



**REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN A GEOPARK  
TERRITORY: A POSSIBLE PATH BASED ON  
COMMUNICATION AND ACTIONS WITH  
THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

**DESENVOLVIMENTO REGIONAL EM UM TERRITÓRIO GEOPARQUE:  
UM CAMINHO POSSÍVEL A PARTIR DA COMUNICAÇÃO E DAS AÇÕES  
COM A COMUNIDADE LOCAL**

# REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN A GEOPARK TERRITORY: A POSSIBLE PATH BASED ON COMMUNICATION AND ACTIONS WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

## DESENVOLVIMENTO REGIONAL EM UM TERRITÓRIO GEOPARQUE: UM CAMINHO POSSÍVEL A PARTIR DA COMUNICAÇÃO E DAS AÇÕES COM A COMUNIDADE

Flavi Ferreira Lisboa Filho<sup>1</sup> | Mauricio Rebellato<sup>2</sup>

Received: 08/09/2023

Accepted: 07/26/2024

<sup>1</sup> PhD in Communication Sciences (UNISINOS).  
Professor at the Federal University of Santa Maria.  
Santa Maria – RS, Brazil.  
E-mail: flavi@ufsm.br

<sup>2</sup> PhD student in Communication (UFSM).  
Santa Maria – RS, Brazil.  
E-mail: mauricio-rebellato@hotmail.com

### ABSTRACT

Seeking the development of a street, a neighborhood, a city or a region is part of the actions of those who identify with the place where they are located or who maintain some type of relationship with it. In a Geopark territory, this collective action seeks to boost the economy, social recognition and the preservation of what already exists, but which often, due to lack of knowledge, resources or incentives, does not reach sustainable levels of development. In this article, from a communication perspective, the aim is to present some strategies adopted in Geopark territories that promote sustainable development. Methodologically, the study is based on qualitative, bibliographic and documentary research. From Cultural Studies, the importance of communication is discussed as fundamental to achieving sustainable development. In general, it is concluded that every action needs to be articulated and thought out with the encouragement of educational institutions, public authorities, of the business sector but fundamentally with and for the community.

**Keywords:** Communication. Development. Geopark.

## RESUMO

Buscar o desenvolvimento de uma rua, um bairro, uma cidade ou de uma região faz parte das ações daqueles que se identificam com o local onde estão inseridos ou que mantêm algum tipo de relação com ele. Em um território Geoparque, essa ação coletiva busca impulsionar a economia, o reconhecimento social e a preservação daquilo que já existe, mas que muitas vezes, por falta de conhecimento, recursos ou incentivos, não alcança patamares sustentáveis de desenvolvimento. Neste artigo, a partir do viés da comunicação, objetiva-se apresentar algumas estratégias adotadas em territórios Geoparques, que promovem o desenvolvimento sustentável. Metodologicamente, o estudo está embasado em uma pesquisa qualitativa, bibliográfica e documental. A partir dos Estudos Culturais, discute-se a importância da comunicação como fundamental para que se alcance o desenvolvimento sustentável. De forma geral, conclui-se que toda ação precisa ser articulada e pensada com o incentivo das instituições de ensino, do poder público, do setor empresarial, mas fundamentalmente com e para a comunidade.

**Palavras-chave:** Comunicação. Desenvolvimento. Geoparque.

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between economic gain, in parallel with the conservation of natural and landscape resources and the appreciation of the cultural heritage of a region, has aroused different debates around proposals that integrate heritage and public policies for the sustainable development of a territory. Guimarães (2005), highlights that among these proposals, since the early 2000s, the creation of Geoparks has spread worldwide as a sustainable alternative for territorial development, based on the conservation and tourist use of geological and geomorphological heritage, and also on the organization of resources and tourist enterprises that are established in their surroundings, associated with cultural heritage.

According to UNESCO, a Geopark is a geographically cohesive territory, which contains geological sites of recognized national and international importance, valued in their aspects of protection, sustainable development, education and culture. The fundamental lines of action involve local communities, so that this is a project of everyone and for everyone. Currently, in Brazil, there are five UNESCO Global Geoparks, Araripe (2006) in Ceará, Seridó (2022) in Rio Grande do Norte and Southern Canyons Trail (2022), which covers municipalities in Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina, Caçapava (2023) and the Fourth Colony (2023), both in Rio Grande do Sul, and Uberaba (2024) in Minas Gerais.



For UNESCO, through a greater awareness of the importance of the region's geological heritage in history and society, a Global Geopark grants its inhabitants a sense of pride and belonging in relation to the region and strengthens their identification with the territory. Although the mobilization for a Geopark territory does not have origins only in community bases, it is possible to rely on the thought of Gohn (2011), who states that when there is a union, identities are created for networking action, identities for groups that were previously dispersed and disorganized and, by carrying out such actions, they project, in their participants, feelings of social belonging.

Individuals insert themselves into society, organize and mobilize themselves through struggles for recognition, thus, when the moral perspectives of behavior are not met, that is, there is no recognition or economic and social valorization, there are possible ruptures in the social consistency (Bressiani, 2011). In this way, the conflict or, in this specific case, the will to change, emerges as an instrument that projects social development towards a sense of more developed social relations: "the theme of recognition becomes central to the thematization of the empirical and immanent criterion, that is, inscribed in the logic of reproduction of the social structure itself, which defines what should be considered social and moral progress" (Mattos, 2006, p. 15).

This rupture that leads to a mobilization can be called collective action, even if it is also articulated by institutions, but always with the presence of the community. This action enables forms of organization and expression of social, political and cultural demands. For Bourdieu (1984), when the dominated classes break their acceptance of dominant values, "everything suggests that an abrupt drop in the objective in relation to subjective aspirations is likely to produce a break in the tacit acceptance that the dominated classes (...) previously conceded to the dominant objectives and thus make it possible to invent or impose the objectives of genuine collective action" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 168). Through this rupture in the social structure, social actors collectively seek to convert cultural and social values into concrete economic valorization of these communities.

In addition, it is in a context of crisis of capitalism that the concept of sustainable development originates, which main premise is to guarantee the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). For this, it is necessary that all entities involved work in an articulated way in this mobilization,



in order to achieve this objective.

The main emphasis of this mobilization is on tourism, according to Chaves and Lisboa Filho, 2022, “more precisely, geotourism, in line with the protection of the environment, the promotion of education and research, the generation of employment and income, in addition to the preservation and dissemination of our rich material and immaterial heritage” (Chaves; Lisboa Filho, 2022, p. 52). This occurs through the encouragement of local economic activities, as the flow of tourists tends to increase, as well as the demand for local products and typical handicrafts of the region. The authors cited above also mention that the circulation of products is an efficient way to strengthen the sense of belonging in the territory, “enhancing the links of native populations with their local communities, generating positive effects, such as environmental preservation and the reduction of rural exodus, having a direct impact on the belts of misery that surround urban centers” (Chaves; Lisboa Filho, 2022, p. 53).

A fundamental point for this development strategy to occur is the need to work in a network, involving processes of circulation, articulation, participation, as well as association and communication between the social actors involved. The collaborative sense, increasingly, is shown as a potentiality for the organization of initiatives in the territorial consistency formed by relationships, where joint actions, developed from various causes, carry out significant social transformations, since they occur through the exchange of information, institutional and political articulation for the implementation of common projects.

Moreover, to the importance of the agenda mentioned, we also seek to know what has already been worked on the theme of communication and development in an articulated way, and in relation to Geoparks territories. For this reason, in the first semester of 2022, we carried out a state of the art, quantitatively surveying the works published on the themes of development and communication throughout the country, through the CAPES Catalog of Theses and Dissertations, from the SciELO database, delimiting the period between 2013 and 2022. Then, we looked for the thesis banks of Community and Federal universities in Rio Grande do Sul, which have courses focused on communication and development, in view of the location of the territories considered in the study. From an analysis of the works by keywords and summary of each thesis, we arrived



at 16 works that support some of the strategies mentioned in this article. We observed that few studies mention communication as a form of transformation or development of a certain group or community, which would not bring relevant contributions to the advancement of this state of the art.

In this text, we will address possible paths for sustainable development, through other research focused on the concept of Geopark. In addition to this introduction, the manuscript is organized into five more sections. In the first, what motivates the search for sustainable development is addressed. In the second item, paths for development are presented, based on research developed in recent years at the Federal University of Santa Maria. In section three, we will talk about the identity of individuals, as it is considered that from this identification with the territory it is possible to take collective action with a view to social and economic valorization. In the next stage, the importance of communication is highlighted so that a Geopark can achieve community involvement, media visibility and be a means for development. The following are the final considerations with the main conclusions of this article.

## THE SEARCH FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In a global context, proposals have been sought for decades for a development that, according to Peruzzo (2014), has adopted several denominations over the years, but which centrally seeks to solve problems related to inequalities, whether in international relations or in the internal contradictions in countries, generated by the strategies of operationalization of the productive forces, of the relations of production and of the instituted political-cultural systems (Peruzzo, 2014. p.170).

Among these denominations, the term sustainable development gains repercussion, in the face of serious global problems, caused by economic and political structures, associated with poverty and the environment. In Brazil, the term is used mainly in discussions of public policies, government programs, civil organizations, and social movements, responding to the “predatory capitalism of natural resources and intersubjective relations in societies” (Peruzzo, 2014. p 171).

Talking about sustainable development also involves the type of use and management of natural resources that go through the perception that a certain society has about these resources, in addition to the conduct of human beings in relation to nature, mediated by their perception. For this reason, when



thinking about territorial management and development strategies, there is a need to consider aspects related to the perception and subjectivity of the communities involved.

The conservation of the natural characteristics of the landscape, as well as the conservation of the specific way of life of local residents, is fundamental for the reproduction of the collective identity of this community. Thus, the planning, management and protection of natural and built landscape resources essentially involves the interrelationship between human beings and their landscapes, based on aspects concerning environmental experiences and experiences, attitudes, behaviors and valuations related to objective and subjective dimensions, tangible or not, but intrinsic to the life dynamics of different populations and their respective cultures.

Bernáldez (1985), Guimarães (2005) and Carros (2005) highlighted in their researches the necessity to involve the subjective aspects of populations in the process of management and planning of the territory, signaling that, in many nature protection strategies, for example, the failure to consider the perception of the communities involved led to the generation of socio-environmental conflicts or the intensification of those already existing.

The identity collectively constructed by local subjects means a way of politically enhancing actions and resources for sustainable territorial development. And, sustainability here refers not only to the environmental sphere, but also, to the territorial sphere, that is, “respecting the capacity of the socio-cultural system to reproduce a transformation of identity” (Saquet, 2006).

As a strategy for development, supported by Peruzzo (2014), we insist on the importance of communication, as an articulator for sustainable development, but it is far beyond a technician function. Therefore, during the elaboration of this research, it was also sought to know how the themes of communication and development have been worked at the doctoral theses of Public and Community Universities of Rio Grande do Sul, through an exploratory study of academic research to understand if communication has had space in this context.

However, after the analysis of all the doctoral theses of the Graduate Programs in Communication and Graduate Program in Development of the public and community universities of the state, it was possible to verify that the two themes are almost not articulated, which reveals a gap in the studies of the area of communication in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. It was also



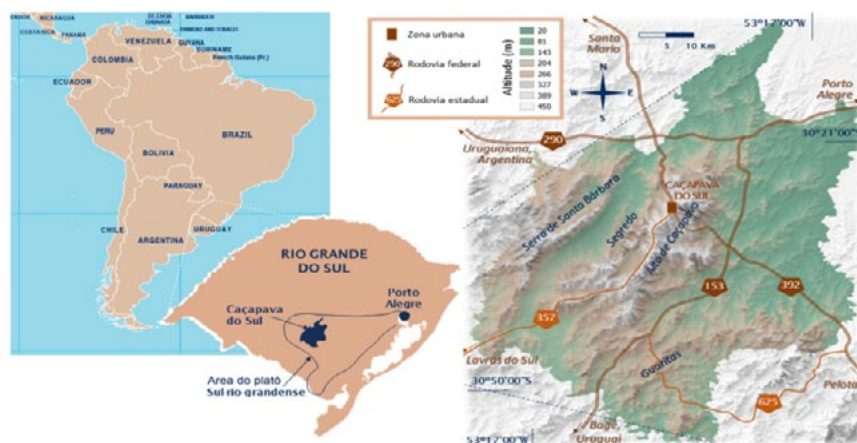
possible to go further, with the analysis of studies in the area of development, where research unfolds on different themes and with biases through various areas of knowledge, but which address little or nothing about communication as a path to sustainable development. In relation to communication, some analyzed works present the theme through more technological bias, highlighting the evolution of the means of communication, over the years, as important for the development of a given community to occur. Others, however, start from a more humanistic bias, in which the theoretical articulation of research is built on a perspective of social transformation of realities, in most cases bringing minority groups as objects of study.

On the other hand, all authors, to a greater or lesser level, mention communication as a way to give voice to communities and social groups. It is through it that, even if implicitly, it was possible to identify transformations and development processes in the groups researched. In addition, it is mainly with this foundation, that of transformation, that communication must be planned, thought and put into practice in the territories.

## STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: PERSPECTIVES FROM OTHER RESEARCHES

Since 2018, the Federal University of Santa Maria, through the Pró-Rector of Extension, has taken on the initiatives of the Caçapava Geopark and the Fourth Colony Geopark as strategic projects. In Figures 1 and 2 we can understand their locations. Figure 1: Map of the Caçapava Geopark region:

Figure 1 | Map of the Caçapava Geopark region

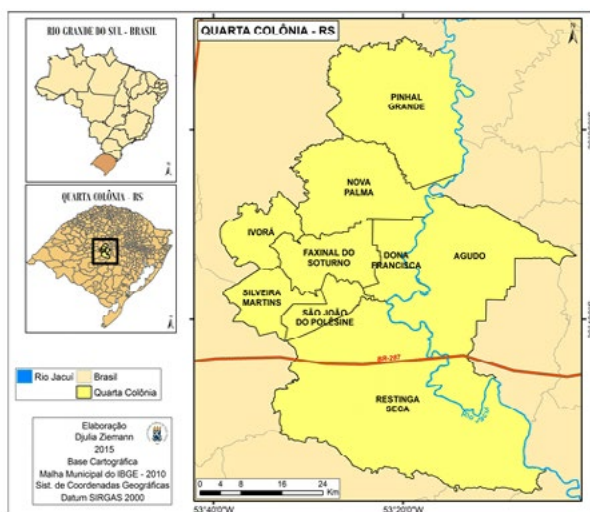


Source: Dossier of Geopark, 2022





**Figure 2** | Fourth Colony Geopark



Source: Zeilmann (2015)

Regarding the distribution of the population of the municipalities of the Fourth Colony, growth rate and percentage of municipalities in relation to the region, according to IBGE population statistical data (2000-2020), the Fourth Colony reduced its population in most municipalities, with the exception of Nova Palma. When we relate the percentage participation of the region with that of the State in the three decades, it can be said that it registers a decrease in the historical series, in which the Fourth Colony, in the years 2000, 2010 and 2020, had the indices of: 0.62%, 0.57% and 0.52%, respectively. The Fourth Colony had a balance between the population of the urban and rural areas, with 49.95% and 50.05%, respectively. In rural areas, all the municipalities of the Fourth Colony reduced their population, and on average the region reduced by 16.11%. We can deduce is that, in this period of 2000-2010, the region suffered a significant rural exodus, with a migration, both for its urban population and outside the region. We ratify here the necessity to have a balanced economic matrix, greater diversity and productive and commercial modernization in the search for a dynamic economy.

Regarding to the Human Development Index (HDI), in 2019, the Fourth Colony is classified as a High HDI (from 0.700 to 0.799), with the municipalities of São João do Polêsine, Nova Palma, Silveira Martins, Ivorá, and Faxinal do Soturno in this framework. The municipalities of Dona Francisca, Agudo, Restinga Sêca and Pinhal Grande are classified as medium HDI (from 0.600 to 0.699). The Fourth Colony has a disparity between its municipalities in the Human Development Indexes, however, the region is

able to improve its performance with bolder public policies, aimed at sustainable development.

As for the geosites, they reveal the paleontological richness of the region, with fossils of vertebrates, invertebrates, plants and ichnofossils, which outcrop in the rocks of the Triassic period (geological period that extends from about 252 to 201 million years ago of the planet) and Jurassic (approximately between 201 and 65 million years ago) of great international scientific relevance, among them, the oldest predatory dinosaurs in the world.

When it comes to the Caçapava UNESCO World Geopark, Caçapava do Sul is among one of the oldest cities in Rio Grande do Sul. The municipality is also recognized for its relationship with the history of the state and the cultural identity of Rio Grande do Sul, due to the important role during the Farroupilha's Revolution.

Currently, Caçapava has three assets listed by the State Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAE), they are: the Ulhôa Cintra House, also known as the Farrapos' Meeting House; Saint Assunção Mother Church and the Caçapava Forum. The geomorphological uniqueness of the territory is associated with marine and continental sedimentary rocks, dated back more than 500 million years, in an area of paradisiacal beauty and ecological importance, known as Pedras das Guaritas and Serra do Segredo. There are fossils of giant sloths, extinct animals that is called mega fauna, located in the streams of the municipality.

The first data of the territory reveal that it has an area of 3,047 km<sup>2</sup>, an estimated population of 35 thousand inhabitants and its economy is based on limestone mining and cattle raising. It is one of the municipalities with the largest planted area of olive trees in southern Brazil, including an olive oil processing industry. As for the HDI, it is below the average of RS, around 0.704, especially low rates in education. The multidisciplinary initiative seeks integration with the community, with the public authorities and with potential entrepreneurs. For this to occur, actions that respect the characteristics of each territory are planned. Through the University's performance in the regional community, the offer of products and services is qualified, contributes to the preservation of cultural and natural heritage, which leads to income generation and enables the permanence of young people in the territory, fostering the community search for sustainable development.



According to the University, the intention of the strategic proposal also seeks to reinforce the interest of UFSM researchers in the theme, and to institutionalize the initiative to promote endogenous local development with the communities. For this reason, the UFSM team carries out extension actions in the two territories mentioned. In addition, many researchers from the University have directed their work to Geopark territories, which contributes to the development perspectives from different scenarios and areas of knowledge.

In this sense, we have listed nine theses and dissertations presented in the last two years and available in the Theses and Dissertations Bank of the Federal University of Santa Maria. The idea is to present here the main contributions pointed out by some researchers regarding ways to foster the development of communities. One of the contributions is from Rossato (2022), who states that a Geopark needs to stimulate actions to value memory. She revealed, in her work, that the older people of the communities have a greater concern in preserving the history of the territory, customs and traditions. According to her, “younger people are focused on other interests and do not always worry about understanding or listening to the great-grandparents “ (Rossato, 2022, p. 150). And this preservation and appreciation of heritage goes through the “systematic education of the school, bringing a more scientific and historical content to the facts that happened and remembered by the descendants of Italian immigrants in our community” (Rossato, 2022, p. 150).

Ziemann (2020), identified in his doctoral thesis, presented to the Graduate Program in Geography of the Federal University of Santa Maria, the social and institutional arrangements that are present in the territory of the Fourth Colony Geopark. According to the author, the region has several social actors who appropriate the space to generate income, through accommodation, gastronomy, trails, tours and the sale of local products. These factors show that the community recognizes the tourist potential of the territory and, based on this, promotes various activities. However, it found structural problems from the lack of tourism planning in the municipalities,

(...) This lack leads to situations such as the non-existence or lack of maintenance of signage and tourist infrastructure, as well as roads, mostly side roads, with poor traffic conditions due to the large number of potholes and in some cases even broken bridges (Zieman, 2020, p. 311).



Tourism planning is an important tool for the government to identify and recognize the tourist potential and the local actors involved. Only from this can “planning and proposing integrated actions that promote local well-being, cooperative work, and network actions” be established (Zieman, 2020, p. 311). The author also recommends more training programs and qualification of actions aimed at tourism, such as courses that can strengthen and diversify “existing activities, as well as to support the Geopark candidacy” (Zieman, 2020, p. 311).

One of the points identified in the territory of the Caçapava Geopark was highlighted by Degrandi (2018). The author showed that although there is an appreciation of social capital, represented by

(...)bonds of trust, union, solidarity, participation in networks and carrying out collective work (...) it is perceived that there is little communication and articulation between the institutions and Associations that work with the management and planning of tourism in Caçapava do Sul and, more broadly, in the Pampa Gaúcho region. (Degrandi, 2018, p.269.)

In this sense, it suggests aligning existing initiatives and creating efforts so that financial and social resources can be better used, so that they contribute to the advancement of projects that are in progress. Another important point to foster development in a Geopark is to articulate the civil society associations present in the territory, to ensure the achievement of a greater network of knowledge exchange and the establishment of partnerships for the development of the various economic activities related to tourism. (Degrandi, 2018. p.269).

Da Silva (2022) highlights that through geoparks, territories have had their economy transformed, mainly improving rural communities, traditional populations, indigenous populations, and women. In addition, specifically about women, the author states that they are trained, and as a result, they are involved in the development actions of geoparks, “especially with regard to the search for gender equality and female empowerment, that is, in the achievement of SDG No. 5 and the Women and Geoparks Guideline” (Da Silva, 2022, p. 257). But for happing this development, it is necessary to ensure that women have decision-making roles. Moreover, this is only possible through “geoeducation, training, encouraging female participation at all levels and (...) In the creation of geoproducs” (Da Silva, 2022, p. 259). According to UNESCO’s definition (1999, p. 2), geoproducs can be conceptualized as the sustainable production of innovative handicrafts that have a geological



connotation, for example, and they are the ones that, for Da Silva (2022, p.259), “directly and indirectly impact economic growth and job creation in the territories.” Geoproducts can also contribute to female empowerment through the creation of handcraft products and social organization.

A proposal for the economic valorization of the inhabitants is made by Da Silva (2022), who believes that it is “pertinent and urgent” to use cultural services to repay the providers of these services and mediators within the scope of the trails in the Fourth Colony Geopark for the protection of this landscape. This retribution is not only a motivation, but transforms the use of the land and leads residents to make more harmonious uses with the landscape of the territory. A system of retribution also includes the systemic environment that establishes relationships. The author highlights the importance of educational institutions in the production of interpretative materials that help trail drivers and suggests awareness that it is not necessary to move people away from the place to make room for nature. “It is urgent to destroy fences and build bridges with the subjects who are part of the landscape (...) at the same time that the local community begins to understand the importance of protecting the landscape” (Da Silva, 2022, p. 257). In addition, he points out that it is necessary to create an alternative market that goes beyond the trails, through another form of use.

The system of economic valorization could work through a pilot project of remuneration for landscape services, with each municipality being responsible for financing through resources from environmental funds and for the search for new financiers. For this to work “it is necessary to have the support of a democratically created public policy, and it takes government commitment and investment to institute and maintain the logic of retribution for those who protect the landscape.” (Da Silva, 2022, p. 259).

Heritage enhancement, through preservation and conservation, can be an effective tool for local and regional development. For Toniazzo (2021), heritage is a local resource that only finds its reason in its integration into development dynamics. In this sense, the valorization of heritage is an alternative for development that can occur in a sustainable and endogenous way.

To this end, social actors must develop activities with the community, in order to promote local culture and development. “Considering the active involvement of social actors in a dialogical process, of collectivity and a sense of belonging are promising levers for the preservation of cultural heritage



for the endogenous and sustainable development of the territory of the Fourth Colony Geopark” (Toniazzi, 2021, p.59).

In “Design and identity: wool crafts in the Caçapava Aspirant Unesco Geopark”, Grigolo (2021) argues that the territories need to carry out awareness actions about the importance of the place, and also, adopt promotion and dissemination strategies, which will lead to an appreciation of cultural heritage.

Ruiz (2021), found in his master’s research that some websites of municipalities and services belonging to the Fourth Colony Geopark did not have basic information considered necessary for the user. The author considers that these portals are important for the dissemination of tourism products in the regions studied, and that the lack of information can affect the attraction of tourists, bringing negative impacts on the economic potential of the tourism sector in the region. Some works produced in other higher education institutions in the country also give clues about the promotion of development in Geoparks territories. Gallo (2019), argues that the development caused by a Geopark crosses several areas, contributing to environmental conservation, awakening awareness among residents, generates income for the inhabitants, develops the region and enables tourists and researchers to visit the territory, giving national and international visibility to the region, “especially given the archaeological, paleontological, geological and scenic relevance of its sites and Geosites” (Gallo, 2019, p.185).

The author is one of the few we found in the survey carried out, which addresses the importance of communication for the sustainable development of a geopark. According to her, to mobilize communities it is necessary to develop community communication. “However, it is very difficult to obtain satisfactory results in a given period of time or success, through the organization of community communication, without a team in this task” (Gallo, 2019, p. 186). In addition, this team made up of professionals in the field of communication must reinvent its journalistic positioning and develop a “geoconservative” and “geotouristic” awareness in the community. It is necessary to arouse interest in content related to the Geopark, make the community search, understand, stay informed, and thus be able to propagate ideas focused on the importance of the territory.



Regarding the preservation of the territory's memory, Duarte (2012) believes that this is a challenge, and that the involvement of the local community, network management, the sharing of information and experiences, and the development of new studies are necessary. According to the researcher,

(...) the involvement of the Local Community is important because it must be truly involved from the conception of the accreditation process, since the experience of the Araripe Geopark shows that involving it after the accreditation of the Geopark with UNESCO is a very big challenge for the management team and that part of the difficulties faced in the Territory of the Araripe Geopark is related to the difficulty of involving the residents, artisans and people who live and work in the territory, after all, it will be of little use to draw the attention of the national and international media, tourism agencies, researchers, national and foreign universities, if the local community does not know what a Geopark is, its importance, and the benefits it will bring to the local community and to society as a whole (DUARTE, 2012, p. 166).

Duarte (2012) attributes to public managers a way to promote sustainable development. The author, when describing the potential of the handcrafts made in the Araripe Geopark, states that it is up to “the managers to encourage, through specific projects and notices, the development of handicraft products with the theme of the Geopark” (DUARTE, 2012, p. 139). A strategy adopted by a certain territory may or may not work in another, but the proposals presented in each research above, and supported by UFSM's initiative with the Geoparks territories of the central region of Rio Grande do Sul, bring clues and paths that can culminate in a balanced local development. These strategies will also depend on something specific to each territory, its identity. The way in which political, economic, religious, cultural, educational institutions act and relate and, above all, its people, will be decisive for the success of the proposed actions.

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY IN A GEOPARK TERRITORY

When we think about the relationship between culture and the construction of identity, we can see that culture normalizes actions and suffers various influences from globalization processes, so it is important to understand how these relationships between subjects and individuals are represented. To talk about identity in this case is to talk of community involvement. From the identification with the territory, the individual tends to participate in the actions, engage with the proposals, suggest changes and work towards collective development.



The construction of the individual's identity depends on the constitution of a habitus and the various available capitals, which will determine specific positions and places within society, thus involving disputes and negotiations that imply real consequences for individuals and for the formation of collectivities. This construction retains and reconstructs social patterns of recognition, under which the subject can claim respect in his sociocultural environment. These experiences go through the denial of rights and social devaluation. As Honnet (2009) states, they affect dignity and prevent or limit the subject's self-realization. However, they may have the potential to foster reflections, the result of moral indignation, which exerts emancipatory force with a view to recognition.

For Spink (1995), the individual is not alone when he elaborates his social representation, he is inserted in a defined sociocultural and historical situation, that is, in a group of belonging, which is responsible for part of his representation. In this case, the possibility of social representations participating in the construction of social reality and the formation of the identity of the subjects lies in their power of creation. Therefore, the function that constitutes the identity of the subjects, performed by the various forms of representation, acts in a natural way to conceptions of the world conditioned by historical factors. For Spink (1994), these forms of thoughts are, concomitantly, socially structured fields that can only be understood when referring to the conditions of their production and to the structuring nuclei of social reality, in view of their role in the creation of this reality. In the field of communication, these social representations are dynamic structures and can vary according to each context and historical period.

In view of the evidence exposed so far, it is necessary to consider how the media can or cannot interfere in the construction of this identity process. Setton (2005, p.88) states that the media context acts as a source for the acquisition of cultural capital, "as it offers a multiplicity of knowledge, constituting a new perceptive and cognitive reality of contemporary formations for the individual". The power relationship that the media assumes can be explained through Bourdieu (1984), who suggests that some concentrations of symbolic power are so great that they dominate the entire social landscape; that seem so natural that they are difficult for people to perceive. Thus, symbolic power acts as the power to construct social reality. The field of power is the space above and beyond the specific fields where the forces that dispute influence over the interrelations





between the fields operate: the state is the main point of reference, which is why it is essential that development strategies are associated with public policies that respect the particularities of the territories, while encouraging their progress.

With regard to the media, it constructs a representation through different symbolic systems and meanings, so the subject can choose new positions based on the cultural, social and economic changes that occur in the world and in people's lives, through the most different representations of events (Hall, 2016).

Representations act in this construction and imply identities, because, as Hall (2000) defines them, they have to do with the way in which we are represented and how this representation affects the way, each one can represent themselves. Alexandre (2001) states that the mass media have become fundamental as a form of social cohesion, as they "deal with the manufacture, reproduction and dissemination of social representations that underlie the very understanding that social groups have of themselves and of others, that is, the social vision and self-image" (Alexandre, 2001, p. 116).

In view of this, we can affirm that the construction of collective identities acts as an aspect of location for the group, where the subjects meet, identify themselves. When the territory is a strong aspect to forge identity, we can then understand that there is a territorial identity, a bond of belonging that unites the subject to his or her space of reference. At this point, belonging and social representation are key categories. Especially because we understand that identity, can retain and understand the resulting spatial forms, as references and a sense of identification of the self, the other and our own.

## **COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT: SOME INITIAL ARTICULATIONS**

From the technological development of the media, communication has taken on a greater role in society (Carniello, 2022), configuring social, political, and economic processes. In this context, it is necessary to reflect on how communication has been related to the development of the most diverse territories.

Communication, for at least four decades (Peruzzo, 2014), has been treated as an instrument for development from a critical point of view in Latin America. The means of communication directly



and indirectly stimulate mobility and the development of the economy and can be used for the benefit of the city and in interaction with other constitutive forces of society.

From this perspective, the communication intends to align itself with a development model that “only makes sense if it promotes equality in access to wealth and the integral growth of the person and of all, that is, if it has the human being as its mainspring” (Peruzzo, 2007, p. 49). To measure this development aligned with communication, Carniello (2022) proposes aspects that need to be observed. In addition, public institutions are also part of this access to communication, through accountability to the population with a view to public transparency. Communication facilitates the generation of personal and group processes of social change in which people are protagonists and the most favored by the benefits.

In the moment that it is understood that culture is governed by power structures, and that communication is part of this process, it is possible a critical reading to the point of questioning media representations. According to Lisbôa Filho (2022), it is the representations that bring processes of silencing and erasures in their discourses. The media helps in the process of mediating the lived experience.

The experience in the area of communication, developed in the Araripe Geopark, also serves as a strategic possibility to be followed in the search for development. Duarte (2012), shows that the Communication of the Araripe Geopark is done through a monthly online newsletter, available on the Geopark’s own page, on instagram and facebook, and also through press releases in general. In a community way, it is done through interpretive panels, tourist and geological itineraries, websites, recreational activities, cordel poetry, exhibitions and projects already mentioned.

Sousa and Alves (2014) state that in addition to popular education, sustainable development must occur from the engagement and commitment to the involvement of the people in important decisions for society, promoting spaces where they leave invisibility. For this, communication, with the correct use of its means, and its social understanding, will be the main tool to achieve these objectives. Community communication deals with groups inserted in the same social context, of thought, experiences and behaviors and is specifically aimed at the community, locality, in order to bring accurate local information; give voice to their group as a reinforcement of identity.



## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The central region of Rio Grande do Sul has two major initiatives in favor of sustainable development: the Caçapava Geopark in Caçapava do Sul and the Fourth Colony Geopark, which covers nine municipalities. Moreover, it is in this important moment of regional community mobilization that we seek to bring contributions here, we present clues on the paths to sustainable development in a regional context of a Geopark territory, based on scientific research recently developed at the Federal University of Santa Maria.

Communication is articulating and strategic for development, which, in turn, functions as a hope, a search originated from a community mobilization that aims to achieve both social and economic development. In addition, the Geopark is what brings together, aggregates and involves social actors in search of development.

When a community thinks about strategies for the management of this territory, it needs to consider mainly the perception of the actors involved. This is essential to maintain identification with the place, motivating the planning, management and protection of cultural and natural heritage. As Bernáldez (1985), Guimarães (2005) and Carros (2005) consider, not considering the perception of the communities involved can lead to the generation of socio-environmental conflicts or the intensification of existing ones. Thus, all decisions need to be discussed, proposed and carried out based on what the social actors want for the territory.

In this way, the identity will be built and legitimized, and politically it will be able to enhance the actions and resources for this long-awaited development. As fundamental for this to occur is communication, as a source of political articulation, access of all decisions, communication to the environment outside the territory, a form of inclusion and income generation. Having found that communication combined with sustainable development is still little worked on, encourages us to continue research in the area and, through a more humanistic bias, collaborate for a perspective of social transformation of realities.

Through the nine researches presented and their main contributions, the importance of the Federal University of Santa Maria is reinforced, which since 2018, through the Pro-Rectorate of Extension, has taken over the initiatives of the Caçapava Geopark and the Fourth Colony Geopark. In addition, fulfill one of the objectives, which is to reinforce the interest of UFSM researchers in Geoparks. Research that



breaks the environment of teaching and research, and is also converted into extension, through dozens of projects, providing the social insertion of the Graduate Programs. It also reveals the importance of stimulating community actions for the preservation and appreciation of memory and local and regional identities, especially among the youngest. Likewise, municipal public authorities also need to invest in tourism planning, paying attention mainly to access conditions and infrastructure.

The social role of transformation that a Geopark has is very great. It is evident in Da Silva (2022) how much rural communities have been transformed, as well as traditional populations, indigenous populations, and women. Moreover, it is up to public managers to encourage, through specific projects and notices, the development of products and services belonging to the territory.

The power relationship, made explicit by Bourdieu (1984), is also an invitation to think about the voices that are silenced, even in these territories. If there is mobilization in favor of development, it is because there are many flaws and hierarchical processes in the social construction of this place, which lead to inequalities. For the author, some concentrations of symbolic power are so great that they are difficult for people to perceive. And, it is precisely these invisibilities and silencing that researchers need to be aware of.

Sustainable development will only be achieved through the progress of the territory through community awareness and mobilization, and the monitoring of the actions carried out, demonstrating the importance of collective articulation. A Geopark, for UNESCO, must contribute to the development of the region where it is inserted, with emphasis on tourism (geotourism) combined with the protection of the environment, the promotion of education and research, the generation of employment and income, in addition to the maintenance and recognition of natural and cultural heritage.

Geoparks are also an efficient way to strengthen the sense of belonging of individuals to that territory. For Lisboa Filho (2022), a development strategy based on the Geopark, when associated with heritage education, is a powerful tool that strengthens the bonds of belonging, stimulates cultural citizenship and can generate employment and income. In addition, it brings a series of benefits to municipalities, such as the appreciation and preservation of public spaces.



## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

ALEXANDRE, Marcos. **O papel da mídia na difusão das representações sociais**. Comum - Rio de Janeiro - v.6 - n.º 17 - p. 111 a 125 - jul./dez. 2001.

BERNÁLDEZ, F. G. **Invitación a la ecología humana: La adaptación afectiva al entorno**. Madrid: Editora GAR, 1985.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **A distinção: crítica social do julgamento**. São Paulo: Edusp; Porto Alegre: Zouk; 1984.

BRESSIANI, Nathalie. **Redistribuição e reconhecimento - Nancy Fraser entre Jürgen Habermas e Axel Honneth**. Caderno CRH, Salvador, v 24, 2011.

CHAVES, T.; LISBOA FILHO, F.F. **“Educação patrimonial: reencontro da comunidade de Restinga Sêca com a obra e vida de Iberê Camargo”**. Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, 2022.

DA SILVA, Elisângela Lopes. **As mulheres e o Geoparque Caçapava Aspirante Unesco. Uma relação alinhavada pelo artesanato**. Tese de doutorado. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Geografia, da Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, 2022.

DA SILVA, Greice Kelly Perske. **Proposta de retribuição por serviços da paisagem no Geoparque Quarta Colônia (RS BRASIL): uma análise a partir dos serviços culturais em trilhas**. Tese de doutorado. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Geografia. Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, 2022.

DEGRANDI, Simone. **Capital social e desenvolvimento territorial endógeno: desafios e perspectivas para a criação de um geoparque em Caçapava do Sul, RS (Brasil)**. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Geografia, Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, 2018.

DUARTE, Francisco Ricardo. **Território em rede: Redes sociais e difusão do conhecimento do Geoparque Araripe (CE)**. Salvador, 2012.

GALLO, Nathalie Cristine. **Projeto Geopark Corumbataí: Um estudo da comunicação prévia à implantação**. Dissertação de mestrado, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2019.

GRIGOLO, Micheli da Silva. **“Design e identidade: artesanato em lã no Geoparque Caçapava Aspirante Unesco”**. Universidade Federal de Santa Maria. Dissertação de mestrado, 2021.

GUIMARÃES, G. B.; LICCARDO, A.; MELO, M. S.; MOREIRA, J. C.; PIEKARZ, G. F.; MOCHIUTTI, N. F. **Geoparque dos Campos Gerais, PR: por que ele ainda não foi criado?** Anais... 46 Congresso Brasileiro de Geologia, set./out. 2012. HIGGINS, S. S. Os Fundamentos Teóricos do Capital Social. Chapecó: Argos Ed.Universitária, 2005.

HALL, Stuart. **A identidade cultural na pós-modernidade**. Rio de Janeiro: DP&A; 2000

HALL, Stuart. **Cultura e Representação**. Tradução William Oliveira e Daniel Miranda. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Apicuri, 2006.

LISBÔA FILHO, Flavi Ferreira. **Extensão Universitária: gestão, comunicação e desenvolvimento regional**. Santa Maria, RS: Facos - UFSM, 2022.

MATTOS, Patricia Castro. **A sociologia política do reconhecimento: as contribuições de Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth e Nancy Fraser**. São Paulo: Annablume, 2006.

ROSSATO, Marisa Bertoldo. **O patrimônio cultural no distrito de Vale Vêneto, São João do Polêsine/RS: histórias e personagens contadas num caderno didático**. Dissertação de Mestrado. Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, 2022.

RUIZ, Lúcio de Medeiros. **Gestão pública do turismo – atributos dos websites dos municípios da região do projeto geoparque Quarta Colônia - RS**. Dissertação de mestrado. Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, 2021.



SOUSA, Daniely Cintia Viana de; LIMA, Ohana Luize Alves. **A Comunicação Popular e a construção da cidadania através do Programa de Rádio Sintonia Jovem da cidade de Piripiri-PI.** In: Intercom Júnior – 37º Congresso Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação, 37, 2014, Foz do Iguaçu, p. 1 - 13. Disponível em:<<http://www.intercom.org.br/papers/nacionais/2014/resumos/R9-1244-1.pdf>>.

TONIAZZO, Bibiana. **Turismo, Patrimônio e artesanato: uma proposta educativa para o território Geoparque Quarta Colônia Aspirante Unesco.** Dissertação de mestrado. Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, 2021.

UNESCO. **UNESCO Geoparks Programme – A New Initiative to Promoter A Global** .<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001151/115177.1999.pdf>> Acesso em: 13/01/23.

ZIEMAN, Djulia Regina. **Proposta para a gestão do território do Geoparque aspirante Quarta Colônia/RS, com base na análise do seu capital social.** Tese de doutorado. Pós-Graduação em geografia, Universidade Federal de Santa Maria. 2020.

