

## Papers

# Effects and transformations of tourism in the territorial context of Ibitipoca State Park, Minas Gerais, Brazil

Efeitos e transformações gerados pelo turismo no contexto territorial do parque estadual do Ibitipoca, Minas Gerais, Brasil

Consecuencias y transformaciones generadas por el turismo en el context territorial del parquet estadual del Ibitipoca, Minas Gerais, Brazil

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### Keywords:

Park;  
Tourism;  
Impacts;  
Indicators;  
Ibitipoca State Park (MG).

### Abstract

Ibitipoca State Park (PEIb), in Minas Gerais, is one of the most visited conservation units in Brazil. Over the last years, the park has received an increasing number of visitors, with different social-spatial repercussions. Inspired by this context, this work aims to understand the impacts of tourism in the territorial context of PEIb. This research, based on qualitative method, involved bibliographical and documentary data collecting, participative formulation of an indicator system in order to measure the impacts of tourism in PEIb, data feeding of this indicator system by research in official databases and surveys and interviews with social segments linked to the study context. The results indicate a relevant influence of tourism in the context of the park, both negative and positive, and that many strategic topics are hardly taken into consideration regarding ecotourism planning actions in the park and its surrounding area.

### Palavras-chave:

Parque;  
Turismo;  
Impactos;  
Indicadores;  
Parque Estadual do Ibitipoca (MG).

### Resumo

O Parque Estadual do Ibitipoca (PEIb), localizado em Minas Gerais, é uma das unidades de conservação mais visitadas do Brasil. Nos últimos anos, o parque tem recebido um número crescente de visitantes, com repercussões e transformações socioespaciais diversas. Inspirados neste contexto, o presente trabalho tem por objetivo compreender os efeitos e impactos gerados pelo turismo no contexto territorial do PEIb. Esta investigação, de caráter qualitativo, envolveu levantamento bibliográfico e documental, elaboração participativa de um sistema de indicadores para a mensuração de impactos do turismo no PEIb, alimentação desse sistema de indicadores, através da realização de investigações em bases de dados oficiais e aplicação de questionários e entrevistas com segmentos sociais vinculados à realidade em estudo. Os resultados evidenciam uma influência significativa do turismo no contexto do PEIb, tanto positiva quanto negativa, e que muitos temas estratégicos são pouco considerados em âmbito das ações de ordenamento do ecoturismo no parque e em seu entorno direto.

**Palabras clave:**

Parque;  
Turismo;  
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**Resumen**

El Parque Estadual del Ibitipoca (PEIb), ubicado en Minas Gerais, es una de las unidades de conservación más visitadas de Brasil. En los últimos años, el parque ha recibido un número creciente de visitantes, con repercusiones y transformaciones socio espaciales diversas. Inspirados en este contexto, el presente trabajo pretende comprender los impactos generados por el turismo en el contexto territorial del PEIb. Esta investigación, de carácter cualitativo, involucró levantamiento bibliográfico y documental, elaboración participativa de sistema de indicadores para la medición de impactos del turismo en el PEIb, alimentación del sistema de indicadores, a través de la realización de investigaciones en bases de datos oficiales y aplicación cuestionarios y entrevistas con segmentos sociales vinculados a la realidad en estudio. Los resultados demuestran una influencia significativa del turismo en el contexto del PEIb, ya sea negativa y positiva, y que muchos temas estratégicos son poco considerados en el ámbito de las acciones de ordenación del ecoturismo en el parque y su entorno directo.

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**1 INTRODUCTION**

Over the last decades, protected natural areas such as conservation parks began to acquire different meanings and to play different roles, interpreted by Soja (2008) as *symbolic zones* to the metropolis, gradually becoming spaces dedicated to contemplation and leisure to its neighbouring population. Largely, this has happened due to the loss of quality of life associated with urban living, current environmental concerns and also by new trends in the eco-market that aim to emphasize the importance of keeping routines intertwined with nature (Lopes, 2019; Sancho-Pivoto & Deus, 2015; Siikamaki, Kangas, Paasivaara & Schroderus, 2015; Tavares & Irving, 2009; Soja, 2008).

As a result, the importance of parks to tourism, leisure, recreation, sports-practising and the contemplative experience of landscape grows (Sancho-Pivoto & Alves, 2017), with direct contribution to the economy of several countries, generating increased revenues and raising demands for infrastructure of public use to cater for visitors. Recent studies demonstrate that the economic benefits of visitation currently constitute an important point that favours conservation and development when it comes to territories of protected areas (Souza, Thapa, Rodrigues & Imori, 2018; Semeia, 2014; Cook, 2013; Medeiros, & Young, 2011; Crompton, 2010; Eagles, 2002). The studies by Balmford, Green, Anderson, Beresford, Huang, Naidoo & Manica (2015, p. 1), for instance, suggest that in specific matters such as protected areas on the planet “they receive roughly 8 billion visits/year—of which more than 80% are in Europe and North America (...) these visits generate approximately US\$600 billion/year in direct in-country expenditure and US\$250 billion/year in consumer surplus”. Souza et al. (2018) exemplifies the US case, in 2015, which recorded 307 million visitors in its parks. In economic terms, such number of visitors generated US\$16.9 billion spent and a contribution to the national economy estimated in US\$32billion, US\$11.1 billion in working income and 295 thousand jobs created. In Brazil, according to a study conducted by Medeiros et al. (2011), parks received approximately 3.8 million visitors in 2009 with estimate expenditures of US\$144 and US\$163 million dollars.

The economic factor of visitation, both for parks and for its neighbouring population is to be considered. Despite that, it is also important to consider the logic involving those activities, as well as their potential for transformation and impacts of environmental, sociocultural, and political-territorial nature directly associated with them. This happens due to the fact that in many cases tourism plays the role of a mere reproducer of capitalistic hegemonic processes, clearly favouring economic gains in a way that nature conservation starts to acquire relevance greatly due to its value as a commodity (Lopes, 2019; Sancho-Pivoto & Deus, 2015; Cruz, 2007; Lobo & Moretti, 2008). It seems necessary, in this context, to focus on research addressing the processes of space production, by and for tourism, and also the importance of investments in strategies aimed to apprehend, understand, and measure the pressures as a result of tourism in the territorial aspect

of parks, in a way to reveal their actual impacts on such places and to promote critical evaluations regarding the process of development that is currently in motion, with the purpose of supporting planning actions and management (Sancho-Pivoto & Alves, 2017).

Inspired by this context, the present work aims to understand the influences and transformations generated by tourism in the territory of the Ibitipoca State Park (PEIb), MG, and its direct surrounding zone, more specifically in the District of Conceição do Ibitipoca (a municipality of Lima Duarte, MG), nestled in the vicinity of the only entrance to the PEIb, and as a result concentrates the biggest part of the local tourist flow and supporting tourism services and facilities. Being one of the most visited conservation units in Brazil, the park has received, over the last years, an increasing number of visitors, a situation which has been causing a set of transformations of various natures in its direct influence area. Investigations covering such topic can contribute, therefore, to the unveiling of the logic that surrounds this model of development of tourism in Ibitipoca, as well as its real economic, environmental, sociocultural, political-territorial, and spatial effects with the purpose of generating strategic information to support territorial planning processes in the segments of conservation, tourism, and socio-environmental development.

## 2 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This study is of a qualitative nature and comprised three main steps: participative formulation of an indicator system to measure the impacts of tourism in PEIb; data feeding of the indicator system by conducting database research and fieldwork and collecting and analysing data.

The indicators are variables defined to measure an abstract concept related to a social, economic, and environmental meaning, with the aim of guiding decisions on a certain phenomenon of interest (Sesi, 2010). On the other hand, the indicators simplify, quantify, analyse, and communicate, what makes it possible to understand complex phenomena and making them quantifiable and understandable to be analysed in a given context and also dialogue with different echelons of society. Simultaneously, the generated data and analyses carried out also allow a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest, both in a segmented as well as in an integral/transversal way. Sesi (Idem) points out some advantages in the use of indicators, such as their ability to summarise technical/scientific information; they allow the identification of priority matters; facilitate the dissemination of information, help participation; constitute a useful tool to support decisions, manage processes, and implement public policy, and they are monitoring and evaluating tools.

The process of formulating the indicator system to measure tourism impacts in PEIb involved, at first, a literature review of tourism impacts in Brazilian parks and the topics of research therein prioritised. This analysis supported the recognition of the “state of art” of Brazilian research that aim to understand the nature and the effects of tourism in conservation units such as parks. At the same time, it has been possible to recognise commonly adopted indicators, which helped to consolidate a system of indicators for measuring tourism impacts in the PEIb context.

Subsequently, a participative workshop was conducted involving members of PEIb’s Consulting Administration Board that gathers social representatives who are directly and indirectly linked to the park’s territorial administration and the tourism sector. The objective was to apprehend the most valuable topics by the advisors regarding the influences of tourism in the territorial context of the PA (Protection Area or ‘conservation unit’ in the Brazilian designation). Such approach considers that the content of evaluation needs to be based upon the actual demands from different social groups, in a way that the results can contribute to a better understanding of the local living and at the same time generate inputs for planning and decision making.

Based on the topics with more relevance to the board members, it was carried out a comparative study with the main indicators adopted by secondary researches<sup>1</sup> with the purpose of creating a first proposal of an indicators system in order to measure the impacts of tourism on Ibitipoca State Park.

<sup>1</sup> Barros, 2013; Betti, 2014; Coelho, 2006; Cruz, Mendonça & Filho, 2010; Fenker, 2013; Ferreira & Carneiro, 2005; Filetto, 2007; Fontoura, Medeiros & Adams, 2016; Fontoura, 2008; Giatti & Rocha, 2001; Guimarães, 2009; Hübner, 2007; Jeannot, 2013; Ladeira, 2015; Lobo, 2008; Menezes, 2015; Oliveira, Gómez & Cândido, 2013; Peccatiello, 2007; Rangel & Guerra, 2015; Richter & Souza, 2013; Rodrigues & Amarante-Junior, 2009; Santos & Campelo, 2008; Vieira & Rocha, 2009. To have detailed access to the analyses of these researches, see Sancho-Pivoto & Alves (2017).

Such system encompassed, at first, 23 indicators and 63 sub-indicators distributed in 5 dimensions/indexes, aiming to observe economic, environmental, sociocultural, political-territorial, and spatial tourism aspects in the reality in question, according to Table 1.

**Table 1** – Indicator system for measuring impacts on Ibitipoca State Park. (continue)

| <b>Economic Dimension</b>                               |   |
|---|---|
| Average visitor expenditure                             | Average expenditure on accommodation  |
|   | Average expenditure on food   |
|   | Average expenditure on tours/ leisure and recreational activities                 |
|   | Average expenditure on local products   |
| Tourism-related establishments                          | Number of tourism-related enterprises   |
|   | Percentage of enterprises in the tourism sector                                   |
|   | Growth rate of tourism-related ventures.  |
| Jobs  | Number of people employed in the tourism sector                                   |
|   | Percentage of people employed in the tourism sector                               |
|   | Growth rate of the number of people employed in the tourism sector                |
| Income  | Average annual income in the tourism sector                                       |
|   | Average annual income of people employed in the tourism sector                    |
|   | Growth rate of the average annual income in the tourism sector                    |
| Importance of the Park                                  | Growth rate of the average annual income of people employed in the tourism sector |
|   | Ibitipoca State Park's annual fundraising   |
| Cost of living (inflation)                              | Number of visitors  |
|   | Residents' perceptions of the rising cost of living related to tourism.           |
| <b>Environmental Dimension</b>                          |   |
| Waste generation and management                         | % of use of waste treatment techniques.   |
|   | % of use of recycling techniques  |
| Environmental education actions                         | For local inhabitants   |
|   | For staff   |
|   | For visitors  |
| Conservation Index                                      | Percentage of protected area in the Ibitipoca State Park's buffer zone            |
|   | Protection of water sources   |
|   | Percentage of environmental fines in tourist attractions/ventures                 |
|   | Trampling on species in Ibitipoca State Park                                      |
| State of conservation of trails in Ibitipoca State Park | Siltation   |
|   | Floods  |
|   | Garbage piles   |
| Pollution   | Noise pollution perceived by locals and visitors                                  |
|   | Visual pollution perceived by locals and visitors                                 |
|   | Existence of socio-environmental certifications                                   |
| Adoption of sustainable practices                       | Socio-environmental projects  |
|   | Energy saving actions   |
| Political-territorial dimension                         | Adoption of techniques for water saving.  |
|   | Representativity  |
| Level of democratic governance                          | Parity  |
|   | Level of engagement   |

**Table 1** – Indicator system for measuring impacts on Ibitipoca State Park. (conclusion)

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | Integration and transversality<br>Transparency<br>Tensions and territorial disputes<br>Tensions and confrontations between residents and visitors<br>Public use plan   |
| Tourism-related conflicts  | Effectiveness of the Public Use Plan<br>Monitoring and evaluation<br>Standardisation of ecotourism   |
| Ecotourism planning actions in Ibitipoca State Park                    | Level of integration between actions of planning of the ecotourism<br>Monitoring and evaluation  |
| Ecotourism planning actions in Ibitipoca State Park's surrounding area |  |
| Sociocultural Dimension  |  |
| Valuing and strengthening of cultural manifestations by tourism        | Rescuing of traditions and cultural practices<br>Maintenance of manifestations and cultural practices<br>Cultural exchanges<br>Generation and/or aggravation of social issues  |
| Impact of tourism on the way of life                                   | Changing of routines and sociocultural traditions, rural exodus, abandonment of cultural practices, new habits caused by visitors (consumerism)  |
| Awareness raising toward ecotourism (residents and visitors)           | Actions taken by Ibitipoca State Park<br>Actions taken by local institutions<br>Actions taken by external institutions   |
| Ecotourism training  | Number of establishments that provide training for their staff<br>Professional qualification/ requalification training promoted by Ibitipoca State Park<br>Citizen education for and by ecotourism promoted by Ibitipoca State Park. |
| Role of the Park in valuing/strengthening local culture                | Taken and/or in motion project and actions<br>Support to local initiatives   |
| Spatial dimension  |  |
| Road traffic   | Traffic jams   |
| Landscape  | Changes in the local landscape related to tourism  |

**Source:** The authors.

Each indicator brings along a meaning regarding the complex relationship between tourism and parks, encompassing both the level of influence of tourism in the study context as well as the respondents' perception/evaluation of ongoing activities, with the aim of minimising negative impacts of tourist visitation and also maximising the associated benefits. At the same time, each indicator is comprised of sub-indicators, responsible for gathering a set of information which, after treatment and analysis, starts to express the value or meaning of the indicator in question.

For each proposed indicator, it was created a datasheet involving definitions, interpretations and use, possible limitations during the research, geographical disaggregation, detailed sources of information, periodicity of data, used methodologies in obtaining information and parameters with the purpose of guiding the entire process of collecting, treating, and interpreting the data the study has gathered.

The next step was data collection to feed the system of indicators, which involved data collection in the official institutions, especially in the RAIS (Annual Relation of Social Information) of the Ministry of Labour and also

by CAGED (General Register of Employed and Unemployed); fieldwork data collection through a specific interview with the present manager of Ibitipoca State Park; and administration of a structured questionnaire to Ibitipoca State Park's board members, through Google Forms. With the aid of tablets, we applied a mixed structured questionnaire to businessmen and residents of the District of Conceição do Ibitipoca, and to visitors of Ibitipoca State Park.

It is important to mention that, as this is an exploratory study, essentially qualitative, the samples are not representative in view of the researched universe. And for each considered social segment, it was established different and specific research patterns.

When it comes to the tourist trade in the District of Conceição do Ibitipoca, the study aimed to better understand the engagement of local entrepreneurs with sustainable practices and principles and with a territorial planning of tourism. In this sense, an initial effort to address this reality was made. A semi-structured questionnaire was administered to 23 businessmen, directly and indirectly linked with the tourist market, regarding topics such as: waste generation and treatment, promotion of environmental education actions directed at staff, tourism-related service providers and visitors, adoption of sustainable practices and participation in initiatives dedicated to the maintenance of the ecotourism in the area. According to RAIS and CAGED databases, in 2016, the number of formal enterprises in tourism sector was 57.

A semi-structured questionnaire was applied to eighteen residents of the district, with the purpose of assessing their perceptions on the influence of tourism on the cost of living, level of noise pollution, changes in the landscape, conflicts, valuing and strengthening of cultural manifestations by tourism, influences on the way of life, raise awareness of ecotourism, and road traffic

A special attention was given to the main space of administration and social participation involving the Park: its Administration Board. In this sense, aiming to highlight the political-territorial dimension of the impacts associated with tourism, there was an attempt to assess board members' perception regarding the level of democratic governance, existing conflicts, as well as an evaluation of the activities of maintenance of ecotourism in the park's territory and its surrounding area. Nowadays, the board is composed of 12 representatives affiliated to teaching and research public institutions, private initiative, NGO's, and organized civil society. Through "Google Forms", emails were sent to all the senior representatives of each board chair, with 8 responses. Another contemplated segment was visitors of Ibitipoca-State Park. In an initial effort, 43 interviews were conducted, with the support of two SETUR/MG authorities. The study sought to capture participants perceptions of environmental education activities promoted by the conservation unit, state of conservation of the trails in Ibitipoca State Park, and the level of visual and noise pollution and traffic jams in the District of Conceição do Ibitipoca.

Lastly, it was carried out an interview with the Ibitipoca State Park's head, who got the chance to express his views on the influences of the tourism phenomenon in the Park and its direct neighbouring area, encompassing topics of research in all considered dimensions.

After fieldwork, the project team treated and analysed the gathered data through two main approaches: quantitative and qualitative. Economic, environmental, sociocultural, political-territorial, and spatial dimensions were taken into account.

In quantitative terms, the treatment of information and generated data admitted defining results of each established sub-indicator through the calculation of the averages of events observed in field. For instance: when it comes to the political-territorial dimension, there is the indicator "Planning of Actions of Ecotourism in Ibitipoca State Park", composed of 3 sub-indicators: a. Public Use Plan; b. Effectiveness of the Public Use Plan; c. Monitoring and Evaluation. The calculation of the sub-indicator "Effectiveness of the Public Use Plan" involved the classification by each Administration Board member regarding its efficiency: "Very Satisfactory", "Satisfactory", "Regular", "Unsatisfactory/bad". Afterwards, an average of answers was worked out from all members of the board and later, the sub-indicator was classified. Once the result of each sub-indicator has been classified, the result of the indicator was obtained, also through the calculation of the average of the outcomes of the associated sub-indicators which allow the attribution of a qualification:

VERY SATISFACTORY / SATISFACTORY / REGULAR / UNSATISFACTORY/BAD

In this sense, the treatment and addition of data in sub-indicators and indicators allowed the feeding and definition of the created indicators system, that expresses the current situation of the repercussions and impacts of tourism on the territorial context of Ibitipoca State Park.

It was intended, at last, to deepen the results of fieldwork through the qualitative analysis, with the purpose of pondering over valued elements and issues perceived by different investigated social echelons regarding the interference of tourism in their local context.

### 3 INTERPRETING THE MATTER INVOLVING EFFECTS AND TRANSFORMATIONS UNCHAINED BY TOURISM IN PARKS

According to Coleman (2013), tourism in protected areas can unveil a wide range of positive and/or negative effects and the types of impact are numerous, categorically speaking, and affect the resources of protected areas, economies, local communities, and the tourists themselves. It is possible to recognise, in this sense, an increasing number of studies dedicated to identifying and better understanding the effects and transformations of visitation in parks. In a recent work that aimed to recognise the “state of art” of Brazilian studies on understanding and measuring the impacts and pressures of tourism on parks, Sancho-Pivoto and Alves (2017) reassure the relevance of such topic of investigation, and also state that almost all studies considered<sup>2</sup> expressed different viewpoints about this complex relationship, except for the economic and environmental dimensions.

In general, “positive” aspects such as the generation of income, job opportunities and local economy-booster, as well as the creation of financial resources for maintaining the parks, are key-elements in these studies. Topics regarding the rise in the cost of living, real estate speculation, and influences on the price of land – are frequent in the studies considered, being regarded as negative impacts associated with visitation. On the other hand, when it comes to the environmental aspects, some researches point out tourism as a great contributor to natural conservation, disseminator of sustainable ideas, and its ability to strengthen environmental education practices to local inhabitants and visitors. Canto-Silva & Silva (2017), for example, recognize the fundamental role that visitation can play in the sustainability of PAs and in the development of local communities, but emphasize the importance of investments in research in order to generate more consistent data on the effective contributions of this practice.

Despite the potential benefits generated by visitation, Sancho-Pivoto & Alves (2017) found that this practice is also presented in all researches as an element of great pressure on the physio-natural environment, responsible for intensifying polluting processes and increasing the generation of waste and residues, as well as the demand for goods and services such as water, food, and energy. For Nascimento, Canto-Silva, Melo & Marques (2016), when poorly planned and managed, public use policies can also create risks and negative impacts, in different dimensions like physical, biological, or social. Environmental conservation, the quality of life of the local community and their use in the PAs can be compromised, as the possibility of such degradation may result in discouragement to visitation. These results, as Sancho-Pivoto & Alves (2017, p. 29) point out, “call into question the idea that, in the case of nature-related tourism proposals – which applies to ecotourism, ecological tourism and rural tourism – the impacts on natural attributes are minimal”. In this sense, the authors draw attention to the need to look further and transversally when it comes to tourism, visitation, and parks, considering other analysis dimensions such as sociocultural and political-territorial aspects, encompassing topics like the influence of tourism over routines and economic-productive practices, awareness raising about meanings of tourism development, actions of ecotourism planning, social participation in decision-making, conflicts, and others.

<sup>2</sup> Barros, 2013; Betti, 2014; Coelho, 2006; Cruz, Mendonça & Filho, 2010; Fenker, 2013; Ferreira & Carneiro, 2005; Filetto, 2007; Fontoura, Medeiros & Adams, 2016; Fontoura, 2008; Giatti & Rocha, 2001; Guimarães, 2009; Hübner, 2007; Jeannot, 2013; Ladeira, 2015; Lobo, 2008; Menezes, 2015; Oliveira, Gómez & Cândido, 2013; Peccatiello, 2007; Rangel & Guerra, 2015; Richter & Souza, 2013; Rodrigues & Amarante-Junior, 2009; Santos & Campelo, 2008; Vieira & Rocha, 2009. To have detailed access to the analyses of these studies, see Sancho-Pivoto & Alves (2017).

An initial approach to international publications revealed a set of diverse effects and transformations caused by tourism in parks. According to Deery, Jago & Fredline (2012), some studies aim to discuss social and cultural aspects focusing on tourist-perceptions (e.g.: demand for tourist services, motivations, attitudes, and expectations), host communities (e.g.: job, services, and costs of opportunities), or the interrelation between visitor and local community (e.g.: nature and consequence of such contact). On the other hand, Esteves, Franks & Vanclay (2012) highlight that tourism in protected areas presents a great potential for raising awareness and teaching visitors about values and local traditions, the importance of respect and the adoption of appropriate non-invasive practices between visitors and local community, with direct influence on the maintenance of identity processes and local lifestyles.

This learning process, according to Zeppel & Muloin (2008), may also contribute to strengthening bonds between visitors and natural protected areas, increasing visitors' awareness regarding the respect for fauna and flora and, consequently, helping to perpetuate such natural reserves. The elucidation pertaining to conservation matters inside and around protected areas, directly presented to local residents and visitors, may increase, in this sense, the engagement of such groups when it comes to their diligence and respect for natural resources. Visitors' experiences may possess a transforming character for one's personal growth and for one's health and well-being and, simultaneously, instil an elevated sense of cooperation and support incorporated values in such areas (Liu, Vogt, Luo, He, Frank & Liu, 2012).

Some studies draw attention to the pressures associated with the rise in visitation, be it in parks or receptive centres. As stated by González et al. (2003), the expansion of the tourism segment "ejerce una notoria influencia sobre las variables sociales relacionadas con la calidad de la experiencia recreativa, así como una fuerte presión sobre las características biofísicas y paisajísticas de los sitios donde se desarrollan". Matheus & Raimundo (2017) present important notes about the relationship between visitors X effects about biodiversity conservation, in a comparative study between protected areas from Canada and São Paulo (Brazil). According to these authors, the focus of public use policies on more permissive activities, from Canada's part, did not negatively impact the environment, which is more related to the lack of regulation. In contrast, excessive limitation of public use activities, as observed in state "conservation units"<sup>3</sup> in São Paulo, does not necessarily guarantee a reinforced protection toward natural resources and also curbs benefits that the activity can generate, both in the local community engagement and in the offer of recreational opportunities, as well as in the awareness raising of visitors. The matter of experience and the quality of learning content play, in this case, a major role. Bassotti (2003) carried out a study with international experts to identify the factors that determine the quality of ecotourism related experiences. In general, the results indicate aspects such as: the attraction "authenticity", setting the carrying capacity, information availability, socio-environmental responsibility from tour operators, safety, certifications of good practices, quality services, and local community hospitality.

Deery et al. (2012) also attempted to address the benefits from visitation in parks, warning that, upon many occasions, basic resources (electricity, water, public services) can be channelled to cater to tourists, despite the needs of the host community and other local industries. Other potential threat is the possibility of the local community to compromise its traditional way of life trying to supply the great volume of demand from tourists for cultural "authentic" experiences, arts, and crafts. The boost in the tourist activity may also be responsible for creating disputes, tensions, and conflicts of territorial nature. This happens because the designation of a protected area that is open to visitation can sometimes mean restricting the access of zones traditionally occupied by locals, therefore interfering with material/immaterial daily routines and practices (Rodríguez, Vázquez & Baltazar, 2018).

Standing before the complexity of transformations and repercussions associated with the visitation of natural areas, Cassiano, Silva, Severian & Lopez-Richard (2016) highlight the existence of legislation, regulation, and control measures are of vital importance, becoming prerequisites for developing an adequate structure for tourism management, especially when an integration with the local biodiversity is sought.

<sup>3</sup>The nomenclature "Conservation Unit" was established by the National System of Conservation Units (Law 9985/2000) to treat and characterize Brazilian protected areas.

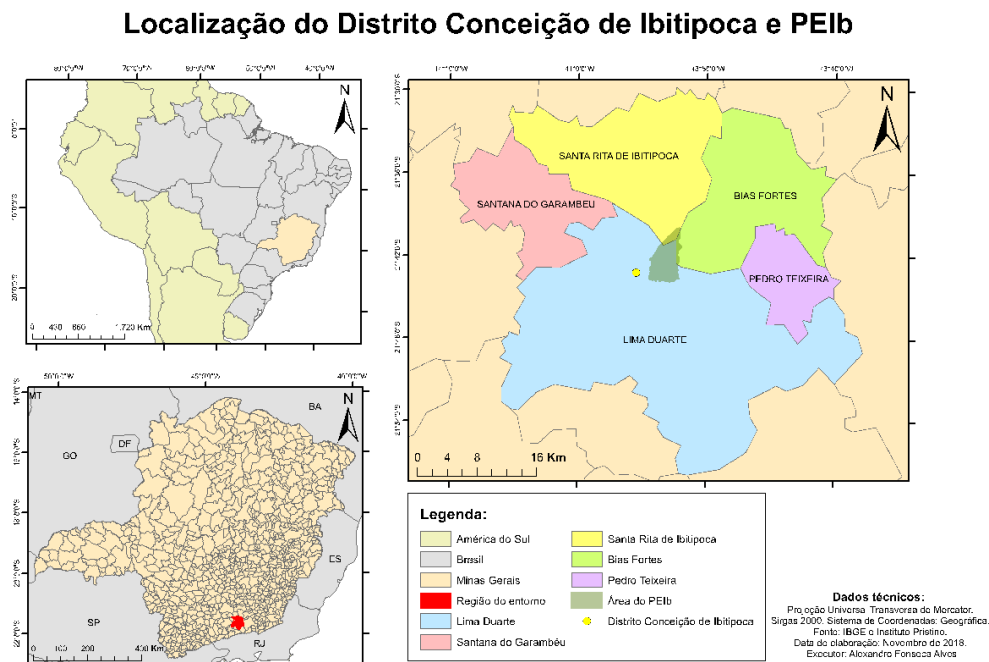


## 4 IMPACTS OF TOURISM ON IBITIPOCA STATE PARK, MG.

### 4.1 Characterizing the study area

According to the Instituto Estadual de Florestas de Minas Gerais [Minas Gerais State Forestry Institute] – IEF (2018), Ibitipoca State Park is nestled in Zona da Mata of Minas Gerais, encompassing the municipalities of Lima Duarte and Santa Rita do Ibitipoca (Figure 1). The park occupies the top of Serra do Ibitipoca, a portion of the lengthy Serra do Mantiqueira, presenting an area equivalent to 1,488 hectares and that divides the basins of Rio Grande and Rio Paraíba do Sul.

Figure 1 - Location of the study area



In the second half of the nineteenth century, “Serra do Ibitipoca or Serra Grande, the ways it is referred to by older residents, started being scenery to many scientific expeditions with the purpose of cataloguing the countless species of fauna and flora found in the region” (Drummond, 1991 *apud Campos, Bursztyn & Delamaro*, 2006, p. 33). In 1964, the government of Minas Gerais sent to Serra an expedition aimed to establish a use for the entire area, considering the creation of a conservation unit. In the following year, the state declares ownership of almost 15 thousand hectares of the district’s green land, and in 1973, they created Ibitipoca State Park (Campos et al., 2006), abiding by the Law No. 6,126. Ibitipoca State Park is the most visited park in Minas Gerais, being one of the most important tourist attractions of the region. The park boasts several caves, waterfalls, peaks, belvederes, natural freshwater beaches, and pools, besides a great diversity of fauna and flora.

Nowadays, the park’s daily limit of visitation is 600 people. The only gateway to the park is 2 kilometres away from the District of Conceição do Ibitipoca (belonging to the municipality of Lima Duarte). According to IBGE (2010), in 2010, Conceição do Ibitipoca’s population was 1,004 people. In the last decades, it has been receiving investments, both from the private initiative as well as actions from the public state authorities, especially when it comes to improving the access infrastructure, public use, and services for tourists. As a result, the district has been experiencing economic growth and a rise in the creation of job and income opportunities due to the emergence and consolidation of tourism, more specifically ecotourism and tourism in natural areas, anchored in the region’s main tourist attraction, Ibitipoca State Park. The district hosts several events which also attract tourists. With the increase in the tourist flow, Ibitipoca has been undergoing a wide set of socio-spatial transformations and in the local way of life.

This context of transformations associated with tourism motivated the present investigation, with the purpose of identifying and better understanding the effects of tourism on Ibitipoca State Park territory and its direct surrounding area, more specifically, the District of Conceição do Ibitipoca.

#### 4.2 Presentation and data analysis

Following the discussion, the study presents the results of database searches and fieldwork – interviews and/or questionnaires with Ibitipoca State Park’s administrator, his advisors, and visitors, as well as residents and businessmen of the District of Conceição do Ibitipoca.

Table 2 presents a summary of the results of the indicators that shows both the level of influence of tourism on the studied context as well as the perception/evaluation of people who were interviewed about the ongoing territorial planning activities, aimed at minimising the negative effects of tourist visitation and also maximising the associated benefits. It was possible to verify a significant influence of tourism on the District and on Ibitipoca State Park territory, with several associated changes. In general, the greatest part of the indicators obtained “regular” as result, which indicated that the tourism phenomenon still plays a minor role and has limited contributions in strategic and defining aspects to consolidate a model of tourism based on the pillars of sustainability.

**Table 2** - Classification of the Indicators related to tourism impacts on Ibitipoca State Park territorial context.

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Economic Dimension              | Cost of living (inflation)   |
|                                 | Importance of the Park   |
| Environmental Dimension         | Waste generation and management  |
|                                 | Environmental Education Actions  |
|                                 | Conservation Index   |
|                                 | State of conservation of trails in Ibitipoca State Park                |
|                                 | Pollution  |
|                                 | Adoption of sustainable practices                                      |
| Political-territorial dimension | Level of democratic governance   |
|                                 | Tourism-related conflicts  |
|                                 | Ecotourism planning actions in Ibitipoca State Park                    |
|                                 | Ecotourism planning actions in Ibitipoca State Park’s surrounding area |
| Sociocultural Dimension         | Valuing and strengthening of cultural manifestations by tourism        |
|                                 | Impact of tourism in the way of life                                   |
|                                 | Awareness raising toward ecotourism (residents and visitors)           |
|                                 | Specialised ecotourism training  |
|                                 | Role of the Park in valuing/strengthening local culture                |
| Spatial Dimension               | Road Traffic   |
|                                 | Landscape  |

**Caption:** VERY SATISFACTORY / SATISFACTORY / REGULAR / UNSATISFACTORY/BAD

**Source:** The authors.

In the following, the results of each dimension of analysis are discussed.

### a) Economic Dimension

When it comes to the Economic Dimension, at first, we aimed to capture the perception of residents and local entrepreneurs in the District of Conceição do Ibitipoca about possible changes in the cost of living due to the growth in tourism. Most of the people interviewed recognise the role of the sector in the rise of cost in the local lifestyle, in the practiced prices and in the prices of land. This happened due to the fact that the tourism phenomenon underwent a transformation, especially in the last 20 years, in the location's main economic sector, attracting a considerable number of visitors, which results, in the vision of the people interviewed, a rise in the practiced prices in a general way, adjusted from the consumer purchasing power of non-residents. At the same time, it is necessary to regard tourism as responsible for generating a great part of jobs and temporary job opportunities, revenues and income for most of the locals, an aspect which according to the people interviewed, also contributed to elevating the cost of living in the district.

This perception about the representativity of tourism for the local economy is reflected upon the data involving establishments, jobs and income associated with tourism, starting from sources RAIS and CAGED. In 2018, the number of formalised enterprises in the tourism sector in the municipality was 57 (tax of growth of 90% in 2006, when 30 companies were registered). The establishments of tourism represent around 10,1% of the total of companies in the municipality. When it comes to the number of jobs generated in the sector, in 2016 there were 196 workers formally registered (tax of growth of 94% in 2006, when the number of people employed by the sector was 101), which represents around 85 of the total of jobs generated in Lima Duarte. The annual income of the tourist sector in 2016 was R\$ 877,00 (tax of growth of 77% in 2006, when the income was R\$493,0) and the annual average income in the sector was R\$ 1.207,0 (tax of growth was 145% in 2006, when the average income of the sector's employees was R\$ 492,38).

It is important to mention that these data refer to the municipality of Lima Duarte and not specifically to the District of Conceição do Ibitipoca, since the consulted sources do not permit the stratification of information on a district level. Anyhow, due to the representativity of the tourism sector in this district, which holds most part of the sector's enterprises in the municipality, it is believed that this closeness may generate important data, revealing the economic impacts associated with tourism.

This economic scenario also influences the manner how the people who have been interviewed evaluate the quality of life in the district, which admittedly improved after the consolidation of tourism as the main local economic activity. This improvement is associated with the access to new information, income and opportunities generated by tourism.

Another investigation topic was comprised of measuring the representativity of Ibitipoca's State Park, both from the viewpoint of the people who have been interviewed and the collection of data regarding visitation and revenue raising in this conservation unit.

The recognition of the importance of the Park in economic terms was unanimous, being a main regional tourist attraction. Every evolution of the tourism segment in the District of Conceição do Ibitipoca is directly connected to nature, landscape contemplation and practices of leisure and relaxation.

It is important to reinforce that regarding the conduction of the field research in July of 2018, in practically all conversations and interviews, a topic or recurrent worry was regarding the definition, in April 2018, of the diminishing of the maximum number of visitors per day allowed in Ibitipoca's State Park, which went from 1200 to 600 people. Such definition is part of the term of agreement (TA) signed between the Public Ministry of Minas Gerais (MPMG) and the State Institute of Forests (IEF), causing a great indignation in the district's inhabitants by the direct association with the reduction of the number of tourists in Ibitipoca. The expression "they want to kill our golden goose", also very present in the speech of locals, suggests an interpretation of the importance of the economic sector of tourism in the location. Facing this adverse and threatening scenario from a tourism attractions' perspective, local leaders began to take action with the purpose of reversing such court order.

Regarding Ibitipoca's State Park annual fundraising derived from visitation, there was a considerable increase in the last 10 years, going from R\$ 27.315,00 to R\$ 1.856.708,50 in 2018, the same applied to the number of visitors, which went from 34.722 people in 2008 to 104.657 in 2017. In 2018, the number of visitors was 85.598, decrease associated whit the diminishing of the maximum number of visitors per day

allowed in the park. We also sought to produce an estimate of the economic impacts related to visitation generated in the District. We have conducted interviews with 43 visitors in Ibitipoca's State Park, attempting to measure the average expenditure during their trip: average of expenditures with lodging – R\$ 446,00; food R\$ 221,00 and expenses related to the purchase of local products – R\$ 62,00. Although it does not qualify as a considerable sample, this array of data allows identifying, even if superficially, some of the economic effects of tourism on the District and on the Park. It is important to note that, inspired by the methodology adopted by Souza et al. (2018), there is already an on going effort to expand the number of interviews with the Park's visitors, with the purpose of reaching a substantial sample capable of unveiling the actual effects and economic repercussions of tourism in this case of study, which will become the object of a future work. Anyhow, given the considerable number of visitors and the relevance of tourism on the local economy, it appears necessary to better understand the aftermaths of this process in other analytical dimensions, stated below:

## **b) Environment Dimension**

When it comes to the environment dimension, we have sought to apprehend and measure the impacts unchained by tourism on the District of Conceição do Ibitipoca and also on Ibitipoca's State Park's territory and its direct surrounding area (buffer zone).

In the District's case, the results suggest the great impact produced by tourism in terms of environment and, at the same time, incipient actions with the sake of minimising the pressures on natural resources. The biggest part of business ventures that participated in the research (65,21%), for example, discharge sewage generated directly into the river. On the other hand, there is a common concern among respondents regarding solid waste management, more specifically regarding the adoption waste separation techniques for recycling, relying on the city's garbage collecting service. The cases of noise pollution in the District Serra do Ibitipoca are very rare, in the opinion of the people who have been interviewed. The increase in the noise as a result of tourism occurs mainly during the weekends, holidays and vacations, when there is an upsurge in the amount of visitation. Such perceptions are linked to loud music played in local pubs and in some holiday residences rented by visitors. Nonetheless, many stated that they turn a blind eye to this situation considering the fact tourists seek those moments of entertainment. Nevertheless, most of the residents who have been interviewed question the "Ibitipoca Off Road" event – an annual occasion that gathers motorcycle riders and trekkers. According to testimonies, these tourists don't respect the District's traditions and pace of life, starting fusses and making a lot of noise with their motorcycles, and thereby disturbing the locals' lives.

In a general way, environmental education actions involving residents, entrepreneurs and visitors are still incipient and when they exist, they acquire only a guidance character, very informally. In this same direction, only a few business ventures related to tourism adopt sustainable practices like environmental education, development of socioenvironmental projects and techniques to save water and electricity.

The results suggest, therefore, that the management of tourism in the District does not show worries with possible impacts and pressures on natural resources. In the same sense, the tourist's experiences show a low level of environmental education-driven actions, contributing in a very insufficient way to the raising an environmental awareness in people involved in the tourist segment.

Reflecting upon the relationship between tourism and Ibitipoca's State Park, it's been possible to verify that the environmental education actions promoted by the conservation unit are specifically directed at their visitors and still are sporadic, since they depend upon the public's interest of paying a visit to the visitors' centre, a place that gathers a lot of information about the Park, its history, geological and geomorphological formation, species of fauna and flora, etc. There aren't, nevertheless, lectures or formal strategies intended for visitors.

Regarding Ibitipoca's State Park surrounding area, the conservation unit does not promote any education-driven action directed at residents and local entrepreneurs at the moment. The administrator mentioned a project carried out in schools of the region, but which got interrupted due to the lack of interest from the schools themselves. Similarly, nowadays, the Park does not present any socioenvironmental project in the region, which highlights its distance from neighbouring communities.

The level of conservation in the Park's direct surrounding area is high, according to the administrator's judgement, who mentions, as an example, the few numbers of environment fines imposed upon attractions and establishments. Nevertheless, a disoriented growth in construction sites and condominiums have created degrading circumstances, especially in the District of Conceição do Ibitipoca. For instance, there are no actions intended for protecting water sources in the Park's direct surrounding zone, which would mean an important step to guarantee the protection of biodiversity and the supplying of environmental services.

When it comes to the state of conservation of Ibitipoca's State Park's trails, the administrator stated that less than 10% present any significant damage such as silting or enlargement: "most of the cases aren't caused by anthropic use. They are mainly caused by flash floods and rainfall, and not by trampling". The visitation, nonetheless, does not represent an element of pressure on the Park's natural attributes. Besides, the presence of garbage on trails does not pose as a worrying factor, they are an exception, according to the visitors who have been interviewed.

Another object of investigation consisted in researching sustainable practices related to saving strategic resources such as water and electricity. The Park does not possess any formal processes for saving power. The administrator showed interest in the subject, but declared he has little autonomy and scarce financial resources to carry out projects of such nature, although he considers them fundamental.

It becomes crystal clear, in the Park's case, its tendency for isolation from the local context, besides a reduced role-playing as a dispenser of conservational and socioeducational practices.

### c) Political-territorial Dimension

In a political-territorial dimension, the first topic discussed involved an evaluation of the democratic governance level of the Ibitipoca State Park's Board, which includes aspects such as representativity, level of engagement, transparency, integration, and transversal actions.

Regarding parity and the level of representativity, half of the interviewed advisors recognise that the foundation of the board incorporates different social segments. However, the biggest challenge still resides in the difficulties pertaining to exercising the actual representativity in the Board. Despite the representativity, the main obstacle was the prevalence of individual interests over defending the interest of the represented social group.

Another aspect considered was the level of engagement. According to respondents, the participation and involvement in debates, decisions, and directions are satisfactory, although there is a clear recognition that some board members could be more proactive in debates and therefore cooperate more. It is important to note that two of the interviewees questioned the consultative nature of the administration board: "*Yes, there is engagement, however it is clear that even though we operate as a consultative board, not always the opinions and suggestions of topics to be discussed are taken into consideration by the conservation unit's administration*" (excerpt from the report of one of the Park's advisors). This feeling externalised by the advisors could mean direct obstacles to the social engagement of the Board, since the decisions and directions are not legitimised by society's representatives, once they do not feel valued in this administration area.

When it comes to the level of integration and transversality of the Board's actions, most of the people interviewed stated that there are only rare cases of projects carried out along with other representation levels in the Park, despite the recognition of similar topics, issues, and goals. On the other hand, another advisor recognises that this low effectivity is linked to the lack of initiative from the advisors themselves, in terms of stimulating group works in the name of the institutions they stand for.

Transparency in the Board is also another topic of investigation. According to the interviewees, there is a certain inefficiency and even lack of interest in building a publication routine about procedures and administration initiatives in Ibitipoca State Park, especially in terms of publicizing the access to information and accountability, key-aspects to the consolidating democratic governance processes.

Another topic of research was the possible tourism influences regarding the generation of conflicts and tensions of territorial nature. In a general way, the occurrences lie in the uprisings and disputes for construction plots, land and even between locals themselves, born and raised in the District and new residents, not born in Ibitipoca, but who settled in the area, opening up some sort of business venture in the tourist area or who

simply acquired real estate as a second home. In the view of those interviewed, the repercussions of the arrival of new residents and second home growth are already felt in terms of landscape changes and alteration of local traditions.

One of the measures adopted to regulate the use of land in Ibitipoca State Park was the establishment of a buffer zone, pointed as an element that stirred great tension. That is because such initiative ended up imposing restrictions in terms of use, impeding the land fractionation for commercial purposes, be it for creating construction sites or for the direct sale of plots to non-residents.

The matter pertaining to the reduction of the maximum number of visitors per day in the Park has arisen again, representing an element of conflict, since such decrease tends to result in direct socio-economic losses to the District's population. The economic segment of tourism is highlighted in such debate. One of the people interviewed said that, despite the Park's relevance in terms of tourist attractions, the unit ends up being a "competitor" of the district since most of its visitors stay there all day long, which prevents them from "spending" their money outside of the Park or from even visiting other regional attractions.

It is important to highlight the standpoint of one of the interviewees, mentioning that tourism constitutes the main source of income to the District, which makes him to turn a blind eye to the negative impacts unchained by this sector. The relationship between locals and visitors was pointed out as satisfactory, without major conflicts or tensions, a lot due to the tourists' profile, who take more interest in ecotourism.

Lastly, the advisors' views of ecotourism management actions were examined, both in the Park and in Condição do Ibitipoca. It is peculiar to notice a certain unfamiliarity from some advisors regarding the existence of plans directed at organising and regulating the visitation to the Park. Even those who declare to know such tool, turned their attention to the visitation carrying capacity, something recurrent in debates. Topics such as zoning, infrastructure, trails, environmental education activities, quality of experience, for instance, were not mentioned. Similarly, initiatives for assessing and monitoring visitation in Ibitipoca State Park were considered insufficient, an aspect which compromises a better comprehension of this activity in the Park's territory, as well as planning actions.

In the opinion of the majority of the people interviewed, the actions meant for managing ecotourism in the Park's surrounding area are sporadic and have no deep effect on the level of the structuring and planning of tourism in the District, a factor which contributes to the uncontrolled development of the sector, at the mercy of private initiatives that not always have the common good in their agenda. Besides this, the absence of periodic researches on impacts of tourism make it difficult to fathom its repercussions and the establishment of proposals to tackle the generated problems. At the same time, Ibitipoca State Park's advisors recognise that integrated actions of territorial planning, capable of encompassing different sectors with representativity in the Park's context, are either inexistent or still infrequent. The Board itself has been mentioned as an institution that could congregate efforts from different niches due to its representativity and its potential to handle actions in the Park's territorial context. However, proposals in this sense are still very common.

#### **d) Sociocultural dimension**

In the perception of most of the people interviewed, tourism does not constitute an element that directly interferes with rescuing and maintaining cultural and religious traditions. Religious celebrations, for example, recognised as a symbol of identity and culture in the District, do not possess a tourist vocation, associated with a traditional practice from locals. Only a few visitors are drawn to the region to engage in such festivities. Contradictorily, tourism was cited as an element that endangered the continuity of culture-related traditions in Ibitipoca. This is because residents, once they are directly involved in the tourist service sector, end up not having enough spare time to participate in the preparation of religion/culture-related events.

When it comes to the cultural exchanges between residents and visitors, it has been possible to grasp two different perceptions. Some of the people interviewed recognise that the contact with tourists provides an encounter with the "different", "it's hard to escape from this exchange of cultures" – an aspect that produces knowledge and learning about other ways of life, ideas and traditions, which ends up enriching the act of hosting, filling it with symbolic value. Other residents, on the other hand, state that these exchanges depend

a lot on the visitor's profile. In many cases, this encounter is simply the provision of basic services, without any interest of approximation from the tourist.

The study attempted to verify a possible relationship between tourism and social problems like violence, drugs, and alcohol abuse. According to locals, the District does not undergo issues like prostitution and violence. Nonetheless, tourism was cited as the main responsible for drugs, a problem that has been causing concerns, especially regarding kids and negative influences.

Another investigation topic involved the measuring of the level of interference of tourism on local routines, like rural evasion, abandonment of cultural practices, and new habits that result from visitors' "influences", like consumerism. All residents recognise that the influence is inevitable, and most of them stated that transformations in practices and traditions are high. Tourism has become the District's main economic sector, generating income and jobs. At the same time, traditional activities of crops cultivation and breeding of animals that receive little aid from social and rural policies, ended up losing strength. This economic dependence upon tourism impacts the compromising of cultural traditions and the relation of sociability between residents and the favouring of economic aspects. It became clear the prevalence of financial aspects of the tourism phenomenon over the created sociocultural ties.

Lastly, the study sought to investigate the existence of actions aimed at raising awareness toward ecotourism. In general, residents' perception is that, currently, the actions taken are intermittent and not very recurrent, and have no relevant effect on the organization and on the quality level of the tourism in the District of Conceição do Ibitipoca. SEBRAE and "Rede de Hospitalidade" play a leading role in this context, which is made up of local entrepreneurs, who, on a specific occasion, carry out training specifically aimed at entrepreneurs and tourism trade staff in the region.

At the same time, there is a blatant recognition of the low participation and little involvement on the part of the residents when some type of initiative in this sense is proposed. To some interviewees, this is due to the results of past conflicts involving the management of the park and local population, which ended up undermining this relationship and even undertaking group actions. In general, there is a recognition that Ibitipoca State Park has little action in initiatives aimed at enhancing and strengthening local culture. The head of the Park himself acknowledged that, currently, practices related to the valuing and strengthening of local culture are not being developed.

### **e) Spatial Dimension**

The spatial dimension included indicators related to road traffic and changes in the landscape due to tourism. According to respondents, there are frequent traffic jams at weekends, long holidays and also in the high season of events, a situation that bothers the residents and compromises part of the local tranquillity.

Most residents also recognised that changes in the local landscape are directly related to the advent of tourism in the District. There were unanimous perceptions about the disproportionate increase of construction sites and condominiums, which have compromised important ranges of native vegetation and scared away fauna species, through the insertion of different urban material aspects in the landscape and the increase of the number of inhabitants in the local. Some statements refer to such assessments: "high rate of change, many green areas are gone. A lot of animals are gone! Animals have nothing to do with it" (...) "There are too many construction sites, you see houses everywhere" (excerpts from participants' interviews).

Another aspect highlighted by some interviewees that also contributes to the change of the landscape of the District is the increase in the number of billboards advertising tourism services. Strategic places are, therefore, disputed by businessmen for the placing of panels, signs, banners, and informative signs. The Park's manager confirms such alterations. According to his statement, the changes are significant, either because of the strategies for advertising tourism-related enterprises, which end up contributing to the visual pollution in the District, or because of the increase in construction: "unfortunately, Ibitipoca has lost its typical architectural features, it is not as pretty as it was 20 years ago. Along with tourism, there was an increase in the number of homes and rental houses, more things began to be built, occupying almost 100% of the land, all the advertising contributes to visual pollution, the combination of these factors generates this, although some sights are pretty" (excerpt from the interview with the head of Ibitipoca State Park).

## 5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The results obtained in the present research display a significant influence of tourism on the context of Ibitipoca State Park, both regarding the generation of benefits and the increase of several social and spatial problems, and that many strategic topics are still not taken into account properly in the isolated and occasional planning actions related to ecotourism, especially in the District of Conceição do Ibitipoca, where the tourism impact is greatest.

It became evident that the economic segment of tourism acquires centrality, dictating the direction of the ongoing development process. For this reason, it is possible to note a certain short-sightedness from the different interviewed sectors, in positioning themselves critically and proactively about the effects caused by the phenomenon of tourism, especially in relation to influences in the local way of life, daily practices and maintenance of the District's landscape quality. Few were those who showed concern about the possibility of definitive compromise of the characteristics that constitute the identity of the place, if the current logic that permeates the development of tourism is maintained. That happens because this logic has played its role of reinforcing essentially economy-driven models, based on the reproduction of capitalistic and on commodified relations, generating inequalities, situations of socio-spatial exclusion and degradation of natural attributes. This reality is very close to the case of Bonito (MS), studied by Lobo and Moretti (2008), in which the model adopted is characterised as "tourism in natural areas" "disguised" as ecotourism, therefore, still far from its potential of raising environmental awareness of those involved, stimulating co-management, and territorial planning processes, generated democratisation of benefits, conservation of biodiversity and respect of the history, pace of life, and identity of the place.

Despite being a first attempt to approach the complex relationship between tourism and parks, it has been possible to verify that the in-depth and multidimensional approach adopted allowed the generation of a set of information with great potential to inspire debates about the current development model and its consequences on a local level. In a broader perspective, this approach may also contribute to a better understanding of the manifestation of the tourism phenomenon in the context of protected natural areas and to the challenges in the proposals that are more closely linked to ecotourism principles. Recognition of the economic, environmental, political-territorial, socio-cultural, and spatial effects of tourism can support the different agents of space production in taking group actions for planning, monitoring, and evaluating tourism, with the aim of reducing the negative effects on natural resources and local ways of life.

The challenge lies precisely in making viable periodic studies about the impacts of tourism as a strategy to provide important contributions to ecotourism planning and the elaboration of products and services more aligned with the perspective of socio-environmental responsibility, capable of generating tourist experiences with higher quality and more linked to nature and socio-cultural practices of the visited territories. This can represent a pathway toward the consolidation of development processes committed to nature conservation, with the improvement of tourist experiences and optimising the quality of life of native populations.

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