

THE TRANSMISSION OF THE SPIRIT OF THE PLACE IN THE LIVING CULTURAL ROUTES: THE ROUTE OF SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA AS CASE STUDY

Alberto Martorell Carreño (ICOMOS Peru and ICOMOS-ICLAFI)
c/ Las Matas 31 – 3 – D, Madrid 28039, Spain
0039 3481634538 – 0034 914500468
martorellc@yahoo.com – a.martorell@lycos.com

Sub-theme 4: Transmitting the Spirit of the Places
Key words: Transmission, recontextualization.

Abstract

The cultural or heritage routes are focussed not only on the sites, but on the interrelationships generated by their use along the history. I will contend that the spirit of these routes is a result both of the local traditions and the movement of peoples processes and how it becomes even more complex when discussing about living cultural routes. I will present the Route of Santiago de Compostela WHS as a case study. (It keeps most of its original meanings for more than 10 centuries and it is **re-appropriated** and **culturally re-contextualized** by modern pilgrims and local people nowadays). The paper will propose answers for: **Is the historic spirit the same than the modern one? Is it the same along the entire route? Who is transmitting it? How is it being interpreted and transmitted?** To develop this paper we dedicate a first section to theoretical aspects and a second one linked with the use of internet tools on the interpretation of the Route of Santiago de Compostela.

The cultural routes are dynamic historic elements with two main characteristics: they were created to **connect** two or more different geographical locations and, to create **interrelationships** between different human groups because of the historic use of the route. Transmission, transportation, communication, interchange, etc, are natural functions of a communication route.

Therefore, the values represented by the route and the “spirit of the place” of the route are the result of dynamic human interrelationships. People using a physical path (road, river, etc.) and alternatively people using the landscape for displacing themselves without generating considerable changes on it during a significant period of time have been the creators and the receptors of the “spirit of the cultural route”. Stating this we are stating that the spirit of a living cultural route is in permanent re-creation.

Interpretation and transmission of the spirit of a historic route should reflect all its historic periods and different uses. As it is stated by the Ename Charter (draft version) *Interpretation should explore the significance of a site in its multi-faceted historical, political, spiritual, and artistic contexts. It should consider all aspects of the site’s cultural, social, and environmental significance and values.*

In such a sense, some theoretical proposals that look to focus only in one of the historic moments and functions seem to be not according to the “authenticity” concept. The Operational Guidelines of the WH Convention states that the authenticity is expressed in *a variety of attributes including: form and design; materials and substance; use and function; traditions, techniques and management systems; location and setting; language, and other forms of intangible heritage; spirit and feeling; and other internal and external factors.*

It also states that ...*all these sources permits elaboration of the specific artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions of the cultural heritage...*

Living examples of the above quoted elements can be found in a cultural route, especially when it is still *in use*. In the case of a *no longer used* route its historic meaning can be more easily determined, at least from a theoretical point of view. When dealing with a living cultural route we have not only historic but contemporary meanings, values and uses. People using it nowadays are re-appropriating and by this way keeping alive the spirit of the place. Nevertheless, the authentic presentation and communication of the traditional values and meanings must be displayed in order to preserve its authenticity.

The Route of Santiago de Compostela offers many examples of how old and new traditions can contribute to keeping the route alive.

Interpretation and communication of a cultural route

As we formerly discussed, there are two main differential factors to distinguish the goods belonging to the “cultural routes category”: connectivity and interrelationship.

Connectivity

We understand *connectivity* as a property of the human creations specifically made to facilitate the *movement of peoples* and transportation processes. Any route is connecting distant geographical points. The decision of creating the connections between determined geographical points is made by the territorial management powers, according with political, economic, military, religious, etc., interests.

The Wordnet¹ (lexical database for the English language of the University of Princeton) defines *connectivity* as *the property of being connected or the degree to which something has connections*. Additionally to the English concept, we also considered the Spanish expressions “conectar” and “conectivo” (connect and connective). Considering all these concepts we can set out the elements denoted by the word “connectivity”:

- Capacity to joint or link different parts.
- The state of connecting.
- A system.
- A connection implying communication, creation of relationships, material and immaterial assets flowing.

It is also necessary to specify that we apply *connectivity* to the links between human points over the territory (connectivity between human inhabited spaces, between points of production and consume of a resource, sacred places and pilgrims origins points, etc.) By this reason, we understand *connectivity* as a cultural phenomenon, which is specified in human creations or human uses of the territory, made with the goal of facilitating the *movement of peoples, commodities and information*.

Interrelationship

Human creations made to facilitate human and goods mobility over the territory play a more important role than just connecting. As a consequence of the connectivity, the routes of communication create interrelationships between peoples living in different territorial points affected by the route.

¹ <http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn>

Therefore the capacity to generate *interrelationships* is the second characteristic of the category *cultural route*.

Many new cultural manifestations are arising because of the encounter between two or more different societies or human groups. That encounter implies social, economical, cultural, spiritual, politic, religious, technical, scientific, etc, interchanges.

However, the *interrelationship* is not limited to human contact. It also implies the *mutual correspondence between assets or phenomena*, as said above. This is another factor to take into account. Human interrelationships resulting of the use of the routes of communication explain the expansion of artistic tendencies, use of techniques, materials, products consuming and many other very important expressions of the social life. In the paradigmatic case of the Route of Santiago de Compostela, many outstanding monumental works reflects the dissemination of some of the most important European artistic styles along the route, while ways of thinking, religious principles, and many other human values were spread by the route, reaching to the different European regions.

The heritage of connectivity / interrelationship perspective as basis for the cultural routes category

In a cultural route, different goods interact creating a system. There are some specific goods used to facilitate the *movement of peoples* because they fulfill a function linked to the territorial connectivity and human interrelationship (bridges, tunnels, train stations, etc). These goods acting jointly constitute ways of communication (channels, routes, roads, transportation nets, etc.). By the use of the ways of communication some human activities are becoming possible and constituting a differentiated activity (trading, nomadism, transhumance, immigration, pilgrimage, etc). In this level, the route is acquiring specific values and meanings (including intangible values).

It is also necessary to consider another kind of assets which have played a key role in the *movement of peoples* processes: the vehicles and transportation means in general. From the simpler cases of the past to the modern means, they played, play and will continue playing a role in the processes. In some cases the transportation means are a key element of the system. The most typical example is a locomotive in relation to a railway. Without this device the route itself becomes useless.

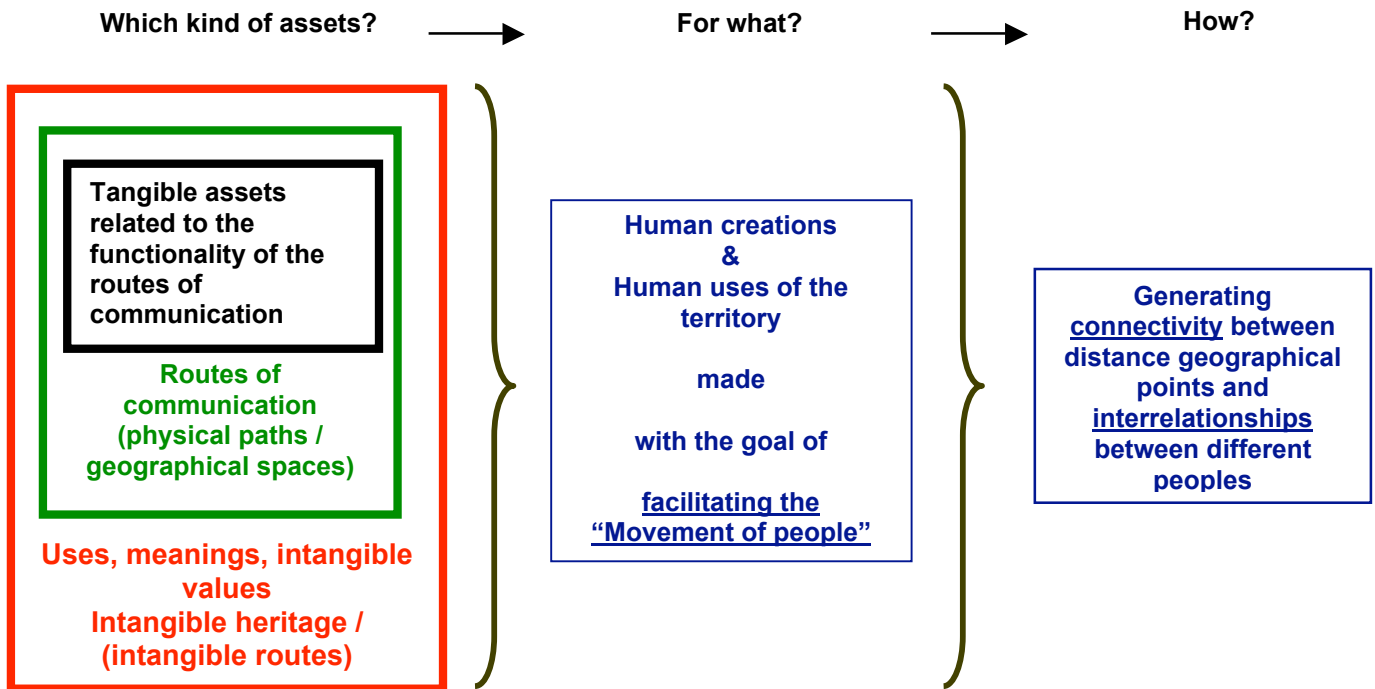
All the above quoted goods are part of a dynamic process. To understand their role in the communication system it is important to determine the historic values of each good by itself and the cultural route as a whole. That is what we call the *heritage of connectivity / interrelationship perspective*. The Diagram 1 resumes it.

The Mountain Railways of India contains amazing examples of how the communication way operates as a system with determined inputs and outputs contributing to the general function of the *cultural route*.

Recently we have visited the so called Matheran Light Mountain Railways (from Neral city to Matheran town). We found on it a very important communication system as the generator of a human landscape with outstanding esthetical and natural values. The railway route includes the physical path with some specific peculiarities, the different stations with particular vernacular heritage value, the locomotive and wagons depots and maintaining workshops, different rest houses for the workers in charge of the route, the historic town of Matheran which has also special vernacular values, and the human landscapes including the Charlotte lake and some of the most outstanding views to a natural site around the world. Original locomotive and coaches are fully operatives. Authenticity from the technical point of view is very clear. However, the railway cannot

be fully understood de-contextualized from the landscape. Importantly, Matheran can only be reached by train because the automobiles are not allowed to arrive to this point. The whole set of elements above mentioned are working as a system for more than 100 years. Each one of them plays a very important role to maintain the values of the site.

Diagram 1. Operation of the *heritage of connectivity / interrelationship perspective*



Elaborate by the author.

Some tips for the interpretation and communication process for heritage routes

The cultural routes are the more complex category in the conservationist sciences up to the moment. Many different cultural goods are integrated in each cultural route. Such a complexity makes more difficult to understand this kind of goods. It also increases the difficulty for its social appreciation. One of the main requirements for the adequate conservation of a site is public awareness. Local society must develop some degree of identification with the good.

Interpretation and communication of a cultural route must be done taking into account that it is a complex system with *connectivity / interrelationship* differential values. By the said reason, it is necessary to develop some specific strategies for both activities. We propose:

- Holistic vision and participation: to transmit a complete image of the cultural route it is necessary that the interpretation is done in a participative basis and considering the whole communication system represented for it.
- Location: a communication strategy focussed on the set of goods integrated by the cultural route must determine the neuralgic areas of the route itself. Interpretation centres should be located in such points. Some neuralgic points are the sacred places on a pilgrimage route, the places where important historic successes have taken place; the provisioning and resting points, etc.

- c) Symbols and other distinctive elements: It is necessary to design a distinctive mark to identify the whole cultural route. In the case of Santiago the famous shell is well done after its official adoption by the Council of Europe. It is also important to understand the traditional symbols and signals of the route.
- d) Shared values must underline the differential character of a heritage route. That character is mainly located on those goods linking different points of the territory and generating interrelationships between the peoples located on it. Those goods act as linking elements for the diverse cultures generating new goods and values. Therefore, the interpretation centres for the cultural routes should dedicate special areas to show those elements resulting from the interchanges and interrelationships. It is necessary to emphasize the local elements (i.e. those corresponding to the specific point where the centre is located) that are a demonstration of such a process (i.e. the elements exhibiting an artistic tendency that can be located in different points of the itinerary; the work of an architect or an artist with presence on different points of the itinerary; the elements showing the inter-influence between different artistic styles, ways of thinking, etc.)
- e) Linguistic style: when dealing with longer routes that embrace areas with different languages, the interpretation centres should contain at least basic information on each one of those languages and not only in the local one. Additionally, information in a more universal language should be also included. These criteria should be applied to the diffusion materials (basic leaflets, guides, etc.).

The route of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, WHS

The Route of Santiago de Compostela was inscribed in 1994. Criteria applied for including this site on the WHL were ii, (The Route of Santiago played a *fundamental role in facilitating the two-way interchange of cultural developments between the Iberian peninsula and the rest of Europe....*

- Criterion ii: The Route *played a fundamental role in facilitating the two-way interchange of cultural developments between the Iberian peninsula and the rest of Europe...*
- Criterion iv: The Route of Santiago *has preserved the most complete material record in the form of ecclesiastical and secular buildings, settlements both large and small, and civil engineering structures.*
- Criterio vi: this Route is *outstanding testimony power and influence of faith among people of all classes and countries in Europe during the Middle Ages and later.*

The three above quoted criteria are the “official” explanation of the OUV of the Route of Santiago. There is not doubt on the validity of them. However, there are some other interesting explanations about the origin of this pilgrimage route, and surely they would be also part of the interpretation of the complete set of historic values of the Route of Santiago.

Barreiro Rivas states in his doctoral work²:

... el Camino no debería ser descrito sólo como una ruta penitencial -transformada al paso de los siglos en una eficaz vía de penetración de la cultura, la literatura, el arte, el comercio y

² *La Función Política de los Caminos de Peregrinación en la Europa Medieval: Estudio sobre el Camino de Santiago*, Political Sciences and Administration Department, Complutense University of Madrid, 1993.

otras manifestaciones de las ciencias jurídicas y naturales-, sino como una vía de comunicación de gran alcance, alta capacidad y fuerte influencia cultural y económica, abierta al socaire de un proceso de sacralización que, aunque concurrente con un efectivo espíritu religioso y aventurero generado en los albores del año 1000, no debe impedir el apreciar los claros objetivos primarios, de índole civil, que están en la base misma de la organización de las peregrinaciones.

...lo cierto es que el Camino de Santiago llegó a ser, con mucha diferencia, la mejor, más cómoda y más rápida vía de Occidente, dotada de gran seguridad para el viajero” y protegido por una fuerte red asistencial y hospitalaria, que no casa muy bien con esa idea romántica de un camino lleno de penalidades y peligros. El viaje de los peregrinos era ciertamente duro y peligroso en la medida en que todos los viajes medievales lo eran; pero, dentro de esa circunstancia, en el Camino de Santiago se unieron ingentes esfuerzos de los reyes y señores del poder civil, de la Iglesia y de las congregaciones religiosas, y de benefactores de toda índole para lograr, precisamente, seguridad física y jurídica, comodidad, rapidez, asistencia suficiente al viajero, e incluso una riqueza artística notable que incentivaba a cada paso el esfuerzo del caminante. (p. 82)

The above quoted paragraphs are not denying the value of the pilgrimage route to Compostela, living for more than 10 centuries. It contributes to understand it in a broader way, thinking in its whole values. Was the Route of Santiago only a pilgrimage route? When interpreting and communicating its values, is it enough to focus our attention on its religious values?

The Route of Santiago de Compostela in Spain (Camino Frances) is **essentially** a pilgrimage route. Nevertheless, it was also a very important way of communication during the medieval times for more activities than the religious one.

It is interesting to underline that among other special rights given to the pilgrims to Santiago, in 1434 *John II established a safe-conduct for pilgrims travelling to Spain from Italy, France, Germany, Hungary, Sweden, Norway and other nations. It was decreed that they could not be arrested or their properties subjected to embargo. They were also recognized other rights such as the right to sell, buy, make a will and make use of their properties. This constitutes a very important chapter in the history of European and Spanish law.*³

The *Cronica del Obispo don Pelayo* states that during the ruling of Alfonso VI a woman was able to walk through the entire kingdom with gold and silver in her hands. Nobody was disturbing her travel. (Sánchez⁴, p. 34).

Barreiro explains that the medieval pilgrimage routes in Europe, and more specifically the Route of Santiago are the result of political strategies linked with the control of the territory and the consolidation of the Western values in face to the chaotic situation of those times. The main necessity of the Catholic kingdom of Asturias was to concentrate enough power to fight against the Muslims expansion.

By this way we pretend to demonstrate that interpretation of a cultural route must be done considering its whole context (historic, environmental, social, etc.)

Interpretation of the Route of Santiago de Compostela

Pilgrims sensations and feelings: the first approach

³ MARTORELL, A. (2005) *The Route of Santiago in Spain (Camino Frances) as WHS: its conservation and management*. Paper submitted to the ICOMOS Scientific Symposium *Monuments and sites in their setting - conserving cultural heritage in changing townscapes and landscapes*, Xi'an China, 2005 (see <http://www.international.icomos.org/xian2005/papers/4-33.pdf>).

⁴ *Crónica del Obispo Don Pelayo*, editada por Sánchez Alonso (ed.), Madrid, 1926.

The Route goes through the territory of five Spanish Autonomous Communities (i.e. Aragon, Navarra, La Rioja, Castile and Leon and Galicia). Due to the Spanish administrative framework, the Route does not have a unique management system. Even the definition of the core area and its buffer zone presents differences between one to the others jurisdictions.

As it was stated, the Route of Santiago is a living cultural route. By this reason, re-appropriation and re-contextualization of the route is permanently happening. People walking by the Route of Santiago nowadays are not always responding to religious motivations. Many of the “pilgrims” walk by the route because of other interests among which we can mention the sport, adventure, appreciation of the artistic manifestations, enjoying of the natural values and even the opportunity to share the experience with many other walkers coming from different origins around the World. The question is if those motivations are creating new ways of understanding the Route of Santiago and if their approaching is also valid from the point of view of the World Heritage Site.

Most of the walkers we are speaking about will do the whole path to Santiago, following the same ancestral route and visiting the same sacred places. If we consider the pilgrimage as a spiritual experience, it is possible to affirm that the big majority of the people walking by it are living that kind of experience. The Route of Santiago is characterized by having different environments which effect over the human being generates a spiritual reaction. For some travellers the Route of Santiago means an opportunity for the self-reflection and the look for oneself meaning.

When making the route, traditional and new pilgrims are sharing the same path, observing the same things and developing some answers to their own feelings and the social one to the route. There are some “personal interpretations” of the Route such as the one of the painter Antor Hurtado whose work on the Route of Santiago is available at the web site <http://www.euskalnet.net/caminandoasantiago.htm>. To this personal approaching we can add many different cases of photographers which have prepared special presentations, dossiers and websites on the Route of Santiago and its document. The landscape appreciation is also an important factor in the motivation of many of the people walking to Compostela. So as the landscape concept is becoming more and more important in the conservationist sciences, it is reaching a more important position in the popular imagination. The Route of Santiago offers some of the more amazing landscapes around the World.

Art historians and other specialists use also to do the route with the intention of completing their personal formation and acquiring a direct experience of the Romanic art while visiting the different locations of the route.

More than all these kind of personal experiences linked to the Route of Santiago, the religious one continuous playing the most outstanding role.

We have discussed two different points of view to demonstrate the complexity we are dealing with when communicating sites such as the Route to Santiago. First, from the point of view of its origin, it is necessary consider the political and military interests, and not only the religious one that influenced on the creation of the route. Second, the new pilgrims’ motivations are different and very complex. In parallel, religious motivations still continue giving the main sense of the route.

Interpretation made taking into account just some and not all the discussed factors, will result incomplete and not consider all the context of the site.

The Route of Santiago on the WWW

Many different websites have been created for the interpretation, communication and transmission of values of the Route of Santiago to the people. Perhaps the Route of Santiago is one of the sites around the World having a bigger presence on Internet. From public to private institutions, from official to personal websites, from religious to layperson interpretations, from free interpretation to academic essays, many different contents about the Route can be found in Internet.

Importantly, the number of civil associations created around the Route of Santiago de Compostela is very big. All the main cities and many of the shorter towns have created sorts of vicinal organizations. This is underlying the public interest and public participation on the Route. Not only the “Camino Frances”, which is the WHS, but many other routes have local and regional associations inspired on the route. The availability of the information in a number of different languages is also saying too much on the broader international audience interested on Santiago. At the same time these associations are a space for the local people interpretation and communication of their own way of understanding the route..

“Virtual visitors” to the Route are a bigger number than the real visitors one.

Among the official websites there is a clear tendency to present it as a tourist interest destination more than a cultural site in the broader mean of the expression. The official website site for the Route of Santiago of the Government of Aragon (http://www.jacobeo.aragon.es/flash/principal_flash.html) is the only one made by the Education and Culture Department. It is focussed on the different aspect of the route along this Autonomous Community. The website contains a description of the main route and some secondary routes in Aragon (including references to the main historic monuments), a chapter about the main ways to undertake the route and advises for the pilgrims, and a relation of the main links available on the website.

The website of the Government of Navarra (<http://www.turismo.navarra.es/esp/propuestas/camino-santiago/>) is in charge of the tourism sector. It contains a section with the description of the main route and other secondary ones, a brief historic information, practical advises and information for the pilgrims, a relationship and information on the main legends of the route.

In the case of the Government of Castile and Leon, the website (<http://www.turismocastillayleon.com/cm/xacobeo>) is offering a detailed description and guide of the stages of the route, a relationship of the lodgings (traditional “hospitals”) in the territory of the Autonomous Community, a very short reference to the Route of Santiago in general, the usual practical advices to the pilgrims and some biographical information about Santiago the Apostle.

The Autonomous Community of La Rioja dedicate to the Route of Santiago the website (http://www.lariojaturismo.com/camino_santiago/index.php). It is in charge of the tourism sector. The main sections contained are: a general description of the route in the Autonomous Community territory, the legends of the route, a relationship and brief description of the hospitals a description of the main cities on the route in La Rioja and a section presenting the “Camino del Ebro” other of the routes linked to Santiago de Compostela different that the Camino Frances.

Some differences can be found in the case of the website of the Autonomous Community of Galicia (http://www.esgalicia.com/camino_santiago/) which presents not only the Camino Frances but the so called “camino del norte”, “camino ingles” y “camino portugués”. Being the point of confluence of the different pathways, it is interesting that the proposal embraces all these different routes. It presents the different stages on the territory of Galicia and a general description of them.

All the above quoted websites contains information in Spanish, English and French. The last one has also information in the regional “gallego” language. Thus, the information is displayed in the more used languages around the world.

It is clear that none of the sections present a general interpretation of the Route of Santiago but are dedicated to the specific aspects of each regional jurisdiction. Even the historic information is very limited. It is also difficult to find at least references or active links to the other websites. By this way the possibilities offered by the technology are not being well used. A general sensation of a “fragmented” and not unique WHS is produced.

This problem is not present in the case of the private websites. They try to present all the main information about the Camino Frances and other routes to Santiago de Compostela in a comprehensive way.

For example the website of the Federation of Associations of the Route of Santiago in Spain (<http://www.caminosantiago.org/cpperegrino/federacion/inicio.asp>) is presenting a comprehensive description of each one of the stages of the Camino Frances and other “Jacobea’s routes” such as the Camino primitive, el Camino del norte, the Camino ingles, the Vía de la Plata, etc. It also contains information on each one of the lodgings available not only in the Camino Frances but in the different roads that go through the Spanish territory to Santiago. Some other websites allow the pilgrims to actively participate on the evaluation of the quality of services of each one of the lodgings.

The use of the WWW tools for the presentation, interpretation and communication of the Route of Santiago de Compostela is being developed by different actors. They present the spirit of the place and meet spaces for the more personal expressions, the social approaching and the institutional and public one. We have only commented the main ones. The website is a powerful instrument when dealing with a complex cultural route.

Nevertheless, there are even many aspects that would be developed in the case of the Route of Santiago. For example, it is necessary to link and coordinate the many different efforts. We have only commented the case of the Camino Frances, the Spanish section of the Route. However we must take into account that there are many other sections of the Route in Spain and other European Countries. So as it is necessary to have a more comprehensive approaching from each one of the Autonomous Governments, it s also necessary to develop a complete presentation of the Route and its different national sections. Some websites are dealing with such aspects. For example <http://www.chemins-compostelle.com>, that is created by an Interregional Association (*Les chemins de Saint-Jacques de Compostelle*). However, the linguistic problem is present because the website is mainly in French language. An European website on the Routes to Santiago de Compostela is still a necessity.

The modern pilgrims are interpreting and communicating the Route of Santiago every day. Their efforts to communicate (websites, traveller books, guides, etc.) must be recognized. In parallel a bigger effort for communicating the historic general value of the route must be done, underlying the importance of the value of each one of the elements and traditions of the route. In such a way the continuity of the living tradition will be guaranteed.

Short CV: Alberto Martorell

Alberto Martorell is a Lawyer specialized on heritage conservation and planning. He holds a Master in Natural Protected Areas (UAM-UCM-UA, 2004) and an Advanced Studies Diploma and is candidate to Doctor on Cultural Rights (UNED, Madrid) He is member of ICOMOS Peru and ICOMOS Italy, ICLAFI, ICIP and CIIC. He is author of specialized books and articles in his expertise area. He has contributed with evaluations of the state of conservation of WHS in Peru, Argentina and Spain.