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IfS Discussion Paper 01/2015

**Rediscovering German and Austrian
Sacred Places in "Eastern Europe"**

Josef Langer

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consists of several overlapping, swirling green lines of varying thickness and opacity, creating a sense of movement and depth.

Discussion
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Josef Langer

Rediscovering German and Austrian Sacred Places in “Eastern Europe”

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Institut für Soziologie, Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt
Department of Sociology, Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt
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Abstract

Using examples of pilgrimage sites dedicated to the Holy Mary in former communist countries I will discuss perceptions, memories, motives and expectations towards these places among Germans and Austrians. Linked to this will be a reflection on changing spirituality and mobility in the West as far as this is relevant for understanding pilgrimage in our times. Comparisons with previous historical eras will be made. The emphasis, however, will remain with the last three or four decades, where we observe not only the "re-unification" of Europe, but also significant cultural changes in the West. I will show how these changes (channelled individualism, redefinition of inequality, supra-nationalism etc.) have relevance for what pilgrimage and sacred places can mean today. Further, the question is raised whether these changes have seized former Communist Eastern Europe one-to-one, or, if deviations can be expected. Finally, a look into the future will be attempted, considering possible impacts on spirituality and pilgrimage.

Keywords

pilgrimage, wandering, Eastern Europe, German pilgrims, sacred places

1. Introduction

When pondering over sacred places or pilgrimage it is unavoidable to meet history. Particularly when the attempt to search for such places in so-called "Eastern Europe" is made by a Westerner. This will inevitably lead to taking into consideration the dramatic history of the twentieth century. Because, when soon after World War II an "Iron Curtain" fell down from the Barents Sea in the north to the Mediterranean in the south, the lands east of it evermore disappeared as a structured and historically loaded geography from the minds of people living west of this line. What emerged instead in Western populations was a vague view of the "East block", frequently simply called the "East". Its disappearance in the sphere of culture, religion and spirituality was particularly strongly felt, as here the Communist system had its own competing concepts, hostile to those in the West. Although that part of Europe was covered with centuries old sacred places, the new generations growing up in the West barely got an idea of them. With the fall of the Iron Curtain (1989) opportunities for rediscovery returned, although it remains to be seen to what extent they will be used. Although the "Iron Curtain" has disappeared, the political geography of Europe remains fluid, depending on the perspective of the viewer (Langer 1992; Langer 2012). What, from a Western perspective, appeared as the monolithic "East", has received a more layered connotation since 1989. As the proposition of this contribution is, that the Communist period had a fundamental impact on culture and pilgrimage respectively sacred places east of the "Iron Curtain", the term "Eastern Europe" can be read synonymously with "post-communist countries".

There were probably few generations in history, if any, who experienced as many changes in their lifetime as those of the 20th century. Of course, this is obvious for those from Europe who embarked on "socialism" before or after World War II, but not only. The people in the West also went through transformations which raise severe questions about continuity in identity. This has been particularly true since 1989, when fundamental changes did not only seize the societies of the former Communist block, but also those of Western Europe. Social scientists have tried to grasp changes with concepts like "post-modernity", "second modernity", and "globalisation". Without going into depth with regard

to these attempts, I will show how the re-emergence of sacred places and pilgrimage is deeply linked to fundamental societal changes. The sacred places in "Eastern Europe" are of particular interest. These places have re-appeared in the collective mind and their discovery merits a new understanding of pilgrimage in German and Austrian society. Finally, I will give a brief theoretical interpretation of the empirical observations made and will provide an outlook into the future. Cross-connections to "Eastern Europe" will be made.

Pilgrimage in European thinking (Souden 2002) is usually associated with Mediaeval times and Christianity. Sacred places like Rome, Jerusalem or Santiago de Compostela turn up in our mind (Ganz-Blättler 1990). Then, numerous legends survived and are recalled to continue to give meaning. In the case of Santiago de Compostela, for example, several legends about Saint Jacob, who is allegedly buried there, have been handed down. However, it would be misleading to presume that pilgrimage then and now have the same meaning, although on the surface similarities might be observed. To recognize the differences helps to compare main characteristics of Mediaeval and contemporary Western societies. Whereas the latter are determined by a strong emphasis on dynamic and individual mobility, innovation and change, Mediaeval societies were of an estate-type with little or slow change. Most people were engaged in agriculture and under regular circumstances, never left their immediate environs. All human striving was directed towards a common centre not directly reachable by our senses – the will of God. The place of every individual in society was ascribed and predestined.

For most who wanted to escape this slow, static and restricted life situation, at least temporarily, pilgrimage was the only legitimate way (Ohler 1994). Other kinds of travelling in the Middle Ages, normally reserved for the more privileged, included missionary journeys, crusades for the defence of Christianity and long-distance trade. These types of travelling were socially bound, long distance trade for example in the hands of patrician families. Pilgrimage by contrast, was open to all social classes and age groups. Although a general opportunity to travel, the destinations were institutionally determined. The most

famous distant places of pilgrimage were Rome (key of Saint Peter), Jerusalem (palm branch) and Santiago de Compostela (scallop shell).¹ There were thousands of other sacred places all over Europe for the individual pilgrim to visit. Many of them owed their existence to the convergence of religious and political interests. Santiago de Compostela and its legend, for example, is said to have served the interests of Christian rulers in reconquering (Reconquista) the Iberian peninsula from the Moors. Later on "Santiago!" echoed on through the centuries as the battle cry of Spanish conquistadores (Girtler 2005).

With the arrival of the modern era and with it the gradual replacement of feudal characteristics of society by modern circumstances and interests, pilgrimage as an institution to meet, in general terms, the two contradicting human needs of striving for new experience and security at the same time (W. I. Thomas), had to share this function increasingly with other modes of mobility. With the Age of Discovery and Reformation from the 16th Century onwards, new global channels were opened for the individual to escape the narrow, repressive, restricted and static situations of daily life. By these channels I mean emigration to the discovered lands overseas, expeditions, expanding distant trade (...), but also the spiritual escape from the all-encompassing dogma of Mediaeval Christianity to new competing religious and political views. Although pilgrimage lost relevance during the unfolding of modernity, it did not disappear. Aristocratic and royal regimes usually favoured pilgrimage, whereas secular polities were indifferent or even hostile in the 19th century the Catholic Church used pilgrimage as counter mobilisation to hold against secular movements like nationalism and socialism (Margry 2008, 15). Good contrasting examples are provided by the Habsburg and Communist rule in central and Eastern Europe. Parallel to this the re-emerging of secular forms of pilgrimage can be observed (e.g. non religious participants in the Camino), particularly since the late 20th century (Bauman 1996). Although not always recognized and understood as such, these forms of pilgrimage, by some referred to as "post-modern", have considerable structural and functional similarity with the religious prototype.

¹ The parenthetic objects are commonly known symbols of pilgrimage in Christendom.

2. Historical ties and heritage

The term "Eastern Europe" is understood to include countries east of the former Iron Curtain, with the main emphasis on those which historically fell under Habsburg rule. Today one would rather speak of Central or East Central Europe, similar to a century ago (Naumann 1915; Busek 1997). It is the proposition here that for understanding pilgrimage and sacred places in this "Eastern Europe" today from a "Western" perspective one has to search for interests and links which survived during Communist rule and the related isolation affected by the Iron Curtain. Here two actors appear to be taken into account: a) the Catholic Church with its century-old transcendental and political interests, and b) the millions of Germans expelled from this part of Europe after World War II, so called "Vertriebene" (expellee), who kept and cultivated strong memories of their lost homelands², including the many pilgrimage sites of the past. Anybody who wants to understand sacred places and pilgrimage in the former communist territories of Europe will have to consider these two groups. Besides this, from a post-modern view of pilgrimage, World War II by itself produced new, secular "sacred places", be they places like Auschwitz (Snyder 2010), victory monuments of successful communist armies and, after the political turnaround ("Wende") in the Nineties, communist mass graves or German military cemeteries on the territory of the former Soviet Union and elsewhere in "Eastern Europe".

With few exceptions (e.g. Joseph II, 1741 – 1790) during Habsburg era there was a rather strong symbiosis between the Catholic Church and the political system represented by the Imperial Family, later also known as "Political Catholicism". This was expressed by a sometimes bellicose language used by representatives of the Church from that time. In the preface to a book on sacred places and pilgrimage in Habsburg Austria, for example, the author Alfred Hoppe (1913), dedicates his work to Jesus Christ as "the supreme commander of an apologetic troop".³ Metaphorically speaking, sacred sites act as

² Until World War II German people lived in considerable numbers basically in all countries east of the later Iron Curtain, from the Baltic Sea in the north down to the Balkan and even in the Soviet Union.

³ „Das vorliegende Werk versucht die Wallfahrtsorte in konzentrierter, lückenloser Phalanx vorzuführen und diese gerüstete und gewappnete Schar dem obersten Kriegsherrn Jesus Christus als apologetische Truppe zur Verfügung zu stellen.“ (Hoppe 1913, V)

strongpoints of spiritual armies. That pilgrimage was politically highly significant is apparent throughout the entire book. And, Hoppe's work is certainly one of the most eminent and elaborated sources on pilgrimage in this part of Europe prior to the Communist takeover. Historically, geographically, spiritually and statistically Hoppe describes more than 300 pilgrimage sites in *Cisleithania*, the Austrian part of Austro-Hungary, reaching from Lake Constance in the west to Cernowitz in the east, the latter belonging to the Ukraine today. The text provides a ranking of significant pilgrimage sites according to the consumption of Holy Communion wafers distributed in the year 1913.

1. Mariazell (Austria), 110,000 – 130,000 wafers;
2. Kalwarya/Zebrzydowska (today in Poland), 95,000 – 100,000;
3. Pribram (today in the Czech Republic), 70,000 – 80,000;
4. Brezje (today in Slovenia), 50,000 – 60,000;
5. Tersat (Croatia), 40,000 - 50,000;
6. Filippsdorf/Filipov (today in the Czech Republic), 40,000 – 50,000;
7. Hostein/Hostyn (today in the Czech Republic), 35,000 – 42,000;
8. Welehrad/Velehrad (today in the Czech Republic), 26,000.

For the Habsburg polity the Cathedral of Mariazell was not only the primary pilgrimage destination, reflected in the number of Communion wafers distributed, but the "living heart" of this multinational state. Germans, Hungarians, Slovaks and Czechs all went on pilgrimage to Mariazell to search for peace under the protective cloak of the Blessed Virgin. The historical legends of the place are such that not only German but other peoples of Central and Eastern Europe can identify with it too. Founded in 1157 by German monks from the region, later developments show a strong Slavic and Hungarian influence. There is, for example, the statue on the right side of the cathedral's main entrance which represents Margrave Henry of Moravia. According to legend, the margrave and his wife went on a pilgrimage to Mariazell with the hope of being healed from a painful illness (1220). In his gratitude for this he left a considerable sum of money to build a stately chapel. On the left side of the main entrance is the statue of King Louis I of Hungary and

Croatia. He had the great Church of Grace built (1363) in gratitude for the victory over a Turkish⁴ army. Incidentally, many pilgrimage sites in the former Habsburg realm pass on legends connected with the defence of Christian Europe against the Muslim Turks. According to Hoppe (1913) there was hidden the secret key for peace between the wrangling people of the monarchy. That Mariazell seemed to have secured its transnational function even after the Communist takeovers in Central and Eastern Europe is indicated by the fact that it was the burial ground of the Hungarian Primate Jozsef Mindszenty, a declared opponent of Communism, who was entombed there between 1975 and 1991, only then his mortal remains were transferred back home to Hungary.⁵

Like Mariazell, which was a major if not the most sacred place for all Catholic people in Central and Eastern Europe, although it is situated in German speaking Austria. Many pilgrimage sites in the Slavic and Hungarian speaking parts were also of international importance, particularly for Germans who settled throughout the region. This situation continued probably after First World War far into the interwar period, as ethnic plurality remained and Political Catholicism continued to play a role in many places. The rupture came with the end of World War II, when first about 13 - 15 million (ethnic) Germans were expelled from their homes in Soviet-occupied Central and Eastern Europe, where they had lived for centuries. This already deprived this area of a major circle of potential pilgrims, as about half of the expellees were Catholics. The next event decisive for the fate of pilgrimage sites was the Communist takeover in practically all Soviet occupied countries – Yugoslavia had already become communist in 1945. Although the extent to which these new secular, atheist regimes suppressed religion and Church varied from country to country, it was in no case supportive or even neutral. This often led to abandonment of pilgrimage sites and in some cases even to their complete destruction. Out of this

⁴ Whereas in present-day international communication terms like "Turkish" or "Turks" are mainly related to matters concerning contemporary Turkey, in the Habsburg era these were generic terms respectively everyday expressions designating anything coming from the Ottoman empire. I am not aware how much these terms are still present in the collective consciousness of individual successor states in the region. At least in Austria it is the case. With respect to the relevance for the understanding of sacred places see Hoppe 1913.

⁵ Mariazell became the burial ground of another Hungarian bishop, *J. K. Scitovsky*, already in 1866.

dilapidating situation cooperation between expelled Germans, their embedded priests and church institutions developed (Grulich 2011). When, in later years, the Iron Curtain became more open, these activities could reach back into the Communist countries and help to preserve, if not rebuild pilgrimage sites, destroyed or left derelict by the Communists.

3. Places of grief and despair, places of reconciliation

Rudolf Grulich (2011, 5) describes how Catholic priests tried to console expelled Germans in their camps in the West and how social, political and spiritual support emerged with the founding of the *Ackermannsgemeinde* (Ackermann Society) on the 13th of January, 1946 in Munich.⁶ This date commemorated an alleged appearance of the Holy Mary in the year 1866 to a terminally ill woman (Magdalena Kade) in Filippsdorf (Filipov) in northern Bohemia, close to the German border. After this appearance the woman was healed and a Church of Grace was built there in gratitude. As noted, Filippsdorf later became one of the major pilgrimage sites in the Habsburg Monarchy. Maybe it was the hope of the expellees that their own suffering sooner or later will be ameliorated in a similar way as the suffering of the woman from Filippsdorf ninety years earlier. Within the frame of the *Ackermannsgemeinde* not only Filippsdorf but many other sacred places east of the Iron Curtain were remembered. In the course of which the Blessed Mother Mary was nominated as the "Queen of Eastern Europe" and "Mother of Expellees".⁷ Already in 1946 thousands of German expellees went on pilgrimage to substitute places for the sacred sites in the lost homeland. One such location was Königstein/West Germany, where a multifunctional centre for Catholic expellees and refugees from the East was established. It was the expelled Germans who never forgot their native places of grace in lost German territories or other countries where they had lived for centuries. When the Iron Curtain became more

⁶ The label *Ackermannsgemeinde* (Ackermann Society) was chosen to signal the centuries-old rootedness of German culture in the Bohemian lands. More than three million German expellees came from these lands after WWII. The expression "Ackermann" stems from the title of the Modern High German poetry from the year 1400 "Der Ackermann aus Böhmen" by Johannes von Saaz.

<http://www.ackermann-gemeinde.de/23.html?&L=2%2F%27> retrieved 1.3.2013

⁷ For example, tradition has it that the Christian force which relieved Vienna from the Turks in 1683, carried a banner of the Holy Mary in front of them (Grulich 2011, 18).

pervious and the Communist regimes more tolerant, the expellees used the opportunities to visit and help to restore the sacred places in the East. The Church of Fillipsdorf (Filipov), for example, began to be renovated in the 1980s. In the meantime pilgrimage from Czechoslovakia and the neighbouring German Democratic Republic, though the latter historically mainly Protestant, also revived. The reunification of Germany and visa-free travelling brought still more pilgrims. As if its hope from 1946 had been rewarded, the *Ackermann Society* was able to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary with a memorial service in the Church of Grace in Filippisdorf (Filipov), now in the Czech Republic.

Dietrichswalde/Gietrzwald, an early place of reconciliation between German expellees and Poles, today located in northern Poland, was in the 19th century called the „Lourdes of Ermland“. Grulich (2011, 31) calls this a good example for how, after a population exchange, pilgrimage can quickly pick up, if the proper pastoring is in place. On occasion of the centenary in 1977 of the Marian apparition, 200,000 Polish believers attended the festivities. A decade later a group of German expellees from the area, probably the first since 1945, came to celebrate mass. The contribution of this group to reconciliation between German and Poles is, according to Grulich, also recognized by the Polish side. Common Mass and pilgrimage of expellees from Ermland and current Polish inhabitants is said to be not unusual since the geopolitical turnaround in 1989. German bishops and priests celebrate during pilgrimages in the former German East and Polish clerics participate in pilgrimages of expellees in today's Germany. Poles together with Croats belong to the most pious populations in the former Communist East, whereas Czechs and Estonians are counted among the least religious⁸.

The Czechoslovakian Communist regime was among the most rigorous suppressors of religion. One sacred place which bears witness to this is the Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Pilgrims' Church in Zuckmantel (Zlatehory), located in north eastern Czech Republic today. This place of pilgrimage is linked to the Thirty Years War, when Swedish armies frightened the people in these parts (Silesia) and forced them to hide and find refuge in surrounding

⁸ According to a Gallup poll, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Importance_of_religion_by_country, retrieved on 6.3.2013.

forests. A century ago Zuckmantel was a smaller pilgrimage destination with 35,000 to 40,000 annual visitors and a distribution of about 3,500 Communion wafers per year (Hoppe 1913, 620). In 1946 the German parish priest was driven out, the place was looted and demolished. A final coup de grace came in 1973 when the Communist regime blew up this holy place. There is a certain irony in the fact that not only the Communists but the frequently praised enlightened Emperor Joseph II in his utilitarian obsession ordered the demolition of what was a pilgrimage chapel at that time, but after several years of „chapel war“ this was prevented. After the Communist blasting operation the place was left in ruins for many years until the political turnaround in 1990 when the Pilgrimage Church of Zuckmantel (Zlatehory) was rebuilt with considerable help from Sudeten-Germans. Today it is once again a pilgrimage destination for Czechs, Poles and Germans (Grulich 2011, 68).

As the German population lived for centuries scattered throughout central and eastern Europe among other nationalities, so are the pilgrimage sites which are now waiting to be rediscovered and, as we have seen, some are already attracting visitors from the West. Most of these places are in countries of former Habsburg rule, but not only. Among the former and with historical significance for Germans are, for example, Maria Schoßberg (Slovak: Sastin; Hungarian: Sasvar), Deutsch-Proben (Nitrianske Pravno), Leutschau (Levoča), Kaschau (Košice) and Mariatal (Marianka) in Slovakia. Grulich (2011, 72) speaks about fifty places of pilgrimage in Slovakia. Most of them were not only visited by Slovaks, Czechs and Hungarians but also by Carpathian Germans (~ 150,000 before World War II). Although Slovakia was part of the Hungarian Crown during most of its history and in the interwar period part of Czechoslovakia, it became a separate state, the first time between 1939 and 1945. Today the character of that state is controversial, although it was recognized not only by Germany and the Vatican but also by the Soviet Union and most members of the League of Nations. Because the president of this state was a Catholic priest, Josef Tišo, it is said that under the Communist regime in the Slovak part of Czechoslovakia oppression of religion and Church was even stronger than in the Czech part. Although traditionally Maria Schoßberg (Sastin) north of Pressburg (Slovak: Bratislava; Hungarian: Pozsony) was for the Slovaks what Jasna Gora in Tschenstochau is for the Poles, after the Prague Spring in 1968

when the prohibition of pilgrimage was lifted, Leutschau (Levoča) in the former German area of Zips became the most visited place of pilgrimage in Czechoslovakia – 280,000 pilgrims in 1988. Before World War II this position was occupied by Mariatal (Marianka), a place six kilometres north of Bratislava. The legend relates this to the Hungarian Saint Gellert, in German Saint Gerhard, who is supposed to be the protector of the Danube Swabians.

A still important place of pilgrimage for Danube Swabians is Maria Radna in today's Romania (Banat). Although most of this German minority has since left Romania, Maria Radna remains relevant for Swabians and several other ethnicities from the region including Croats, Hungarians and Czechs. Similar shared holy-places are the sanctuaries of Mariapocs in north eastern and Mariagyüd in southern Hungary. This is frequently expressed by superscriptions in the three languages Hungarian, Croat and German. Then, there is Brezje, the "Slovene Lourdes", which today attracts pilgrims also from Austria. In Croatia the pilgrimage church of Aljmas in eastern Slavonia is of historical significance for Danube Swabians. During the Yugoslav secession wars in the Nineties, the church was destroyed but soon afterwards rebuilt again.⁹ However, Croatia has many other places of pilgrimage. Among the main attractions are the miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin in Trsat near Rijeka or Our Lady of Sinj, a town in the hinterland of the port city of Split.

"Eastern Europe" possesses many well-known and lesser known sacred places as well as secular sites connected with the wars and political upheavals of the 20th century, which could be attractive for visitors from the West. However, whereas the religious shrines convey the connotation of transcendence and miracles, the secular places are often sites of memory and sorrow. In "Eastern Europe" such places are usually battlefields, birth or burial grounds of charismatic political leaders and war cemeteries. For example, the birthplace of the former Communist Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito, Kumrovec in Croatia, is attracting a

⁹ Lydia Scheuermann Hodak, a Croat writer of German descent, has with her work "Marijas Bilder" erected a literary monument for the pilgrimage to Aljmas.

new kind of pilgrim admirers and devotees (Belaj 2008). Sometimes religious and secular sites of memory and worship can be located close together, forming interesting spiritual ensembles. Such a case, for example, is found in Žužemberk (German: Seisenberg) in the Dinaric Alps of Slovenia at a shortcut road leading down to the Adriatic. Approaching this town, a gorgeous two steeple parish church on the hill leaps to the eye. This church was set fire to and blown up by Communist partisans in the spring of 1944 but was beautifully rebuilt after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the Nineties. On the church square a monument commemorates several hundred locals killed by Communist partisans in World War II. A huge obeliskoid monument 500 meters away commemorates even more hundreds of Communist partisan fighters killed in the same war. Between these secular monuments is the re-emerged parish church. Both monuments as sites of sorrow attract secular pilgrims and due to the high visibility of the church, occasional transients who might have some spiritual experience too.

4. The post 1989 German wandering and pilgrimage growth

The phenomenon of pilgrimage can be imagined as concentric circles with a strong religious core of transcendental perspective and several circles of decreasing spirituality around it.¹⁰ A German study¹¹ of the pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela found out that only about 20 – 30% were motivated by religious reasons. They can be counted to the core of the concentric circle model. About 60% of pilgrims mention simply “touristic curiosity” and “enjoying nature” that would position them at the transition from pilgrim to ordinary hiker. Important motives like the “rediscovery of old values” (50%) and “simple life” (40%) are shared by religious and secular pilgrims alike. If we stay with the metaphor of concentric circles but take “hiker” as the umbrella term, then in Germany pilgrims are only a tiny part of the 35 Million German hikers. (Brämer 2009, 9) For the custom of walkabout or trekking is very widespread among Germans and it has significantly increased during the last three decades from 45% of Germans indulging in this activity in 1985 to 56% in 2008.

¹⁰ For an extensive discussion of the concept of pilgrimage see Margry (2008)

¹¹ Marburger Pilgerstudie, <http://www.wanderforschung.de/files/wanderforschung-wm1461286549914.pdf>, retrieved on 3.3.2013

The yearly budget Germans spend on hiking activities is estimated to be about 10 – 15 Billion Euro.

That mobility like this (Souden 2002), increasing the number of pilgrims of one sort or the other, can be politically intended, is indicated by the fact that it was not before the Council of Europe began to develop a policy on “European cultural routes”¹² in the Eighties that the number of pilgrims, for example, to the historically famous Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage site, started to pick up again. In 1986 Santiago received only 2,491 pilgrims and in 2010 it counted 272,135.¹³ However, whereas in the Middle Ages Santiago was a place to gain spiritual energy for fighting the “infidel” and to free the Iberian peninsula from the Moors (Girtler 2005), under the current supranational regime in Europe Santiago is obviously supposed to foster a more inclusive, secular Europeanness. “By providing people of varied backgrounds, believers and non-believers, Christians and non-Christians with an opportunity to gather together, the Santiago Routes serve both as a symbol, reflecting over one thousand years of European history, and as a model of cultural co-operation for Europe as a whole.” (See link in footnote 12) However, if we take account of different pilgrim statistics, the programmatic intentions of the Council of Europe have only been partly met. Santiago remains a place for European pilgrims first of all, although a mix of religious and secular pilgrims, the ratio of the two might stay contested. At the same time there are no hints that it attracts significant numbers of non-Christians of any kind. In 2011, according to the official statistics of Santiago de Compostela, 53.35% (97,822) of pilgrims came from Spain. This is the overwhelming majority. Germany takes second place with 9.05% (16,596) in 2011 and arrivals from Austria amounted to 1.05% (1,921).¹⁴

¹² „What was, for centuries, a religious phenomenon based on expression of the Christian faith took on an additional dimension with the Council of Europe’s Declaration of 1987 and the adoption of a common European graphic identification system.” http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/routes/compostella_en.asp, retrieved on 13.3.2013

¹³ <http://www.csj.org.uk/present.htm> retrieved on 13.3.2013

¹⁴ <http://www.peregrinosantiago.es/esp/wp-content/uploads/informes/peregrinaciones2011.pdf>, retrieved on 13.3.2013

In Germany pilgrimage grew in public consciousness, following the publication of a bestselling book about the Camino (Kerkeling 2006), the famous route to Santiago de Compostela. This is indicated by a rise of German Santiago pilgrims of 70% in 2007 after the publishing of Kerkeling's book, sometimes this is called the "Kerkeling effect". Brämer (2009) estimates the proportion between pilgrims on foot, long distance walking (Specht 2009) and day hiking like 1:10:100. And as far as pilgrimage inside Germany is concerned only about 20% approach the sacred sites on foot. This proportion among Santiago pilgrims is, however, greater – about 80%. Other demographic characteristics of German pilgrims: age 35 among Santiago pilgrims, others 50 plus; 40% female Santiago pilgrims, otherwise 50% female; among Santiago pilgrims almost three out of four have higher education, i.e. 25% students, 40% professionals (engineers, professors, self-employed, office workers), 7% retired people, 6% blue collar, 3% housewives, whereas among ordinary pilgrims only 1% are students, one third retired people and the rest employed persons (3% blue collar). Further, comparing German pilgrims with mere hikers reveals that pilgrims are more curious discoverers and self-discoverers, whereas nature and landscape, physical challenges (sport, health, outdoor exercise) and company are less important for them.¹⁵ (Brämer 2005) Although comparable data are not available for Austria, a recent survey (2012) showed that 2% of those polled (455) intended to tread a pilgrim path in their next summer vacation, whereas 24% were planning hiking, mountain climbing and enjoy nature.¹⁶

Roughly, these are the characteristics of German pilgrims and hikers. Now, to what extent could particularly the pilgrims among them be attracted by sacred places in "Eastern Europe"? Is there, from the German or Austrian perspective, a Santiago in the "East"? There is a place in the East which has enjoyed a broad awareness among Germans and Austrians for a long time already, it is Jasna Gora in Poland, or better known here as "Tschenstochau". Jasna Gora actually attracts many more pilgrims¹⁷ annually than Santiago

¹⁵ See R. Brämer (2009), Heile Welt zu Fuß – Pilgerstudie 09 <http://www.wanderforschung.de/WF/wandern-2/pilgern.html>, retrieved on 14.3.2013

¹⁶ Data provided by "Market Institut", Linz, Austria

¹⁷ http://sunday.niedziela.pl/artykul.php?dz=spoleczenstwo&id_art=00572, retrieved on 14.3.2013

de Compostela in Spain. But, in relative terms it seems to be even less international than Santiago. In 2012 among the more than three million Jasna Gora pilgrims, only a little more than 80,000 came from abroad. Whereas in Santiago among more than 95,000 foreign pilgrims Germans tend to be number one (16,596), in Jasna Gora they only take third place (10,302) among a much larger population of pilgrims, behind Italy and the USA, Austria takes seventh place (2,449). The part of true Germans is probably even smaller since among the "German" pilgrims might be considerable numbers of Polish immigrants settling in Germany.

Obviously, for Germans and Austrians an eastern "Santiago" is still waiting to be discovered or invented. Instead, for the time being, it seems there are numerous publicly less visible pilgrimage undertakings promoted by the Catholic Church and organisations of the post-World War II German expellees. However, since the Nineties there have also been pilgrimages of a more secular kind connected with the establishing of German World War II war cemeteries¹⁸, particularly in Russia. This undertaking is implemented by the German organisation "Volksbund Deutscher Kriegsgräberfürsorge e.V." (Alliance for German Military Graves Registration)¹⁹, which bases its activities on a treaty (9.1.1990) between Germany and the Russian Federation. This organisation also organizes regular trips to the war cemeteries for relatives of the fallen soldiers but also for the general public. One can imagine that these journeys to some extent also have elements of pilgrimage, in a religious as well as secular sense. Soldiers' cemeteries as sites of memory and sorrow offering spiritual and transcendental experiences, similar to religious places of pilgrimage (Dubisch 2008).

¹⁸ For further investigations into the rebuilding of World War II soldiers cemeteries in Eastern Europe see Popa (2013)

¹⁹ <http://www.volksbund.de/en/volksbund.html>, retrieved on 6.4.2013

5. Conclusion and outlook

As indicated, pilgrimage in numbers and kind depends on historical circumstances. I have shown that in the West the interest in "Eastern European" sacred places was kept alive by long standing ties of the Catholic Church and the homesickness and nostalgia of post-World War II (ethnic) German expellees. This provided the main basis for propelling Western pilgrims to

"Eastern Europe" towards the end of the Communist regimes, and after their collapse in the late Eighties and early Nineties. As well it has been indicated that this was also the time when in the West pilgrimage began to grow again in the frame of an even stronger expansion of hiking in a broader sense. This development continued parallel to the transformation of the post-communist countries till now. How much the sacred places in "Eastern Europe" were able to benefit from the pilgrimage hypes in the West beyond the return of German expellees and probably Communist regimes refugees remains to be seen. However, at first glance it doesn't appear that, with cited exceptions (Jasna Gora, Medjugorje), the "East European" sacred places were able to tap significantly into the growing Western pilgrimage streams. If it is so, the reason for this might be related to the different types of transformations "East" and "West" were experiencing during the past two or three decades.

In a nutshell, whereas the post-communist Europe was embarking on a transition to a market economy by emulating Western institutions, people in the West pursued their own transformation, interpreted sometimes as "cultural turn" or "post-modernism". In the core of this transformation could be a far-reaching reconfiguration of collective consciousness from structure to meaning, in other words shifting public attention from class to culture. Whereas in the era of the Cold War public awareness was slashed together by class struggle and system confrontation (Capitalism vs. Communism), from the Eighties onwards but particularly after the collapse of the Communist system in the "East", the focus of Western self-interpretation shifted on a global scope to "clash of civilizations" (Huntington 1996) and on the level of individual societies to redefining social inequality into cultural inequalities. Inherent to this transformation is a repositioning of the individual. While in the

earlier industrial society the individual was mainly defined by social membership (class and family), in the new situation cultural characteristics are considered decisive for the life course, e.g. male/female, old/young, domestic/foreign, gay/straight, disabled/not-disabled, Christian/Muslim. Tensions inherent in a society are politically directed to such features, all kinds of horizontal cultural conflict replaces the vertical class conflict. In Europe the EU is the main agent of promoting this transformation (producing a "European citizen") of which the replacement of nation states by an open and globalized world is a part. Although in theory this "turn" promises all kinds of additional liberations and opportunities, in reality it often means more stress and strains, leaving the individual with incoherent cultures and precarious social relations.²⁰

Because in the West the revival of pilgrimage and the cultural turn took place in parallel, it is plausible to see the prior as simply an aspect of the latter. Pilgrimage is sharing its function with alternative lifestyles like the return of folk culture, eating local food, appreciating traditional crafts, superstition and myths. It can provide an escape from the iron grip of an intensifying and psychologically exhausting world of work, by decelerating life. Pilgrimage, together with hiking, as a relief from the overwhelming artificiality of globalization, allowing feelings of eternity and closeness to nature. It also offers the "post-modern" individual a last spiritual retreat (be it religious or secular) from an otherwise completely utilitarian life, although even here the commercial dimension (equipment, accommodation, souvenirs etc.) remains present. Although the "cultural turn" is also an option for "Eastern Europe", strongly promoted by the EU and other Western agencies, it has not yet been embraced to the same extent as in the West, in many aspects even resisted. Examples for resistance are the adherence to nation, little success of the Western "turn" of gender and less emphasis on transparency. If the proposition is right, that the post-communist "East" did follow the structural but not the cultural standards of the West, then a different constellation and character of pilgrimage should also be expected.

²⁰ The Huntington debate, the "cultural turn", the "end of history" thesis (Fukuyama 1992), globalisation theories (e.g. Robertson 1992) and other attention attracting paradigms of Western thinking all imply more or less that after the demise of Communism global conflicts will be structured along civilizational and cultural lines. Is it simply a coincidence that this paradigmatic shift from "class" to "culture" happened around the same time when the class-based challenge of a global Communist revolution spearheaded by the Soviet Union began to crumble away?

Generally speaking, according to this reasoning the escape function could be expected to be smaller than in the West but the part of pilgrims with mainly religious motives higher. Given this, and connected with a lacking cultural turn, a very different, rather reduced media and marketing communication is likely. This could hamper the full alignment of "Western" and "Eastern" pilgrimage mobility, despite the long lasting communalities in previous historical periods.

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