Re-inventing Europe: the case of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela as European heritage and the political and economic discourses of cultural unity

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Abstract: This paper argues that the enthusiasm for heritage tourism that has developed in Europe in the past three decades is inextricably tied to the political project of the European Union and its drive to create cultural coherence in a multinational, multicultural continent. I explore the ways in which the ‘heritage-scape’ of Europe, in particular its pilgrimage routes, are portrayed as emblems of European values and culture. I claim that these values are built on selective readings of history and a romantic re-imagining of the past that serve present political and economic ends. Through peripheral pilgrimage sites and routes, messages about cultural unity are disseminated, and the reproduction of an ideal of ‘unity in diversity’ is brought to centre stage in the politics of the Union. I exemplify this process with a description of the pan-European network of pilgrim routes that now forms the largely re-invented Camino de Santiago pilgrimage.

Keywords: politics; religion; pilgrimage; Camino de Santiago; heritage; culture; European council; council of Europe; European union.

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1 Introduction

In modern, secular Europe, old pilgrimage routes and shrines attract millions of visitors each year (Nolan and Nolan, 1989; Notermans and Jansen, 2012; Chemin, 2012b, 2015). From motorcycle clubs going to Kevelaer, Germany and the Madonna del Ghisallo in Northern Italy, to the Via Francigena (a pilgrim route linking Canterbury to Rome), to the pilgrimage to St. Olav’s tomb in Trondheim (Norway), to religious festivals in Southern France and hikers on their way to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, places abundant in
Religious heritage have re-emerged out of a wide, renewed interest in places and traditions that are often imbued with religious, in particular, Christian meanings. Places such as Lourdes (France), Santiago de Compostela (Spain), Fátima (Portugal), Częstochowa (Poland), Medjugorje (Bosnia and Herzegovina), the monastic complex of Meteora in Greece and Trondheim (Norway), amongst thousands of other pilgrimage sites and routes, not to mention the Vatican, have become popular economic, political and religious hubs for a multitude of people in a variety of ways. Despite the influence of the Catholic Church, especially through the figure of Pope John Paul II, mass media, literature and the internet, which all contributed to fomenting this apparent 're-enchantment' of Europe (see Herrero-Perez, 2004), other phenomena such as large-scale economic and political transformations have also been important developments strengthening the popularity of pilgrimage sites in Europe, all of which must be placed within the wider EU political context. For instance, it would be difficult to conceive of the growing popularity of pilgrimage routes such as the Camino de Santiago in Spain (the Way of St. James) without considering the impact of the European Union, the Council of Europe and the European Council on publicising the heritage of these routes as a focus for economic, political and cultural integration.

Recently, observers have turned their social scientific gaze to this phenomenon. For instance, Jansen (2012) points out that

“...open borders, the Euro, and new interactive techniques of engaging with pilgrimage sites via websites or blogs, changed the personal and collective experience of pilgrimage. Pilgrimage to European Christian pilgrimage sites has a great socio-cultural and politico-strategic significance.” (p.2)

Despite the obvious importance of pilgrims themselves in contributing to the popularity of pilgrimage routes (Kissling, 2003), in this paper, I discuss this relatively new field of enquiry by paying attention to the importance of heritage in the formation and dissemination of narratives about cultural values and the politics of identity in Europe. Considering that most 'European heritage' is in fact the inheritance of religious traditions, some native to specific localities and others not so (some of these places being world-famous Catholic pilgrimage shrines), the questions I raise are: how can the reality of an increasingly multicultural Europe be reconciled with discourses of 'European culture' and 'European values', both of which are communicated through heritage found in or around Christian pilgrimage sites? Can the Council of Europe's, the European Council’s and the EU’s incentives for the expansion of European pilgrimage and European heritage routes be seen as an aid for the politics of unification and homogenisation that bypasses a range of sometimes-conflicting identity and cultural discourses?

I base most of my commentary on my experience as a sociologist of religion with an interest in pilgrimages, who has actively researched the Camino de Santiago for more than a decade (2004 to the present). Apart from my own work (see Chemin 2012a, 2012b, 2015), in writing this paper, I have used a range of materials and sources found online and in the academic literature all concerned with pilgrimage and heritage. Finally, I found it useful to filter my interpretations of the data here presented through the lens of the well-known and very influential idea of ‘invented traditions’, which has been described by Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983) as

“...a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature which seek to inculcate certain values and norms
of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.” (p.1)

It is in this sense that the work of Hobsbawn and Ranger becomes, if not always explicitly, at the very least implicitly important in this discussion. The arguments put forth here will also echo the often-quoted phrase ‘imagined communities’ as coined by Benedict Anderson (1982 [2006]), in the sense that it sees European culture as an imagined ideal. For Hobsbawn, traditions are often deliberately created much later than people realise, but they arise as a response to real social needs. Indeed, we find in the Invention of Traditions (Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1983) that traditions are often used by elites to manipulate the powerless, although they are also used by a number of different institutions to maintain social unity and to prevent themselves from falling apart in periods of rapid social change. This was certainly the case during the time of the ‘invention’ of the cult of St. James in early Medieval Europe. My argument follows this path by looking at how the tradition implied by the Camino de Santiago has been partly ‘re-invented’ by the combination of social, cultural, religious, economic and legal institutions and individual agents acting both on national and supranational levels to justify a perceived need for cohesion in a time of perceived fragmentation. What may call discourses of cohesion and fragmentation are present in daily parlance but also in speeches given by politicians, government officials, members of the clergy, economists, journalists, even academics themselves.

My focus on the Camino is justified by the fact that, of all projects launched by the European Union under the auspices of European culture and heritage, the revitalisation of the Camino de Santiago has been one of the most successful projects to date: economically, culturally and politically. I begin with a description of the Camino de Santiago, its origins and modern-day popularity. This is followed by a discussion of the Camino as part of the designated ‘European Cultural and Heritage Routes’ and the economic, cultural and political value of the heritage contained in them. I then give examples of political discourses that make explicit links between European politics and pilgrimage routes, whilst showing the importance placed on the Camino de Santiago more specifically, in the context of European cultural cohesion and the EU’s political project of unification. Finally, I reflect on some of the discourses inherent in the construction (the invention) of the Camino de Santiago as European Cultural Heritage.

2 Myth and history on the way of St. James: from pilgrimage to heritage and cultural itinerary

Any serious history of the development of European pilgrimage routes will be necessarily punctuated by significant omissions where legend often supersedes recorded history. The modern articulation, or what can be called the re-invention of the Ways of St. James (or the Camino de Santiago as it will be referred to henceforth) is based on a number of medieval legends. This is important to establish early on in this discussion for, as we will see later, in modern political discourses, myths of origin remain prevalent and important for present issues and the imagining of possible futures.

In a well-known version of the Santiago story, St. James (Sant-Iago) – one of the 12 Apostles, the brother of John and son of Zebedee, an important though obscure character in the making of Christianity – was mysteriously buried in what is today’s city of
Santiago de Compostela in Spain. It is the ‘miraculous’ rediscovery of his grave many centuries later that gave origin to the pilgrimage that helped Europe to remain Christian after the Reconquista in the 15th century, when Muslims (pejoratively called ‘the Moors’ because of their dark complexion) were expelled from the Iberian Peninsula, a territory encompassing most of what today we recognise as Spain and which Muslims had occupied for centuries.

**Figure 1** Network of routes leading to the *Camino Francés*

Note: Including the territories ruled by Muslims

*Source:* Adapted from Lois-González et al. (2015), with permission

According to the most well-known version of the legend, after Christ’s crucifixion, James travelled westwards from Jerusalem on a mission to preach to the pagan peoples of other lands. On his journey, he is said to have reached the Roman territory of *Hispania*, the Iberian Peninsula. James achieved little success in his mission, so he returned to Jerusalem where he was then captured and martyred in 44 A.D. by the Roman Emperor, Herod Agrippa – a passage that is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 12 2-4). A story not found in Acts is one that tells us that James was beheaded, and that both his head and body were thrown outside of the city walls. According to this version of the story, after his martyrdom, James’s remains were placed on a boat (the type of boat and how it got to Spain are details that vary dramatically in different versions of the tale), which miraculously arrived at a place called Iria Flavia, a coastal town nowadays known as Padrón, a fishing village on the Galician Atlantic coast. With the help of a pagan
woman (perhaps queen) named Lupa, James’ remains were buried approximately 80 miles inland on a hill called Libredon, a rugged valley where the city of Santiago de Compostela now stands (see also Kendrick, 1960; Dunn and Davidson, 1996).

Knowledge of this story, together with the supposed remains of St. James, was somewhat forgotten until the 9th century, when a monk, or perhaps a shepherd, was miraculously guided to the tomb by a shooting star. After the myth of St. James of Compostela was established, movement towards this shrine gradually became part of an already expanding network of pilgrim routes that linked most of the major Christian pilgrimage shrines of Europe and was consolidated by the Order of Cluny (a medieval monastic order). Together, these places formed a network that maps the religious landscape of the European continent (see Vázquez de Parga et al. 1948–1949; Davies and Davies, 1982) and, very conveniently, formed a sort of Christian barrier between Islam and the rest of Europe (see Figure 1).

The movement of people towards the shrine dedicated to James in Compostela saw its heyday in the 13th century, during the so-called ‘golden age of pilgrimage’ (see Sumption, 2003) and remained very popular until the 15th century. However, following the impact of the Reformation, the number of pilgrims declined, and by the 18th century the cult of St. James was mainly restricted to the local population of Galicia at the periphery, or the edge of the European continent.

After a long period of ups and downs, it was not until the 1960s that Santiago de Compostela was given renewed attention by the then Spanish government, which used the image of Santiago Matamoros (Santiago the Moor Slayer) and its association with the mythical Battle of Clavijo, as a powerful ideological symbol in the promotion of National Catholicism during Franco’s regime. This period saw attempts from the part of the Spanish state to relate to the Catholic religion. Franco’s regime was very active in restoring monasteries and stimulating religious reconstructions of old churches and shrines, as well as imposing a Catholic culture within society as a way to counterbalance the ‘atheist and non-Catholic’ actions during the II Spanish República, just before the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939. Indeed, for Garcia-Fuentes (2013, p.1)

“Medieval Spanish monasteries were turned into monuments through a series of political struggles that claimed them for competing ideas of the nation from federalist, Catholic, regional, and fascist conceptions of Spain.”

After that, the cult of Saint James declined in importance once again and the pilgrimage to Compostela again dwindled.

A few decades later, during the mid 1980s and early 1990s, the European Council’s and the Council of Europe’s cultural programs once again placed emphasis on the pilgrimage to Compostela. Together with the United Nations Educational, and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) and the Catholic Church, in its mission to mark its presence as a foundational institution in modern Europe and its importance for the making of ‘European culture’, the Council of Europe and the EU transformed the Camino de Santiago by making it the first ‘European Cultural Itinerary’ in 1987. It was in this period that the pilgrimage to Compostela was re-branded El Camino de Santiago (Frey, 1998).

It is important to note that the name ‘Camino de Santiago’ has become interchangeable with one particular pilgrimage route, namely El Camino Francés (the French Way). In reality, there is a multiplicity of other ‘foot highways’ that connect Compostela to other religious sites of importance across Europe and beyond: from Jerusalem to Rome, Canterbury, Lourdes, Fátima, Trondheim, Assisi, St. Giovanni
Rotondo and Medjugorje, amongst thousands of others places (Nolan and Nolan, 1989). In France alone there are at least four main routes connecting historical pilgrimage sites to the Spanish part of the Camino Francés: from Paris, Vézelay, Le Puy and Arles. These are connected to the French Way via two mountain passes through the Pyrenees, which link the town of St. Jean Pied-de-Port (St. John at the Foot of the Pass) in France, to Roncesvalles (Roncevaux in French, meaning ‘Valley of Thorns’), which is the first Spanish village after the Spanish/French border, a place associated with Charlemagne and the romanticised Battle of Roncesvalles, depicted in the famous Song of Rolland. The other route, known as El Camino Aragonés, links the town of Somport (France) to Puente La Reina, an important medieval town on the Spanish side of the French Way, further west from Roncesvalles.

**Figure 2** Typical sign found along the Camino Francés (see online version for colours)

Other routes derive from England (El Camino Inglés), Portugal (El Camino Portugués) and the south of Spain (La Vía de La Plata). For those travelling on foot from St. Jean Pied-de-Port, the journey lasts for four to five weeks and extends for nearly 800 km, depending on the route taken. The main route itself is well signposted throughout – but only in one direction – with yellow arrows painted on rocks, trees, buildings and traffic signs, as well as plaques and signposts bearing stylised shell
symbols and the council of Europe’s ‘Milky Way’ logo: that is, a scallop shell turned on its side displayed next to the European Union’s circle of stars, both set against a blue background.

The simple change in semantics, from a ‘pilgrimage’ to ‘Camino’, initiated by the Council of Europe and the Xunta de Galicia, placed an emphasis on the route and the journey element of the pilgrimage, rather than on the shrine of St. James. This later became a point of contention from the part of the Catholic Church, which is at times at odds with the development of the route as a tourist enterprise, as exemplified by Benedict XVI’s speech in Compostela in 2010 (I discuss this later).

The change in discourse from religion to heritage exposed the symbolism, myths, legends and history of the pilgrimage to a wider public that, through cultural tourism, has been ever since encouraged to engage with the architecture, landscapes, foods, music, literature and supposed ‘European’ culture and traditions inherent in the pilgrimage routes. This movement goes hand in hand with the idea of a Europe with open borders and, as I will argue later, rather contradictorily, with multiculturalism. Today, the Camino has a dedicated webpage hosted by the Council of Europe4. In it, we find an opening statement that tells us that “the Santiago routes have played a vital role in the development of European culture” (italics added). This is a big claim and one without an empirical base. It is a claim substantially informed by the EU’s top-down political strategy to enhance the normative discourse of a ‘European’ history. It is undeniable that the surviving material heritage found along the pilgrim routes, in particular architectural wonders such as churches, monasteries and cathedrals (Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque) indeed make explicit the link between the original medieval routes and the construction of such buildings, all of which certainly surpass the modern re-invention of the past found in present-day political discourses. Therefore, my aim is not to deny the legacy of the movement of people crossing the European continent during the middle ages, but rather to alert us to the way we are currently enticed to read this past and its heritage as something that reflects our current situation, purposes and ambitions. This is very much in line with the way Eric Hobsbawn has framed the matter. In particular, he is critical of the way myths are passed down as history in order to fit present narratives (see Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1983). Indeed, he reminds us that

“...insofar as there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of ‘invented’ traditions is that the continuity with it is largely factitious. In short they are responses to novel situations, which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition. It is the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant, that makes the ‘invention of tradition’ so interesting...” (p.2)

As we will see in the following sections, Hobsbawn seems to have captured the key aspects of a pervasive tendency in modern institutions, exemplified by the articulation of ‘European’ heritage and culture to invent traditions. Hobsbawn’s thinking, along with the so-called postmodern philosophy of Deleuze, Derrida and Foucault is part of the cosmopolitan turn in the social sciences and humanities referring to a sustainable post-colonial critique of discourses of coherence and unity in historical accounts of Europe [see for example the work of Delanty (1995, 2009, 2010) in sociology; and of Bendix et al. (2012) and Adell et al. (2015) in cultural studies and ethnology; and also George Steiner’s celebrated 2004 essay The Idea of Europe].
3 European heritage and the commodification of culture

One of the key developments in the rekindled enthusiasm in pilgrimage sites and routes was undoubtedly the creation of the Council of Europe. This organisation must not be confused with either the European Council or the European Union, although they share many interests. The Council of Europe came to life before the European Union itself, in 1949, and its first aim is to improve human and civil rights (including right to cultural heritage since the Faro convention of 2005), within the countries of the geographical Europe, including EU members. Today, one aim of the Council of Europe is to promote integration via cultural programs. The principal channel through which this rather ambitious program is to be implemented concerns the promotion of ‘European heritage’. In the pursuit of ‘Unity in Diversity’ (the EU motto), the Council works closely with the UNESCO definition of culture in order to define its own concept of European heritage:

“In its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.”

Heritage as defined exclusively by the Council of Europe is

“...a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time.”

It would be difficult to escape the universal language of continuity and belonging on which these definitions draw [see Di Giovine (2009) on the topic of UNESCO and the ‘heritage-scape’]. The feeling here is that heritage may be locally produced, but it somehow needs to be validated by the supra-national institution that frames it, and that there is enough communality between these ‘distinctive’ qualities to justify notions of a ‘whole’. This is not to say that there are no differences or contested discourses that are expressed by nominating something as ‘European’ heritage or ‘World’ heritage. However, the debates revolving around such differences would warrant an entire different paper, the contents of which I can only mention in passing [for more on this see Peckham (2003)].

For our purposes, what is important is that the Council of Europe works on preserving and enhancing the cultural environment, which covers the built heritage, environment and objects (including works of art), as well as the non-material heritage of places and landscapes. In this process the Council of Europe shares communalities with the European Commission as both seem to assume ideas about traditions, social customs and knowledge that are “taken fully into account in a broad definition of what kind of heritage is common to the peoples of Europe” [European Commission, (2002), p.14]. As such, the remains of a civilisation or a site of exceptional natural beauty are important not just for the people who live nearby, “but for all the people of Europe” (ibid – note the use of ‘people’ in the singular). Does that imply that the wishes, beliefs and life-styles of minorities are to be given preference over the political ambitions and ideals and the ‘shared’ values of the perceived (constructed) ‘whole’?
This is precisely when heritage becomes an important concept. Despite the peripheral position that the study of heritage and pilgrimage occupy within political economy and cultural sociology, here we have a case to argue that heritage is becoming a focal point in political agendas because of its power to translate discourses of difference into a political discourse that emphasises homogeneity. Governments have long used sites of religious importance and their heritage to amplify their messages and attract attention to specific causes. It is an interesting fact that the landmark Treaty of Lisbon, which consolidated and harmonised all previous treaties, was signed in the Jerónimos Monastery, an important Christian monument of Portugal founded in 1495 and a UNESCO Heritage Site since 1983. Furthermore, one has only to think of the constant use of pilgrimage centres by modern-day public figures as stages for the enhancement of messages. From Popes to secular authorities, artists and academics, these spaces have re-gained appeal partly due to the works of what I call ‘producers of meaning’ (see Chemin, 2012a), the same actors who seem to benefit from these places of cultural prominence. At this junction, the relationship between tourism (economics), heritage (history and culture), politics and religion, come to the fore. According to Kristof Van Assche (2011, p.7)

“The scientific and policy discourses on what heritage is and should be have multiplied over the last decades. These heritage discourses, rooted in the 18th century dialectics between romanticism and enlightenment, were revived and intensified by the growth of the tourist industry, and thus linked to processes of commodification, but simultaneously associated with the enlargement and deepening of the European Union.”

The Council of Europe understands that heritage can be a precious channel for communication, an invaluable tool in the dissemination of ideas about ‘values’. The latter are in my view reified sets of notions, taken for granted as ‘universal’, whereas ‘European’ takes a similar significance to the word ‘Christian’, even if on the surface the Council and EU are officially and strictly secular entities. Local governments also have, of course, a claim over these very same sites, and do use them for their own campaigns formed by discourses not always in tune with those Christian ‘European’ values. In the Maastricht Treaty, we find the following passage referring to heritage:

“(d) aid to promote culture and heritage conservation where such aid does not affect trading conditions and competition in the Community to an extent that is contrary to the common interest.”

This is a curious passage; notwithstanding that it is not part of the often-quoted article 128 (previously article 151 of the Amsterdam Treaty) but rather article 92(3) on common market, competition and economics. It is inserted under the heading “Title V: Common Rules on Competition, Taxation and Approximation of Laws”, a strange place to discuss the value of culture and heritage. In my view, this shows the prevalent commodification of culture and that the ‘value’ of culture is actually not simply a metaphor but rather a financial term that determines how profitable a focus on heritage and culture can be, given the appropriate investment from the public and private sectors. In that sense, the universalist discourse of ‘European’ values, history, culture, heritage, etc., benefits, is fed by or feeds into, the master narrative: neoliberal economics.
4 The Camino de Santiago and European political and religious discourse

One famous quote often attributed to Johann Wolfgang Goethe says that “Europa ist auf dem Jakobsweg entstanden” (Europe is built on the Way of St. James). While it is questionable whether Goethe ever said that, the sentence has been used on numerous occasions to emphasise the importance of the Camino de Santiago for the foundations of Europe and the European Union as a cultural and political ideal.

With this in mind, a speech made by Francisco José Millán Mon is rather revealing. Millán Mon is a Spanish politician and member of the European Parliament with the Partido Popular, a Christian democratic party. He sits on the European Parliament’s Committee on Foreign Affairs and is a substitute for the Committee on Development. He is also a member of the Delegation to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly. Before an audience including the leader of the German Bundestag and other important ministers and parliamentarians, including the vice-presidents of Germany, Spain and Portugal, he gave a speech titled “Santiago de Compostela and the St. James’s Pilgrimage: A European Dimension”. The speech was given during a presentation in the conference organised by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Santiago de Compostela in April 2012. There, Millán Mon reinforced the importance of the Camino de Santiago as European cultural heritage with important ramifications for politics. In particular, Millán Mon emphasised “the links between the Ways of St James and Europe”. He begins with a strong claim:

“Let me begin with a clear statement: the Ways to Compostela have contributed significantly to the creation of the European culture and a common European identity. I remind you that, as Goethe said, ‘Europe was built on the pilgrimages to Compostela’ … The pilgrimage to Compostela also symbolizes a set of values and ideas that are very closely linked to the views that many Europeans have of mankind and of the construction of Europe. Indeed, principles, religious ideals and values such as freedom, solidarity and reconciliation have always been present in the Ways of Saint James.” [Millán Mon, (2012) pp.1–2 – italics added]

After drawing many ideological parallels between those who walk the Camino, their aspirations and the fundamental place of Christian ethics in the building and maintenance of the European project since WWII, Millán Mon is very explicit in his aims to portray the Camino as

“…a symbol, a metaphor for the current process of European construction. In fact, the pilgrimage to Santiago has been a place of dialogue and coexistence for many Europeans, far from the exclusion caused by nationalism, the cancer of Europe... The Way of Saint James is an example of the synthesis of unity and diversity, as is the Europe of today. ‘United in diversity’, as we say.” (p.4)

In his address, Millán Mon makes particular reference to the heritage of the ‘pilgrim ways of Europe’ whilst emphasising the role of the architecture of the pilgrim routes and how important it is for the formation of European culture. He goes as far as to state that the Camino is the ‘spiritual backbone’ of Europe (p.5). The most important message, however, is found in Millán Mon’s closing remarks:

“In these last few years, European citizens seem to have been gradually drifting away from the process of European construction – visible in the referenda in France and the Netherlands in 2005. I think that to remember the role of the
Ways of Saint James in the creation of Europe is useful in order to show that the EU is not an artificial construction, but has very deep and strong roots.”

“Furthermore, we are now undergoing a severe economic crisis and many Europeans feel disheartened, pessimistic. We politicians must restore, for our citizens and for ourselves, the idea of Europe as a place of hope, a value so closely related to the pilgrimage to Compostela.”

“Let me finish by saying that to speak today of the Way of Saint James is not purely a historical exercise of looking back in time.”

“It is also a living reality that is flourishing once again. At the same time, it symbolizes the values of our present European Union, that is to say, reconciliation, unity, progress, solidarity and hope. Values that we want to preserve for future generations.” (p.7)

Reading through the entire transcript, one does not need to be an expert in discourse analysis to see how the Way of St. James is employed as a way to naturalise the idea of Europe as an evolutionary consequence of history. There is a sense of inevitability about the ‘flourishing’ of the Camino (in this case the re-flourishing) as if it has occurred organically, without any institutional impulse behind it. The EU is portrayed as ‘not an artificial construction’ in the same way that, according to Millán Mon, the Camino has flourished out of an organic inevitability rather than political engineering. He is also explicit in drawing parallels with economic crisis, a supposed pessimism and something that the EU and its message of universal hope can help with. Millán Mon infuses his description of the Camino with what he repeatedly calls ‘European values’.

Although we could continue to analyse Millán Mon’s speech for the remainder of this discussion, for it makes for very interesting material, more important still is that Millán Mon is not alone in drawing such parallels. Within the European Parliament itself, a group of 60 parliamentarians from 18 European states formed an intergroup, the ‘Ways of Saint James Intergroup’, of which Millán Mon is the chair. The message is clear: the EU is not an artificial political construction; it is a historical fact, a natural development of forces beyond politics, forces that are beyond our earthly concerns. In essence, the EU is often portrayed, despite cautionary notes on ‘diversity’, as one cultural entity that must be salvaged against the perceived (not to say unfounded) rhetoric of fragmentation. Note for instance that the ‘no’ votes in the European referendum on a possible EU constitution were seen by Millán Mon not as an expression of democratic values and European values, but rather as a sign that Europe is ‘drifting away’ and becoming ‘pessimistic’.

Another former member of the Council of Europe, José Maria Ballester, further exemplifies the construction of such discourse rather aptly. An international civil servant and art critic, Ballester was former advisor to the Holy See for the cultural resources of the Church (1996–2008), and amongst other responsibilities were a member and Vice President of the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage/Europa Nostra Awards until 2012, when he was elected President. He was also a member of the advisory board for the European Institute of Cultural Routes and a closer observant of the development of the Camino de Santiago. He has recently described the present time as follows:

“It is also a time when a crisis of values and ethical standards, an expansion of relativism whose effects are seen spiritually occurs. The result is a deficit in humanism, and a breakdown of social cohesion and a devaluation of the model of a free, fair and balanced partnership we have had so far as a paradigm of what Europe is and means.”
In the celebration of the jubilee marked by the year 2000, Ballester gave a short speech to a meeting in Compostela. There he placed great emphasis on just how important cultural heritage is for the formation of the EU:

“…we see as the function of cultural heritage that it is developed with strength until it is converted in a true social phenomenon and one of the pillars of the building of Europe, along with this great Europe that comes together around our organization.”

Furthermore, in the foreword to the volume entitled *European Cultural Heritage (Volume II) A Review of Policies and Practice* (2002), Ballester explains that

“The founding principles of the Council of Europe, set down in the Organisation’s Statute in 1949, were directed towards achieving greater unity between its member states by safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage. Since the European Cultural Convention was opened for signature in 1954 the Council of Europe has pursued a policy of common action to safeguard and encourage the development of European culture and, more particularly, to safeguard and ensure access to the *common cultural heritage*.” (p. 5 – italics added)

Despite the dates 1949 and 1954, the moment that set fire to the imagination of EU officials came not from the European Parliament, the European Council or the Council of Europe’s representatives but rather from the Catholic Church. And in spite of economic and political agreements, the idea of common origins and cultural homogeneity really sprouted to life and germinated through a change in Catholic rhetoric led by John Paul II, who visited Compostela in 1982. In his influential speech on 9 November that year, before a crowded Plaza do Obradoiro on the steps of Santiago’s Baroque Cathedral during the Holy Year, the pope pronounced:

“I, Bishop of Rome and pastor of the universal church, from Santiago issue to you, old Europe, a cry full of love: Find yourself. Be yourself. Discover your origins. Give life to your roots. Revive those authentic values that gave glory to your history and enhanced your presence on the other continents… You can still be the beacon of civilization and stimulate progress throughout the world… The other continents watch you and expect from you the same response that St. James gave to Christ: ‘I can do it.’”

Following the Pope’s influential speech, a whole process of Europeanisation of culture and heritage was put in place. After that came the secular political incentives, the proliferation of literature on the theme [Paulo Coelho published *The Pilgrimage* (*O Diário de um Mago* in Portuguese) in 1987], the strengthening of the tourist industry by cheaper air travel, and the economic development brought about by public investors, which attracted interest from the private sector, resulting in the opening of hotels and restaurants, the restructuring of transport connections, etc.

I believe it would be pertinent to read these statements as part of a larger narrative. The romanticism evident in the ‘golden age’ discourse inherent in Millán Mon’s, Ballester’s and John Paul II’s texts is obvious and not accidental, and such discourse is pervasive in the EU’s and the Council of Europe’s rhetoric. At this stage, the true history of wars and constant redrawing of boundaries, religious conflicts, persecutions and horrific crimes on behalf of tribes, empires and then nation-states is put aside in favour of a linear narrative of universal cultural and religious unity. The Camino de Santiago comes handy in the endeavour of creating political rhetoric of a perceived cultural, religious common ground out of the scraps of complex, fragmentary, disputed and
often-contentious histories. It provides modern, in this case Catholic commentators (both Millán Mon and Ballester are practicing Catholics) with the chance to look back and re-imagine a Europe that is united in its Christian values, even when such values are portrayed as secular. Difference in opinion is seen as fragmentary and detrimental to Europe. The European people (singular) that Millán Mon describes is, according to him, disheartened and pessimistic in general, not simply with the European Union and its policies or with their own governments.

In contrast, Benedict XVI’s speech, made during his visit to Compostela in 2010 (also a Holy Year), was marked by a more cautious absence of such rhetoric or any explicit mention to European history, heritage or culture. Instead, he thanks the Spanish people and places emphasis on pilgrimage as a spiritual, religious undertaking and not as a tourist destination.

“To go on pilgrimage is not simply to visit a place to admire its treasures of nature, art or history. To go on pilgrimage really means to step out of ourselves in order to encounter God where he has revealed himself…”

Benedict’s speech is concerned almost exclusively with Christian doctrine and it contrasts sharply with the Council of Europe’s notion of the Camino as a manifestation of European culture and values. Benedict of course, was a very different Pope than John Paul II. Benedict’s papacy differed from that of his successor mainly because of the flexibility and charisma shown by John Paul II and his talent for public relations. Neither Benedict’s personality nor his theological views (orthodox and conservative), especially as the former Cardinal-Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, allowed him to accommodate political discourses that may overshadow the hard-line theological component of his messages.

5 Differences in understanding of value and heritage and the economic drive behind the EU’s heritagisation of culture

It is easy to see the allure, the enticement of claims of a common European heritage. One late winter evening I had a chance encounter with the process we could call ‘heritagezation of culture’ (this can also imply the ‘commodification of heritage’) when I first visited the city of Olsztyn in Poland. After a strenuous 12-hour journey from Berlin to Olsztyn for a meeting sponsored by the European Commission, I found myself walking around the streets of Olsztyn at night, looking for my hotel. Meanwhile, as I made my way through the historical centre, I encountered numerous times the image of St. James the pilgrim, depicted next to a scallop shell and set against a blue background. Intrigued, I asked the hotel staff about the meaning of St. James in Olsztyn. They promptly replied that St. James was Olsztyn’s patron saint.

The next day, I paid a visit to Olsztyn’s tourist office, and there I came across a promotional pamphlet, which I later also found online. In it, the city authorities placed emphasis on the link between the city and St. James as a patron saint and its importance. It is worth quoting a passage from this material in length.

“What constitutes the history of Olsztyn and exerted an immense influence on its present image are historical events and signs of activity of its outstanding citizens and ordinary inhabitants. The elements of the past and present days may be discovered in characteristic emblems, architectonic buildings,
monuments and documents, which became recognizable symbols of the city. Since the very beginning Olsztyn has been accompanied by the person of St James – the wanderer with a pilgrim stick and a shell in his hands. At first he was only the church patron, later on he became the protector of the whole city. His image has been present on the seal and coat of arms of Olsztyn for ages, has been applied on stained glasses and pictures, facades of the buildings and interiors of municipal offices. Nowadays the name of the saint is evoked during important cultural and sporting events whereas the bridge, park, music ensemble and the shopping gallery were even named after him. One group of important symbols of Olsztyn comprises historic buildings associated with municipal authorities. Erected in the past centuries they outlasted the wars, fires and other historical maelstroms. Among the major symbolic monuments of Olsztyn we should mention the Gothic St James Cathedral, the Old and the New City Hall.17

To complement the rhetoric of surviving legacy and the symbolic importance of St. James, on 28 April 2007 the official opening of the first part of the ‘Polish Way’ took place. The latter is a walking/cycling way from the St James cathedral in Olsztyn to Gothic St James church in Toruń, a 240 km route divided into nine stages and varying in length between 18 and 37 km.

The connection with St. James, and automatically with the networks of European pilgrimage, allows Polish local authorities to make a connection between their local cultural identity and the European project. This perceived need to be part of EU cultural discourse has also been observed by other scholars. For example, according to Even-Zohar (2011)

“...for areas little known or which need some economic injection, legacy objects and images may be dug from some imaginary or covert sources…. it would be justified to contend that heritage has become mostly a matter of competition about ‘who has got the better goods for sale,’ while for the majority of people in everyday life they carry very little meaning.” (p.36)

Indeed, for the residents of the localities through which the foot-highways of Europe pass (whether these paths have always crossed these modern localities is a disputed matter), pilgrims are not always a blessing. Often the economic argument prevails over community understandings of value and what constitutes heritage and its use. According to my own experience whilst walking and researching the pilgrim routes, local people are often burdened by the sudden influx of tourists rushing through derelict villages that are frequently ill-prepared to accommodate the increasing volume of holidaymakers, especially during the summer months. Some locals see the pilgrims/tourists as illegitimate secular tourists and not pilgrims in the religious sense, whilst doubting the authenticity of their motivations. Pollution caused by heavy tourism, noise, the replacement of local services and businesses by standardised agencies and international brands, and the exclusion of the local population from decisions about what happens in their villages and towns due to European Union restrictions on heritage protection and for the benefit of tourism are all issues that remain largely ignored. Let us not forget that the reference to St. James the pilgrim found in the local discourses of cities such as Olsztyn is made not by local popular discourses but by the religious and political elites of these localities who wanted to find closer connections to the real centres of power in Europe or to develop the economic potential of these localities. Other cities, such as Bremen (Germany)18, Trondheim (Norway)19, Reading (England)20 and Brussels21, amongst many
others, also claim to be historically linked to the pilgrim routes of Europe and other
important religious centres.

In an editorial supervised by the aforementioned José María Ballester, Lionella
Scanziosi, a professor of architecture at Milan Polytechnic, sees European rural
landscapes as “an interrupted sequence of gardens”. In this short piece, the
interconnection between a cultural consensus and the significance of heritage in the
discourse of cultural proximity and the economics of tourism becomes obvious:

“A widespread asset like the rural landscape needs widespread protection and
development and, of course, widespread consensus. However, it is not enough
to raise public awareness of rural landscapes’ historical, cultural and
architectural significance; their importance as an economic asset and their
usefulness to society and the individual also has to be explained. One need only
think of the positive effects of tourism (although they are sometimes very
difficult to control) on minor hillside and mountain sites, for example.”
(Scanziosi (2001), n.p. – italics added]

Here the words 'asset' and ‘usefulness’ stand out, together with the sentence “the positive
effects of tourism… on minor hillside and mountains sites”. They prompt us to ask the
question: for whom is the Camino an asset, for whom is it useful and what are exactly the
positive effects of tourism, say, for local communities? All these questions are often
bypassed in political discourses. They are inconvenient questions for those holding dearly
to the cultural universals propagated by the Council of Europe and the European Council,
as well as those for whom the neo-liberal impulse to transform anything and everything
into assets and opportunities is persuasive.

The various practices and perspectives we have come to understand as ‘pilgrimage’
may in fact be very much dissociated from the individual who travels along the Camino
(see Frey, 1998; Cazaux, 2011; Chemin 2015). The European Council and the Council of
Europe, the Catholic Church and numerous civil-society organisations and programs (too
numerous to cite), are legitimising institutions which, through their funding of academic
work and regional development funds (largely through FEDER in the case of the
European Council), frame the complex lives, multitude of motivations, diversity of
cultures, histories, peoples and myths that compose not one phenomenon but many
actions and social relations into one event.

In this there are tensions between what local communities, in Galicia for example,
value as heritage as opposed to what the local government and the EU may
regard as being of cultural importance. For example, in a study conducted by
Cristina Sánchez-Carretero (2012) on the heritage of the Camino de Santiago, we find
that in a small town in Galicia through which the Camino passes, she found heritage
discourses were predominant in the administration (in this case the mayor of Olveiroa)
whilst they were lacking in the (mostly rural) population composed of a high percentage
of unemployed workers.

“The mayor’s control of the municipal heritage processes is evident in his
depiction of the top-down mechanism; the population figures as passive
recipients of heritage… In sum, the institutional discourse of Olveiroa features
heritage vocabulary, but it is missing in the discourse among the inhabitants.”
(p.151)

Another study, co-funded by the Culture Program of the European Union, was published
attempted to assess the value of heritage in quantifiable ways. It highlights, during a
review of academic work on heritage, the great prevalence of economic-led studies in this field. Although they acknowledge that “…the number of studies concerned with social and cultural impacts increased from 1990s onwards”, the study points out that there has been only a small concern with environmental issues [CHCfE Consortium, (2015), p.14]. The report reassures the reader by stating that the reason for the lack of studies on the environmental impact of heritage-tourism on communities is, quite simply, due to the novelty of the field. However, it is doubtful in my opinion whether this is the real reason, considering that concern over the impact of tourism on the environment is something that has been voiced by environmentalist groups and civil society at large since at least the 1970s.

6 Reflections on the reification of pilgrimage as European heritage

The discourses found amongst some EU representatives and those of other agencies and organisations constantly reify the pilgrimage routes of Europe as something stable, fixed in time, overarched by something larger than the individual and recognised by all involved as of heritage and cultural value in the same way that the EU is portrayed as larger than the nation states which comprise it. The same process that reifies the nation-state as a community [in the sense of Anderson’s ‘imagined communities’, (Anderson, 2006)], the European Union as a shared ideal and natural progression from barbarism and chaos to the stability of European modern civilisation, is also the same process which reifies the idea of European culture, European values and European people, and which now uses the concept of European pilgrimage to consolidate such claims of communality and shared understandings through European heritage. Academics, tourists, educators, politicians and administrators (at local and national levels) are all part of this cultural imperative, as we all, myself included, have helped to manufacture these overarching communalities through our work. Sometimes we are unaware we are doing so, but this can occur even when we are being (self) critical and (self) reflexive.

It is worth asking whether a church in the city of Pamplona, Basque Country (an autonomous province of Spain with a history of separatist movements and whose population can still raise strong claims of self-sufficiency and independent cultural and political values) is a European heritage site, a World Heritage site or a property erected by the Basque people and their self-defining efforts. Is a dirty footpath hidden away in the Galician mountains a European Heritage Route, a UNESCO protected natural heritage route or a footpath used for centuries by local farmers to herd sheep and cattle to fresher pastures? Is it of value to the local population? If so, in what way? Would they rather invest the often-large sums of money differently, in other necessary and basic services perhaps? In sum, is value understood the same way by all stakeholders? Is a bridge built and maintained for centuries by peasants and local priests in the plains of Castilla an example of European construction methods and a material evidence of the cultural roots of Europe, or is it simply the efforts of the community to overcome natural obstacles? Do understandings of what constitutes something worth preserving by local communities always match local, national and supranational government interests? Are Cathedrals that are built on soil fought and won from foreign (‘non-European’) ‘invaders’ symbols of the resilience of the Christian roots of Europe, or a structure built by local people and resources with no timely understanding of modern conceptualisations of
European culture? Are not their modern counterparts largely apathetic to the origins and symbolism of the place for local history, let alone for what it means for Europe as a larger entity?

These questions made me further reflect on the various interests as well as local versus national and supranational (and global) understandings of heritage [territorial or intangible: see also Peckham (2003), Bendix et al. (2012) and Adell et al. (2015)] and what Murray (2014) has called ‘narratives of leadership’ present in the ‘heritage complex’, in this case described as the sum of European, Spanish, Galician claims of authority (p.58). Cultural heritage and identity discourses coincide in the discussions on European citizenship, cross-cultural understanding, economic specialisation and tourism development (During, 2011), all of which are made obvious in the usage of the Camino de Santiago as a universal (European) set of core values and ideals. It is important to emphasise that until the 1980s, most local people living in the rural parts of Northern and Southern Spain would not be familiar with the name ‘Camino de Santiago’ (as opposed to going to Compostela in whatever way they could). People have always gone to Compostela, but after the invention of the car and trains and airplanes, not many of the faithful would contemplate long journeys on foot (see for example Vázquez de Parga et al., 1948–1949; Frey, 1998).

Europe, as a political tool, was indeed also an opportunity for local, regional and peripheral territories to benefit from easy money, more than states and national governments themselves. However, the dynamics of the Invention of Traditions were very efficient at these local and regional levels because of EU funding since the 1980’s, as they were at national and states levels during the nation-state building process.

Still, the re-invention of the European network of European pilgrimage paths occurred mostly top-down and from various sources. Let us note that of the 237,886 pilgrims who arrived in Compostela in 2014 (88.67% of which were on foot), 113,624 (47.76%) were Spanish (Pilgrim’s Welcome Office, 2014). So almost half of all walking pilgrims to Compostela are foreign to Spain (many are even foreign to Europe), with almost more pilgrims from the USA as from France or Portugal. Considering the word ‘pilgrim’ derives from the Latin word for ‘foreign’ (pellegrinus), it is a little ironic that this should be the case, since the Camino is supposed to be about European culture for the benefit of European people, a symbol of European values. That said, and as Hobsbawn reminds us:

“‘Invented traditions’ have significant social and political functions, and would neither come into existence nor establish themselves if they could not acquire them. Yet how far are they manipulable? The intention to use, indeed often to invent, them for manipulation is evident; both appear in politics, the first mainly (in capitalist societies) in business… Yet it also seems clear that the most successful examples of manipulation are those which exploit practices which clearly meet a felt – not necessarily a clearly understood – need among particular bodies of people.” [Hobsbawn, (1983), p.307]

More than 50% of pilgrims walk only the last 200 km (or less) of the routes, starting mostly from or near the border with Galicia with 24.61% of them starting in Sarria (113 km from Santiago), or from Tui, Oporto, O’Cebreiro, Ferrol, Valença do Minho, Ourense and Vilafranca (most of these locations fall within a 200 km radius or less from Compostela – see Pilgrim’s Welcome Office 2014). In Galicia, the practice of going to Compostela has a particular affinity not to European values but to the way Galician culture and society value walking to Compostela as a local, not European, practice. Let us
not forget the antagonism found in Galicia towards Castilian Spain and Galicia’s peculiar nationalism, which does not stretch its allegiance much further east than the hills of O’Cebreiro”. Young, especially urban people from Galicia are incentivised to walk, cycle or ride to Santiago at least once in their formative years. They can even enhance their social capital by including the experience in their professional curriculum. But also, foreigners who go on the Camino throughout the year rarely report their own experiences as having anything to do with a desire to engage with European culture or European values (see Chemin, 2012b).

However, the more tangible heritage, history and a sense of community with other individuals are often-discussed themes in research (see Chemin, 2015), and the sense one gets is that pilgrims related a lot more to global ideals (freedom of expression, community, freedom of movement, diffused, and unchurched, forms of spirituality, contact with nature, etc.) than those labelled as European or necessarily Christian (Frey 1998). Still, the perceived notion that the world is ever more fragmented and that it needs more unity is very well expressed in the discourses of international pilgrims: largely middle-class, well-educated people living in urban centres. The form of discourse that says heritage is capable of unifying us all into one European people is indeed very clear. It is worth quoting Hobsbawn once again. Discussing the ‘mass production’ of traditions between 1870 and 1914, he reasons that:

“...nationalism became a substitute for social cohesion through a national church, a royal family or other cohesive traditions, or collective group self-presentations, a new secular religion, and that the class which required such a mode of cohesion most was the growing new middle class, or rather that large intermediate mass which so signally lacked other forms of cohesion. At this point, once again, the invention of political traditions coincides with that of social ones.” [Hobsbawn, (1983), p.303]

I believe Hobsbawn’s argument is still valid as an analysis of discourses found in contemporary Europe, except that the nationalism he refers to has given way to the idea of Europe as a political and cultural entity not in spite of, but over and above diversity.

7 Conclusions

The geography associated with the Camino de Santiago has been for a long time part of a mostly rural periphery largely neglected by the rest of European societies. These localities were for most part distanced from the centres of power and real economic development of Europe. Today, however, the heritage of these designated cultural routes have placed the old pilgrimage routes at the centre of European political discourses. The claims made by officials, regarding its origins and ties to ‘European’ culture and values, follow political rhetoric underpinned by a cultural imperative taking place in a Europe that seeks ‘unity in diversity’ can obscure disparaging understandings between communities and governments of what constitutes value, culture and heritage. The re-invention and re-branding of pilgrimage routes in Europe, more specifically the Camino de Santiago, reveals a political discourse that entails assumptions about a great diversity of people and cultures, with the purpose of consolidating a European cultural unity to a politico-economic project that depends on the notion of integration. Hence, what were fairly recently peripheral events and places are now reified as a natural movement towards the achievement of cultural coherence to curtail a perceived
fragmentation of European society. These discourses seem to fit well with the economic, neoliberal, European agenda that seeks to harness anything and everything of potential value. After all, the two pillars of European integration are free trade within the European borders and a common custom policy (see also Dinan, 2004, 2010)\(^3\). In sum, the EU project is an economic project for which culture has become a valuable commodity. With tourism becoming such an important slice of the economy of many European states, the politics of heritage cannot be dissociated from the pervasive economic and political imperatives.

References


Notes

1 It is important to note that the supposed remains of St. James were hidden away by the clergy during the Reformation. However, the priests hid them so well that nobody could find them until the 19th century, when they were revealed by an excavation in the Cathedral of Compostela.

2 Today, the Battle of Clavijo is considered by serious historians to be purely fictional. However, for centuries it was believed to be historically factual and it has become very popular in political rhetoric in Spain when recalling the expulsion of Muslims from Europe. In a well-known legend, Santiago Matamoros (St. James the Moor Killer) appeared in a white stallion holding a sword in the shape of a thunder. He slayed thousands of Muslims and saved the largely outnumbered Christian army. After that he became the patron saint of Spain and the image of him mounting a white horse, sword in hand killing a Muslim soldier being trampled by horse, is depicted in many churches and official buildings around Spain, not least the Cathedral of St. James in Santiago de Compostela.

3 The Battle of Roncevaux Pass (Roncesvalles in Spanish) occurred in 778. It is said that Rolland, a commander of the rear guard of Charlemagne’s army, was brutally defeated by the Basques. The Roncevalles Pass is a high-mountain pass in the Pyrenees (the border between France and Spain). It is one of the most important ‘starting points’ of the Camino Francés. The battle is said to be one of the decisive moments in Charlemagne’s consolidation of Christian Europe. However, it is usually romanticized into a conflict between Muslims and Christians, which is historically inaccurate given that the enemy army was also Christian.


5 UNESCO (1982).

6 Council of Europe (2005).

7 It is also interesting to note that the year 1495 was marked by the Diet of Worms when the Holy Roman Empire was considerably reformed.


12 Año Santo Jacobeo in Spanish or Ano Santo Xacobeo in Galician. These are celebrated every time 25 July (St. James’ day) falls on a Sunday. Holy Years occur every 6–5–6–11 years. For example, the most recent Holy Year was celebrated in 2010. Other Holy Years took place in 1982, 1993, 1998 and 2004. The next Holy Year will be celebrated in 2021.

13 John Paul II (1982: no page number).

14 I do not mean to imply that Europe is the result of Christian history alone. Jewish cultural heritage is also an important matter, as is the revival of Al’Andaluz cultures around the Mediterranean. Rather I am simply pointing to the presence of particularly Catholic rhetoric in the European politics of culture.


16 Benedict XVI (2010, no page number).

Bremen has a dubious association with the image of Rolland (described earlier) and the Jakobsweg. The image of St. James above the entrance door of the Bremen Geschichtenhaus (history museum) was, for instance, placed there after the house was renovated. The link between Bremen and the Camino satisfies the needs of a local council for proximity to the pilgrim routes even if the city’s Cathedral is dedicated to St. Peter, not St. James (St. Petri Dom zu Bremen).

Trondheim is not associated directly with St. James. It is, instead, associated with St. Olav who is said to have walked the pilgrimage to Compostela during the medieval period. It has a dedicated website (http://pilegrimsleden.no/en/) where we find the following description of the pilgrimage as “European tradition, Nordic history, Norwegian culture. And at the same time a very personal experience”.

Reading is said to have been one of the stops on the medieval route to Canterbury and from there across the English Channel by ship and on to Galicia. The Church of St. James in Reading recently received an important Christian relic believed to be the left hand of St. James. The relic is normally stored at St. Peter’s Church (Marlow). When the local priest spoke to a journalist he said “We have been honoured and delighted. Large groups came to view it - many for the first time - and hopefully we have sown the seeds for a pilgrimage from Reading to Santiago” [online] http://www.readingchronicle.co.uk/news/13393182.Mummified_hand_of_St_James_is_returned/ (accessed 31 August 2015).

Just across from Port Hal, an important landmark of old Brussels, one of the main gates to the medieval city, there is now a monument celebrating the way of St. James, Chemin de Saint-Jacques-de-Compostelle. All over the old Brussels, one can see golden metal scallop shells lined up and stuck to the cobbles and pavements. The monument in Port Hal is a ‘pilgrim meeting point’ and was donated by the Xunta de Galicia who sent over a Neolithic-style stone block to mark the spot.

Francisco Franco himself was Galician from Ferrol. However, when in power, he prohibited Galician to be spoken and taught to young children.

On 18 April 1951 six countries (Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) signed a Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which became known as the ‘Schuman Plan’, after Robert Schuman, the then French Minister of Foreign Affairs. The idea was to create a single open market between those countries and from there to build political stability in the creation of what became known as the EEC (European Economic Community). The Customs Union is the main task of the European Economic Community, established in 1958, and now succeeded by the European Union. The Common Customs Union is the only policy to be fully accepted by all EU member states. Whilst taxation rates vary between countries, EU custom policy is the same for every country (see also Dinan, 2004, 2010).