Moving through space

Heritagization of the *Via di Francesco del Sud* in practice, people, and place

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Moving through space: Heritagization of the *Via di Francesco del Sud* in practice, people, and place

Amsterdam, December 2, 2024

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Outside. Out of doors. In walks that extend over several days, during major expeditions, everything is inverted. 'Outside' is no longer a transition, but the element in which stability exist. It is the other way round: you go from lodging to lodging, shelter to shelter, and the thing that changes is the infinity variable 'indoors'. You never sleep twice in the same bed, different hosts put you up each night. Every new décor, every change in ambiance, is a new surprise; the variety of walls, of stones. You stop: the body is tired, night is falling, you need rest. But these interiors are milestones every time, means to help you stay outside for longer: transitions. (Frédéric Gros)[1]

Abstract

This thesis examines the heritagization process of the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, focusing on how pilgrimage space is produced through movement. Heritagization refers to the process by which places or practices from the past become recognized as a means to understand and engage with the present. Focusing on movement allows for research into how practice shapes interactions between people and places, highlighting how space is produced by these interactions while simultaneously shaping them. Grounded in Henri Lefebvre's theory on the production of space, the research explores the dynamic interactions between pilgrims, local hosts, and the landscape. Using autoethnographic methods, combined with semi-structured interviews with pilgrims and questionnaire responses from local hosts, the thesis investigates how pilgrimage routes are not static but actively produced through the movement of individuals and their interaction with both human and more-than-human environments. This approach expands the concept of pilgrimage space to include the 'space-in-between', focusing on spatial elements specific to this space, such as 'two-sided linearity' and 'places of rest'. These places are not merely points of respite but are integral to the pilgrimage experience, where temporary communities of belonging are formed through acts of hospitality. In doing so, the thesis contributes to a broader understanding of heritage as not only a static or preserved phenomenon but as something produced and transformed through temporal spatial interactions.

[1] Frédéric Gros, *A Philosophy of Walking*. Second edition (Londen: Verso, 2023), 4.

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Introduction: embarking on a journey

I cannot recall precisely when I first learned of the *Via di Francesco del Sud* in Italy, but I decided to undertake this pilgrimage after experiencing a first 'life-crisis': a breakup with my partner. My sister presented me with a Dutch guide to the path, *De Franciscaanse voetreis* (*The Franciscan journey on foot*),[2] and encouraged me to embark on an extended solo journey for contemplation. However, undertaking a pilgrimage demands considerable freedom, since pilgrims must temporarily set aside personal responsibilities to fully embrace the journey's transformative potential. Identifying the appropriate time for this journey was challenging, but an opportunity arose when I had to decide on a thesis subject in 2023. That year marked a significant jubilee, celebrating a decade since Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio chose the name 'Francis' as his papal name, underscoring the importance of Saint Francis' heritage in the 21st-century. And so I went on this journey, trying to understand the heritagization of the *Via di Francesco del Sud* by looking at the production of the pilgrimage space through movement.

St Francis of Assisi

Choosing a papal name is a symbolic gesture that reflects the new direction a pope intends to lead the Church. Cardinal Bergoglio chose the name Francis in honour of Saint Francis of Assisi. Saint Francis, born Giovanni Bernadone in Assisi in 1181 or 1182, lived for 44 years and is one of the world's most venerated religious figures, revered beyond the Catholic tradition.[3] In the 1980s, Pope John Paul II convened leaders of various world religions in Assisi for interfaith dialogue, choosing the location because of St Francis' inclusive approach to faith and his emphasis on the intrinsic value of all creation. This inclusiveness, along with a commitment to poverty, became central to Franciscan spirituality and contrasted sharply with the Roman Catholic institution of the High Middle Ages. However, Francis' revolutionary movement was already officially recognized in 1209, showing the Church's willingness to adapt.[4]

His life and works were widely known and respected during his lifetime, earning him many followers. This widespread recognition contributed to his canonization just two years after his death, a remarkably swift process. Further recognition followed in the contemporary era, culminating with the naming of Pope Francis in 2013. In 1939, Francis was declared the patron saint of Italy, underscoring his significance in Italian religious and cultural history.[5] Later, in 1979, he was named the patron saint of ecology as environmental concerns began to gain prominence globally, coinciding with the rise of the modern environmental movement.[6] His association with ecology was further emphasized by Pope Francis in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, named after the opening line of Saint Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures*.[7] Thus, many of Saint Francis's core teachings and values remain relevant and applicable in the 21st century.

[2] Kees Roodenburg, Pieter Quelle and Ruud Verkerke, *De Franciscaanse voetreis: Florence - Assisi – Rome* (Amersfoort: Salvatore, 2019).
[3] Jacques Le Goff, *Saint Francis of Assisi* (London: Routledge, 2023); André Vauchez and Michael F. Cusato, *Francis of Assisi: The Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint*. First edition (London: Yale Univ. Press, 2012); Edward A. Armstrong, *Saint Francis: Nature Mystic: the Derivation and Significance of the Nature Stories in the Franciscan Legend*. Hermeneutics, Studies in the History of Religions 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).
[4]Russ Eanes, *Pilgrim Paths to Assisi: 300 Miles on the Way of St Francis* (Harrisonburg: The Walker Press, 2023), ix-x.
[5] Pope Pius XII. *Licet commissa nobis* (1939), Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Dicastero per la Comunicazione.
[6] Pope John Paul II, *Inter Sanctos: Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 71 (1979), 1509, as cited in: Peter C. Phan, "Pope John Paul II and the Ecological Crisis," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (1994):67, https://doi.org/10.1177/002114009406000105.
[7] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On care for our common home*, Encyclical letter (Vatican: The Holy See, 2015).

The *Via di Francesco del Sud*

In parallel with Saint Francis' renewed relevance, religious pilgrimages have also experienced a resurgence, with an estimated 200 to 300 million people participating in such journeys annually in the early years of the 21st century.[8] This trend is also evident in the revival of contemporary journeys connected to the shrine of Saint Francis, with the *Via di Francesco* being a prominent example. Unlike many traditional heritage routes that seek to reconstruct or retrace medieval pilgrimages—such as the renowned *Camino de Santiago* in northwestern Spain, which follows ancient paths to the shrine of St James, or the *Via Francigena* in Italy, which traces a historic route to St Peter's Basilica in Rome — the *Via di Francesco* is distinct. It does not follow a historical route, but instead draws inspiration from Saint Francis himself, who was a pilgrim in his own right and continues to represent the archetypal figure of the pilgrim, seeking to encounter Christ in various forms throughout their life journey.[9]

The *Via di Francesco* thereby provides a meaningful journey, retracing the saint's footsteps through the diverse and historically rich medieval landscape of central Italy. The dynamic nature of the *Via di Francesco* enriches pilgrimage studies by challenging traditional, linear conceptions of pilgrimage space. Since its initiation in 2008, the *Via di Francesco* has expanded both in scope and in significance, making more people feel heir to its heritage. Most recently, the *Via di Francesco* was divided into northern and southern sections – the *Via di Francesco del Nord* and the *Via di Francesco del Sud* – after the route was extended southward to reach Rome. As a result, the *Via di Francesco* in general, and the *Via di Francesco del Sud* specifically, provide a framework for examining how heritage is constructed, negotiated, and experienced. Despite the significant growth in pilgrimage studies, however, the intersection of heritage and pilgrimage has received less attention than one might expect.

While the *Camino de Santiago de Compostela* was designated as the first European Cultural Itinerary by the Council of Europe in 1987 and already received the UNESCO World Heritage status in 1998, it is only since the last decade that scholars came to understand pilgrimage through a heritage framework.[10] This new approach reflects the changing discourse surrounding heritage. In *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (2012), Rodney Harrison outlines three historical phases in which heritage was understood differently. The first phase, which emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, focused on preserving objects from the past for public benefit. The second phase, spanning the late nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, saw increased state control and professionalization of conservation, with nation-states investing in heritage as part of nation-building efforts. The third phase introduced 'world' heritage organizations and 'universal' values, which led to conflicts over the definition and ownership of heritage across diverse cultural contexts.[11]

This last phase marks a shift in academic heritage studies from a focus on materiality to understanding heritage as a discourse and a system of values. In her influential work, *Uses of Heritage* (2006), Laurajane Smith argues that heritage should not be viewed merely as objects or places but as "a cultural and social process, which engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present".[12] While material objects and tangible

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[8] Dee Dyas, *The Dynamics of Pilgrimage: Christianity, Holy Places and Sensory Experience*. Routledge studies in pilgrimage, religious travel and tourism (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2021), 4.

[9] Avril Maddrell, Veronica Della Dora, Alessandro Scafi, and Heather Walton, eds., *Christian Pilgrimage, Landscape, and Heritage: Journeying to the Sacred*. First edition. Routledge Studies in Religion, Travel, and Tourism 3 (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 29.

[10] For example: Maddrell et al., eds., *Christian Pilgrimage, Landscape, and Heritage*; Cristina Sánchez-Carretero, ed., *Heritage, Pilgrimage and the Camino to Finisterre: Walking to the End of the World*. GeoJournal Library, Volume 117 (Cham: Springer, 2015).

[11] Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (Milton Park, Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 114-115.

[12] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (Londen: Routledge, 2006), 2.

sites are still significant, they do not encompass the entirety of what heritage represents. Smith contends that all heritage is intangible, representing a multilayered performance that embodies acts of remembrance and commemoration while negotiating and constructing a sense of place, belonging, and understanding in the present. Thus, heritage involves negotiation, utilizing the past and collective or individual memories to create new expressions of identity.[13] This perspective encourages a reassessment of the processes involved in the construction of heritage, known as heritagization.

Heritagization refers to the process through which cultural phenomena or objects, whether historical or contemporary, are designated as cultural heritage by relevant stakeholders. This designation imbues them with new meanings, leads to transformations, and utilizes the past to inform the future.[14] Researching pilgrimage through the lens of heritagization rather than just heritage, offers several advantages and insights, particularly in understanding the dynamic processes and contemporary implications of pilgrimage practices. Through the heritagization framework, a new role is assigned to heritage communities of practice, as participation and community are central to heritage-making. Moreover, this framework extends our understanding of these communities of practice, broadening their scope beyond pilgrims to include other participants involved in the process.

Moving through space

In pilgrimage, practice fundamentally revolves around movement. As Richard Scriven (2014) rightly argues, the motion-centric nature of pilgrimage should be central to any analysis. This is particularly relevant for the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, where Saint Francis' heritage extends beyond his tomb to include his own acts of movement. Movement in the context of the *Via di Francesco del Sud* includes not only the walking of pilgrims but also other spatial-temporal practices, as pilgrimages are produced, performed, and experienced through these physical movements and embodied actions that shape how individuals and communities interact with their environment.[15] Focusing on movement, therefore, allows me to understand how the spatial-temporal dynamics of pilgrimage shape the experiences and behaviors of those involved, and how these experiences actively produce the pilgrimage space. This approach provides a new perspective on the dynamics of heritage.

To support this analysis, I will employ Henri Lefebvre's theoretical framework on the production of space, which entails a triad of conceived, lived, and perceived space, to examine and understand the various dimensions of space and how they interact.[16] The thesis will begin with a chapter situating this framework within existing research on heritagization and pilgrimage. Heritagization heavily relies on representations of space. The next chapter will, therefore, scrutinize the development of the pilgrimage itinerary, examining various aspects, and analysing how these components influence specific behavioural patterns. The third chapter will explore the communal aspects, and the 'sense of place' and 'sense of belonging' fostered by the spatial configuration of the pilgrimage. This segment will elucidate the lived space of the pilgrimage, highlighting the collective identity shaped by the pilgrimage journey. Lastly, the final chapter will focus on the embodied experiences of pilgrims as they traverse the pilgrimage route and its heritage. Delving into their rhythms and interactions with the landscape, this segment can be viewed as an exploration of perceived space.

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[13] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 4.
[14] Cristina Sánchez-Carretero, "To Walk and to be Walked… at the End of the World" in *Heritage, Pilgrimage and the Camino to Finisterre: Walking to the End of the World*. GeoJournal Library, Volume 117, ed. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero (Cham: Springer, 2015), 13.
[15] Richard Scriven, "Geographies of Pilgrimage: Meaningful Movements and Embodied Mobilities," *Geography Compass* 8, no. 4 (2014): 254-255, https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12124.
[16] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991).


Credenziale del Pellegrino

Chapter I Theoretical Framework and Methodology: Routes with roots

Pilgrimages have a rich history and evolution, spanning diverse cultures and religions. Originating as sacred journeys in various ancient traditions, the practice became prominent in Christianity during the Middle Ages. Pilgrims embarked on physical travels to holy sites, such as the Holy Land, Rome, Santiago de Compostela, and Canterbury, seeking spiritual enrichment, fulfilling vows, performing penance or seeking miraculous cures. But pilgrimage routes adapt to and emerge from historical events and shifts in political, religious, or social landscapes. Changes in religious practices, the rise and fall of empires, and political developments can influence the popularity and significance of pilgrimage paths. These paths and sites have experienced moments of forgetting and remembering, resulting in the emergence of new meanings. Thus, pilgrimage paths offer a modern avenue for engaging with past events. Consequently, pilgrimage emerges as a dynamic concept, a contemporary spatial phenomenon shaped by history. This chapter will explore some of the more prominent definitions of pilgrimage, its process of heritagization, and its spatial dimensions.

The study of pilgrimage

Pilgrimages have experienced a resurgence in Europe in recent decades, particularly in the twenty-first century. Old shrines and pilgrimage routes are undergoing restoration and revitalization, while new pilgrimage centres and forms are emerging. Whether ancient or modern, organically evolved over time or designed intentionally, pilgrimages are "routes with roots".[17] They signify not merely physical passages from one place to another but profound and transformative experiences through their cultural or historical connections. But given the presence of the pilgrimage in so many different cultural and historical contexts, no single meaning can be attributed to the act of pilgrimage. And, with a great variety of pilgrimages came a multitude of pilgrimage literature and definitions.

Prior to the twenty-first century, pilgrimage studies primarily focused on religious sites and their associated rituals. In the 1970s and 1980s, the dominant scholarly perspective was that saints' shrines functioned as 'cult centres,' attracting pilgrims to foster social cohesion.[18] In his work *The Sacred and the Profane* (1959), renowned historian of religion Mircea Eliade posited that pilgrimage sites are seen as designated sacred spaces by believers, ontologically opposed to mundane profane spaces. These sacred sites then serve, according to Eliade, as society's *axis mundi*: centres of cosmological perfection that penetrate the ordinary world, connecting it with the sacred. The pilgrimage experience, thus, has the power to transmute an individual's everyday existence into a religious one, imbuing significance into even the most routine gestures. Eliade's approach facilitated the identification of specific places where the sacred was anticipated to manifest.[19]

Departing from Mircea Eliade's more essentialist approach concerning the sacred and the transformative aspects of religious encounters in particular places, Victor and Edith Turner authored their work *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (1978). In this study, the Turners adopt a more phenomenological point of view and delve into the spatial aspects of sacred shrines, examining their fixed points, and conceptualized an ideal community that pilgrims might encounter. They identified the pilgrimage as a formalized ritual, characterised by a three-phrase

[17] Marion Bowman and Tiina Sepp, "Caminoisation and Cathedrals: Replication, the Heritagisation of Religion, and the Spiritualisation of Heritage," *Religion* 49, no. 1 (2019):74–98, https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2018.1515325.
[18] Anne E. Bailey, "Journey or Destination? Rethinking Pilgrimage in the Western Tradition," *Religions* 1, no. 1157 (2023): 3, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14091157.
[19] Michael A. Di Giovine and Josep-Maria Garcia-Fuentes, "Introduction," in *Sites of Pilgrimage, Sites of Heritage: An Exploratory Introduction*. International Journal of Tourism Anthropology 5, no. 1, ed. Michael A. Di Giovine and Josep-Maria Garcia-Fuentes (Geneva: Inderscience Publishers, 2016), 4.

structure – separation, liminality, reincorporation, as first identified by Van Gennep (1909) for *rites de passage*. The person embarking on their journey is devoid of her social and professional roles and enters the second, liminal phase in the new role of pilgrim. This liminal phase has, therefore, been the focus of their work.[20] The Turners explored the limonoid qualities tied to the communal spirit, known as *communitas*, and the rituals observed at these pilgrimage sites. Consequently, pilgrimage represented a temporary departure from everyday life, allowing individuals to immerse themselves in distinct social and spiritual realms.[21]

Nevertheless, the 'Turnerian paradigm', as it became known, faced swift challenges for being perceived as 'deterministic' and lacking in diversity. Within the realm of pilgrimage scholarship, such conclusions were most strongly articulated by John Eade and Michael Sallnow (2000). In an introductory chapter to a collaborative work, they contested assertions about the universality or homogeneity of pilgrimage features. Instead, they advocated for an examination of the distinct and at times conflicting beliefs and practices manifesting at specific locations and moments. They suggested considering the pilgrimage site as a "ritual space capable of accommodating diverse meanings and practices".[22] This space has a significant ability to absorb and reflect various religious discourses, offering a variety of experiences to meet the desires of different pilgrims.[23] Thus, while the Turners sought to identify shared elements in pilgrimage experiences through their liminality and communitas framework, Eade and Sallnow emphasized the diversity and contestation within pilgrimage practices, advocating for a more contextually sensitive approach that takes the unique characteristics of each pilgrimage into account.

John Eade not only contested the notion of *communitas* but also questioned the predominant focus on the place-centred aspect of pilgrimages, such as destinations and shrines. Collaborating with anthropologist of religion Simon Coleman, Eade proposed a more comprehensive understanding of pilgrimage, suggesting that it could be effectively analysed as a blend of four key elements: people, places, text, and movement. This perspective broadened the concept, challenging the idea that the sacred qualities linked to pilgrimage sites must solely stem from fixed geographical places of immanence or revelation. Instead, Coleman and Eade proposed that the sacred could be generated through the interplay of movement and meaning, emphasizing the role of practice and performance.[24]

Starting in the 1990s, pilgrim shrines were less often seen as isolated sacred centres and were increasingly understood as interconnected sites within a dynamic network of social interactions and cultural exchange. Consequently, scholarly interest shifted from pilgrimage destinations to the journeys themselves.[25] By the turn of the century, this shift gave rise to a new discourse in pilgrimage studies, characterized by a growing body of interdisciplinary work where the role of movement became an indispensable element. This can be seen notably in studies of pilgrimage centred on walking, such as Nancy Louise Frey's (1998) phenomenological study of the *Camino di Santiago*. A mobilities framework prompts consideration of the intersection of movement and

[20] Tatjana Schnell and Sarah Pali, "Pilgrimage today: the meaning-making potential of ritual," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 16: 9 (2013): 891, https://doi.org/10.1080/13674676.2013.766449.
[21] Avril Maddrell, Veronica Della Dora, Alessandro Scafi, and Heather Walton, eds., "Introduction: Pilgrimage, Landscape, Heritage," in *Christian Pilgrimage, Landscape, and Heritage: Journeying to the Sacred*. First edition. Routledge Studies in Religion, Travel, and Tourism 3, ed. Avril Maddrell, Veronica Della Dora, Alessandro Scafi, and Heather Walton (New York: Routledge, 2015), 4.
[22] John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow. "Introduction," in *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, ed. John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 15.
[23] Eade and Sallnow. "Introduction," 15.
[24] Simon Coleman and John Eade, eds., *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*. Workshop Held at the European Association of Social Anthropologists Conference in Kraków (2000), European Association of Social Anthropologists (London: Routledge, 2004), 16.
[25] Bailey, "Journey or Destination?," 9.

meaning, including travel and embodied performance.[26] In this perspective, the sacred qualities of pilgrimage sites are not necessarily confined to specific geographic locations. Instead, mobile performances can create, even if temporarily, spaces imbued with sacred significance.[27]

This created an opportunity to extend research beyond the pilgrimage sites or destinations and explore the spaces in between. Drawing on the more-than-representational theory in human geography and social science, mobility scholars emphasise the significance of practice and performance in shaping and experiencing the pilgrimage landscape. This research highlights how specific mobile practices influence the dynamic place-temporalities that form particular landscapes. These scholars focus on understanding how these practices contribute to the ever-changing nature of pilgrimage sites, examining the interplay between movement, place, and time in creating and redefining these sacred spaces. It is the multivalent nature of the pilgrimage that blurs the boundaries between the static and the dynamic and recent scholarship, thereby, seeks to move beyond social constructivism and to re-appreciate the visual and material agencies of landscape in shaping subjectivities and geographical imaginations.[28]

In their 'landscape approach' to pilgrimage, Maddrell et al. (2015) combine traditional notions of landscape as both the material environment and a panoramic view, with notions of landscape as an arena for socio-economic, cultural, and political practices, along with embodied experience and performance. Unlike studies that focus primarily on fixed places like shrines, ritualistic religious performances, or the mobile practices associated with pilgrimage journeys, they employ the concept of landscape as a broader spatial context for pilgrimage and as a way of seeing and knowing. This integrated view encompasses material and symbolic topographic features that are experientially encountered and perceived. They argue that the pilgrim experience is a multifaceted and interactive blend of social, emotional, physical, and spiritual elements. These elements are influenced to varying degrees by individual and collective journeys, beliefs, actions, and aesthetic reactions. This perspective highlights the importance of an integrative and relational framework and methodology, linking the symbolic, material, and more-than-representational aspects of pilgrimage journeys and shrines to their broader contexts.[29]

Heritagized manifestations

The notable shift in pilgrimage studies from solely emphasizing the destination or pilgrimage sites to a more comprehensive understanding that includes a consideration of the entire pilgrimage journey, has significantly impacted the concept of pilgrimage heritage. Pilgrimage heritage now encompasses not only the cultural artifacts and practices at specific sites but also the routes and practices associated with them. This was first affirmed when the Council of Europe designated the *Camino de Santiago de Compostela* as the first European Cultural Itinerary in 1987, followed by the *Via Francigena* in 1994 and the *Saint Olav Ways* in 2010. These recognitions underscore the value of slow travel along these transnational routes, highlighting not only the immersive experiences of meeting new people but also the chance to explore diverse landscapes and cultural environments.[30]

As a part of the heritage policy of the European Union, these routes are emphasized as emblems of common European values and culture, and hence subsumed into the cultural tourism industry. In this sense, pilgrim routes cannot be seen as independent of overarching political aims that

[26] Scriven, "Geographies of Pilgrimage," 249–61.
[27] Coleman and Eade, *Reframing Pilgrimage*, 3.
[28] Maddrell et al., "Introduction," 6.
[29] Maddrell et al., eds., *Christian Pilgrimage, Landscape, and Heritage*.
[30] Daniel H. Olsen, Dane Munro, and Ian McIntosh, "Developing New Religious Pilgrimage Routes and Trails," in *New Pilgrimage Routes and Trails,* Pilgrimage Studies, volume 2*, ed.* Daniel H. Olsen, Dane Munro, and Ian McIntosh (Lausanne Berlin Bruxelles Chennai New York Oxford: Peter Lang Ltd. International Academic Publishers, 2023), 1-25.

shape how they are made subject to processes of heritagization.[31] In 2019 scholars Marion Bowman and Tiina Sepp made the observation that new pilgrim paths are "routes with roots", heritagized manifestations of a lost, possibly idealized history, often encouraging access to rural areas and neglected cultural heritage.[32] Perhaps it is through heritagization that people feel a sense of inheritance from pilgrimage traditions, enabling them to participate in and connect with a long history of spiritual travellers, even if their personal beliefs differ or they generally distance themselves from religion.[33] This broadens the scope of pilgrimage to include individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds and religious affiliations, including those who identify as non-religious— groups traditionally not considered conventional pilgrims.[34]

Their participation has occupied social scientists over the past decades, engaging in ongoing debates concerning the relationship between the conceptual categories of pilgrimage and tourism. These discussions primarily focused on whether each practice is considered 'religious' or 'secular'. However, the current academic perspective has largely shifted away from a strict either/or model. Instead, it recognizes that in the modern world, distinguishing between pilgrimage and tourism is increasingly challenging, as religious and secular practices often blend. For example, it has been suggested that pilgrims and tourists often interchange roles or that pilgrims blend secular and sacred elements within their journeys.[35] With a broader target audience, contemporary pilgrimage now encompasses a complex mix of cultural, spiritual, recreational, physical, and personal motives. As a result, pilgrimage represents contested spaces that embody a variety of motives, experiences, and symbolic meanings for everyone who undertakes the journey.[36]

What then sets apart a pilgrimage from other cultural heritage trails? In their research on cultural routes and heritage trails, Timothy and Boyd (2014) distinguish between two types of pilgrimage routes: those that have organically evolved and those that have been deliberately developed. They present their findings and the development of these routes in a clear and informative diagram (fig. 1). Organically-evolved routes are those such as the Camino di Santiago, which contains points of interest that emerged naturally over time and became formalized and developed (fig. 1.I). While not everyone who walks the trail seeks religious experience, its existence is undeniably rooted in religious history and remains a significant aspect of one "Christian denomination's heritage".[37] Additionally, there are purposefully constructed trails with a religious theme, designed to connect locations linked to a religious figure and their ministry. These trails, called 'Purposive Routes' by Timothy and Boyd, are not necessary the exact routes taken by the spiritual leader but are assembled by various organizations to emphasize the figure's life and impact on others.[38] The multiple thematic nodes related to this religious figure are connected by a designed route (fig.1.II). The latter category seems to include the *Via di Francesco del Sud*.

[31] Hogne Øian, "Pilgrim Routes as Contested Spaces in Norway," *Tourism Geographies* 21, no. 3 (2019): 424, https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2018.1522511.
[32] Bowman and Sepp, "Caminoisation and Cathedrals," 81.
[33] Bowman and Sepp, "Caminoisation and Cathedrals," 80-81.
[34] Bowman and Sepp, "Caminoisation and Cathedrals," 83.
[35] Bailey, "Journey or Destination?," 9.
[36] Øian, "Pilgrim Routes as Contested Spaces in Norway," 424.
[37] Dallen J. Timothy and Stephen W. Boyd, *Tourism and Trails: Cultural, Ecological and Management Issues* (Bristol; Multilingual Matters, 2014), 33.
[38] Timothy and Boyd, *Tourism and Trails,* 54.

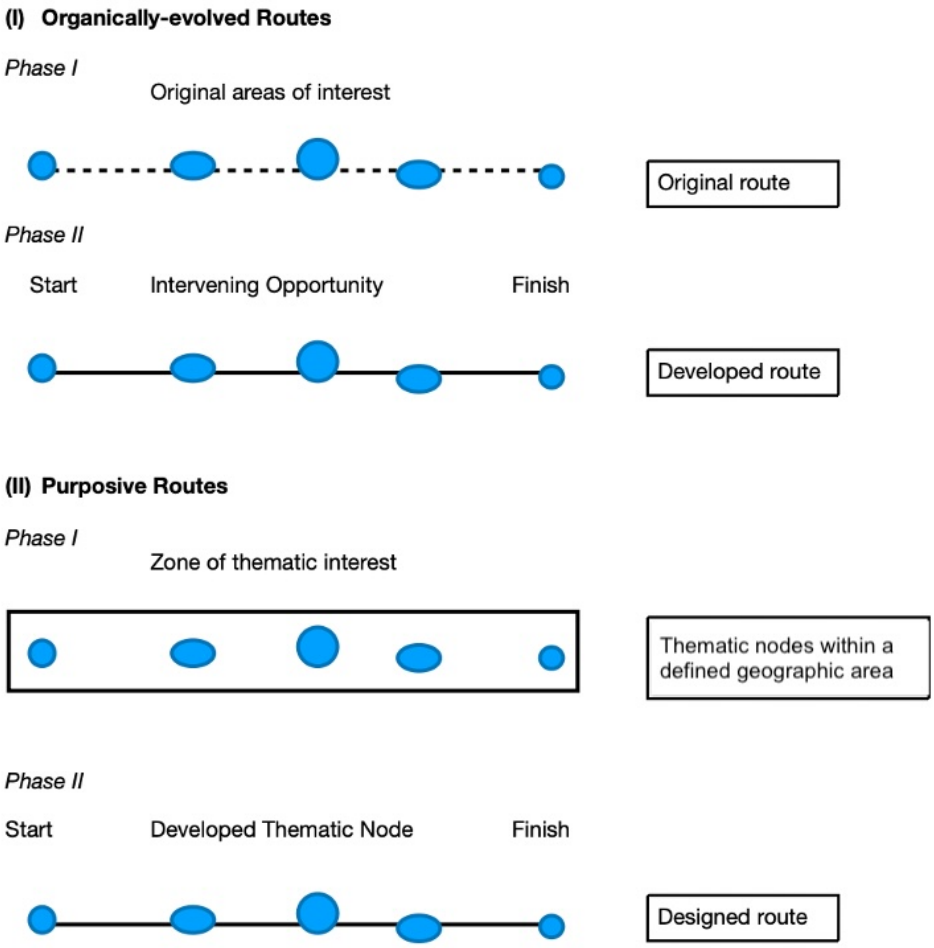

Figure 1 Types of cultural heritage trails as outlined by Timothy & Boyd (2014).[39]

The former, however, seems to highly influence the latter. The 'new' *Camino de Santiago* has reshaped many individuals' perceptions and conceptions of pilgrimage. This has led to a notable trend of transplanting and replicating the *Camino* in other, mostly European, countries, especially those where pilgrimage traditions were disrupted and discredited. Scholars Bowman and Sepp term this contemporary phenomenon 'Caminoisation'.[40] Every replication involves moving and adapting the concept to new settings, where it interacts with different circumstances, backgrounds, and objectives within the specific cultural, historical, and religious context of the area.[41] However, a frequently overlooked facet of 'caminoisation', vital for understanding pilgrimage, is the profound sense of belonging to space.

The schematic representation of cultural heritage routes illustrates two distinct approaches to encapsulating space into an itinerary for cultural heritage trails, showing how space is structured and organized to create meaningful and navigable routes for visitors. The *Camino* stands uniquely as the only route where its heritage is inherent to its itinerary, since it became a UNESCO Cultural Itinerary in 1998.[42] While an itinerary is commonly viewed as a sequence of places, within the pilgrimage context, it might be more aptly perceived as a continuous space. This perspective arises from the notion that places traversed along the itinerary maintain their interconnectedness,

[39] Timothy and Boyd, *Tourism and Trails,* 21.
[40] Bowman and Sepp, "Caminoisation and Cathedrals," 74–98.
[41] Bowman and Sepp, "Caminoisation and Cathedrals," 94.
[42] Bowman and Sepp, "Caminoisation and Cathedrals," 75.

forming an enduring spatial relationship throughout the pilgrimage. The itinerary has been produced and is re-produced by movement over the path.[43]

Additionally, purposive routes are usually defined not by a historical itinerary but by thematic content that connects locations, establishments, and communities with similar histories and offerings catering to comparable interests. This type of pilgrimage requires "a set of values whose whole is greater than the sum of the parts and that points along the route must be understood holistically as an entire thematic collection, not the parts individually".[44] Understanding points along the route holistically requires considering their spatial context—how each site relates to the others geographically and thematically. Even more than the organically-evolved routes, the itinerary of the purposive route encompasses space, visually apparent by the contour in figure 1.II, reinforcing the idea that the pilgrimage is about the collective experience of moving through and engaging with pilgrimage space.

By creating a cohesive thematic journey, purposive routes embody the principles of heritagization, which enhances the visitor experience, fosters cultural understanding, and ensures the preservation and presentation of local heritage. Trail development, therefore, can play a significant role in deepening a sense of place by highlighting local significance and fostering connections between people and their environment.[45] The holistic approach, furthermore, appreciates the cultural and historical contexts of localized heritage, and integrates these values spatially. Thus, heritagization not only fosters a connection to material culture, historical practices, and fellow pilgrims but also nurtures a sense of belonging to the continuous space of the pilgrimage itself.

In recent years, several guides for the *Via di Francesco* have been published, but few studies have emerged, with most focusing on the northern route ending in Assisi. These studies primarily address sustainable tourism development,[46] with the notable exception of Christopher Michael Iwancio's 2019 dissertation on the influence of the Assisi pilgrimage on high school participants.[47] While sustainable tourism and heritagization are complementary, they employ distinct approaches. Sustainable tourism views the *Via di Francesco* as an economic product and tool for regional marketing, typically adopting a 'top-down' approach focused on local institutions like the Tourism Office and their impact on local practitioners. A heritagization approach, on the other hand, offers a 'bottom-up' perspective, emphasizing consumer experiences and meaning-making. This perspective highlights alternative narratives and the interaction of agencies within heritage assemblages, paving the way for an exploration of how regional authorities, local hosts, and pilgrims contribute to the heritagization process.[48]

[43] Bowman and Sepp, "Caminoisation and Cathedrals," 81.
[44] Timothy and Boyd, *Tourism and Trails,* 24.
[45] Timothy and Boyd, *Tourism and Trails,* 19.
[46] Carlo Valorani, "La rete europea dei percorsi di transumanza. Il caso dell'area laziale," *Urbanistica Informazioni 279,* special Issue XI Giornata di studi INU (2018): 112-116, https://hdl.handle.net/11573/1204744; Gianluca Bambi and Tiziana Tei, "Sistema turismo rurale integrato come fattore di sviluppo socio-economico di un territorio," *Atti XIII Convegno Internazionale Interdisciplinare*. Uniud. (2008):1-10, https://hdl.handle.net/2158/1330110; Paola de Salvo, "Developing Pilgrimage Itineraries: the Way of St Francis in Umbria as Case in Point," *Local identities and transnational cults within Europe*, CABI Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Series (2018):19-29, https://doi.org/10.1079/9781786392527.0019.
[47] Christopher Michael Iwancio, "The Pilgrims' Return: The Influence of the Assisi Pilgrimage on High School Participants" (PhD diss., School of Education, Catholic Educational Leadership, University of San Francisco, 2019). Retrieved from https://repository.usfca.edu/diss/493.
[48] Alexis Thouki, "Heritagization of Religious Sites: In Search of Visitor Agency and the Dialectics Underlying Heritage Planning Assemblages," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 28, no. 9 (2022):1038, https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2022.2122535.

The production of space

Based on the previous sections of this chapter, heritagization can be understood as a process of heritage-making. In the context of pilgrimage, I refer to this as the production of pilgrimage space. This space is shaped by three key elements related to the actors involved—regional authorities, local maintainers and hosts, and pilgrims—and their dynamic interactions. Regional authorities, similar to UNESCO but at a regional level, design spatial representations. Local hosts and maintainers experience the pilgrimage space within their immediate surroundings, living in spaces of representation. Pilgrims, on the other hand, engage with the space through their spatial practices, such as traversing the pilgrimage path. This conceptual framework has directed my attention to the scholarship of French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre.

Henri Lefebvre is known for his work on urban sociology and the production of space, of which the original French edition *La production de l'espace* was published in 1974. However, it was not until the English translation, *The Production of Space,* emerged in 1991 that his ideas were introduced to a wider English-speaking audience, particularly in geography and cultural studies. In this work Lefebvre argues that the mode of existence of social relations is spatial.[49] He proposes a concept known as the 'Triad of Space' to examine and understand the various dimensions of space and how they interact, gaining knowledge of social reality and the transformational potentialities in this reality. Criticizing dualistic perspectives that separate space from time, body from mind, and nature from culture, Lefebvre argues for more integrated and holistic approaches that recognize the interconnectedness of these elements.[50] Most of all, Lefebvre was a man of his time; he lived throughout the twentieth century and his work must be seen in the context of the massive political upheavals of this period.[51] In Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*, these dimensions are not historical stages but ever-present spatial possibilities that "vie for ascendancy".[52]

Henri Lefebvre's 'Triad of Space' is analytical and trialectical in nature, consisting of three components: perceived, conceived, and lived space. Conceived space (representations of space) represents the abstract, mental, and symbolic representations of space. It includes maps, plans, and conceptualizations of space created by institutions, authorities, and planners. Lived space (spaces of representations) is the space as it is socially practiced and constructed by society. It is shaped by the interactions, activities, and behaviours of people within a space. Perceived space (spatial practice) refers to the everyday, lived experience of space by individuals. It encompasses the subjective, sensory, and personal encounters people have through their physical activities.[53] The difference between lived space and perceived space is the intervention of culture, not as ideology, as in conceived space, but through the imagination as tradition and symbol.[54] Space does not exercise agency, but people's agency is continuously expressed in and through it.[55] Looking at space through this analytical triad, therefore, produces knowledge of social reality and the transformational potentialities inherent in that reality.[56]

Henri Lefebvre argues that understanding the production of space requires an integrated comprehension of both the concrete and abstract, fostering a dialectical connection between materialism and idealism. The concept of the lived space acts as a vital intermediary, bridging the gap between perception and conception as a third essential element. Lefebvre emphasizes the

[49] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 404.
[50] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 116-117.
[51] Lynn Stewart, "Bodies, Visions, and Spatial Politics: A Review Essay on Henri Lefebvre's The Production of Space," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 13, no. 5 (1995): 609–618, https://doi.org/10.1068/d130609.
[52] Kim Knott, "Spatial Theory and Method for the Study of Religion", *Temenos - Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 41, no. 2 (2005): 181, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2008.00112.x.
[53] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.
[54] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 39.
[55] Knott, "Spatial Theory and Method for the Study of Religion," 168.
[56] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 404.

centrality of lived experience, acknowledging its complexity due to cultural influences, particularly in spatial practices. He asserts that these practices were lived first and then conceptualized, however in modern society it is "subsumed beneath the weight of the conceptualised spatial order".[57] Nevertheless, it has the potential to be continuously revitalized by individuals and groups aiming to symbolically challenge prevailing norms and dominant structures.[58]

Lefebvre not only rejects dualistic thinking by challenging the separation of body and mind, but also the notion that space and time exist independently. His theory of the production of space highlights the dynamic and temporal nature of spatial processes, countering static perspectives. Space is both a product to be used, or 'consumed,' and a means of production. Networks of exchange, along with the flows of raw materials and energy, both shape and are shaped by space.[59] A comprehensive understanding of space production, thus, requires an integration of both empirical and theoretical approaches. This involves analysing both the tangible and intangible aspects of space, employing various methods of reasoning, and navigating between different scales and dimensions of space. The goal is to capture a complete picture of how space is created, experienced, and understood, revealing both its visible and hidden qualities.[60]

Furthermore, as Andrew Marrifield argues in *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction*, rather than offering a complete or fully detailed framework, Lefebvre ideas are outlined "only in preliminary fashion, leaving us to add our own flesh, our own content, to rewrite it as part of our own chapter or research agenda".[61] Lefebvre's work, thus, provides a foundational overview that invites further development. And while Lefebvre's theories have been extensively applied to a range of touristic and non-touristic landscapes, they have rarely been applied to pilgrimage spaces. This limited application may be due to a gap in Lefebvre's work, as he does not address religiosity or spirituality in his concepts, despite their relevance to his theoretical framework.[62] However, Lefebvre's triad helps in understanding the different layers of pilgrimage spaces — how they are physically constructed (perceived space), how they are represented and managed (conceived space), and how they are experienced and imbued with meaning (lived space).

Methodology

By focusing my research on the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, I embarked on two transformative journeys. The first involved immersing myself in nature for over two weeks, while the second required less physical exertion and more intellectual engagement and academic effort. With a background in history and religious studies, where I have primarily concentrated on religious urban history of the Middle Ages, my interest in Saint Francis is a natural extension. However, while this thesis is situated in religious heritage studies, it emphasizes contemporary cultural and spatial aspects rather than historical ones, thereby integrating concepts from cultural geography, sociology, and anthropology.

This research is grounded in analytical autoethnography, which involves collecting diverse data sources, including the researcher's experiences, other participants' input, and scholarly theory. Autoethnographic methods address complications within ethnographic tradition, particularly the researcher's position within the field. This is especially relevant since anthropologists and

[57] Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis*, Reprinted (London and New York; Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 52.
[58] Knott, The Location of Religion, 52.

[60] Andrew Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (Londen; Routledge, 2006), 108.
[61] Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre,* 105.
[62] Christine Buzinde, David Manuel-Navarrete, Jyotsna M. Kalavar, and Neena Kohli, "Social Production and Consumption of Space: A Lefebvrian Analysis of the Kumbh Mela," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 10:I (2022): 179, https://doi.org/10.21427/dkc8-sv03.

ethnologists are part of both the heritage regime and heritage communities, through their production of heritage scholarship, which inevitably becomes part of the heritage assemblage.[63] Additionally, through participant observations, the autoethnographer immerses themselves in the observed community and integrates their own involvement as a key element of the analysis. This approach also tackles issues such as blurring boundaries between (auto)biographical and ethnographic writing and the increasing interest in emotions within the social sciences.[64] In pilgrimages, autoethnography facilitates open and personal conversations with participants through a shared purpose and experience. The camaraderie of the journey facilitates these discussions.

This method of autoethnography was first proposed by Leon Anderson (2006) and has been extensively used since then.[65] Anderson' s method consists of three pillars: the researcher is a full member in the research group or setting, the researcher is visible as such a member in the published text, and the researcher contributes to the development of a theoretical understanding of the research topic.[66] This last element is of particular importance, as it prevents the researcher from writing analyses that do not connect with the broader academic discussion on, in this case, heritage and pilgrimages. Between April and May, I walked the *Via di Francesco del Sud*. During these weeks, I developed a personal relationship with the pilgrims, hosts, and the landscape. Therefore, I consider myself fully part of the community of participants in the Via di Francesco del Sud. I make this hybrid identity—as both a researcher and a pilgrim—visible by incorporating elements from my field diary and audio field notes. Every evening throughout the entire pilgrimage, I documented the day's experiences and frequently recorded memos on the road. These audio memos also included reflections on conversations and interactions with participants.

Furthermore, analytic autoethnography involves gathering diverse data sources, not only the researcher's own experiences. I thematically analysed public documents of stakeholders in the pilgrimage design and gained additional information from them through e-mail. Furthermore, during my pilgrimage I conducted semi-structured interviews with five pilgrims, selected not on their religious or spiritual beliefs but on their long-term participation in the *Via di Francesco*. This approach aligns with Dee Dyas's view that a strict distinction between tourists and pilgrims is problematic, as pilgrimage experiences exist on a continuum between the two.[67] The interviewed pilgrims travelled the *Via di Francesco* in various ways – some from Rome to Assisi, some from La Verna to Assisi to Rome – and for different reasons. About three months after their pilgrimage, I asked them to reflect on their experiences using photo elicitation, providing them with an additional means of storytelling. To ensure anonymity while allowing for a nuanced understanding of their experiences, the names of these pilgrims are pseudonymized. The data are kept secured in an off-line external memory.

Since those who host pilgrims are also participants in the production of the pilgrimage space, I distributed a questionnaire to include their experiences. I gained their contact information from the Umbrian and Lazio website of the *Via di Francesco*, making sure that they host pilgrims on a more permanent basis, and contacted only those who provide hospitality on a donation basis –

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[63] Nicolas Adell, Regina Bendix, Chiara Bortolotto, and Markus Tauschek, "Introduction: Between Imagined Communities and Communities of Practice: Participation, Territory and the Making of Heritage," in *Between Imagined Communities and Communities of Practice: Participation, Territory and the Making of Heritage*, Göttingen Studies in Cultural Property 8, ed. Nicolas Adell, Regina Bendix, Chiara Bortolotto, en Markus Tauschek (Göttingen: Univ.-Verl. Göttingen, 2015), 17.
[64] Leon Anderson, "Analytic Autoethnography," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35, no. 4 (2006): 373, https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241605280449.
[65] Suzanne van der Beek, for example, also uses the autoethnographic method to understand the dynamic of hospitality within pilgrimage. Suzanne van der Beek, "De hospitalera en de pelgrim, over gastvrijheid en identiteit", *Religie & Samenleving* 15, no. 1 (2020): 49–66, https://religiesamenleving.nl/article/view/11556/13113.
[66] Anderson, "Analytic Autoethnography," 375.
[67] Dyas, *The dynamics of pilgrimage*, 8.

thereby reducing the economic motive. I further expanded my outreach by requesting participation from those who had hosted me. They were able to fill out the questionnaire anonymously online, resulting in 55 respondents in between March and July 2023. From those respondents, only 29 filled out more than 60 percent of the questionnaire, which contained 48 multiple-choice and 2 open questions.


Non abbiate paura di andare
adagio, ma di fermarvi
Buon cammino pellegrino!
Via di Francesco

Chapter II Constructing Saint Francis' Way

Before embarking on my pilgrimage, I made the decision to improve my hiking skills. Despite the Netherlands being largely below sea level and Italy renowned for its mountainous terrain, I felt that the hilly landscape of Dutch Limburg bore a resemblance, albeit loosely, to the Apennine Mountains in Italy. My mother opted to join me as an experienced guide, hoping to impart valuable lessons to me and free herself from the irrational fears she had since the announcement of my two-week solo trek through Italy. As we progressed, our confidence grew, and on the final day, I felt comfortable navigating without GPS, instead relying solely on the identification of the route marker – a distinctive red and white signage. However, my mother's quick intervention saved us from a wrong turn when I mistook a cross-shaped marker for a clearer signpost. Expressing concern about my ignorance, she clarified that these crosses denote "do not proceed". An essential piece of knowledge in the interpretation of the pilgrimage design.

Pilgrimages are designed spaces, shaped by decisions regarding their content, routes, and intended messages. This chapter explores the conceptualization of pilgrimage spaces, particularly focusing on what is referred to as conceived space. Conceived space encapsulates the mental frameworks and abstract ideas that influence how people plan, arrange, and interpret physical environments, ultimately affecting how space is created, experienced, and contested. Within the context of pilgrimage, conceived space encompasses the symbols, language, abstract concepts, and cultural stories that mould pilgrims' perceptions and interactions with the pilgrimage journey. This chapter, therefore, examines this conceived space through an exploration of the cultural and historical narratives, symbolic representations, and organizational structures evident in the *Via di Francesco del Sud* and their spatial implications.

Walking with Saint Francis

One of the most defining traits of Saint Francis' character is his deep love for nature and animals, a bond symbolized for centuries by the iconic image of a bird in his hand. This profound connection was formally recognized in 1979 when Pope John Paul II declared Saint Francis of Assisi the patron saint of ecology and environmental advocates.[68] In a more recent homage, Pope Francis not only adopted the saint's name, but also Saint Francis' famous work, the Canticle of Brother Sun, as inspirations for his environmental encyclical.[69] The Canticle of the Brother Sun is a laud, a prayer of gratitude to the Creator and the beauty and purpose installed by in him in all creatures.[70] By doing so, Pope Francis underscores the saint's enduring legacy and its ongoing relevance in contemporary society, hence, Saint Francis' heritage.

Within his own time, Saint Francis of Assisi catalysed a significant paradigm shift within medieval Christianity regarding humanity's relationship with nature, departing from the doctrine of human supremacy. He regarded all elements of creation, both living and non-living, as interconnected and equal, emphasizing harmony and mutual respect rather than domination. From a young age, Francis promoted a simpler lifestyle and a deep reverence for nature, urging people to protect and honour it as God's creation. His message resonated during the 12th and 13th centuries in Italy, amid urbanization and economic change, and influenced new religious brotherhoods and mendicant orders that challenged the church hierarchy. They offered more personal, intuitive, accessible, physical paths to salvation, and spread this message worldwide.[71] UNESCO recognizes this influence of Saint Francis and the Franciscan Order, through its inclusion of "Assisi, the

[68] Pope John Paul II, *Inter Sanctos,* 67.
[69] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'.*
[70] "Canticle of the Creatures," in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, *vol. 1*, ed. Regis J. Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 1999).
[71] Per Binde, "Nature in Roman Catholic Tradition," *Anthropological Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (2001): 19, https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/anq.2001.0001.

Basilica of San Francesco and Other Franciscan Sites" on its World Heritage List in 2000. In its description Assisi is even acknowledged as "an important Christian pilgrimage [site]" by UNESCO.[72]

Saint Francis himself was considered a pilgrim too, travelling to sacred sites such as the Sacro Speco ("Holy Cave") in Subiaco and the Holy Land. Furthermore, he and his followers emphasized nature as a direct conduit to God, believing that pristine environments conveyed spiritual truths more profoundly than written doctrines. Many of Francis' spiritual encounters unfolded amidst natural landscapes, fostering mystical experiences and metaphysical revelations. Consequently, a series of monasteries emerged, nestled in forests or against mountain slopes. For Franciscans, the wilderness became a realm for ascetic discipline, aesthetic appreciation, moral reflection, and mystical communion. Francis thus embodies the archetype of the pilgrim, journeying to encounter Christ in manifold forms along the human path. He is one of the saints "whose shrines are visited in a symbolic act of mimetic withdrawal".[73] It is, therefore, not surprising that, although UNESCO's focus is limited to Assisi and its immediate surroundings, Italy hosts multiple pilgrimages dedicated to Saint Francis, spanning various regions.

Italy boasts 46 endorsed *cammini*, recognized by the Ministry of Culture[74] (MiC, 2024) for their historical-cultural value, and featured in the digital Atlas of the *Cammini d'Italia*.[75] Seven of these paths honour Saint Francis, linking sites in Central Italy associated with his legacy. However, interpretations of Saint Francis along these routes vary; some rely on biased biographies from Franciscan authors written after his death in 1226, while others stem from local oral traditions.[76] While sites like Florence and La Verna are confirmed in Saint Francis' history, others' historical accuracy remains debated, leaving much uncertainty regarding the routes he likely traversed.[77] Three of the seven itineraries dedicated to Saint Francis—*Cammino di Francesco* (nr. 13), *La Via di Francesco* (nr. 29), and *The Way of St Francis* (nr. 35)— overlap almost entirely, extending into Lazio and ending in Rome.

Despite this shared route, they differ significantly in how they contextualize the places connected to Saint Francis within their narrative. Among these paths, *Cammino di Francesco* stands out as one of the oldest Franciscan routes, described as a lengthy journey linking the four sanctuaries established by the 'poor man' of Assisi.[78] It is regarded as a trail of religious and naturalistic significance, retracing Saint Francis' steps through the Holy Valley, with the 'long trail' extending to both Assisi and Rome. While the *Via di Francesco* may be translated *The Way of Saint Francis*, these are different pilgrimages, each assigned its own number within the digital Atlas of the MiC. The primary disparity lies in their starting and ending points; while *The Way of Saint Francis* begins or concludes – depending on the chosen route – in Florence, the *Via di Francesco* commence s its journey at La Verna. *The Way of Saint Francis* aims to connect the symbolic sites of Saint

[72] "Assisi, the Basilica of San Francesco and Other Franciscan Sites," UNESCO World Heritage Convention, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/990,.
[73] Maddrell et al, "Introduction," 28-29.
[74] Previously known as Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities and for Tourism (MiBACT).
[75] "Atlante dei Cammini d'Italia," Ministero della Cultura, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://camminiditalia.cultura.gov.it/home-cammini-ditalia/atlante-dei-cammini/.
[76] André Vauchez and Michael F. Cusato, *Francis of Assisi* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 325.
[77] Gianluca Bambi, Simona Iacobelli, Giuseppe Rossi, Paolo Pellegrini, and Matteo Barbari, "Rural Tourism to Promote Territories along the Ancient Roads of Communication: Case Study of the Rediscovery of the St Francis' Ways Between Florence and La Verna," *European Countryside* 11, no. 3 (2019): 465, https://doi.org/10.2478/euco-2019-0025.
[78] "Un lungo sentiero ad unire i quattro santuari fondati dal 'poverello' di Assisi". "Cammino di Francesco," Ministero della Cultura, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://camminiditalia.cultura.gov.it/cammini/cammino-di-francesco/.

Francis' life.[79] On the other hand, the *Via di Francesco* is described as a pilgrimage among the symbolic locales of the saint's spirituality, seeking to re-enact the Franciscan experience through "it is landscape and places".[80] Unlike the former, the *Via di Francesco* places less emphasis on the historical context of these places and instead highlights the performance of re-enactment inherent in traversing the pilgrimage space on foot.

In his footsteps from Umbria to Lazio

The *Via di Francesco* was initiated in Umbria in 2008 and funded by Inter-Regional Funds for religious itinerary development. Initially, pilgrims journeyed from La Verna to Assisi or from Greccio to Assisi. Subsequently, in 2011, the Umbria Region co-financed the creation of a new consortium named 'Umbria and Francesco's Ways'.[81] This consortium ensures all necessary services are available to support pilgrims in their spiritual, leisure, and cultural pursuits, while fostering meaningful engagement with local communities.[82] In 2016, the Associative Network of the Via di Francesco in Lazio (*La Rete Associativa della Via di Francesco nel Lazio*) was founded, bringing together 38 associations from the Lazio region. These associations provide free assistance to pilgrims and work to preserve local heritage. This initiative led to the official extension of the *Via di Francesco* into the Lazio region, forming what is now known as the *Via di Francesco del Sud*. The Associative Network aims to unite and enhance cultural and natural landmarks, promote tourism, and create employment opportunities. As such, the *Via di Francesco del Sud* remains a work in progress, with numerous locales and alternative stages continually being incorporated.[83]

While both the Umbria consortium and the Associative Network aim to develop, promote, and market the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, they maintain their regional identity through separate websites, though each promoting the entire path. However, a noticeable disparity emerges in the introduction of the pilgrimage. The Umbrian website emphasizes the region's landscape, highlighting its rich historical connection with Saint Francis:

> […] the landscapes that the pilgrim will see are the same that brought joy to the simple heart of St Francis; stop-off locations preserve the memory of his words and his gestures; the people you meet along the route are related to him. In spite of everything, Umbria has remained Francesco's land, […].[84]

It suggests that the essence of Saint Francis and his heritage are embedded in the environment, because, despite changes over time, the Umbria region has retained its identity as the land of Saint

[79]"Dall'Eremo di Camaldoli, dove probabilmente Francesco assistette alla consacrazione della chiesa nel 1220," on: "The Way of St Francis," Ministero della Cultura, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://camminiditalia.cultura.gov.it/cammini/the-way-st-francis/.
[80] "Un viaggio tra i luoghi simbolo della spiritualità del Santo di Assisi" and "un pellegrinaggio che ripropone l'esperienza francescana attraverso le sue terre e i suoi luoghi," on: Via di Francesco, Ministero della Cultura, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://camminiditalia.cultura.gov.it/cammini/via-di-francesco/.
[81]"Chi siamo," Francesco's Ways, accessed on July 23, 2024, http://www.umbriafrancescosways.eu/en/about-us/.
[82] Paola de Salvo, "Il viaggio tra spiritualità e territorio: una visione moderna del pellegrinaggio. La Via di Francesco," *Pellegrinaggi e itinerari turistico-religiosi in Europa. Perugia: Morlacchi Editore* (2015): 230, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/298790225_Il_viaggio_tra_spiritualita_e_territorio_una_visione_moderna_del_pellegrinaggio_La_Via_di_Francesco.
[83] *La presentazione in PDF della Rete Associativa della via di Francesco nel Lazio* (2017). Retrieved from: https://www.viadifrancescolazio.it/
[84]"La Via di Francesco," La Via di Francesco, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://www.viadifrancesco.it/en/via-di-francesco-st-francis-way-pilgrimage-route.

Francis and preserved his presence.[85] If re-enactment entails "following in the footsteps of Saint Francis", for the Umbrian region, it signifies "to see what he saw".

In Lazio, however, the reliance on historical associations with Saint Francis is considerably limited, particularly in the region between Rieti and Rome. One of the founding associations of the Associative Network, Alfa ODV, situated in the territory of Municipio III Roma Montesacro, illustrates this challenge. According to Andrea Morbidelli, the president of Alfa ODV, the organization's interest stems from a deep passion for the historical, cultural, and naturalistic importance of the Marcigliana Nature Reserve, situated in Municipio III.[86] In reference to the association between this particular territory and Saint Francis, Morbidelli clarifies that the *Via di Francesco del Sud* is not a historical pilgrimage, but rather a contemporary itinerary linking areas traversed and encountered by the Saint of Assisi. In line with his Umbrian counterpart, he acknowledges the profound impact the landscape had on Francis of Assisi and continues to have on the pilgrims who follow in his footsteps.

However, he extends this argument by asserting that it is not solely the landscape itself, but rather the act of traversing through the landscape that yields this profound influence. This sentiment is echoed both on the website of the Associative Network and within the official Statute of the Network:

> His conception of life goes beyond a simple religious attitude; it can be safely defined as a true philosophy. A philosophy that the Network aims to retrace in the footsteps of Saint Francis through one of the most natural gestures for human beings: walking. A way to rediscover our identity, eliminating the superfluous, with a spirit of adaptation, accepting the unexpected, managing to live the present without haste with the possibility of savoring the beauties that surround us and getting to know the communities that host us.[87]

The Associative Network regards walking not only as a means to deepen appreciation for the natural and cultural heritage of the land but also as a catalyst for a transformative spiritual inner journey—a journey intrinsic to Saint Francis' legacy. This perspective underscores the belief that walking pilgrimages foster an intimate understanding of the territory through which pilgrims traverse. By journeying along the *Via di Francesco del Sud del Sud* on foot, individuals can embody the spiritual essence inherent in walking or traveling at a leisurely pace. "Following in the footsteps of Saint Francis" becomes "to do what he did".

The *Via di Francesco del Sud* thus serves as a journey of re-enactment, inviting pilgrims to "follow in the footsteps of Saint Francis". However, because the route spans regions with their own connections to Saint Francis, this re-enactment takes on varied meanings. Essentially, it aligns with Michael Fagence's concept of a 'trailscape'—a thematic trail where the emphasis is on the overarching narrative rather than specific locations. This method deliberately weaves actions and

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[85] "La Via di Francesco," La Via di Francesco, https://www.viadifrancesco.it/en/via-di-francesco-st-francis-way-pilgrimage-route accessed on July 23, 2024.
[86] "È proprio questo forte legame con il territorio e la profonda consapevolezza dell'importanza storica, culturale e naturalistica della Marcigliana che hanno spinto l'associazione a dedicarsi attivamente alla promozione della Via di Francesco e a mettere in "rete" le realtà associative lungo il suo tratto laziale.," personal correspondance with Andrea Morbidelli, Presidente Alfa ODV, on May 2, 2024. (my translation)
[87] "La sua concezione della vita va al di là di un semplice atteggiamento religioso, si può tranquillamente definire una vera e propria filosofia. Una filosofia che la "Rete" vuole ripercorrere sulle orme del Santo d'Assisi attraverso uno dei gesti più naturali per l'essere umano: il camminare. Un modo per ritrovare la nostra identità, eliminando il superfluo, con spirito di adattamento, accettando gli imprevisti, riuscendo a vivere il presente senza fretta con la possibilità di assaggiare le bellezze che ci circondano e conoscere al meglio le comunità che ci ospitano". "La presentazione in PDF della Rete", La Via di Francesco Lazio (2017), https://www.viadifrancescolazio.it/about.html. (my translation)

places together across multiple sites, all linked by a common story and pathway.[88] Similarly, Timothy & Boyd describe 'purposive routes' designed from a geographical area with nodes of common thematic interest.[89] In both 'purposive routes' and 'trailscapes', the whole is seen as greater than the sum of its parts, with each point along the route understood holistically as an entire thematic collection, not the parts individually.

Following yellow and blue

'Trailscapes' involve interpreting landscapes by utilizing geographical and semiotic evidence to tell stories through physical and spatial elements. However, in pilgrimage studies, there's often a tendency to focus solely on either pilgrim movements or fixed locations, while the static (shrines, waypoints and accommodations) and mobile (pilgrims, objects and vehicles) are continually interacting and intermixing.[90] Drawing from autoethnographic research conducted in May 2023,[91] this section delves into the examination of spatial attributes along the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, analysing their intentional construction and mobile implications.

The significance of the pilgrimage experience is intimately linked to the physical demands, rugged terrain, and intricate journey it entails. In the context of pilgrimage, the distance and complexity of the path are not viewed as hindrances, but rather as opportunities for profound devotion, introspection, and spiritual growth.[92] The pilgrimage is composed of repeated moments of movement and rest; it maintains thereby a certain rhythm. For Lefebvre, rhythm is implicated in the production of social order.[93] It is by the unusual rhythm of movements over a longer period that the pilgrim is marked out in our contemporary society. The *Via di Francesco del Sud*, spanning 300 kilometres[94] over 14 stages, offers various lodging options and encourages pilgrims to walk approximately 4 to 9 hours a day.[95] Depending on the duration of the pilgrimage, individuals may have the time and energy to explore the destinations they reach and appreciate their cultural and historical significance. The stages within the Lazio region are renowned for being particularly challenging, characterized by longer daily distances and, consequently, lengthier travel times within that area leaving less time for cultural exploration.

However, while the Lazio section may entail the longest travel time, it exhibits significantly fewer direct connections to Franciscan heritage compared to other segments of the route. Both the Umbrian and Lazio websites thoroughly outline the locations or stages where these heritage elements can be encountered. From these sources, I have distilled the elements directly linked to Saint Francis. This heritage can be further categorized based on its characteristics into three main groups: architectural (built), natural, and literary (fig. 2). Only Rome connects the Lazio part of

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[88] Michael Fagence, "A Heritage 'Trailscape': Tracking the Exploits of Historical Figures – an Australian Case Study," *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 12, no. 5 (20 October 2017):456, https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2016.1242593.
[89] Timothy and Boyd, *Tourism and Trails*, 24.
[90] Scriven, "Geographies of Pilgrimage," 255.
[91] Since then, the *Via di Francesco* has continued its developmental trajectory, particularly notable in the Lazio region. However, the spatial characteristics may be perceived as exhibiting a degree of consistency, attributed to the expanding Associative Network and its affiliated volunteer base. Consequently, their spatial interventions have become increasingly noticeable, yet remain in alignment with the original conceptual framework, indicating a persistence of overarching design principles.
[92] Scriven, "Geographies of Pilgrimage," 255.
[93] Henri Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life.* Reprint (London: Continuum, 2010), 8.
[94] On the website the pilgrimage is 'about 300km' while all the stages combined, without the alternative routes, make up for about 250km. "La Via di Francesco del Sud," La Via di Francesco, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://www.viadifrancesco.it/la-via-di-francesco-itinerario-del-pellegrinaggio/via-del-sud-tappe-del-cammino-da-roma-ad-assisi.
[95] Based on the information provided on the travel time from the websites. "La Via di Francesco del Sud," La Via di Francesco, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://www.viadifrancesco.it/la-via-di-francesco-itinerario-del-pellegrinaggio/via-del-sud-tappe-del-cammino-da-roma-ad-assisi.

the route with Saint Francis' heritage, however, the Lazio part of the route traverses multiple places and regions deemed Roman and/or medieval heritage, offering pilgrims the opportunity to engage with and traverse the landscape that Saint Francis likely crossed on his journey to Rome.

Figure 2 Map of Saint Francis' heritage along the official route of the *Via di Francesco del Sud*.

Furthermore, throughout the pilgrimage, the pilgrim is consistently reminded of the presence of Saint Francis through ritual symbols embedded within the journey. While the Pilgrims Path (*Pelgrimspad)* in Dutch Limburg is distinguished by red and white signage, the *Via di Francesco del Sud* features markings in yellow and blue. Despite appearing trivial, these colours are purposefully selected. These colours are not only chosen for their visibility and contrast against natural surroundings, but the yellow also represents the Saint James pilgrimage, while the blue symbolizes the flag of Europe.[96] Tuscany, Umbria, and Lazio all utilize the Tau cross signage along the route. Historically, the Tau symbol, resembling a "T" and representing the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, signified true believers (Ezekiel 9:4). During the time of Saint Francis, it was

[96]Rete_via_di_francesco_lazio (@rete_via_di_francesco_lazio), "ATTENZIONE: COMMUNICAZIONE IMPORTANTE PER IL TERRITORIO,", Instagram, February 27, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/rete_via_di_francesco_lazio/

repurposed to symbolize faithfulness and compassion, values he exemplified. Saint Francis even adopted the Tau as his signature, replacing his name on documents.[97]

These signs are predominantly painted every two hundred metres, on trees, stones, electricity towers, asphalt, and other material elements found along the route. The goal of the signage is "that pilgrims can fully immerse themselves in their journey".[98] In the Umbrian section, however, there are also signs indicating the distance in kilometres to the next stop, and its distance to Assisi or Rome (fig. 3). They serve to keep pilgrims mindful of their pace and surroundings, thereby minimizing the possibility that they could 'wander off', and guiding them towards the ultimate destination. The Associative Network takes a different approach, placing wooden signs along the Lazio stretch (fig. 4). These signs feature inspirational quotes about walking or journeying, that serve to guide the pilgrim in introspection regarding their journey, particularly aiming to shape their perception of how this pilgrimage, and the act of traversing it, should impact their worldview: their internal voyage.

As Table 1 proposes, walking and journeying are presented as acts of discovery and novelty, emphasizing their transformative potential by leaving the mundane behind. This theme is evident in most quotes, except for the one from Saint Francis' Canticle of Brother Sun, likely included due to his significant authority in the context of the pilgrimage. Although Saint Francis left many writings, the Canticle of Brother Sun is his most popular work related to nature. Linguistically, there are notable aspects too. Some quotes are translated, such as Enya's lyrics from *Pilgrim* (English to Italian), while others, like Bob Dylan's *Blowin' In the Wind* and Antonio Machado's Spanish quote, remain in their original language. This discrepancy may stem from the intended audience: Spanish is more accessible to Italian speakers, whereas English might require translation for clarity. Dylan's unaltered quote, however, evokes a sense of recognition, resonating with Italian popular culture. The pilgrimage signs are, thus, carefully tailored to their intended audience, with linguistic choices reflecting the expected language proficiency and cultural familiarity of the pilgrims, ensuring the messages resonate effectively. Despite potentially interrupting mobility, these quotes encourage pilgrims to immerse themselves more consciously in nature.

While the signs offer the pilgrim a small confirmation of being on the right path, reaching a resting place may produce a sense of alienation. Whereas the path serves as a distinct pilgrimage space, the resting places often lack clear markers, blending multiple social spaces. Here, the pilgrimage experience competes with other social realities, at times blurring its significance, at times enhancing a self-awareness that triggers dissonance. In the next chapter, I will explore this concept further. The pilgrimage structure is, however, upheld by the official Credential, a religious travel document carried by pilgrims on the *Via di Francesco del Sud*.[99] The credential aims to authenticate the pilgrimage, identify the pilgrim, provide access to hospitality facilities, and enable certification of the completed pilgrimage by ecclesiastical authorities.[100] It is stamped at resting places along the route by individuals associated with the pilgrimage, including deacons, lay

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[97] Newton Nobert, "Franciscans and the privileged identity for the Tau cross, Episode 17", *Inspired Learners* (2024): 1-2, https://inlearners.org.
[98] "Si sta facendo tutto il meglio perché i pellegrini possano abbandonarsi al proprio cammino". "Segnaletica," La Via di Francesco, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://www.viadifrancesco.it/informazioni-e-consigli-pellegrinaggio-di-assisi/segnaletica-segnavia-giallo-blu-e-tau-giallo.
[99] de Salvo, "Il viaggio tra spiritualità e territorio," 230; The official website mentions: "it is issued by a religious authority that takes responsibility for what it says and therefore it must be used responsibly and correctly", accessed on July 23, 2024, https://www.viadifrancesco.it/en/pilgrim-s-credential-and-testimonium-viae-francisci.
[100] "a) garantire l'autenticità del pellegrinaggio; b) identificare il pellegrino; c) consentire l'accesso alle strutture che offrono ospitalità ap Pellegrini; d) consentire di ricevere dalla competente autorità ecclesiastica la certificazione dell' avvenuto pellegrinaggio." As stated in the *Credenziale del Pellegrino* issued by the Diocese of Gubbio, retrieved in February 2023. (my translation)

ministers, hostel owners, or private individuals. These stamps confirm the pilgrim's status within the newly arrived place and connect the various places along the pilgrimage route with the ultimate destination. It thereby co-shapes the journey into a long-distance pilgrimage walk, expanding the pilgrimage space into these new realms. Furthermore, this pilgrimage passport confirms the pilgrims' status as 'in transit' and, most of all, as a 'follower of Saint Francis' footsteps, thereby encapsulating the symbolic meanings and associations attributed to the pilgrimage route and its destinations.

Author	Quote on wooden sign	Translation in English
Thomas Stearns Eliot	*Solo chi rischia di andare troppo lontano avrà la possibilita di scoprire quanto lontano si può andare*	Only those who risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go
Enya	*Ogni cuore è un Pellegrino*	Each heart is a pilgrim
Anonymous	*Non abbiate paura di andare adagio, ma di fermarvi*	Do not be afraid of going at a slow pace, be afraid only of standing still.
Antonio Machado	*Caminante son tus huellas el camino, y nada más; caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.*	Traveler, your footprints are the path, and nothing more; traveler, there is no path, the path is made by walking.
Henry Miller	*Una destinazione non è mai un luogo, ma un nuovo modo di vedere le cose.*	One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things
San Francesco	*Laudato si', o mio Signore, per sor'Acqua, la quale è molto utile, humile, pretiosa et casta.*	Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water, who is very useful, humble, precious, and pure.
J.R.R. Tolkien	*Non tutti coloro che vagano si sono persi.*	Not all those who wander are lost.
Bob Dylan	*How many roads must a man walk down before you can call him a man?*	How many roads must a man walk down before you can call him a man?
Paul Morand	*Partire è vincere una lite contro l'abitudine*	To leave is to win a fight against habit.
Marcel Proust	*Il vero viaggio di scoperta non consiste nel cercare nuove terre, ma nell'avere nuovi occhi.*	The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.

Table 1. First ten inspirational quotes to be found along the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, based on ethnographic research conducted in May 2023.

Figure 3 Sign with kilometres along the *Via di Francesco del Sud* in Umbria, May 2023.

Figure 4 Wooden sign along the Latium stretch of *Via di Francesco del Sud*, May 2023.

Pilgrims who present the credential in Assisi receive a certificate called the *Testimonium Viae Francisci* (fig. 5), officially confirming their arrival at the end of the *Via* and their visit to the tomb of Saint Francis. Historically, testimonialsoriginated from pilgrimages associated with penance and punishment, serving as proof of reaching the goal and thus enabling absolution and remission of punishment.[101] In modern times, the *Testimonium* for the *Via di Francesco del Sud* holds personal significance, akin to a souvenir of the pilgrimage experience. Albeit a souvenir, the *Testimonium* is issued with the approval of the religious authorities of Assisi. In Latin, these authorities proclaim the completion to the "City of Saints Francis and Clare" and make it known that the pilgrim, "for the sake of piety and pilgrimage", has visited the Papal Basilica dedicated to Saint Francis.[102] Since its issuance is contingent upon specific conditions – the pilgrim must have walked the last hundred km to the Tomb of Saint Francis in Assisi[103] - the word "piety" is directly related to the pilgrimage. Interestingly, the authority issuing these testimoniums also monitors applicants at the *Statio Peregrinorum*, keeping track of the percentage traveling for religious reasons—32.2% in 2022 and 46.73% in 2023.[104] Thus, for over half of the pilgrims, the word "piety" may not apply.

The *Testimonium* is written in Latin, a language often considered 'dead'. This choice mirrors the testimonia of the *Via Francigena* and *Camino de Santiago*, where Latin is used to uphold a tradition dating back to the Middle Ages when Latin served as the *lingua franca* of the Church and religious

[101] de Salvo, "Il viaggio tra spiritualità e territorio," 230; Giuseppe Lorini, "On Credentials," *Journal of Social Ontology* 6, no. 1 (2020): 60-61, https://doi.org/10.1515/jso-2019-0034.
[102] *Testimonium Peregrinationis peractae ad Sanctorum Francisci et Clarae Civitatem. Notum facimus Hanc Papalem Basilicam apud Sancti Francisci corpus aedificatam atque ad dei gloriam et ipsius Sancti Francisci Honorem Dicatam dom [name] Pietatis causa ac peregrinationis visitasse.*
[103] "Credenziale", La Via di Francesco, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://www.viadifrancesco.it/credenziale-del-pellegrino-e-testimonium-viae-francisci.
[104] "Le statistiche per il 2023 della Statio Peregrinorum", San Francesco, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://www.sanfrancescopatronoditalia.it/notizie/francescanesimo/le-statistiche-per-il-2023-della-statio-peregrinorum-53450?fbclid=IwAR0NRuX_j-o07f5cB2OPhNaXc_9fN6qOIQ-mIMnlypfWy_YRbwznANVuxY.

pilgrimages. This use of Latin preserves the historical and ecclesiastical character of these centuries-old pilgrimage routes and emphasizes the religious and spiritual nature of the pilgrimage. Similar to the *Testimonium* of the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, these certificates affirm this tradition with the phrase "pietatis causa".[105] Its Latin, just as its document design which include a medieval miniature of Saint Francis and Saint Clare, tries to evoke the feeling of historicity. The *Testimonium*, is therefore, not just a record of a journey but serves as a tangible link to the past, connecting contemporary pilgrims with centuries-old practices and a conceptual representation of the pilgrimage's spiritual and cultural dimensions.

Figure 5 Testimonium Peregrinationis Peractae ad Sanctorum et Clarae Civitatem, such as issued in Assisi after completing the *Via di Francesco del Sud*.

The *Via di Francesco del Sud* is one of several routes linking various sites related to Saint Francis. It is designed and promoted by various entities to connect locations associated with Saint Francis, thereby preserving rural areas and linking them to historical and spiritual narratives. This conceived space is an intentional creation that embodies specific cultural, historical, and spiritual meanings, reflecting the planners' vision to evoke Saint Francis's memory and legacy through the landscape, extending his heritage beyond Assisi. The heritage discourse of the *Via di Francesco del Sud* varies, depending on the area the route passes through. The act of walking the route reflects the pilgrim's physical and personal investment, aligning with the original intentions of the pilgrimage. These intentions are projected onto the route, integrating the pilgrim's body and self with the physical landscape. This journey through space allows for mental and self-reflective movement through one's own life. As a 'trailscape' it integrates physical geography with cultural and spiritual narratives, promoting a particular way of perceiving and engaging with the landscape. The notion of "following in the footsteps of Saint Francis", a form of re-enactment promoted differently in the Umbrian and Lazio regions, creates a unique connection between the walker and the landscape. It fosters a dynamic interplay of being and becoming, where both the individual and the environment shape and are shaped by each other.

[105] Maria, "Understanding Camino Pilgrim Passports & Certificates," Caminoways, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://caminoways.com/camino-pilgrim-passport-certificates.


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Chapter III Movement in 'Places of rest'

"Send me a picture when you've arrived in Assisi." Those were Patrizia's parting words as I left Scandriglia for that day's journey to Poggio San Lorenzo. The previous day, Patrizia and her friend Roberto had welcomed me with open arms, offering a bed and a traditional Italian three-course dinner. During *secondo piatto*, I asked Patrizia why she extended such hospitality. She explained that, after walking nearly thirty kilometers that day, I was likely exhausted and reluctant to cook. For her and Roberto, offering a meal and a place to rest was a simple gesture of kindness. Sleeping and eating are unavoidable activities, she pointed out, and thereby essential elements of the pilgrimage itself. By offering these to pilgrims, Patrizia felt she was participating in the pilgrimage with them, experiencing their journey without having to walk—a task she preferred to avoid.[106] In this way, she experienced movement while remaining in the 'place of rest'. Based on both participant observation and observer participation, semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire, this chapter delves into these places of rest, exploring how these places are experienced as lived space by both pilgrims and local hosts.

A place in pilgrimage

Place is crucial in our understanding of movement. While immobility contradicts the essential movement-between-places that defines a journey, being-in-place, as Patrizia already pointed out, "proves to be movement's constant companion".[107] Hence, Lefebvre sees a place as a temporary and specific form that emerges from the ongoing creation of social space. It is an integral component of lived space, where the abstract conceptions of space (conceived space) and the tangible, material world (perceived space) converge. Lived space is the space of everyday life. It "is directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'."[108] Place, as Andrew Merrifield compellingly argues through a Lefebvrian perspective, is synonymous with what is lived. And the meaning of the entire space comes from these individual lived places, and each place, through its connections with other places, helps to shape and define the whole space.[109]

Lefebvre's concept of lived space encompasses the symbolic dimensions and cultural and social practices that endow a space with character and significance.[110] For instance, the simple act of hosting pilgrims transforms a home into a place of spiritual significance. This aligns with Tim Cresswell's idea of a 'sense of place'. Cresswell, a prominent scholar in human geography, defines place as "a certain portion of space" that holds meaning through human experiences and interactions, not just as a specific location.[111] Places serve – just as sites – as memory complexes that enshrine and commemorate community narratives, identities, and a sense of belonging. Both concepts recognize the importance of narratives and heritage in shaping the significance of places. Heritage encompasses both tangible elements (like buildings and landscapes) and intangible aspects (such as traditions, memories, and rituals). It shapes our experience of lived space through collective practices and historical contexts. And the stabilizing persistence of place as a container of experiences contributes to its intrinsic memorability. The power of place partially rests on its capacity to invite a way of seeing and understanding the world.[112]

[106] Appendix I.
[107] Cecilia Elena Gossen, "Place-making and meaning-making in the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela" (PhD diss., University of Calgary Press, 2012), 53-54.
[108] Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 39.
[109] Andrew Merrifield, "Place and Space: A Lefebvrian Reconciliation," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers 18*, no. 4 (1993): 520-523, http://www.jstor.org/stable/622564?origin=JSTOR-pdf.
[110] Merrifield, "Place and Space," 520-523.
[111] Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden; Blackwell, 2005), 7.
[112] Gossen, "Place-making and meaning-making in the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela", 200.

It is, thus, through the interaction of people and place that a walking pilgrimage creates meaning.[113] But the literature on pilgrimages has primarily focused on the experiences of pilgrims and the significance of pilgrimage sites or destinations, resulting in interpretations of these places in terms of either *communitas* or contestations. Scholar Michael di Giovine suggested already in 2011 that this dichotomy can be overcome by examining the roles of site managers and other mediators. These individuals navigate and mediate the inherent conflicts and competitions at sacred sites while also fostering a sense of community and belonging among participants.[114] Since then the few studies on how host communities perceive the impact of pilgrimage tourism have focused primarily on the communities living in localities where the pilgrimage ends, which often have religious buildings or sites that attract a bigger number of visitors, and already for a longer period – like Assisi and Rome.[115]

A pilgrimage often spans several days, during which pilgrims rely on the hospitality of local communities. This aspect of the journey is vital, as it upholds the pilgrimage's identity. Without the welcome and support of hosts like Patrizia, the pilgrimage loses its continuity, a key element of its essence.[116] These maintainers greatly impact the pilgrims and their experience, while the pilgrimage also significantly affects these communities.[117] This research delves into these interactions to explore how the ongoing movements and activities on the pilgrimage route shape the experiences of place and influence the dynamics of mobilities. Often overlooked in pilgrimage studies, these intermediary places, typically overshadowed by the focus on departure and arrival sites,[118] become temporary places of belonging.

From a place

"We are all strangers and guests on this earth, we are all on a journey." This tagline from the Associative Network of the Via di Francesco in Lazio evokes a sense of community and belonging and highlights the Network's role in shaping the pilgrimage narrative and the concept of hospitality. The network promotes hospitality as part of the pilgrimage tradition and as an expression of peaceful coexistence and reciprocity.[119] Both the tradition and the implementation of hospitality are shaped by the historical figure of Saint Francis, who was both pilgrim – as he

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[113] Richard Scriven, "A 'New' Walking Pilgrimage: Performance and Meaning on the North Wales Pilgrim's Way", *Landscape Research* 46, no. 1 (2021): 64–76, https://doi.org/10.1080/01426397.2020.1829574.

[114] Michael A. di Giovine, "Pilgrimage: Communitas and Contestation, Unity and Difference - An Introduction," *Tourism review* 59, no. 3 (2011): 250, https://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/anthrosoc_facpub/116.

[115] Assisi, as a city, being recognized World Heritage since 2000, and the Vatican City – the end/start of the pilgrimage is the Basilica of Saint Peter – since 1984. "Assisi, the Basilica of San Francesco and Other Franciscan Sites," UNESCO World Heritage Convention, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/990; "Vatican City," UNESCO World Heritage Convention, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/286.

[116] Leonardo Porcelloni, "Pilgrimage and Hospitality along the Via Francigena: Revitalisation of Rural Areas and Therapeutic mobilities," *Turismo e Psicologia* 14, no. 1 (2021): 70-82, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354995919_Pilgrimage_and_Hospitality_along_the_Via_Francigena_Revitalisation_of_Rural_Areas_and_Therapeutic_Mobilities.

[117] Ricardo Progano, "'Residents' Perceptions of Socio-Economic Impacts on Pilgrimage Trails: How does the community perceive pilgrimage tourism?," *Asian Journal of Tourism Research* 3 (2018): 174, https://asiantourismresearch.cmu.ac.th/Vol3%20No.2/Chapter7.pdf.

[118] Scriven, "Geographies of Pilgrimage," 255. Some research on in-between places does, however, exist, but it more often examines these locations through an economic lens. For example, P. Ballesteros-Arias, "Processes of Change in Olveiroa, A Hostel Village," in *Heritage, Pilgrimage and the Camino to Finisterre: Walking to the End of the World*. GeoJournal Library, Volume 117, ed. Sánchez-Carretero, Cristina (Cham: Springer, 2015), 135-162.

[119] "[…] trasmettere alle comunità locali, attraversate dal cammino, il dovere e il piacere dell'ospitalità. Ospitalità intesa come espressione della reciprocità di doni, come convivenza pacifica tra i popoli." In: *La presentazione in PDF della Rete Associativa della via di Francesco nel Lazio,* 4.

went on several pilgrimages – and 'host', as he placed himself in service for those in need, including pilgrims.

Hospitality as part of the pilgrimage tradition runs back to the Middle Ages, when welcoming travellers, the sick, and pilgrims at religious centres was a cornerstone of monastic and convent life. This is clearly demonstrated by the widespread presence of *domus hospitales* and *xenodochia* during this period, in Europe and particularly in Italy.[120] Saint Francis of Assisi, however, significantly influenced this practice of hospitality in the Late Middle Ages, by emphasizing active engagement with the broader community, extending hospitality outside the monastic walls.[121] Communities along pilgrimage routes established institutions and private accommodation to support traveling pilgrims, viewing these acts as works of mercy.[122]

The understanding of hospitality, as expressed by the Associative Network, is deeply rooted in the teachings of Saint Francis. For the Network, true hospitality goes beyond mere convenience; it involves meaningful engagement, recognizing the unique qualities of others, and fostering mutual understanding and personal growth. Seen as transformative and salvific, hospitality requires listening, empathy, and an open attitude, enabling hosts to adapt to the needs and experiences of those they welcome. It shapes our humanity and is essential for creating deep connections.[123] Unlike older pilgrimage routes with well-established infrastructure to meet accommodation and basic needs, the *Via di Francesco del Sud* depends on the proactive efforts of associated organizations to build necessary facilities. These organizations promote a specific interpretation of hospitality aligned with Franciscan values. Accommodations along the route range from simple campsites to luxurious hotels, but studies suggest that many pilgrims prefer places specifically designed to host them.[124] Along the *Via di Francesco del Sud* this means either a dormitory in a pilgrim's hostel, a spare room in a local's house or a cell in a convent. The nature of these accommodations is rooted in providing temporary, short-term engagement and shelter.

As hospitality is a key element of the pilgrimage tradition, hosts play an essential role in sustaining this tradition and become integral to the pilgrimage experience. Their role is enacted in the 'places of rest,' where the movement of the pilgrimage drives the practice of hospitality. Understanding hospitality as a reciprocal act places the hosts in a temporary community with the pilgrims, which relates to the experience of place. To understand the part of the performance played out by the hosts, I distributed a questionnaire to individuals offering hospitality on a donation basis. The questionnaire began with a set of broad questions on their motivations and the religious aspects of their practice, and then moved on to questions about their engagement with the pilgrims and the perceptions of space and its connection to the sense of community.

Contact information for the questionnaire was gathered from the Lazio and Umbrian websites and different Facebook groups. Additionally, during my pilgrimage in May 2023, I further expanded my outreach by requesting participation from those who had hosted me.[125] Their responses were processed anonymously. A total of 55 people responded, with 29 completing most of the

[120] Silvia Beltramo, "Medieval Architectures for Religious Tourism and Hospitality along the Pilgrimage Routes of Northern Italy," *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 3, no. 1 (2015): 79, https://hdl.handle.net/11583/2650710.
[121] Maddrell et al., "Introduction," 28-29.
[122] Elizabeth Tingle, "The Pilgrim as Temporary Pauper: The Changing Landscape of Hospitality on the Camino de Santiago, 1550–1750, in *Do Good unto All. Charity and Poor Relief across Christian Europe, 1400-1800, ed.* Timothy G. Fehler and Jared B. Thomley (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023), 209–30.
[123] Domenico Paoletti, "Francescanesimo, Paoletti: L'accoglienza, stile della minorità," *San Francesco*, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://sanfrancescopatronoditalia.it/notizie/francescanesimo/francescanesimo-paoletti-l-accoglienza-stile-della-minorit%C3%A0-50935.
[124] Suzanne van der Beek, "De hospitalera en de pelgrim," 55.
[125] I chose to ask them after I had departed to prevent any suggestion that their participation would influence my donation.

questions, between March and July 2023.[126] The typical respondent is generally Catholic, aged 51-65, with higher education, in a relationship, and either employed or retired (see Table 2).

Category	Group	Percent
Age	36-50	25.0
	51-65	53.1
Marital status	Single	31.3
	In a relationship	25.0
	In a relationship with children (<18)	34.4
Gender	Female	56.3
	Male	43,8
Education	Higher education	81.3
Occupation	Employed	61.5
	Retired	34.4
Religion	Catholicism	71.9
	None	18.8

Table 2. Demographics of the respondents (N=29).

In Katić and Eade's research on the role of volunteers in pilgrimages (2022), it is demonstrated that individuals are motivated to volunteer due to a combination of dedication to the mission of an organization and personal benefits such as work experience and social connections. The study highlights that religion significantly impacts the creation of social capital and the likelihood of volunteering, with regular religious practice enhancing exposure to volunteering opportunities and personal spirituality fostering informal volunteering.[127] To understand the motivations and sentiments of volunteers on the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, I used the ABCE Model of Volunteer Motivation. This model categorizes motivation into four main components: affiliation (A), which encompasses social and socialization motives; beliefs (B), which includes personal values and beliefs; career development (C), which covers gaining work experience, networking, and enhancing employability; and egoistic (E), which pertains to desires, wishes, and actions related to the volunteer's ego.[128] The survey asked participants to rate their motivations and their feelings toward pilgrims on a five-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

The survey also contained inquiries about respondents' sentiments toward the pilgrims and the pilgrimage. To assess this relationship, respondents rated their connection with the pilgrims, the significance of the pilgrims in their lives, and the similarity of their experiences with those of the pilgrims on a five-point scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." It involved rating statements as: “I put the needs of the pilgrims over mine” and “I am part of the experience of the pilgrim”. Reliability of these components—connection, significance, and experience—was tested

[126] Appendix II.
[127] Mario Katić and John Eade, “The Role of Volunteers in Pilgrimage Studies: Autobiographic Reflections on Belief and the Performance of Multiple Roles,” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 12, no. 2 (2022): 582, https://doi.org/10.1086/720901.
[128] Matti Ullah Butt, Yu Hou, Kamran Ahmed Soomro, and Daniela Acquadro Maran, “The ABCE Model of Volunteer Motivation,” *Journal of Social Service Research* 43, no. 5 (2017): 593-608, https://doi.org/10.1080/01488376.2017.1355867. Given that these four components are further divided into nine dimensions, and considering the length of the survey, I decided to exclude the subscales Social (A), Organization (B), Enhancement (E), and Protective (E). Consequently, the Egoistic (E) component was excluded in its entirety. However, this decision did not compromise the model’s reliability. After these adjustments, 28 questions about motivations remained.

using Cronbach's Alpha[129] with a small sample (N=5), resulting in values of 0.73, 0.88, and 0.88, respectively, indicating good internal consistency. The overall survey items had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.94.

The results indicate a significant strong positive correlation ($r = 0.724$, $p < 0.001$) between religious motives and the volunteers' feelings of influence on their own and the pilgrims' religious experiences. These participants responded positively to the questions: "I deepen the religious experience of the pilgrims" and "I am part of the experience of pilgrim", but also "The pilgrims deepen my religious experience". This suggests that volunteers with religious motivations not only perceive their contributions as enhancing the pilgrims' spiritual journeys, but also feel that their own religious experiences are enriched through the act of volunteering. Furthermore, this reciprocal enrichment highlights a two-way exchange where both parties benefit spiritually. However, this correlation does not extend to feelings of significance or connection with the pilgrims. The absence of correlation between religious motivations and feelings of significance or connection indicates that while volunteers with strong religious motivations perceive their work as spiritually impactful, this does not necessarily correlate with how significant they feel the pilgrims are or how connected they feel to them. This separation suggests that religious motivations influence the perception of spiritual impact more than the personal significance or emotional connection within the volunteer-pilgrim relationship.

To illustrate, when I arrived in Scandriglia, I visited the local church, but found the door closed. Feeling tired from the long walk, I decided to skip it and proceeded to Riccardo and Patrizia's home. When I arrived, Patrizia asked if I had seen the church. I mentioned that the door was closed, but that it had not been a major issue for me. She then explained that this had happened to other pilgrims before and had requested an extra key from the church, as she felt it was important for us to have access to this local religious heritage. She eventually took me back to the church, shared some background on the frescoes of Saint Francis (fig. 6), and we ended up discussing faith. While I cannot be certain that Patrizia's motives were religious, she and Riccardo mentioned that evening, as recorded in my audio diary, that they felt deeply connected to the pilgrims' experience. Through her act of hospitality, Patrizia not only deepened her own connection with and experience of the pilgrimage—as if she were walking it herself—but also saw herself as an important gatekeeper, providing pilgrims with a literal 'key' to a deeper, more meaningful experience.

[129] Cronbach's Alpha ensures that the items in a scale correlate and measure the same underlying concept.

Figure 6 Fresco of Saint Francis of Assisi in the Church of Santa Maria del Colle in Scandriglia.

Figure 7 Anna and Mauro in front of their accommodation, April 29th, 2023.

Additionally, there are strong correlations between 'experience' and other motivations: prosocial ($r = 0.565$, $p < 0.001$), understanding ($r = 0.520$, $p = 0.002$), and socialization ($r = 0.545$, $p = 0.001$). This implies that helping others, learning and self-exploration, and social interactions significantly enhance volunteers' personal and religious experiences. Patrizia was not the only host who articulated this correlation. Two other hosts, Mauro and Anna (fig. 7), also explained that while they did not particularly enjoy walking, it was our shared experience that defined the pilgrimage for them. To them, offering hospitality was their way of participating in the pilgrimage journey. Furthermore, a strong correlation exists between socialization motivations and the sense of connection with the pilgrimage ($r = 0.654$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the crucial role of social aspects in deepening volunteers' involvement and sense of belonging to the pilgrimage community. Just like Patriza, Mauro and Anna told me that they 'were doing' the pilgrimage through the act of hospitality, opening their home and providing pilgrims with practical information. The importance of community, underscored by this correlation, shows that pilgrimages are both individual spiritual journeys and communal events where social bonds are strengthened. The social fabric of the pilgrimage is essential in creating a sense of belonging and community among participants, and these interactions are a critical component of the heritage experience. These motivations suggest that the pilgrimage heritage is enriched by the reciprocal, temporal actions of volunteers, making the pilgrimage a living tradition that evolves through acts of kindness and support.

In addition to the multiple-choice questions of the pilgrimage, the volunteers were asked to describe the kind of physical space they associate their work with, and the physical space they associate with the pilgrimage, further enriching the understanding of their spatial engagement with the pilgrimage. The answers provide an insight in the placing of their heritage practice within the pilgrimage space. In the answers to both questions, there seems to be a division between volunteers who mention the small, close-to-home aspects, associated to their hospitality and those who describe the infinite possibilities of nature. One respondent even describes this division in his answer to the latter: "Two spaces: primarily the linear, indefinite, natural, and solitary space

of the road/path; then the closed but welcoming and inhabited space of the arrival point where one can rest […]."[130]

For example, answers about the physical space of their work included a direct "Accommodation[131] for pilgrims", but also a "The home as a privileged place of hospitality to establish a sincere and warm relationship", and "Cozy accommodation and natural garden for pilgrims. I manage a welcoming (agritourism) establishment and experience the happiness of pilgrims when they arrive at a well-kept place." These answers suggest that they seem to understand hospitality as a personal and community-oriented practice that is integral to their role in the pilgrimage. Volunteers who focus on close-to-home aspects, thereby, contribute to a localized understanding of heritage, where the pilgrimage is experienced in familiar, community-centric environments. This aligns with the 2003 definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) as practices that provide a sense of identity and continuity within the community.[132] This localized view integrates the ritual of hospitality into everyday life, reinforcing community ties and local traditions, creating a sense of place.

Volunteers who describe the infinity of nature may see their local hospitality as part of a larger, more expansive spiritual or communal journey. They might perceive their acts of hospitality not just as isolated events, but as contributions to a grander narrative of pilgrimage that transcends physical and cultural boundaries. One respondent associates the physical space of the work she does with "Nature, infinity. As a pilgrim who hosts pilgrims, I feel part of everything". But answers also included "Unspoiled/untouched nature" and "A field of colourful flowers, because pilgrims, travellers, walkers are like flowers, coloured with different shades". On the physical space of the pilgrimage, answers included: "Nature, because it is where we come from" and "Wood and mountains... Probably because our area is exactly like that". This broader perspective integrates their local practices into a universal experience of nature and spirituality, seeing the hospitality offered as part of a larger ethos of kindness and service that connects all participants in the pilgrimage, thereby creating a sense of belonging.

By connecting their local practice to the infinite aspects of nature and the pilgrimage, volunteers create a sense of continuity both temporally and spatially. They view their role as contributing to a living tradition that spans beyond their immediate environment, enhancing their sense of place as part of a dynamic and evolving process. This 'being-in-place as process' offers a more dynamic, active, and practice-oriented understanding of how people relate to place over time. In her research, *A Global Sense of Place*, Doreen Massey explains that places are created through interconnected flows of people within a particular location. These flows can range from global interactions to more local, intimate connections. However, they must be beneficial to both. As a result, places are always evolving through the ongoing interrelations they are part of. Movement, therefore, plays a crucial role in constituting a place and ensuring its continuous existence. A place then, is always in process. [133]

To a place

Co-participating in this act of hospitality, are the pilgrims of the *Via di Francesco del Sud*. This part examines how these pilgrims interpret the various places along the pilgrimage route, delving into their personal experiences and the deeper meanings these locations hold in the context of their

[130] "Due spazi: prioritariamente lo spazio lineare, indefinito, naturale e solitario della strada/sentiero; poi lo spazio chiuso ma accogliente ed abitato del punto di arrivo dove riposare […]." (my translation)
[131] The Italian word "accoglienza" was used here, which also indicates a form of hospitality.
[132] Adell et al., "Introduction," 10.
[133] Doreen Massey, "A Global Sense of Place" in *Reading Human Geography: The Poetics and Politics of Inquiry,* ed. Trevor Barnes and Derek Gregory (Londen: Arnold, 1997), 315-323. As cited in: Gossen, "Place-making and meaning-making in the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela," 144.

journey. I initially met these pilgrims during my own journey along the *Via di Francesco de Sud*, spent a few hours with them, and conducted interviews. After completing my journey, I reached out to them again for follow-up questions about their experiences. For these 'follow-up' interviews, I employed a visitor-employed photography method. This technique involved asking participants to share photographs they had taken of elements along the route, which were then used to explore the deeper meanings and personal significance they attached to these places. Photographs can capture aspects of the pilgrimage experience that words alone might not convey, revealing the underlying meanings, experiences, and memories associated with their visit.[134]

The interviews reveal that the pilgrims' journeys are marked by profound personal and communal experiences. For instance, one pilgrim expressed, "There is still here, in this region and on this path, a great deal of humanity. In the different villages, in the different cities, I feel a strong sense of community, something you no longer find or that I no longer find in cities. […] I feel that there is a spirit of community" (Bruno, 70, Switzerland). When asked if he felt he was part of this community, he acknowledged that while he feels a sense of connection because of his status as a pilgrim, he is not fully integrated into the community, mainly because of the language barrier. He further described the relationship with others along the journey as being based on reciprocity. Another pilgrim remarked, "I did not expect to encounter such small villages. On vacation, you usually don't visit these little towns. I always wonder how people live in these tiny villages. I did not anticipate finding such beauty here" (Greta, 32, Germany). Like Bruno, Greta faced a language barrier. While Bruno knew some basic Italian, Greta had no Italian skills and thus could not stay in the designated pilgrims' accommodation, primarily staying in hotels instead. As a result, she could not engage in the reciprocal nature of hospitality and was unable or unwilling to connect with the religious aspects due to her non-Catholic background.

For three other pilgrims – Marijke, Aleksander, and Lena – who were Catholic practitioners, their sense of community was closely tied to their religious practices. Marijke (54, The Netherlands) chose this pilgrimage for its religious and spiritual dimensions, which she saw reflected in "the numerous convents and Franciscan places". Beforehand, she had bought a pocket Bible and printed a Bible reading schedule to deepen her religious experience. The schedule covered the New Testament in a month's time, three fragments a day. However, after two weeks she had sent the Bible home because it felt too burdensome, and she was not motivated to read. Instead, her spiritual growth was fuelled by her increased attendance at church. She had, thus, favoured the spirituality inscribed in the lived material culture rather than in a form of written textuality that afforded an individual practice. And although she did not feel a sense of community with the nuns, their blessings on several occasions had left her deeply touched. Furthermore, she was once invited to participate in a Catholic foot-washing ceremony, akin to the Maundy Thursday ritual, which made her feel very special. These moments left her with the sense that she was the one receiving rather than engaging in a mutual exchange.

Likewise, Aleksander (30s, Poland) and his wife Lena (30s, Poland) experienced a sense of belonging through religious practices, though in different ways. Aleksander was very disciplined in his religious observance, reading the Bible daily and attending church regularly. He was eager to encounter Saint Francis in nature. Lena, on the other hand, found spiritual fulfilment in painting religious art and did not follow the same strict religious practices as her husband. Together, they both found a sense of community through the warmth and hospitality of the Franciscan monks and nuns, but most of all through the invitations they received to join mass. Aleksander, when asked what had surprised him most about the *Via di Francesco*, responded:

[134] Jafar Bapiri, Kourosh Esfandiar, and Siamak Seyfi, "A Photo-Elicitation Study of the Meanings of a Cultural Heritage Site Experience: A Means-End Chain Approach," *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 16, no. 1 (2021): 62-78, https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2020.1756833.

> The hospitality of Franciscan monks in Monteluco was very surprising. They have prepared our beds, gave us a wonderful dinner and breakfast, we were able to join them for the mass and chants. And they did not want a penny, the offering was all up to you. It is rare in the modern world, you hear about it in stories from different centuries. They were also very warm, welcoming us on the mass. And they send us an email afterwards, because we left them a message, that they are praying for us to come back.

For him, meeting these "like-minded people, with whom you can connect in a dialogue" was the most valuable part of the experience, suggesting a sense of connection based on shared religious experience.

This sense of community is vividly expressed in the pictures I received in response to my request for images that best represented their pilgrimage experience. These images are not representative for the pilgrimage. Out of the twenty pictures I received, sixteen focused on hosts (fig. 8), religious sites or elements at the 'places of rest' (fig. 9) or fellow pilgrims (fig. 10), while all pilgrims mentioned in their interviews that the journey primarily involves walking alone through nature. The format of the interview, conducted during the journey of both these pilgrims and me, somehow fostered a more conventional narrative of the pilgrimage as a solitary journey through nature. The photographs and the follow-up question, on the other hand, allowed for the expression of a personal experience, of space that is lived. These personal narratives reveal that the places of rest along the pilgrimage route are more than just unavoidable stops; they hold deep meaning and significance through the interactions and experiences shared between pilgrims and hosts. The hostels, churches, and public spaces where pilgrims eat, sleep, and socialize become central to their journey, offering moments of respite and fostering connections among all participants – including the hosts.

Figure 8 Image sent by Bruno, displaying Daniel who hosted him during his pilgrimage.

Figure 9 Image sent by Aleksander, capturing the scene he witnessed during a mass he was invited to during his pilgrimage.

Figure 10 Image sent by Marijke, portraying a group of fellow pilgrims she had met during her pilgrimage.

There seems to be a different dynamic at play as well, which was clearly formulated by both Greta and Hans (early 60s, Germany). Greta explained that she felt a certain distance between her, and the people living in these small villages and explained this difference by her being "on the way" or "travelling". Hans made a similar observation, he felt "detached" from the local society, especially when dining alone.[135] I experienced a similar feeling during my own pilgrimage. For me, the sense of community within these places came not from religious elements but from the people who opened their homes and took the time to get to know me. However, in their absence, I experienced a loneliness not related to being alone on the pilgrimage, but rather a feeling of separation from the social relations within these locales. Just like Greta, I felt in a state of transition which made it difficult to settle in.

Sean Slavin (2002) observed a similar sentiment among pilgrims, in his research on the *Camino di Santiago*. He argued that pilgrims are structurally distinct because they are foreign, and temporally distinct because they "pass through", leading to their isolation from the surrounding settled society.[136] The pilgrimage is a liminal experience, a transformative journey that takes pilgrims out of their everyday routines and into a space of spiritual and cultural exploration. Liminality involves the de-familiarization of the known and the blurring of normally distinct categories in our minds. This ambiguity can create internal conflict as we struggle to categorize and make sense of our surroundings.[137] In the context of a pilgrimage, liminality provides the stage for the emergence of cognitive dissonance. Pilgrims, as Slavin concluded, are not so much in no-place or even a marginal place but rather in a place "ontologically different from places bounded by space and time".[138] Cognitive dissonance is a psychological concept that refers to the mental tension or discomfort people experience when confronted with conflicting beliefs, attitudes, or

[135] Appendix I.
[136] Sean Slavin, "Walking as Spiritual Practice: The Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela," *Body & Society* 9, no. 3 (2003): 7, https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X030093001.
[137] Alun David Morgan, "Journeys Into Transformation: Travel to An 'Other' Place as a Vehicle for Transformative Learning," *Journal of Transformative Education* 8, no. 4 (2010): 252-253, https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344611421491.
[138] Slavin, "Walking as Spiritual Practice," 7.

behaviours.[139] It is in the engagement with the host community that the reformulation of the meanings and identities are confirmed.[140]

Suzanne van der Beek in her research on the *Camino di Santiago* explains this relation between host and pilgrims as a form of exchange, or a transaction. Pilgrims not only receive hospitality but also contribute something of value in return to the host. The pilgrim identity, and the significance attached to it, is pivotal here. The act of presenting, recognizing, and affirming this identity plays a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of hospitality along the *Camino*.[141] Similarly, Constanza Gasparo's ethnographic research on the *Camino* examines how the host community facilitates the pilgrims' quest for authenticity through hospitality. Pilgrims seek deeper, more authentic interactions and experiences as a way of differentiating themselves from conventional tourists. Their quest for authenticity serves as a means of self-definition, helping them see themselves as part of a unique group.[142]

For Van der Beek and Gasparo, both host and pilgrim play a crucial role in reestablishing the pilgrim identity through acts of hospitality. The absence of this form of hospitality or a lack of access to this hospitality, for example due to a language barrier, can cause the pilgrim's reality to remain unconfirmed, preventing them from reconciling conflicting expectations and potentially leading to cognitive dissonance. Places, thus, can initiate and support transformative experiences, but not, as Bajc, Coleman, and Eade (2007) phrase it, if they are locales "that seem to want to keep us out".[143] For places to serve as catalysts for transformation, they must function as social spaces that invite and enable individuals to envision themselves as already being a part of them. This sense of belonging and the ability to imagine oneself as already inhabiting the space is crucial for transformation.[144] Thus, it is through the act of hospitality that the pilgrimage space is sustained within these 'places of rest'. This hospitality is a part of the local heritage, allowing pilgrims to envision themselves as already integrated into it, since they play a crucial part of the performance that contains the act of hospitality. At the same time, these places transcend their local character, affirming the pilgrim's sense of 'being-in-place' as an ongoing process. These places, therefore, perform a crucial bridging role.

This dynamic interaction between the pilgrims, hosts, and places illustrates Lefebvre's idea of lived space. According to Lefebvre, lived space is shaped by our experiences and social relationships. On the Via di Francesco, the interactions between pilgrims and their hosts go beyond simple acts of hospitality; they create a profound sense of community that is both lasting and transformative. As pilgrims move along the path, they experience not just physical places to rest but also intangible spaces filled with shared humanity and spirituality. The act of hospitality brings these immobile places in motion and reinforces the pilgrim's identity, which is marked by transformation and ongoing movement.

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[139] Carmen Nastase and Zakaria Ait Taleb, "The sources of the cognitive dissonance in the religious tourism." *Revista de Turism-Studii Si Cercetari in Turism 24* (2018): 63, https://econpapers.repec.org/RePEc:scm:rdtusv:v:24:y:2017:i:24:p:3.
[140] Morgan, "Journeys Into Transformation," 256.
[141] Van der Beek, "De hospitalera en de pelgrim," 53.
[142] Costanza Gasparo, "Viandanti o residenti: etnografia lungo il Cammino di Santiago de Compostela," *Fuori Luogo Journal of Sociology of Territory, Tourism, Technology 8*, no. 2 (2020): 46, https://doi.org/10.6092/2723-9608/7137.
[143] Vida Bajc, Simon Coleman, and John Eade. "Introduction: Mobility and Centring in Pilgrimage," *Mobilities* 2, no. 3 (2007): 323, https://doi.org/10.1080/17450100701633742.
[144] Bajc, Coleman, and Eade. "Introduction," 323.

Chapter IV Solidary steps in solitude

The morning before embarking on my pilgrimage, I attended the funeral of a close friend's father. During the service, a colleague shared an anecdote from the 1990s when TomTom was founded, an Amsterdam-based company specialized in accessible navigation systems. The colleague had sued the company, claiming they were taking away users 'right to get lost'. My friend's father had joined the defending party, arguing that TomTom did not take away this right but rather made wandering possible. This deeply resonated with me, and I found myself reflecting on it throughout my journey. Mobility involves not just moving physically but also how we perceive and experience this movement.[145] Being lost often produces feelings of stress and fear, increasing awareness and reducing the chances of wandering off. As I wrote in my field diary: "when I think I am getting lost, real fear sets in, and [I] want to leave quickly. Interestingly, the pilgrimage insignia guide you so that you can stray".[146] It seems we need a path to be able to move away from it.

The essence of postmodern pilgrimage lies not in its destination, but in the journey.[147] The destination has become something that can be achieved by the act of walking. As the founder of ecological psychology, James Gibson, argued: we perceive not from a fixed point, but along a 'path of observation', a continuous itinerary of movement.[148] Walking a pilgrimage transforms movement into a performative action that "denotes the way how people generate, use, and perceive space".[149] Hence, this chapter will delve into the last dimension of Lefebvre's framework: perceived space. This dimension of space deals with the physical, tangible, and sensory experiences of practices and routines. During my 2023 pilgrimage, I employed a phenomenological approach to capture and integrate these experiences along the Via di Francesco, through a combination of interviewing pilgrims, maintaining a research diary, and photographing the route.

Mobility

Before embarking on my pilgrimage, I first had to reach its starting point: Rome, located 1,600 kilometers from home. As – almost – pilgrim, and in the spirit of Saint Francis, I decided that I had to stay on the ground and minimize my ecological footprint, resulting in a bus and train ride. Today, mobility in Europe is regulated on a pan-national level, making travel relatively easy for me. Historically, however, local lords or aristocracy restricted people's mobility, with pilgrims being a notable exception, thereby occupying a unique role in society.[150] This increased mobility was not due to their means of travel, but rather its purpose. Mobility is the "experienced and embodied practice of movement".[151] Without meaning, the *Via di Francesco del Sud* is just a long-distance walk. Social geographer Tim Cresswell, therefore, argues that "mobility exists in the same relation to movement as place to location".[152] He proposes three entangled aspects of mobility: movement, representation, and practice.[153]

Physical movement is the raw material for understanding mobility. It can be measured, mapped, and modeled, but it doesn't reveal the meanings or practices behind these mobilities. However, it

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[145] Tim Cresswell, "Towards a Politics of Mobility," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28, no. 1 (2010): 19, https://doi.org/10.1068/d11407.
[146] Appendix III.
[147] Mats Nilsson and Mekonnen Tesfahuney, "Pilgrimage Mobilities: A de Certeauian Perspective," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 101, no. 3 (2019): 224, https://doi.org/10.1080/04353684.2019.1658535.
[148] James J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception: Classic Edition* (New York: Psychology Press, 2014), 179.
[149] Stewart, "Bodies, Visions, and Spatial Politics," 610.
[150] Cresswell, "Towards a Politics of Mobility," 17-31.
[151] Cresswell, "Towards a Politics of Mobility," 19.
[152] Cresswell, "Towards a Politics of Mobility," 18.
[153] Cresswell, "Towards a Politics of Mobility," 19.

does answer questions about the location, timing, and participants in the pilgrimage space. For example, the *Statio Peregrinorum* at the Basilica of Saint Francis tracks pilgrimage data and recorded 4,078 pilgrims arriving in Assisi in 2023 on foot, and mostly alone (65,8 percent).[154] For comparison, 404,175 pilgrims completed the *Camino di Santiago* on foot in the same year.[155] While the *Statio Peregrinorum* does not give any data on when these pilgrims arrive, we can expect the pilgrimage season to align with the *Cammino di Santiago*, since the climate of Assisi is similar to Santiago de Compostela.[156] It is, therefore, likely that pilgrims arriving in Assisi, travelled from late spring to early fall (May to September).

These pilgrims mostly arrived on the Franciscan pilgrimage path the Via di Francesco (81,4 percent), though it is not specified which variant they followed.[157] The path traverses a sparsely populated area in central Italy, with its Apennine Mountains (fig. 11), olive groves (fig. 12), and forests (fig. 13). However, different pilgrims on the *Via di Francesco del Sud* took varied approaches to their journey, even though they were all traveling the same general path across central Italy. I, for example, followed the route as outlined on the Umbrian website of the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, whereas Bruno, Greta, and Marijke walked the pilgrimage in reverse. Additionally, Aleksander and Lena shortened their pilgrimage by starting in Rieti, while Marijke and Bruno lengthened theirs by beginning in Florence. Furthermore, I merged two stages into one due to their short length and my acquired rhythm from longer stages. Similarly, Greta had adjusted two stages of her journey when she could not find accommodation and as I walked with Aleksander and Lena, they decided to stay at the Monteluco hermitage and convent located a few kilometres before Spoleto. Thus, pilgrims walk the path in different ways, meaning that with approximately 4,000 pilgrims annually over a five-month period, 'walking alone' often truly means walking alone, with encounters more likely occurring with those traveling in the opposite direction.

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[154] 4,227 pilgrims arrived on foot (96,48 percent) or on bike (3,13 percent). "Turismo: Assisi, nel 2023 4.227 pellegrini giunti a piedi o in bici crescono le motivazioni religiose che spingono ad intraprendere I cammini francescani," SIR Agenzia d'informazione, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://www.agensir.it/quotidiano/2024/2/22/turismo-assisi-nel-2023-4-227-pellegrini-giunti-a-piedi-o-in-bici-crescono-le-motivazioni-religiose-che-spingono-ad-intraprendere-i-cammini-francescani/.

[155] Mark Stevens, "Camino de Santiago Statistics 2023," Follow the yellow shell, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://followtheyellowshell.com/camino-de-santiago-statistics-2023/.

[156] Based on comparison of temperature and rainfall.

[157] "Le statistiche per il 2023 della Statio Peregrinorum," San Francesco, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://www.sanfrancescopatronoditalia.it/notizie/francescanesimo/le-statistiche-per-il-2023-della-statio-peregrinorum-53450?fbclid=IwAR0NRuX_j-o07f5cB2OPhNaXc_9fN6qOIQ-mIMnlypfWy__YRbwznANVuxY.

Figure 11 The Apennine Mountains between Ceselli and Spoleto.

Figure 12 A limestone path between Monterotondo and Scandriglia through olive groves.

Figure 13 Path through a forest, between Poggio Bustone and Piediluco.

Physical movement is only one aspect of mobility, and just as these pilgrims prepared in some way for the physical activity of the pilgrimage—similar to my experience in Dutch Limburg—they also prepared for its spiritual and cultural dimensions. In other words, they prepared for its meaning. In Cresswell's concept of entanglement, representation includes shared meanings. In general, whether religious, or spiritual, a pilgrimage is a journey towards potentially meaningful encounters,[158] and these meaningful encounters are most likely to happen while on the move. In our 'groundless modern society', as anthropologist Tim Ingold argues, the pedestrian experience is often reduced "to the operation of a stepping machine".[159] Consequently, walking has gained different importance. Especially in the context of pilgrimage, walking is reinterpreted as a meaningful practice and a source of authenticity for pilgrims. This technique, associated with medieval pilgrimage,[160] transforms the act of walking into a form of re-enactment.[161]

As explored in the second chapter of this thesis, on the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, pilgrims follow the footsteps of Saint Francis and engage with both the landscape and the practice as part of his heritage. This approach is intended to lead to personal knowledge and growth through the act of pilgrimage. However, this shared meaning of the pilgrimage has implications on an individual level, influencing both preparations and expectations. Ultimately, it is the intentionality of the pilgrim that allows the pilgrimage to achieve its purpose. The pilgrim's intentionality creates a framed life situation – the liminality – that, in the context of the pilgrimage, is transferred to a framed route. Within that framed route, transformations are to be expected.[162]

[158] Richard Scriven, "Journeying with: Qualitative Methodological Engagements with Pilgrimage," *Area 51*, no. 3 (2019):546, https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12498.
[159] Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 55.
[160] Anne Bailey argues that the method of travelling to a shrine was often immaterial to medieval pilgrims. In many ways, the realities of medieval pilgrimage were much more varied than is often realized today, however, walking is still presented as a pilgrimage heritage practice. Bailey, "Journey or Destination?," 1-15.
[161] Jesper Østergaard and Dorthe Refslund Christensen, "Chapter 17 Walking Towards Oneself: The Authentification of Place and Self," in *Re-Investing Authenticity: Tourism, Place and Emotions.* Tourism and Cultural Change, vol. 20, ed. Britta Timm Knudsen and Anne Marit Waade (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2010), 249.
[162] Østergaard and Christensen, "Chapter 17 Walking Towards Oneself," 249.

Almost all pilgrims prepared spiritually for their pilgrimage by learning about Saint Francis to varying degrees. Bruno, Greta, and Marijke bought guides relating his story to the route, focusing on nature's liberating force. Bruno hoped nature would help him become a better person through contemplation. Marijke and Greta, who had recently quit their jobs, sought closure and a new direction in life. Aleksander and Lena purchased a book on Saint Francis's life and writings to deepen their spiritual connection by understanding both the saint and his relation to the places they would encounter. Aleksander, therefore, was particularly excited about "meeting Saint Francis."

Getting to know somebody, engaging in contemplation, and finding a new direction in life takes time and practice. Regardless of how these pilgrims journeyed, their movement involved walking over an extended time, both in hours and days. This brings me to the final aspect of Cresswell's mobilities entanglement: practice.[163] Coleman and Eade explain this practiced mobility within the context of pilgrimage as a sort of 'meta-movement', with which they emphasize that pilgrimage involves complex layers of meaning, interpretation, and social dynamics that transcend simple movement from one place to another. Walking a pilgrimage, thus, involves both internal and external movement.[164] I will start with the former.

Walking

> Walking like this, I have a feeling of total freedom I have never felt in my entire life. […] By walking alone, I organize myself as I want. No need to consult other people to define the program for the day. For example, I can stop for a long time to contemplate or admire a flower, an insect, a landscape or to get the right light to take a photo. And then walk very quickly to make up for lost time. I can also lengthen or shorten the stage depending on my physical condition or stay an extra day in a place because there is a great energy there. Difficult to integrate this way of doing things into a group. This solitude I choose, I do not suffer it! Solitude is for me a wealth, an opportunity. It allows you to think for yourself, to rest your mind. It gives me the opportunity to find solutions to life's problems. It offers me the opportunity, despite my age, to discover myself even better and above all, when the moment presents itself, to open up fully to others.

This description of Bruno's experience of the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, sent to me some weeks after Bruno had finished the pilgrimage, is extensive and rich. It highlights how the act of walking within a pilgrimage allows for a state of liberation, that provides the pilgrim with time and space for introspection and contemplation, as well as the possibility to open to others. In a similar vein, Greta found that walking had brought forth questions and reflections that had been lying at the back of her mind. Walking a pilgrimage, thus, creates first of all a unique rhythm that allows one to both distance themselves from and engage with everyday concerns. The argument for walking a pilgrimage on foot suggests that the fast rhythm of modern life is too overwhelming for deep reflection.[165]

Rhythm is essential for cultivating a sense of presence, both internally and externally, a form of 'being-in-the-world'. It includes internal rhythms, like those of the body and mind, while external rhythms are shaped by the pilgrimage's schedule and the environments encountered along the way.[166] Henri Lefebvre (2004) argues that rhythm underpins the spatial practices that shape social space, involving distinct temporal elements, such as intervals of activity and rest. These elements create a sense of contrast and opposition, which is essential for perceiving rhythm.[167]

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[163] Cresswell, "Towards a Politics of Mobility," 20.
[164] Coleman and Eade, *Reframing Pilgrimage,* 18.
[165] Gossen, "Place-making and meaning-making in the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela," 107.
[166] Slavin, "Walking as Spiritual Practice", 11.
[167] Lefebvre, *Rhythmanalysis*, 79.

Walking practices, for example, align with the rhythms of a place, suggesting a 'tempo' that shapes a place's temporal identity and character.[168] Bruno's decision to stay an extra day highlights a personal adjustment within the pilgrimage's established rhythm, reflecting how individual choices fit into a broader temporal framework.

This temporal framework also involves an overarching movement that incorporates these elements. This overall movement, which Lefebvre compares to the flowing patterns in a waltz, contributes to a broader construction of time and movement. By submitting to the rhythm of walking, a way of perceiving and organizing thoughts and experiences emerges. Pilgrims engage in a reflective process that involves both their inner world, such as private fantasies and future imaginings, and the outer world, such as public concerns and past events. The act of walking serves as a catalyst for this mental and emotional integration, blending their thoughts and experiences into their current reality. For the pilgrims, the rhythm of walking becomes a continuous movement that structures their reflective practice, thereby integrating experiences as a sequence of individual moments and as overlapping, interconnected experiences.[169] Walking a pilgrimage is thus an embodied practice, where physical actions and movements are deeply intertwined with mental, emotional, and often spiritual experiences.[170]

Aleksander, for example, also spoke about reorganizing his thoughts, particularly through the act of walking in Saint Francis' footsteps. He explained how Saint Francis organized his thoughts by distinguishing between temporary joys and lasting ones, eventually finding solace in thoughts of God. This story prompted Aleksander to reflect on his own mental processes: "No one had talked to me about thoughts before. For like thirty years. I understand more now about our nature, about myself, about psychology." Lena resonated deeply with this topic. She had recently allowed herself to dwell on negative, depressive thoughts, which led to an emotional breakdown. During this dark period, Lena found solace in Aleksander's discussions about Saint Francis, which brought her a new perspective: "Today is a different day. I realized that I want to go on with Saint Francis, pray more, and have him keep me company. Walking without thinking about God is just walking for me. I feel different now and I'm very grateful."

"For there to be rhythm, there must be repetition in a movement", Lefebvre argues.[171] However, there are two types of repetition: cyclical and linear.[172] The act of walking involves a cyclical rhythmic movement, with steps creating a consistent beat. As previously discussed, this physical rhythm can have a meditative, cyclical effect on the mind. Additionally, pilgrims' engagement in repetitive daily routines creates a cyclical rhythm within each day. Linear repetition, on the other hand, consists of sequences of events or actions that have a clear beginning and end. The pilgrimage itself has a starting point and a destination, which gives it its linear character as it progresses from start to end. Each stage of the pilgrimage, furthermore, holds its own linear repetition, covering specific distances.[173] These stages are also marked by specific signs, such as the stamp in a pilgrim passport.

This repetition of walking, for multiple hours over multiple days, contributes significantly to the overall spiritual, emotional, and cultural experience of the pilgrimage.[174] Marijke explained that she had become very sensitive due to the grueling journey: "I feel calm and as if you are open to everything. More sensitive, not as if I feel like an open wound where everything just comes in, but in a pleasant way, present in the world." Exhaustion has a profound impact on how we experience

[168] Lefebvre. *Rhythmanalysis,* 16.
[169] Filipa Matos Wunderlich, "Walking and Rhythmicity: Sensing Urban Space," *Journal of Urban Design* 13, no. 1 (2008): 127, https://doi.org/10.1080/13574800701803472.
[170] Coleman and Eade, *Reframing Pilgrimage*.
[171] Lefebvre. *Rhythmanalysis,* 78.
[172] Lefebvre. *Rhythmanalysis,* 90.
[173] Lefebvre. *Rhythmanalysis,* 39.
[174] Maddrell et al. "Introduction," 7.

the world and respond to our environment. When we are tired, our perception changes in various ways. Just as children often cry when they are tired, adults tend to become more emotionally open and reflective when fatigued, which can help them perceive and interpret encounters and events on a pilgrimage as more meaningful.

The experience of pain and the exhaustion of the body plays a crucial role in the formation of solidarity among pilgrims and among pilgrims and hosts. It underscores the spirit of exchange, of mutual care.[175] Since my journey was ending the next day while Marijke still had over two weeks of walking ahead, I gave her my band-aids. In return, she shared valuable insights about the upcoming stage and made a donation on my behalf to the sisters of the Franciscan convent where we were staying. Similarly, during my walk with Lena and Aleksander, we met a former pilgrim living in an abandoned chapel in the mountains. His generosity made a profound impact on us all, as he offered coffee despite being a hermit who had to walk over two hours to the nearest city to buy it. Each of us, separately, decided to give him something in exchange: a sack of nuts, some money, and a pack of crackers. It seems that the basis of social connectedness lies in the resonance of movement and feeling that arises from the mutual attentive engagement of people in shared practical activities.[176]

Fatigue makes adults not only more sensitive and solidary to others, but these encounters are also perceived as symbols or signs of the pilgrimage's spirituality. Lena explained that she saw her breakdown as a sign that she was not relying on God enough and had closed her heart to Him. After our walk together, she texted me saying she had received two signs that day confirming she was back on the right track: her encounter with Mario, and her encounter with me. She had been in need to talk to me and explained that I was to her a "guardian angel sent by God".[177] In a similar vein, Marijke had experienced a difficult situation in Assisi, where she felt extremely vulnerable and panicked. When she considered leaving the city, she saw a pilgrim she had met before just outside the gate. This pilgrim offered a sympathetic ear and guided her back into the city. "Just at the right moment, it was very special; it was something more," Marijke said. The next day, finding a guidebook titled *The Way is the Soul* was another reassuring sign for Marijke that things would turn out well.

Walking, as a physical and embodied activity, offers a unique and transformative experience that goes beyond mere movement from one place to another. On the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, walking establishes a distinct rhythm that sets it apart from the everyday routines and pressures of modern life. The repetitive act of setting one foot in front of the other creates a kind of meditative flow, that allows pilgrims to immerse themselves in a space of introspection and spiritual reflection. As pilgrims cover the hundreds of kilometres of the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, this physical activity evolves into an immersive experience that enhances their sensitivity to the environment around them. This environment is not merely a backdrop but an active participant in the pilgrimage experience, compromising both human elements such as fellow travelers, local inhabitants, and man-made structures, as well as the natural world.

Nature

Walking is more than a practice; it is a spatial activity involving constant interaction with the environment. Lefebvre highlights how the body shapes and is shaped by its surroundings through

[175] Nancy Louise Frey, *Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago, Journeys Along an Ancient Way in Modern Spain*. Moravian MUPO Title (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 99.
[176] Tim Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape," *World Archaeology* 25, no. 2 (1993):160, https://www.jstor.org/stable/124811.
[177] Personal contact after interview on May 2nd, 2023.

repetitive actions, grounding cognitive processes in physical interactions.[178] Mobility scholars have stressed that pervading treatments of movement have focused on the sites of departure and arrival with little thought being given to the space-in-between. This not only includes the 'places of rest' but also the landscape traversed.[179] Traditionally, landscape was seen as something distant and static, like the 17th-century Dutch *landschap* paintings. Tim Cresswell and John Wylie argue that landscape should be seen as a topographic concept with both surface and depth. It is defined by the tension between the perceiver and the perceived, blending into a dynamic 'seeing-with' – instead of a 'way of seeing' – that integrates subject and object.[180] It requires accounts that interweave its interiority and exteriority, perception and materiality.[181]

Jane Bennett's concept of enchantment, as articulated in her book *The Enchantment of Modern Life* (2001), provides a useful framework for understanding how pilgrims' connections to nature can lead to profound emotional experiences. Bennett's idea of enchantment involves being struck or delighted by the extraordinary within the familiar through embodied engagement with the world.[182] Pilgrims' interactions with nature often reveal the profound within the mundane, such as Marijke's experience of feeling welcomed by the spring sowbread (*Cyclamen repandum*) (fig. 14) she had seen along the way. This small, pinkish flower, a spring species of the forest floor, has characteristic heart-shaped leaves and stands out against its environment. She described its contrasting color as feeling "as if the red carpet has been rolled out for me." Marijke used the red-carpet metaphor to express how she felt welcomed and encouraged by nature. In a similar vein, a few hours after reaching Assisi, already reflecting on the journey I wrote in my field diary: "I truly felt carried by the people and nature." Nature acts as a catalyst for these feelings, revealing its agency and capacity to evoke wonder and awe.

As pilgrims traverse different landscapes and connect with historical and spiritual dimensions, they undergo a form of crossing that aligns with Bennett's idea of crossing into new realms of understanding and connection. This sense of crossing contributes to the feeling of enchantment as pilgrims experience a deep connection to both the past and their current surroundings.[183] Marijke's experience in a cave exemplifies this: "I was in a cave with Francis, I did not know what was happening to me. It is a rock, split and covered with moss, and then you go underneath it, and it is like a kind of blanket, even though it is naturally very cold and wet." She was struck by the realization that, centuries ago, people traversed these same trails with nothing more than a stick, searching for shelter and often finding refuge in caves. Her sensory experiences imbued sacred sites with a numinous quality, linking her to an enduring tradition and making the need to justify her existence seem unnecessary.

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[178] Kirsten Simonsen, "Bodies, Sensations, Space and Time: The Contribution from Henri Lefebvre," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 87, no. 1 (2005): 1-14, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0435-3684.2005.00174.x.
[179] Scriven, "Geographies of Pilgrimage", 256
[180] Peter Merriman, George Revill, Tim Cresswell, Hayden Lorimer, David Matless, Gillian Rose, and John Wylie, "Landscape, Mobility, Practice", *Social & Cultural Geography* 9, no. 2 (2008): 201-202, https://doi.org/10.1080/14649360701856136.
[181] Christopher Tilley, "Walking the Past in the Present," in *Landscapes Beyond Land: Routes, Aesthetics, Narratives, ed. Arnar Árnason et al* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012):21, https://doi.org/10.1515/9780857456724-004.
[182] Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton University Press, 2001). As cited in: Avril Maddrell, "'It Was Magical': Intersections of Pilgrimage, Nature, Gender and Enchantment as a Potential Bridge to Environmental Action in the Anthropocene," *Religions* 13, no. 4 (2022): 4, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040319.
[183] Maddrell, "'It Was Magical'", 3.

This historical continuity made her journey feel deeply rooted in the past. In her follow-up answers, she further emphasized this connection. She included a picture (fig. 15) to represent her pilgrimage experience: "The forest below [the picture] is of a magical beauty. The enormous boulders covered with moss and the beautiful trees. The earth that was given to us made a deep impression, making me feel insignificant and part of a greater whole. Also, the whole and the long tradition of the Roman Catholic Church." This quote reflects her deep sense of connection to both nature and the spiritual heritage of the Roman Catholic Church, highlighting themes of humility, awe, and belonging to both the past and the present.

Figure 14 Spring sowbread next to the path of the *Via di Francesco*.

Figure 15 Image sent by Marijke, representing her experience.

Moreover, Lena's breakdown was not an isolated incident. On my fourth day of pilgrimage, I experienced a similar moment of intense emotion, as I noted in my field diary: "There was a moment when nature overwhelmed me […] and I started crying." Sharing this with Lena, she felt a deeper connection and related our experiences to Saint Francis. She explained that "nature is just attacking you", but emphasized that this is precisely what makes Saint Francis remarkable; he had recognized the transformative potential of these 'attacks' when experienced over time. Consequently, she understood her experience in relation to the legends of Saint Francis, which illustrate his encounters with various challenges posed by nature, from wild animals to harsh weather. He overcame these challenges—what Lena referred to as 'attacks'—through his profound compassion and awareness of the interconnectedness of all creation. Furthermore, she emphasized that "nature is still the same," which allowed her to draw direct parallels between her experience and his. Her reflection, therefore, underscores how the pilgrimage alters one's perception of the environment, imbuing it with deeper meanings. Ultimately, the authenticity of the pilgrimage emerges from the interaction between the landscape, rich with historical significance and semantic features, and the pilgrim's intentionality to uncover this deeper knowledge.[184]

A path

When pilgrims walk a pilgrimage route, they immerse themselves in the landscape on a path. This path is both situated in and a part of the landscape, thereby altering what we see and how we see it. Traveling through the landscape over a path creates a structured sequence where our spatial experience is continuously transformed.[185] Just as we can transition from one moment to another without a strict chronological divide, we can also move through landscapes without crossing rigid

[184] Østergaard and Christensen, "Chapter 17 Walking Towards Oneself", 250-251.
[185] Porcelloni, "Pilgrimage and Hospitality along the Via Francigena," 80

boundaries, as the essence of a place evolves with our journey.[186] Additionally, our perceptual experience is influenced by the path's composition.[187] Walking on a tarmac road allows the walker to look up and around (fig. 16), while a rocky dirt road (fig. 17) demands more attention to foot placement, thereby not only altering our rhythm but also our direct sensory experience – one might need to stop to look around.[188] Furthermore, the physical exertion and muscular states experienced on the road can evoke strong emotional responses that colour the perception of the landscape. For instance, a challenging uphill climb might make the pilgrim perceive the surrounding scenery as rewarding. The road's surface is even inscribed upon the pilgrims' body through blisters and strengthened calf muscles.

To understand a path beyond its physical form, in relation to human experience, is to grasp it through its affordances. In his influential work, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (1979), James Gibson lays out a theory of affordances of the environment. The affordances of an environment are what the environment offers to humans, based on its characteristics and how it interacts with humans. These affordances are, therefore, relative to the human experience, transcending the object-subject dichotomy. They simultaneously represent the motives and needs of the observer as well as the surfaces and components of the environment. Though they are interdependent, the environment, with its infinite possibilities, exists prior to human presence.[189] In this way, the landscape – specifically the path – shapes the pilgrim's journey, yet the space itself does not possess agency. Instead, it holds endless spatial possibilities that are only realized through the interaction between the pilgrim and the path.

Figure 16 Tarmac road between Rieti and Poggio Bustone.

Figure 17 Steep rocky dirt road, between Ceselli and Spoleto.

[186] Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape", 159.
[187] Tilley, "Walking the Past in the Present," 17.
[188] Avril Maddrell and Veronica Della Dora, "Crossing Surfaces in Search of the Holy: Landscape and Liminality in Contemporary Christian Pilgrimage," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 45, no. 5 (2013): 1105–1126, https://doi.org/10.1068/a45148.
[189] Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*, 119-135.

While the path shapes the pilgrim's journey through its affordances, the relationship is not one-sided. The path does not merely inscribe us, we also inscribe the path, sometimes even taking parts home.[190] My walking boots, for example, tucked away in my closet, still bear traces of dust from the limestone road. Each time I took them off, I also scattered some of the road's sprigs and dirt in the 'places of rest'. Through my walking, I thus carried away fragments of limestone, spreading them through the landscape while simultaneously leaving my imprint and scratching the earth's surface, revealing glimpses of what lies beneath. Paths, thus, serve as testaments to the existence and contributions of past generations through the traces they have left behind. To perceive the landscape is therefore to carry out an 'act of remembrance'. Remembering is not just about pulling up a mental image from our mind; it is more about interacting with a landscape "that is pregnant with the past".[191] This past is made up of previous encounters between humans and the surface. Paths, as acts of consensual making, represent the cumulative effect of countless footsteps, each contributing to the formation and maintenance of a path.[192]

In their journey along paths, people also move from place to place. There can be no places without paths, along with people arriving and departing, and no paths without places that constitute their point of departure and destination.[193] A pilgrimage is meaningful in relation to its destination, which acts as a focal point for reflecting on the journey. The image of the destination is shaped by a set of functional and value-based expectations, influenced by both the pilgrimage narrative and the pilgrim's encounters along the way.[194] An interesting aspect of the *Via di Francesco del Sud* is that it features routes running in opposite directions, altering both destination and sequence. Consequently, pilgrims often encounter those traveling in the reverse direction. This allows for an exchange of similar experiences – those derived from the bodily activity within the narrative framework of the *Via di Francesco del Sud* – whilst also sharing experiences that are 'yet to come' for the other pilgrim.

For example, Bruno shared his experience of walking the land and how it helped reorganize his thoughts, something I had also experienced. He also told me about meeting the hermit Mario long before I encountered him, leading me to anticipate and actively seek him out. The sharing of experiences thus connects these traversing pilgrims to the path ahead, sustaining the collective nature of the pilgrimage, albeit not physically. As Bennett argues, the temporal crossing can enchant pilgrims by making them feel part of something larger than themselves, connected to those who have undertaken the pilgrimage before them.[195] This connection to the past and present may be even stronger when we encounter other pilgrims who have walked the same path – in reverse – within the same temporality.

This 'reversing' aspect of the pilgrimage is unique to the *Via di Francesco del Sud*. For instance, while there are numerous routes to Santiago de Compostela and some extensions, such as to Finisterre, there seem to be none moving from Santiago to another 'sacred' place. Santiago may not be the end of the physical journey for all pilgrims, but it is rarely the starting point. While travelers on the *Camino de Santiago* often prioritize personal growth during their journey and are therefore generally indifferent to the destination,[196] the option to reverse the route introduces a different dynamic. First, as pilgrims move forward on their journey, they inevitably move away from those they have met traveling in reverse direction. Second, while pilgrims often expect transformative experiences upon reaching their destination, this anticipation is more about

[190] Maddrell and Della Dora, "Crossing Surfaces in Search of the Holy", 1118.
[191] Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape," 152
[192] Robert Macfarlane, *The Old Ways* (Londen: Penguin Books; 2012), 17.
[193] Ingold, "The Temporality of the Landscape", 167.
[194] Darius Liutikas, "Travel motivations of pilgrims, religious tourists, and spirituality seekers," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religious and Spiritual Tourism,* ed. Daniel H. Olsen and Dallen J. Timothy (New York: Routledge, 2021), 226.
[195] Maddrell, '"It Was Magical"', 8.
[196] Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*.

completing the journey than the inherent sanctity of the site itself.[197] Otherwise it would not be necessary to walk the path in reverse.

The significance of the destination then lies in its symbolic role as the journey's endpoint, representing personal achievement and spiritual growth, which underscores that the pilgrimage's true essence is the journey itself.[198] In her comprehensive study on pilgrim experiences (1998), Nancy Louise Frey identifies two key rites of closure on the *Camino de Santiago*: attending the Pilgrims' Mass and receiving the Compostela from the Pilgrim's Reception Office.[199] Those two option are also provided in Assisi. However, pilgrims who finish their journey in Rome miss out on these rites, as there is no dedicated Pilgrims' Mass in Saint Peter's Basilica, nor can they obtain the *Testimonium* there.[200] Peter Jan Margry has found in his research on the Finisterre (2015), that pilgrims, in the absence of 'official' rites of closure, engage in improvised, communal rituals at the end.[201] Thereby signifying the site's role in the process and in the pilgrimage narrative.

In my follow-up questions, I asked the pilgrims about their experiences upon reaching their destination. Although the sample size of interviewed pilgrims is limited and they do not specifically mention engaging in rituals, their responses suggest certain patterns and themes. Those arriving in Rome wrote to me afterward about their feelings of happiness, pride, and satisfaction upon arrival. Two pilgrims even sent me a picture of Saint Peter's Basilica, representing their overall experience of the pilgrimage. However, both these pilgrims also included pictures of the road itself, with one even stating, "the way is the target" (fig. 18), making clear that the destination is appreciated as the fulfillment of their journey. Aleksander and Lena, upon reaching Assisi, did not report acquiring the *Testimonium* or participating in any formal religious ceremonies like attending Mass. However, they spent a significant amount of time near the shrine of Saint Francis, which suggests a deep connection between their journey and the saint. Similarly, I noted in my field diary: "At his tomb, I sat for a long time and cried, just as I did at the altar. I really feel like I know him now, or at least understand him to some extent."

[197] Peter Jan Margry, "Secular Pilgrimage: A Contradiction in Terms?", in *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World: New Itineraries into the Sacred*, ed. Peter Jan Margry (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 24.
[198]Simon Coleman, *Powers of Pilgrimage: Religion in a World of Movement* (New York: NYU Press, 2022), 117.
[199] Frey, *Pilgrim Stories*, 136.
[200]"Credenziale," La Via di Francesco, accessed on July 23, 2024, https://www.viadifrancesco.it/credenziale-del-pellegrino-e-testimonium-viae-francisci.
[201] Peter Jan Margry, "To be or not to be, … a pilgrim? Spiritual Pluralism on the Finisterre Trail," in *Walking to the End of the World: Heritage, Pilgrimage and the Camino to Finisterre*. GeoJournal Library, Volume 117, ed. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero (Cham: Springer, 2015), 196.

While more research on pilgrims' rituals at the different destinations of the *Via di Francesco del Sud* is needed, it appears that the ending has a profound effect on how the pilgrims remember their journey. As Frey notes, at the end "the linear journey becomes a circuit", with the city representing a point of supersaturation.[202] She argues that the city – the end point of the journey – marks the turning point where the linear journey ends, but the deeper journey of reflection on its significance begins. However, the 'reversing' aspect of the *Via di Francesco del Sud* points to an unique sense of circularity, suggesting that Assisi, through means of the tomb of Saint Francis, serves as a focal point in the perception of the pilgrim. For those traveling from Assisi to Rome, the memory of Saint Francis remains with them throughout their journey, allowing them to reflect on their own journey once Rome is reached. In contrast, pilgrims walking from Rome to Assisi experience their journey in anticipation of encountering Saint Francis. For them, arriving in Assisi marks the moment when they can reflect on their travels, now framed in connection with the saint. In this way, the tomb of Saint Francis does more than simply mark the end of the route—it acts as a spiritual and emotional anchor, shaping how pilgrims process and understand the significance of their journey.

Figure 18 Image sent by Greta to represent her experience.

The rhythms of walking and the practice of reverse walking illustrate the dynamic and experiential nature of perceived space, where physical characteristics and sensory experiences continuously shape and redefine the spatial environment, offering certain affordances. That space has its beginning and end according to the framing made by the pilgrim, within the pilgrimage narrative. This framed space is then filled by the pilgrim's body through the act of walking. Pilgrims engage with both cyclical rhythms, which include their daily routines, and linear rhythms, characterized by the progression from start to finish. These rhythms influence not only their spiritual, emotional, and social experiences but also how the landscape unfolds and transforms with each step they take. This underscores Lefebvre's concept that perceived space is inherently dynamic rather than static, continuously created and redefined through human activity. Simultaneously, this human activity is influenced and molded by the landscape itself.

[202] Frey, *Pilgrim Stories,* 141-144.

Conclusion

A triad

Having analysed how each spatial dimension applies to the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, I now turn to the trialectics of pilgrimage space (fig. 19)—the interactions among the three dimensions of Lefebvre's spatial triad. The narrative of the pilgrimage space (conceived space) unveils two complementary regional heritage discourses, each depicting the practice of pilgrimage as a form of re-enactment. In Umbria, the *Via di Francesco del Sud* is framed as a means to explore the environment through the perspective of Saint Francis. This entails two aspects: first, the pilgrim is expected to see the same landscape that Saint Francis encountered, and second, to grasp how this environment influenced him. In this region, Saint Francis' heritage becomes something the pilgrim can directly behold, supported by the physical heritage that is present. In Lazio, however, the historical connections to Saint Francis are much less tangible, especially between Rieti and Rome. Here, the emphasis shifts to the act of walking and the experiences it provides—both internal and external—mirroring the experiences that Saint Francis himself encountered.

Both narratives concentrate on the 'space-in-between' rather than the shrine at the end of the path, transforming the pilgrimage into a 'trailscape'—a thematic trail where the emphasis is on the overarching narrative rather than the specific route. At the same time, a form of 'caminoisation' seems to be occurring, with elements from the *Camino de Santiago* being adopted. Much like the shrine of Saint James, the shrine of Saint Francis has become the focal point of the journey, as the official pilgrimage *Testimonium* is issued exclusively there. This Testimonium aims to create a sense of historicity, suggesting that people have been traversing this path since the Middle Ages to experience the shrine's sacredness. However, this notion is challenged by the fact that the pilgrimage can be undertaken in either directions, whether from Rome to Assisi or from Assisi to Rome. The latter is particularly popular due to Rome's role as the centre of the Catholic Church and its historical significance. It is precisely because Saint Francis' heritage serves primarily as a framework that pilgrims have the flexibility to choose their path, walking the pilgrimage in either direction according to their preference.

Walking the pilgrimage in different directions carries several implications for the spatial practice (perceived space) of the pilgrimage. Most pilgrims who embark on the *Via di Francesco del Sud del Sud* choose to undertake a solo journey, as solitude is a trait closely associated with Saint Francis and is something pilgrims actively seek. Since they can choose to walk in either direction, pilgrims are less likely to travel with others. By walking alone, these pilgrims are liberated from the rhythms of everyday life and are not constrained by the pace of other pilgrims, thereby creating time and space for contemplation. This solitude helps them distance themselves from everyday concerns and fosters a profound sense of presence, or 'being-in-the-world.' Furthermore, the pilgrimage narrative introduces a linear rhythm, as the concept of a journey inherently includes the understanding of both a beginning and an end. This narrative implies that the pilgrim must walk for an extended period, ultimately enhancing their vulnerability. "An open wound", as Marijke described her condition, "but in a good way", because pilgrims become more attuned to the various elements encountered along the way—such as the changing landscape, the people they meet, and the places they visit. These encounters are more likely to be perceived as meaningful. And because the steady rhythm of walking becomes a continuous motion that structures their reflective practice, their meaningful encounters are integrated into a sequence of individual moments and overlapping, interconnected events. As they walk, their encounters are woven into the narrative of the pilgrimage space, its significance being enhanced.

Since pilgrims experience only brief moments of interaction on the road, often marked by a simple exchange of "*Buon cammino*!", the 'places of rest' along the route gain greater importance for fostering social connections. These places emerge from the ongoing creation of social space but become a temporary crystallization of the lived experience through symbolic acts. They acquire

meaning through human experiences and interactions, serving not merely as physical sites but as memory complexes that enshrine and commemorate community narratives, identities, and a sense of belonging. In this sense, these places of rest provide intriguing insights into the dimension of lived space within the triad, particularly because they are an integral part of to the pilgrimage yet often overlooked in pilgrimage studies.

However, these 'places of rest' are contested spaces where various groups or individuals may have conflicting interests, values, or claims. Pilgrims, being in a liminal state and detached from their everyday lives, might encounter cognitive dissonance if their beliefs and practices conflict with those of the surrounding settled society or if their expectations are not met. As these places are woven into the pilgrimage narrative, and they bring this narrative into practice, pilgrims expect these places to be central to their journey. Therefore, interactions with fellow pilgrims or acts of hospitality become crucial for alleviating this dissonance. Such encounters reinforce the pilgrims' sense of being 'in transition' and foster a shared feeling of belonging to the pilgrimage. The sense of belonging is cultivated through the movement of passing pilgrims, which brings these locations into motion and creates a sense of 'being-in-place in process' among local hosts. Their role contributes to a living tradition that spans beyond their immediate environment, enhancing their sense of place as part of a dynamic and evolving process.

Concurrently, some hosts engage in acts of hospitality to preserve local intangible heritage and foster a sense of place. By welcoming pilgrims and offering them support, hosts help to maintain and highlight cultural practices, traditions, and values that are integral to the local sense of identity. For instance, my host in Scandriglia, Patrizia, entrusted me with the keys to the local church, allowing me to see the frescoes of Saint Francis. This dynamic interplay enhances the role of these locations in embodying the pilgrimage space and its associated heritage discourse. Through acts of hospitality, local hosts actively contribute to this discourse, providing pilgrims with the opportunity to envision themselves within these places, and giving them access to its heritage, contributing to the sense of belonging. They thereby act as gatekeepers. Conversely, if a pilgrim is unable to engage in the hospitality— due to obstacles like language barriers—they find themselves excluded from fully accessing this heritage. While acts of hospitality and the physical act of walking are deeply intertwined and mutually supportive, these pilgrims might place greater significance on the act of walking, thereby influencing the process of heritagization of the pilgrimage.

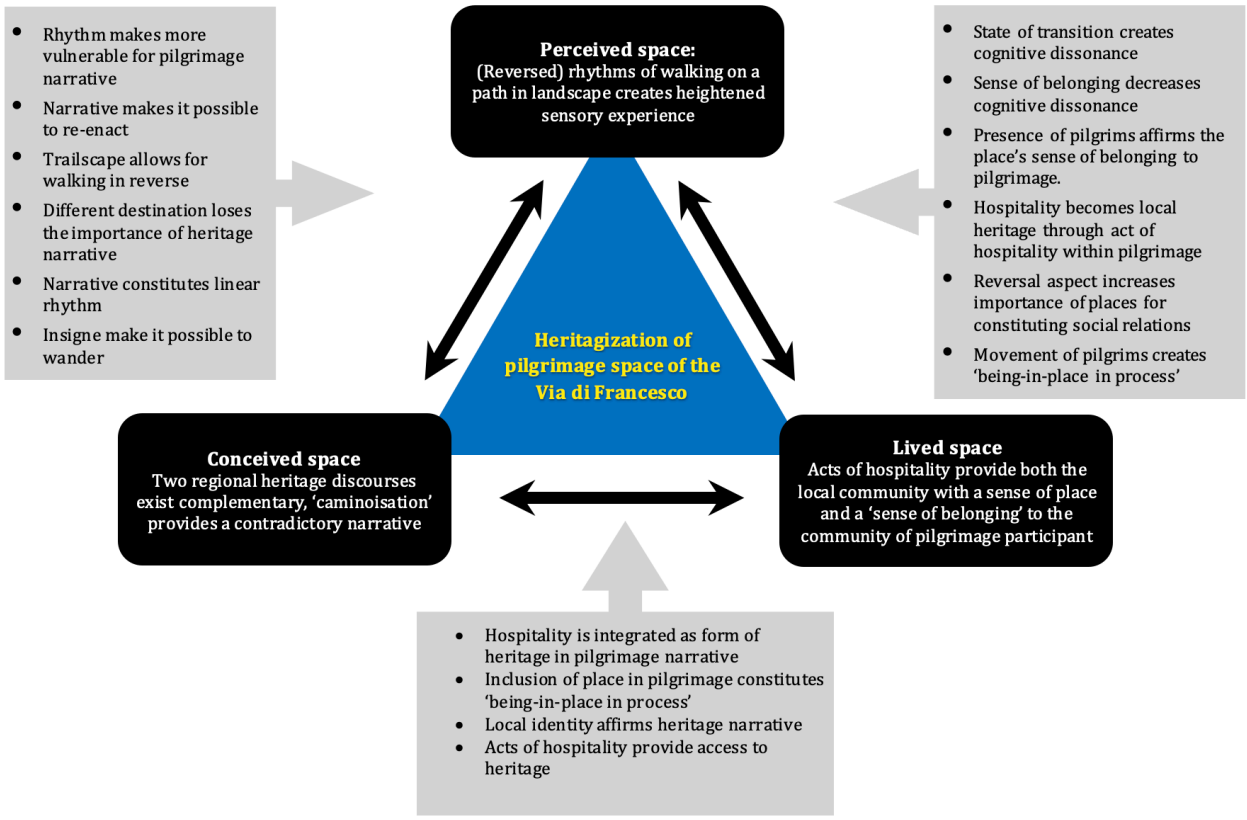

Figure 19 The trialectis of the spatiality of the *Via di Francesco del Sud*.

Two-sided linearity

In the narrative of the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, the pilgrimage is associated with Saint Francis, but its ultimate aim goes beyond simply arriving at Assisi. The true purpose is to recreate Saint Francis' own journey by walking in his footsteps. Pilgrims connect with his legacy by purposefully traversing an area designated as part of Saint Francis' heritage, referred to as the trailscape. This method grants pilgrims the freedom to select their direction of travel. While the *Via di Francesco del Sud* maintains a linear structure, similar to the *Camino di Santiago*, with a defined starting point and endpoint, its linearity is 'two-sided'. This allows for an adapted version of Timothy and Boyd's model of purposive pilgrimage routes, specified to the *Via di Francesco del Sud* (fig. 20). This means pilgrims can start from either end and proceed to the other, allowing for a personalized journey while the route remains linear, linking two distinct points and preserving the continuity and progression characteristic of a pilgrimage.

However, the linearity of the pilgrimage is only a construct of the pilgrimage's narrative, made tangible by the pilgrimage's *testimonium*, while at the same time the narrative provides the pilgrim with a goal that is already reached by walking in the designated space. In contrast, the *Camino di Santiago* has its linearity imposed by its historical significance, with millions of pilgrims aiming to reach Santiago as the place where their intentions might be realized. The pilgrims of the *Via di Francesco del Sud* already embody the intentions that they themselves have set based on the pilgrimage narrative. This suggests that the linearity of the *Via di Francesco del Sud* is a product of 'caminoisation', as introduced by Bowman. However, this linearity is essential for establishing the pilgrims' liminal state. If these pilgrims had already achieved their purpose merely by walking in the designated space, they would no longer be "in transition". I suggest that for a pilgrimage to be a transformative journey, it requires a beginning, an in-between, and an end. The starting point

and endpoint can be interchangeable, but they must be designated places within the pilgrimage space, which is itself shaped by the pilgrimage narrative.

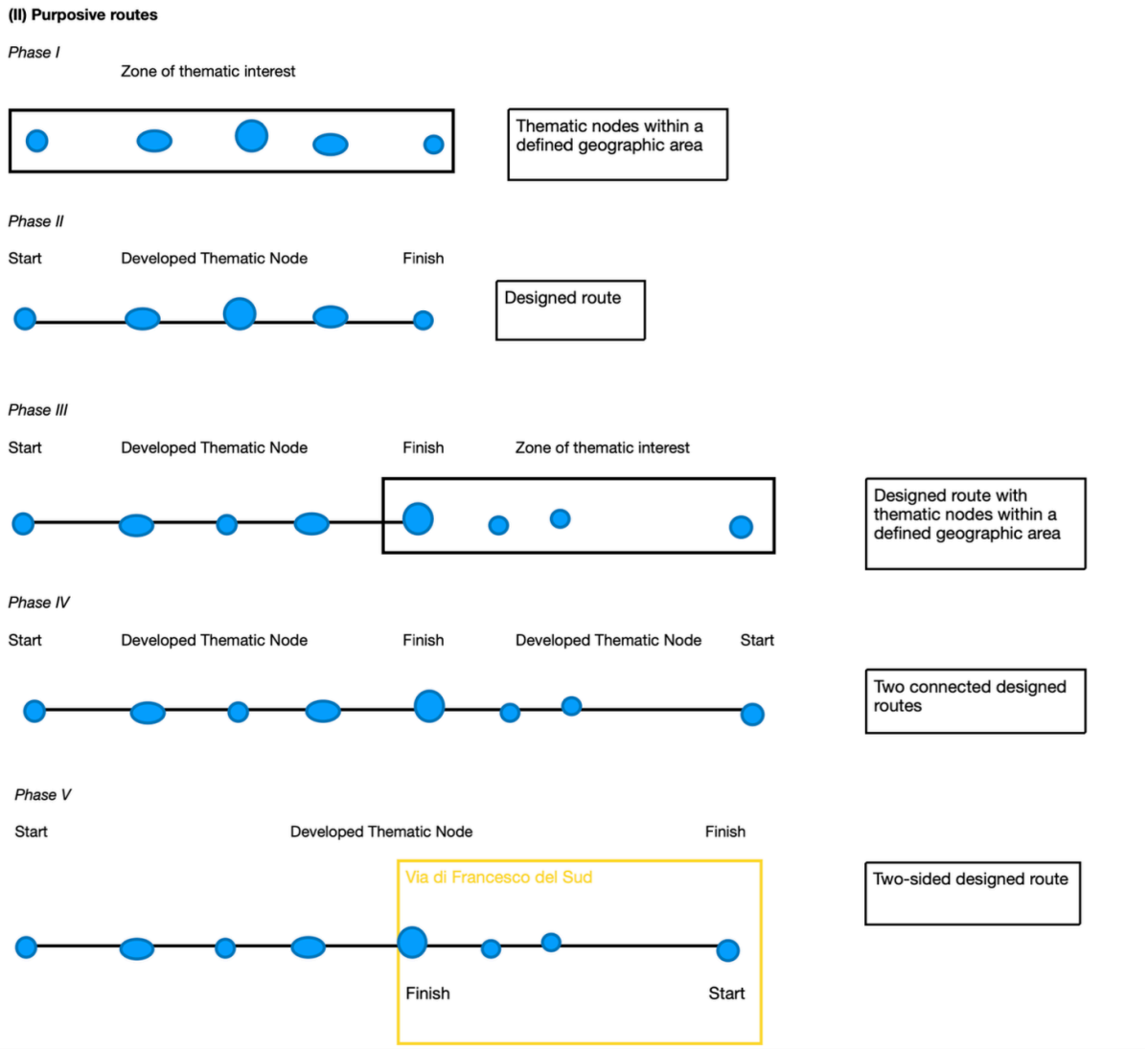

Figure 20 Adaption of the development of Purposive Routes to include the *Via di Francesco del Sud*.

Further developments

Before embarking on my journey, I had anticipated meeting more pilgrims along the route, especially given the timing, which coincided with two official Italian holidays: *Festa della Liberazione* and *Festa del Lavoro*. However, the reality brought several unexpected turns which affected my research. First, I experienced some stress related to my research, which eased after reaching out to my thesis supervisor and meeting two fellow pilgrims. Second, I suddenly found myself spending several hours each day alone in nature, which led to deep reflection. This experience, I believe, allowed me to connect more deeply with both the research and the participant group. However, this study includes only five interviewees and 29 questionnaire respondents. As such, the findings of this thesis offer preliminary insights rather than definitive conclusions or a fully generalizable understanding of the experiences and perspectives related to the *Via di Francesco del Sud*. Future research with a larger sample size would not only reduce potential biases but could explore specific variables such as pilgrims' directionality, faith, language knowledge, and other relevant factors to deepen understanding.

This study sought to explore the concept of space within the heritagization process of pilgrimage, a topic that remains largely unexamined. By applying Lefebvre's theory to analyse the spatial dimensions of the *Via di Francesco del Sud*, I aimed to reveal the complexity of this process and how interactions between practice, people, and place shape the development of spatial discourses, multiple uses of space, and their associated interpretations. Additionally, I hoped to demonstrate the value of incorporating Henri Lefebvre's 'Triad of Space' into pilgrimage studies. Specifically, this study highlights the importance of including not only major sites of significance but also the 'places of rest' along the pilgrimage route, emphasizing their role beyond just tourism or commercial perspectives. Hosts at these locations significantly contribute to the creation of pilgrimage space, by confirming the pilgrimage identity within these 'places of rest' through the acts of hospitality. These local hosts, therefore, not only form important stakeholders in the process of heritagization but they also act as gatekeepers. They provide the pilgrim with a sense of belonging to the pilgrimage space, while reaffirming their local identity.

Further research is needed to assess the applicability of this adapted version of Timothy and Boyd's diagram to other purposive routes. Additionally, it would be valuable to investigate the impact of 'walking in reverse' on the rituals associated with pilgrimage spaces and the heritage discourses. Preliminary observations among five pilgrims revealed no clear correlation in their practices or rituals upon reaching their destinations. A comparative study could illuminate the differences between rites of closure in two-sided linear pilgrimages and those in one-sided linear pilgrimages, such as the *Camino di Santiago*. Understanding these differences could shed light on how they affect the overall experience of the pilgrimage space, and the rituals performed within it.

By examining pilgrimage space from the perspective of movement, I argue that pilgrimage routes are not static entities but are actively produced. Pilgrimage space is both a product to be used or consumed, as well as a means of production. By adopting Lefebvre's *Triad of Space*, I aimed to better understand the social reality upheld by pilgrimage and the transformational potential inherent in it, which is both produced and actualized through movement. The social reality transforms locales into 'places of rest' where a temporal community of belonging is created through acts of hospitality. At the same time, the temporality of the space may cause cognitive dissonance for pilgrims when these locales, with their more permanent character, cannot be incorporated into the pilgrimage space—or, in other words, when the pilgrimage space cannot be extended into these locations. Furthermore, the temporal character seems to create a sense of 'being-in-place in process' for the local stakeholders. These different spatial elements of pilgrimage suggest that the heritage of the pilgrimage is not merely preserved through movement—such as the scraping of the path or the pilgrim's cyclical and linear rhythm—but that movement itself is essential for the pilgrimage heritage to exist. It is only within the pilgrimage space that certain locations form an itinerary of which the whole is seen as greater than the sum of its parts. Further research might expand on this temporality of pilgrimage heritage, its relationship to linearity, and its role in shaping heritage communities.

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Appendices are available on request.