A Longitudinal Analysis of Territorial Social Innovations in a Touristic Route

Uma Análise Longitudinal das Inovações Sociais Territoriais Numa Rota Turística

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Abstract

This research's objective is a longitudinal analysis of the ways in which the actors of a touristic route established their strategies, developed their actions and interacted in order to generate a territorial social innovation, through actor-network theory. Specifically, it is an attempt to identify the main changes occurred in the romantic route (RR) over the past three years, as well as to analyse the benefits derived from the social innovation to the municipalities that are part of the romantic route. As a research strategy, the case study of the romantic route was used, through semi-structured interviews made in two different moments: 2011 and 2013. This research concludes that the romantic route, whose primary objective was not social, has developed, over the course of its history, initiatives and different social actions throughout the territory, bringing a better quality of life to the population through the social and economic development of the municipalities.

Keywords: Social Innovation, Territorial Innovation, Actor-Network Theory, Romantic Route

Resumo

Esta pesquisa teve como objetivo analisar longitudinalmente de que forma os diferentes atores integrantes de uma rota turística estabeleceram suas estratégias, desenvolveram suas ações e interagiram para gerar uma inovação social territorial, por meio da teoria-ator-rede. Especificamente, busca-se identificar as principais mudanças ocorridas na Rota Romântica (RR) ao longo dos últimos três anos, bem como analisar os benefícios resultantes da inovação social para os municípios integrantes da Rota Romântica. Como estratégia de pesquisa utilizou-se o estudo de caso único na Rota Romântica, por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas, coletadas em dois momentos diversos, 2011 e 2013. O resultado da pesquisa foi que a Rota Romântica, cujo objetivo primordial e inicial não era social, desenvolveu, ao longo da sua história, iniciativas e ações sociais distintas ao longo do seu território, proporcionando melhor qualidade de vida para a população, através do desenvolvimento econômico e social dos municípios.

Palavras-chave: Inovação social, Inovação territorial, Teoria-ator-Rede, Rota Romântica

1 Introduction

There has never been so much discussion about innovation as of late, especially because of the indiscriminate use of the concept, many times interpreted simplistic and incorrectly as a reference to absolutely everything that is new. It is assumed that companies must innovate to distinguish themselves in the market, government must innovate in the public services and people must innovate to stand out as professionals. However, attention must be drawn to the correct use of the term. The role of innovation is unchallenged, in every sector and types of organization, but a topic that deserves special attention is the social innovation, which aims specifically to improve the quality of life through new services or procedures both public and private.

One of the ways in which social innovation can be developed is by tourism and its supply chain, in other words, the encouragement of this activity in the municipalities can generate income, jobs and a better quality of life among other relevant factors to the social context. The development of the touristic activity must include the common use of the structures both by visitors and the local inhabitants, i.e., the benefits of the actions must be perceived not only by the tourists, but also by the community who will benefit indirectly.

For the analysis in this paper, the Romantic Route was selected as the object of the case study. Located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul – Brazil, this route is understood as an example of a touristic activity that can generate social benefits. The Romantic Route is a route inspired by its namesake itinerary in Germany and is in the region that ranges from the Vale do Sinos Plain until the Serra Gaúcha Plateau, covering 184 kilometres and 14 municipalities.

It was chosen because of their characteristics and the possibility to identify specific factors. These factors bring about, in their execution and operation, social innovations that have benefited and may come to benefit the participating communities. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to analyse longitudinally in what way the different actors of a touristic route established their strategies, developed their actions and interacted to generate the social innovation. Specifically, it aims to identify the main changes that occurred in the Romantic Route in the past three years as well as to analyse the benefits of the social innovation to the participating municipalities of the Romantic Route. Furthermore, this article will answer the following research problem: "How did social innovation happen in the idealization of a touristic route through the interaction of the participating municipalities over the past three years?"

In this context, the article presents a literature review, which includes fundamental theories on social and territorial innovation and the Actor-Network Theory. Furthermore, the Research Methodology and the analysis of the collected data will be presented, as well as the conclusions that resulted from the analysis and interpretations.

2 Literature review

The literature review will focus on territorial social innovation and actor network theory, approaches that will provide support for the research developed.

2.1 Territorial Social Innovation

The concept of social innovation has been highlighted in research on social development and analysis on alternatives for communities with social vulnerabilities. This paper adopts as concept of social innovation "the generation of new ideas and solutions that create an impact in solving social problems, involving actors and stakeholders in promoting change in social relations" (Agostini, Marques, & Bossle, 2016, p. 89).

One of the terms that comes from of this subject is the territorial social innovation, that aims at the satisfaction of the human necessities in a regional, local or neighbourhood level (Moulaert et al., 2005). The greater focus is on the role of the community and its social actors such as leaders and creative individuals capable of proposing the necessary changes. The difficulties found through this process come from many levels of governance and the creation of cooperation networks among community actors.

A relevant factor to the development of social territorial innovation is the role of the community and the cooperative work with other institutions, such as public and private entities and non-governmental organizations. Most of the social territorial innovation models use the concept of network as a key element. Social innovation reinforces the efficiency of networks and social movements through socially creative strategies that emerged as a response to the global changes (Kimberlee et al., 2009).

Examples of social movements are the environmental groups, considered a civic engagement in inter-organizational networks that may take the shape of a social movement, coalitions or independent organizations (Kimberlee et al., 2009). This perspective on networks is a useful complement to the structural perspective of political economics, and is based on the Actor-Network Theory. In a perspective that allows networks to have different elements, it is evident that creative social strategies may arise from networks built around actions made by several people, organizations, institutions and non-human actors (including nature) and may consist of the cooperation between different production scales (Kimberlee et al., 2009).

The cooperative work between actors may form some type of territorial innovation models, which are understood as spaces, clusters or blocks that allow the development of innovation, learning and the formation of networks. The main territorial innovation models range from the innovative environments, industrial districts, local production systems, new industrial spaces, innovation clusters, regional innovation systems and learning regions (Moulaert & Sekia, 2003).

The innovative environment or *milieu innovateur* is a type of regional innovation model developed by a European group of researchers called GREMI (*Groupe de Recherche Européen sur les Milieux Innovateurs*). The researchers believe that a company is not an isolated innovative actor, but part of an environment with innovative capability. The analysis' focus is to understand the technological innovation through cooperation and interdependence between actors of a network and inhabitants in a determined environment.

Regarding the learning regions, they cover the innovative capacity of a regional company which is directly linked to the learning capacity of the region. Therefore, those regions are environments that provide the flow of knowledge, ideas and learning.

The innovation capacity and the regional capacity of learning are related to the density and the quality of the regional productive environment of the network, which includes the cooperation between different actors, like companies, public sector, and others (Landabaso et al. 1999; Ruddat & Schönaue, 2014). In this context, innovation is regarded as an interactive process and as shaped by a variety of processes.

The traditional approach on territorial innovation does not include social innovation, which is the focus of this paper because territorial development is too focused on technological innovation and not on the social result these settings will bring to the local community. Klein (2009) states that from the perspective of social innovation, sectorial approaches are not enough because they must link economic and social actions and have some governance in charge of management.

Therefore, our proposal is to add another territorial innovation concept, from the perspective of social innovation. Figure 1 indicates the characteristics of the concept of territorial social innovation.

Innovation Resources	Regional System of Social Innovation
Centre of dynamic innovation	Communities' capacity to innovate themselves through their own initiatives.
Role of the institutions	Institutions are agents that provide a better quality of life to the population through the promotion and development of innovation.
Regional Development	Through the actions of different actors, it will provide not only economic development, but especially social development.
Culture	Network culture, social and economic interaction. Community's role in modifying the environment.
Type of relationship between agents	Learning interaction; cooperation; network of agents between people and community.
Type of relationship with the environment	Agents' capacity to modify the environment based on a situation deemed unsatisfactory.

Figure 1. Concept of Territorial Social Innovation. **Source:** Created by authors (2015).

By examining the concept of social innovation on the development of communities from different perspectives, it is clear that innovation contributes to the

local social development and consists of citizen's mobilization as a form of organization to fight decay and territorial vulnerability.

2.2 Actor-Network Theory

Territorial social innovation is directly linked to innovation as a process of social construction, since it depends on the interactions and the understanding between groups and social actors involved in answering needs which could not be accomplished by society.

However, the relationship between different actors can be highlighted by making use of the social-network theory. Therefore, considering the related characteristic of social innovation, the study finds it convenient to expose a body of theoretical arguments that enables not only the deepening of the concepts and concerning question, but also the search for methodological and analytical tools. Accordingly, an exposition of the Actor-Network Theory follows, based mainly on authors such as: Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and John Law.

The expression Actor-Network or the *Actor-Network Theory* (ANT) was created in France and aims to understand how objects, more than symbols, materialize themselves in a determined social order through scientific facts. According to Latour (1994), these facts are constructed, but cannot be reduced to the social aspect because it is filled with mobilized objects that aim to build it. For such construction to be understood, it is necessary to study the relationships between the participants of this process.

The ANT aims to understand how actors and organizations, consisted of pieces of the social, the technical and the textual spheres, are gathered into groups and converted into a scientific product that, despite having heterogeneous parts, is similar to a single and compact thing. He also states that the social is nothing more than networks of patterns of heterogeneous materials, in other words, the actors and the networks cannot be conceived separately (Law, 1992).

From ANT's perspective, the elements that create an organization are effects generated by multiple interactions; not something established by the order of things. In addition, the organizations are continuous and incomplete entities, partial and precarious. Analysing them through ANT is an attempt to understand the way by which a scattered and complex system, composed by humans and non-humans, becomes a network (Alcadipani & Tureta, 2009b).

The Actor-Network Theory consists of the following concepts: network, translation, black box and measurement technical equipment. A network means that all resources are concentrated on few places, on the nodes, interconnected with the threads and meshes. These connections transform the few resources into a network that seems to spread everywhere (Latour, 2000). Networks can consist of people, as well as of machines, animals, texts, money or any other material that may come to mind. Besides, it is important to highlight that a network is stronger than its parts on their own (Law, 1992).

A black box is the outcome of associations, disputes, controversies that, little by little, converge into something that can be referenced without discussion (Latour, 2000). Another concept developed by Latour is the measurement technical equipment, which are instruments capable of providing an interpretation of what is being studied, such as a thermometer or a microscope. "The act of defining a new object by the answers it inscribes on the window of an instrument provides scientists and engineers with their final source of strength." (Latour, 2000, p. 150).

The ANT also includes the interpretation given by the fact constructors to their interests and to those of the people they have enlisted. It is possible to say that it refers to the fact participants. In other words, those who wish to build a fact have to involve others in its construction, having, also, to control their behaviour in order to make their actions predictable (Latour, 2000).

The translation process can be understood as four different moments, during which the actor's identity, their possible interaction and the maneuver limits are negotiated (Callon, 1986):

- *Problematisation:* it is not limited to creating questions, but it also determines a set of actors and defines their identities to establish the obligatory point of passage in the relationship that is being built on the network;
- *Interessement:* a set of actions through which an entity attempts to impose and stabilize the identity of the other actors, which is defined by their questioning. Different devices are used to implement such actions;
- *Enrollment:* interest does not lead to alliance or, in other words, effective inscriptions. The term "inscriptions" refers to the device that allows a set of interrelated functions and is defined and attributed to the actors who accept them;
- *Mobilization of allies:* establishment of a representative of all the actors involved in a specific network.

The Actor-Network Theory enables the analysis or the interrelationship between the technical choice and the social destiny of the innovations, through the point of view of different entities that surround the human, non-human, technical and social world. Another important factor is mentioned by Montenegro and Bulgacov (2014), when they state that actors are constantly involved with each other in the formation and the destruction of groups and in their attempt to provide explanations to their actions.

In a recent study on the Romantic Route, Silva, Agostini, Langoski (2016) analysed how different actors, members of the Romantic Route/RS, developed their individual and collective strategies and identified if there is strategic alignment between the cities and the OSCIP that keeps the route. As research results it concluded that there is evidence of strategic alignment, such as participation, leadership, clear communication and commitment; however, the lack of formalization of strategies inhibits one full strategic alignment.

This finding is aligned with the principles of the theory analysed in this article, since the organization studied here is structured within the same organizational strategy, requiring analysis about the different actors involved and their networks.

3 Methodology

To answer the research problem, a predominantly interpretative approach was chosen, since it is the most appropriate to measure the characteristics described in the question (Hair Junior et al. 2005) and to inform on situations, facts, opinions or behaviours of the studied phenomenon. Descriptive studies aim to describe a certain population or phenomenon's characteristics or the establishments of relations between variables (Gil, 1999).

As a research strategy, a single case study was used, considering that its contribution to the comprehension of individual, organizational, social and political phenomena is unparalleled (Yin, 2001).

This particular study was made on the Romantic Route, which is a route that currently covers 14 municipalities of the state of Rio Grande do Sul and aims to encourage the local collective tourism. The collection and the analysis of the study data were qualitative. Qualitative data represents descriptions of things without direct attribution of numbers. Qualitative data is generally collected using some type of unstructured interviews or observation (Hair Junior et al., 2005).

In-depth interviews, analysis of documents and direct observations were made. Yin considers interviews to be one of the most important information sources to a case study, especially if the interviewed assumes the role of an *informant*, in other words, people who provide the researcher with perceptions and interpretations on a subject and that suggest sources in which to look for corroborating evidences (Yin, 2001). Therefore, our interviews were semi-structured, having only a supporting script, based on the theory of social innovation and the translation process, from ANT.

This paper has longitudinal characteristics. It analyses data collected in two different moments: the first gathering happened on January and February of 2011; and the second gathering happened over the months of October and November of 2013. During the first data gathering, 13 people who occupied positions related to the Tourism Secretary and were responsible for the touristic route on the municipalities were interviewed, as well as the director of the Romantic Route. On the second stage, in-depth interviews were made with 13 actors of the municipalities and with the director of the Romantic Route association. The repetition of the interviews two years after the first stage was a choice made because of the municipal elections of 2012, when the people who occupied the positions in charge of the municipal tourism sector changed. Figure 2 shows a summary table of respondents.

Municipality/ Entity	1st Data Gathering – 2011		2nd Data Gathering – 2013	
	Interviewed	Interview Date and duration	Interviewed	Interview Date and duration
Romantic Route Association	President	01/17/11 – 64 min	President	11/28/13 – 47 min
São Leopoldo	Tourism director	01/20/11 – 24 min	Tourism director	11/26/13 – 38 min
Novo Hamburgo	Tourism assistant	02/02/11 – 30 min	Tourism director	11/04/13 – 73 min
Estância Velha	Tourism director	01/21/11 – 47 min	Secretary of Tourism	10/29/13 – 86 min
Ivoti	Tourism assistant	01/18/11 – 17min	Municipal Secretary of Development	10/29/13 – 74 min
Dois Irmãos	Secretary of Agriculture, Tourism, Industry and Commerce	01/21/11 – 50 min	Chief of Tourism Department	10/29/13 – 44 min
Morro Reuter	Tourism coordinator	02/03/11 – 26 min	Secretary of Tourism and Chief of Tourism Department	11/05/13 – 42 min
Santa Maria do Herval	Secretary of Industry, Commerce and Tourism	01/19/11 – 50 min	Secretary of Industry, Commerce and Tourism	11/13/13 – 49 min
Presidente Lucena	Assistant to the Secretary of Education	02/09/11 – 12 min	Secretary of Education, Culture and Sport, Commerce and Tourism	11/13/13 – 49 min
	Culture and Sport		Mayor	
Linha Nova	Municipality did not belong to RR yet		Planning Assistant	11/21/13 – 37 min
Picada Café	Secretary of Education, Culture, Sport and Tourism	02/25/11 and 03/25/11 – 28 min	Secretary of Tourism	11/28/13 – 22 min
			Chief of Chamber	
			Chief of Event Sector	
Nova Petrópolis	Secretary of Tourism	01/17/11 – 24 min	Secretary of Tourism	11/02/13 – 39 min
Gramado	Secretary of Tourism	02/10/11 and 03/25/11 – 45 min	Secretary of Tourism	11/19/13 – 48 min
Canela	Secretary of Tourism	02/10/11 – 28 min	Administrative Agent	11/19/13 – 47 min
			Technical assistant of Tourism	

Figure 2. Summary table of respondents. **Source:** Created by authors (2017).

The Romantic Route currently covers 14 associated municipalities. However, one of the participating municipalities could not welcome the researchers until the closing of this article and another municipality was not associated to the Route in 2011. Because there is no possible comparison to be made, those two municipalities were removed from the comparative analysis. The interviews were semi-structured, having only a supporting script. Afterwards, an analysis of the data was made, in other words, an analysis of the frequency of the characteristics that repeat themselves throughout the text (Bardin, 1977).

This paper has as a fundamental characteristic the gathering and the analysis of the data in a longitudinal perspective. This methodology has the purpose of investigating the data, context and process of change over the course of time in order to explain the occurrence of the main objectives of those changes. The three main points to be stressed in this kind of research cover firstly, the importance of studying change in a context of interconnected analysis; secondly, the importance of temporal interrelationship, in other words, to find the change in time – past, present and future; and, thirdly, the necessity of exploring context and actions, as well as the cause of the change (Pettigrew, 1990).

4 Results

The Brazilian Romantic Route, which covers some municipalities of Rio Grande do Sul, is a project inspired on the namesake route in Germany. The gaucho version covers cities with a predominantly Germanic origin and some cities with touristic tradition.

In order to understand the guiding strategy of the Brazilian version, it is necessary to understand how the Germanic route functions and its guidelines. The *Romantische Straße,* or Romantic Route, is the most famous route on Germany. It follows the ancient pilgrims and merchants' routes, covering cities that, together, protect the centennial history of that region. They are imperial cities with fortified gates and walls that surround historic city centers, gothic churches and an infinity of Baroque churches.

Mayors and representatives of the major cities between Würzburg and Füssen, totalizing 18 municipalities, decided to create a vacation route to present to the foreign visitors, specially the Americans who visited Germany in the post-war period in the 50's. To achieve such an objective, the itinerary was included in many touristic catalogues all over the globe, in addition to an intense advertising of its hotels and hostels (Romantische, 2010).

This project encouraged the economy, the hotel business and work opportunities in the participating region. In 1995, the route's touristic association and University

of Munich did a research with the city halls and the local representatives of ten cities to collect opinions and suggestions for the route. The research's results showed deficiencies, but it also showed positive aspects.

To unite the people of such a vast and heterogeneous area, it was necessary to concentrate on the common aspects. Therefore, the route managers created a *protocol of broad intentions* because, possibly, the majority of the inhabitants could be encouraged to a future local development. Among the cities, the variety of opinions was large and everyone, in any position, could contribute daily to make the route's guests feel welcomed.

The German experience shows one of the fundamental and characteristic aspects of social innovation: its process of diffusion. Unlike technological diffusion, controlled by companies through industrial protection mechanisms and patents, social diffusion creates the possibility of an exchange of knowledge and experiences between the actors.

The Brazilian Romantic Route – RR, located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, was created in 1995 through a proposal presented by many institutions and organizations, such as the State's Tourism Secretary, universities, municipalities, agencies and operators with the objective of developing a collective tourism. The decision of extending the route was supported by tradition, history and the German influence. Clearly, the objective was to expand the touristic experience accumulated specially by four municipalities into the others and, thus, encourage regional tourism.

June 26th, 1995 was the official launch of the Romantic Route by the tourism organizations, the community in general and the public and private entities. In that occasion, an intention protocol was signed between 11 municipalities and the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS) through FAMECOS – Graduation course on Tourism, with the support of the State Secretary of Tourism, the Tourism Assembly of Rio Grande do Sul and EMBRATUR. The objective of the protocol was to produce a map and a touristic diagnosis of the municipalities.

In the beginning of 1996, from the 16th to the 29th of March, a study and observation trip was promoted to the "*Romantische Straße*" in Germany and a committee set out with the objective of observing the means, factors, sectors and productive agents of that region's tourism and to gather financing for the implementation of the gaucho route.

The Romantic Route Association institution – AMRR – was officially created on April 22th, 1996 with the first General Assembly of the participating municipalities of the "Romantic Route Project". At that time, it had 11 participating municipalities, which were: São Leopoldo, Novo Hamburgo, Ivoti, Dois Irmãos, Morro Reuter, Presidente Lucena, Picada Café, Nova Petrópolis, Gramado, Canela and São Francisco de Paula. In March of 1997, other two municipalities were included in the route: Estância Velha and Santa Maria do Herval. In the year of 2013, a new municipality

joined the group, Linha Nova, making a total of 14 participants. Figure 3 shows the RR map, describing the 14 municipalities.

Figure 3. Romantic Route Map. **Source:** Romantic Route (2017)

Based on the collected data, it was possible to gather some relevant information for the analysis, as shown on Figure 4, analysing distinctive aspects of RR when compared to another route, the main actors, the diffusion of results, the relationship to other institutions, the degree os formality of the relationships, the network autonomy, the partnership with other routes and social and economic development.

Considering the definition presented in this paper, social innovation is a new, more effective, efficient and sustainable solution to a social problem and has its value mainly reverted to the society as a whole (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010). It is clear that the Romantic Route was not created with the intention of solving some municipal problem, but to create collective actions among the municipalities in order to advertise and encourage tourism in a collective and non-individual way, through actions between entities private and public. This looks are matched by the meso level the creation of social innovation through public/private partnership (Bonifacio, 2014).

Therefore, the Romantic Route is a touristic enterprise that generates social innovation by benefitting all the municipalities. However, it cannot be considered an SI by itself. Also, the population in general benefits as well, since the tourists that visit the city ends up generating income to the municipality, which is reinvested, through taxes, in the improvement of the local infrastructure.

The municipalities with less touristic tradition seem to glimpse the route's advantage better than the ones with a greater touristic development. For Gramado's tourism secretary the Route does not bring benefit to the municipality yet because it does not have a commercial structure. On the other hand, the smaller municipalities such as Morro Reuter and Santa Maria do Herval now see in tourism a way to develop.

Another point raised by those who were interviewed was the access to resources, since, collectively; it is easier to gain access to resources of public organizations. Despite the positive aspects pointed by those who were interviewed, some questions inhibit the route's functionality, like the difficulty to integrate the municipalities and its commercial consolidation.

It is evident that the entity is aware of its difficulties and has been working on some points. The change into a Public Interest Organization of the Civil Society – OSCIP contributes to the route because it makes the private initiative a participant in its management, thus integrating other actors, which are not connected with political parties. Another positive aspect of this new organizational constitution is the acquisition of public funds.

The actions developed by the route are not integrated to the planning developed by the municipalities because they still tend to forward requests that do not bring collective benefit. Therefore, it is clear that the Brazilian Romantic Route, compared to the German one, still has a lot to develop regarding collective thinking. The German route already has clear guidelines that highlight the importance of collective thinking and the development of collective action and that all the participants have a fundamental part in the process of the project's consolidation.

Even with some political divergences and/or different structures, the actors involved try to contribute to the other members of the route, especially in the aspect of knowledge exchange. That exchange happens when a municipality needs support and/or information to accomplish a certain activity. However, it is clear that there is not an absolute agreement between each actors' point of view on the process.

The route, as an association, has been performing a task with the goal of benefiting the group, such as the realization of a touristic survey in the year 2010, which ranged from a diagnosis of the attractions and the touristic activities and infrastructures to the social and environmental aspects of the cities. The Romantic Route has been consolidating over the years and reverberating positively in the regional tourism, despite the difficulties. It can be concluded that the Romantic Route is a touristic enterprise that seeks social innovation, since it has as its objective the encouragement of the municipalities' tourism. It "seeks to contribute to the prosperity, understanding and the well-being of mankind through those who travel and the communities that welcome them, as well as the social, natural and cultural heritage" (Lage & Milone, 2004, p. 89).

Assuming that the Romantic Route is a touristic enterprise that generates social innovation, it does not fit into Moulaert's et al. (2005) definition of territorial innovation, which has as its objective the satisfaction of human necessities in a regional level. The work of the association in cooperation with other entities does provide an indirect improvement in the quality of life of the population.

Researched Items	Appreciation of the actors	Source
Distinctive aspects of RR when compared to another route	• Collective actions developed by the actors • Public initiative that became public-private • Region privileged by the preservation of culture and traditions • Differences in the municipalities, broadening the possibilities of a diverse itinerary • Consolidated brand	RR Association, Dois Irmãos, Novo Hamburgo, Canela
Main actors	• Initially 11 municipalities and others included later • State's Secretary of Tourism • FAMECOS • University: Graduation Course on Tourism	RR Association, Gramado, Nova Petrópolis
Diffusion of results	• Periodic meetings • Newsletters • Spontaneous Media • Municipal events • Reports	RR Association, Presidente Lucena, Nova Petrópolis, Santa Maria do Herval, Gramado, Canela, São Leopoldo
Relationship to other institutions	• Strong support from the Secretary of Tourism - SETUR • Ministry of Tourism • German Consulate • Association of Commerce • Different entities both public and private • DENIT • Universities	RR Association, Nova Petrópolis, Estância Velha, Novo Hamburgo, Canela, Santa Maria do Herval
Degree of formality of the relationships	• Existence of a contract between the municipalities and the RR • Information exchange happens in a more informal way during events and scattered contacts.	Ivoti, Estância Velha, Dois Irmãos, Novo Hamburgo, Santa Maria do Herval, Gramado, Canela, Morro Reuter, Picada Café
Network autonomy	• Total autonomy to develop advertising material and activities at municipal level • Municipalities use RR's logo without the need of a formal authorization • The use of RR's logo is not obligatory, but there is an informal agreement that everyone should advertise the RR	RR Association, Nova Petrópolis, Ivoti, Estância Velha, Dois Irmãos, Novo Hamburgo, Picada Café, Morro Reuter
Partnership with other routes	• Developing partnership with Santa Catarina state in order to develop an Association in the Rio do Rastro Range • German Route • Technical visit to São Paulo, at the Water Route	RR Association, Ivoti, Canela, Novo Hamburgo, Santa Maria do Herval
Social and economic development	• Developing tourism in a collective way • Rural area appreciation • Appreciation of the citizen as a cultural subject	RR Association, Ivoti, Estância Velha, Picada Café

Figure 4. Summary of the collected data. **Source:** Created by authors (2015).

The Romantic Route, through its actions, provides territorial social innovation as identified in the interviews, the education, infrastructure and cultural aspects and in the relationships between the companies and the business community.

The route differs from the other touristic routes because of its German characteristics that cover culture, gastronomy and architecture, and by its beautiful landscape. An important actor to the Romantic Route is nature itself, the attractions which the natural resources offer urge the tourists to get to know the region. Another aspect that differentiates this from other similar projects, and was pointed by those who were interviewed, is the German identity as a common aspect between the actors of the route.

Another aspect of the project, which aims at bringing benefits to the involved actors, emphasizes the support of different entities that contribute to the development of the actions and of the route. It is clear how important are the partnerships, such as the tourism secretary, universities, governmental entities among others that support it both financially and through specific actions which are fundamental to the development and the consolidation of the route. Additionally, in each municipality there are also partners that help with the route's actions.

The results generated by the Romantic route are not completely tangible to the municipalities, even though they value the actions developed by the route with the objective of increasing the flow of tourists. Another relevant aspect that is not necessarily connected to economic gain, but to gain of another order, like the advertisement of the municipalities in order to attract tourists.

Despite the incentive to collective actions, the municipalities still maintain their work autonomy, for example with the use of the Romantic Route logo. There is no punishment for not putting it in the advertisement material. However, attention is drawn to advantages that this small action brings to everyone.

The actions developed as well as the route's results are communicated to the associates through monthly meetings, reports, newsletters and minutes sent by e-mail; and to the community, it is sent spontaneously through the media in general.

Even though the Romantic Route was not created with the objective of answering some regional human necessity, since it meets this criterion through tourism, some of the route's aspects can be fit into the territorial social innovation resources as proposed in the concept by the authors, such as:

- Innovation dynamics centre: the innovation centre is the Romantic Route Association itself, since it is the supporter of the actions that bring benefits to the municipalities;
- role of the institutions: through the partnership with public and private institutions, such as the Tourism Ministry and local entities, such as

commercial associations, among others, the Romantic Route is capable of innovating socially;

◆ regional development: the Romantic Route cannot work alone. Therefore, it is necessary to engage many actors, such as: the municipalities themselves, the touristic trade, the local establishments and diverse institutions;

◆ culture: the predominant culture is to strengthen the relationships between the associates and the municipalities and among the municipalities themselves, since collective work will benefit the group;

◆ type of relationship among the agents: The bonds between the association and the municipalities are not equal. There are municipalities which are more active in the projects and other which are less. This happens due to political questions and to the level of touristic development of the municipality. This matter, trying to integrate the group further, is a challenge to the current management.

◆ type of relationship with the environment: the Romantic Route has no clear notion of the social issues to be worked in the municipalities. Some questions have been solved indirectly with the growth of local tourism, such as the generation of income and work opportunities and the improvement of the local infrastructure.

The route is not a territorial social innovation, but it has generated social innovation throughout its itinerary. Even though the RR still has a long way to go on the development of the social aspects of the municipalities, they are acting each year so that tourism in the fourteen municipalities happens in an organized, systematic and professional way, thus bringing positive results to the population of each city.

The Actor-Network Theory aims at understanding how actors and organizations, consisted of pieces of the social, the technical and the textual tissue, are gathered into groups and converted into a scientific product that, despite having heterogeneous parts, is similar to a single and compact object (Law, 1992). The Romantic Route initially looks like a road that connects several municipalities throughout its extension of more than 100 kilometres. However, it is the link of an extensive network, consisted of actors and durable objects that represent the result of a project which intends to unite around a single objective the largest number of municipalities with a strong cultural influence of Germany.

The actors of route are: the municipalities (through their legal representatives), the population, the Romantic Route Association, the touristic trade, the entities, the universities, the public institutions, the road, the information centres, the platanus trees and other routes that have influenced and still influence the project and the management. Figure 5 presents the main actors and their functions within the Route.

Actor	Function
Municipality	Municipal agents who develop local tourism and encourage the social and economic development of the cities.
Population	Agents who work in local tourism and suffer the actions of the social and economic developments of the route
Romantic Route Association	Manager and articulator of the Route
Touristic Trade	Agents inserted in the municipalities who participate in the touristic phenomenon, such as hotels and leisure enterprises among others.
Touristic Information Centre	Orienting tourists to the municipalities' attractions and touristic infrastructure
Entities	Encouraging actions
Universities	Generating knowledge to the improvement and development of the route's actions
Public Institutions	Providing resources
Other touristic routes	Management models
Road	Connection link between the municipalities

Figure 5. Actors and their functions in the Romantic Route. **Source:** Created by authors (2015)

One way or another those actors unite, some more than others, with the objective of consolidating the Romantic Route in the national and international market. And for such an action to be completed the leadership role is directed to the route's president, since a person has not naturally risen to the role of contacting the municipalities and encouraging meeting participation and actions by the route. Despite the lack of an informal leadership in the group, it seems the municipalities follow each other's best practices/actions.

As for the symbols that represent the route, it can mention the German culture, the architecture of the municipalities, gastronomy and the platanus tree, which is the symbol of the Romantic Route and has had its leaf transformed into the region's logo and identification of its touristic potential.

Using the main concepts advanced by the Actor-Network Theory, it is possible to consider some relevant aspects of the Romantic Route's composition. It is not consisted only of asphalt; it is filled with meanings and sustained by the action of some agents – individuals and legal entities – and also by objects and explicit and implied messages.

During the longitudinal analysis, the data collection happened in two different moments, 2011 and 2013. The decision of collecting data in two moments was an attempt to identify changes in the structure, strategies, leaderships and actions of the RR, since a new management took over the municipalities in January of 2013. The main conclusion was that the actions remained the same. The information gathered in the second stage of data collection showed no change in the RR's structure. In other words, despite the changes in management, the RR continues to consolidate itself as a social innovation project, having maintained the same difficulties in establishing collective planning and providing a greater balance between the associates over the past three years.

5 Conclusions

Social innovation is a new subject in Brazilian academic researches, but it is extremely relevant, since it aims at presenting solutions in order to improve the quality of life of the population. And for that to happen, the participation and cooperation of many actors is necessary in the generation of social solutions that stay within the communities or society in general.

Therefore, this research contributes to the deepening of this subject as well as proposes a new concept to this area: territorial social innovation. It was also our objective to analyse in which ways the different actors of a touristic route established their strategies, developed their actions and interacted in order to generate social innovation, making this research relevant, since it made possible to verify how tourism, through the municipalities' collective work, organized and systematized by the Romantic Route Association, encouraged improvements for the communities, such as the generation of income and work opportunities and other social factors. The research concluded that the Romantic Route is not a social innovation by itself, but a touristic enterprise that, during its execution and operation, brought about social innovations that benefitted the communities throughout the route.

The inspiration for the Romantic Route was the German Romantic Route, which has already completed 50 years and has some aspects that should be followed by the Brazilian route in order for it to consolidate itself in the touristic Market. Consequently, it will generate more benefits to the cities, such as a more systematic involvement of the communities, hotel, restaurants, commerce and the route association's leaders with the objective of discussing the route's future. The aspect of the political parties was considered a hindrance to the development of the Romantic Route and mechanisms to overcome it must be found.

Through our research, it was clear that the collective tourism, encouraged by the Romantic Route Association, generated some social benefits to certain communities, for example: improvement in the infrastructure – asphalt to poorer neighbourhoods; creation of day-cares that are open at night so the parents can work in the touristic organizations; local private investment, such as commerce, restaurants and hotels that employ local workforce; incentive to rural producers to sell their local products, such as jams and typical cakes to tourists; and school actions so children may grow up learning to value tourism in their city and welcome tourists. Even though some social aspects were verified, it was evident that the public managers had difficulties in listing the results of both the Romantic Route and the work of the tourism secretary towards improving the quality of life of the population. The secretaries are unaware of any study on the municipalities' social necessities and also there is no kind of articulation with other secretaries. Since tourism is a field which integrates other sectors of economy, it is fundamental that integration between those actors arises.

It was clear during the research that the degree of interaction between municipalities and the Romantic Route is uneven. The municipalities with a smaller touristic tradition tend to integrate and participate more in the Romantic Route's actions than the ones who already have a more consolidated touristic scope. Thus, it is necessary that municipal governments, independent of political parties and their tourism consolidation, work in an integrated way to generate innovative social solutions that are reverted to the communities.

That subject was not completely examined in this study. Our suggestion for future researches is the investigation of other touristic routes with the purpose of identifying if they are social innovation or simply generators of social innovation like the object of this study. Or, an investigation of the population that participates and is reached by a certain social innovation and their perception of the social benefits generated by the touristic enterprises which generate social innovation. Another suggestion is to investigate if in the case of the Romantic Route, which served as a basis for the object of this study, the impact on the local development and on the improvement of the quality of life, besides the new services or public processes, which are all indicative of social innovation, were the same as the ones identified in this paper.

Finally, the Romantic Route has the challenge of continuing the encouragement of tourism in the cities, through the collective work of many actors, such as: public and private initiatives and non-governmental organizations, which together can change sceneries unwanted by humanity, through the generation of social innovation that will lead to a better quality of life to the population.

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