

# To become a Pilgrim: Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela as a Construction of the Pilgrim Body

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*Abstract: This work focuses on how contemporary pilgrims walking to Santiago de Compostela understand their experience. Through the analysis of interviews with nine pilgrims and an auto-ethnographic diary with a strong dose of reflexivity I want to show that pilgrimage can be understood as a process of constructing a pilgrim body. “To become a pilgrim” is achieved through six different strategies, which are walking, socialising, solitude, separation (from everyday life), asceticism, and faith. This experience results in a form of a technique of the body (Mauss 1968) which can be learnt and used in everyday life after the pilgrimage ends. Pilgrim body is a complex skill, consisting of physical, mental, spiritual and social dimensions, each describing a different aspect of the pilgrimage itself, all embodied in the physical body of a pilgrim. Through such an approach I want to show that we might understand pilgrimage as a form of physical experience with transcendental overlap, focused mainly on individual progress, but constructed together in friendly communitas of pilgrims, described by Victor Turner in his classic study (Turner 1969). Usage of these benefits gained from pilgrimage and the life of Pilgrim body in everyday life is analysed as well.*

*Key words: pilgrimage, Santiago de Compostela, pilgrim body, communitas, autoethnography*

## Introduction

*“This is the end. My body probably felt that I will let it rest soon, so my calves and hips started to ache. Finally, limping on both legs, I reached the albergue (hostel) and in the glass-door I saw the reflection of my pilgrim-self for the last time; smelly clothes, mussed-up hair, in pain, deady tired, and perfectly happy.”* (autoethnographic diary, 29 August 2017, Muxía)

My pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela took place in August 2017, lasted for ten days and in total I walked about 300 km.<sup>1</sup> This (rather short) journey became the main source of data for my bachelor’s thesis, homonymous with this paper, that came out of it one year later. Through the auto-ethnographic diary from my journey and interviews with other pilgrims after my pilgrimage I am trying to understand what it means to become a pilgrim through composition of a pilgrim body. My research takes the perspective of anthropology of the body, and through such an approach I describe the strategies of the construction of these pilgrim bodies, their nature, and how these experiences are handled after the pilgrimage is over, lingering in the physical body of the pilgrim.

I argue that pilgrim’s experience is anchored in the physical dimension (physical body), but consists of three other dimensions: mental, social and spiritual. Each of these dimensions is of the same importance, describing a different aspect of the pilgrimage. This four-dimensional form of experience or “habitus of the pilgrim” describes the ways in which one becomes a pilgrim in his<sup>2</sup> own body. Certain strategies are used to achieve the pilgrim body, on which I will elaborate below. Apart from the construction of the pilgrim body, I will analyse how pilgrims deal with this embodied experience once the pilgrimage is over.

## Theoretical framework

*“I have this diary for a month or so, but up until now, only theoretical notes about *communitas* and such has been written here. It will be my main tool of research on the journey which starts in a week. I feel like I know so little about ethnography, about how to do this properly. I also wanted to see the general framework of pilgrimage, so I have seen the film “Wild”, and read “Diary of a Magus”. Boy, that was some bullshit.”* (autoethnographic diary, 2 August 2017, Prague)

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<sup>2</sup> When referring to an indefinite pilgrim, I am using masculine pronouns, unless the feminine gender needs to be stressed.

### *Communitas*

Despite the recent shift in the anthropological approach towards the study of pilgrimages, the classical work of Victor and Edith Turner remains an intuitive analytical starting point. Turner builds upon Arnold van Gennep's study of rituals of passage (Gennep 1960) and reframes pilgrimage as such ritual. Focusing on the liminal phase of the ritual, the Turners observe the unstructured communities of pilgrims, and introduces the term *communitas* (Turner 1969). It is only through the power ascribed by all to ritual, particularly to the Eucharistic ritual (which in part commemorates the pilgrim saint), that likeness of lot and intention is converted into commonness of feeling, into "*communitas*" (Turner, Turner 1978: 13). The unstructured social groups of equals sharing the zero social role status has become one of the key concepts of this work. However, I take another perspective than the religious study of the ritual and focus on the pilgrimage as a gathering of people sharing the ritual of pilgrimage, which often has little to do with Christianity as such.

Even though the Turnerian approach is the most inspiring, recent debate concerning the shift in the study of pilgrimages must be addressed. One of the main sources of the criticism of *communitas*, that it failed to take account of the mundane conflicts inherent in pilgrimage, is used as the very foundation of the new approach. *Communitas* is seen as just one idealizing discourse about pilgrimage rather than an empirical description of it (Eade, Sallnow in Coleman 2002: 357). Furthermore, the universalism of the Turners' work tends to overlook the complexity of the problem. According to Eade and Sallnow, there is no pilgrimage, but pilgrimages (Eade, Sallnow in Coleman 2002: 360), and they should be studied as such.

This work does not aim to describe the specificity of the Camino de Compostela; it aims to do quite the opposite. The notion of pilgrim body construction is anchored in the Turnerian perspectives, as it appears thanks to the unstructured socio-spatiality and timelessness that the framework of *communitas* offers. Moreover, I argue that the pilgrim body is a construct of a rather universalist nature and can be indeed found in pilgrimage as such. Therefore, this analysis does not have to be concerned about pilgrimages, but only about a pilgrimage. The pilgrim body is then a complex of all mental, spiritual and social competences experienced through the physical body, gained while the pilgrimage is a form of individual experience, constructed and shaped together in the community of pilgrims. This construction can happen both consciously and unconsciously. Fully formed pilgrim body is a state of mind and body: a lifestyle, an attitude or, in other words, a *habitus*.

### *Habitus*

Even though above-mentioned scholars pay certain attention to the pilgrim's corporeality, their approaches are rather shallow in terms of the complexity this paper aims to describe. However, the notion of cultural patterns embodied by members of such cultures was throughout described by Marcel Mauss in his most inspiring essay "Techniques of the Body" (Mauss, 1968). According to him, every technique properly so-called has its own form. But the same is true of every attitude of the body. Each society has its own special habits (Marcel Mauss 1968: 71). Moreover, the Maussian approach to the study of physical skill is quite similar to the approach I am taking. His triple viewpoint of analysis constructs the physical skills based in physicality, psychology and the social sphere (e.g., through imitation, learning, etc.) (Marcel Mauss, 1968: 74). As the terrain of pilgrimages is rather specific, I added one more dimension to the constitution of the Pilgrim body technique, namely the spiritual dimension. I believe it is crucial for learning this technique, as I shall present in the analysis below.

### *The Body Memory*

I argue that the pilgrim's corporeality is the key platform for experiencing the pilgrimage. People who walk long distances tend to develop a specific relationship to their bodies, as it is the main tool of transport; higher maintenance and intensive care are the usual phenomenon of such a process. However, pilgrimage is not only a "long walk"; it is a spiritual journey undertaken for a reason. The transactional nature of pilgrimage involved offering up one's body as the most intimate sacrifice possible, in exchange for an enduring connection with divinity (Greenia 2019: 50). This narrative penetrates the corporeality, and transforms understanding of pilgrims to the bodily experiences that occur. My approach focuses on the construction of multi-layered experience based in the body of the pilgrim, though some other aspects of the corporeality analysis should be mentioned here. Closely connected to the argument of this paper is the phenomenon of storing the memories inside the body. A rather high number of pilgrims take it literally and decide to follow the tradition of pilgrim tattoos. Pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem in the 16th century also received tattoos as a part of their pilgrimage. Such tattoos were designed with the viewer's perspective in mind, so that returning pilgrims could roll up their sleeves and tell stories about their pilgrimage. This praxis has several meanings; it is an identity-creating act, connecting the tradition of pilgrim tattoos with the contemporary trend in Western societies to use the body for identity construction. There is also a spatio-temporal dimension, which is comprised of tattoos in the form of autobiographical symbols and objects of memory, such as places a person has visited or which are immortalised in tattoos.

The symbolising of one's own life story by means of biographical events written on the body can thus contribute to a stabilisation of the self. (Kurrat, Heiser 2020: 12-13). The intense need of manifesting this new identity is closely tied with the ephemerality of the whole experience. I argue that construction of a pilgrim's body and the intense need of maintenance of this multi-layered experience after the pilgrimage is another way of the immortalization of the pilgrim's experience within his corporeality. The body is the canvas which bares the memory; whether in form of ink or in my case, a set of complex multi-dimensional practices.

### *Embodiment*

The basis of experience is the physical body, but as stated above the experience cannot be reduced just to the physical dimension. The aim is to describe the complexity of the experience that overlaps the physical dimension of the body. It is a crucial thought to understand that body and mind do not stand in opposition; they are in fact the same position and of the same importance. The methodological condition of the unity of body and mind is described well in the work of Thomas Csordas:

“Both (Merlau-Ponty and Bourdieu) attempt not to mediate but to collapse these dualities, and embodiment is the methodological principle invoked by both. The collapsing of dualities in embodiment requires that the body as a methodological figure must itself be non-dualistic, that is, not distinct from or in interaction with an opposed principle of mind.” (Csordas 1990: 8)

This duality needs to be avoided in order to fully understand the complex experience that the pilgrimage offers.

The body is not the opposite to mental, spiritual and social experiences, but another part of it, with the same importance and role. Body and mind become the research perspective through which I analyse the experience of pilgrims who walk the Camino de Compostela.

### *Santiago de Compostela*

The pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in Spain is one of the most massive Christian pilgrimages in Europe. It took its origins from the legend of Saint James from the 8th century. According to it, St. James was trying to spread the word of God in Hispania, but he failed and travelled back to Palestine. When he died, his bodily remains were placed in a boat, which miraculously sailed near today's Santiago de Compostela. The city was built after his remains were found and displayed there. From the eleventh century, the cult of St. James spread through the

Europe. In the 12th century the famous, “The Pilgrim’s Guide to Saint James” is written, and the pilgrimage becomes massive (Le Goff & Schmitt 2002: 509-511).

Today, the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela is the most frequented and massive pilgrimages in Europe. It attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from many different cultural backgrounds, of different religions and ages and with various motivations. The massive plurality of personal stories creates a specific time and space, that pilgrimage is. Every personal narrative has a place here and can be heard even in the harmonies of other voices. The experience of Camino the Santiago resonates with Turner’s description of *communitas*; a friendly unstructured community of equals, with values such as brotherhood, friendship and unity (Turner 1969). The shape of this experience is the shape of the pilgrim body.<sup>3</sup>

## Methodology and data characteristics

*“I am writing this in the night, but even now there is no time for this. It is so hard to keep the diary updated. There is always something to do on the Camino.”* (autoethnographic diary, 19 August 2017, A Guarda)

The autoethnographic approach provides several notable advantages. It is a highly useful tool both for ethnographic research enriched with the self-observation and reflection of an insider. Such an approach is most valuable concerning the abstract bodily experiences, which are extremely difficult to both observe and discuss. The autoethnographic diary was key to the composition of the semi-structured interviews.

The interviews were conducted with nine pilgrims, six women and three men. The ages of the pilgrims were between 18 – 40 years.<sup>4</sup> They were all in good

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<sup>3</sup> However, it is needed to be said, that the concept of pilgrim body is not limited to the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela only. The process of its construction is possible thanks to the pilgrim’s conceptualization of the walking journey as a pilgrimage and can be observed within other pilgrimages as well. An example can be found in the analysis of the Japanese Shikoku. A pilgrim stated, that:

“I guess something major did change. Kōbō Daishi still performs miracles.” Through hard work, ritual, and reflection, the young man had earned the salvific outcome of Shingon Buddhism; he became Kūkai in his own body.” (Thorndike 201: 38)

To become a “Kukai in one’s own body”, meaning to embody Kukai Kobo Dashi, the Buddhist monk who founded the pilgrimage and Shingon Buddhism is very similar to embodiment of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.

<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that rather low age of the respondents could have impacted the outcomes of the analysis. Repeating the research with a wider group of respondents would perhaps bring new, crucial understandings of the pilgrim’s corporeality.

physical condition, although three of them were not experienced walkers. Two couples were interviewed (separately); the first one undertook the pilgrimage together, the second couple went separately, as one partner inspired the other to start the journey. All the other people went alone. Two of the interviews were conducted over the phone in English, other interviews were done in Prague, face to face with Czech pilgrims. Seven of the pilgrims were Czech, one was Spanish and one Polish. I have met the two pilgrims who were not Czech on my own pilgrimage, and decided to interview them later, based on non-formal interviews we had during the pilgrimage. Other pilgrims were asked for an interview via Facebook groups for Czech pilgrims<sup>5</sup>. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Czech (and were translated for this paper), two interviews were carried out in English. The interviews were stopped when the information received started to repeat. Two uneven groups of respondents were chosen; those who accompanied me on my journey and were interviewed quite shortly after their journey ended; the aim was to reconstruct the shared experience from different perspectives and find similarities and differences in the experiences. The second group consisted of Czech pilgrims, who had walked the Camino in the past and the aim of the more-or-less randomized selection was to collect experiences that would differ from those collected on the Camino in order to achieve a selection of extreme and different cases, as described in the methodology of Grounded Theory (Corbin, Strauss 1999).

The interviews were opened with a biographical intro. The aim was to understand the situation from which the motivation to start the Camino emerged.<sup>6</sup> A set of questions based on the autoethnographic diary followed, however this core of the interview was ever changing, as the Grounded Theory approach was adopted, and the researcher aimed to be as sensible to the terrain as possible. With the prism of the body in mind, the open codes roughly outlined the dimensions of the body experiences and the activities that led to the construction of the whole experience. Through constant comparison of the old analysed data with new interviews, axial codes were established (Corbin, Strauss 1999). As the outcome, I have discovered four main dimensions of the pilgrim body; physical, mental, social, spiritual. The areas of experiencing the pilgrimage, or the activities constructing the pilgrim body were labelled as the strategies of pilgrim body construction. I have found six main strategies: walking, ascetism, separation, solitude, sharing

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<sup>5</sup> The facebook groups I am referring to can be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/Ultreiacz> and here <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CaminoForum>

<sup>6</sup> Both the motivations and Biographical situations of the pilgrim are important factors that need to be understood. However, the paper does not work with it in concert with its deeper analysis; it works with the phenomena as data supporting the main theory.

and faith. Based on these codes, the pilgrim body construction was analysed together with the post-liminal phase of the pilgrimage and its impacts. I believe the list of mentioned strategies is not complete, however I argue that these are the main strategies every pilgrim has to come in close contact with. Even though the selection of the cases is rather small, I believe that the method is suitable for constructing an important perspective on the pilgrimage study.

### *The movie*

After the bachelor thesis was finished and submitted, I decided to take another approach to this topic. I have mentioned above that it is nearly impossible to fully transfer the experience of the pilgrim body construction through words. In search of another tool of expression, an idea of animation has emerged. I followed this idea and created a short-animated documentary entitled PEREGRINO<sup>7</sup>.

Animation usually works with simplifications and symbols and this one is no exception. Reducing the analysis to pilgrim body construction and its preservation in the body by drawing this process more metaphorically so it can be understood by visual viewing helped me get closer to the core of the concept I have created. Another important finding was the universality behind the symbolic journey; the process does not necessarily need to relate to a physical pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, but it can mean any journey, that has a complex impact on the pilgrim, and which culminates with understanding of one's problems, and perhaps, a decision to leave them behind. The spectrum of interpretation is wide enough for people to find their biography in it, if they need to.

I conclude that even though I have made the interpretation framework wider and got one step closer to making the viewers understand the concept of pilgrim body construction, I am still far from transferring the whole experience to others; at this point, it seems to me, that the only true way of understanding is to walk the pilgrimage on your own feet.

### **Walking the Camino, constructing the body**

In this chapter I am going to present six strategies of pilgrim body construction. They are the strategies of walking, asceticism, separation, solitude, sharing and faith. This core part of the analysis works with various quotations of other pilgrims as well as my autoethnographic diary.

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<sup>7</sup> The movie can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PRLD1LSdoQ&t=0s>

### *Learning to walk: Strategy of walking*

*“Today was about walking in solitude; just walking, nothing else. I walked, listened to most beautiful music, which paired with the forests all around me so well. First beams of new day started to appear through the trees, and I walked.”*  
(autoethnographic diary, 24 August 2017, Pontevedra)

The traditional mean of transport for pilgrims is his own legs. A pilgrim can be defined by the constant movement, which gives the pilgrimage its shape. I believe that the physical body is the anchor and the starting point of the whole construction of the pilgrim's body. Unless we teach the body how to walk like a pilgrim, we can't expect the person to think, do, or speak like a pilgrim either.

*“I told myself I would like to be closer to God, right, but most of the time I was just so focused on me walking, and if I will be able to make it, that I didn't get to that.”* (Petra)

Pilgrims often started their story with the description of the troubles they had with their bodies in the first few days of the pilgrimage. Usually at this point, the walking becomes a way of finding the limits of the physical body. However, this phase of pilgrimage is also a time for the transformation reflection. After some time passes, pilgrims start to observe changes in their physical selves.

*“The first three days are just suffering, to get used to the weight of the bag, every step hurt...but after three days, when the body is all crumpled, you start ignoring it, and begin to take it as a standard. You notice the first blisters, but the blisters on the first blisters... you just don't care. After a while, you do not deal with anything on the physical side”* (Tadeáš)

Tadeáš reflects on a forming technique of the body. The body gains the physical capital and learns how to overcome the pain. It learns how to walk like a pilgrim; it learns a new technique of walking. This quotation reflects also on the pain management, which is also an important transformation process; I will elaborate on it further below.

The most important moment of the body transformation is the shift from understanding the body as a suffering obstacle to the tool of transcendental experiences.

*“I don’t know how, but somehow it was very spiritual for me. For example, I was really surprised, that I can just walk, and be aware of the walk. Other times my head is always full of thoughts, but I was not able to think at all on the Camino, I just walked. And it was amazing.” (Jana)*

Walking is now a part of the physical body of the pilgrim. This means that the technique is embodied physically enough, that it does not have to be controlled or reflected consciously during the walking process and can rather be used to enter new aspects of the pilgrimage. As Jana reflects, the constant automatized walking made her feel present, yet empty-minded. The walking shifted to a physical activity with a potential of psychological and spiritual perception. The mediation in movement described by Jana is similar to experiences of the Flow<sup>8</sup> state; timeless moment of absolute presence and focus, balanced between the skill and a challenge, leading to absolute calmness of the mind.

I believe walking is a learnt technique of the body in the Maussian sense, since it stays in the body as a form of skill even after the pilgrimage is over. This embodied habitus stays latent, until it is needed again; like any other physical techniques we have written in our body, such as knowing how to swim, except this one has stronger transcendental potential.

*“When I went on my second pilgrimage, I very fast tuned myself to the “pilgrim self”, and started to enjoy it, the walking became meditation much faster for me than the first time. I just walked, I was the pilgrim that walks through the landscape, perceiving time differently. My friend who went with me for the first time, I could see that she is just learning how to do this as well.” (Šarlota)*

Walking becomes a tool of meditation, and a process of tuning with something described as the “pilgrim self”, which I understand as a necessarily embodied part of the self in the body. Within the framework of this analysis, it describes the awaking pilgrim body during the next pilgrimage. Another pilgrim, who had never walked a pilgrimage before mentioned in the quotation of Šarlota, creates a nice illustration of contrasting behaviour without the pilgrim body habitus.

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<sup>8</sup> Flow is a psychological term introduced by Mihaly Csikszentmihaly, who observes such a state of mindfulness and presence in the moment in such cases as gifted children or talented people being caught in the moment while doing an activity. Activities done to achieve flow are many and often have a physical base. What they have in common is the empty mind, relaxation benefits and challenge for the actor. (Csikszentmihaly 2015).

I argue that walking is key and the main strategy of the whole process of pilgrimage. All the other strategies are happening with the walking constantly being the background. From mere physical activity it transforms into something transcendental, unconscious and affective, connected to other dimensions of the pilgrimage. In the next chapter, I will analyse how pilgrims deal with the side-product of this activity, pain.

### *Learning to suffer: the strategy of ascetism*

*“My right leg started to ache yesterday, and it is getting worse. It makes me slow, which causes great frustration. I do not care about the pain, I am worried what causes it, though. Tomorrow we walk to the mountains, and I need to be ready.”* (autoethnographic diary, 24 August, Pontevedra)

*“Sleep-deprived, soaking wet, stung by insects, hungry and thirsty, fighting sickness and bad mood, the pilgrim approaches step by step the destination. (...) As if these obstacles were not enough, many pilgrims tortured themselves on purpose. In the List of Miracles by Theobald from Thann we read: A certain woman, whose baby was born with a crippled arm walked a pilgrimage from Lübeck for this newborn, dressed in a simple robe and bare-foot. Another man went with no clothes at all; naked, with no protection from the sun or insects. Her clothes on the other hand were thick and from a material that was tearing her skin.”* (Ohler 2000: 96)

The traditional understating of the term “ascetism” must be re-defined first for the sake of this work. Generally, we can understand it as any form of exercise (physical, moral, mental), done with certain technique in order to progress in moral or religious life (Goffi & de Fiorres 1999: 40). A pilgrims’ intimacy with exhaustion, injury, exposure, and hunger would extend to their beasts if they took any, and certainly to the human companions who shared their provisions, apprehensions, illnesses, and lice. Above all, medieval pilgrims perhaps felt more keenly than their modern counterparts that they were taking their sinful bodies to visit holier bodies (Greenia 2019: 38-39). The main difference between traditional ascetism and today’s understanding of pilgrimage is in the duality of body and mind. The point of modern pilgrimage is not to torture the body to reach spiritual epiphany by learning how to ignore pain that is enormous. Neither is it to torture the physical body that has sinned. The point is to torture the body just enough to overcome the obstacles, and through those experiences of suffering connect with the spiritual and abstract self, based in the physical dimension. Pilgrims are not tormenting the body; they are giving it a hard lesson,

teaching it and watching the progress, that brings them possibility to connect spiritually with other aspect of the pilgrimage, while the physical body becomes not muted for the sake of spiritual revelation, but emphasized and enriched with the knowledge and skill it has gained. The pilgrims experience is complex and holistic. Modern pilgrims anchor their experience in the traditional perspective of tormenting the sinner's body, but they reframe this perspective into an identity construction through overcoming burdens they had put on their own shoulders.

Identity is an important aspect for all people walking the Camino. The enormous diversity of walkers can be roughly divided to two major groups of Pilgrims and Tourists. The group of pilgrims can be structured as well (see Kurrat 2019), though the differences are not as significant, since they all share the pilgrim identity. However, there are certain tensions between pilgrims and tourists, spiritual tourists, “snack-bags” and other “non-pilgrim” walkers. They are socially constitutive performances that raise questions over who possesses the power to authenticate collective experiences, or to determine the very criteria of authentication (Coleman, Mesaritou 2018: 180). The distinction of these two groups is extremely tricky, as the status can change, and rather than categories, it seems like a wide spectrum. During my fieldwork on pilgrimages, I often had to ask myself who is a pilgrim and who is not – who am I supposed to study. And every time I had to answer myself, that I need to study everybody, who appears on the pilgrimage (Kapusta 2011: 28). Following the framework of pilgrim body construction, the focus on the distinction between the pilgrims and tourists can be found in the narratives of pilgrims in their sense of self-identification.

*“The disproportion (between pilgrims and tourists – authors note) was clear just before Santiago. There was a guy from Spain with bandages all over his leg, from ankle to the knee. We asked him what happened to his leg, and he answered: “a blister”. So, we looked at our fusses, covered in blisters, and we were like – so what? This is the pilgrims detached view of things. These guys seemed like weaklings to us.” (Tadeáš)*

Pilgrim Tadeáš speaks about an encounter with, what he called, “snack-bags”; people, who only carried a little bag with a snack for the day. The rest of their luggage was sent ahead by a car, so the walking part would not be so hard for them. Such people usually walk only 100km of the pilgrimage in total, because that is the minimal limit to get the Compostela<sup>9</sup>. Just a few kilometres before

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<sup>9</sup> The Compostela is a diploma for those who walked the Camino de Santiago. Each pilgrim has a Credential; the “pilgrim passport”. It needs to be shown in albergues (pilgrim

Santiago, the pilgrimage becomes a mixture of people walking very long distances, and such “snack-bags”. Stressing of the pain management is a significant motive of self-definition as a pilgrim, whose identity is endangered by the enormous crowd of people.

The self-conceptualization of a pilgrim is what makes the pilgrimage a pilgrimage and separates it from other kinds of long-distance walking trips. In other words, “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Thomas 1928). The approach pilgrims are adopting towards pain management during the pilgrimage creates a key aspect of the distinction. This binds the pilgrim community even closer and creates a shared opinion that tourists cannot understand the true meaning of the pilgrimage, because they did not take enough time, did not overcome enough obstacles or in an overall sense do not have the right attitude.

However, this unclearness of the pilgrim status vaguely based on pain management brings another problem, which is the amount of suffering that is needed to gain the status of pilgrim. If the pilgrim constructs themselves upon the pain suffered and managed, then tourism is conceptualised as the opposite of pain consumption. But the pilgrim’s status in terms of modern pilgrimage is rather ambivalent in this sense. It does not mean that the pilgrimage is not pleasant at all in the “touristic” way, as the pilgrims reinterpreted ascetism not as strict as its traditional forms. The body is supposed to be experiencing also pleasant things. It is the extent of these pleasant or profane (touristic) and unpleasant or spiritual (pilgrim) experiences, that creates the tensions between some.

*“Some people have other opinions, for example one guy commented on the pilgrim forum (on Facebook), that some girl took the bus for 30km, and that she fucked up the whole pilgrimage, and it is the same as if she did not go at all, he was really mean. But we agreed on the pilgrimage with other pilgrims that it is everybody’s choice, and everyone is different, and it does not matter if you go by train or walk, or whatever.*

*I told myself that I am going for my own health, both mental and physical, and that you can’t have one without the other. So, when something hurt too much – the blisters just were not reconcilable with the boots. So, in the end, I rode 100 km*

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hostels), and every pilgrim needs to collect at least three stamps everyday to prove that he or she actually walked through these places. In Santiago de Compostela, the credential is shown to the Pilgrim office and if everything is in order, the pilgrim can get a Compostela. The Compostela is an important document that brings benefits for pupils, and it is welcomed to have it in your Curriculum vitae, especially in Spain. The motivations of some pilgrims can be impacted by this.

*by bus of my 600 km journey, and I have no bad feeling about it, in fact, I don't care at all." (Tylda)*

There is a fragile consensus within the community of pilgrims stating that every pilgrim should languish individually. The point is not to compare yourself with others, but with your own limits. If 80-year-old lady walks 100 kilometres with only a snack-bag, she is a pilgrim hero, but if a healthy young woman does this, she is not determined enough and considered a tourist. This definition is not absolute, but somewhat accepted by most. Today's pilgrims try to find the golden mean between these extremes, to balance their journey and make it as hard and as pleasant as their pilgrim consciousness allows them.

*"In the beginning, you have this walking part, and then the social part. In the morning you are tired, you are sweating, and so on, but nobody cares that everybody sweats and stinks. And in the evening, after it, you take a shower, go outside, and want to look better than in the morning, and we go swimming, see sights, and in fact, for me I was praying mostly on the walking part. In the evening, it is shame, but I didn't think so much about God, like still I think it is pilgriming, but the evenings after walking part I focused on the different things, like sightseeing, and being together, and I became kind of tourist then." (Marie)*

Time on the pilgrimage is divided between the pilgrimage and the rest. Morning is meant to be a walking part, the "pilgrim" part, with nowhere to sleep and nowhere to belong. When the place of rest is reached, the pilgrim is no longer undertrained, he can rest. At this point, the "job" is done for the day, and since there is nowhere else to walk, pilgrims often look for other activities of amusement. Tourist activities, such as drinking, sunbathing, trying local foods or going sightseeing are quite common. The main difference between tourists and such "afternoon-tourists" is, that the tourist does not "work" in the morning.

Distinguishing between pilgrims and tourists is a very complex question that remains unanswered. However, I argue that the degree to which the person feels like a pilgrim is to a great extent anchored in the amount of hard work, and pain management is one of the main tools of self-understanding in terms of the pilgrim-tourist distinction. It is one of the strategies of pilgrim body construction, because it helps to determine the pilgrim self.

### *Learning to (dis)connect: strategy of separation*

*“I think about the people I left at home; I would love to take them with me, but I know they would not understand if I wanted to just walk alone. I want them to have this experience, but I do not want them here with me. I am too busy walking alone, meeting my demons, alone.”* (autoethnographic diary, 19 August, A Guarda)

Now that the physical body knows how to walk, and the pain is well managed, the pilgrim can look around and start to explore his surroundings. The pilgrimages are typically different from the everydayness. The radical change of the scenery often leads to a change in the mindset as well. But to experience this otherness of the situation fully, pilgrims must temporally disconnect from what everyday life means to them. Such a disconnection creates a distance for self-observation and perspective seeking. This is beneficial especially for those, who experience hard times in their lives, and seek help on this journey.

*“You are cut from the everyday reality, ordinary experiencing. It is about stepping out of the frame, your role you play in the society, like when you press “pause”, and you have time to think, experience, live, and observe the paused picture; see what it is you are looking at really. You have the perspective, and so when you come back, you are not lost anymore.”* (Tadeáš)

This “stepping out of the frame” does not only refer to the geographic location and temporary abandonment of the thoughts linked with “everyday life”, but more importantly the everyday social role.

Time is an issue often discussed among pilgrims. Most of them agree that to really experience the pilgrimage, one must spend as much time on the way as possible. Some of them claim it is impossible to gain any deeper experiences in a shorter time than two weeks. I felt the same arriving to Santiago de Compostela after a two-week journey myself. Pilgrims often mentioned that time is important for a form of “spiritual hygiene”.

*“In my opinion it is good to use the time on the pilgrimage well to think about anything you have no time to think about at home. Our lives are very fast, one has no time to think about the values, or himself. It takes some time to get in the mood, to calm down and start thinking about something. About two weeks, I guess. You need to free the mind (...). When you get away from the pressure to a calmer environment, where you have only one problem; to pack your things in*

*the morning, get from point A to point B (...) after some time you start to free the mind. Our minds do not work like machines, so the change will not immediately mean to start thinking differently, but after some time, that I cannot define, it will become freer. People with regular spiritual hygiene will get there sooner, others later. People just walk, are alone, think and it drives them crazy (laughter).” (Daniel)*

Daniel understands the pilgrimage as time and space, where the everyday thoughts are reduced in a way which allows pilgrims to think differently. I reinterpret this process as learning how to think like a pilgrim. If it is possible to teach the body how to walk like a pilgrim, then it should be also possible to find a pilgrim state of mind. I believe that using the time in the described way is one such moment.

Another crucial dimension of the separation process is the social status of a pilgrim. The Spanish term for pilgrim “peregrino” can be translated as “nobody, weirdo, stranger”. The anonymity of the pilgrims is a very important factor. It allows *communitas* to emerge, as all the pilgrims are degraded to the same level of strangeness, or nothingness, and the status is shared. It also creates a very wide spectrum of people, so different and so colourful, that every story becomes both original and accepted. At the same time, protected by the anonymity, such groups are perfect for sharing the deepest fears and personal demons with others, who gain the paradoxical status of strangers, but also companions. This way, the pilgrimage creates a social sphere, giving pilgrims enough time and space, and the status of zero social role.

*“It is really great that you arrive with zero-social role. Not only here, whenever you travel really. Home, you have the role of student, sister, daughter, student, but you arrive there, and you are clean. You can either play whatever role you want, or you can just be you – the real you, you do not need to play these roles.” (Tylda)*

For Tylda, the zero-social role status was an opportunity; a chance to “try” on different masks, to try to be someone else, play a different role and see what happens. Everyone can share whatever they need, without being judged. People walking the Camino can be whoever they want; even themselves.

In this chapter I described the importance of separation from everydayness, and the possibility to accept the role of the pilgrim, creating a space for creative self-conceptualization. The time needed for this transformation is individual, but the longer the better, as the consensus stands. This strategy is crucial since it reflects on the social frame of the pilgrimage. However, the next strategy I am going to describe, which stands in opposition, is as important as this one.

### *Learning to think: the strategy of solitude*

*“Alone. That is the Camino for me. Me, the forest, the path, the music in my ears.”*  
(autoethnographic diary, 24 August, Pontevedra)

Many people reflect their motivation for undergoing the pilgrimages as a wish for “some time to spend alone”. However, thanks to *communitas* forming on the pilgrimage, to be alone on the Camino de Santiago is a tough task; one starts the pilgrimage alone but finishes it with a dozen new friends.

The function of solitude for the pilgrim body construction draws partly from the common wish to spend time alone and think, partly it is made possible by separation from everyday life. It is an individual part of construction, when the pilgrim focuses only on himself, his thoughts, feelings, and enjoys the presence of the walking.

*“I thought of this as of a form of therapy, autotherapy I might even say. I overcame myself, became calm, I stop being impacted by perceptions made by humans. Then you can open, open to the outer world, natural perceptions, and this way you can open to yourself; if you can take a good look around you, you can also take a good look to your core.”* (Daniel)

Daniel relates mainly to the mental calmness, absence of the hectic life perceptions, and delineates himself from the norm. Autotherapy is linked with solitude, self-cultivation and self-understanding. Oneness of the mind and spirit is described through studying one’s core, along with the unity of self and the pilgrimage itself.

This construction deals mainly with the mental dimension of the pilgrimage. However, the spirituality of the journey is usually experienced in solitude as well. The surroundings of pilgrim create an atmosphere for such experiencing, as well as the state of mind that the pilgrims often are in; i.e., opened to “something”, an unclear idea of spirituality of the pilgrimage. Even though the Camino de Santiago is traditionally a Christian pilgrimage, it does not have to be the Christian Holy Spirit that mediates the mystical experiences.

*“It is really intense, one is alone, no one around, really no one; I was completely alone, and I started to feel that I was going wild; I was in nature, and I started to be affected by its laws, the biorhythms, I felt the need to have people around me to be socialized, to be normalized by society”* (laughter).

*“Can you please elaborate on the “going wild?”* (Interviewer)

*“In the solitude, there are no other people to talk to, there is only your thoughts, your experiences, and silence. Words can’t describe this, but you feel that you are going wild; you disassociate yourself from society and its rules, and you associate more with something ... it is really hard to describe by words it is a state of mind. When you have people around you, everything works as it should, but when you are alone, you have no possibility to share the experience, you are not so stable, and it borders on meditations, so I ended up with almost mystical experiences (laughter).”* (Interview with Tadeáš)

Tadeáš frames his experiences as a mystical journey made possible by becoming. The power and beauty of nature invokes a spiritual dimension, described by many pilgrims walking the Camino, who chose not to associate themselves explicitly with Christianity.

Lastly, it is needed to elaborate on the dangers of choosing the solitude. In fact, the Camino the Santiago creates a relatively safe space for the pilgrims, which is one of the many reasons why is it attractive for so many women. Many female pilgrims choose this pilgrimage to show their power and independence; but at the same time, they know that they are not in real danger, and can focus on overcoming their own limits, rather than being scared for their lives.

*“If I did it for someone, I did it for myself. For my own need. But also, for others; I wanted to show everybody that I can do this. That I am not such a lady. That I don’t mind sleeping under the stars, being nibbled by ants; to show other people that I am not a city girl that cannot do this. That was the reason I went – for myself.”* (Petra)

Petra decided to use this experience as a way of showing people from her everyday life this side of her as much as she wanted to prove it to herself. She welcomes (mild) obstacles of the journey, shows her endurance and stamina by overcoming them, and through using her own power to get through this she becomes more self-confident.

The strategy of solitude is tied with the time of walking, and in the reflexive narratives is connected to both spiritual experiences, and mental processes and self-understanding. Solitude can also serve as a tool of building confidence based on overcoming the obstacles using only one’s own power. I believe that solitude as a pilgrim body construction strategy might not be accepted by all the pilgrims, but I believe that for some it has become enormous part of the pilgrimage.

### *Learning to talk: the strategy of sharing*

*“We sat on the beach, Sarah played her ukulele, George made polaroid pictures, I bothered everyone with sunflower seeds for dinner. Everyone we met so far was there, and it was beautiful, safe and it was communitas.”* (autoethnographic diary, 20 August, Mougás)

This chapter might seem to stand in opposition to the previous one, showing the importance of solitude. In fact, both parts are needed for the pilgrim to fully emerge in the pilgrimage. The friendly atmosphere of pilgrimages has been described in Turner’s major work on pilgrimages (Turner 1969). It is important in terms of my work to elaborate on the social structure of the pilgrim community; in other words, how pilgrims learn to talk to one another.

*“So, when the body got used to the walking and the difficulties, and you got over the physical pain, how was it then?”* (interviewer)

*“I started to talk to people I started to communicate more. I started conversations myself, which was something I didn’t want to do the first week, I needed to focus on myself more. But after this first week I overcame some barrier; language, physical.”* (Interview with Aneta)

The body that has learnt how to walk, suffer and think as a pilgrim is ready to learn, how to talk like a pilgrim too, as well as to mediate the pilgrim identity with the others. The “pilgrim language” is English, but to improve language skills is not what I mean here – I am referring to the ways of communications, and the differences between pilgrim conversations and the conversations led in everyday life.

*“At first, I was so excited, I did not know what is going on; some pilgrim, what can I say to whom, how to talk to these people. But after a while one finds out that everyone is kind of open, and that I can talk to them, because the conversation is easy, you both know what to say; you start with easy stuff, how are they, how many kilometres did the walk today, where did their pilgrimage start. But slowly you get to more important topics, like why are you walking the Camino, and so on. And you do not know if you will walk with this person the whole journey, or you will say goodbye after two hours.”* (Šarlota)

Šarlota reflects on the process of understanding the character of pilgrim community. At first, pilgrims feel that they are associated with the others, but do not know how to express this connection through the conversation. After some time,

she learnt that others welcome a conversation, and that it can be built on the shared things pilgrimage brings. It is important to stress that the length of the relationship is unclear; as Šarlota says, it could be two hours, but it could be a month. It is very important to elaborate on this, because this makes the relationships between pilgrims very dynamic; strangers become companions after an exchange of a few words, so it is common to learn about personal stories of the other person in just a few minutes after meeting him for the very first time. Such short but intense relationships are built on the shared pilgrim status. As mentioned above, pilgrims stand outside the major society, having a zero-social status, which degrades them all to the same level; the social roles they play outside the pilgrimage are not important here.

*“Nobody cares if you are a manager, or a zero. When you walk, you are a pilgrim, you all are, and you all share the same goal, the same struggles; food, water, shelter. You share this, and therefore you are closer to each other. Normally this is complicated, to start to talk to strangers in a subway, but you share the same experience, so you know. The more you know the more you share, and the more you share, the more you know.”* (Tadeáš)

Tadeáš understands this connection through the shared experience. In his reflection I notice a very important moment for pilgrim body construction; that is sharing his own individual pilgrim experience to another and receiving other pilgrims' experiences in exchange. It is the process that reshapes and reinterprets the pilgrimage, passing the experience on to new pilgrims in the real time of their journey. Thanks to this constant narration, the pilgrim changes his identity in relation to this narration, and at the same time shapes the pilgrimage itself by passing on his reinterpretation.

As a contrast to this shared pilgrim identity, Tadeáš speaks again about “tourists”, therefore people who either make their journey easier, or walk only short distances. Above I conceptualized these people in relation to their pain management; it is not the only dimension of the pilgrimage that makes them different, though. Not only did they often not learn how to suffer like a pilgrim, but they also do not know how to talk like one.

*“It was really fun to see those snack-packers on the last hundred kilometres before Santiago de Compostela. Those people have no idea what the journey is about, that it is about intense sharing of the pilgrim experience, everybody talks to everybody, everybody shares the same fate, everybody walks to Santiago, everybody shares the same struggle; food or no food, hills or no hills...”* (Tadeáš)

Besides, with the increasing number of people on the pilgrimage, something I conceptualize as “pilgrim spirit” decreases. With too many people around, anonymity becomes more common, pilgrims form smaller groups, and the atmosphere is not as friendly as it was on the beginning of the pilgrimage.

One more aspect of the social structure needs to be mentioned. So far, I only spoke about such relationships formed on the Camino, but there are of course people who decide to take the pilgrimage together; in a group, or as a couple. Their journey is therefore very different from those who decide to walk alone; mainly, because this relationship can be transformed to something different for the time of the pilgrimage. Structures of the outside world do not apply on the pilgrimage, and that can create tensions between people who arrive together.

The main difference lies in the fact that the pilgrims are not responsible for one another. It might seem paradoxical concerning the friendly atmosphere, but it goes hand in hand. Pilgrims understand that the people they meet have their own story, goals and ways to deal with the Camino; hence the dynamic relationships. Pilgrims respect each other, share the experience, and of course help one another if needed. But there is no real responsibility; if one pilgrim needs to go ahead and leave someone rest for a day in albergue, there is no moral tension present. The community will take care of the wounded one, other pilgrims will help him; at the same time, the wounded pilgrim understands that the other one has to go, because his or her journey needs to be finished in the way he feels it needs to be done.

The tensions tend to be more significant, when the people arrive to the Camino in a defined relationship, such as partnership. Couples walking the Camino often speak about it as a hard lesson for their relationships, by describing the harsh conditions, pain management and other aspects of the journey. However, I believe that the difference of the social structure is one of the most crucial factors, causing these difficulties. By arriving together, people feel responsible for each other, and as I argued above, responsibility is not common among pilgrims. In a way, couples tend to limit their own experiences for the sake of the other.

*“Now when I think about it, I let him set the walking speed, and I just followed. Once he wanted to teach me a lesson, and he walked so fast I could not follow, I only saw him as a small dot on the horizon (laughter), so that was very important, because I learnt how to rely on myself. Mostly, he wanted to go alone, I wanted to share with him more, but he did not, and he always run away like that (laughter) and waited for me somewhere. We went about two days completely separately, but usually we met after a few kilometres like that, so there was a lot of time for myself, which was enough for me, but Daniel probably wanted even*

*more, so he might walk the Camino alone. But maybe I will too, when I think about it now. It has another dimension when one is alone.*

*But we communicated easily, I started to talk to other pilgrims more, because I needed to share the experience, either with people around me or on the phone, which was something Daniel was not comfortable with, but I needed it, I really needed to share not only with people from the community but also with my close friends.” (Aneta)*

*“I think the spirituality would be different if I walked alone. When you walk as a couple, you need to look out for the other one. If I make it sound bad, she was a burden to me, I needed to take care of her, and I could not do what I wanted. You can’t just turn around and walk away the path you need to; you need to submit to the other. For example, she wanted me to wait for her, so I did, but there were places where I just didn’t want to sit on a bare rock, so I walked ahead and waited in a coffee shop or something, but we always met before we reached the albergue. You learn how to deal with it, but you are impacted, and you have an impact, and that draws you away from becoming calm, and going deeper within yourself.” (Daniel)*

While Aneta prefers to walk slowly and share with others, Daniel needs to walk faster, and spent most of the journey alone. These two pilgrims embody a different amount of the various pilgrim body construction strategies needed to experience the pilgrimage fully. Moreover, their reflections are a contrast to any other relationship made on the pilgrimage itself. The presence of responsibility decreases the possibilities of pilgrimage experience. It needs to be said though that both consider their journey beneficial for their future relationship.

In this chapter, the ways of sharing the pilgrim experience within the pilgrim community are described. The pilgrimage creates a characteristic time and space for the pilgrims to interact in. However, the pilgrim body construction comes first; making alliances or caring about others comes second. Like the strategy of solitude described in the previous chapter, the strategy of sharing is individually needed, and the time spend by talking to others can differ, as well as the number of allies made on the journey. However, even presence within such community forms the pilgrim’s experience.

### *Learning to give in: the strategy of faith*

*“It looks like there will be nowhere to sleep”, I said dramatically to Marie. She looked at me as if she was disgusted, or rather impatient. She waved her hand and, bothered that we are even talking about it, answered “Oh, don’t worry, or how to pronounce it ... or translate ... don’t worry about what will happen, it will just do somehow!” And she was right, it did somehow, and it was fine.”* (autoethnographic diary, 18 August, Viana do Castelo)

Finally, after the pilgrim managed the body, the pain and found the balance between the time spend with the community and alone, the most intimate and individual dimension unravels. It is crucial for pilgrims to decide to give in; no matter how they conceptualize the higher power ruling over them. It expands the frame of the journey, and makes it not only a longer walking trip, but it adds a spiritual overlap, and “creates” the spirit pilgrimage.

*“Usually I have everything under control, I am used to it; but on the pilgrimage this is impossible, and I had to learn to give in to “something” to lead me. On our way we met mystique, you know; a guy in a towel, lots of tattoos of symbols over his body, and he told me a story; that we are like a ship on the sea, trying to reach the shore, controlling everything at all times, but we do not know where there are rocks in the sea. So, we keep on bumping in them, turning around and sail god-knows-where, and we sail in circles. But if we give in to the stream, which for him was the Virgin Mary, it will lead us safely. So, it is good to have a direction, but let fate lead you.”* (Tadeáš)

Tadeáš undertook a huge transformation, from a person controlling every minute of his life to someone aware of this “higher power”, leading his life in a certain way. This knowledge, or maybe life attitude, will be further analysed in the chapter below concerning the resocialization process after the pilgrimage is over.

The last reflection on the spiritual side of the pilgrimage is the story of Tylda; a girl who never believed in God (or so she said), and who understood her journey mostly as a trip (in my terminology, she considered herself a tourist), and did not spend much time thinking about the spirituality, until she reached a small monastery Monasterio Armenteria in the mountains, where she attended a mass for the pilgrims.

*“Before the mass I had one more beer, and I kept drinking, then it was seven o’clock, so I told myself fuck it, I am not here for some masses, but then I told*

*myself, you cow, go to that church, so I went. There were seven nuns and one ... they are called ... monk, and one of the nuns played the piano, and they sang. It was in Spanish, only thing I understood was "Senior", Oh Lord, but still; I was not feeling good mentally, and it affected me very much, because it was really for only a few people, pilgrims mostly.*

*So, the mass started right, and until then, it was just kind of a field trip for me. Like a long walk, you sleep on different places, you meet people, have fun, sometimes you drink too much wine, and so on. But the mass – there I realized that it was my twelfth day of my pilgrimage, and the others are like eight days in. I am kind of an emotive person, so I started to sniff and cry a bit. I took this mass as if it was only for me, it was very personal. Not that I would like to ... belittle the other pilgrims, but I took it personally, and I cried, so much. Then they told us "May you go back to home full of light and joy", like the sense of the return right, like you started this journey for some reason, so go home back and be happier. Some people left homes because something bad was happening to them, so when you go home you are full of anticipation, like you see your partner and you think, wow, did he cheat on me, and such bullshit. So, they told us this, and I started to cry so much, I could not stop, and I cried for another hour. One of the German girls went to talk to me and told me that I must be religious, but I told her I am not, and I have no idea what is happening. I spend the evening with some Czech guy, who talked with me about God and these things then.*

*I can't describe the feeling I had, but I think that in the end God caressed me a bit, and he was with me until the end of the journey. But when I got home, he is not there anymore. He is waiting for me on the Camino, waiting for me to get back. Until the mass I did not think about it, but after it to the end of the journey, I understood that it was something more than just a walk, a way of meeting with something. I felt different there; but I do not feel it anymore. I am back, down-to-earth (laughter)." (Tylda)*

Tylda understands herself as a "down-to-earth" person, and she conceptualizes the beginning of the pilgrimage more as a field trip than a spiritual journey. However, she is affected by the surroundings, and she slowly accepts the idea of the pilgrimage as something more than just a holiday. She started to recognize the impact of the time spent on the pilgrimage as well as the distance she managed to walk. The experience of God's touch is very affective, and it triggered a different understanding of her presence on the pilgrimage. The reflection of understanding the meaning of coming back from the pilgrimage is also important, since it bounds the pilgrimage's experiencing, and creates a line to be crossed, back to everydayness. At the same time, she believes that God awaits her return; meaning,

the pilgrim self she found is not lost for good, and will be activated again, when she returns to the pilgrimage.

By the description of this strategy, I conclude the list of the strategies I consider important for construction of the pilgrim body. I am aware that the list may not be complete, and that many pilgrims find other ways of experiencing the pilgrimage to be more important. However, I believe that these are the core activities of every pilgrim that describe the dimensions of the pilgrim body; the physical dimension through the walking and the pain management, the social dimension described through learning how to talk and share with others, the mental dimension linked with time alone and thinking, and the spiritual dimension teaching the pilgrim to dive in.

Now that the pilgrim body is fully constructed, it is time to come back home from the pilgrimage and analyse how the pilgrim body behaves after the pilgrimage is over, and how the pilgrims deal with this experience.

### After the pilgrimage

*“I am home for a few days now. The Camino still has an impact on me. I walk whenever and wherever I can. I also see all the things in the society that are wrong; patterns I did not perceive before. And I feel that it is all fading away and it scares me.”* (autoethnographic diary, 9 February, Prague)

The pilgrim returning home carries a pilgrimage in his body; a habitus constructed through the above-described processes. Affected by this experience, he needs to deal with this new knowledge and skill. I purposely leave out cases of pilgrims who claimed that the journey had no impact on them; such cases are very rare.

Most of the pilgrims refer to their journey as a positive experience, that has taught them how to live better, and this knowledge is now being integrated into their everydayness. In most cases, the pilgrim incorporates the new knowledge into his previous life, making minor changes. Not only the pilgrim body itself, but also the strategies that led to its formation are seen as beneficial, and are integrated into this new lifestyle:

*“I learnt two things mainly. First – and I did not plan that – (laughter) I learnt not to plan too much, do not fix on the plans. That will bring you much more suffering, it’s like the Christmas gift effect; you hope to get a race car, and you get a tractor instead, which is also great, but you are disappointed, because you wanted a race car (laughter). It is important to set goals, but not to get fixed on them, be opened to possibilities and let things flow.”*

*The second thing is that you do not need much to be happy. You do not need a career, and a big house; you need the basic stuff, like food, water, shelter. And you can be happy like this, you do not need this bunch of bullshit that is so important in society today ... when you have the minimum, everything else is an extension. Everybody knows this – but if you really try to live it, you come to actually know it.” (Tadeáš)*

In the first paragraph of Tadeáš’s narrative he talks of the spiritual and mental dimension of the experience. Through the process of learning how to give in, he continues to practice this also at home. He changed his previous mindset, and instead of controlling everything he, similarly as he did on the Camino, lets the events happen, and learns how to react to whatever comes into his life instead of setting his goals as fixed points in time.

Tadeáš also reflects on materiality and material possession. Because of its nomadic format, the pilgrimage forces pilgrims to carry as little as they can, which teaches them how many of the things they use in everyday life are necessarily needed. Pilgrims often clear their homes of items that they believe are not necessary. Tadeáš also mentions the transcendent meaning of the material possession; it embodies something typical for major society, that is the cumulation of possessions as a mark of success. The pilgrimage leans to post-materialistic values, such as humanism, freedom, self-realisation and such.

The interpretation of habitus used in this work is summed up in the reflection of Aneta, who describes this experience as a form of dealing with everything and a point of view which she now embodies, and it places her in the society:

*“I understand now that it does not matter what it is you are doing, but the point is how you are doing it; how you get to the goal. And it does not matter if you are washing the dishes or writing a book; it is about how you decide to face it. You need to choose a path, and the path is more important than the goal. Let it happen. Stay calm. Do not push it.” (Aneta)*

However, it is not always possible to incorporate this experience into the previous life pilgrims lived before their journey. Embodied experience can become an obstacle instead of a tool. In that case, pilgrims need to decide; either to leave this experience behind, ignore it and embrace their old lifestyle, or forget the lifestyle they lived before, and start a new life drawing from the pilgrim experience. Because of the drastic changes needed to be done in the second case, most of the pilgrims whose pilgrim bodies have hard time adapting to everyday life are forced to leave some of the pilgrims’ habits behind.

*“I was thinking about values a lot on the Camino, but it was not worth shit. I came back and had this ideal, but I realized that I need to take care of myself; and so, I had a life crisis, about two months after the Camino. I tried to live up to the values and ideals I thought about during the pilgrimage, but in the end, I was not able to, and I had to take a job I hated anyway.” (David)*

Values and habits learnt on the pilgrimage are usually adored by the pilgrims and are therefore hard to let go. If pilgrims are forced to let go of the pilgrim life, they at least try to actualise those parts of the pilgrim body they can; try to take longer local trips, try to dwell in nature more frequently, try to be more socially open, etc. But it is hard to do alone; as described above, the pilgrim body is a socially constructed phenomenon.

*“After the Camino my first day was completely in the Camino mode. Not only for the people, but also for the “take it easy”. But the problem is, that after the Camino, you just forget about it. It is impossible to stay in this Camino mode when normal life is around you, everyday life, the real world, this normal stuff, a normal day, your life, everyday life. (...) Even this interview with you is very important for me, a very good thing, because some parts of my mind are sometimes like “tomorrow I will try to make my Camino, or my day more in the Camino mode.” (Marie)*

The “Camino mode” stands for the embodied pilgrimage experience. Marie reflects on the fact that it is almost impossible to hold on to the feeling, or the lifestyle on her own, and that without the pilgrim community, she is unable to keep herself in this pilgrim mode, even though she tried. The fear of forgetting that often fuels the efforts of pilgrims is quite common. Many others, such as Marie, act against it by keeping in touch with pilgrim-friends or planning another journey.

*“I am not done yet you know – I am scared of forgetting the feeling, because the feeling was so awesome that I just do not want to forget, and I have another goal set; I want to do the pilgrimage from my house to Rome.” (Tylda)*

It is believed that pilgrimages are highly addictive. Pilgrims very often come back to the Camino, or seek other pilgrimages, just as Tylda states. Most pilgrims keep their pilgrim body waiting for such opportunities in the future, which keeps it active. However, other pilgrims decide for more drastic change; the experience had such impact on them, they consider it more important than the lifestyle they had before the Camino started. Many such people try to find a lifestyle as like

the pilgrimage as possible; or they choose such a lifestyle, that lets them live the same values, live in community, or such.

*“After the Camino, it became much clearer for me, and I thought that the idea of experiencing your life as best as possible and this idea was not in the process of my job, just reaching a certain goal and being happy with results, but after the Camino I realized I have to be happy with the process, walking every step. Not just the goal. And even if it meant I had to quit my job, leave my company and rent the apartment, then so be it. (...) Well, right now I am in Nepal, it is the trip like “another Camino”, and I am here with one person from the Camino, we have some goals we share and we like the idea of going on this trip and some things we want to do and we have ideas or goals we want to work at.” (Georg)*

There are many ways of dealing with the pilgrimage experience, and it is a process as individual as the construction itself. The experience, though, is always embodied, forcing the pilgrim to do everyday tasks in specific ways. Dimensions of the experience are present in almost every activity. Trying to include new habits into the old life can be tricky but mostly it is possible. In other cases, the lifestyle can be fully changed, according to the newly gained habitus. If the body becomes latent and will start to fade on all levels of experience. It usually is possible to find these old bodily memories when they need to be used again.

## Conclusion

*“I am exhausted, slow, soft. I have lost all my strength; the whole Camino lies on me. We walked about 300 kilometres in 14 days. Today is the last day, the day for resting. I can’t wait to work on the analysis, though. I will have a chance to work with my experience, my memories and I will always have a chance to come back to my Camino. I will never forget any of this.” (autoethnographic diary, 29 August, Muxía)*

I would like to conclude my analysis of pilgrim bodies by coming back to the beginning of this paper. My interest of the research was to come closer to understanding how modern pilgrims conceptualise their experience. I have found that many pilgrims frame their journey through complex multi-dimensional experience anchored in the physical body, which is a centre of attention on the pilgrimage. This experience has the shape of the pilgrim body. I argue that this form of habitus or technique of the body (Mauss 1968) is being created through a process of learning, gaining new perspectives, value judgements etc. Acquiring

these (and many more) competences can be divided into four dimensions of experiencing. These dimensions are physical, mental and social as described by Mauss, accompanied by a spiritual dimension specific for the concept of pilgrimages.

However, there is also an important individual dimension of this process, that collides with the Maussian framework. As stated in the beginning of the paper, I have conceptualised the body as a multi-layered complex including its spiritual and mental elements, following the concept of embodiment introduced by Csordas. This means, that the pilgrim body construction is both a subject of individual process framed by the phenomenological approach, as well as a process evoked and moulded by the social milieu around the pilgrim.

In order to acquire the pilgrim body, pilgrims use certain strategies. The way these strategies are reflected in both my autoethnographic diary and pilgrim's memories, and also the development or improvement in their performance as well as their overlap and the result, I consider these activities to be strategies, since they lead to gaining the embedded habitus. The strategies that I analysed are the walking strategy, austerity strategy, separation strategy, solitude strategy, sharing strategy and faith strategies.

After returning from the pilgrimage, a pilgrim, who has managed to construct such a pilgrim body has to make a choice how to handle this new habitus<sup>10</sup>. Usually, the experience leads to a certain shift in attitude to ordinary activities, or a reflection of one's own abilities. The pilgrimage habitus thus manifests itself to a lesser extent and is in certain sense latent. When the pilgrim decides to make another pilgrimage, this ability becomes active again, and can be used. Another case is a situation when the pilgrim body cannot fuse with ordinary life; a choice must be made. The pilgrim can either decide to abandon this new habitus, which usually happens involuntarily. The second option is adopting the new pilgrim habitus as a new lifestyle, abandoning the previous way of life.

The fear of forgetting the details of the experience of pilgrimage creates another out of the frame overlap. Victor Turner's analysis of rituals describes the liminal

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<sup>10</sup> Marcel Mauss uses the term to describe the reflection of the sociocultural background in the techniques of the body of the individual. Pierre Bourdieu, who builds upon Mauss's theory uses the term in the sense of a lifestyle, or a differentiating tool of social distinction (Bourdieu 1998). For this work, the term has become both the description of the body techniques gained in the process of becoming a pilgrim, as well as a description of the further life changes in the post liminal phase of the pilgrimage, where the fully developed pilgrim body becomes a new lifestyle of sort. I argue that the understanding of the term can slightly shift through the analysis; that is, Maussian usage of the term is more sufficient for description of the pilgrim body construction, while Bourdieu's usage of the term can relate to a newly established identity of a pilgrim in the post-liminal phase of the ritual; the pilgrim would change his lifestyle.

phase of the ritual as perhaps a pleasant and brotherly part of the transition, yet as one that is desired to be ended in order to come back to the society. The pilgrims quoted above adored the liminal phase (which is the pilgrimage), expressing the wish to go back as well as mentioning fear of forgetting. This is an important shift in understanding the liminality of the ritual, since the point of undertaking the pilgrimage is not to finish it, as to walk it. In other words, as the awful cliché goes; it's about the journey, not the destination.

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