Exploring Transformation Through Travel by Means of the Movie *The Way*

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ABSTRACT

Transformation through travel is attracting scholarly attention due to its potential to trigger a radical transformation extending beyond the traveler's unique experience during the trip of a lifetime. As one of the most common ways of encountering the different, tourism can enable people to become aware of their hidden assumptions and make volitional decisions about them, resulting in a transformation. This study aims to understand how transformation takes place through touristic experience, based on Mezirow's learning theory. To do this, the movie *The Way* (Emilio Estevez, 2010), which depicts the relationship between touristic experience and the transformation of the individual in an artistically powerful manner, was utilized. To analyze the document that constitutes the data source of the research study, a narrative analysis, and a qualitative research design, was followed. The results of the narrative analysis demonstrated that the representations in the movie coincide strongly with the literature on transformation through travel. It showed that transformation begins with the traveler's questioning of self or the perceived world, and that the various difficulties experienced, encounters with the different, and going out of one's comfort zone and habits facilitate transformation through travel. It was also concluded that the authenticity of the touristic experience strengthens its transformative aspect. Thus, the study proposes that in order to strengthen the transformative aspect of the touristic experience, tourists should be offered touristic products and services that contain transformative experiences whose authenticity is preserved.

Keywords: Travel, tourism, transformation, transformative experience, *The Way*

1. Introduction

The relationship human beings establish with their environment, the mediations in this relationship and its transformative effect on people have been the subject of cultural anthropology studies, theories of cultural plurality, identity debates and their philosophical and psychological background, especially after the 19th century. Hence, it is possible to reveal the transformative effect of touristic experience on the individual in a holistic manner through an interdisciplinary perspective. A multidisciplinary approach would be appropriate in studies that deal with travel and transformation together. Each discipline can address the transformation arising from human-environment interaction from different perspectives (Morgan, 2010). Mezirow's transformative learning theory, which focuses on the transformation of the individual, has formed the basis of studies in various disciplines. One of the fields that utilize Mezirow's theory is tourism.

The concept of transformation has been frequently associated with tourism or travel in recent years (Sampaio, Simoni, & Isnart, 2014; Kirillova, Letho, & Cai, 2017a; Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020; Teoh, Wang, & Kwek, 2021). Pine & Gilmore (2011) argued that in order for transformation to occur, a person must experience change in behavior and personal characteristics. They added that this change depends on the personal characteristics of the individual as well as the nature of the encounters. The diversity of tourist experiences and individual characteristics makes understanding transformation a challenging task.

Teoh, et al. (2021) stated that transformative travel experiences initiate a transformation process that results in change, which is instrumental in modifying the perspective of the person undergoing transformation and transferring this new perspective to thoughts, attitudes, and behavior in daily life. Touristic experience and its potential to transform the individual are important because tourist experiences not only provide entertainment, recreation and enjoyment during travel, but also cause changes that are reflected in behavior and attitudes in daily life.

The reason that studies on transformative travel experiences have become more visible in recent years is that transformative travel experiences lead to changes in the consumption habits of tourists and the way they relate to their environment, even after returning home (Soulard, McGehee, & Knollenberg, 2020). In its 2016 report, the World Tourism Organization underlined the transformative power of tourism and described tourism as a tool for cultural-social change (UNWTO, 2016). Santos, Ferreira, Costa & Santos (2020) expressed the need to recognize the importance and value of tourist transformation and to create memorable and transformative tourism experiences.

Studies on the relationship between travel and transformation have generally been concerned with the transformation of specific groups such as backpackers (Noy, 2004), international sojourners (Brown, 2009), and volunteer tourists (Coghlan & Weiler, 2018). While few studies have focused on the characteristics of transformative tourism (Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020), Pung, Gnoth, & Del Chiappa (2020) developed a conceptual model of tourist transformation. The current study will not discuss types of tourism that involve transformative experiences or tourist groups that are more predisposed to transformation, but how a tourist is transformed through travel, by example. To do this, the transformative learning theory, utilized by tourism and various other disciplines, will be drawn upon and how this transformation is realized will be examined through the movie *The Way* (2010). This movie was chosen because it conveys how transformative travel takes place in stages and contains powerful representations of studies that investigate the relationship between tourism and transformation more than similar road movies.

2. Conceptual & Theoretical Background

Participating in tourism activities and traveling has an educative and transformative potential that makes people open to novelties, strengthens understanding and tolerance, and leads to learning, development, mental enrichment, and maturation (Morgan, 2010). As emphasized by Lean (2012: 169), "everyone is transformed by travel to some degree". Similarly, according to Kottler, "[t]here is no other human activity that has greater potential to alter your perceptions or the ways you choose to run your life" (Kottler, 1997: 23). Traveling or participating in tourism activities is seen not only as a means of pleasure, but also as an opportunity for an experience with the potential to transform people for a better life.

If tourism is considered as an experience of breaking out of the routine of everyday life (Cohen & Taylor, 1992), transformation through travel becomes more evident. As a matter of fact, Reisinger (2013) stated that transformation is an irreversible change and mental enrichment that requires a new way of knowing and a radical break from established practices. Therefore, transformative travel experience necessitates a conscious effort on the part of the individual and involves changes in self-understanding, revision of one's belief system, and modifications in one's behavior and lifestyle (Reisinger, 2013). Tourism literature shows that not all tourism experiences have an intrinsic transformative effect and that transformation depends on the quality of the tourist experience. Transformative travel experience considers the transformation phases identified by the transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1994) as important factors of transformation through travel. Furthermore, Smith (2017) revealed the power of Mezirow's theory by stating that it enables travelers to reflect on tolerance and equality.

According to the transformative learning theory, there are certain requirements that lead the individual to transformation, and these emerge gradually during the transformation of the subject. The qualities of the transformative experience can be instructive in understanding what qualities the touristic experience should have or how it should be constructed to be transformative (Mezirow, 1994; Reisinger, 2013). To investigate the transformative effect of touristic experience, Mezirow's transformation phases (1994: 224) were examined by classifying them into three stages: triggers of transformation, transformation, and post-transformation.

Triggers of transformation;
- A disorienting dilemma,
- Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame,
- A critical assessment of assumptions.

Transformation;
- Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and others have negotiated a similar change,
- Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions,
- Planning a course of action,
- Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans,
- Provisionally tying out new roles,
- Renegotiating relationships and negotiating new relationships.

Post-transformation;
- Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships,
- A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

The first phase of transformation begins with mental confusion and a disorienting dilemma that causes an inner personal crisis. In transformation through travel, this personal inner crisis arises when the encounter with the Other calls into question established assumptions that make up one's sense of direction and values. As a result, the individual makes a critical assessment of assumptions and frames of reference, usually accompanied by unpleasant or undesirable feelings. They start to question established patterns that enable them to interpret and make sense of the experience. This phase is a kind of self-evaluation and serves as a trigger for transformation. To put it more simply, this is the stage in which the individual's will to change emerges. Transformation is the abandonment of a particular state before the acquisition of a new state. Therefore, the will to abandon the current state rather than the desire for the new state becomes the trigger. Mezirow identified the individual's confusion about the characteristics to be transformed as the basis of the shaping of this will for transformation. This is described as an emotional motivation that will trigger a rational decision. The emphasis on strong feelings such as guilt and shame are evaluated in this way. These are the feelings that call into question some of the assumptions that the individual has and perhaps has never thought about. These feelings, which are encoded as negative, can also function as productive emotions that allow the person to question established convictions, strengthen relationships with other people, and rethink the way they relate to their environment (Walker, 2017).

Interpersonal relationships play a very important role in shaping touristic experience. The individual who enters the transformation process also witnesses similar experiences of other individuals. The opportunities provided by touristic experience for interaction between people motivate the individual in favor of transformation by enabling the exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions. The encounter with those different from the person undergoing the touristic experience and the Other who is described as not "normal" requires the individual to plan different courses of action and to acquire knowledge and skills for implementing those plans. According to MacCannell (1973), tourists traveled not only to repeat established patterns and remain within their comfort zones but also to seek authentic experiences. In this sense, touristic experience has a transformative potential as long as it presents the foreign to the tourist in its most authentic form. The touristic experience, during which the roles in the world of everyday life are partially abandoned, offers the opportunity to provisionally try out new roles. This takes the individual to the final phase of the transformation by leading them to renegotiate existing relationships and negotiate new relationships.

The person's reintegration into life on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective and worldview gained from this experience points to the transformation that has taken place. In the final phase, the person completes transformation through travel by building competence and self-confidence in the new roles and relationships brought by transformation.

Transformation is a change that occurs through the replacement of the factors that make a particular situation plausible and the introduction of elements that successfully establish an alternative situation (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Although transformation seems to be the result of the individual's free will, processes outside the will must be effective in its emergence. The reason for this is that not only judgments of the individual, but also the ability to make judgments undergo a change and such a radical change in will is the result of the will itself. Lean (2012) argued that the factors affecting transformation are innumerable; they take place before, during and after travel; and the interaction of these factors will affect tourist transformation. According to Lean (2012: 157-168), transformation of the subject through travel is influenced by "(1) social relation-

ships, (2) roles, routines and performances, (3) travel perceptions, knowledge and motivations, before travel; (1) social relationships, (2) roles, routines and performances, (3) reflection on experiences, (4) mobile places, spaces, landscapes and objects, during travel; (1) social relationships, (2) roles, routines and performances, (3) memories and mobile places, spaces and landscapes, post travel". Thus, transformation through travel is influenced by not only the characteristics, but also the memories, experiences and relationships of the individual during different stages of the journey (Lean, 2012).

Kirillova et al. (2017a) considered the individual and the social and cultural world around travelers as a whole and suggested that there are some triggers for transformation through travel to take place. The triggers of transformation through travel are: the timing factor such that the transformation occurs at the end of the journey; the emotion valence varying from a feeling of horror to intense joy; the emotional intensity felt during the transformation experience; the heightened cognition factor created by the reflection process that initiates the transformation; the temporal and spatial transiency and demarcation of the experience that initiates the transformation; a connection to something grand such as God or life; and, finally, the role of circumstantial environment including awe-inspiring nature, encounters with wildlife, a novel cultural setting, and meaningful connections to other individuals (Kirillova, et al., 2017a). In addition to the triggers of transformation through travel, there are also facilitators of transformation (Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020). These are social interaction, which is the most important element of the touristic experience; challenges faced during travel; sense of place created by the different cultural, social elements and belief values in the visited destination; and long stays compared to short stays (Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020). In their study, Pala and Cetin (2022:11) claimed that transformative travel experiences may vary depending on tripographic factors such as "duration and motivation of travel, personal characteristics, and destination features". They also posited that transformation through travel occurs through "behavioral, attitudinal, and personality changes".

Sheldon (2020) stated that transformation through travel or touristic experiences is something that can be designed and identifies situations that involve transformative tourism experiences as deep human connectivity especially in cultural contexts; deep environmental connectivity in natural settings; self-inquiry, self-reflection, self-knowledge; and engaged contribution to the destination by tourists. Moreover, the transformative moments experienced by travelers emerge with Mezirow's disorienting dilemma, causing them to step out of their comfort zones, question their intrinsic values and change their current attitudes and values (Sheldon, 2020; Soulard, et al., 2019). Pilgrimages are also largely defined as journeys in which a person is on a quest, often leading to transformation. On these journeys, people are prepared to look beyond the immediate in their lives and explore ideas and possibilities in community with others (Devereux & Carnegie, 2006). *The Way* (2010) tells the story of travelers who are ready for change and a traveler seized by change on a route known as the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes, certified as a cultural route by the Council of Europe in 1987 (Council of Europe, 2022). The transformation of Tom, the protagonist of the story, explored in this study is completely consistent with Mezirow's phases of transformation.

Methodology

The research design was influenced by narrative analysis, one of the qualitative research designs. Narrative research considers the life story or experiences of one or more people as its field of study. According to Creswell and Poth,, "narrative stories tell of individual experiences, and

they may shed light on the identities of individuals and how they see themselves. Narrative stories occur within specific places or situations. Temporality becomes important for the researcher's telling of the story within a place. Such contextual details may include descriptions of the physical, emotional, and social situations." (Creswell & Poth, 2018: 112). Riessman (2008) stated that narrative researchers collect various stories of lived experience, which may also include performance narratives that aim to communicate some message or issue. The current study analyzed a fictional story constructed as a motion picture by following its narrative pattern. *The Way* focuses on the story of a father who sets off to recover the body of his son who lost his life during a travel experience. In addition, the movie strongly incorporates narrative chronology (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which is often emphasized in the narrative pattern.

"Narrative stories are gathered through many different forms of data, such as through interviews that may be the primary form of data collection but also through observations, documents, pictures, and other sources of qualitative data" (Creswell & Poth, 2018: 112). The document analyzed in this study is *The Way* directed by Emilio Estevez. The document presents in chronological order the experiences of the main character and his three companions during a pilgrimage.

Riessman (2008) proposed several data analysis strategies for narrative research. These are: *thematic* analysis concerned with "what" is spoken; *structural* analysis that examines "how" a story is told; and *dialogic/performative* analysis that focuses on "who" an utterance may be directed to. In the current study, all three strategies were used for data analysis. First of all, depending on the chronological storyline of the movie, important scenes were analyzed via the strategy proposed by Daiute (2014) including the analysis of values, plot, significance, character mapping, and time. After the first stage of analysis, *transformation phases* defined by Mezirow (1994), *factors affecting transformation through travel* identified by Lean (2012), and *triggers of transformation* suggested by Kirillova, Lehto and Cai (2017) were used for the thematic analysis of important scenes and turning points. For structural and dialogic/performative analysis, philosophy literature was drawn upon. The narrative analysis of the film was carried out independently by three authors, two from the field of tourism and the other from the field of philosophy, and then the findings of the three authors were compared with each other.

The validity and reliability of the research were ensured through *enabling external audits* and *peer debriefer* (Erlandson, et al., 1993; Creswell & Poth, 2018). For enabling external audits, the study was shared with a sociology scholar, whose suggestions were taken into consideration. As for peer debriefer, the research was examined by an academic working in the field of tourism, who is familiar with the subject and the phenomenon under study, and provided feedback to the authors.

3. *The Way* (2010) Movıe
3.1. A brief note on the movie

The 2010 movie *The Way*, directed by Emilio Estevez, is about the transformation of Tom, an upper-class American ophthalmologist played by Martin Sheen, while he walks the "Santiago de Compostela Route". This has been one of the pilgrimage routes of Christians since the Middle Ages. Tom, who has upper-middle class privileges such as a good job, a satisfactory income, and a secure and predictable life, learns that his son Daniel, who has put all of these privileges aside in order to "see the world", lost his life while walking this route and sets off to bring him home for burial.

The prevailing emotion at the beginning of the movie is Tom's grief over the loss of his son and anger at his lifestyle. Tom and his son Daniel are the portrayals of two opposite characters. While Tom represents a planned, controllable, rational, bound, and organized way of life, Daniel

represents a way of life that can push aside a bright career and all the privileges, preferring to go after what he does not know and has not seen, following his will. To put it in terms of the distinction Kierkegaard makes in his major work *Either/Or*, while Tom represents the ethical way of life based on public objective experience, where the idea of duty and order is decisive, Daniel represents the aesthetic way of life based on individual experience, where one's feelings and desires are decisive. This distinction has appeared in various forms in existentialist philosophy and literature since the second half of the 19th century. On one hand, there is rationality, whose power goes beyond explaining the world with modernity, and on the other, there is the inner world and desires of the human being, who expresses themselves with anxiety and crisis as their power is lost within the rational world. This dilemma, embodied in the characters Tom and Daniel, can be seen in Daniel's response to his father, who is angry with him for "ruining his life" and acting without a plan: "You don't choose a life, Dad. You live one." On one side, a life planned and designed; on the other side, a life lived.

Figure 1: *The Way* (2010) Movie Poster

3.2. Triggers of transformation

The next stage of the movie begins when Tom, out of a sense of responsibility, decides to complete his son's unfinished journey, leaving his ashes at places where he wanted to be. At the very beginning of his journey, the captain who helps him with the procedures for his son gives him the following warning: "The way is a very personal journey." This statement does not mean much to Tom who is still at the beginning of the journey, because he is making this journey to fulfill the responsibility he feels towards his son, that is, someone other than himself. What compels him to this journey is not an immediate will, but a sense of responsibility. In the first part of this journey, which he does not desire, the audience witnesses encounters that are quite alien to

Tom. The general theme of this part of the movie can be identified as situations he has never encountered before in his lifestyle, people who are not/would not be in his normal life, places he looks/would look at from afar and perhaps even with a sneer, and the sense of astonishment created by all these encounters. His having to go into the river after the bag containing his son's ashes and then spending the night outside can be interpreted as evidence that he is making this journey not out of desire but out of a sense of responsibility. At this stage, Tom is still making a journey he does not want, but endures due to his responsibility. He feels astonishment at being in hostels where dozens of people stay together, with people who are not/cannot be a part of his daily life, and mingling with nature he would rather be a spectator to than a part of. In this part of the movie, Tom, who belongs to a well-designed world free from accidents and uncertainties as far as possible, displays a non-reactive bewilderment towards the uncertainties facing him. The situation in a café when he wants to order tapas is quite striking in terms of showing Tom's faith in his orderly, predictable world. Joost from Amsterdam, who is a prototype of people who are not a part of his everyday life, warns Tom when he is about to order *tapas* by saying, "[Here,] they're called *pinchos*." Tom's response is the symbol of his absolute trust in his own world: "I beg your pardon Joost, but in Pamplona they're called *tapas*. I just read it [pulling out a tourist guide out of his pocket]. You see, unlike the Dutch guidebook which may be directing you to the nearest party, the American guidebook is designed so that you don't look like a clown if you order *pinchos* when you really mean *tapas*." This dialog represents his negative view of the lifestyle that prioritizes pleasure, embodied in the character Joost. It also illustrates Tom's trust in his own world in the face of a person who is "captive to his desires" whom Tom does not take seriously. This trust is an obstacle that prevents Tom from approaching the foreign with an open mind and trying to understand it. In fact, Tom's avoidance of contact with other people and wanting to fulfill his responsibility and leave as soon as possible until this part of the movie can be explained by this motive.

Figure 2: Beginning of Tom's Journey

3.3. Transformation

The next part of the movie is where Tom begins to understand those around him as he goes through experiences that shake his confidence in his own world. In this part, the audience witnesses Tom's dialogue with the cheerful Joost from Amsterdam, who is on this journey to lose weight and is excessively fond of worldly pleasures, Sarah from Canada, who says she went on this journey to quit smoking, and the Irish writer Jack, who set out to find his lost inspiration. For each of them, the other's world becomes meaningful and intriguing. This part of the movie ends at a police station when one evening Tom gets drunk and confronts those around him with what he perceives as their weaknesses, his anger actually stemming from his own inner turmoil. Tom leaves the police station thanks to his companions who show great understanding for his situation, and the shame and guilt he feels about this night sets the stage for his transformation.

The dialogue between the fellow travelers, which resulted in understanding each other, evolves into acceptance. Tom starts to open his inner world to those around him. Allowing Jack, who is suffering from writer's block, to write his story is a symbol of Tom's opening his inner world. This can be considered as opening his assumptions, which constitute the founding core of his actions, to discussion. This dialogue with the Other now leads Tom to change his perspective and do things he thought he would not do. This narrative about the transformation that the relationship with the Other can create in the established mental schemas is clearly represented in the movie by the story of Tom's bag being stolen by a Romani boy. This part of the movie reveals that encounters are a valuable means for eliminating prejudices. Just when it becomes clear that Tom is getting to know and be a part of the new world around him, his bag containing his son's ashes is stolen by a Romani boy. This means the triumph of the world of reason based on predictability and security, embodied from the beginning in the character Tom, over the world of experience shaped by desires, represented by Daniel. However, the thieving boy's father hands over the bag with great embarrassment, and his moralizing attitude exposes the established mental patterns that lead to all kinds of marginalization practices in the context of discrimination against Romanis. This tilts the balance in the equation between what Tom represents and what Daniel represents irreversibly in favor of Daniel. With the friendly atmosphere they encounter in the wedding they are invited to in the Romani neighborhood and the scene in which the father of the thieving boy bids farewell to the travelers, the phase of embracing the Other evolves into a desire to get to know new Others. Tom now has Daniel's enthusiasm and curiosity about life. The fact that after a long and arduous walk, Tom does not enjoy an overnight stay in a comfortable hotel but misses his life on the road points to a radical change in his outlook on life. The fact that he has his name erased and Daniel's name written on the certificate of completion he receives at the end of the journey can be interpreted as the fulfillment of his responsibility towards his son, as well as his turning into Daniel. Tom, who intends to calculate and organize his life, turns into Daniel, who lives with great curiosity and enthusiasm for everything life brought and will bring.

3.4. Post-Transformation

The final part of Tom's transformation is accompanied by Alanis Morisette's song *Thank U*, an ode to change for what life brings. Tom's journey, which started with grief and anger, ends with inner peace and curiosity for the new. As the captain said at the beginning of the journey, this has been a very personal journey. In the last sequence, Tom is in another part of the world, walking with a backpack, curiously looking around.

Figure 3: New Tom

4. Representations of Transformation Through Travel

The Way contains many connections that were established between being on the road and transformation. Pilgrimage routes have a special place in terms of the relationship between touristic experience and transformation. The route followed in the movie is a holy pilgrimage route that ends in Santiago, where the bones of Saint James are believed to have been found. In Christian theology, pilgrimage refers to a kind of purification, to turning away from what you are. It is no coincidence that the original meaning of *peregrinus*, which lies at the root of the term pilgrim in many Western languages, is *foreigner*. For this reason, the goal is not to arrive at Santiago, the final destination of the walk, but to complete the route that leads there; because this journey promises a process of turning away from what you are. The goal is not to get somewhere, but to get away from some things. Frédéric Gros expresses this ideal as follows: "Internal transformation remains the pilgrim's mystical ideal: he hopes to be absolutely *altered* on his return" (Gros, 2017: 121). Although Tom's journey does not have the same spiritual tone as a pilgrimage, it does evolve into an inner reckoning and self-questioning. From this point of view, the captain's warning at the beginning that this will be a very personal journey becomes even more meaningful.

Another important theme that establishes a connection between being on the road and transformation is that the experience is outside the comfort zone and completely authentic. Being at one with nature and walking are identified as important elements of the transformative touristic experience. American philosopher Henry David Thoreau defined walking as an opportunity to get rid of the sounds of the outside world and listen to one's own voice (Thoreau, 1862). However, this should be a walk towards the wild, towards what is alien to one's self. According to Thoreau, "Our expeditions are but tours, and come round again at evening to the old hearth side from which we set out. Half the walk is but retracing our steps. We should go forth on the shortest walk, perchance, in the spirit of undying adventure, never to return, –prepared to send back our embalmed hearts only as relics to our desolate kingdoms." (Thoreau, 1862). By suggesting walks that transgress comfort zones, Thoreau is suggesting that people encounter what is foreign to them so that

they can hear their own voice. In this sense, Tom's walk is a journey as Thoreau suggests. Tom is in the wild in every sense of the word. He is both in nature and in a world alien to him and this walk in the wild enables him to hear his own voice, as Thoreau promises. This walk will continue, in Thoreau's words, "till one day the sun shall shine more brightly than ever he has done, shall perchance shine into our minds and hearts, and light up our whole lives with a great awakening light, as warm and serene and golden as on a bank-side in Autumn" (Thoreau, 1862). Tom's transformation can be interpreted as such an enlightenment. The adventure in the wild, listening to oneself, seeing the different, inner reckoning, and encounter with the new lead to a new person at the end of the path.

The movie opens with the decision to embark on a journey, develops with the journey experience and concludes with Tom's transformation. The beginning of such an experience can be explained by different motives. Existential crisis, which is defined as a result of the tension between the individual's desire for self-realization and life, is one of these motives. This crisis, which is the founding dynamic of existentialist philosophy and literature, becomes the motivation for a search for the purpose of life. The relationship between existentialism and the theme of death help to understand Tom's motivation for embarking on the journey. Some experiences interrupt the ordinary and familiar course of life abruptly, calling into question the meaning of this ordinary flow. Karl Jaspers, one of the symbolic philosophers of existentialism, defined death as a "boundary situation" that leads one to reflect on one's existence (Jaspers, 2010: 64). A situation like death, which one finds themself inevitably face to face with, is not a situation that can be made sense of within the course of the everyday world. For this reason, it is beyond the limits of our meaningful world. Therefore, death is not something that can be known; it can only be felt. When death is felt, the meaning-laden course of everyday life loses its meaning and the person starts to reflect on the meaning of existence. Tom's loss of his son is this kind of an experience. After Daniel's death, Tom sets off to bring his son home and bury him, and then to resume everything from where he left off; however, he cannot do this. He feels compelled to do something in order to place the pain within the ordinary flow of his life, to make this devastating experience meaningful. The emotional intensity (Kirillova, et al., 2017a) that Tom experiences, the dilemma he goes through as a result of the unexpected encounter with the death of his child and the resulting questioning of himself and the meaning of life (Mezirow, 1994) are the factors that trigger Tom's transformation. This explains his sudden decision at midnight to complete Daniel's journey. Tom's journey progresses in almost perfect conformity with the phases of transformation identified by Mezirow. The course of his relationship with his companions is the most obvious example of this analogy. Tom's feelings of shame and guilt after the scene in which he angrily voices his negative opinions about his friends and ends up at the police station provide a clear example of the factors that trigger Mezirow's transformation. Tom not only regrets but also feels ashamed of what he has done. It is precisely this shame and the resulting guilt that triggers his transformation so that he will never behave like that again.

The main theme of the second part of the movie is Tom's encounters and experiences. It should be underlined at this point that these encounters are contrary to Tom's established convictions and that the experiences during these encounters are foreign to him. Tom is in a world that is completely alien to the ordinary course of his life. However, besides its foreignness, this world is as genuine as it can be. The genuineness here can be interpreted as the authenticity of the experience promised by this world. The nature he is at one with, the hostels he sleeps in, the people he encounters, the food he eats are as foreign to Tom's world as they are genuine in their own exis-

tence. None of them are constructed or planned for Tom's being there; this is precisely why Tom is in the wild. The world he encounters is a new world, and by showing Tom that another world exists, it makes him think that other worlds are possible. The narrative of the first part of the journey is based on the contrast between Tom and this new world he finds himself in. This contrast is important in terms of showing Tom how alien his experiences are to him, making him reflect on these experiences (Lean, 2012), and making him aware of the Other (Kirillova, et al., 2017a). This is because experience is one of the most important means of making sense of the world around one, as well as a major factor that shapes the mental structure of the person.

American philosopher David Lewis claims that "experience is the best teacher" and emphasizes its uniqueness as an instructive occurrence. Having an experience is the best way or perhaps the only way of coming to know what that experience is like. No amount of scientific information about the stimuli that produce that experience and the process that goes on in you when you have that experience will enable you to know what it's like to have the experience. In his famous essay in which he investigates the potentials of experience, Lewis (1988: 29) argues that unless you have smelled a skunk, what you know about the neural system and the sense of smell is of no use. The assumptions that Tom does not doubt the truth of in the least and his rigid point of view can only be shaken with the experiences he goes through supports Lewis' findings concerning the potential of experience.

The relationship between foreignness and the potential to lead to transformation should be underlined once again. In her study about transformative experience, L.A. Paul puts it this way: "When a person has a new and different kind of experience, a kind of experience that teaches her something she could not have learned without having that kind of experience, she has an *epistemic transformation*" (Paul, 2014: 10). The emphasis on "new and different" is quite important, because an experience that can lead to a change in one's point of view and world of thought must be outside the existing perspective. Encountering an unfamiliar world of life has a transformative potential in the sense of witnessing not only a new life experience, but also the existence of different worlds of life. The peculiarity and genuineness of the lived experience can thus be defined as the transformative power of the experience. This becomes clearer when the authenticity of Tom's encounters are taken into consideration.

The final part of the movie depicts the transformation Tom undergoes. Tom transforms into Daniel, whose values are completely contrary to the values Tom represented at the beginning of his journey, and it is his encounters on his journey that lead to this transformation. It can be inferred that this is not a transformation only in perspective from the fact that Tom is portrayed in the last scene as pursuing a new quest. The scene showing Tom continuing his life as a traveler demonstrates how he adapted to his new life. Transformation is important not only in the sense of evolving into something new, but also in the sense of revealing a potential to transform. In this sense, each new journey has the potential to lead to the emergence of a new Tom.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Studies on transformation through tourism are crucial as they respond to the search of new generations who are more sensitive to today's environmental, social and economic problems and aware of the world they live in (UNWTO, 2016). In particular, altruistic (for example, volunteer tourism) and other forms of tourism sensitive to the Other have the opportunity to transform both the traveler and the host (Kay Smith & Diekmann, 2017). This transformative power of tourism comes from the fact that it is a space for encounter. The traveler encounters in different cities and

countries: tastes, people, landscapes, and cultures that he/she has not encountered before. Mac-Cannell (1976) described tourism as a modern pilgrimage, saying that travelers travel with the aim of seeing and experiencing the new.

In this study, in order to understand how transformation through travel occurs, the movie *The Way*, which represents this transformation, was examined under the guidance of Mezirow's transformation phases. The disorienting dilemma that arises with the death of Tom's son Daniel, his anger at his son's lifestyle and this anger changing direction and spilling over to people he has just met, and Tom's questioning his behavior as a result correspond to Mezirow's first three phases, which are the triggers of transformation. Similarly, Kirillova, et. al (2017a) stated that the awareness created by the questioning process is one of the triggers of transformation. Therefore, transformation through tourism starts with the traveler questioning herself or the world she perceives.

In the transformation phase, Tom's relations with "others" becomes instrumental in understanding them and his changing his relationship style by defining new roles (Mezirow, 1994) is a good representation of how transformation takes place. Various challenges Tom faces during his journey (White & White, 2004; Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020; Tasci & Godovykh, 2021); his encounters with different cultures, people, communication styles, beliefs, food and landscapes (Tasci & Godovykh, 2021; Pung & Del Chiappa, 2020; Kirillova, et al., 2017a; Lee & Woosnam, 2010); and going out of his comfort zone and habits (Tasci & Godovykh, 2021) enabled the transformation to take place. After the transformation, Tom is seen as a backpacker, and this scene represents Tom's integration into his new life with his new perspective. Tom has now transformed into Daniel by adopting the life of the son he was angry with. While this transformation points to the construction of a new self (Coghlan & Weiler, 2018), it shows that there may be some changes in the traveler's personality (Noy, 2004; Tasci & Godovykh, 2021). This study showed how tourist transformation takes place by means of the movie *The Way*, which is a very good representation of this type of transformation. The inferences made through the narrative of the movie help in understanding how the tourist transformation takes place, while also illuminating the features transformative travel experiences should have. In practical terms, this knowledge provides guidance for tourism marketers and practitioners on how to promote and design transformative travel experiences when developing touristic products.

Another point to emphasize is that transformative travel experiences should be authentic. The transformation of the movie's protagonist is not the result of a decision but a series of experiences. What triggers and sustains the transformation are the events that occur around the character, the phenomena that surround him, and the experiences he goes through. The transformative experience must be authentic as well as alien to the world of the traveler (Kirillova, et al., 2017b). In other words, an authentic experience can lead to transformation. It should be emphasized that the authenticity of Tom's experience is crucial in his transformation. This is related not only to the events that occur around him, but also to the sense of intrapersonal authenticity he experiences and his interpersonal relationships (Brown, 2013; Rickly-Boyd, 2012; Kirillova, et al., 2017b). In this context, it is necessary to preserve and sustain the authenticity of objects (these can be cultural heritage assets as well as natural sites) and service elements in areas where tourism practitioners have the authority and power to intervene, especially in travel forms where an existential concern is effective (backpackers, volunteer tourism, faith tourism etc.).

Although the results of the research are closely matched with the literature, it should be noted that they are built on the representations of a phenomenon, not on an actual phenomena. Therefore, this situation is a limitation and calls for caution when taking it into consideration. Future

research may examine movies that represent the problem of a similar nature in the example of different cultures. For example, the 2005 movie Bab'Aziz, which deals with traveling and transformation in the context of Sufi philosophy, can be considered. Thus, the issues of being on the road and transformation in terms of eastern and western cultures can be analyzed comparatively.

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