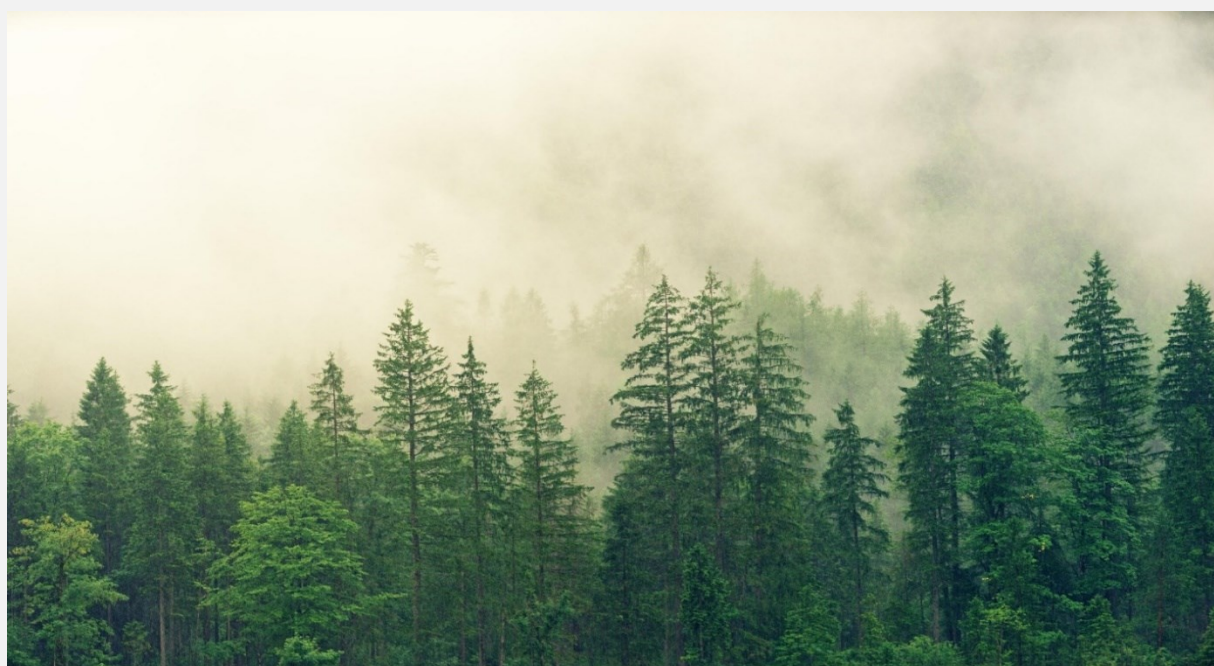


TOURISM FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC
CONFERENCE

18-19 MAY 2023, BULGARIA



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EFFECTS OF ARCHITECTURE ON THE URBANIZATION AND TOURIST PRODUCTION OF A CITY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CITY OF GRAMADO, IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL

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***Abstract:** This article, which is part of the theoretical framework of Cultural Studies, proposes to study the connection established between architecture and tourism, through the analysis of the Gramado Inesquecível Portal, a website organized by the Municipal Secretariat of Tourism of Gramado, with the purpose of publicize this destination, located in the south of Brazil. In this website, we tried to examine how the architecture of the city is explored as an attribute for the promotion of tourist activity and, also, what correlation it establishes with the idea of cultural heritage sustainability. To do so, we used the Cultural Analysis, an investigative expertise typical of the Cultural Studies field, which enables the denaturalization and deconstruction of subliminal and naturalized messages in various textual modalities, especially in advertising pieces. Among the contingent and transitory findings of this research, we highlight the exhortation of the architectural styles of the city's buildings, to establish themselves as an emblematic landmark, a sign for the promotion of the so-called ethnic tourism, and the much in vogue tourism of experience in the modern time.*

***Keywords:** Tourism, Architecture, Sustainability, Gramado.*

INTRODUCTION

Architecture, besides being considered a science, is, above all, an artistic manifestation. McGauhey (2011) explains that the connotation engendered by the term architecture, to transcend the idea of construction, can be understood through Cultural Studies, which comprise spaces and landscapes from a process of cultural construction. And, from this perspective, architectural practice is seen as a physical representation, a kind of language that incorporates politics and cultural themes into the landscape.

Also, for Guillaud (2014), the meanings architecture inscribes to various places highlight its other facets, beyond the functionalist one, such as the symbolic and cultural, which are in line with the ideas of sustainability. According to Souza and Laurentiz (2019), these ideas became applicable to different ways of thinking about society, above all, by establishing the dimensions of sustainability that, for Braun and Robl (2015), aim to extend its understanding to various areas of human relations. Among these areas, one which is interesting for this study

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is the cultural, which, according to Sachs (1993, p.27), is related to "the normative concept of eco-development in a plurality of particular solutions, which respect the specificities of each ecosystem, of each culture and each place".

It is also relevant to emphasize the interrelationship that architecture establishes with tourist activity, because, for Lasanski (2004), tourism is simultaneously a cultural product and a producer. Still according to the author, it acts as an important catalyst in the complex process centered in the experience of the built environment, providing senses to the buildings and engendering the visitors' experiences. That is, it is the tourist activity behind the amplification, conservation and readjustment of buildings and cities which aims to achieve certain political, cultural and economic objectives.

From this connection established among architecture, tourism and sustainability, we can evidence the background from which this study will be developed. Thus, this article aims to examine the effects that are incited by architecture to promote tourism in Gramado and its correlation with the assumptions that underlie the notion of cultural and heritage sustainability, in the tourist promotion materials conveyed by the Gramado Inesquecível Portal website (TGR Studio, 2018), linked to the Municipal Secretariat of Tourism. To understand how these objectives are achieved, the methodological discussion is presented in the next section.

METHODOLOGY

For the feasibility of this study, among the most recurrent investigative expertise in the field of Cultural Studies, Cultural Analysis was used, supported by its investigative potential. According to Silva (2010), Cultural Analysis operate in a way of deconstructing social practices considered natural and intrinsic to reality, from literary and scientific texts to journalistic publications and, mainly, advertising. It is noteworthy that these analyzes occur analogously to a textual approach that, according to Baptista (2009), conceives the text from a semiotic perspective. In other words, the text is seen as a sign, recognizing and deconstructing aspects that are routinely disseminated as natural and intrinsic.

For the analytical corpus, we selected materials of tourist dissemination of Gramado available at Gramado Inesquecível Portal - supervised by the Municipal Department of Tourism - which explore architecture as a tourist attribute of this destination.

GRAMADO INESQUECÍVEL PORTAL: ARCHITECTURE HIGHLIGHT FOR THE CITY’S TOURIST PROMOTION

To start, it is essential to point out that Gramado, located in Rio Grande do Sul, is one of the most visited cities in Brazil. It has already been honored several times with The Travelers Choice award by Trip Advisor, as one of the best tourist destinations in Brazil and South America. It also has the second best hotel in the world, according to the opinions of various tourists who use this website (CNN Brazil, 2022).

The importance that tourism has for this city is so expressive that the city hall itself, through the Department of Tourism, organized a website to publicize the destination, entitled *Gramado Inesquecível*. In this portal, users can access information about the city, its history, as well as aspects of hotels, gastronomy and main tourist routes.

Regarding the use of architecture in this portal, it is noteworthy that the website points out the styles of the buildings in the main avenue of Gramado, Borges de Medeiros, mainly the Bavarian one, considering the avenue one of the city’s highlights. According to the portal, “walking through the avenue, it is possible to find some of the main attractions, such as buildings with Bavarian architecture and steep pitch roofs to dump snow” (TGR Studio, 2018). These ideas can be seen in the following figure.



Figure 1. Borges de Medeiros Avenue– Gramado

Source: TGR Studio, 2018

The Bavarian style is typical in European regions with a cold climate, mainly in Germany. According to Quintans (2008), it was in the late eighties that the municipal public authorities of Gramado began to make efforts to establish this style in buildings. And the purpose of this was to define the city with an identity linked to architecture, replacing square constructions, based on regulation lines.

Also, at Gramado Inesquecível Porta, when searching for the keyword “architecture” in the website's search engine, the building of Gramado’s City Hall (Figure 2) appears at first hand.



Figure 2. Gramado's City Hall

Source: TGR Studio, 2018

On the portal, the building is presented with the following description:

Gramado's postcard and typical example of its architecture. It features, at the top, the city's coat of arms, carved in polychrome wood, finished in lambrequins and a very harmonious painting, rescuing the local ethnic groups. (TGR Studio, 2018).

After that, hotels that have the predominant European and Bavarian architectural style are presented. One particular hotel that calls tourists' attention is Ritta Höppner, which appears described and illustrated on the website as follows:



Figure 3. Hotel Ritta Höppner

Source: TGR Studio, 2018

The tradition of hospitality at Ritta Höppner began in 1958 and, from this moment on, the hotel has been surprising its guests at every visit, because of its personalized service and the innovations implemented each year. Today, Ritta Höppner is considered one of the best hotels in Gramado, which offers elegant environments, with European-inspired architecture and decor. (TGR Studio, 2018).

Based on the emphasis that the Gramado Inesquecível Portal provides to the city's architectural buildings, the interrelationship established between architecture and the promotion of tourist activity is noticeable. In this apposition between architecture and tourism, according to Lasanski (2004) architecture is seen simultaneously as a place, an event and a sign, since it is planned as a process of representation, reception, use, spectacularization and commodification. Besides, its meanings are mediated by the media's rhetorical strategies.

It is also worth mentioning that, when describing the buildings in Gramado as similar to the ones of cold places with a high incidence of snow, European adjectives are attributed to the city, which produces, in its visitors, the idea of living an experience of the old world without leaving the country. This also happens due to the climatic particularities and the typically Germanic architecture present in Gramado, which encourages the so-called ethnic tourism. This kind of tourism, according to Köhler (2019), reinvents attributions of an ethnic group to create a tourist product, which, in this case, is based on architecture. And its consumption appeal is linked to the symbolic value through which it was represented and disseminated in the surroundings.

Furthermore, the emphasis that the Gramado Inesquecível Portal gives to accommodation options, with buildings that have this Germanic architectural style, also aims to promote experience tourism. This concept, according to Bandeira, Carvalho and Menezes (2021) is the search, by the visitors, to experience unique moments on a trip, which can trigger positive memories and sensations of wonder and enchantment. Therefore, in this direction, these hotels promise to offer, not only any accommodation, but accommodations with a typically European style and associated to the cold climate.

On the other hand, when analyzing the correlation established between architecture and tourism in the materials analyzed, taking the cultural sustainability into consideration, it is possible to notice the non-compliance of one of the pillars of sustainable ideas applicable to cultural heritage: "its disassociation from the condition of commodity, which can only make sense if it provides economic return" (Zaniratto, 2016, p.208).

In this sense, it is necessary to point out that the Bavarian and Germanic architectural styles are praised on the website only for its market tourist value, not observing its association with a broader amalgamation of the city and its residents' local culture. That is, in an antagonistic way to what the sustainability of heritage provides, which, according to Nóbrega (2013), cannot be reduced to economic bias since it intertwines with a series of intrinsic values, such as heritage, knowledge, creativity and diversity, Gramado's architecture, on the analyzed

website, is exhorted only to be established as an emblematic landmark in order to be arisen as a travel destination. Canclini (1993) conceptualizes this idea as cultural consumption, which is understood as processes of product appropriation and tourist experiences purchases, in which the symbolic value is more important than the use value.

CONCLUSIONS

Through this study, it was observed that the Gramado Inesquecível Portal explores the architecture of the city as a symbol, a differential, to increase its tourist appeal, mainly through European adjectives. This happens because of the broad incentive to implement the Bavarian and half-timbered architectural style, both typical of Germany, since the end of the eighteenth century. Moreover, the portal highlighted this architectural style in accommodation options to promote the so-called experience tourism, which is widely in vogue today.

However, on the analyzed website, there is a disconnected relationship between architecture and the web of cultural relations that constitute the life of Gramado and its residents (with the exception of marketing tourism practices), not in line with the assumptions of sustainability applied to cultural heritage.

Finally, through the analyzes carried out in this portal, it was possible to notice the need to value the assets to transcend their marketing potential, in order to safeguard them from a holistic perspective of the society in which they are inserted. This practice may also praise the diversity of styles that characterize the place and that show a sense of belonging to those who live there, and not just because of its tourist appeal.

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