

Origin and Socio-spatial Formation of the Alto Vale do Itajaí Region, SC, Brazil: the *Acolhida na Colônia* Project

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Abstract

The *Acolhida na Colônia* project can be classified as a rural tourism variant in which families of European descent host tourists on their farms and show their way of living close to nature. This study aimed at discussing the origin and socio-spatial aspects of the Alto Vale do Itajaí region and the municipalities that are part of the *Acolhida na Colônia* project. The goal was to understand the aspects that preceded the current moment and led those cities to be included in the project. In order to achieve this objective, we adopted a case study with descriptive and bibliographical research of an exploratory quality. Thus, it was possible to contextualize the socio-spatial formation of the study site. Results indicated that the socio-spatial context of that region contributes significantly to the expansion and rearrangement of tourism activity and, consequently, to regional development.

Keywords: Socio-spatial aspects; Alto Vale do Itajaí; *Acolhida na Colônia*.

Resumo

Gênese e Formação Socioespacial da Região do Vale do Itajaí, SC, Brasil: projeto *Acolhida na Colônia*

O projeto *Acolhida na Colônia* é uma forma de turismo rural em que as famílias de agricultores imigrantes europeus recebem os turistas em suas propriedades e apresentam seu modo de viver junto à natureza. Esta pesquisa objetiva discutir a gênese e os aspectos socioespaciais do Alto Vale do Itajaí e, mais especificamente, dos municípios que compõem o projeto *Acolhida na Colônia*, visando a compreender os aspectos que antecederam o momento atual e contribuíram para a inserção das cidades no projeto. Para atingir o objetivo proposto, optou-se pela adoção de um estudo de caso com pesquisa descritiva e bibliográfica de caráter exploratório a fim de contextualizar a formação socioespacial do local estudado. Os resultados demonstram que o contexto socioespacial da região investigada contribui de forma significativa para a expansão e reconfiguração da atividade turística e, por consequência, contribui também para o desenvolvimento regional.

Palavras-chave: Aspectos socioespaciais; Alto Vale do Itajaí; *Acolhida na Colônia*.

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Resumen

Génesis y formación socioespacial de la región del Alto Vale do Itajaí, SC, Brasil: proyecto *Acolhida na Colônia*

El proyecto *Acolhida na Colônia* es una forma de turismo rural en que las familias de agricultores inmigrantes europeos reciben turistas en sus propiedades y les presentan su manera de vivir junto a la naturaleza. Esta investigación pretende analizar la génesis y los aspectos socioespaciales del Alto Vale do Itajaí y, más concretamente, de los municipios que forman parte del proyecto *Acolhida na Colônia*, buscando comprender los aspectos que precedieron el momento actual y contribuyeron a la integración de estos municipios en el proyecto. Para lograr el objetivo propuesto, optamos por la adopción de un estudio de caso con investigación descriptiva y bibliográfica de carácter exploratorio con el fin de contextualizar la formación socioespacial del sitio estudiado. Los resultados muestran que el contexto socioespacial de la región investigada contribuye significativamente a la expansión y reconfiguración de la actividad turística y, en consecuencia, también contribuye al desarrollo regional.

Palabras clave: Aspectos socioespaciales; Alto Vale do Itajaí; *Acolhida na Colônia*.

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the state of Santa Catarina, in southern Brazil, welcomes one of the largest tourist influxes across the country. The state showcases great diversity of attractions, landscapes and cultural traditions that enhance its tourist regions: Caminho dos Príncipes, Vale do Contestado, Grande Oeste, Costa Verde e Mar, Vale Europeu, Grande Florianópolis, Encantos do Sul, Caminho dos Cânions, and Serra Catarinense.

The state is divided into six major geographical regions: Great Florianópolis, North Santa Catarina, West Santa Catarina, Serrana, Southern Santa Catarina, and Vale do Itajaí. The tourist area called Vale Europeu – “European Valley” – is located in the latter.

Several municipalities have been developing tourism activities in the Alto Vale do Itajaí region, especially Apiúna, Ibirama, Presidente Getúlio, Presidente Nereu, Witmarsum, and Vitor Meireles, which are part of the *Acolhida na Colônia* project. In this rural tourism-oriented project, families of European descent host tourists on their farms and show their way of living close to nature (*Acolhida na Colônia*, 2007).

The *Acolhida* project represents an effort to meet, in terms of market, the new complexities that involve the advancement and updating of tourism. Within this context, organizations are required to prepare and adapt in order to face the changes that have occurred in the contemporary world, which is characterized by significant changes in client profile.

This study aims to discuss the origin and socio-spatial aspects of the Alto Vale do Itajaí region and, more specifically, of the municipalities that are part of the *Acolhida na Colônia* project. The goal was to understand the aspects that preceded the current portrait of the region and contributed to the inclusion of these cities in the project. A research on socio-spatial formation will present the concrete materiality found in the study site, investigating and defining its

natural features and the historical process responsible for its current conditions (Santos, 1982).

Given the perspective of socio-spatial formation influenced by multiple determinants, it is possible to analyze, according to Mamigonian (1966), the historical and geographical specificity of each place without abandoning the knowledge of the whole. Thus, this research uses, as a method for analysis, the socio-training paradigm of Santos (1982), which suggests the concept of *social formation* as a basis for the study of society. Therefore, in order to study the genesis of Alto Vale do Itajaí, it is necessary to address Santa Catarina first, considering the region within the greater context of the Santa Catarina state.

After contextualizing the Vale do Itajaí region, the approach will focus on Alto Vale do Itajaí – more precisely, on the municipalities of Vitor Meireles, Witmarsum, Presidente Getúlio, Lontras, Presidente Nereu, and Ibirama, where the *Acolhida na Colônia* project was established. The project started in 1998 around the slopes of a range of mountains known as Serra Geral de Santa Catarina and did not expand to the micro-region of Alto Vale - whose first settlers were German and Italian – until 2005.

This study is relevant in that it contributes to a better understanding about a given society's transformation process by means of space and time characterization.

METHOD

This study may be classified as a case study based on descriptive and bibliographical research. It proposes a dialectical discussion in order to contextualize the socio-spatial aspects and the genesis of the Alto Vale do Itajaí region, with emphasis on the municipalities of Apiúna, Ibirama, Lontras, Presidente Getúlio, Presidente Nereu, Witmarsum, and Vitor Meireles, which are all involved in the *Acolhida na Colônia* project.

Literature review was conducted based on secondary data sources, such as journal articles, books, dissertations and theses. In April 2016, information about the properties that belong to the *Acolhida na Colônia* project was collected from the project's website itself (2007). In addition, a questionnaire requesting an updated list of properties and main attractions in the municipalities was e-mailed to the technical assistance staff in charge of the region. According to the surveys, the following belong to the Ibirama region: a farm in the municipality of Apiúna; two farms in Presidente Getúlio; two farms in Presidente Nereu; two farms in the municipality of Witmarsum; and two farms in Vitor Meireles.

SOCIO-SPATIAL ASPECTS OF ALTO VALE DO ITAJAÍ

Santa Catarina is a state that stands out for its good socioeconomic development index and striking geography. From the socioeconomic point of view, the state “has two very different formations: areas of European colonization, mainly German and Italian, originated from small properties in the 19th century, and areas of large pasturelands” (Mamigonian, 2011, 79).

This study focuses on the areas of European colonization in the Vale do Itajaí region and, particularly, in Alto Vale, as highlighted in the following map (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Coverage area of Alto Vale do Itajaí



Source – Amavi (2016)

The European immigration followed the abolition of slavery, as Europeans came to replace slaves in coffee plantations (Singer, 1984).

German immigrants first came to Santa Catarina in 1829, namely to the colony of São Pedro de Alcântara, near Desterro, the state's capital as it was known at that time. In turn, the Vale do Itajaí region was colonized by Germans in 1850, with the founding of the colony of Dr. Hermann Blumenau at the confluence of two rivers: Ribeirão da Velha and Itajaí-Açu. It was this project that encouraged Germans to settle in Santa Catarina. The Dona Francisca region – today known as Joinville – was colonized in 1851, whereas the region of Itajaí – Brusque – was founded in 1860. In that same year, the imperial government took charge of the colony of Blumenau (Rost, 2008).

The Vale do Itajaí region has three subdivisions: Alto Vale, Médio Vale, and Foz do Itajaí. Alto Vale was colonized in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Haas Jr., 2009). The Blumenau colony, located in that region, was created in 1850 and soon expanded to Timbó and Indaial around 1870, to Ibirama in 1890 and to Rio do Sul in 1910.

In these colonies, social relations were different from those in the coastal and mountain regions. Productive relations were much more intense, since the European immigrants' main objective was the improvement of their economic conditions. With their culture and knowledge, settlers impressed the spirit of capitalism on the region, as defined by Max Webber (Santos, 2000).

According to Santos (2000), the purpose of immigration was basically farming operation in rural areas that had a standard measure of approximately 25 ha, enough to accommodate a family.

As a rule, immigrants were young. Settled on their plots, having relatives or friends as neighbors, they cleared the land so that they could grow their first crops. The colonial administrations provided just enough for newcomers to survive. Many

immigrants were involved in the opening of roads or other types of construction work, in an effort to secure some income (Santos, 2000: 113).

In addition to farming and construction work, Pereira (2003) highlights surplus produce trade and the supply of essential services as activities that were introduced in Santa Catarina thanks to the German colonization.

German settlers initiated a small, yet diversified rural and urban production, with products like butter, lard, milk, cheese, and activities such as those of blacksmiths, carpenters, weavers, tailors, and cobblers. As they sold their surplus goods through the colony-sale system, they acquired other goods, which generated dynamism. In combination with the complex inter- and extra-regional spatial, social and economic relations resulting from the evolution of capitalism in Brazil and in the world, this dynamism allowed the emergence and consolidation of a vigorous industrial park (Pereira, 2003, p. 108).

Primary activities stimulated the emergence of an industrial park centered on food and wood production that is maintained in several municipalities to this day, contributing significantly to the socioeconomic development shown in Table 1 (Menezes & Vieira, 2010).

Table 1 – Stages of the socioeconomic formation process of Alto Vale do Itajaí

Socio-economy periodization and evolution in Alto Vale do Itajaí				
Period	1850-1920	1920-1960	1960-1990	1990-2000
Emphasis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of small towns; Economy based on subsistence and cooperation (extractivism/farming). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timber extractivism; Farming and cooperatives; Emergence of a few economic sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crisis in the timber industry; Search for alternatives; Emergence of the first companies in the industry – a result from the proximity with Médio Vale. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rise and spread of micro/small businesses from the textile and clothing industry; Consolidation of other industries.
Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport difficulty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transport and access to electricity difficulties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flight of people and companies/capital. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural flight; Depreciation of local culture and cooperatives.

Source – Adapted from Menezes and Vieira (2010, p. 198)

The prominent role soon achieved by the European colonization can be explained by the fact that “immigrants bring capitalism to America ‘in their bones’, in the form of landowners, craftsmen, workers or small business owners” (Mamigonian, 1976, p. 89).

In its early years, the development of the German colony in the Vale do Itajaí region faced major difficulties: the need to adapt to local diversities, the reduced number of immigrants, capital and labor shortage, scarce investment, and

frequent flooding, which would cause serious losses. All these obstacles ended up limiting the colonial enterprise. According to Silva (2002), the discontinuous flow of German immigrants did influence the occupation of space, the formation of the agricultural structure and the development of the Vale do Itajaí region. However, the lack of public resources and similar difficulties also found in other Brazilian regions did not affect Vale do Itajaí. In fact, its socioeconomic dynamism soon helped it stand out both in the state and in the country.

After the arrival of the Germans, the Italians settled on the outskirts of the occupied areas of Vale do Itajaí at the end of the 19th century. They also founded colonies along the southern coast of Santa Catarina, which expanded through agriculture and coal mining. The occupation of the Santa Catarina territory was completed in the early 20th century with the trading in western lands, in a process of colonization and settlement for descendants of Germans and Italians who came from Rio Grande do Sul (Pereira, 2001).

Germans settled in Blumenau and its surrounding areas, which currently belong to the municipalities of Gaspar, Pomerode, Massaranduba, Indaial, Timbó, and Ibirama. Italians settled in the municipalities of Luiz Alves, Rio dos Cedros, Rodeio, Apiúna, Ascurra, and in the first colony of Alto Vale, Ibirama. Initially known as the Hamônia colony, Ibirama is located at the confluence of the Itajaí-Açu and Itajaí do Norte rivers and represents the birth of colonial companies in the Alto Vale region whose objective was to sell land (Haas Jr., 2009).

The region exhibits great diversity of tourist attractions, especially regarding gastronomy, architecture and typical events, reflecting the traditions and customs of its colonizers.

Tourism in Alto Vale do Itajaí: *Acolhida na Colônia*

Many authors define tourism as a purely economic activity. According to Luca Filho (2014), tourism is a *socioeconomic* activity, which takes pride of place in the economy of a given country, region or location in that it generates the production of goods and services to meet the basic needs – and desires – of customers, such as food, lodging, transportation and leisure.

Within this same context, De La Torre (1997) shows the importance of tourism in the social, economic and cultural spheres, transcending sectors thought of as exclusively commercial.

Tourism is a social phenomenon that consists in the temporary and voluntary displacement of one or more individuals who, due to a complexity of factors involving human motivation, leave their habitual place of residence and head to a different location, in which they do not perform any profitable or remunerated activities. This process generates multiple interrelationships of cultural, socioeconomic and ecological importance between the sending and receiving nuclei. (Mota, 2001, p.43)

Due to the late arrival of means of transport and the difficulty in consolidating roads, which were created as independent routes, it took tourism in Santa Catarina, as well as other economic activities, a long time to develop

(Mamigonian, 1966). In its early days, the tourist activity in the state turned to sun and sea tourism.

With the aim of promoting other regions of the state, projects seeking to expand tourism emerged, highlighting Alto Vale do Itajaí and its attractions. The municipal partnership-making represented by the Association of Municipalities of Alto Vale do Itajaí (Amavi) was of key importance in this process (Poleza, Butzke, & Rischbieter, 2008). The association began its activities in the 1960s, when mayors from twenty small municipalities of the region sought, through partnership-making, an alternative for attending to regional causes and facing complex structural, organizational, social, economic, and environmental problems (Amavi, 2005). Today, Amavi consists of 28 municipalities.

According to Baum, Canteri and Trzaskos (2012), the *Acolhida na Colônia* project was created in 1998 by Thaise Guzzatti. The purpose of the project was to promote stability for the cities located around the slopes of Serra Geral, which were suffering with rural flight. The initiative was inspired by *Accueil Paysan*, a French network of agritourism that has been active since the 1980s.

According to Baum *et al.* (2012), the association is represented by 30 municipalities situated within roughly 180 properties which belong to rural families. It is a network of community, solidarity and sustainable development that includes the following principles:

Agritourism is part of rural establishments and embodies a factor of local development. Farmers want to share the environment where they live with tourists, and the reception and sharing must occur in an atmosphere with exchange of experiences and mutual respect. Agritourism should practice affordable prices, and services are planned and organized by family farmers, who guarantee the quality of the products and services they offer (Baum *et al.*, 2012, p. 5).

Based on these principles, the project was introduced in Santa Catarina around the Serra Geral slopes, operating in the cities of Anitápolis, Gravatal, Imbituba, Rancho Queimado, Santa Rosa de Lima, and São Bonifácio. In the Ituporanga region, it comprises the municipalities of Aurora and Atalanta; in the Vale dos Imigrantes region, it includes the municipalities of Agrolândia, Agronômica, and Rio do Sul; in Serra Catarinense, the municipalities of Urubici and São Joaquim.

The municipalities that constitute the *Acolhida na Colônia* project are: Apiúna, Presidente Getúlio, Presidente Nereu, Vitor Meireles, and Witmarsum, as shown in Figure 2. These are small farmers who have come together to seek other sources of income through agricultural tourist attractions. The municipality of Apiúna belongs to the Médio Vale do Itajaí region.

resident. The place was given eight different names before finally being named after the only president of the Republic born in Santa Catarina, Presidente Nereu (Presidente Nereu, 2015). The municipality has a population of only 2,306 inhabitants, according to IBGE (2017).

The story of Vitor Meireles began in 1935, with the arrival of the first immigrants. The town of Rio Preso – “Stuck River” – was born, and it was named so because of a river which flowed through ravines and woods. In 1945, the village became known as Alto Rio Dollmann and later as Forçaço – “Gallows” – since the shape of rivers Fachinal and Palmitos resembled a gallows frame. In 1967, through a project sent to the City Council of Ibirama, registry officer Alceste Moser suggested changing the name of the city to Vitor Meireles, after the famous painter from Santa Catarina. On April 26, 1989, the municipality, now dismembered from Ibirama by Law no. 7.579/89, was given the name Vitor Meireles (Vitor Meireles, 2014). As of today, it has an estimated population of 5,089 inhabitants (IBGE, 2017).

The municipality of Witmarsum began its history in 1924 with the coming of German soldiers to the countryside of the Hamônia district, today known as Ibirama. Former combatants on the African continent, the soldiers initially named the site as Nova África – “New Africa”. Six years later, Russian immigrants arrived from Ukraine and changed the name of the place to Witmarsum. When Presidente Getúlio was dismembered from Ibirama, Witmarsum became its district and was not emancipated until 1962 (Witmarsum, 2016). According to IBGE (2017), the town currently has an estimated population of only 3,876 inhabitants.

Tourist attractions

A research in the *Acolhida* website (2007) and a questionnaire emailed to the technical assistance staff provided data on the location and more information about tourist attractions in the region.

Initially, it was found that the municipalities of Apiúna, Presidente Getúlio, Presidente Nereu, Vitor Meireles and Witmarsum are currently part of the *Acolhida na Colônia* project. The city of Apiúna offers the Pousada Recanto dos Bugios as a tourism option. In Presidente Getúlio, tourists can visit Recanto das Abelhas and Recanto dos Saberes e Sabores. President Nereu offers two attractions: Sítio Colina and Sítio Vida Nova. In Vitor Meireles, it is possible to visit Recanto Cardozo and Recanto Natural, and, in Witmarsun, Pousada Recanto da Natureza and Sítio Warmeling.

In Apiúna, Pousada Recanto dos Bugios offers visitors traditional colonial-style breakfast prepared on a wood-burning stove. The farm owners grow organic products such as fruits, vegetables and honey. Tourists can also warm up from the cold of the mountains by the fireplace or the wood-burning stove, as well as go on hiking trails through the native woods, go on tractor rides, and visit waterfalls.

In Presidente Getúlio, as previously stated, tourists have two options: Recanto das Abelhas and Recanto dos Saberes e Sabores. At Recanto das Abelhas, the farmer couple and their family grow organic products and are committed to environmental recovery and preservation. Tourists can learn about the recovery

work of riparian woods, how to economically use forests in a sustainable way, and accompany the harvest of fruits such as *açaí*. Farmers breed several species of native bees, offering tourists diverse types of honey that may be tasted and taken home. In addition, tourists can stroll around the property, see lakes, watch birds in the open, enjoy culinary specialties such as bread, jam, jelly, honey, *açaí* juice, chicken and cassava stew, and go on tractor rides up to a nature trail, where native species can be watched. Another option is to go for a relaxing swim in a waterfall surrounded by the Atlantic Forest, not far from the farm.

At Recanto dos Saberes e Sabores, the owner of the place takes pleasure in sharing her knowledge about medicinal plants and alternative therapies, showing her diversified production and offering therapeutic massages. The place also offers “the trail of the senses,” with red, orange, yellow, green, and blue flowers, representing the colors used in chromotherapy. Tourists can experience countless scents as they stroll through plants and flowers. They can also go fishing, harvest fruit or simply contemplate nature while listening to birds singing and the wind touching the trees.

Sítio Colina, located in Presidente Nereu, was originally a ranch that served as a hardware storehouse and animal shelter. It has been turned into a beautiful colonial-style restaurant, decorated by the owners with local products. The family’s concern with the environment and agroecology can be seen in a banana circle and an organic mandala garden. In addition to delicious lunch and dinner, visitors are served a corn cake with coffee made on the wood-burning stove. The environment offers visitors peace and quiet. It is also possible to walk along a path that leads to a beautiful waterfall, go on tractor rides or go fishing at a lake.

One of the differential features of Sítio Vila Nova is the fact that its area is covered almost entirely by the Atlantic Forest, which is still preserved along the foothills of Serra do Mar. The place offers several attractions, such as the possibility to take part in conversation circles while drinking *chimarrão*, listen to stories and folktales by the fireplace, get acquainted with chores, customs and lifestyle of colonial tradition, and try typical meals with genuine local ingredients and cooking style. Another attraction is the mini-museum, where tourists can find antique objects and historical artifacts that are part of the decoration in the main house, such as a collection of antique clocks and tableware with 17th century pieces, as well as Persian and African artifacts and furniture. The house also offers comfortable bedrooms and suites with a porch overlooking the garden and the mountains - a true invitation to relax and enjoy the scenery. The place provides workshops on soap crafts and on cooking, in which visitors have the opportunity of learning about the history and origin of recipes. Tourists can also go on walkabouts or hiking trails, climb the mountain, observe nature, enjoy the water from springs of small streams that come straight down from the mountain, go fishing at ponds, watch the wild geese and ducks, participate in daily chores by helping prepare meals, milking cows and harvesting fruit and vegetables, or simply lie in a hammock and relax.

In the town of Vitor Meireles, the Recanto Natural ranch, located in the Arie environmental reserve – Area of Relevant Ecological Interest –, offers tourists the possibility of watching various species of local flora and fauna, such as toucans, azure jays, yellow jays, vinaceous-breasted amazons etc. Visitors can also ride horses, walk outdoors and enjoy typical cuisine. At Recanto Cardozo, also located

within the Arie environmental reserve, besides observing nature, tourists can taste traditional dishes prepared with local organic products and take home some in-season fruit preserve.

In Witmarsum, visitors have the option of staying at the Recanto da Natureza inn and enjoying typical dishes made with fresh produced straight from an organic vegetable garden. Residents grow fruit such as blackberries and strawberries and produce handicrafts, wine, jelly, juice, liqueur, cheese, among other colonial products. Tourists can also stroll through blueberry and strawberry orchards, harvest fresh vegetables for lunch and go fishing at a pond.

Witmarsum also offers, as a tourist attraction, the Sítio Warmeling ranch, whose owners are typical farmers from the countryside of Santa Catarina, of German descent and high level of ecological awareness. In addition to serving visitors, they make wine, juice, jelly and fruit preserves, tend their peach, grape and persimmon orchards, and work in the fields themselves. During the harvest of peaches, they offer visitors the “Harvest and Pay” activity. Tourists may also go on walking trails around the property.

From the point of view of Baum, Canteri and Trzaskos (2012), when farmer families teach tourists how to live in a more sustainable manner, they have the opportunity of preserving and valuing experiences that have been transmitted from generation to generation. For their part, guests can learn about the production of organic food, collaborating in the cooking and tasting of meals in the Colony.

Table 2 summarizes the main attractions of each destination.

Table 2 – Survey on the main attractions of the *Acolhida na Colônia* project

Municipality	Destination	Top attractions
Apiúna	Pousada Recanto do Bugios	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical and organic cuisine; • Outdoor walkabouts; • Tractor rides; • Trails leading to waterfalls.
Presidente Getúlio	Recanto das Abelhas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about the production of organic foods; • Environmental education; • Nature trail; • Swimming in a waterfall; • Accompanying the <i>açaí</i> harvest; • Tractor rides; • Observation of native species; • Typical and organic cuisine.
Presidente Getúlio	Recanto dos Saberes e Sabores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about therapeutic plants; • Therapeutic massage; • Tour along the “trail of the senses” with flowers of diverse colors and scents; • Fishing; • Nature watching.

(continues...)

Table 2 – Continuation

Municipality	Destination	Top attractions
Presidente Nereu	Sítio Colina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local cuisine; • Colonial-style breakfast prepared on a wood-burning stove; • Learning about the farmers' life histories; • Comfort from a fireplace on cold days; • Harvesting and tasting of in-season fruits and vegetables; • Environmental education, agroecology; • Trail leading to a waterfall; • Tractor rides; • Fishing at a lake.
	Sítio Vida Nova	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversation while drinking <i>chimarrão</i>; • Stories and folktales by the fireplace; • Typical homemade meals; • Mini-museum with antique objects and historical artifacts; • Hiking trails around the mountain and along a stream; • Landscape and fauna watching; • Environmental preservation; • Fishing at ponds; • Participation in daily tasks: preparing meals, milking cows, and harvesting fruits and vegetables; • Workshops on cooking and soap crafts; • Community parties and theme dinner parties, such as the Arabic Night, Countryside Pizza and Cultural Dinner; • Cozy suites and bedrooms; • Presentation of accordion and guitar players, reintroducing Brazilian country music; • Homemade wine and draft beer tasting; • Dishes for vegetarians and coeliac sufferers; natural foods and detox diet.
Vitor Meireles	Recanto Natural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical dishes; • Observation of fauna and flora, environmental preservation area; • Horse rides; • Outdoor walks.
	Recanto Cardozo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical cuisine; • Organic produce; • In-season fruit preserves; • Nature watching.
Witmarsum	Pousada Recanto da Natureza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stroll through blueberry and strawberry orchards; • Harvest of fresh vegetables; • Nature watching and fishing at a pond.
	Sítio Warmeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical and organic cuisine; • Outdoor walkabouts; • Tractor rides; • Trails leading to waterfalls.

Source – Prepared by the authors (2016)

FINAL REMARKS

This study presented the concrete materiality expressed by the study site using Santos's socio-spatial paradigm (1982) as a method for analysis, which suggests the concept of *social formation* as a basis for the study of society. The objective was to study the origins of the location and the definition of its natural features, as well as the historical process responsible for its formation.

The analysis of data on the socio-spatial formation of the Ibirama region shows that the possibilities offered by the transformation of resources and socio-spatial organization led farmers to see a new business opportunity in the rural land where they live and make a living. Hence their investment in the tourism sector as an additional family income option.

This study also points out that tourists may enjoy many different attractions in each of the investigated destinations. Out of the nine sites, eight of them feature, as top attractions, activities related to local culture, such as typical cuisine, the histories of ancestors, Brazilian country music and exhibition of antique furniture and historical artifacts.

Six of the properties focus on tourists seeking to learn about the history of the places. These properties offer tips on environmental education, therapeutic plants, production of organic food, cooking workshops, handicraft products, and an exhibition of historical furniture and artifacts that reinforce local culture.

By contrast, other destinations emphasize outdoor activities, such as nature watching, walkabouts, hiking, fishing at lakes, waterfall swimming, tractor rides, wine and draft beer tasting and massage therapy. Moreover, some of the properties feature activities involving participation in daily chores, such as preparing meals, milking cows, harvesting fruit and vegetables, as well as handicrafts and cooking workshops.

It was also found that property owners are trying to diversify the attractions they offer in an effort to contemplate different preferences, by offering special dishes for vegetarians and coeliac sufferers as well as detox meals, for instance. Hosts also rely on performances by local accordion and guitar players, community parties and theme dinner parties.

The cultural, natural and architectural riches of the region end up contributing to managers in the creation and planning of the main attractions to be offered to tourists. This change in the scenario of the region results in greater appreciation of its culture and production. Farmers will continue to work in agriculture, only now combined with the economic activity of tourism.

Therefore, it is clear that the entire socio-spatial context of the investigated region contributes significantly to the expansion and rearrangement of the tourism-oriented economic activity and, consequently, to regional development.

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