

The French Way of St. James as an Engine in the Invigoration of Rural Municipalities in Galicia¹

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to analyze the invigorating effect of the Way of St. James in the Galician rural areas. To do so, we have chosen as a territorial scope the 14 rural municipalities that the “French Way” crosses in this Autonomous Community. The utilized data come from the Bank of Municipal Data of *Instituto Galego de Estatística* (IGE). A double approximation on the impact of this route has been made: on one hand, we analyze the behavior of different socioeconomic variables during the last two decades in the selected municipalities. On the other hand, we examine to what extent a more favorable dynamic has been witnessed in similar rural territories that do not have access to this product. Although the results of the analysis should be taken as a first approximation, data point to the existence of a very moderate impact of the Way of St. James, in the sense that the development of tourism activities linked to the Way are not sufficient to reverse the demographic and economic decline of these rural areas.

Key-words: rural areas, tourism, municipalities, Galicia, the Way of St. James.

Resumen: *El objetivo de este estudio es analizar el efecto vigorizante del Camino de Santiago en las zonas rurales de Galicia. Para ello, hemos elegido como ámbito territorial los 14 municipios rurales que cruza el “Camino Francés” en esta Comunidad Autónoma. Los datos utilizados provienen del Banco de Datos Municipales del Instituto Galego de Estadística (IGE). Se ha realizado una doble aproximación sobre el impacto de esta ruta: por un lado, analizamos el comportamiento de diferentes variables socioeconómicas durante las últimas dos décadas en los municipios seleccionados. Por otro lado, examinamos hasta qué punto se ha observado una dinámica más favorable en territorios rurales*

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similares que no tienen acceso a este recurso. Si bien los resultados del análisis deben tomarse como una primera aproximación, los datos apuntan a la existencia de un impacto muy moderado del Camino de Santiago, en el sentido de que el desarrollo de actividades turísticas vinculadas al Camino no son suficientes para revertir el deterioro demográfico y económico de estas zonas rurales.

Palabras-clave: áreas rurales, turismo, municipios, Galicia, Camino de Santiago.

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1. Introduction

The Way of St. James represents a cultural route, which origins date back to the IX Century (GUSMÁN *et al.*, 2017) as a consequence of the invention of apostle James the Greater's mortal remains. Ever since, it is considered one of the most important routes of cultural Exchange in Europe, already counting ten centuries of existence. In this sense, it is important to mention that even though pilgrimages to Santiago could be included as a religious tourism mode (PRECEDO-LEDO *et al.*, 2007; ANDRADE-SUÁREZ, 2011), the Way itself constitutes a more complex phenomenon, to which diverse dimensions are integrated (cultural, social, environmental, leisure, ...) that give it some special attraction.

Under this premise, the Way of St. James becomes a versatile itinerary (MURRAY and GRAHAM, 1997), going from being considered a product linked to spiritual tourism to becoming a much ampler product that collects different touristic typologies (NILSSON and TESFAHUNEY, 2016; NOVELLO *et al.*, 2013), mainly those linked to culture and nature (HERNÁNDEZ-RAMÍREZ, 2011; LEIRA *et al.*, 2010; MAAK, 2009; PRECEDO-LEDO *et al.*, 2007; PORCAL, 2006; BURGO, 2006; MURRAY and GRAHAM, 1997). Besides, the large number of municipalities that share its layout make the Way a polyvalent product of great potential (DUQUE, 2014).

The attention that the Way receives, and the generalized opinion that it represents a product of high potential for the socioeconomic development of the territories that Galicia covers – zones of an essentially rural character until reaching the city of Santiago

de Compostela – contrasts with the lack of studies about its impact in recent decades. Among the scarce contributions, Precedo-Ledo *et al.* (2007), Andrade-Suárez *et al.* (2010) and Andrade-Suárez (2011) are worth mentioning.

Starting from that perspective, the objective of this work is to offer an approximation of the role played in the last decades by the Way of St. James in the invigoration of rural areas of Galicia. To do so, we analyze the evolution in the last two decades of the main demographic and socioeconomic variables in the 14 rural municipalities that cross the French Way, paying special attention to those economic activities that may be more closely related to the presence of the pilgrims. All the data used comes from the Municipal Data Bank of *Instituto Galego de Estatística* (IGE). From available statistical information we try to respond two questions: To what extent is verified, on the socioeconomic evolution of these municipalities, an improvement related to the activities instigated by the Way? Are there any differences between the changes experienced by these municipalities and the set of Galician municipalities of similar rurality?

2. Theoretical foundations

2.1. The way of St. James: historic remarks

The significance that this route has gained in the present era goes back to the mid XIX century, with rise of two relevant facts: on one hand, reappearance of the mortal remains of the apostle and, on the other hand, the phenomenon of St. James itself. However

it is not until the celebration of St. James in 1965 that the first invigoration strategies, related with the route, take place. In this sense, the Way of St. James starts to take a new spin becoming, initially and embryonically, a touristic destination inside the Spanish touristic planning. Several actions took place but, without a doubt, the declaration of the French route (French Way) as a first European cultural itinerary in 1984, and the recognition of Santiago de Compostela as World Heritage, served as encouragement for the touristic takeoff that happened in 1993. Although it is in the 1990's when the Way of St. James turns into the mass phenomenon that it currently is, and into a star product inside Galicia's touristic planning and promotion (CELEIRO, 2013), igniting a series of public programs that had, as a final aim, its dissemination and the creation and improvement of infrastructures of the different routes of the Way of St. James, particularly, of the French Way. Additionally, actions related with non-regulated training, conceived to the owners of rural houses, or the training of its artisans, including a specific section for work with women, also took place (GARCÍA, 1999). From there, holy years become authentic catalysts for the attraction of visitors and the global growth of the touristic sector in Galicia. A proof of this is the presence of pilgrims that has grown steadily during the last two decades, significantly standing out holy years 1993, 1999, 2004 and 2010.

Hence, the Way of St. James has consolidated itself as one of the most visited cultural routes in the world, becoming a route of great magnitude that, at the same time, is made up by different well-known routes (English Way, North Way, Silver Road, Portuguese Way, Finisterre Way, Arousal and Ulla Sea Way, and French Way, Primitive Way and so on) which, although starting at different geographical points, all have as their final destination the city of Santiago de Compostela.

For research purposes, we will concentrate on the French Way of St. James since it is the route that has a longer historic path, as well as important international recognition. It is a route of almost 800 km that starts at Saint Jean Pied de Port (France) towards Santiago de Compostela (Galicia). In total, there are 31 stages that go across a big number of municipalities. This paper only analyzes the stretch that crosses Galicia, given that a homogenous as possible socioeconomic aspect was sought after.

2.2. Rural tourism and invigoration of rural areas

The rural crisis, the containment of agrarian productivism prompted by the European Union and the necessary introduction of other type of activities; the supposed end of the sun and beach tourism cycle, and decentralization of touristic policy are important factors to explain the promotion of economic diversification in rural areas. The activities that could take place in these zones are varied, as are their local resources which offer an experience based on contact with extraordinary nooks and crannies (HERNÁNDEZ-RAMÍREZ, 2015). However, for ages, rural tourism has been considered one of the development tools that allow meeting economic, social, and environmental goals linked to an integral development process of rural areas (CALATRAVA-REQUENA, 1999; IVARS-BAIDAL, 1997).

In fact, in Spain, rural tourism has experienced some notable growth in the last decades, partly explained by a high degree of public policies support (MOYANO-ESTRADA and ORTEGA, 2014) through both Spanish and European funding, inside several programs. Among them, stand out the activities financed by public initiatives that apply a local focus of rural development⁷ (CARNEIRO *et al.*, 2015).

The Galician case does not escape this characterization, the important place that Rural Tourism had in the public policies is manifested when verifying its main role in the Leader Initiative. When considering funding, at least in its first two stages, this sector is clearly privileged, making clear the purpose of turning it into one of the main rural development alternatives of rural areas in Galicia (IVARS-BAIDAL, 2016).

Other actions of the Autonomous Administration should be added to these public support lines that, without having an exclusive incidence on this concrete type of touristic offer, prompted to invigorate the touristic attractive of the rural regions through creation and rehabilitation of touristic infrastructures (signpost of trails, recreational areas, touristic refuges,

7. We refer to the three stages of the Leader initiative, developed from 1991 to 2006, the two stages of the Proder Program (1995-2006) and, in the Galician case, Agader Program (2000-2006). From 2013, this intervention methodology in rural areas is included in the Rural Development Programs of each Autonomous Community.

restaurants etc.) or by means of recuperating cultural and natural heritage.

3. Methodological aspects

This study is carried out in the Autonomous Community of Galicia, which has 4 provinces and 317 municipalities. In our case, the selected sample for this study includes the 14 rural municipalities that the French Way⁸ crosses in Galicia and the time frame for the analysis spans years 1991 to 2014. Year 1991 corresponds to the beginning of the first stage of the Leader Initiative that, as pointed out before, has meant a great wake-up call for the development of touristic activities in the Spanish rural areas. We have enlarged time frame to year 2014 following a current criterion and as well as the need of integrating different stages of an economic cycle as complex as the one existing in Spain from 2008. The whole of the utilized data come from the Bank of Municipal Data of *Instituto Galego de Estatística* (IGE) because this source collects data of primary source of diverse demographic and economic variables of both urban and rural municipalities. A socio-demographic analysis has been made based on these data, which lets us know the evolution experimented by these municipalities during the established period. Afterwards, this study was completed with a comparative analysis of the evolution of the variables in the set of municipalities of the same province that present similar rural characteristics. This has been supported by the typology developed by IGE (IGE, 2014), based on a Eurostat standard that groups up municipalities according to population, density, and continuity of local areas. Three classifications are established inside this category: densely populated areas (DPA), intermediate populated areas (IPA) and sparsely populated areas (SPA). Likewise, inside SPA areas, which are identified as rural, three subcategories are differentiated (subrogation of urbanization): high SPA, intermediate SPA and low SPA. Detailed definitions of these categories and subcategories can be found in IGE (2014), but we consider it important to mention that, out of the three municipalities of the

province of A Coruña that are crossed by the French Way, 1 belongs to intermediate SPA and the other two to low SPA; out of 11 of the province of Lugo, there are two in the intermediate SPA and 9 in the low SPA. As a set, therefore, 3 out of 14 rural municipalities through which the Way crosses are classified in the intermediate SPA and 11 in the low SPA.

When it comes to the used variables for the analysis, we must specify that those related to both the demographic and economic dynamics have been considered. Among demographic ones is evolution of population, ageing level, and migratory balances. On the other hand, the economic variables considered are evolution of employed population, number of enterprises and available gross rent⁹, measured as balance of the distribution of the secondary rent account.

4. Results and discussion

We will start the analysis of results talking about a concrete type of accommodation that, as pointed out before, has had important support from the Galician administration: rural tourism houses. Figure 1 allows for verification of how these establishments tend to concentrate at determined areas. In this way, the greater number of houses can be seen in municipalities next to main cities, around a main road (such as AP-9 freeway that crosses the western outskirts of the Autonomous Community, from north to south) and at spaces that possess patrimonial or natural attractions, well-known as touristic resources.

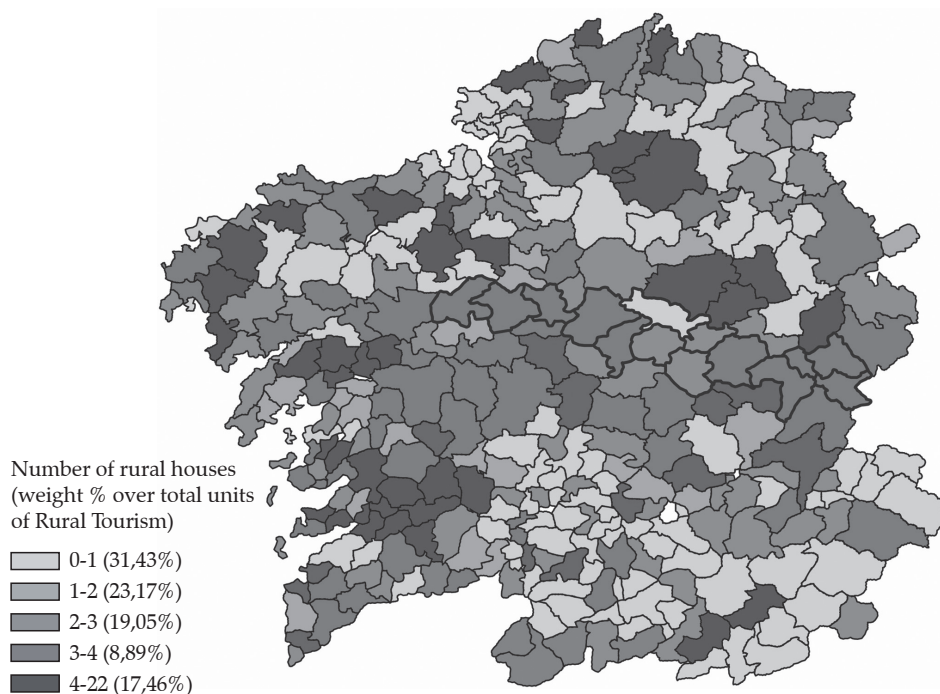
In this last category is the Way of St. James, where 11 out of 14 studied town halls have a greater number of establishments. These 2013 data are in relation with what has been expressed by Andrade-Suárez *et al.* (2010), who additionally point out that the fact that the majority of these municipalities have specific touristic development plans may have influenced such distribution.

Having said this, we want to make evident that the map also displays how inside the 11 points with

8. Three located in the province of A Coruña (Melide, Arzúa, O Pino) and 11 in Lugo (Pedrafita do Cebreiro, As Nogais, Triacastela, Samos, Sarria, O Páramo, Paradela, Portomarín, Guntín, Monterroso, Palas de Rei).

9. It results from the balance of primary rents added to social benefits and current transfers that are a resource for homes; and subtracting the revenue taxes, social contributions, and current transfers that are an expense for homes.

Figure 1. Spatial distribution of rural tourism establishments by municipalities in Galicia in 2013



Note: The municipalities marked with gross line correspond to the French Way of St. James. The % represents concentration of number of houses by area.

Source: Own preparation, based on the *Instituto Galego de Estatística*.

bigger presence of this type of establishments, the weight of the activity is quite unequal, being Arzúa (16), Pedrafita do Cebreiro (8) and Palas de Rei (7) the ones that present a greater concentration of this type of rural accommodation.

Pointing out this fact, before advancing with the analysis, it is important to make it clear that the offer of touristic accommodation along the French Way of St. James is not limited only to rural tourism houses. Indeed, the existing type of accommodation has become wider and more diverse as years go by. According to data gathered by IGE in the *Estatísticas de ocupación en establecementos turísticos e infraestrutura turística* (Occupancy statistics of touristic establishments and touristic infrastructure), there is an important portion of the accommodation offer that goes away from the briefly described model in section 3. In this way, hotels, hostels, campsites, tourism apartments and touristic refuges contribute, more significantly, to making up this offer.

This phenomenon is clearly established in Figure 2. It is possible to verify how, by year 2013, the type

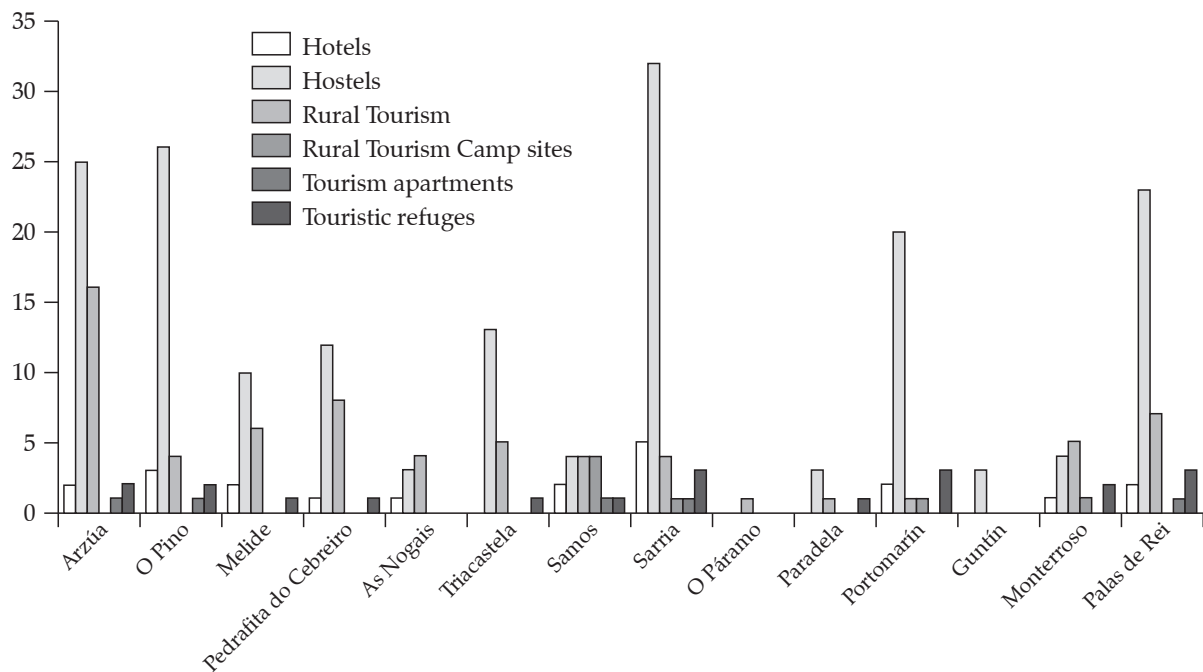
of accommodation with greater presence in a big part of the municipalities of the Way were hostels (59%), followed by rural houses (22%). However, the percentage of these types of accommodation decreased in comparison with previous periods.¹⁰ If, additionally, we analyze the offer in terms of available vacancies, we find that the number of vacancies offered by hostels is five times the number of units offered by rural tourism houses¹¹ in 2013.

So, although this change would require a more detailed study, data signal a relative loss of importance of the weight of this type of accommodation. This situation can be attributed to tourists' preferences when choosing the type of accommodation. In the

10. It is important to mention that, in the last two decades, the percentage of rural tourism accommodation has decreased. In 2003, rural houses distributed along the municipalities of the French Way of St. James represented 76%, and in 2008, 71%.

11. According to the database of touristic accommodations prepared by IGE, rural houses offered in 2013 a total of 774 accommodation places, while the number of places offered by hostels rose to 3.904.

Figure 2. Number of touristic accommodations in 2013



Source: Own preparation, based on Occupancy Statistics of touristic establishments and touristic infrastructure – Galician Institute of Statistics

specific case of the French Way of St. James, users opt for cheap, close to the route accommodation.

Once this clarification has been made, we continue detailing the results of the developed analysis; to do so, we will divide the results into two sections: one dedicated to the estimated effects on the demographic variables and another in which the observed results on the economic structure of the 11 municipalities that constitute the geographic scope of the analysis are exposed.

4.1. Analysis of demographic dynamics

The first aspect that we are going to refer to is the structure and dynamics of the population, trying to contrast up to what point the municipalities which the French Way crosses present a more positive demographic behavior than at the rural zones that lack this product. In order to accomplish this, the changes experienced during the last two decades will be analyzed, moment at which this touristic area reaches a greater peak.

We start by pointing out that in Spain the global trend since the 1960 is defined by a strong population

bleeding in rural areas. These spaces not only lose inhabitants but also it is a selective loss that unbalances the demographic pyramid, accentuating the ageing and reducing the capacity of generational replacement (CAMARERO, 1991). In the case of Galicia, the rural areas have also experienced demographic deterioration.

The analysis of demographic variables of the municipalities of the French Way puts forward a type of evolution similar to the described one. The big majority of studied municipalities has experimented intense loses of population and, additionally, these negative dynamics persist at present. The study of population evolution in the periods 1991-2001 and 2001-2011 has let us witness that, in some cases, the loss of inhabitants occurs at really accelerated rates, as it happens in the municipalities of Pedrafita do Cebreiro (-26.02% y -22.52%), As Nogais (-19.68% y -14.64%) and Samos (-11.94% y -24.05%). Only the municipality of Sarría gets to increase its population in both periods: a 3.75% increase in the 1991-2001 period and 3.87% in 2001-2011. Additionally, it must be pointed out that although the municipalities of Monterroso (-7.41% and -4.86%), Melide (1.90% and 7.54%) and Arzúa (-2.62%

and -7.39%) have registered a loss of population, it is less negative in relation to the others in the classification.

The demographic analysis carried out has shown that this tourist product has had a smaller impact than expected in the demographic dynamics of the rural areas through which it crosses. The municipalities studied are situated within the general demographic patterns that describe the reality of the rural areas of Galicia. The mountain municipalities and/or those that either lack a population entity of a certain dimension or are far from urban areas are those that present greater population losses. Therefore, the existence of this tourist product has not been able to mitigate these negative demographic dynamics. At the same time, the municipalities that have population entities of some relevance which function as local or municipal capital are those that show less negative evolution. This situation corresponds to what Andrade-Suárez *et al.* (2010) establish: existence of a notable demographic regression of the Galician rural municipalities crossed by the Camino de Santiago Francés, regression that is only moderated in some cases by the presence of a municipal capital of a certain size.

The results obtained from the analysis of ageing rates do not allow situating the municipalities outside the chart that describes rural Galicia as a demographically deteriorated and extremely aged territory either. During the analysis, period the ageing rate grows substantially in the greater part of the municipalities of the Way, registering rates higher than the Galician average¹² in all cases. Again, the worst situation is present at the municipalities located in the province of Lugo¹³.

The analysis of the migratory balances¹⁴ between years 1991 and 2014 shows that the biggest part of the municipalities of the Way, located in the province of Lugo, present negative balances in all analyzed periods. There are only two that escape this description: Sarria and Monterroso. On their part, municipalities located in the province of A Coruña show a different

panorama, registering positive balances in the majority of the analyzed periods.

It seems, then, difficult to assert that existence of this touristic product has supposed a significant improvement of the basic demographic rates in these 14 municipalities. We will now complete the analysis by comparing their demographic dynamics with that experienced by a set of municipalities with similar rurality levels.

Figure 3 allows for verification of the fact that the municipalities with lower population density, independently of their possessing the Way as a product or not, have more negative demographic dynamics. In this case, the municipalities of the Way of St. James located in the Province of A Coruña present a lower population falls, while those of the Lugo group have worse results than those of the group chosen for comparison.

The most favorable relative dynamics is shown by the groups classified in the intermediate SPA. In the case of Lugo, the Intermediate SPA Way presents better results than the comparison group and, in the case of Intermediate SPA Coruña the same does not happen. In our opinion, it is difficult to attribute this improvement to the Way of St. James effect since there are two municipalities (Monterroso y Sarria) that have a municipal capital of a certain entity, a fact that surely explains the high degree of results.

Table 1 shows the weight, expressed as per thousand, of the migratory balance over the total population in each of the analyzed groups. Data point at more positive balances for the groups that have the Way as a product, except for the municipalities of the province of Lugo with low population density.

Finally, table 2 shows that the municipalities of the Way (although they participate in the emphasis of ageing of population that characterizes the set of the rural Galician area) have experienced a comparatively better evolution in the last decades than the municipalities of similar characteristics.

Once again, the intermediate SPA areas are the ones in a better position, especially those located in the province of A Coruña.

As a conclusion of this section, the demographic analysis does not allow to confirm existence of improvement of the indicators that is clearly linked to existence of the Way of St. James as a product. While it is true that some of the analyzed variables show a more favorable evolution for the municipalities of the Way, we also find other for which evolution has been

12. In 1991 there were 40 people older than 65 years of age per every 100 younger than 20. In 2011, there were 92 people older than 65 per every 100 younger than 20.

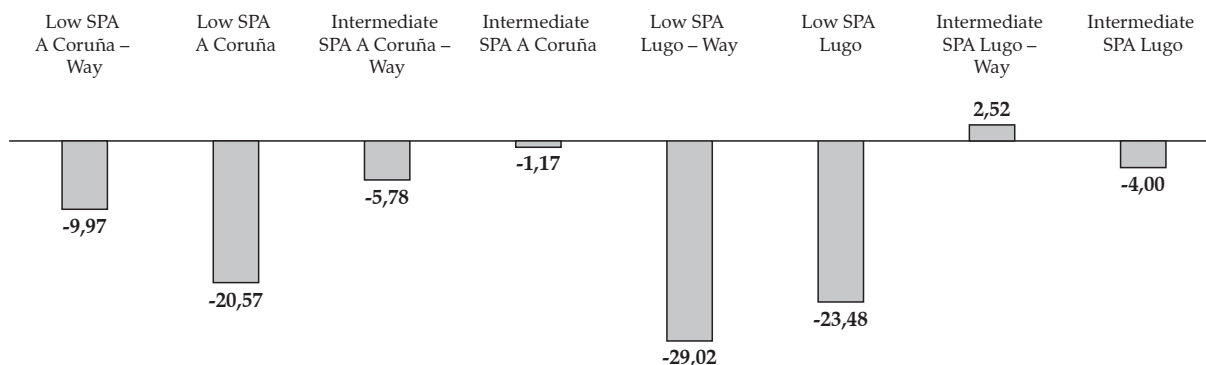
13. As demonstrated by the ageing rates of years 1991 and 2011 in the municipalities of Pedrafita do Cebreiro (98 and 394), Samos (127 and 363) and Palas de Rei (123 and 300).

14. Migratory balances have been calculated from 1991 to 2014, in 4-year periods.

worse than in the contrast group. In this last case, they are municipalities located in the mountainous outskirts, with a population that started from high ageing rates and that, hence, have a great number of expulsive factors. We find municipalities that have

municipal capital that work as service centers for the county to which they are integrated, inside those that present a positive evolution, which is why it becomes impossible to attribute only to this factor the more or lesser important experienced improvement.

Figure 3. Percent variation of population in the municipalities of the French way of St. James and in the sparsely populated areas of the provinces of A Coruña and Lugo – period 1991-2011



Source: Own preparation, based on INE. Population Censuses.

Table 1. Variation rate of migratory balance in the low and intermediate sparsely populated areas of A Coruña and Lugo and municipalities French way of St. James (1991-2014), expressed in percentages (%)

Sparsely Populated Areas	1991-1995	1996-2000	2001-2005	2006-2010	2011-2014
Low A Coruña – Way	-6,42	9,56	0,76	15,07	20,41
Low Coruña	-8,82	-7,45	-14,12	-10,16	-16,35
Intermediate A Coruña – Way	34,20	15,40	16,78	16,01	31,95
Intermediate Coruña	4,57	5,13	11,41	26,43	-10,89
Low Lugo – Way	-18,04	-22,78	-31,25	-16,56	-22,56
Low Lugo	-9,39	-9,08	-8,12	-2,47	-6,24
Intermediate Lugo – Way	16,70	18,57	43,24	51,34	5,28
Intermediate Lugo	4,19	21,97	30,13	39,62	7,02

Source: Own preparation, based on INE. *Estatística de variacións residenciais* (Statistics of residential variations).

Table 2. Population ageing rate in the sparsely populated areas of A Coruña and Lugo and in the municipalities of the French way of St. James – period 1991-2011

Sparsely Populated Areas	Ageing rate	
	1991	2011
Low A Coruña – Way	64	149
Low Coruña	73	205
Intermediate A Coruña – Way	59	124
Intermediate Coruña	47	125
Low Lugo – Way	107	286
Low Lugo	111	298
Intermediate Lugo – Way	74	155
Intermediate Lugo	79	167

Ageing rate: (Population ≥ 65 years/ Population < 20 years) *100.

Source: Own preparation, based on INE. Municipal population census; IGE. *Cifras poboacionais de referencia* (Population reference numbers)

4.2. Market and economic diversification

The transformation experienced by the productive structure of the rural areas has caused deep readjustments to the sectorial dynamics in the last decades. The agrarian sector is not any longer the main economic activity of rural Galicia; the steep decrease of workmanship has not come along with an important development of other productive activities. A situation that is especially evident in the mountainous areas at the east of Lugo.

As can be seen in Table 3, the greater part of municipalities located on the Way of St. James do not escape the reality described previously: during the 1991-2011 period a total of 8.802 employments were lost in the primary sector, in the 14 analyzed municipalities, and the destruction process of agrarian employment has settled with a fall in occupation of the tertiary sector and, above all, the secondary sector, both of which have not had, in the majority of cases, the ability of generating enough employments to compensate this loss.

Only Sarria presents clearly different results: in this municipality, there was a weak creation of employment

in the secondary sector (106 more employments), and an important creation of employment in the services (2.264 more) so that it compensated 1.172 lots jobs in farming and cattle raising (Table 3). The results shown by Sarria are explained because it is a municipality with an important population density, which acts as a municipal capital and also constitutes the start of a stretch of the Way of St. James.

It does not seem that the presence of the Way has contributed in a very relevant way to advancement in the economic diversification process of these areas. But what is the situation of other municipalities of similar characteristics, and that lack this product?

Table 4 shows what has been exposed in previous results: steep falls of employment in the primary sector in all the categories, accompanied by an insufficient creation of employment in the tertiary and, above all, secondary sectors. So, that in the greater part of these areas there has been a fall in the number of total employments, although there is a lesser negative evolution in the intermediate density areas.

In any way, and in view of the data, expansion of employment in the service sector does not seem an exclusive behavior of the municipalities of the Way.

Table 3. Variation of employment in farming and cattle raising, industry and services in the municipalities of the French Way of St. James – period 1991 - 2011

Municipalities of the French Way of St. James	Variation of employment 1991-2011		
	Farming and cattle raising	Industry	Services
Arzúa	-602	-106	631
Pino, O	-418	-105	507
Melide	-527	-54	432
Nogais, As	-292	-	-18
Pedrafita do Cebreiro	-300	-61	134
Guntín	-1.462	-	234
Portomarín	-597	14	69
Paradela	-963	-	143
Páramo, O	-515	-	141
Samos	-254	-	12
Sarria	-1.172	106	2.264
Triacastela	-351	37	43
Monterroso	-696	80	79
Palas de Rei	-653	79	297

Note 1: For the municipalities of As Nogais, Guntín, Paradela, Páramo and Samos, variation of employment in industry is blank due to the reduced number of simple observations that exist in the 2011 census, which implies a high sample error in these cases.

Source: Own preparation, based on INE. *Censos de poboación*, INE. *Padrón Municipal de Habitantes* (Population census, INE. Municipal Register of Inhabitants).

Table 4. Variation of employment in farming and cattle raising, industry and services in the low and intermediate sparsely populated areas of A Coruña, Lugo and municipalities of the French St. James way – period 1991-2011

Sparsely Populated Area	Employment variation 1991-2011		
	Farming and cattle raising	Industry	Services
Low A Coruña – Way	-1020	-211	1138
Low Coruña	-21026	-972	6874
Intermediate A Coruña – Way	-527	-54	432
Intermediate Coruña	-1224	3388	6458
Low Lugo – Way	-5387	-176	1055
Low Lugo	-29017	-592	9245
Intermediate Lugo – Way	-1868	120	2343
Intermediate Lugo	-2273	-114	2953

Source: Own preparation, based on INE. *Censos de poboación*, INE. *Padrón Municipal de Habitantes* (Population census, INE. Municipal Register of Inhabitants).

In order to try to shed some light about this matter we have studied what has happened with the business net that has a bigger relation with the touristic activity. We have analyzed the evolution of the number of hospitality enterprises and retail businesses in the 14 municipalities that are the simple for the analysis, both during the economic expansion period, and during the crisis (2008-2014) from data of the *Directorio de Empresas e Unidades Locais* – Local Units and Business Directory – (IGE).

The whole of municipalities of the Way has seen an increase of the number of companies dedicated to hospitality, except As Nogais (-47% and -15%), Pedrafita do Cebrero (-16% and -20%) and Paradela (-54% and -21%) in both analyzed periods. On its part, the creation of retail businesses in these municipalities

has experimented opposing behaviors to the light of economic burst. In a first period, an increase of companies is registered in most of the municipalities; contrarily, during the crisis period, the whole of municipalities register negative percentages, except Triacastela (14%) and Palas de Rei (5%). It seems, then, that the Way as a product could have had positive effects when restraining the impact of the crisis on enterprises linked to touristic activity.

Table 5 gathers the results of the comparative analysis. The municipalities of the Way generally show better dynamics in the enterprise creation; additionally, with the only exception of the lesser-populated municipalities of the province of Lugo, the groups that have the Way as a product have had a better evolution of hospitality enterprises.

Table 5. Variation of the number of hospitality enterprises and retail businesses in the sparsely populated areas of A Coruña and Lugo, and municipalities of the French way of Santiago, expressed in percentages – periods 1999-2007 and 2008-2014

Sparsely Populated Area	Variation N° of enterprises expressed in percentages			
	Hospitality		Retail business	
	1999-2007	2008-2014	1999-2007	2008-2014
Low A Coruña – Way	18.26	8.10	13.26	-5.57
Low Coruña	8.56	-5.12	1.27	-2.79
Intermediate A Coruña – Way	8.33	15.12	0.00	-0.76
Intermediate Coruña	10.12	2.44	5.64	-8.41
Low Lugo – Way	11.18	-3.01	16.19	-8.02
Low Lugo	6.68	-1.85	-0.69	-12.28
Intermediate Lugo – Way	4.47	3.10	3.51	-9.70
Intermediate Lugo	7.51	-1.47	1.63	-2.54

Source: Own preparation, based on IGE. *Explotación do directorio de empresas e unidades locais* (Exploitation of local units and business directory).

5. Conclusions

This study addresses the analysis of the evolution of tourism in rural areas linked to the Way of St. James. It has tried to quantify the impact that this activity has had in the demographic and economic evolution of some areas that were immersed in a process of agrarian adjustment. And the main conclusion we reach is that the potential of these activities when mitigating the effects of agrarian restructuring has been overestimated.

In the Galician case the impact of tourism in rural areas crossed by the Camino has been less than expected. The majority of the municipalities studied are within the general demographic patterns, which describe the reality of the rural areas of Galicia. The existence of this tourism product has not been able to reverse the negative demographic dynamics in which they had been immersed for decades. Only those municipalities that have population entities of some relevance and which function as local or municipal capital show a positive demographic evolution.

In light of the data we can affirm that the potential of the Way of St. James as a product for the development of the rural areas of Galicia strongly affected by the process of agricultural adjustment has been limited. However, it is important to note that demographic and economic indicators are better in most rural municipalities crossed by the Way than those that present areas with similar degree of rurality, but lacking this product. In any case, the volume of employment generated from this product has not been able to reverse the intense process of demographic and employment loss, suffered by these areas during the last decades.

In short, although the analysis should be taken as a first approximation to the problem, the data point to the existence of a very moderate impact of the Way of St. James, in the sense that the development of tourism activities linked to the Way are not sufficient, in general, to reverse the demographic and economic decline of these rural areas. At least it has not been so far.

The analysis of the evolution of the type of establishments has also offered us some other interesting result. While the initiatives linked to the tourism sector financed with rural development funds were heavily influenced by a specific modality of

tourism in rural areas: rural tourism, demand seems to have evolved differently. The time has shown that the demand for accommodation has not been directed mainly towards this type of enterprises but towards other modalities. Tourists that walk along the Way have a clear preference for cheaper accommodation and next to the route, which has conditioned a significant change in the offer of existing accommodation over these years.

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