

**PATH OF FAITH: AMONG CYCLE TOURISTS, MOUNTAINS AND
LANDSCAPE**

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ABSTRACT: Opened in 2003, the Way of Faith (CF) is a pilgrimage route of more than 300 km. It starts in Águas da Prata/SP, and ends at the Basilica of Aparecida (Aparecida)/SP. Every year the CF CF attracts more than 40 thousand pilgrims, of which more than half are cycle tourists. The objective of this article is to analyze how cycle tourists perceive the landscapes on this path. As methodology we use: qualitative research; observation through cycle trips; field journal, and a semi-structured questionnaire. We asked cycle tourists about the landscapes that most caught their attention. As a result, we found answers that focused on natural landscapes, highlighting olfactory and sound landscapes, among others.

KEYWORDS: Path of faith. Cycle tourists. Landscapes.

CAMINHO DA FÉ: ENTRE CICLOTURISTAS, MONTANHAS E PAISAGENS

RESUMO: Inaugurado em 2003, o Caminho da Fé (CF) é uma rota de peregrinação de mais de 300 Km. Ele tem início em Águas da Prata/SP e termina na Basílica de Aparecida (Aparecida/SP). Anualmente o CF atrai mais de 40 mil peregrinos, sendo que mais da metade são de cicloturistas. O objetivo deste artigo é analisar como os cicloturistas percebem as paisagens neste caminho. Como metodologia utilizamos: pesquisa qualitativa; observação através de ciclovagens; diário de campo; e, um questionário semiestruturado. Indagamos os cicloturista quanto às paisagens que mais lhes chamavam atenção. Como resultado encontramos respostas que foram em direção as paisagens naturais, destacando-se paisagens olfativas e sonoras, entre outras

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Caminho da fé. Cicloturistas. Paisagens.

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Introduction

Since the 2000s, Brazil has seen a significant increase in the number of people from different parts of the country who have dedicated themselves to making religious pilgrimages (STEIL; CARNEIRO, 2008). There are several reasons for this phenomenon, such as the idea of personal improvement; physical training to complete the *Camino de Santiago de Compostela* [Way of Saint James], in Spain²; the need to repeat in Brazil the experiences lived in Spain (STEIL; CARNEIRO, 2008); the search for inner personal transformation, sharing experiences in a group; the practice of tourism (CALVELLI, 2006), and the practice of religious tourism³ (STEIL, 2003), among others.

Inspired by the *Camino de Santiago de Compostela*, several religious routes were created in Brazil to offer pilgrimage experiences, such as *Caminho Passos de Anchieta* (Path of Anchieta's steps, state of Espírito Santo - ES), in 1998; *Caminho das Missões* (Path of Missions, state of Rio Grande do Sul - RS), in 1999; *Caminho da Luz* (Path of Light, state of Minas Gerais - MG), in 2001; *Caminho do Sol* (Path of Sun, state of São Paulo - SP), in 2001, and *Caminho da Fé* (Path of Faith/MG and SP), in 2003 (STEIL, 2003).⁴

In this context, the *Caminho da Fé* (CF) has been an important attraction for religious tourism, drawing thousands of people, mainly due to its Catholic tradition and

²The *Camino de Santiago de Compostela* is a network of pilgrimage routes of about 800 km. It begins in the city of St. Jean-de-Port, in France, and ends in the city of Compostela, in Spain (GUIMARÃES, 2008). This is a medieval pilgrimage route in the Iberian Peninsula that has existed since the 9th century, when pilgrims from all over Europe, walking or riding horses, set out to pay homage to the sacred relics of the Apostle Saint James the Great (MENDES, 2009; REIS 2007).

³ Religious tourism is understood as the “ancient social practice now renamed, in times of globalization and deterritorialization, [which] consists of visiting places considered sacred, using accommodation facilities” (SILVEIRA, 2003, p. 36).

⁴Many routes continue to be created, such as, for example, *Caminho da Prece* (Path of Prayer/MG), in 2007; *Caminho de Nhá Chica* (Path of Nhá Chica/MG), in 2019, and *Caminho das Capelas* (Path of Chapels/MG), in 2022.

the presence of chapels and Christian symbols, and also to — and no less importantly — the fact that it is located mostly in rural landscapes and on dirt roads.

Inspired by the *Camino de Santiago de Compostela*, the CF begins in the city of Águas da Prata/SP, crosses the South/Southwest Mesoregion of the state of Minas Gerais and ends in the city of Aparecida/SP, where the Cathedral Basilica of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida is located, which annually attracts millions of faithful⁵ to worship the saint. In addition to being a trail with a strong religious appeal, it also has natural beauty with incredible landscapes, with a mountainous route mostly located in the Mantiqueira Mountains, which has an average altitude of over 1,000m, with an extension of 324 km and thousands of kilometers of trails. Mainly due to its geographical characteristics of mountains, valleys, and almost inaccessible places, the CF has attracted thousands of cycling tourists every year, and today they represent more than half of the 40 thousand pilgrims who travel it (RELATÓRIO DE ATIVIDADES, 2017).

It seems obvious that the cycling tourists who pedal along the CF, as well as along other pilgrimage routes, have reasons largely related to issues of religiosity and faith, but – and this is not incompatible with issues of faith – it also reveals the search for spaces to travel by bicycle. Therefore, the CF shows signs that it is increasingly being characterized as a cycling tourism route, that is, short or medium-distance paths and itineraries that constitute a cycling tourism circuit, interconnecting regional tourism products whose identity has been reinforced for tourist use (BRASIL, 2020).

The CF currently represents the third most sought-after route for cycling tourism⁶ in Brazil, losing in infrastructure only to the *Circuito Vale Europeu*

⁵The flow of tourists to the city of Aparecida reaches almost 1 million monthly (GAUDIUM PRESS, 2021).

⁶Like Roldan (2000), we understand that cycling tourism can be considered a pleasurable two-wheel trip to see the world.

Catarinense [European Valley Circuit of Santa Catarina](PEDRINI, 2013; CINI; GUIMARÃES, 2017), and in distance to the *Estrada Real* [Royal Road] in Minas Gerais (BRASIL, 1999). Despite this, we believe that the route has been improving every year and will soon become the main cycling tourism route in the country. Such an affirmation is based on the following three facts: the religious importance of a centuries-old pilgrimage route; its proximity to large urban centers such as São Paulo/SP⁷ and Campinas/SP⁸; and, finally, because the cities that are part of the CF have been adapting in recent years to welcome the public of cycling tourists, that is, a public that seeks experiences in nature and, therefore, “consumes” landscapes.

In order to understand how the phenomenon of cycling tourism has been happening in the CF, between 2018 and 2023 we carried out a doctoral research in the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Leisure Studies (PPGIEL) at the School of Physical Education, Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy (EEFFTO) of Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG). As the main research methodology, in addition to a bibliographic review (LAKATOS; MARCONI, 2006), we used direct observation in several cycling trips during fieldwork (MARTÍNEZ, 2007). Moreover, we applied a semi-structured questionnaire in which 27 legal-age cycling tourists (24 men and three women) were asked, among other questions, which images and/or landscapes caught their attention the most. The result was surprising and the CF mountains⁹ appeared in almost all the answers, with some very well-known to cycling tourists standing out, such as Porteira do Céu, Serra do Caçador, and Serra da Luminosa, among others.

⁷The city of São Paulo/SP is only 226 km away from the city of Águas da Prata/SP.

⁸The city of Campinas/SP is only 130 km away from Águas da Prata/SP.

⁹In Brazil, mountains are understood as “a large natural elevation of the terrain, with a height of more than 300 m, consisting of one or more elevations” (IBGE, 2015). However, mountains, hills and steep elevations are considered mountains by the cycling tourists interviewed, which is a shared perspective.

Mountains in general – and those mentioned above in particular – arouse a number of feelings in cyclists: enchantment, admiration, contemplation, and fear, among others. Many, perhaps the majority, interpret mountains as scenic places that demand great effort and challenge, given that they are faced by going up and down. Below, this article reflects on how these mountains affect the cyclists' senses.

Landscapes and Senses

Landscapes are personal encounters, they are experiences, that is, they are the encounter between the human being and the world that surrounds them (BESSE, 2014). This experience is an encounter, an exposure to reality, such as riding a bicycle, and when the body gets tired, it becomes available to the world and also part of it. Thus, cyclist, bicycle, and world become landscape; generally, the cycling tourist, after pedaling for many kilometers, is close to physical exhaustion and, when they are blessed with rain that eases their fatigue or find shade under a tree that protects them from the sun, become available to the world. These and other similar moments are magical and difficult to explain in words. They awaken a feeling of being-in-the-world, which rarely makes the cycling tourist feel separated from it.

Moments like those described above make cyclists and bicycles travel companions (LANZILLOTTA, 2013), especially for cyclists who travel alone. Contact with nature awakens the most intimate feelings. For example, mountains seem to be not only obstacles to be overcome, but also places for contemplation and other experiences in space; according to Dardel (2015, p. 9), “space appears essentially qualified by a concrete situation that affects man.” Fernandes (2009, p. 2974), for example, studying the relationship between tourism and mountains in the Central Mountain Range of the Iberian Peninsula, states that mountains “have become the target of multiple interests,

ranging from contemplation to use for different reasons and different degrees of intensity.” According to the author, they are spaces for consumption, but also maintain natural and cultural integrity.

Driven by different motivations (spirituality, faith, sport, leisure, etc.), cycling tourists travel along the CF, reaching the top of the mountains, and instinctively characterize the space with various adjectives that describe beauty; however, such a description is given not only based on the objectivity of kilometers traveled, but also by placing themselves as beings that are reached by nature. As Dardel (2015) emphasizes, human beings place themselves within reach of things, within reach of landscapes.

The landscape is made up of real objects, such as mountains. They can awaken feelings in cyclists that are perceptible during the physical effort of riding a bicycle. When cyclists reach the top of a mountain, for example, they present a state of agitation that is celebrated with shouts, jumps, smiles, etc.

In cycling tourism, the landscape is a place of interaction; as Besse (2014) states, it is more than an exposure to reality, that is, it is a possibility of experiencing reality. However, human beings do not always want to confront reality; reality can be very harsh; the ground, the slope, the geographic space itself, is a harsh reality that limits the body.

The CF geographic space is complex, dynamic, symbolic, concrete and material, but, above all, it makes cycling difficult, being a challenge for all cyclists, given that it is a space, first and foremost, predominantly mountainous. There is a joke among cyclists, a phrase, a little lie of encouragement that is told when a cycling companion is tired and can no longer ride their bike; it is as follows: “We are close, it is right there; this is the last mountain, the rest is easier!”. Dardel (2011, p. 8) asks: “isn’t a mountainous region, above all, a region that obstructs the movement of people?”. In this

sense, the CF is one of these mountainous spaces that obstructs the movement of people.

Bicycles,¹⁰ cyclists and the tension of riding a bike – especially the fear of falling off it – interfere with the perception of space, because when we are mountain biking, it is very difficult to look around to contemplate the place. During a cycle trip, vision, smell, touch, taste, and hearing are generally focused on riding.

Tuan (1983, p.30), reflecting on the constitution of children's space and comparing it with that of men, says: "men live on the ground and see trees and houses from the side. They do not see them from above, unless they climb a high mountain or travel by plane." Cycling tourists also end up developing peripheral vision, since, most of the time, they are forced to concentrate on riding by looking down and ahead. Therefore, sides become peripheral vision. For this reason, the way of perceiving space is affected and, consequently, the act of pedaling is affected. Nonetheless, if vision is impaired, human instinct somehow develops other defense and precautionary abilities, that is, other human senses such as touch, hearing, and smell, which sharpen to compensate for the partial lack of vision. In this way, the pleasure of cycling becomes experiencing spaces through balance, vertigo, and movement. The space, naturally, goes beyond vision and allows these new sensations to be experienced.

Various bodily sensations are experienced in the practice of cycling tourism along the CF. The senses are like extensions of the body, "which is the sensory geography itself that is designed from a given corporeality, the foundation of the experience of the world" (Gratão, 2009 as cited in MARANDOLA JR, 2012, p. 62).

¹⁰In the CF, cycling tourists mainly use mountain bikes; these are robust and tall bicycles, with a certain degree of complexity for riding that involves the position of the cyclist, the type of saddle (wide, narrow, inclined, etc.), the type of gear shifter (hydraulic, mechanical, etc.), and the type of handlebars (wide, narrow, straight, curved, etc.), among many other technological characteristics.

Each cyclist creates bonds of affection with the CF, which can be a chapel, a mansion or a coffee plantation, and transforms the space called *Path* into a place with its own characteristics, where relationships that sharpen the senses are established. The bicycle allows the cyclists to feel the wind on their faces, and it may be one of the most acute sense expressions for them, because bikers, in addition to feeling the wind whipping up their bodies, can detect the smell brought by it.

A cycling tourist, reflecting on the question about which images, places, or landscapes caught his attention the most, expressed himself as follows: “Well, Andradas [MG], so much coffee!”. When pedaling alongside this cyclist, he repeatedly referred to the smell of coffee and how good it was to be able to ride his bike near a coffee plantation. For him, it was a double sensation: being in a mountainous region and in the middle of coffee plantations.

The smells allow us to experience sensations, which, at certain moments of the ride, seem to establish a deep connection between man and earth. There is no Brazilian who does not remember the smell of coffee, but filtered coffee (LIBERATTI; SILVA, 2019). Coffee is deeply rooted in our culture and is a national liquid that gives us identity (MARTINS, 2017). Although almost all of us have smelled filtered coffee, few know how the coffee plant branches are formed, how much ground coffee it produces, but, most importantly, what the coffee plantation smells like. How to describe the smell of a coffee plantation?

The smell of a coffee plantation involves a very interesting mix, certainly far from city dwellers. It is a smell of jasmine mixed with earth, weeds and bean leaves (some crops, such as beans, are planted in the middle of coffee plants), among many other odors. It brings a geographical experience of human culture that is expressed in the concept of geophoricity, that is, in a meaning and an expression of the human

being's involvement with the environment. The coffee plantation does not smell like filtered coffee; smells like a mixture of green leaves and earth. In turn, coffee beans laid out on a patio to dry give off a smell of fruit warmed by the sun. Roasted coffee, for example, further stimulates the imagination, as it is a coffee smell that almost all of us have smelled at some point in our lives. The conclusion is that a fruit like coffee has several smells throughout its life. Isn't life like that, don't we exhale several smells throughout it?

According to Grato (2009), flavor in geography is an experience of the landscape, which is sensation, taste, color, and smell. Taste and smell are imagination and memory, which take us to other places, which may or may not be pleasant, but are always lived experiences.

Perceptions and sensations in relation to the CF can be awakened in spaces or physical environments that we transform into places with which we identify. A place is something that is intrinsically related to "the meaning we give to the lived world, based on the relationships we build in it" (VIRGENS, 2021, p. 2); other coffee plantations along the CF evidently have smells; however, for a biker, the experience of cycling alongside a plantation makes them invaded not only by the aesthetics of the leaves of a coffee plantation in a profusion of colors, but also by the smell, and this allows us to experience humanity, allows us to feel human beings.

Experiencing humanity or experiencing it through smell implies educating oneself, cultivating experience, memory, and discourses in order for gaining perception to understand the world and communication between people. Smell is related to the physical environment and is an interface between physiology and psychology, culture and linguistics; in other words, it has geography (KOZEL, 2012).

Smell is present in all spaces. Regardless of human will, it can characterize and determine places. - Describing smells is one of the most difficult tasks. Some authors, such as Pitte and Dulau (1998) suggest the term *olfactory landscapes*, that is, landscapes that we construct from odors. Although the term *odor* is generally interpreted and shared as something bad, fetid, it is a noun that means the opposite of bad smell. In this sense, according to the Houaiss Dictionary (2001), the term *odor* means a “volatile emanation of bodies that can be perceived by smell; smell; soft and pleasant smell; aroma; perfume, fragrance, scent.”

Smells, odors in general, as highlighted by the sensitive perception of the cyclist who was enchanted by the coffee plantation, are present throughout the CF. Even if we wanted to list them, it would be impossible, as they are almost infinite. Even so, we dare to point out that some smells are more present on the cycling tourism path, such as the smell of the fragrant squares and gardens of small towns, the smell of wood-burning stoves in country houses and, mainly, the pleasant and unpleasant smells from the top of the mountains, brought by gusts of wind.

The geography of smell is the geography that constitutes an olfactory landscape that reveals the role that odor plays in the differentiation and constitution of territories. Smell, then, can reveal several spatial scales. The smell of the urban area of the city of São Paulo/SP, of carbon dioxide, of fetid abandoned rivers, of landfills, in short, of human neglect, as opposed to the smell of jasmine, of flowers... The aroma, the essence, and the pure air associated with beauty, pleasure, health and what is good... On the other hand, the polluted air is associated with chaos, with what is ugly and the lack of pleasure...

Pitte and Dulau (1998), referring to European industrial cities, emphasize that in the past the business bourgeoisie built their homes in places far from polluting industry,

while workers were forced to live close to them. Smell is a factor of social distinction: the bourgeoisie lived far from pollution, while poor workers lived practically next to it.

But perhaps one of the behaviors that reveals expression and the greatest intimacy with smell is the act of cooking, which also happens during a bike trip in the CF. Interviewing another cycling tourist, he enthusiastically recounted an episode that occurred in Serra da Luminosa, in the city of Brazópolis/MG; when the fork of his bike broke,¹¹ he was helped by the owner of a inn, who lived in the mountains. Since he could not continue his bike trip that day, he stayed there. During his stay, he helped the owner cook, which gave him great satisfaction and contentment. This because the act of cooking establishes, among many interpretations, at least two functions in this example: the first is a sign of gratitude for a stay; the second is the intimacy of being able to deal with another human being's kitchen, its food, its objects and, above all, to share the same smells. If we think about it, especially since the episode took place during a pandemic, the level of intimacy revealed is very high, as they share the air with the same smells, even taking the risk of being contaminated by COVID-19, for example.

The country kitchen in the CF is one of those places – a landscape – that is present as a degree of generosity and gathering of people. Some family inns welcome cycling tourists in the kitchen with a wood-burning stove – typical Minas Gerais cuisine –, where the stove is usually made by mixing clay with burnt cement and the popular *vermelhão*, a type of powder, which, when mixed with the dough to make the stove, gives it a very beautiful and shiny appearance.

The smell of a wood-burning stove refers to the idea that odors generate the imagination that gives meaning to human activities; in other words, the smell stimulates the olfactory memory. The wood-burning stove exudes the burning of wood, the burning

¹¹ A fork is a structure which the hub of the bicycle back wheel is attached to. Very sensitive, the fork must be preserved in its structure; otherwise, the wheel may come loose (CAVALLARI, 2012).

of the iron pot, the clay pot, the sausage hanging on a simple piece of wood above the stove to be smoked... If distance can be near or far as an abstract measurement, smell can tell a lot about spatiality. It is capable of filling the rooms of the human imagination.

According to Le Breton (2007), the sea, the mountain, the desert, and the flowers are ways of reconquest by humans, who have physical and moral resources, exercising their choices. From them, humans become enchanted with their existence, storing sensations and emotions, forging their personal mythology. The smells emanating from the mountains, such as the earth, plantations, cattle sheds, chicken coops, high-altitude vegetation (*araucaria* trees, for example), water and wind, allow the cycling tourist to make a personal choice, placing themselves in a mythological world created by them, going up and down by means of physical and moral strength, but always experiencing new sensations. Perhaps this is why many cyclists consider the CF magical.

The smells have rhythm, it goes up and down, like pedaling up and down. The smell of the mountain, for example, demarcates the place and gives meaning to the territory; it also establishes the idea of the bicycle, between risk and safety, as being a synonym for freedom, for conquering the world. The “risks assumed and the deliberate personal exposure in difficult circumstances are a way of intensifying the feeling of existence” (LE BRETON, 2007, p. 10). The feeling of existence, then, can be interpreted as the conquest of the smell of the wind in the mountain in the act of riding a bike. Most likely, due to the tragic pandemic we faced in Brazil, the smell of the wind in the CF mountains has never been as significant as in 2020. During our second cycling trip, a cyclist isolated from her cycling group, at the top of *Porteira do Céu*, opened her arms and breathed deeply. Provocatively, we cried out loud a question to her: how does it feel? She then replied: “I can smell the fresh air that hasn’t been infected [by COVID-19].”

Individual existence, explains Le Breton (2007), lies between risk and guarantee, safety and vulnerability, between shortcuts and established paths: “It is precisely because nothing is guaranteed that the taste for life accompanies man’s relationship with the world” (LE BRETON, 2007, p. 10). Taking risks while descending a mountain, at high speed on a bicycle, facing the imbalance of the shortcut due to the irregularities of the ground, is what can lead the cyclist, through the sharp smell of the cold air, to perceive the relationship with the world.

In addition to the smells, cycling tourists attribute various meanings to the CF landscapes, such as places to praise the sacred, exercise, and enjoy moments of leisure; in other words, the mountains are associated with an intimate knowledge of the act of cycling. Without distinction, all the bikers interviewed characterized the mountains as beautiful and difficult places to cycle. The space, the CF understood as an abstract unit, gains relevance as a place from the mountains, and cyclists identify themselves through them. Landscapes and mountains are synonymous with the path.

It is worth remembering, as Tuan (1980) teaches, that when space is intimately recognized by individuals, it receives values and meanings, becoming places close to us, like a relative. It is in these places that cycling tourists create identity and begin to feel like they belong there, building emotional bonds.

Along the CF, the mountains present themselves to the cyclists with various possibilities for appropriating landscapes, observed characteristics that can be associated with places to pray, contemplate, stroll in silence, and become almost blind in the fog. For the purpose of an example study and based on these references, we can say that the CF mountains can be classified, from the point of view of landscapes, as follows: a) sacred places: Porteira do Céu and Serra do Caçador; b) places considered proper for contemplation: Serra dos Lima and Serra da Luminosa, and c) place

considered proper for enjoying silence: Campos do Jordão State Park.¹² Obviously, this proposed division is not rigid and deterministic. After all, every mountain can be sacred, proper for contemplation, and proper for enjoying silence, among several characteristics. We only highlight the main symbolism that these mountains represent for cyclists, as well as the meanings attributed to these landscapes.

Sacred Landscape

Porteira do Céu (1,188m), a dividing mark between the cities of Borda da Mata/MG and Tocos do Moji/MG, and Serra do Caçador (1,200m), between the cities of Estiva/MG and Paraisópolis/MG, have been highly valued symbolically by cyclists since the CF inauguration because of the difficulties involved in pedaling at those places. Thus, a mystique of overcoming and skills in relation to the physical effort that is made on the bicycle has been formed around them. Besides, they began to be worshiped as sacred places.

In Porteira do Céu, for example, a chapel in the shape of Our Lady of Aparecida was built, and in Caçador – as this mountain is known among cyclists –, one constructed a chapel dedicated to Saint Rita of Cássia, with infrastructure such as a bathroom and an outdoor shower.

Since the chapels opened their doors, people started placing small colored ribbons with religious messages on the barbed wire fences around the them, and it has also become a religious tourist attraction. The mountains, especially for bikers who cycle along motivated by faith, have become sacred places and the landscape that

¹² We also have the “blind” mountains, such as the Pedrinhas descent, in the city of Campos do Jordão/SP. However, we will leave the perceptions and meanings of “blind” landscapes for another article. For now, it is worth pointing out that these are places where fog prevents free cycling, leading to situations of fear and sharpening other senses.

composes them is reminiscent of a popular religiosity, which values that place as a mystical route for those who describe it as such.

The colored ribbons with religious messages, the chapel as a site for prayer, the altitude that takes man closer to the sky, and the serenity, that is, the idea of the plenitude of the sacred space has created a mystique for these places. We can therefore see that these mountains, which are here examples of sacred mountains or perhaps sacred landscapes, respond to the geography that allows the soul to ascend, to an idea of a vocation for purity and spiritual elevation. While the waves of the sea rock and shake the boat, destabilizing and decentralizing the being, the mountains stabilize the world and convey the idea of serenity. They are powerful geographic formations that immortalize the moment and provide cyclists with the opportunity for inner reflection (peace, calm, self-knowledge, and so forth). We could call these mountains sacred landscapes for spiritual experience.

Cycling tourists driven by faith generally feel very affected by these sacred landscapes, precisely due to the religiosity they carry and, at the same time, because they are surrounded by religious symbols, a constant presence along the CF. Nonetheless, what we perceive is that the issue is deeper, that is, it refers to an idea from the beginnings of humanity, when one believed that gods occupied the mountains (TUAN, 1980). The Earth, states Dardel (2011, p. 43), “is, par excellence, for man, a destination, the *circumstance* (*circumstare*), that which rises around him and maintains its presence as an engagement of the Being.”

A circumstance for ascending to these sacred places is the challenge of going up the mountains and the inner feelings, which seem to lead the human being to know their physical and psychological limits in relation to the environment. In this regard, we conclude that the awakened geographicity implies a lived world, “the ambient world of

the daily existence of men” (BESSE, 2014, p. 114); and, at the same time that it liberates, it throws in the face of the cyclists that they are all too human and, therefore, have limits. Many bikers, upon reaching the top of these mountains, whether pedaling or pushing the bicycle, extrapolate their most intimate feelings with screams and jumps, as previously mentioned.

While some mountains stand out for their sacred characteristics, others stand out for being places for contemplation. For example, Serra dos Lima (1,221 m), between the cities of Andradas/SP and Ouro Fino/MG, and Serra da Luminosa (1,822 m), between the cities of Paraisópolis/MG and Campos do Jordão/SP, are perhaps the worst CF sections to cross by bike, especially Serra da Luminosa, with more than 8 km of ascent. All mountains can be places for contemplation. However, the two mentioned above are impressive for their altitude and, at the same time, for the view they allow and seem to evoke.

Serra dos Lima has a viewpoint for observing a valley, while Luminosa challenges the gaze in relation to a valley and a rock wall measuring approximately 150 m to 200 m. A rocky colossus that stares the biker in the face, as if to say:

“I am bigger than you,” intimidating the more experienced. These mountains are very steep to be conquered, much steeper than Porteira do Céu and Serra do Caçador. They demand a lot of effort when pedaling, besides determination. Some cyclists, as we have seen more than once, simply turn back, giving up trying to going up and returning with the firm intention of going around the mountains and continuing on the highway (asphalt). Others simply give up and resort to the support car.

Halfway up Serra dos Lima, there is a viewpoint that overlooks an open valley, an almost obligatory stopping point for all those who are traveling the CF. The sight of the vastness of the valley and the of the open space stirs the feelings of bikers, who

admire the beauty of the place and silently reflect. The valley transmits incredible sensations, as pointed out by a cyclist who came from a coastal region. According to him, the view of the valley was a profusion of objects, plantations and relief, which revealed an internal agitation, with the heart beating faster with an indescribable emotion.

As humans, we respond to the world through the senses. Among them, vision is the one we are most consciously accustomed to: “Human vision, like that of other primates, evolves in an arboreal environment. In the dense and complex world of a tropical forest, seeing well is more important than developing an acute sense of smell” (TUAN, 1980, p.7). Human eyes, for being frontal, have the characteristic of capturing objects in a three-dimensional way. This is an innate ability. However, this ability only comes with time and with experience with which we learn to understand the distribution of light and shadows in order to recognize solids, curves, and relief (TUAN, 1983).

The Serra dos Lima valley fire the imagination. Trying to decipher the different shades of green of the plantations is an exercise that amuses cyclists and observers in general. A pair of cyclists with whom we had the good fortune to interact at the mountain viewpoint played a game of trying to guess the different shades of green in the valley. The “mountain, the valley and the flora are not simply a picture, an ‘exterior,’ even if familiar. They are man himself. It is there that he realizes and knows himself” (DARDEL, 2011, p. 49). We observed that bikers spend more time standing at the Serra dos Lima viewpoint than at other mountains. They sit on a small improvised wooden bench and are enchanted by contemplating the valley, the flight of the birds, themselves, etc. The wind there is constant, and there is a dimension of grandeur that leads to reflection. Many who get emotional when talking about the CF are not talking about the birds, the signs of “God,” the mountains, the viewpoints, and so on. Most likely, they

are talking about themselves. But, in these moments, cyclists also become landscapes.

The strength of the geography represented by the mountains, for example, is a means used by them to guide themselves inwards. After all, the effort that they seem to draw from within makes them produce physical and psychological strength to be able to conquer the mountains. The soil, for example, is perfectly imperfect in its nature. Human nature, in turn, seeks its imperfections and perfections in the Earth's crust. "Man cannot limit himself to observing inanimate objects. What we call subjectivity is transferred to geographical realities" (DARDEL, 2011, p. 50).

On the other hand, Serra da Luminosa, besides being a place for contemplation, like Serra dos Lima, awakens other sensations, which occur in the stiffness of the body to face the terrain. It is 8 km of incessant ascent; on the bike, as many cycling tourists report (and we feel it in our skin!), the whole body goes numb: hands, wrists, feet, neck... The whole body hurts. The effort of the body is taken to the extreme of exhaustion.

The "infamous" Luminosa – as many cycle tourists refer to it –, is among the most popular mountain ranges for cycling tourism in Brazil, "losing" only, perhaps, to Serra do Rio do Rastro, in the state of Santa Catarina. Luminosa has a dirt road, which, on sunny days, is dry and porous, resembling talcum powder for being very fine; on the other hand, on rainy days, the ground feels like butter for being very slippery. Some sections of Luminosa are known among cyclists as the "quebra-perna" (leg-breaking), a nickname that reflects the reality of the place, which is not just a figure of speech, given that they are responsible for many accidents. It has incredible places for contemplation, with several natural viewpoints, which are literally in the middle of the clouds. Sometimes the mountain range is free of fog and contemplation is permitted, and

sometimes the fog and clouds cover the mountain range and it is impossible to see anything, with almost zero visibility.

In this mountain range, contemplation leads to landscapes of admiration and fear at the same time. Even on a sunny and hot day, it causes fear and insecurity, as a kind of human finitude, and could be an example of what Tuan (1979) calls *landscapes of fear*, natural places that are threatening: “Fears are experienced by individuals and, [...], are subjective; some, however, are undoubtedly produced by a threatening environment, others are not” (p. 1). However, the author asks what *landscapes of fear* would be. The answer is that landscapes of fear are the manifestations of the forces of chaos, both natural and human.

Along the way up to the top of Luminosa, there are no old mansions, religious symbols such as chapels, crosses and oratories, and there is almost no human beings. The place is deserted and filled with nature itself. There is a beautiful waterfall in the middle of the mountain range, a refreshing place to rest, catch your breath, and then continue going up. In Luminosa, on different occasions, there is a feeling of fear, anxiety and anguish, as the mountain range seems to swallow the cyclist. A biker told us that Serra do Caçador and Serra da Luminosa were the places that caught his attention the most, precisely because they impose suffering and adversity; another referred to this mountain range as a place that is scary, especially on foggy and rainy days.

For Tuan (1979), some fears cause oppression in people who live in hostile environments. Other fears arise in complex technological societies that dominate nature. Human beings have fears that appear and disappear throughout their lives, and a middle-aged adult, for example, barely remembers the fears of youth or the fears of childhood, of nights of terror. Tuan (1979) asks: what is fear? It is a complex feeling composed of distinct components: alarm signals and anxiety. The alarm signal appears

out of nowhere, in an unexpected event or in an impending denial of the environment, and is the response of the animal instinct driven by two actions: flight or confrontation. Anxiety, on the other hand, is a sensation that spreads widely in all directions of fear and that conjectures an anticipation of it. It may be an anticipation of a danger that does not actually exist, but is created in the human mind and, as such, demands a response: “Emotional variation is an indicator of the complexity of the nervous system and, therefore, indirectly, of the mind” (Tuan, 1979, p. 3). The human mind imagines different types and intensities of fears, and can create fears of ghostly worlds, such as witches, ghosts, and monsters. Tuan (1979) says that taking risks is the ability to feel more fear.

We have observed, among cyclists, that Serra da Luminosa causes some types of fear, such as the fear of the terrain slope and of not being able to going up; of cycling in the middle of the forest; of cycling alone for kilometers without human presence; of getting injured and not having anyone to ask for help; in other words, the fear of facing the geographical reality of an inhospitable crossing region. It seems that fear evokes silence...

Not only present in Luminosa, silence seems to be a sign of reverence throughout the CF, but with particular magnitude when among mountains; the mountains seem to throw cyclists into a world of their own, a high, vertical world, close to the sky.

Silence can be described as the state of someone who is silent, but it cannot be labeled in its entirety, because even in silence, we can say a lot. If we label silence simply as the lack of speech, it will cease to be strange, anticipating the idea of experiencing it before it can even happen. Even if we reproduced silence in a laboratory

test, it would not be the same silence as cycling on a mountain with dense forest, as, for example, in the Campos do Jordão State Park,¹³ another section of forest in the CF.

Silence is a possibility for experiencing the CF, which cyclists carry within themselves and that, therefore, when perceived and experienced by them, can lead to a state of ecstasy and be represented in various ways. A cyclist reflecting on the CF highlighted that, regardless of one's religion, it is a place of silence, of self-knowledge; for others. it is a way of thanking "God," of acquiring self-knowledge and inner peace in absolute silence.

The subjectivity of cyclists voluntarily subjected to silence is a process that is generally triggered in the last stage of the CF cycling trip. By the time the cycling tourists reach this point they have already traveled approximately 270 km, have faced the worst mountains and several situations. The body is tired and the anxiety of reaching the final point becomes increasingly evident, given that there are only 50 km left to cover to reach the Shrine of Aparecida.

The cycling tourist understands that descending the next stage of the cycling trip is a reward for having faced so many mountains. Silence, then, seems to fall as something natural, and reflection or conversation with oneself reveals subjective inner aspects, which trigger psychological mechanisms that can be described as self-knowledge, faith, and religiosity, among many others. Nonetheless, we believe that it is something even deeper, like contact with the environment, as if the human being were reclaiming nature, even if only for a few moments.

Silence is only silent for those who hear it, for those who are with it, but it can be, at the same time, very noisy. Silence has a double personality. Let's see. Generally,

¹³ The Campos do Jordão State Park (PECJ) is a fully protected Conservation Unit (UC). It was created on March 27, 1941 (State Decree No. 11.908) and is located between 22°39'58" S and 22°39'17" S and longitudes 45°26'07" W and 45°30'30" W. Its total area is 8,341 hectares and represents approximately 1/3 of the city of Campos do Jordão (FUNDAÇÃO FLORESTAL, 2015).

in common sense, silence is attributed to the idea of emptiness and its reduction taken to the limit, to a tiny inner space, as if we could determine a depth for it. On the other hand, silence can be a state of excitement, which fills the beings and elevate them to a huge inner space. Whether empty or filled, bigger or smaller, silence inevitably seems to free the human being for other sensitive experiences, such as listening better, looking more attentively, and feeling life. In this regard, Sontag (1987) says that the notions of silence, emptiness, and reduction outline new recipes for the acts of listening, looking, and so on.

“Silence is the furthest extension of that reluctance to communicate [...]” (SONTAG, 1987, p. 14). When distressing, it imprisons; when reflective, it liberates. Sometimes, it can be interpreted as synonymous with dead time in relation to a space where nothing happens, and can be boring. Other times, it can generate expectations and be highly confident.

But, if there is the silence from the cyclist, on the other hand, there is no deaf silence from nature, since pure silence, if we can put it that way, only exists in outer space. On Earth, silence is always caused by sound; however, listening to the sounds of nature requires a silence to be filled, which can be abstract or even very real and defensive.

Silence in the CF is not hostile to speech, but is most likely an inner landscape that exists absolutely in the shadows of thought. It is a possibility of the cyclist's perception that frees the sensibilities of sounds, in which, normally, for someone who is accustomed to the sounds of the urban and industrial world, is enchanted by the natural world. If the cyclist is silent, the Campos do Jordão State Park, on the other hand, is not. What does that mean? It means that the silence from the cyclists allows them to hear the sounds of nature. Thus, they subjectively absorb and interpret these sounds and, at the

same time, with some degree of precision, identify some elements of the natural world. What is at stake throughout the CF – and we imagine in the relationship between the urban space of the cyclists and the rural space of the route –, is a relationship of noise and signal, that is, urban noise in opposition to the sound signals of the countryside.

According to Schafer (2001), since the Industrial Revolution, modern man has become accustomed to the noisy sounds of machines and the entire industrial technological environment. The sounds of the means of transport that civilization has produced today, for example, are not very different, whether in Johannesburg, Belo Horizonte, Hong Kong, or Paris. The technological environment is noisy and indecipherable and synthetic sounds, in general, disturb rather than actually soothe the ears.

Schafer (2001, p. 24) understands that the soundscape is a field of acoustic studies that “[...] consists of events *heard* not of objects seen.” According to him, we can isolate the acoustic environment to study it. Nonetheless, this would require technical problems with recordings and thousands of decibel measurements, among other measures. Therefore, a soundscape must be an heard event heard and not a object seen. But how can we methodologically describe the sounds in a text with silent pages? For Schafer (2001, p. 25), the solution is to discover the significant aspects of the soundscape; that is, “[...] sounds which are important either because of their individuality, their numerousness or their domination.” Furthermore, the author proposes a generic classification of sounds so that we can describe them, which he classifies as themes of the soundscape. These would be: keynote sounds, signals, and sound marks.

Keynote sounds are those that do not need to be heard in a conscious state, are overheard and cannot be examined; signals, unlike keynote sounds, are conscious

sounds and are heard as acoustic warning resources. This category would include the sounds of whistles, bells, horns, and sirens. These are sounds with elaborate codes: the sound of a fire truck, the sound of an ambulance, and so on. Finally, sound marks are sounds of the community, which have the quality of a certain place.

The CF is marked by keynote sounds, such as, for example, the sound of the waterfalls of Andradas/MG, Tocos do Moji/MG and Serra da Luminosa (Brazópolis/MG); the constant wind along almost the entire CF, and birds, insects and wild animals, among many others. Sound signals are also present in the CF urban circuits. During the COVID-19 pandemic peak, in 2020, ambulances became the frequent sounds that we would hardly hear in abundance in a normal situation.

The communities' sound marks can be identified in the CF in several places. As examples, we could mention the sound of the train whistle, in Andradas/MG; "Menino da Porteira," a song that is played over and over again on the radio stations of Ouro Fino/MG, and a religious song that plays on the loudspeaker of Borda da Mata/MG when there is an announcement of the death of someone in the community.

As stated by Schafer (2001), the eyes take us outward, while the ears bring us inward. In the Campos do Jordão State Park, as on many occasions in the CF rural area, we are more affected by the keynote sounds, with nature all around us. Among the keynote sounds, however, one sound that accompanies the cyclist all the way, indiscriminately, going up and down mountains, sweeping through valleys, is the sound of the wind.

Schafer (2001) points out that the wind has infinite vocal variations with a wide spectrum and frequency ranges. It takes over the ear and there is a double sensation: auditory and tactile. Cyclists feel the wind all over their bodies, especially the cold wind blowing over their ears. At the same time, the biker is also a wind producer. For the

cyclist, the wind is hard to face, and they use jackets named windbreakers. The wind blows over the trees and shakes their branches, sweeps the leaves and pushes the cyclists back, causing resistance while they pedal.

The wind inside the Campos do Jordão State Park, for example, acquires a different characteristic in relation to other places in the CF. What happens is that the zigzag path is very narrow, forming tight corridors. Therefore, the wind that blows hard in these corridors is vigorous, seeming to cut us in half. For comparison purposes, we can mention a situation where two doors are opened and the wind passes through them, blowing in a kind of “corridor” in the middle of the house.

The great magic of wind landscapes is that we cannot see it unless we look at some vegetation or other objects. It enters our ears, passes over our body with energy, and even so we do not know the direction. In relation to the wind, the Campos do Jordão State Park forest produces a type of sound whose tone we cannot describe. However, by comparison, we know that it is a different sound in relation to the CF open mountains. We dare say that the wind is a free sound and that the objects of nature are its musical instruments, which produce countless tunes and songs.

In cycling tourism, the wind produces at least three curious situations: the first is imbalance – the wind is so strong that it slows down the progress of the cyclist, throwing them sideways on the bike; the second is a question of sociability, that is, some bikers tend to talk a lot while pedaling – in the South of Minas Gerais it is popularly known as “saying good morning to the horse.” In other words, the person talks so much that they can’t contain themselves and greet the animals. In these cases, the wind is an ally, since, at a short distance from the speaker, it is not possible to hear what they are saying, and one is left only with the sensation and sound of the wind. The wind produces sounds and, at the same time, allows silence, carrying the sound far

away. The third situation, opposite to the second, concerns something very common: often, when there is a problem with the bike, the cyclist stops to check it out. In this case, the biker usually shouts to their colleague ahead to wait. Usually, the colleague does not hear it because of the sound of the wind.

According to Schafer (2011, p.48), “Every natural soundscape has its own unique tones-and often these are so original as to constitute soundmarks.”

Conclusion

Based on Deleuze and Guatari (1997), we conclude that the several landscapes found in the CF exert great impact on cycling tourists. As for them, we believe that they are like nomads, that is, they have a territory and follow a customary route that goes from a starting point (Águas da Prata/SP) to an ending point (Aparecida/SP). They pay attention to the landscapes and are deeply affected by them, but, just like the first inhabitants of the land, they crawl towards water, towards hydration. This is the alternation of landscapes, that is, “the nomad only goes from one point to another as a consequence and actual necessity; in principle, for him, the points are alternations on a route” (DELEUZE; GUATARI, 1997, p.42). And what does this alternation mean? It means that the bodily senses are constantly repeated in the CF like a mantra: you enter the path in one way, however, you will leave it feeling completely different! For some it is faith, for others self-knowledge, and so forth. And for us? It is about geographicity.

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