



From Utopia to Tourism: How the Finnish Utopian Colony of Penedo, Brazil, Turned into a Tourist Place

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This paper shows how an ancient Finnish utopian colony founded in 1929 in the Brazilian rural area found tourism as an alternative for its own sustainability. Tourism activities began in the colony in the 1940s after the end of the vegetarian utopian experiment. This vegetarian and naturalist Finnish colony was part of an utopian project created in the tropics by Toivo Uuskallio and some young idealistic followers in 1929. This new business was a successful way to maintain the pioneers and their families. Penedo maintained its local culture and grew as a place where Finnish pioneers and their descendants had their own culture as an additional attraction for tourism. After the end of this experience, tourism became its main economic activity as hospitality had its beginning in the Finnish immigrants' houses in the 1930s. Those activities were based on contemplation tourism, as the place is near a National Park and impressive surrounding nature, and on the attractions of Finnish culture such as the handicraft, food, and dance. Between 1940 and the 1970s there was a huge growth in the number of hotels and small inns. During the 1980s and 1990s the contemporary tourism industry process brought many changes to Penedo. Staged authenticity, as MacCannell (1999) writes, was reflected on some activities, such as the Finnish dance groups, created to show traditional dancing to tourists, and also with the architectural changes, with buildings constructed in Finnish vernacular style, in a way to show tourists that Penedo was a Finnish colony. This process included the creation of a Santa Claus House as found in Lapland, Finland, as a link between Penedo and its motherland, in a process Hobsbawn (1997) called 'invention of traditions'. Other authors such as Urry (2001), Shields (1992), and Judd and Fainstein (1999) helped to understand the process of tourism in this place, showing how such a global process in contemporary times is close to image-making, and its importance for the history and urbanism of a place. This paper studies local history through many of the pioneers' writings and some studies of its planning history and the utopian formation of Penedo, studied in a MSc thesis (FAGERLANDE, 2007). Many Finnish immigrants such as Ampula (1997), Valtonen (1998), and Hildén (1989) wrote their memoirs, an important element to understand the entirety of this process. Local foundation and the beginning of the tourism process was reported by Alva Fagerlande (1996;1998), Melkas (1999), Hottola (2006), Mascarenhas (2005), and is part of a PhD thesis on local history and the process of local place-image and its relation to tourism in small Brazilian villages.

KEY WORDS: Tourism, Finnish colony, Penedo, utopian colony.