

---

Volume 7

Issue 2 *Special Issue : Volume 1 of Papers  
Presented at 10th International Religious  
Tourism and Pilgrimage Conference 2018,  
Santiago de Compostela*

Article 3

---

2019

## Biographical Motivations of Pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago

Christian Kurrat

*FernUniversität in Hagen (Germany)*, christian.kurrat@fernuni-hagen.de

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp>



Part of the [Tourism and Travel Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Kurrat, Christian (2019) "Biographical Motivations of Pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*: Vol. 7: Iss. 2, Article 3.

doi:<https://doi.org/10.21427/06p1-9w68>

Available at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/ijrtp/vol7/iss2/3>

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons  
Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](#).

---

# Biographical Motivations of Pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago

---

**Christian Kurrat, Ph.D.**

FernUniversität in Hagen (Germany)  
[christian.kurrat@fernuni-hagen.de](mailto:christian.kurrat@fernuni-hagen.de)

The question of what leads people from a biographical perspective to go on pilgrimage has been a research object in the Department of Sociology at the FernUniversität in Hagen, Germany. This qualitative study examines the biographical constellations which have led to the decision to go on pilgrimage and therefore a typology of biographical motivations was developed. To achieve the aim of a typology, methods of qualitative research were used. The database consists of narrative interviews that were undertaken mostly with German pilgrims. The life stories of the pilgrims were analysed with Grounded Theory Methodology and made into a typology of five main types of pilgrims: balance pilgrim, crisis pilgrim, time-out pilgrim, transitional pilgrim, new start pilgrim.

**Key Words:** pilgrimage, sociology, qualitative research, biography research, typology

## Introduction

The medieval practice of pilgrimage is experiencing an extraordinary renaissance. Travel by foot is becoming a worldwide trend and 'The Way of St. James' in Spain is gaining especially huge attention. The so called 'Camino de Santiago' is a network of routes that lead to Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain, where it is believed that the remains of the apostle St. James are buried. The first pilgrims went there in the 9th century (Bottineau, 1987). Within the last 30 years this pilgrimage route has experienced a remarkable revival. In the year 2017 alone more than 300,000 people were registered in the Pilgrim Reception Office in Santiago de Compostela (Oficina de Acogida al Peregrino, 2018). The true number is probably higher as up to 11.5% of pilgrims are not recorded there (Lois González and Santos Solla, 2015). The question of what leads people from a biographical perspective to go on pilgrimage has been the research subject at the Department of Sociology at the FernUniversität in Hagen, Germany. In their qualitative study was examined the biographical source constellations which have led to the decision to go on pilgrimage and therefore a typology of biographical motivations was developed. In the following paper, the status of research about the motives of pilgrims will be presented. After that, the methods will be presented before the typology of pilgrim's biographical motivations will be shown.

## Status of research

What do we know about the motives of pilgrims? Though the Pilgrim Reception Office in Santiago de Compostela produces official statistics about the pilgrims' motives, this database is not convincing. The statistic shows that about 43% of the pilgrims who were registered within the last ten years point out 'religious' motivations and almost 50% 'religious or cultural' (Oficina de Acogida de Peregrinos, 2018). One must know that by not signing religious or cultural reasons the pilgrims receive a certificate that is different from the historical and desirable one in the Latin language. For that reason the 'dataset provided by the Pilgrim Office is interesting but very limited despite improvements' (Lois González and Santos Solla, 2015:155).

While a pilgrimage to a sacred place like Santiago de Compostela, one of the three 'geospiritual centres of the Christian dominion' (Lois González *et al.*, 2016:773), clearly was a religious endeavour in the Middle Ages (Ebertz, 2012), contemporary empirical studies point out a dichotomy between religious and spiritual motives. In a large quantitative study of 2010, 48.5% of all pilgrims declared to walk for spiritual reasons and 47.6% for religious motivation (CETUR and SA Xacobeo, 2010). In another quantitative study of the same year (Gamper and Reuter, 2012) state that 23.4% of all pilgrims claim religious motives and almost the same number say that they want to get to know different religions (22.4%). Repentance is important for 16.6% and to visit Christian places for 12.1%. To reach the Cathedral of Santiago de

Compostela is important for 6.6%. On the other hand, more than half of all questioned (51.8%) indicate an individualistic motive: to find oneself. It is important for the pilgrims to escape from everyday life (40.2%); to enjoy calmness (39.4%); and to feel the spiritual atmosphere (34.6%). In particular, motives that can be called spiritual lead people to the Camino de Santiago (Gamper and Reuter, 2012: 220). One third want to enjoy nature (34.4%) and the sight of nice landscapes are also important (32.9%). Less than a quarter indicate that they want to meet people from different countries (23.7%); to be together with family (22.2%); to experience adventure (20.9%); or to be part of the pilgrim community (19.1%). Fewer indicate sport motives (17.3%) or cultural reasons (17.2%). Some want to overcome a life crisis (14.2%). Of minor importance are motives related to interest in animals and plants (9.5%); to party with others (7.4%), or; have a cheap vacation (5.2%).

Modern pilgrimage is not exclusively in accordance with the traditional devout notion (see paper in this Issue by Haller and Munro) and it has become a significant form of a self-initiated, non-denominationally bound sense-search and self-search (2012:228). 'The post-secular situation is marked by a major shift from organized, normative religion to subjective and experiential spirituality' (Lopez *et al.*, 2017:226). While a religious journey includes belief in God and the practice of traditional rituals, a spiritual journey is about the idea of a non-structured, individual and direct relationship that one has to their transcendental reality (Frey, 2002:47). Even though most of the pilgrims come from a Christian background, many do not practice their religion in their everyday life nor on the Camino de Santiago. Of central motivation is a form of transformation that includes inner values and questions about the sense of life (Haab, 1998:13).

In this respect the research of pilgrims gives a well-founded insight into the transcendental orientation of pilgrims, but does not yet show which personal motives lie beyond that. However, the status of research gives us reason to assume that the starting point of a pilgrimage is biographically motivated. Haab, for example, states that people go on pilgrimage in existential physical or psychic crises or at turning points in life (1998:140), while Frey states that pilgrims are motivated by a suffering soul (2002:63). Since there had not been a study that especially focused on the biographies of pilgrims, this was identified as the main goal of the study at hand - to

investigate expressly this and to present a typology of biographical motivations of pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago.

## Methods

To achieve the aim of developing a typology, methods of qualitative research were used in order to explore the social width of the until then unknown field. The process of research followed the ideas of Grounded Theory Methodology (Glaser, 1998). This basically means that the research field has a higher priority than theoretically advanced takeovers: the theory shall be discovered within the field and through the interactions in it (Flick, 2007). Connected with this research attitude is a specific technique of finding interview partners. In Grounded Theory Methodology it is called 'theoretical sampling' which means a careful selection of cases (Corbin, 2003). For the researcher this means finding extreme and contrastive cases but also similar ones in order to capture as much as possible from the complexity of reality. Under the prerequisite assumption that the occurrences in the social world move in a process and that the parts of the occurrences can be divided into a small and finite number, a widely spread selection of cases allows the creation of types. Barney Glaser's interpretation of Grounded Theory Methodology recommends that the researcher should be open to new discoveries which are proceed inductively. Referring to that, a research stay of six weeks was conducted in the summer of 2010 at different locations along the French route of the Camino de Santiago in Spain. During a period spent working in hostels, hundreds of pilgrims were observed while listening to their talks or having short chats with them. By doing that, it was possible to find both similar and contrastive cases who were asked to participate in the study. This approach was undertaken until it was believed that no new aspects could be discovered.

The final database consists of 30 Narrative Interviews that were undertaken mostly with German pilgrims who walked the Camino for the first time, who started it alone and who walked at least 250 kilometres. The method of the Narrative Interview was invented by the German sociologist Fritz Schütze in the 1970s and is especially used in biographical research (Fuchs-Heinritz, 2009). The method he invented refers to concepts of phenomenology, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism and sociology of knowledge. The method contains the main assumption that all life experiences are stacked up like layers within the

human brain and that the memory patterns of these experiences can be reactivated with a stimulus of narration (Schütze, 1983; Küsters, 2009). Therefore, the participants were asked to tell their whole life story until the day they decided to go on pilgrimage. Once the stimulus is ratified, three 'forces of telling' come into effect, because the participant is forced to tell the life story unprepared to an unknown person: the force of detailing, the force of story closing, and the force of attaching relevance and condensing the information. This means that the participant is forced to go into detail so that the story is plausible for the unfamiliar interviewee, they are forced to tell the story from the beginning to the end so it makes sense, and they are forced to point out the relevant parts on the one hand and shorten them to the essentials on the other hand (Küsters, 2009). The main important task of the interviewer is not to interrupt the narration until the story is being finished with a clear coda. Two question parts follow: while the immanent questions refer to the story that was told and seek to ask for more details or explain incomprehensible aspects, the examinant questions were prepared in advance and are the same in each interview in order to compare them.

The life stories of the pilgrims were analysed with methods of Grounded Theory Methodology (open coding and axial coding) and by using four steps of typology creation as suggested by Kelle and Kluge (2010):

- (1) development of relevant comparison dimensions,
- (2) grouping of cases and analysis of regularities,
- (3) analysis of content interconnections and type building,
- (4) characterising of the types.

The main task of the researcher is a continuous interaction with the material that will bring a theoretical sensibility to the data and thus, develop a knowledge of what is significant (Corbin, 2003). Through constant and systematic comparison of the cases, seven categories emerged from the data that had a significant meaning for each case:

- biographical start situation
- intentionality of pilgrimage
- communication patterns
- corporeality
- social environment at home
- ecclesiality
- transcendence reference

The axial coding revealed abductively (Reichert, 2003) a connection between the categories 'biographical start situation' and 'intentionality of pilgrimage' with the 'communication patterns', 'corporeality' and 'social environment at home'. The categories 'ecclesiality' and 'transcendence reference' revealed no correlation to the other categories. This cognisance led to the decision to combine the categories 'biographical start situation' and 'intentionality of pilgrimage', lift them up to the core category 'source pattern' and group the cases along them. The categories 'communication patterns', 'corporeality' and 'social environment at home' were determined as typology dimensions. By doing that it was possible to look into empirical regularities. Seven groups emerged and the internal homogeneity was verified, because all cases of a type should preferably be similar. The analysis showed that the characteristic shapings of the dimensions are highly similar in each group. Also the external homogeneity was verified and it was confirmed that the groups distinguish themselves from each other contrastively. Subsequently all cases were put into a story along the typology dimensions. Finally the types had to be characterised and described thoroughly. For that, an ideally conceived case was constructed for each group that allowed the creation of an analytic orientation frame in which the social reality takes shape.

### **The pilgrim typology**

The analysis (Kurrat, 2015) shows that people go on pilgrimage in typical life situations and that the source patterns correspond in a typical way with the communication forms during the pilgrimage, the meaning of corporeality and the meaning of the social environment at home. Five main types and two special types emerged from the data: the main types balance their lives, process a crisis, take time off, transition between two phases of life or initiate a new start. The special types do not go on pilgrimage for a self-induced purpose, but for someone else or as a vocation. Hereafter the five main types will be characterised initially in a general way and then illustrated by a case.

#### ***Balance pilgrim***

The balance pilgrim reflects and balances their life. These are mostly old to very old people who are physically still able to walk a long distance trail but at the same time are certain of their oncoming death on account of the advanced age or an illness. These pilgrims seek silence and moments of solitude for intense reflection, to remember times in their life and

**Table 1: The five main types of biographical motivations of pilgrims**

Type	Balance	Crisis	Time-out	Transition	New start
Source pattern	The end of life in sight	Shock because of an unplanned occurrence of the close past	Extremely high demands in professional life	End of a phase of the normal biography	Self-chosen break
Communication forms during the pilgrimage	Contemplation	Consolation	Community	Inspiration	Construction
Meaning of corporeality	Repentance	Relief	Slow movement	Enquiry	Manifestation
Meaning of social environment at home	Legacy	No meaning	Prioritisation	Presentation	Demonstration

to carry out balancing classifications. The effort of walking fulfils the function of repentance. The social environment at home, especially the family, has a high meaning: in view of the foreseeable end of life they want to leave their progeny a legacy.

The type is now being illustrated by the case of a 70-year-old German man, who is conscious of his imminent finiteness. He decided to walk ‘the Camino at the end of my life’. This journey is the self chosen finale of his travels. He reminisces about hikes and mountaineering in Nepal, South America, Africa and the Alps and states about his physical capability: ‘Grand things I won’t do anymore’. The pilgrimage on the Camino has a different meaning than the other travels he had done and he connects the pilgrimage with his biography: ‘70 years is a long life, I have seen a lot and achieved a lot, but it is about time to make an exploration of conscience.’ He balances his life during the 36 days of his pilgrimage as the following excerpt illustrates:

*I must say that I regard this as a thank you to life (starts to cry). I've had a tough professional life; a nice one, but also with great demands for me and my family, with overtime, Sunday working and so on. There were many people in my life who supported me, some of whom are no longer alive. I think about them and remember those who did me well and who promoted me. In my thoughts I am very thankful for those who I met during my life, who supported me, who cheered me up and who brought me joy. That is very important, because not everything you achieve in life is because of your own physical power or intelligence. You must not forget that. My thoughts go, of course, back to my parents' house. I remember my parents, my grandparents and my siblings who are no*

*longer alive. And of course there are things in my life I did wrong. I think about that – and I ask for forgiveness.*

The mental orientation of this man goes way back to his past. Facing the finiteness of his existence, he reflects on the stages of his life and confesses that ‘of course there were also things that I did wrong and I think about that’. The other pilgrims do not have any special meaning for this man, because he wants to be in silence with his thoughts. He does not search any exchange with others and there are only ‘short talks - very warm’, but he emphasises: ‘99.9 percent I go alone’, because in the silence he finds ‘the talk with myself’. Silence means ‘inner retreat’ and ‘workup of different things’. He wants to think back to his life: ‘I would like to think back to the life I have led and to the significant points in my life. For that I need silence during my pilgrimage.’ Walking 800 kilometres is a challenge for him and he has pain in his body and many blisters: ‘The good times of my life outweigh the bad and for those I accept the blisters and the pain of my body as a form of repentance.’ He describes this as ‘saying prayers with the feet’. The social environment at home – his wife, siblings and nephews – have a big relevance for him, and for them he takes many pictures during his pilgrimage and writes a diary with his thoughts and experiences that he wants to give them afterwards.

### **Crisis pilgrim**

The crisis pilgrim reflects on a crisis and searches for processing opportunities. An unplanned experience of the close past has shaken the life of these people massively – for example the sudden death of someone close to them, losing their job or being left by their partner. The occurrence is perceived as a shock and the

pilgrimage to Santiago shall be a way to overcome the feeling. Therefore, communication with other pilgrims has a relevant function for these people. They tell them about their biographical crisis and hear from them other or similar life destinies, from which they learn interpretation patterns for their own crisis and they receive consolation. The physical activity helps to relieve the pain of the soul and regain inner balance. What the others at home think about the pilgrimage is of no importance, because it only serves to overcome their own crisis.

The type is now being illustrated by the case of a 46-year-old German woman who lost her father a few months before her pilgrimage. Her sister had called her to inform her that her father was not doing well. She then drove a few hundred kilometres to her father's sickbed and knew 'the days are numbered'. She is thankful that she could tell her father many things that were important for her. A few days later her mother urged her to go back to work. She did so and 'maybe an hour after getting home' the phone rang and she was informed: 'Dad has died.' This shocking moment felt 'so bad' and she blamed herself for going home and not staying at her father's sickbed. She was confronted with the idea of 'letting it go', but it was hard: 'You cannot hold on to others, you know that we all have to die one day, that is clear, but still it really hurts'. She decided to go on pilgrimage to Santiago, 'so that the pain can be processed, that the pain can come out'. It was important for her 'to go to a different place and to meet other people'.

On the Camino the woman speaks with other pilgrims about the shocking experience and she finds consolation:

*The encounters during the Camino were very intensive, especially those with individual people, because I could pour out my heart and to talk about it relieves me. They poured their hearts out and you realise, okay, you are not alone. Also the others have to carry a burden. It consoles. It was simply good and helped me.*

She calls the people she walks with her 'soulmates' and they develop 'a very deep understanding' for each other. She and her pilgrim friends are connected by individual experiences of a biographical crisis. At the same time, the physical activity helps her processing the loss:

*With the movement, you have the possibility to process something that hurts. I believe it is a lot better to process it in movement than in your quiet room at home. For me it was important to*

*do that, so that the pain can be processed, that the pain can come out. ... With the movement, you sweat and you sweat things out, not just rubbish of your body but also of your head and you become free again and ... Yes, it was good. Even though I am still very touched because I loved my father deeply.*

The reactions and opinions of her social environment at home have no meaning to her. She walks the Camino just for herself and in order to overcome her crisis.

### ***Time-out pilgrim***

The time-out pilgrim takes a professional time-out and plans professional priority changes. These people experience high demands in their profession at home and invest a lot of time in their occupation. The balance between private life and professional life is not preserved anymore and the occupational everyday life is considered as excessively burdening; consequently it causes burnout. These people undertake a pilgrimage to escape for an extended period from their professional everyday life and to let ideas arise for professional priority changes. Similar to many other pilgrims they have everyday conversations and are impressed by the community experience. They are, however, in a totally new situation, because in contrast to their professional life, the others along the Camino do not request anything from them. The physical activity lets them find a new rhythm, serenity and tranquillity that they had lost in their daily lives. Pilgrims of this type do not have any contact with the social environment at home during their pilgrimage and they plan to change their priorities.

The type is now being illustrated by the case of a 46-year-old German woman, who experiences extremely high professional demands in her work in the media industry. She is self employed.

*That means a tough and full workload. I work seven days a week, I'm always busy and on tour, I always have deadline pressure. That can't be maintained in the long run. Of course, success is nice, but it doesn't fulfil me anymore. If success doesn't make sense anymore – and I need sense in what I do – if you realise that you are only there to work, then you have to rethink and ask yourself, 'What do I want?' We are just too materialistic, too organised. That makes me sick. That doesn't fulfil me anymore. And then I thought that I need a break. I really must go out for a long time in order to not think about tomorrow and the day after tomorrow and all that overruns me every day. I really need some time off.*

Characteristic for this case is that the woman does not have any contact with her home during the pilgrimage:

*What I'm doing now I have never done before. I am not reachable for a period of 36 days. Absolutely not. I have my mobile with me, but it is turned off and I will only switch it on when I get back to Germany. Many of my colleagues had to get used to the idea that I really mean it: I am not reachable for 36 days.*

She wants to show the people in her life that she will come back changed: 'When I am back in the office I will deal with many things in a different way.' She is certain that 'the key that I find here while walking will change me in many ways at home.' Part of the key is the community experience and the physical effort. The other pilgrims and the locals accept the stressed woman and hereby create new sense, 'because I do not know that in Germany. It is very impressive, it makes me calm and quietens me down'. She talks with the others about everyday affairs and to some extent about the question of why they walk the Camino. She avoids talking about her profession and rather lets others speak: 'I do not ask in depth, ordinarily they talk on their own accord.' While the community experience gives her a new sense, the physical activity brings her a new rhythm. 'The inner harmony is coming back.' For that, it is important that she walks six weeks: 'It wouldn't work to do this in just six days.' While at home she is 'sitting at the work desk the whole day' and her 'head is occupied all the time', the daily walking 'brings me so much composure and so much peace that I see many things with different eyes'. She experiences 'how easy one can live' and is certain that when she returns to the work desk she will say to some demands and assignments: 'That does not have priority today.'

### **Transitional pilgrim**

The transitional pilgrim finds him/herself in a rite of passage – after finishing studies and before becoming a first-time employee, after the professional life and before retiring or after the children have moved out. Those transitions are part of normal biography. With young people the social position changes with the crossing from school to occupation and with older people with the dissolution of the working life. Within this transition phase, the individual's past is reflected and future options are experimented. It is interesting that there do not exist rituals for these transitional phases in our modern world. In that respect the pilgrimage is a self-chosen ritual that shall mark off the end of one phase and transfer them into the one that

begins. During the pilgrimage these travellers talk with others about their past, define their current status and search for suggestions for the future. The physical challenge is experienced as a form of maturity: when they bear the strain, they are mature for the next social status. Because of that, self-presentation for the social environment at home is important: young people want to delineate themselves from people of the same age, while older people want to prove their performance capability.

The type is now being illustrated by the case of an 18-year-old German who walks the Camino during their last summer vacation before graduating. He describes his life until now as 'totally normal', 'nothing special'. He grew up in a small village with four younger siblings and has a 'very good relation with all'. After reading a book about the Camino de Santiago he dreamt about walking it and then thought 'this year in my last summer vacation it must be'. He says that graduating is a 'big chapter in life' and he wants to think about his future during the pilgrimage:

*I wasn't completely sure what I should do after school. I had thought about going to the army, to study there and commit myself for many years as a soldier. And I also had some other options like becoming a teacher or a ranger.*

He talks to other pilgrims about his future ideas and meets an American teacher who gives him insights into the vocational world of being a teacher and invites him to sit in on the school for two months. He is very impressed by the exchange with her and says:

*I realised on the Camino that I would like to pass on what I have learned from others, so that means that becoming a teacher is 90 percent likely.'*

The physical challenge is an exam of maturity for him:

*Pilgrimage is an exam for yourself and you must approach it every time when you feel like giving up or when you feel like saying, no, I don't want any more, I have pain, I got stiffness, I got blisters.*

Self-presentation for the social environment at home is very important for him, he seeks recognition and that everyone will be 'very proud' and ask him 'what I have considered to do in my future life'. He has a strong connection with his 80 year old great-grandfather who told him that he himself would have liked to experience such a journey when he was young: 'but that was when the war was just over'. This awareness leads to a diachronical community in his

family. He thinks that 'in 60 or 70 years' he will tell his children and grandchildren about this adventure of his life. Because of that idea he writes a diary and 'when they will go on pilgrimage I can take out my diary'. His circle of friends could not understand that he would walk 800 kilometres through Spain during his last summer holiday. They were 'mischievously amused that they would lay on a white coconut beach with a cocktail in their hand while I torture myself here'. He dissociates himself from them and reinforces this by stating:

*They will come back after two weeks and have not learned anything for their lives. They can say that they had a nice holiday with hangovers and sunburn. But none of them can say that they dared to do such a thing like I do, none can say that they dared to spend time on themselves.*

### **New start pilgrim**

The new start pilgrim resembles the *Transitional* type, but it represents an extreme form. It concerns people who have given up their long time practised profession or left their partner after a phase of massive irritation and they want to begin a completely new life. Therefore, the pilgrimage is of great importance: they try to find interpretation patterns for their 'failed career' and also seek options for their future occupation. The pilgrimage is like an initiation rite for a new life. People of this type speak about the discovery of new abilities or talents and the importance of the pilgrim's community for gaining courage for the new start. The exchange with others is of vital importance: they tell others about the causes that led to the break in their life and construct a new identity with them which they want to demonstrate to their social environment at home after returning from the Camino. The new start must also be shown physically: the conquest of the challenge is the proof that a wrong and unclear life has ended due to high conversion efforts.

The type is now being illustrated by the case of a 30-year-old German man who quit his job before his pilgrimage:

*I've been working as a lathe operator for eight years now. But I realised the whole time that my profession doesn't fulfil me. I was very unlucky, but I never had the courage to do something else. I was completely unlucky with my profession and went to work every day against my will. During this time I drank a lot of alcohol and tried to eliminate my problems by that. Of course that was idiocy! Then I thought: I can't go on like that, I still have to work 30 or*

*35 years. There must be something else, this way you can't live on. I didn't know what I wanted to do and what to search for. I then stopped drinking and thought about quitting my job. But it is very hard to close a door, because you have your monthly income and it is hard to say 'I will do something else now'. But then I said all of a sudden 'I will quit my job', because I just needed time for myself in order to think about what I want to do, who I am and where my way is. I didn't have any further goal and I didn't set any. So I thought I must quit my job, I must close this door so that a new one can be opened. I then went on the Camino de Santiago because I thought that I would meet a lot of people there to talk to and I would have a lot of time to think about myself.*

He started his Camino in his home town in Germany and walked more than 2,000 kilometres to Santiago. The pilgrimage marks the end of his former life and the start into a new, uncertain future. This means that this pilgrimage is a transition into openness, where both the damage of the past and 'the idea of the future, how do I find my way so that I can be lucky' are of importance while speaking with others. This pilgrim has intensive talks with those he encounters on the way and tells them about his problems, dreams and wishes. He tells others the whole truth in order to integrate their self-chosen break into his identity. At the same time, he discovers that he is also very interested in helping others with their problems and starts to consider a new qualification as a Social Care Worker. This new concept of identity he wants to demonstrate to others at home when he returns. He wants to show them that he had the courage and perseverance to quit his job and to walk 100 days to Santiago where he found a new concept for his life. It has to be pointed out that this pilgrim has in point of fact done so, as a subsequent interview showed. He began a new course of education as a Social Care Worker and returned many times to the Camino where he finds the 'tools' for his life.

### **Conclusion**

This analytical research study showed that the pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago is a biographically induced form of acting. People go on pilgrimage to balance their lives, process a crisis, take time off, make a transition between two phases of life or initiate a new start. The biographical source patterns determine in a typical matter how they communicate with others, what function the corporeality has and what significance the social environment at home has. While, for example, the balance pilgrim searches



silence and no deep communication with others, it is of high importance for the new start pilgrim to have intensive conversations with others. While, on the other hand, the social environment at home has no meaning for the crisis pilgrim who wants to overcome a shock, the idea of presenting ones new self is essential for the new start pilgrim.

It is interesting to question how the life stories of the pilgrims continue after they return home. This research gap is being investigated at the moment in a subsequent study at the FernUnviersität in Hagen in collaboration with the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela in Galicia/Spain and the College of William & Mary in Virginia/USA. New interviews are being conducted for a qualitative longitudinal study. The research questions are: what do pilgrims learn during the pilgrimage and to which life and professional changes can the pilgrimage experience lead?

## Bibliography

- Bottineau Y (1987) *Der Weg der Jakobspilger. Geschichte, Kunst und Kultur der Wallfahrt nach Santiago de Compostela*. Bergisch Gladbach: Bastei Lübbe.
- CETUR and SA Xacobeo (2010) *Observatorio Estadístico do Camino de Santiago 2010*. Universidade de Santiago de Compostela: Xunta de Galicia y Centro de Estudios Turísticos.
- Corbin J (2003) Grounded Theory. In: Ralf Bohnsack, Winfried Marotzki, Michael Meuser (eds): *Hauptbegriffe Qualitativer Sozialforschung. Ein Wörterbuch*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 70-75.
- Ebertz M (2012) Der 'alte' und der 'neue' Pilger. In: Patrick Heiser, Christian Kurrat (eds): *Pilgern gestern und heute. Soziologische Beiträge zur religiösen Praxis auf dem Jakobsweg*. Berlin/Münster: Lit, 91-112.
- Flick U (2007) *Qualitative Sozialforschung. Eine Einführung*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt.
- Frey N (2002) *Santiagopilger unterwegs und danach*. Volkach/Main: Manfred Zentgraf.
- Fuchs-Heinritz W (2009) *Biographische Forschung. Eine Einführung in Praxis und Methoden*. Wiesbaden: VS.
- Gamper M and Reuter J (2012) Pilgern als spirituelle Selbstfindung oder religiöse Pflicht? Empirische Befunde zur Pilgerpraxis auf dem Jakobsweg. In: Daniel A, Schäfer F, Hillebrandt F and Wienold H (eds): *Doing Modernity – Doing Religion*. Wiesbaden: VS, 205-232.
- Glaser B (1998) *Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions*. Mill Valley: Sociology Press.
- Haab B (1998) *Weg und Wandlung. Zur Spiritualität heutiger Jakobspilger und -pilgerinnen*. Doctoral dissertation. Freiburg: Universitäts-Verlag.
- Heiser P and Kurrat C (2012) *Pilgern gestern und heute. Soziologische Beiträge zur religiösen Praxis auf dem Jakobsweg*. Berlin/Münster: Lit.
- Küstners I (2009) *Narrative Interviews. Grundlagen und Anwendungen*. Wiesbaden: VS.
- Kurrat C (2015) *Renaissance des Pilgertums. Zur biographischen Bedeutung des Pilgerns auf dem Jakobsweg*. Berlin/Münster: Lit.
- Lois González R and Santos Solla XM (2015) *Tourists and pilgrims on their way to Santiago. Motives, Caminos and final destinations*. Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change 13: 149-164.
- Lois González R, Castro Fernandez B and Lopez L (2016) *From Sacred Place to Monumental Space: Mobility along the Way to St. James*. Mobilities 11: 770-788.
- Lopez L, Lois Gonzáles R and Castro Fernández B (2017) *Spiritual Tourism on the way of Saint James and the current situation*. Tourism Management Perspectives 24: 225-234.
- Oficina de Acogida al Peregrino (2018) *Estadísticas*. Available at: <https://oficinadelperegrino.com/estadisticas/>
- Reichertz J (2003) *Die Abduktion in der qualitativen Sozialforschung*. Wiesbaden: VS.
- Schütze F (1978) *Die Technik des narrativen Interviews in Interaktionsfeldstudien – dargestellt an einem Projekt zur Erforschung von kommunalen Machtstrukturen: Arbeitsberichte und Forschungsmaterialien*. Bielefeld: Universität Bielefeld.