

**LANDSCAPES, WALKING AND LEISURE: A SYSTEMIC APPROACH OF
TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN LINHA NOVA/RS**

Recebido em: 14/03/2024

Aprovado em: 02/05/2024

Licença: 

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ABSTRACT: The objective of this study is to understand the correlations and interactions between the landscape, leisure walks, and the systemic context of tourist development in the city of Linha Nova, Rio Grande do Sul. The study of an applied nature has a qualitative approach. As for the procedures, it is characterized as a case study of the municipality of Linha Nova. Six walk organizers were interviewed, and an online questionnaire was made available to people who take leisure walks, totaling 40 participants. The responses indicated two themes: a) Nature as the main attraction; and b) Economic and tourist development through walking. The results demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between walking events and the development of the tourism production chain, in addition to a perception of “landscape” associated with nature, natural spaces, and panoramic scenarios.

KEYWORDS: Landscapes. Tourism. Systemic approach.

**PAISAGENS, CAMINHADAS E LAZER: UMA ABORDAGEM SISTÊMICA DO
DESENVOLVIMENTO TURÍSTICO EM LINHA NOVA/RS**

RESUMO: O objetivo deste estudo é compreender as correlações e interações entre a

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paisagem, caminhadas de lazer e o contexto sistêmico de desenvolvimento turístico na cidade de Linha Nova, Rio Grande do Sul. O estudo de natureza aplicada tem abordagem qualitativa. Quanto aos procedimentos, caracteriza-se como um estudo de caso do município de Linha Nova. Foram entrevistados seis organizadores de caminhadas e disponibilizado um questionário online para pessoas que praticam caminhadas de lazer, totalizando 40 participantes. As respostas indicaram dois temas: a) A natureza como principal atrativo; b) Desenvolvimento econômico e turístico através das caminhadas. Os resultados demonstraram que existe uma relação positiva entre eventos de caminhada e o desenvolvimento da cadeia produtiva do turismo, além de uma percepção de “paisagem” associada à natureza, espaços naturais e cenários panorâmicos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Paisagens. Turismo. Abordagem sistêmica.

Introduction

Leisure amid nature and rural areas has become a widely sought-after experience for health-conscious people or for those looking to escape the stress of big cities. The relationships between leisure, nature, tourism, and their direct or indirect implications on the landscape, whether “natural” or man-made, extend far beyond the mere contemplation of space. Besse (2014, p. 47) defines landscape as “the event of the concrete encounter between man and the world that surrounds him”. In this sense, according to Ingold (2000), landscape encompasses the social and natural environments in which all life is contained and humans as well as animals and plants are considered participants in the same world, which can be social and natural simultaneously, with mutual engagement and continuous relationships. In this manner, the landscape is not a separate scenery that can be contemplated, but rather a network that permeates and is permeated concomitantly by the relationships between its inhabitants, be they human, animal, or plant.

Landscapes offer infinite possibilities for subjective and objective relationships. According to Maderuelo (2005, p. 38), “landscape is not [...] what is there before us, it is an invented concept or, rather, a cultural construction”. According to the

author, “the landscape is not merely a physical spot, but a set of ideas, sensations and feelings that we develop from the place and its constituent elements”, in other words, there is a subjective and individual construction of what is the landscape and its attributes. Along these lines, Mendes (2016) comments that landscape is the perception and a way of perceiving nature or reality, and attributing meaning to spaces, places, or environments as landscapes reveals profound aspects of culture.

Schama (1996), on the other hand, strongly associates landscape with nature, proposing the idea that from childhood, children have a perception of nature that can include memories, myths, and complex meanings, whereas being even more elaborate than the frame through which adults contemplate the landscape. Thus, the landscape undergoes an individual construction based on cultural elements, which eventually dichotomizes the relationship between nature and human perception. The author also comments that however much man is accustomed to separating Nature and perception into distinct fields, they are inseparable since the landscape is a construction of the mind before it is a retreat for the senses.

One of the possibilities for leisure and interaction in different “landscapes” that has been gaining prominence is walking tours, especially in rural areas or in natural parks or forest trails. According to a study by Leão, Dallgalo, and Kanashiro (2022), there was an increase in hiking related to physical activities, leisure, work, and visits after the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the fact that individuals who already carried out recreational walking activities before the pandemic had less impact on their activity routine. Walking is part of human nature and since the dawn of time, the need to move around and survive has made humans keep walking. Nowadays, leisure walking has become a way of escaping from busy life and daily occupations, especially

in big cities, and, according to Augusti (2021, p. 628), it “promotes feelings of serenity and satisfaction and allows human beings to reconnect with something that was lost in the distant past”.

Leisure walking events, according to Carvalho and Alves (2021), generally coincide with weekends, and are continuous and immersive in territories, especially rural ones, and a form of appreciation for “pedestrianism” and for walking tour routes. In this regard, the town of Linha Nova, Rio Grande do Sul, about 80km from the capital Porto Alegre, has recently hosted several organized walking tour events and since 2020 has also provided self-guided and signposted trails for those who want to walk around the town independently (LINHA NOVA, 2024a). With this proposal for leisure, connecting with nature, and promoting health, the town has experienced a growing influx of people. In this municipality, walking tour events began timidly in 2010, organized by a local association, however since 2017 there has been a significant growth in the number of events and participants, with an average of 7 to 8 events per year, with more than 300 participants per edition.

Tourism, according to Knupp (2015, p. 48), is “one of the most dynamic sectors nowadays, as it involves a multitude of activities that have an impact on urban and rural environments, as well as influencing social and economic issues in many countries around the world”. In this sense, tourism can be considered a “system”, as discussed by various authors⁴, including Beni (2003) who, drawing on some of the foundations of Ludwig von Bertalanffy's general systems theory⁵ considers various

⁴ In addition to Beni (2003), Cuervo (1967), Leiper (1979), Jafari (1981), Sessa (1985), Boullón (1985) and Molina (1991) have also employed systemic analysis to create direct and indirect connections with touristic activity, through theories and concepts (MEIRA; CONCEIÇÃO; ANJOS, 2015).

⁵ This theory was the first attempt to develop systemic ideas as a new perspective on scientific knowledge since the analytical and mechanistic model was proving to be limited and unable to respond to complex

elements interacting in time and space in a determined way. Tourism can be considered an open system, since it is influenced and interfered with by various external factors, such as politics, economics, and society (KNUPP, 2015).

Tourism acquires the characteristics of a complex system due to its multidisciplinary interactions and organized phenomena, which are best assessed when analyzed as a whole. According to Kasper (2000, p. 268), systemic thinking arises from “questioning the universal applicability of analytical doctrines”, which explain phenomena by disassembling them into parts. According to the author, for systemic thinking, complex phenomena and situations must be examined as a whole, assuming “the existence of a dynamic of its own, generating local causality, which determines and preserves the systemic characteristics and their evolution, in the face of multiple external determinations”. In this sense, Besse (2014) highlights complex relationships between landscape, power, politics, and the economy, for example. Such relations can be analyzed through systemic thinking.

Starting from this panorama, the research is centered on understanding the correlations between the landscapes experienced, leisure walking, and tourism as a dynamic system that induces economic and social development. The study aims to understand the correlations and interactions between the landscape, leisure walking, and the systemic context of tourism development in the town of Linha Nova, RS.

Methodological Procedures

This research is of an applied nature and, according to Prodanov and Freitas (2013), the aim is to generate new knowledge that contributes to the advancement of

issues that were becoming increasingly common due to the dynamization of societies and technological and industrial advances (KASPER, 2000).

science. The problem was approached using the qualitative paradigm. The qualitative method seeks to understand the context in which a phenomenon occurs, allowing the observation of different elements in a small group. (VÍCTORA; KNAUTH; HASSEN, 2000). In terms of objectives, it is descriptive. Descriptive research aims to understand and interpret, classify, explain, record, and describe the facts that occur (MORAES; MONT'ALVÃO, 2010; PRODANOV; FREITAS, 2013).

In terms of procedures, it is characterized as a case study of the municipality of Linha Nova, Rio Grande do Sul. According to Minayo et al. (2005, p. 93), a case study is “a qualitative research strategy for delving into the how and why of a situation or episode over which the investigator has little control”. White (2005, p. 359) states that the case study “can lead to insights that produce theoretical advances, whether made by the author or by others”. In line with these statements, Zanini, Moraes, and Mariotto (2011) point out that there are several situations in which studying a particular perspective can provide the most valuable insights into a given situation.

The city of Linha Nova is located on the slopes of the Serra Gaúcha, between Feliz, Nova Petrópolis, Picada Café, and São José do Hortêncio. According to the 2022 Demographic Census, it has 1,683 inhabitants and an HDI of 0.749⁶ (IBGE, 2022). The economy is based on primary production, with around 80% of GDP coming from this sector, especially poultry production, which accounts for 92% of ICMS (Tax on Goods and Services) revenue (LINHA NOVA, 2024b). Since 2012, the municipality has invested in the tourism sector, by joining the regional routes and itineraries, and, since 2017, with the recognition of the city as the “Cradle of Breweries in the State of Rio

⁶ Base year 2010 (IBGE, 2022).

Grande do Sul”, the city has seen a greater influx of visitors, events and tourist activities.

The respondents were divided into two groups: a) organizers of walking tours events; and b) participants in the walking events. For the group of walking tour organizers, a semi-structured interview was carried out, with profile questions and other specific questions regarding the organization of events, methods of choosing routes, pricing, and the relationship between leisure walking and tourism. This research tool contains both closed and open questions, allowing some freedom to develop the interview in certain directions and explore specific issues further (Prodanov; Freitas, 2013). As an inclusion criterion, organizers who have promoted walking tours in the municipality of Linha Nova in the last five years were interviewed. Thiry-Cherques (2009, p. 22) explains that, in non-probabilistic techniques, selection by convenience or by accident occurs when “the subjects are those that can be accessed and the data are those that are possible to obtain”. Nevertheless, according to the author, the number of participants in qualitative studies cannot be less than six and can have up to fifteen participants, which is the minimum and maximum threshold for achieving theoretical saturation of the information. The interviews were conducted online via a messaging app, after the interviewee had authorized the use of the information, and the answers were subsequently transcribed.

For the group of participants in walking tours, a survey-type questionnaire was prepared containing questions relating to habits and preferences when participating in walking events, aspects of the landscape considered important, as well as general questions to establish the profile of the respondents. This format of questionnaire is structured with standardized and pre-established questions in order to obtain data that

can be compared and grouped (PRODANOV; FREITAS, 2013). The questionnaire was made available via the Google Forms platform from December 18, 2023, to January 29, 2024, on the World Wide Web, for voluntary access by any person who practices walking tours and was interested in answering the survey. The questionnaire was posted on the social media of hiking groups in the region where the municipality of Linha Nova is located. By accessing the survey, the respondent agreed and authorized the use of the information in this study.

Based on the responses of the two groups of participants, a systemic structure was developed so as to organize the various parts and correlate them with one another, shaping the network with “multiple interconnected positive and negative feedback loops” (KASPER, 2000, p. 200). Furthermore, according to the author, in systemic thinking, systemic structures are conceived as a pattern of relationships between key variables in a context or phenomenon, and this pattern is formed by networks composed of loops, with negative and positive feedback.

The collected data was analyzed and discussed through the triangulation method. Marcondes and Brisola (2014) explain that the data triangulation method employs a *modus operandi* based on the preparation of the collected material and the articulation of three aspects in order to proceed with the analysis: the empirical data collected in the research; the exchange with the authors who study the subject in question; and the analysis of the situation. According to Minayo et al. (2005, p. 29), triangulation means the “combination and intersection of multiple points of view; the joint task of researchers with different professional backgrounds; the views of various interviewees and the use of a variety of data collection techniques that accompany the research work”. The authors consider that this theoretical approach is the most

interesting choice when one wants to “contribute to increasing knowledge of the subject and meet the objectives that one wishes to achieve” (MINAYO *et al.*, 2005, p. 71).

Analysis and Discussion of Results

The study involved a total of forty people, divided into two groups. In the group of walking tour organizers, six people were interviewed who promote walking events in Linha Nova and whose profiles are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of the interviewed event organizers

	Gender	Age	Occupation	City	Position as organizer	How long you have been organizing events
Organizer 1	Male	61 years old	Real Estate Broker	Ivoti	Others*	12 years
Organizer 2	Male	33 years old	businessman	Linha Nova	Company	2 years
Organizer 3	Male	37 years old	Journalist	Nova Petrópolis	Freelancer	6 years
Organizer 4	Male	67 years old	Retired	Linha Nova	Company	2 years
Organizer 5	Male	33 years old	Professor	Linha Nova	Association	7 years
Organizer 6	Male	45 years old	Sports Events Coordinator	Presidente Lucena	Company	10 years

* Organizes free or low-cost events because they enjoy hiking.

Source: Authors.

Three event organizers are residents of the city of Linha Nova and three are from neighboring towns, and all of them regularly organize walks in the municipality. The organizers' ages range from 33 to 67, and they have been organizing their events for an average of 6.5 years (between 2 and 12 years). The organizers' occupations are diverse, however, only Organizer 6 declared that he works specifically in the field of sporting events, having set up a company with this specific interest.

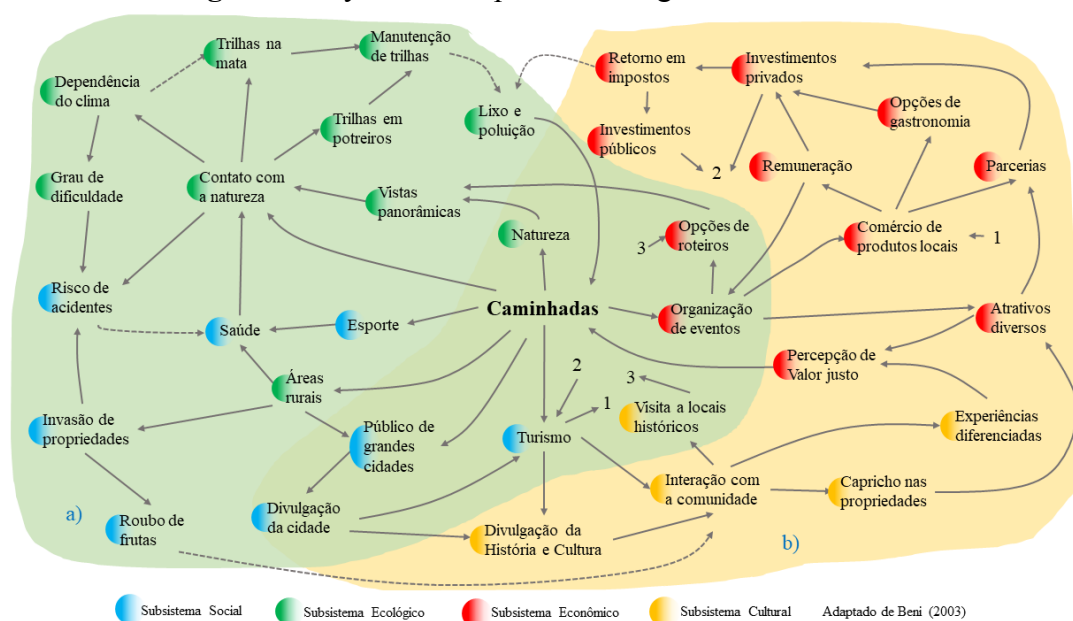
In the group of participants in walking activities, thirty-four people answered the online questionnaire, making up 19 female participants (55.9%) and 15 males (44.1%). The average age of the participants was 46.67 years old (between 20 and 72 years of age). With regard to the length of time they had been taking part in leisure walking events, 35.4% (12) of the participants said they had been participating for between 0 and 5 years; 44.1% (15), between 6 and 10 years; 17.6% (6), between 11 and 15 years; and only 2.9% (1) had been attending this type of event for more than 15 years. With regard to the walking events held in the town of Linha Nova, only 2 (5.9%) respondents reported not having taken part in any in the town. Considering how they learned about the events, 55.9% (19) heard about them through friends and 61.8% (21) through social networks. Regarding the distance to be marched, 73.3% (25) of people prefer to walk between 8 and 15 kilometers.

Based on the responses and considerations made by the group of walking tour organizers and the group of walking tour participants, a “systemic map” was produced listing walking tour events as inducers and drivers of direct and indirect impacts on the city. According to Kasper (2000), a systemic approach can take different forms, considering the different complex contents of reality. In this sense, one of the best-known system theories applied to tourism is SISTUR - *Sistema de Turismo* - by the author Beni (2003, p. 44), who conceptualizes a system as “the set of procedures, doctrines, ideas or principles that are logically ordered and cohesive, with the aim of describing, explaining or directing the functioning of a unit”. The author applied this concept to situate tourism in a referential model that could synthesize its dynamics and multifaceted combinations. Thus, the author divides the system's components into sets and subsystems, such as the “ecological, economic, social and cultural superstructure,

infrastructure, market, supply, demand, production, distribution and consumption” (BENI, 2003, p. 47).

The results achieved and grouped in the systemic map in Figure 1 are part of this system of sets, and the themes were identified according to the affinity and sequence of the subjects listed in the interviews and answers. As a result, two thematic areas were found: a) Nature as the main attraction; and b) Economic and tourist development through walking tours.

Figure 1: “Systemic Map” connecting the thematic areas



Caption:

Continuous arrows: the element at the tip of the arrow switches in the same direction as the variable at the origin of the arrow;

Dashed arrows: the element at the tip of the arrow switches in the opposite direction to the variable at the origin of the arrow;

Numbers: linking elements, avoiding the use of additional arrows;

Letters a and b: thematic areas for analysis and discussion, delimited by color

Source: Authors (2024).

It is apparent that a systemic structure, however complete, does not encompass all possible interactions and correlations, but rather is an approximation of reality, organized based on the opinions and information provided by those involved in the process. For Kasper (2000), systemic thinking serves to build knowledge and systemic

models describe the logic of connections, of interrelated physical processes and interrelated human activities, different points of view or interpretations of individuals or groups, as well as the interactions between abstract human concepts in general. The author also suggests that people, as active participants in the process, can alter their perceptions and actions in the event of a change in material conditions, access to new information, or social relations (KASPER, 2000). Corroborating this, Senge (2018) emphasizes that companies and human achievements are also systems, connected by interrelated actions, as if invisible threads, which can take years for the effects of one on the other to manifest themselves.

The map in Figure 01, based on the central idea of “Walking”, shows two distinct fields, but interconnected by positive and negative feedback loops. The fields were represented by different colors and letters: a) Nature as the main attraction, where connections are made with natural attractions, rural areas, and the risks and benefits associated with the activity of walking tours and taking part in events; b) Economic and tourism development through the walking tours, considering the promotion of the city and its culture and history, leading to unique and differentiated experiences in the city, in addition to the direct financial impact of the activity from the events in terms of collection and investment of resources in infrastructure, attractions and enhancement. The terms brought up by the interviewees were also categorized based on the ecological, social, economic, and cultural subsystems listed by Beni (2003), according to the SISTUR proposed by the author.

The central term “walk”, from which the arrows linking the elements of the proposed systemic network start, permeates the entire structure, relating directly and indirectly throughout the analysis of the two themes, as seen hereafter. The thematic

areas presented are not static or exclusive, but interconnected and mutually influential, i.e. should an action be taken on any element to reinforce or balance any effect, the entire structure needs to be reassessed considering the possible influences, since, according to Bellinger (2004), several archetypes can exist and be reinforced or balanced by the mutual interaction between the parts that compose the system.

a) Nature as the Main Attraction

Landscape has increasingly been associated with nature, and eventually confused with it. As seen in this study, the interviewees relate landscape directly to nature or places with panoramic views. For Cauquelin (2007), nature is not landscape, but it has come to be seen that way, as a symbol of contact between the individual and nature. Common sense eventually attributes nature and natural spaces an idealization as being the landscape itself, but the author considers the landscape as a notion, a structured set, with its own rules and a symbolic scheme of human contact with nature. Cauquelin also understands landscape as a peculiar symbolic form, the result of a constant learning process (SEBASTIÃO, 2021).

As a symbol, the landscape is a cultural construction, with multiple subjective significances that will structure personal experiences, though influenced by social constructs. According to Toniol (2011), the landscape is in constant formation, as it incorporates stories and weaves them together with the life cycle of plants, animals, and whoever else happens to inhabit it. Along these lines, social and cultural construction has led to a simplistic connotation that landscape is simply nature, leaving more complex aspects aside, such as symbolism, history, and subjective interpretations of the landscape.

For the author Ingold (2000), the landscape is the background where activities are not just performed, but where there is an interaction that is incorporated as a fundamental element of the historical fabric of the world and the individuals who inhabit it. As he proposes, the world

takes on the character of an organism, and the movements of animals - including those of human beings - are parts or aspects of their life process. This means that by inhabiting the world, we don't act upon it, or do things to it, but rather move along with it. Our actions do not transform the world, but are rather parts and parcels of the transformation of the world itself [...] (INGOLD, 2000, p. 199).

In this sense, walking tour events move along with the landscape and are an inherent part of it. Preferably held in natural environments and rural areas, these events seek to distance themselves from the hectic pace common to cities and urban areas. In addition to combining nature contemplation and outdoor activities, they seek varied experiences, whether cultural, religious, or of other interests (CARVALHO; ALVES, 2021). Besse (2014) understands experience as an “escape” from reality or an “exposure” to reality, an event in which the body is present, affected, and physically touched by the world around it and its textures, structures, and specialties. According to this author, the walking tour is a fundamental example of this type of experience of the landscape, with the “particular moment of tiredness on the trail, which is neither exhaustion nor lassitude, but which restores availability to the body and [...] restores the ability to be affected by the sensitive data of the world” (BESSE, 2014, p. 48), being an important reason for going for a leisure walk

As illustrated by the map in Figure 1, within Beni's (2003) ecological subsystem, nature, rural areas, panoramic views, and trails are widely mentioned, therefore, there is a convergence of opinions between the group of organizers of walking tour events and the group of participants, regarding the search for nature and

rural areas as preferred “landscapes” for the practice of hiking. In this sense, according to Organizer 5, “for the organization of the itinerary, new routes are thought of, where there are beautiful landscapes, historical sites and greater contact with nature”. Corroborating the above, Augusti (2021) comments that walking tours carried out as a leisure activity, express the desire to return to nature, although not in a wild and barbaric state, but supported by the employment of technologies, enabling a certain control and mastery over the natural world.

It can be noted that the search for contact with nature in rural environments or on forest trails indicates concepts related to the improvement of health quality, through the practice of sports and moments of relaxation or contemplation, especially at lookouts with a wide view, related to the social subsystem of Beni (2003). Participation in events of this type, according to Carvalho and Alves (2021), brings important contributions to the promotion of well-being and healthy lifestyle habits, especially linked to outdoor activities and socializing. The authors, when analyzing hiking events in the region of Pampilhosa da Serra, Portugal, also point to the landscape diversity provided by the local geographical diversity, associated with cultural heritages, as a decisive contributor to offering value and generating tourist flows. More attractions at the events are reflected in a greater perception of fair value, as seen in Figure 1, configuring a positive relation.

The rural or woodland “landscape” was rated as important or extremely important by 97.1% (33) and 88.2% (30) of participants in walking tour events respectively. Apparently, the stressful routine of big cities and the contemporary pressures of financial success and competition are mitigated by contact with the countryside and nature. Corroborating this, Organizer 6 expresses that “a lot of our

audience is from the big city, so they want to get away from the stress of day-to-day life [...] and they want to come and take part in walking tours in the middle of nature, in the middle of the woods”. In this vein, “the countryside offers everything that the city takes away - quiet, abundance, freshness and, supremely, the leisure to meditate, far from false values. Like an inverted double, the countryside offers the negative of the city” (CAUQUELIN, 2007, p. 62). For Augusti (2021), the natural landscape offers a differential, making it possible to symbolically reconnect with a time/space when human beings' way of life was simpler and their knowledge was enough to understand the world. As Figure 1 illustrates, the walking tours attract people from larger cities seeking leisure and entertainment, positively boosting local promotion and tourism.

When asked what participants in walking tour events consider when deciding to take part, two organizers expressed that they look for “different experiences” (Organizer 3) and “mainly the experience they will have, from the moment they are first greeted until they arrive back at the venue” (Organizer 2). A leisurely walk can provide experiences, adventures and a variety of sensations and

as a form of leisure, walking in the countryside offers the opportunity to return to the natural world, an adventure through Nature, where the senses are transported through the diverse rural scenery, from the extensive croplands and so many species of trees and varied vegetation, to the streams, bridges, the cattle roaming free, calves in the pens, chickens roaming free in the yards, the birds singing, the scent of flowers, the ecstatic sight of plains and mountains. In short, a possibility for the individual to “feel alive” and to promote life experiences that have transcendent meaning and significance. (AUGUSTI, 2021, p. 629).

Among the most important experiences, according to participants in walking tour events, are contemplation at natural lookouts (85.3%); the presence of historic buildings that can be visited (73.6%); contact with local people and their life stories (66.6%); and the presence of animals and birds to contemplate (64.7%). Figure 1 illustrates how these themes relate directly to the perception of value, reinforcing hiking

events as differentiated experiences with high subjective value. It can be noticed that the event organizers seek to provide these experiences, meeting the expectations of the participants, as Organizer 5 points out: “Whenever possible, the itineraries include places with lookouts, areas with farmland, paddocks, historic buildings, gardens, as well as trails in the middle of the forest to intensify the contact with nature”. In this sense, Augusti (2021) proposes that going for a walk in the countryside becomes a learning opportunity, a fun experience in search of pleasant sensations. According to the author, nature and contact with trees, birds, the sun, flowers, and all the colors of the natural world, appears as a door that leads to the ideal place for the individual to find meaning and sense in the experiences with life itself.

On the other hand, the increase in walking tours in these places also stresses the fauna and flora, exposes an often non-friendly relationship between landowners of rural sites and visitors who invade their properties, as well as the dumping of garbage, noise pollution, and the risk of accidents, such as falls and bites from venomous animals. The map in Figure 1 demonstrates the connection between the increase in health risks due to the climate and the difficulty level of the walking tours, as well as the increase in property invasions with the growth in the flow of visitors, reflecting on the social and ecological subsystems (BENI, 2003). In the opinion of Organizer 5, there are positive impacts such as “when landowners clear up and weed their yards and when trails that were previously overgrown with vegetation are also cleared” and negative ones, associated with leaving behind waste, stealing fruit and not removing the markings used to mark out the routes. Organizer 3, on the other hand, considers that the impacts on the environment are “few, as the public is generally environmentally conscious”. Several studies suggest that hiking, especially on trails, can significantly

alter the structure of vegetation (MACIEL; SILES; BITENCOURT, 2011), impact animal life (SOULARD, 2017), and produce “environmental degradation, deterioration, impact or contamination [...] which in many cases is irreversible”. (BENI, 2003, p. 59).

Walking tours are a subjective and at the same time a sensorial act, carried out in the landscape and with the landscape so that the experience is personal and made up of various elements, as Bruhns explains (2009):

The experience of leisure walking extends beyond the ephemeral and enables a combination of aesthetic pleasure (admiration) and the desire to learn. A series of physical sensations are present - olfactory (smells of plants, flowers, debris, and others), tactile (heat tempered by the breeze, water temperature, for example), visual, auditory - in an environment to be discovered, perceived and known by sharpening the senses. An experience of contemplation filtered through values and conceptions of life. (BRUHNS, 2009, p.164).

There is a certain “negotiation” between the expectations of event participants, organizers, and the local community through which the walking routes are carried out. As one participant in the online survey said, “the same landscape that is enjoyable for me may not be for someone else”. Along these lines, Organizer 5 believes that the “landscape” is important, but not paramount to the participant, as the majority of “participants initially consider their wish to engage in physical activity and see new places, as they generally [...] don't know what the route will be and what kind of landscapes they will encounter”. In contrast, Organizer 1 reports that “the influence of the landscape is paramount. Perhaps the most important item in the choice”. Toniol (2011), in interviews with participants, organizers, and the local community during a walking event in the city of Ivaiporã/PR, found narratives of difficulties in reconciling the route chosen for the event. Different perspectives on what they will encounter on the walk need to be considered and eventually, there will be contradictions experienced by the participants when expectations are not fully met.

Concerning the events organized, in the opinion of Organizer 3, despite the growth in leisure walking activities, “there is still a way to go for hiking to be well explored as a touristic business” and he adds that “there is a lack of collective maturity for leisure walking to be better understood as a touristic business”. Perhaps this opinion is based on events that are still organized in an amateur fashion, with shortcomings in terms of organization and customer service, as mentioned by one of the participants in the walking tours who answered the questionnaire: “the last two [walking tours] had a very bad itinerary... it affected a lot of elderly people and people who weren't so well prepared. In the announcement, it didn't specify such a high level of difficulty”. Another participant said that “better organization is essential. At one of the events the weather was terrible and for those who stayed [...] there was no program”. According to Figure 1, and based on Beni's (2003) economic subsystem, organizing events increases remuneration and partnership with local businesses and, consequently, investment and tax collection. In this sense, Maioli and Tomelin (2019) comment that the events market fosters the regional economy, however, organizers need to qualify the professionals who work at events and always be aware of innovations and trends, looking for new suppliers and offering distinguished services.

It is evident that walking tours events are a niche market and that multiple complexities need to be considered in order to guarantee the satisfaction of participants. Embora sejam uma forma de conhecer e divulgar uma cidade, este tipo de atividade precisa ser considerado no planejamento turístico e econômico, já que impacta em diversos setores de uma comunidade.

b) Economic and Tourism Development through Walking Tours

According to Fávero (2006), tourism is an open system and one cannot regard it as an isolated activity, since it is impregnated by the structural system of the locality where it operates and is subject, for example, to the influences of globalization. The author further adds that it is not possible to direct all the actions of those involved in the amplitude that the tourism system presents, in case they are not clear about the objectives and their role within the system.

In this sense, the local economy becomes one of the first subsystems to experience the impacts. These effects can normally be considered positive and progressive, as long as they are managed sustainably. Carvalho and Alves (2021) emphasize that events in Pampilhosa da Serra, Portugal, have induced positive effects and direct repercussions on the local economy, especially by reducing seasonality, increasing the number of tour operators and their income, attracting national and international events and reinforcing the positive image of the region. As an open system, the effects can feed back on each other and more investment in events and attractions can channel increased public and private investment in infrastructure and publicity, further boosting the local economy. Beni (2003) emphasizes that tourism, as an economic activity, comprises a series of services that are offered to travelers who journey from one city to another and spend their time there, enjoying the chain of production, distribution, consumption, and value, within the economic subsystem proposed by the author.

It is notable that the local economy is directly impacted by the walking events. As Organizer 5 mentions, visitors “boost businesses such as [...] the breweries, the farmer's market, handicrafts, and local businesses in an immediate manner and may

return to check out the accommodation options in the expanding inns, ranches, and parks. Corroborating the above, Beni (2003, p. 65) comments that tourism activities generate “intersectoral development, due to the multiplier effect of investment and the strong growth in domestic and incoming demand”. Consequently, as Besse (2014) suggests, hiking can help qualify environments, provide experience of the local world and vernacular values, and bring new qualities and intensities to these spaces. The map in Figure 1 demonstrates the positive feedback that events bring to attractions, local businesses, and public authorities, through increased investment and qualification in organization.

The group of walking tour organizers was questioned about how the events are organized economically, such as pricing and finding partners for the events. All the organizers consider remuneration to be an important factor, as Organizer 3 points out.

Remuneration is important, especially when it involves a fair price for local suppliers and partners. There will always be an audience willing to pay for qualified experiences. When it comes to price, I particularly prefer to charge 100 reais, attend to fewer people, and offer a qualified experience, rather than charge 20 reais, attend to many people, and give each one a pastry (Organizer 3).

Although remuneration is important, Organizer 1 points out that his events are usually free of charge, except for times when the walking tours last more than a day and involve accommodation and food, where these costs are charged. In this organizer's opinion, walking tours are “a market that has begun to be exploited commercially. I'm not against it, but you have to be careful. There must be limits” (Organizer 1). As Beni (2003) comments, tourism is a continuous productive activity and has indirect effects on other productive activities with its multiplier effect. Thus, there is a definite need for events to make a financial return for the organizers, however, and this appears to be the organizer's reflection, excesses should be avoided.

On the other hand, those participating in walking events said that the cost of registration was not a preponderant factor when choosing to take part in an event, where 55.8% (19) rated it as not at all important, not very important, or indifferent. Only 20.6% (7) considered the amount charged for registration to be extremely important. As for the registration fees participants usually pay for events, 76.4% (26) said they paid between R\$40.00 and R\$80.00. These prices are apparently the most charged at events organized in the region and include different products and experiences, such as beer (draft beer), colonial products, tours and visits to distilleries, factories producing various products, and others. For example, Organizer 6 mentions that “when people sign up for our walks, we also want them to experience our gastronomy and what these cities have to offer [...] citing draft beer as an example. [...] because we have many breweries that have opened in the region”.

Walking tour events, marketed as “experiences”, are inserted in Lipovetsky's (2007) concept of hyperconsumption, in which consumers want more objects “to live” than to flaunt a social position. The author continues, explaining that “from things, we are less expecting them to classify us concerning others and more expecting them to allow us to be more independent and more mobile, to feel emotions, to live experiences, to improve our quality of life, to preserve youth and health” (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p. 42). In a way, this commercialization of leisure walks antagonizes the vision of walking as a lifestyle that opposes luxury and consumption and a fast-paced contemporary world. Gros (2010) comments that an entire market of accessories was eventually created for those who practice walking, but he argues that nothing has yet been discovered that is better than walking to go slowly. According to the author, “To walk, you first need two legs. The rest is superfluous” (GROS, 2010, p. 10).

The organizers were questioned about the relationship between tourism and walking tours and some of the aspects listed were: greater publicity for the city and its attractions; dissemination of local culture and history; the possibility of visitors returning to the city at some point after the walking tour and thus increasing their experiences in the city; attracting visitors to local accommodation and businesses and learning about manufacturing processes, among others. It can be observed that walking tour events offer the opportunity to get to know places and enterprises. These themes are evident on the map in Figure 1, within the social and cultural subsystems of Beni (2003). Organizer 5 comments that the walking tours “are opportunities to publicize the municipality, its tourist, economic, historical and cultural potential and can be a good source of income for entities or businesses”. Beni (2003) explains that these are some of the tourist resources that constitute the tourist heritage and the geographical-ecological-cultural landmark of a place and are capable of causing people to leave their homes and spend a certain amount of time away from them.

Organizer 1 brings up the example of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela Route and the Caminos de Caravaggio Trails as tourism-inducing walking routes: “It’s all related. Just look at the example of Europe. Specifically, the Camino de Santiago de Compostela in Spain. People from all over the world go there” and “here we’ve noticed a growth in the Caravaggio Trails. There has been an increase in the accommodation network along the route”. It should be noted that the creation of walking routes and itineraries that run through cities and allow contact with local culture and history boosts tourism and sightseeing, even in small communities, which can benefit from the coming and going of tourists and pilgrims. Beni (2003) observes that natural and cultural heritage must be interpreted in a way that integrates biodiversity, culture, and history,

based on the perspective of the local community, and, on this foundation, seeks to create attractions to form part of the tourism chain.

In this sense, the planning of tourism, as an open and complex system, presupposes the participation and recognition of the various actors involved, however, as Fávero (2006) points out, the involvement of the public authorities in planning is fundamental, as they must have a global vision, thinking of the community as a whole for general benefit. In this context, it can be observed that the city of Linha Nova has tourism as one of its development guidelines, including the officialization of the Municipal Program for Culture and Tourism (LINHA NOVA, 2022), instituted in February 2022. The Program prioritizes walking tours and other nature sports, such as cycling. Along this line of thought, the municipality has instituted self-guided trails and various businesses, associations, freelancers, and enthusiasts organize several walking tour events every year, impacting the local tourism system. Apparently, the city has been achieving the planned results, as according to the participants in the city's walking tours, they chose to take part in the events because there are “trails with beautiful views and historic buildings from the Germanic culture”; the city is “extremely welcoming and with landscapes that connect us with nature”; or even for the “beautiful landscapes, the physical activity, the peace of the countryside, the fresh air”.

The analysis of “landscape” and its relationship with tourism and leisure, although mostly associated with nature, reveals a complex system that encompasses a variety of factors to be considered. The walking tours make use of this ambiguous “landscape-nature” relationship, offering unique experiences, whether of a consumerist nature and personal satisfaction or of a contemplative and introspective nature. However, it should be noted that regardless of the reasons that lead someone to take part

in walking tour events, all the subsystems, such as the economic, social, and cultural, are impacted. Therefore, the landscape, as a macro dimension of the system, is also impacted, in a mutual relationship of influences.

Final Remarks

This article sought to understand the correlations and interactions between the landscape, leisure walks, and the systemic context of tourism development in the town of Linha Nova, RS. These complex and multifaceted relations became evident in the study, since even a walking tour event, however simple, brings together various aspects to be considered, from its organization, pricing, and publicity to the social, environmental, and economic impacts, whether direct or indirect.

Confusion can be identified concerning the interpretation of the term “landscape”, with a clear connotation of “nature”. At various times the interviewees perceive it as a natural space, without considering other elements, including symbolic and cultural ones. Landscape is not just nature; it is not just a cultural construction and it is not just a background for everyday life. The landscape traverses the individual, through a subjective construction, based on life history, social skills, interpersonal relationships, and interpretations of what they see, hear, and feel.

The results of this study have demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between walking tour events and the development of the tourism production chain. The organizers are aware of the impact that organizing this type of activity can have on local communities and participants are increasingly looking to explore other places, have new experiences, socialize, and maintain healthy habits. Although they do exist, the negative impacts, especially on the environment, were considered minor compared to the positive

effects listed by the participants. Thus, if well managed by conscientious organizers and participants, the negative effects can virtually be non-existent and sustainable.

It is evident that participants and organizers of walking events are looking for different scenarios and experiences. Organizers tend to offer a good structure and personalize their events, while participants seek moments of relaxation and contact with nature and rural environments, which are often lacking in their cities of origin.

The availability of pre-defined walking routes or the hosting of organized events can induce visitors to the city and have a positive impact on the local economy, as they have the potential to increase accommodation, gastronomy, and the hiring of local products and services. This economic incentive results in a return in taxes to the public administration and ultimately to the local population, in better services offered by the government. On the other hand, important environmental impacts cannot be dismissed and need to be minimized and mitigated by the organizers and partners, with the enforcement of public institutions, guaranteeing sustainability.

The systemic approach, in this context of planning and identifying problems and possibilities for growth, is a consistent tool that indicates with clarity the path to be followed in order to optimize actions and their results. Especially for the public sector, having a systemic vision can broaden understanding of the various chains that compose systems, as in this study, in which just one section related to walking events brought ramifications and contributions in various spheres of everyday life.

Walking tour events are evolving and adapting to the growing market for individual experiences and sensations. However, without proper planning and limits on the “use” of the landscape, the impacts can jeopardize economic, environmental, and social sustainability, being part of an increasingly complex system that is tourism. In

this sense, planning is fundamental and must involve the participation of all the city's representative spheres, and systemic thinking is an interesting tool for evaluating and interpreting the complexities inherent in tourism. By developing a systemic map with only the relative concepts enunciated by the participants and organizers of this study, it was already possible to have a wide range of themes and implications related to walking tours. In a broader exercise, this structure could be even more detailed and specified, but it still wouldn't cover all of reality and its complex aspects.

A limitation of the study is the impossibility of covering all the connectors mentioned by the interviewees in the systemic map, since systems are complex on the surface and, even more so, as the relationships between the terms are explored more deeply. For this study, a macrosystemic view was considered to the detriment of deepening the connections between the themes, but nevertheless providing rich contributions to the discussion.

Whether at an event for fun or as an experience in the middle of nature or as a physical activity aimed at health and quality of life, walking is inherent to the human being. As a result, the simple act of walking can influence different social segments through individual or small group activities and shape different interpretations and manifestations of the landscape.

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