

Between Ages

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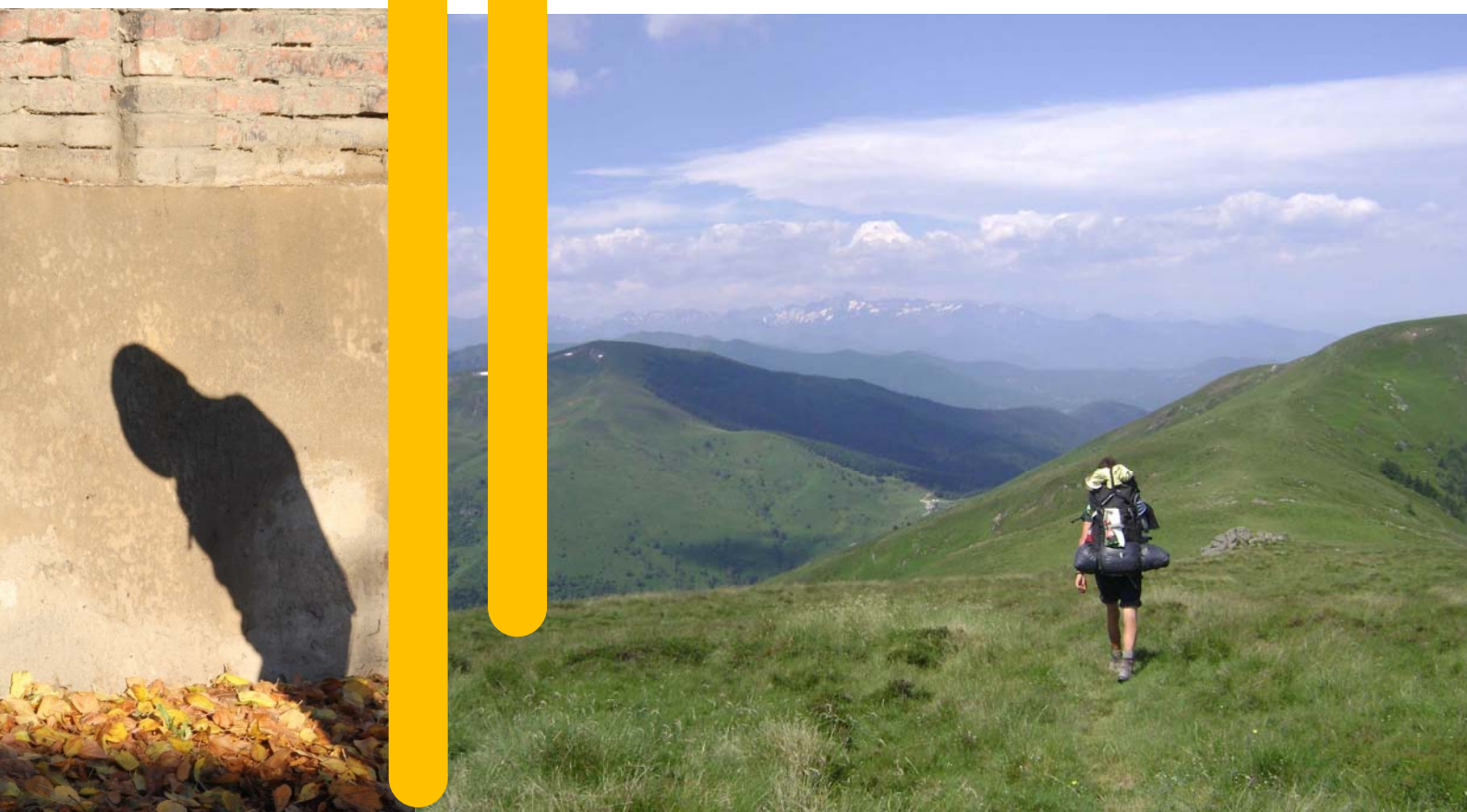
**Pilgrimage as a way to deal with
vulnerable youths**

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1 Introduction

Alba vzw is a Flemish organisation offering long distance walks and working projects within guest families as an alternative to closed young offenders' institutions. In this article I discuss the ways in which Alba, and more specifically its division named Oikoten, provides support to vulnerable youths who are hoping to find new direction in their lives. I draw on my own experience as a companion on three Oikoten projects and on the information in the book "Ik dus naar Compostela" in which 30 teenagers who walked with Oikoten tell about their experience and the impact it had on their lives (de Aguirre & Vermeulen, 2012).

2 The walking projects of Oikoten

The Oikoten organisation was founded by two social workers in 1982. The two were inspired by a documentary they had seen of juvenile delinquents in the United States who walked from coast to coast as an alternative to youth detention centres. The name Oikoten is derived from the Greek 'oikos' and implies 'far away from home' and 'making use of your own strength'. Today, the Oikoten organisation is situated near Leuven in Belgium and has since then organised over 300 projects for more than 500 youths. Oikoten is now part of the larger organisation, Alba, which also engages in related aspects of youth welfare. However, this article focuses only on Oikoten's initial core activity: long distance walking with vulnerable youths.

The youths involved are between 15 and 18 years of age. To label these young people 'vulnerable' or 'at risk' emphasises the lack of future perspectives they face in their lives. The lack of a support network is one reason for this vulnerability. Many have dropped out of school. They lack anyone to turn to when facing life's challenges. Quite a few are young offenders who report to probation officers or case workers following sentences in juvenile court. Many have a history of drug abuse or are taking prescribed neuroleptics or anti-depressant medication.

Most of these teenagers lack confidence in their abilities and have difficulty managing strong impulses and emotions. They may feel anger towards the system and blame society for their situation. On the outside they look tough and cool but just like other adolescents they crave acceptance and belonging, while seeking to establish their own identities.

Young people usually join the programme when it seems that all other options have failed. They participate in the projects with the hope of giving their lives a new direction. The detention centres, where most of them come from, being the last step in a long process within the system is often experienced as the end to their hopes and dreams. For those who apply to participate in a project with Oikoten – the application is based on free choice – such a step is seen as a unique opportunity to take charge of their lives.

The staff of Oikoten select from the applicants those who they think will most benefit from a walking project and show that they're motivated to get their lives back on track. Selection is based on their application letter and an interview with the candidates.

Originally, a walking project contained six youths and two companions, but this was quickly replaced by groups of two youths with one companion. The last two decades a guide generally walks with one youth, or in the case of boys sometimes with two youths.

After a young person is selected, the project leader, a member of the Oikoten staff, begins the preparation. He or she contacts the relevant network of the youth, including the family, the juvenile judge and the case worker. A written agreement is worked out where all parties express their expectations and responsibilities as equal partners.

Meanwhile, the person selected as companion, foster parent and guide for the duration of the walking project prepares the walk. The walk should take three months. The companion decides on a destination, maps out the way and draws a time schedule from start to finish, with an average of 25 km distance per day with a rest day every 10 days.

Both the young person and his or her companion are allocated a supporter, referred to as the 'achterban' (literally 'those behind'), who they choose in consultation with the staff. The role of this person is to support the walkers during the walk and in the case of the youth also after the project.

The actual preparation for the youths starts upon arrival in Oikoten. The first encounter with the open and friendly atmosphere there as well as the degree of freedom they are given is completely different to what they have experienced in the past. To some it may come as a shock. "*What is this?*" (de Aguirre & Vermeulen 2012, 59), is often heard in the first days.

Preparation also involves buying the equipment needed - such as walking shoes, outdoor clothing and tents. The youths learn how to cook on a campfire and have some preparatory talks explaining rules and expectations. Oikoten sets out four clear rules which should be respected:

- No mobile phones or iPod
- Respecting the laws of the country
- Every metre on foot (no hitchhiking or public transport)
- No behaviour that endangers the unity of the group

The day before departure, there is an official meeting in which all people involved meet to sign the agreement in which the youth – the main party in the agreement – the relevant family-members, the juvenile judge, the case worker, other relevant partners, the companion and Oikoten each express their expectations and responsibilities. Afterwards, a small farewell party is held and the group is ready to take off.

The walk may start at Oikoten or at another point of departure. Santiago di Compostela, a Christian pilgrimage destination in Galicia (northern Spain), has been the traditional final destination. In later years, many other destinations and routes have been added and other forms of transportation such as bicycle, horseback and sailing boat have been tried out or combined. For those less eager to walk, alternative working projects in guest-families in remote areas have been organised. Although, the focus of this paper remains Oikoten's long distance walk, most of the information contained in this article is applicable to the alternative projects too.

In the walking projects, the four rules, the route and the destination form the framework in which transformation can take place during the walk. The daily routine is very simple: in the morning, the camp is broken up and the group starts to walk until they reach the new destination. In the meantime, tasks are taken to buy or prepare food and to read the map. Evenings may be spent in a local pub, around a bonfire or as guests of local people. Time takes the group slowly but steadily through different landscapes and moods towards its final destination, each carrying a backpack of about 18kg and with a budget of about 13 Euro a day for expenses and pocket money. Halfway through the walk, a 'support-visit' from Oikoten is organised where the supporters and the project leader visit to evaluate progress, listen to the stories, enjoy each other's company and look ahead to the future. Also, fellow travellers from back home may join in for a couple of days or a week, breaking the routine and bringing new energy into the group.

In the first weeks, an identification with the past and the 'bad boy/girl image' remains strong. Feelings of self-doubt are experienced and the youths may question their ability to complete the walk. Mood swings are quite common with moments of euphoria being followed by periods of crisis.

After a couple of weeks, identification with the past becomes less and less pronounced and space is left to experiment with new roles and identities. Even though some may struggle with the hardships of the walk in the early days and weeks, many experience a sense of relief, which goes along with an increase in physical fitness. Ideally, the youth should no longer look upon him or herself as a delinquent with an attitude but open up to other forms of self-image, such as a pilgrim or a co-walker. This identity may be expressed with other walkers or pilgrims they meet and bond with on the road. During the walk, the youth encounters new ideas, learns to know other views about life and the world, takes on new responsibilities and explores new skills. Many are very surprised for instance by the hospitality and respect they encounter from people they don't know.

Self-esteem increases once the youths become more acceptant of themselves and others. Certainly, demons and negative thoughts are likely to surface but at the same time they acquire coping skills to stand up to their pasts, their families or their feelings.

Up to now I have described the ideal scenario or success story. There are of course projects where the bad boy/girl image remains intact and resistance, complaints and conflicts dominate the atmosphere in the group. There have been cases where participants gave up due to boredom or that they simply ran away. In cases where one or more of the rules are constantly violated or when tensions lead to physical aggression, the companion may decide to stop the project. He or she may ask Oikoten to initiate a crisis intervention. Such interventions may lead to a fresh start for the group or the decision that further attempts to proceed with the walk are futile. In some cases, where the tensions between two youngsters are too great, a group might be split in two and another companion is sought. If the project breaks up, it usually means the youth has to return to detention. Therefore, this option is postponed for as long as possible.

But there are many cases where the walk runs smoothly and the destination comes into sight. At a certain point the youth has questions concerning his or her future. Oikoten formally address these issues in a meeting with the youth once the end approaches.

Finally, reaching the destination may seem somehow paradoxical. On the one hand, there is a sense of pride and great achievement, but at the same time, the challenges of a life back home suddenly become very real. The youths return to Oikoten where they are welcomed by loved ones who join in a party as a celebration of their achievement. Now, the role of Oikoten is over and the role of the support figure (amongst others) begins.

3 The 'uprooting' element of pilgrimage

Oikoten conceived the artificial Dutch word '*ontheming*' for their approach. This term is a combination of the prefix '*ont-*' which means 'no', 'not' or 'without' in Dutch and the ancient Dutch word '*heem*' which means 'settling' or 'dwelling'. The term implies being removed from an environment where one was 'stuck' and secondly it refers to the process triggered by such a removal.

The English word 'uprooting' has a similar connotation. The participants, both the youths and their companion, are uprooted in order to leave their familiar situation. There is a sense of being pushed or even forced to get out of a situation in which one is stuck, to change the situation and the environment so radically that one is forced to take up on another. To be uprooted is to lose that which holds you tight and in place. The reason for doing so is because the present situation is believed to be hopeless, with little chances of improvement or a positive outcome. It is as if Oikoten is saying: "*Get up, you're rotting here, it's time to move out of here and get on the road to experience new things, people, environments, impressions. Take on a new role. It has been long enough now. Move!*"

Recently, the term 'pilgrimage' has been adopted to label the Oikoten approach and a network of similar projects in other parts of Europe. Detached from the religious or spiritual context in which this concept is conventionally understood, one can easily recognise similarities between the approach of Oikoten and the traditional ideas on pilgrimage, including the aspect of healing or becoming whole and the process of self-transformation, empowerment and stress reduction. An interesting introduction to this field of study is a collection of anthropological articles on the relationship between pilgrimage and health in the physical, the mental and the spiritual sphere edited by Dubisch J. and Winkelman M. (2005). The articles introduce a diversity of forms of pilgrimage as well as a range of motivations that inspire pilgrims to undertake the journey including rites of passage and doing penance as well as shedding light on other forms of secular pilgrimage.

4 The framework: learning by doing

The previous section introduced the Oikoten project and its structure. In this section I outline the different components of the approach. The concept of using outdoor activities to transform and heal fits in with a long tradition of outdoor learning going back to the German educationalist Kurt Hahn and even before to ideas proposed by J.J. Rousseau in his "*Emile, ou de l'éducation*" from 1762. The main focus in these approaches is that nature is the best environment to learn in and that action methods are more conducive to learning than merely talking. For Hahn "*it is the sin of the soul to force young people into opinions – indoctrination is of the devil – but it is culpable neglect not to impel young people into experiences*" (Hahn 1965, 3). Hahn's main goal was to build 'strength of character' and he believed outdoor activities were the best way to reach that goal. Hahn's ideas have been developed over the years and have taken on many forms, such as the outward Bound School.

Such programmes are developed with variations within the following eight building blocks (van der Ploeg 2011, 19):

1. Environment: more or less risky or abnormal
2. Activities: structured or not, more or less complex
3. Reflection: incorporated or not
4. Context: incidental or structural participation
5. Aftercare: more or less intensive
6. Guidance: more or less qualified
7. Period: short or long
8. Goals: broad or small

Below, I will examine each of these eight components and discuss how they complement the Oikoten approach.

5 The environment

The environment or nature are not only a source of beauty and solitude, but also of harsh and challenging elements, which are futile to struggle against. A walk to Santiago or any other destination makes use of pathways which are remote and by preference only suit walkers, but which are manageable and not extreme. The environment should not be risky or abnormal and there are no peaks to be climbed, although climatic conditions may be harsh in the height of summer or winter. Safety is important and the roads taken are common walking roads which are easy to travel. Some of the paths may be steep from time to time. The paths to Santiago, which are well documented and marked, form an obvious destination for a walk, but companions may choose any other road or destination which fits into a period of three to four months. Larger towns and cities are avoided as much as possible as they distract too much from the purpose of the walk and may be a temptation to run away. For the same reason there is a ban on mobile phones and music players. The French section of the Camino to Santiago has been avoided over the last decade as the road has become too popular for pilgrims during the summer. Too many visitors make their way along this last part of the Camino and this can distract the youths from the process of inner change. For this reason, other destinations or paths to Santiago are favoured.

6 The activity of walking

Walking is closely related to the element 'environment' and compared to other outdoor activities, such as rafting or climbing, it is simple and easy to do. However, we can say that the walk in itself offers a very clear framework. In the activity of walking, path and goal are hardly distinguishable. One doesn't walk solely to reach the destination, one walks because one walks. Furthermore, being on the road is a strong metaphor for life itself: we often use the term 'path' to express the calamities in life and the direction we are going. Another closely related image is that each step is always a step towards the end and this single step is taken each and every step. To stop walking is to stop the journey of life.

Another important aspect of walking is that it is something you do on your own, without external means or help, which reminds us of the meaning of the word Oikoten as 'making use of one's own strength'. Here the elements of autonomy and self-determination become clear. The walker is responsible for his journey and makes use of his own strength. This may be difficult in the beginning or when cars pass by during heavy rain, but going through hardship is an important element of all environmental approaches. It is believed that conquering the hardship here will facilitate dealing with other hardships in the future and form the character and may bring self-confidence and pride.

Finally, walking also offers a quality which is closely linked with the slow and steady movement through space and time. A long distance walker may experience the environment as happening 'inside' of him. *"Walking is simple. You're alone with yourself and nature"* (Marnix in de Aguirre & Vermeulen, 82). The surrounding nature, sounds, smells, tastes as well as the mental, sensory and emotional experiences all seem to happen within, in that which is not moving. It is as if walking moves the walker to a state of serenity, peace and clarity.

7 Reflection

This brings us to the third component, reflection. One of the main issues the young people involved in the walking projects face is learning to cope with their thoughts and emotions, which are often expressed in impulsive behaviour. The walk, however, allows room for self-reflection. The aspect of reflection is not explicitly promoted or accentuated by Oikoten but the lack of distractions in the environment and the process of walking allows for thoughts and feelings to become more easily accessible and perceived. The French philosopher F. Gros (2009, 9 -16) has illustrated convincingly the importance of walking to reflection and to the development of philosophical ideas. Walking generates clear thoughts and frees the mind from its burden. *"While walking you forget the whole idea of identity, the temptation to be someone, to have a name and a history. (...) The freedom you feel during the walk is that you are no one, because the body that walks has no history property, only an ancient stream of life."* (Gros 2009, 13, my translation)

A typical Oikoten statement is 'First walking, then talking' ('Eerst stappen, dan klappen'). This echoes the learning by doing approach that action comes before thinking and talking. It may be observed that many of the young people who participate in the Oikoten projects react negatively to all kinds of educational questionnaires, talking therapies and reflective conversations about their behaviour or their self. Hence the caution of Oikoten to formalize reflection or to move into a more therapeutic approach.

This does not mean that reflection is rejected. In the early years, one of the tasks of the companion was to keep a diary during the walk and this diary was open for the youths to read. In later years, this practice was discontinued, although it has remained important that all the group are involved in writing a regular letter home. All group members read and sign this letter, which is written by the

companion and the youths are encouraged to add something themselves. The letter writing moments enhance the element of slowness. This is a further reason for the ban on mobiles and internet. One needs time and reflection to write a letter. The letter not only serves to inform those at home about what is going on, but also offers the group the chance to reflect in a structural way about what is at stake in the group. In this sense, a letter provides a basis for group discussions on things that have occurred or ideas that were formed. Generally speaking, reflection is encouraged in whatever way it comes, without formalising it.

8 The context

Fourthly, the context has an important role in the approach of Oikoten. As we have seen before, the context is important from the outset and this is formalised within the signed agreement between all partners as equal partners: the youngster, judge, case worker, support figure, companion, and family members. Every member of the context has formulated both his or her expectations and commitments. A lot of care and caution is given to this aspect which is finalised with a written agreement, to be signed by all partners. This agreement is not merely a paper, but a core tool in the approach. All walkers carry the agreement with them on the walk. It provides a framework that all partners should be obliged to follow. On the other hand the organisation wants to provide enough time and space that is not invaded by expectations, judgements or expertise.

Instead of an individualised educational plan or a theoretical diagnosis with several goals or tasks normally used in youth care, the agreement is a commitment between equals. The youngster is not seen as a 'problem to be treated' but as a responsible person, as are all others who signed the agreement. Whenever necessary, the agreement is referred to by the group.

During the walk, the support person will visit once or twice. This person is involved in the follow-up support after the walk and hence, he or she has an important role in considering future possibilities together with the youngster. This may be assisted living or other forms of appropriate care. Furthermore, one should include the companion and all fellow travellers as part of the context. The presence of others serves as a mirror or screen upon which the youngster may project his ideas, thoughts and feelings. Hence once in a while, a volunteer – for instance a friend of the companion or a future companion – are engaged to walk with the group for a couple of days.

9 The aftercare

The aftercare aspect has always been a delicate issue and for some also the Achilles heel of the project, as the organisation is no longer responsible for the youngster once the project is over. In most cases, all judicial sentences and convictions are removed after the walk has been completed and the youngster can move on with a clean record. It is however, not inconceivable that the youth relapses into old habits once he or she is back in a former environment. Here, the support figure (and context) comes into play as well as the role and importance of a realistic and feasible plan for the future.

One may hope that the project has planted a seed of resilience, but this is never sure. Resilience refers to the extent an individual is able to cope with stress and adversity. It is believed that the youngster has learned to cope with stress and adversity during the walk and that this ability may create a bouncing back or a 'steeling effect' in times of hardship.

The French psychiatrist and neuroscientist Boris Cyrulnic has published several interesting and controversial ideas on the subject of resilience. He challenges traditional psychology in thinking like Pilgrimage as a way to deal with vulnerable youths

car mechanics when looking at childhood trauma, as if these traumas could explain all subsequent suffering in a similar way that a blocked carburettor explains the splutter of the engine. For Cyrulnic, *“our history doesn’t determine our destiny”* (Cyrulnic 2011, 13). Human beings are far more capable of dealing with trauma and fighting back, if they get the chance to reformulate their life stories into positive ones rather than being victimised and believing they are victims, which then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Important in Cyrulnic’s view is the role of a positive story about oneself and a positive self-image. Hence, Oikoten have added a so called ‘outsider-witness conversation’ into aftercare (Vermeire, 2011). This is a form of narrative therapy whereby the youngster is encouraged to formulate *‘preferred accounts of identity’* in which a positive self-concept is shown as well as confidence in one’s strengths and abilities.

For some youths, completion of the walk is the first positive achievement they have experienced in their lives and can be seen as a rite of passage. After the uprooting at its beginning, they are invited to take root again and to incorporate this positive experience in their lives. Recently Oikoten has introduced some new elements to acknowledge and celebrate this “rite of passage”. The youths may present a small work of art or put on a small performance and leave a message to the group setting out on the next walk.

10 Guidance

The sixth component refers to guidance. In this matter, Oikoten explicitly chooses non-professional guidance. Companions are interim workers who are freelance and usually give up their normal job for a period of time. Potential companions go through a strict selection procedure. They are expected to be open-minded and tolerant to enable them to develop an authentic relationship with the youth. They should be over 26 and have developed some life experience. They should also be physically and mentally fit and be aware that the process of ‘uprooting’ is also theirs. The walk should be a new experience for the companion too.

Formal pedagogical and psychological skills are not required. A professional may use strategies, tricks and methods which he learned during his or her training as a helper or coach. Such an approach may easily push the youngster into a role of dependence and this is considered to be counter-productive. In my own opinion, the main quality of a companion is the ability to deal with the youngsters in an open and non-judgemental way.

Although the companion acts as a foster parent, is legally responsible for the youngster and represents the standards of the organisation, he or she has few possibilities to sanction the youth, except the drastic decision to stop the project. However, the walk and the setting make each problem which an individual encounters or creates the problem of the whole group. This element becomes clear very quickly and offers the chance to understand the need to take responsibility.

In a small group with a special goal, everyone is forced to take on responsibility. No one can carry all of the utensils of all food, no one can walk without a map. Hence to take up responsibility is a learning process and the companion has a role here to provide an example in his own behaviour as an example to the youth.

Jan Masschelein, professor Education at Leuven University, saw the role of the companion as crucial in what he called the ‘strategy of disarmament’ (Masschelein 1996, 7). The walk brings the youngster temporarily into the role of pilgrim and creates a space in which *“the live activating agitation is given a chance and desire gets a new form”*. The walk forces him or her to reply to the

questions that arise and offers the chance to break away from a previous 'frozen' strategy of continuous battle without any room for change, a role which was played over and over again. The new setting invites the participants to open up and to 'disarm'.

Disarming has to do with the creation of trust and vulnerability, with taking off your protective armour and accepting what is. The companion shows he is unarmed, and in offering full trust to the youngster, he invites the other to disarm in turn. The process of disarmament occurs more successfully in a smaller group and this is the main reason Oikoten opts for a one to one or a one to two companionship. Experience has shown that members of bigger groups are easily susceptible to social pressure and to keeping on their armour.

The main quality of the companion is to remain present, whatever happens. Indeed, during the walk, rules may, can and will be broken and things seldom turn out the way that is expected. The companion quickly learns that the differences in culture and values, such as views on health, on time, on spending money and on managing emotions, should be accepted and that harshness doesn't work, but leads instead to alienation and disappointment. Even the smallest rejection may cause conflict, hence the need to remain present and to understand the perspective of the youngsters. Learning each other's language needs time and may also lead to crisis, which explains the importance of the role of the support figure for the companion too.

Another point to note is that it is not rare that the companion – for whom the process of uprooting is also the case – may reach his or her limits and experience a physical or mental crisis. In these cases, roles may be reversed and the youngster takes on the role of care-giver and provides support to the companion.

The work of Andries Baart (2005), who advocates "being present" as the first and foremost quality in care, is very well suited to understanding the relationship between companion and youngster. He describes presence as *"a practice through which the caregiver is attentive and dedicated towards the other in order to see what is at stake for the other – from desire to fear – and in connection thereto, what can be done and what s/he can be for the other. What can be done is being done, which can only be realised with a sense of subtlety, skills, practical wisdom and loving fidelity."* (Baart, 2005, 40-41, my translation)

Trust, skills, wisdom and love are the key words here, referring to full acceptance and a strong sense that the other is doing the best he could from within his own views and perspective.

11 The time period

Above, I have shown that the relationship is an important element in the strategy of disarmament. This human aspect implies that the process cannot be accelerated but needs time and patience. In fact, setbacks happen regularly. They are accepted. Conflicts are seen as a chance and part of the process. They are an element of this live activating agitation Masschelein refers to.

The Belgian social welfare department, which supports Oikoten financially, has regularly requested a speeding up of the process by extracting 'that which works' and moulding it into a more therapeutic approach. Oikoten have been requested to put more emphasis on preventive approaches and other methods and to apply these within a shorter time span. They have never been keen to take such a route. One cannot accelerate the process nor put it into a roadmap. The organisation has taken the decision to continue to invest in long-term projects (though less than before) as they strongly believe in the value of their approach. However, they have now also begun to develop further approaches in order to meet government demands.

12 The goal

Finally, I will discuss what may be called the 'paradox of the goal'. The question whether the efficacy of the Oikoten approach should be evidence-based or not is closely related to questions about the goal of such projects. Evaluation of the approach remains difficult if one tries to compare rates of relapse among those who complete a walk with those who do not.

The goal aspect can be evaluated on many different levels. It should be clear that the goal to reach Santiago or any other destination is a means to reach the goals which were stipulated in the agreement. This means that the project should have facilitated the expectations of all parties involved and especially the expectations and the resilience of the youth.

At another level, the most suitable measure of subjective experience is to listen to the stories, as was done in de Aguirre and Vermeulen's (2012) work. Reading through this book gives a clear understanding of what a walk may mean to the participants and illustrates at the same time how difficult it is to generalize.

For me, the approach of Oikoten fits very well into the basic Taoist concept of Wu Wei. This principle is often translated as 'non-doing' or 'non-trying', which implies there is no goal involved and the only advice lies in 'not going against the nature of what happens'. It is all about acceptance. Ideally, the companion is very careful not to judge nor condemn the youth and accepts whatever takes place. This attitude is similar to what happens during meditation. In meditation, no attempt is made to control the thoughts. The only requirement is to return to the breath or to a mantra when thoughts come up. In a similar way, whatever appears in the mind, be it fears, desires or memories, the walker keeps on walking and in this walking an acceptance of oneself is gradually attained.

To elaborate further on this topic is beyond the scope of this article, but I nevertheless would like to refer to two quotes, which beautifully illustrate this acceptance. Katja said: "*Step one to being happy is to love oneself. That is what the walk has taught me*" (de Aguirre & Vermeulen, 281) and Tom remarked: "*On this walk you learn to accept things as they are, many young people need this*" (de Aguirre & Vermeulen, 312).

13 Conclusion

A lot of suffering, pain, aggression and frustration is based on the belief that we are not as good as we ought to be, that we should be different, better, wiser, more handsome, etc. Oikoten has developed an approach in which vulnerable youngsters have the chance to take on a new role and explore new possibilities of being in the world. They learn to accept themselves the way they are and at the same time, they learn to accept the other and the world as it is.

A vulnerable youngster doesn't change for the better by drilling him or her and having them comply with rules, but by bringing them into an environment which enables them to open up and accept themselves and others. And even if the youth falls back into former habits, he or she always remember the project as a positive period in their lives to which they can return in times of crises. As Marc testified: *"almost every day, I think back to the walk. This was the beginning of my life. Before, I had no life."* (de Aguirre & Vermeulen, 301)

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Also available in this project

<http://www.betweenages-project.eu/results.html>

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|---|---|
| Youth in Stress – Prerequisites for European projects in regard to socio-pedagogical walking | Output 1 English |
| Jugend im Stress – Voraussetzungen für europäische Projekte zum sozialpädagogischen Pilgern | Output 1 German |
| Pilgrimage as starting point in a process of encountering, discovering and perceiving oneself | Output 2 English |
| Pilgern als Einstieg in einen Prozess der Selbstbegegnung, Selbstfindung und Wahrnehmung von Selbstwirksamkeit | Output 2 German |
| Socio-pedagogical Walking as an European Alternative in the Work with Young People in NEET and young Offenders. A theoretical perspective | Output 3 English |
| Sozialpädagogisches Pilgern als Europäische Alternative in der Arbeit mit benachteiligten und straffälligen jungen Menschen – eine theoretische Einordnung | Output 3 German |
| Walking to break with the past – the 3 month way from Belgium | Output 7a English |
| Walking to break with the past: the French way | Output 7b English |
| Walking to the future – Concept of the first developed way in Belgium | Output 7c English |
| Five days between imprisonment and Santiago de Compostela Social educational pilgrimage in Saxony | Output 8 English |
| Fünf Tage zwischen Haft und Santiago de Compostella Sozialpädagogisches Pilgern in Sachsen | Output 8 German |
| Report on the results of walking with NEET's and offenders | Output 9 English |
| Ergebnisbericht zum sozialpädagogischen Pilgern mit Menschen in schwierigen Lebenslagen | Output 9 German |
| Requirements for the route - Handbook for socio-pedagogical walking tours with delinquent and disadvantaged youths | Output 10 English |
| Voraussetzungen für den Weg - Handbuch zum sozialpädagogischen Pilgern mit straffälligen und benachteiligten Jugendlichen | Output 10 German |
| In die Zukunft gehen – ein Projekt für Straffällige und Menschen in schwierigen Lebenslagen (Videodokumentation) | Output 11 (Film) Dutch/French/German/ Italian/English |
| Strategy for re-engagement of young offenders and NEET | Output 12 English |
| Sozialpädagogisches Pilgern als ein neues Instrument für die Arbeit bin benachteiligten und straffälligen jungen Menschen Anregungen für Politik und Gesellschaft | Output 13 German |
| White paper to force walking as an instrument to work with NEET's and Offenders in Europe | Output 13 English |

Selected texts are also available in French, Dutch and Italian

Project aim is the development of alternative methods and measures to imprisonment of young offenders and increase the chances of NEETs for social inclusion. *Between ages* evolves strategies towards juvenile crime prevention via the implementation of a platform for policies and practices. The network combats social exclusion, prevents recurrence and early school leaving, promotes social security in community and contains crimes related to petty crime, promotes commitment and empowerment of young people and positive initiatives into adulthood, and enforces last but not least public spending with regard to health issues, welfare and judicial affairs. The overall objective is hence to promote the Europe2020 strategy in the field of youth and the creation of a European association for coordinating pilgrimage activities for young offenders and NEET.

Seit 2011 wird in Sachsen das Pilgern als moderne Methode der sozialpädagogischen Arbeit erprobt und entwickelt. Als spezielle Form des „Sozialen Trainingskurses“ werden Maßnahmen erarbeitet, bei denen Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene in schwierigen Lebenssituationen die übliche Beratungs- und Trainingsumgebung verlassen und sich auf einen längeren Fußmarsch begeben. Diese begleiteten Wege dienen der Reflexion und Selbstwirksamkeitserfahrung und werden mit Arbeitseinsätzen und methodengeleiteten Reflexionen flankiert. So wird den Jugendlichen und jungen Erwachsenen außerhalb ihres gewohnten Lebensumfeldes die Chance zu einer Neuorientierung und einem Neuanfang gegeben. Allgemeines Ziel des Vorhabens ist die (Weiter-) Entwicklung, der Transfer und die Umsetzung von innovativen und bewährten Verfahren im Bereich Jugend bzw. Jugendstrafrecht und NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). Im Rahmen des Projektes „BA-Network“ wurde die Forschung zum sozialpädagogischen Pilgern auf europäische Dimension ausgedehnt und Daten aus der langjährigen Erfahrung von Oikoten (Belgien) und Alba (Frankreich) einbezogen. Seit mehr als 20 Jahren führen diese zwei Partner Pilgerprojekte mit straffälligen Jugendlichen durch, die bis zu drei Monate unterwegs sind und mehr als 2000 Kilometer zurücklegen. Aus Italien sind zwei Partner dem Projekt beigetreten: zum einen unterstützt das Justizministerium Italiens bzw. die Abteilung für Jugendjustiz (DGM) die Partner dabei, die anvisierten Ziele zu erreichen und insbesondere den Zugang zu den europäischen Institutionen zu öffnen. Zum anderen wirkt die non-profit Organisation „L'Oasi Società Cooperativa Sociale“ und „Associazione Lunghi Cammini“ mit, um das Pilgern für junge Menschen zu testen und in Italien einzuführen.

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Between Ages: Network for young offenders and NEET

