

Continuities, discontinuities and challenges for development based on ecotourism and adventure tourism in the Baixo Parnaíba region of Maranhão



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Mateus de Sá Barreto Barros

Doctor in Sciences from the Postgraduate Program in Humanities, Rights and Other Legitimacies (DIVERSITAS) at the University of São Paulo. Professor of the Tourism Coordination at the Federal University of Maranhão/São Bernardo Science Center.

ABSTRACT

The present work is part of both the didactic experience with the students of the Tourism course of the Science Center of São Bernardo (MA), as well as the experience, observation and research in a region far from the capital São Luís and little valued by the tourist activity, although it has attributes for its development. The main objective is: to analyze the challenges, nuances and perspectives of tourism development in the municipality of São Bernardo, Baixo Parnaíba Maranhense Region, observing the possibilities of

internalization of tourism activity in the state of Maranhão, as well as its structuring and segmentation, especially those not linked to mass tourism, such as - ecotourism, adventure tourism and rural tourism. In this article we will cover only about the first two segments. It is important to note that when the project was drafted, the country and the world was already in the midst of the COVID-19 virus pandemic. And although there was the prospect of a return to normality, we were forced to make changes in the methodology, sticking to the bibliographic research and the analysis of official documents. The idea is to understand the existing barriers between the policies and the reality experienced in the northeast, especially Maranhão and the Baixo Parnaíba Maranhense.

Keywords: Tourism Public Policy, St. Bernard, Lower Parnaíba Maranhense, Ecotourism, Adventure Tourism.

1 INTRODUCTION

The present work is part of both the didactic experience with the students of the Tourism course of the Science Center of São Bernardo (MA), as well as the experience, observation and research in a region far from the capital São Luís and¹ little valued by the tourist activity, although it has attributes for its development. Certainly, these elements place us in a place of speech that is different from most of the works produced by turismologists and by those who are interested in the subject, in the most distinct areas of knowledge, because it is not an area favored by investments in the most different segments of tourism. In this way, when dealing with planning, it should be clear to the reader that it is necessary to consider more basic aspects, such as legislation, political structuring of the sector (institutionalization of secretariats, the Municipal Tourism Council and allocation of funds), as well as the conformation of plans capable of guiding both the public power and the private initiative.

¹ São Bernardo is 377.8 km from São Luís, via BR 222 and BR 135 and 413 km via BR 402.



Another issue that became evident in this process of dialogue with students and experience with the place is that the hegemonic perspective of tourism activity, fostered by the Ministry of Tourism, financed by Multilateral Organizations, Development Banks and corroborated by the numerous official and scientific publications and published by the media, contaminate the hearts and minds of young students and configure perspectives, since they do not identify with the segments that have the capacity to develop, both in the city of São Bernardo and in the Baixo Parnaíba Maranhense Region, causing a distance between the university and the communities.

In this perspective, it was perceived that there is a contradiction between the state perspectives on the tourist activity and the potentialities existing in the localities. On many occasions, municipal managers, because they do not perceive in a clear way, the qualities of the place or the aptitude of the municipality for the tourist activity, have no interest in promoting it. On the other hand, the segments that could be explored, ecotourism and adventure tourism, for example, have a high level of normalization, which makes it impossible for small and medium-sized entrepreneurs to invest and train themselves. When they do, they work informally and do not publicize the products offered in official media, such as travel agencies and the channels of the Brazilian Association of Ecotourism and Adventure Tourism (ABETA).

Thus, it is possible to perceive that, from the point of view of the State, it would be important to carry out the planning of the tourist activity in the territory, especially when it comes to natural areas, since it would enable a regulation and planning of the sector. However, tourism courses, at least as far as Brazil is concerned, have a neoliberal perspective, giving the market the responsibility to articulate, structure and market destinations. It is indisputable that there is a concentration of investments in consolidated tourist territories, ensuring the profitability of companies, mostly international.

In this way, the interior of the country, with rare exceptions, was neglected and in order to understand, even if briefly, this process is sought, we seek to scrutinize the situation of Brazil, especially the state of Maranhão and the Baixo Parnaíba Maranhense, based on the two elected segments: Ecotourism and Adventure Tourism. In this perspective, this article is divided into three topics, in addition to the introduction and final considerations, which are: i) a brief history of Tourism Policies in Brazil; ii) political context of the Brazilian Northeast; and iii) challenges for the internalization and segmentation of tourism in São Bernardo/Baixo Parnaíba, Maranhense. These topics unequivocally reflect the method chosen by the researchers for the analysis, based on the assumption that there is no way to understand the current situation of the tourist activity, without having the knowledge about the attempts and dealings made by the responsible bodies and the impasses arising from the socio-historical context experienced.



1.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF TOURISM POLICIES IN BRAZIL

Tourism is an activity capable of bringing together fifty-two sectors of the economy. Commonly, it is used discursively by governments, civil society and entrepreneurs as being endowed with great potential for development, to attract new currencies, increase the supply of labor and modernize the "backward" spaces. Thus, this activity is circumscribed in numerous urban reform projects or even in the major initiatives of the real estate market, although it is not its first end (VARGAS; and PAIVA, 2016). However, not infrequently, tourism has been an instrument of mutation of the dynamics of entire cities, both in central areas (the capitals, large and medium cities) and in peripheral regions (distant, isolated or impoverished cities).

There is, on the part of society, a false idea that tourism is established and develops in enlightened areas, ²of unique tourist potential, with natural and landscape resources in abundance. Except, of course, the capitals for agglutinating, in addition to scenic beauty, services, business demands and cultural elements. However, most of the tourist attractions were, until recently, peripheral regions. In the Brazilian northeast, there is no shortage of examples, here we will limit ourselves to three: i) Porto de Galinhas Beach, on the South Coast of Pernambuco; ii) Gunga Beach, on the South Coast of Alagoas; and iii) Barreirinhas, in Lençóis Maranhenses.

Tourism eventually transformed local socio-economic dynamics. The inhabitants were forced to dialogue with businessmen, in many cases international, and with the interlocutors of the municipal, state and development banks. They were compelled to leave the occupations previously carried out (fishing, agriculture, plant extractivism, among others) to join activities linked to tourism. According to Guardado (2015), this imbroglio produces previously unknown territorial conflicts, since these localities are inserted in the economic logic, putting global interests on the order of the day.

However, it is believed important to know how a tourist destination is produced. How is it born? This question may seem simple, but it is not. Let us look at the above examples. Porto de Galinhas is a nationally and internationally recognized beach. However, the beauties of this, so boasted as being possessed of great tourist aptitude, is present throughout the southern coast of Pernambuco. Not justifying, at least rationally, the preference of this one over all the others.

Gunga Beach, in turn, located in the municipality of Roteiro, has an interesting feature: on one side is the blue sea, beautiful, and on the other, the Lagoa do Roteiro. In this way, the visitor can alternate his bath in fresh or salt water without having to make a long journey. The place has a large number of bars that offer, in turn, a wide variety of places to stay, according to the value that customers and / or tourists are willing to pay / consume. The price varies from R \$ 100.00 to R \$ 2,000.00, corresponding, from simple tables to well-equipped bungalows, with infrastructure and comfort.

² We borrow the category used by Milton Santos, when dealing with the luminous areas of capitalism, as those that receive financial investment, as well as articulate and produce more advanced technologies.



On the other bank of the river, therefore, is Praia das Conchas which enjoys the same natural resources as Praia do Gunga. The same sea, the same river, but it is, practically deserted with structure for camping, but no offer of bars, at least not similar to those that are on the other side.

The Lençóis Maranhenses, in turn, is an immeasurable natural paradise. The dune cordons in monumental proportions, both in size and extent, cut through the landscape going beyond where the eye can reach. But why value the municipality of Barreirinhas in relation to the First Cross and Santo Amaro do Maranhão, municipalities that also encompass the great Lençóis?

These tourist paradises are located in poor municipalities, with precarious infrastructure (basic sanitation, asphalt, paving, education and health), therefore, they constitute marginalized areas, peripheral to capitalism. These places, three decades ago, despite being endowed with scenic beauty, did not have the tourist infrastructure that they have today. They were inhospitable corners and the visitation could be considered an adventure apart.

What is seen in the examples cited, in fact, is that they have the same natural resources and, consequently, the same tourist potential. However, the reach and distribution of equipment, infrastructure and commercialization of tourism activity are present in selective spaces, where there was a convergence of interests between municipal, state, federal and national and international entrepreneurs. In the meantime, the destinations and itineraries are configured, neglecting most of the national territory.

The attempts by the federal government, from 1992 onwards, to municipalize and later regionalize tourism proved to be inefficient, due to: i) the lack of knowledge of the socioeconomic importance of tourism on the part of local managers; ii) the political context of the Northeast and the region under analysis, in particular; and iii) the ineffectiveness and disagreement of the central government in ordering the activity.

This is due to the great economic crisis that Brazil and the world have suffered since the 1970s. The oil crisis, the fall of the gold standard, caused instability in national finances. In the case of Brazil, as it was a country with low international credibility, it could not get new loans to move the economy and, much less, if it was allowed to renegotiate the debt. Thus, the country could only get overnight *loans*, having no way to plan actions, whether economic, political or social. The strategy used to replace imports encountered even greater bottlenecks, such as the difficulty of innovating, lack of investment in new technologies or the absence of capacity to develop new products capable of meeting international demands. The country was still an importer of technologies and depended on *commodities* to sustain itself in times of crisis (GIAMBIAGI *et al*, 2011).

With this, the Brazilian State ended up contracting debts to pay current expenses (salaries, pensions, electricity bills and other costs of the public machine), generating a deficit in the accounts of the Union. Unlike the countries of Southeast Asia, which favored trade to strengthen the economy,



Brazil ended up prioritizing the capital market, which brought losses in a fragile economy. Thus, in the course of international decision-making processes – and especially with the crisis of the welfare state in the US and Europe – the forging and densification of neoliberalism and consequently of its precepts, especially the free movement of goods, the State loses the ability to intervene in the national economy.

Contrary to what had occurred since 1930, when governments planned and encouraged national industrialization, from the 1990s this would no longer be possible. Often, "developed" countries filed with the World Trade Organization (WTO) when they found themselves harmed by economic policies that, in their eyes, favored specific sectors and/or national industries. Therefore, the Brazilian State has lost the ability to regulate industry and to order its territory. In this context, a fiscal war began to occur between the federative entities, in which the one that could grant greater benefits and tax exemptions was won. (IPEA, 2001; VIEIRA, NIZZOLA, KALLAS, BRITO, SCHVASBERG, FARIA, 2011; TUMOLO, 2001).

In this way, the State, as a way to diversify the economy, realizing the potential of tourism activity and receiving strong pressure from business sectors, began to deregulate the spaces of interest, disregarding environmental and heritage laws and the master plan itself. Real estate speculation was allowed, both by construction companies and by the hotel sector, mainly international, letting them shape the localities according to their interests. This way of doing the place, ended up, as seen earlier, by producing conflicts, due to the appropriation of territories, the spoils and repulsion of portions of the local populations, with the merely financial justification.

In some Latin American countries, such as Mexico, the central government has dedicated itself to ordering the segments of tourism, not tied to the economic perspective: ecotourism; adventure tourism; tourism in indigenous areas; among others. It left to the very dynamics of international capital and its greed, urban areas of the big cities or the coasts of the Pacific and Mexican Caribbean. It was absent, therefore, from the regulation of mass tourism, allowing the free action of large international companies (GUARDADO, 2015).

In the case of Brazil, an attempt was made to unite both the neoliberal logic and the perspective of popular participation in the elaboration and implementation of Tourism Planning, as provided for in the 1988 Constitution. This is how the National Tourism Policy/PNT (1996-1999) was conceived. The National Plan for the Municipalization of Tourism (PNMT), institutionalized from the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Industry (MICT), still in the government of Itamar Franco (1992-1994), is therefore added to the PNT (TRENTIN; FRATUCCI, 2011). Also according to these authors:

The PNMT imposed the municipal scale for its actions, considering that the political-administrative limits of the Brazilian municipalities would be the most appropriate territorial cut-off for the definition and implementation of the sector's development policies. In the course of the process, this scale of action proved to be wrong to the extent that tourism, both from the point of view of the socio-spatial phenomenon and economic activity, is not restricted to municipal borders. The PNMT implementation process itself awakened in municipal managers



the perception that they would have greater chances of success if they worked together with their neighboring municipalities. As a result, the first movements aimed at the construction of regional tourism councils and consortia began to emerge, as in the cases of the municipalities of Serra Gaúcha (Rio Grande do Sul) and the region of Agulhas Negras (Rio de Janeiro); these initially spontaneous movements were absorbed by the next government, through the Tourism Regionalization Program (PRT). (*op cit*, p. 845).

Nevertheless, what is observed in relation to the PRT, is that there was a movement of those municipalities that already had attention from local and state governments, excluding, of course, those who might want to invest and prepare themselves as a tourist product. The government's lack of capacity to unite, plan and order the tourist activity, of agents, consultants and advisors with a strong neoliberal bias, ended up causing a gap between the initial proposal and what it became: the configuration of destinations through the intervention of the national and international market, putting to rest the possibility of conformation of new destinations and products.

1.2 POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE BRAZILIAN NORTHEAST

Not infrequently, tourism, especially the segments related to nature, is seen, perceived, as a plausible way, if not as a panacea, to instrumentalize alternatives of economic diversification for small and medium-sized cities. The intention is good, since it can bring important benefits, such as: i) increase family income; (ii) creating new jobs; (iii) encourage subsistence food production, thereby reducing price fluctuations; (iv) diversify the economy; v) improve the self-esteem of the population; among others.

Undoubtedly, ecotourism and adventure tourism are important, but we must analyze the possibilities of implementation, especially in a country of continental dimensions such as Brazil and in a large state, such as Maranhão, the second largest in the Northeast region. In addition, one must take into account the social, political and historical factors from which one intends to implement these segments of tourism, since the forms of appropriation of the factors of production (land, capital and labor), in addition to the seizure of water and the establishment of social relations in time and space between the owners of the land and the peasantry (aggregates, partners and squatters), are important to understand the Northeast, taking into account the particularities of Maranhão and, above all, of São Bernardo.

It is not by chance that the Northeast has been the subject of numerous studies in recent decades. Some of these, broke with pre-existing patterns, managed to encompass the most distinct realities, presenting the region under a new prism. Undoubtedly, a work of great reference and breadth is "The Earth and Man in the Northeast", written by Manuel Correia de Andrade, published in 1986, with eleven editions. The author's goal was to give readers, from the most distinct corners of the country, an idea of "how the relations between man and the land, between workers and owners, are processed



in the great northeastern region" (p. 34). In addition to trying to "understand the problems that afflict the vast majority of the population of the Northeast" (p. 34).

Andrade is able to analyze the nine states of the region, considered a national problem, from Bahia to Maranhão. It seeks agglutinating elements that enable the understanding between similarities and differences, arising from a common historical process, slavery, but that contrasts with each particular colonial reality: the territorial disputes of the European metropolises on Brazilian soil (Portuguese, Dutch, French and Spanish), the climatic conditions and the composition of the soil. The Northeast is, in fact, a region of contradictions. On the one hand, the sugar cane plantations, the plantation owners, the owners of land, capital and labor, the elite. On the other, there is the impoverished population, involved in a tangle of paternalistic relations, drought and famine.

As a way of explaining the relations between man and land, historians, geographers and sociologists borrowed the anthropological concepts of farms and plantations, elaborated by Sidney Mintz and Eric Wolf in 1957, from an ethnographic study carried out in Mesoamerica and the Antilles. For the authors, these are forms of social organization of the land that articulate: symbolic power, elaborate forms of punishment; land as political capital; large territorial extension; dominion over existing land, workers and natural resources. For Mintz and Wolf, farms and plantations resemble each other in many ways. However, the latter is distinguished by the fact that it owns the industry in the field, the ingenuity.

Despite the efforts to analyze both the northeastern reality and the forms of social organization of the land, the authors focused on general aspects that help to understand historical processes and symbolic elements that eventually constituted the region. However, it is known that each place has its particularities and nuances that resemble and diverge from the general context.

In the Brazilian case, historically speaking, peasants were considered, by travelers and landowners, as part of the telluric landscape of the region (fauna and flora). There was a need to dehumanize in order to justify the exploitation and punishments to which they were subjected on a daily basis. The plantation master believed that he possessed dominion and the ability to command over all things: workers, land, rivers and animals (ROGERS, 2009; Schwartz, 2001). He attributed to himself a power very close to the demigods, a legacy of the absolutist period in Europe.

The land was thus a constitutive element of power, which placed the owners in a position of social prestige and, consequently, gave them political weight, capable of influencing the directions to be taken by the public administration, shaping politics and the economy under its own precepts, conceiving unity under aspects that, in no way, could exist. Thus, the masters were in favor of the liberalization of the economy - in accordance with the Crown and, later, the Empire - but conservative in relation to labor, maintaining the slave system without any possibility of change (BOSI, 1992). Certainly, this was not a Brazilian particularity, however, the way it was forged and perpetuated,



justified and diluted under a light layer of varnish, made the population itself, especially the poorer classes, end up agreeing with the ideological precepts of a ruling elite, rooted in the naturalization of social relations, in the perpetuation of work, especially evil or unpaid, analogous to slavery.

It is clear that, in good conscience, no one would agree with the precariousness of work. This is maintained on the basis of the discursive force of merit, in which the subject is responsible for his own destiny, regardless of socioeconomic conditions. Likewise, it is largely based on the idea of "racial democracy", defended by Gilberto Freyre, in *Casa Grande and Senzala* (2004), which suggests that Brazilian society is loving towards racial differences. This can happen in very specific cases, especially when the poor or impoverished classes, mostly black, remain in the historical place to which it was reserved, occupying discredited functions. Any attempt to ascend socially are created impeding mechanisms, capable of maintaining the current order.

To these devices, there are two others, especially in the Northeast Region, paternalistic relations: a political system that disguises authoritarianism through measures of protection and care; and patrimonialism, as defended by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (2016), in which the holders of power and land end up managing the public thing from private interests, not being able to distinguish one from the other.

In the specific case of São Bernardo, a poor city, these relations can be configured from simple measures such as giving food, objects and positions in exchange for political favors, such as voting. The politician, the municipal manager, maintains a centrality, not because of the social and economic importance he can assume for a locality, but because of a network of favors he establishes, forging bonds of affection created with the population, especially the poorest.

It is true that to these factors, we can add to the long list, the fact that even the politician of small and medium-sized cities are unaware of the function they occupy. They desire, fight and remain in power to ensure that there is continuity of the established social situation. They are unaware of elementary issues, such as: establishing a political action plan to diversify the economy, reducing economic disparities; access government funds for the development of tourism, depending mainly on the Municipal Participation Fund (FPM); coordinate actions; They are unaware of the bureaucratic functions they have and the basic procedures of management. Power is thus the end in itself. This was very evident in the pandemic period experienced. The errant directions of the federal government, under the command of Jair Messias Bolsonaro, the meager resources received by the municipality and the little creative capacity to elaborate an action plan, ends up leading to the even greater impoverishment of the local population. Of course, we cannot fail to take into account that inoperability can be a particular instrument, easily confused with a lack of knowledge of the function or the ability to act.



It is essential to emphasize that about 70% of Brazilian municipalities depend on more than 80% of funds that come from external sources, especially FPM (CANZIAN, 2019). This is a consequence of the lack of productive capacity of these and the poor economic diversity, which ends up reducing, and a lot, the collection of taxes. In addition, it is important to take into account that most of the transfer made by the federal government is used for the payment of personnel - salaries of mayors, councilors, municipal guards, teachers, health professionals, hired servers - with little left for the implementation of programs and plans, when it exists.

To elucidate the issue posed here, the city that has most of the population in the countryside, does not have a subsistence food market, much less a popular fair to be organized once a week. The food sold comes from other parts of the country. What is the purpose of keeping the economic circuit as it is? It can be said: to continue the established order, to maintain the *status quo*. But, how to propose tourism in a place that has a large natural and rural area, the links with the land, but does not have the culture of selling its surpluses, so has its income reduced, depending in many cases, exclusively on the social assistance programs of the federal government? How to propose the formation of a tourist market when the social actors are purposely disjointed? To what extent can a destination be established when there is no political and financial incentive and the infrastructure is precarious? How to convince the government of the importance of tourism? How to convince the public power of the process of economic autonomy of the poor population? How to prepare the rural community for the development of tourism? To what extent do public tourism policies assist municipal managers in the elaboration and execution of tourism plans?

1.3 CHALLENGES FOR THE INTERIORIZATION AND SEGMENTATION OF TOURISM IN SÃO BERNARDO/BAIXO PARNAÍBA MARANHENSE

By articulating the structure of national tourism policies and the social, historical and political context experienced by the northeast, and São Bernardo in particular, to the process of segmentation and internalization of tourism, it is perceived that there is an even greater selectivity. This is especially true with both Adventure Tourism and Ecotourism. With regard to the first, 87 itineraries were created, in a country of continental dimensions with 5. 570 municipalities – it is important to note that – only 48 offer activities related to this market segmentation. Of these, only 15 were selected by the Ministry of Tourism and the Brazilian Association of Ecotourism and Adventure Tourism (ABETA) – taking into account the number of Adventure Tourism companies and activities practiced in the municipality – of which four are present in the Northeast Region: Chapada Diamantina; Metropolitan Recife; Metropolitan Fortress; and Lençóis Maranhenses (MINISTRY OF TOURISM, 2010; ABETA and MINISTRY OF TOURISM, 2009).



Brazil was considered by the World Tourism Organization as the country with the greatest potential for the development of Ecotourism and Adventure Tourism. The idea would be, in this way, not only to select, but in fact, to promote internalization, articulating sectors of society with an interest in participating, undertaking and elaborating new scripts. However, what is found is that we are working with municipalities already consolidated and, therefore, with structured segmentation of the tourist market, with the ability to attract tourists with the most distinct interests. A state like Maranhão, with a geographical diversity, water richness and with clear regional differences, to point only the Lençóis Maranhenses as a product is to disregard all the rest of the territory.

That said, it is perceived that the structuring of the tourist activity involves a complexity of factors that includes, both the micro scope – the planning and segmentation in the municipality, as being the smallest administrative division – and the role of the state of Maranhão in the composition of Public Policies related to tourism, as well as in the orientation, structuring and implementation, thus not being able to, limit itself to the initiatives and proposals of the federal government. Thus, in the forging of a tourism development policy, these elements cannot be perceived as inseparable.

It is evident that tourism in São Bernardo, in the Baixo Parnaíba Maranhense, especially in the municipalities furthest from the coast, due to the characteristics that they present, cannot be linked to mass, sun and beach tourism. However, it has the capacity to develop a tourism development plan, with the perspective of the less invasive and speculative segments, with strong community ties and respect for nature. Certainly, when it comes to Adventure Tourism one must take into account important factors such as: i) the technical component, the qualification of adventure drivers; (ii) the maintenance of safety equipment, where appropriate; iii) the availability of equipment, when necessary; iv) compliance with the normative processes of the Brazilian Agency of Standards and Techniques (ABNT), consistent with each activity provided; v) infrastructure of the tourist destination; (vi) support structure; among others.

In this sense, starting a tourist destination planning, based on a segment that requires less qualification and infrastructure can be a viable alternative. Which leads us to think of Ecotourism as a possible path. It is necessary to take into account that both activities may require a structure of lodging not very robust and rustic, depending on the public, thus being able to direct the place to a specific audience such as camping and caravanning. In a survey conducted by the federal government in 2008, it was identified that, with regard to international visitors, 22% of them had Ecotourism or Adventure Tourism as their motivation for travel. However, among these, 64% preferred visits to Parks or Natural Reserves in the country, taking into account the practice of tourism in safety (BRASIL, 2010).

The institutionalization of a Park or Reserve would be important for the Baixo Parnaíba Maranhense Region, not only with regard to tourism, but mainly because it is in an area of soybean expansion, known as the "El Dourado Gaúcho". The Region is composed of the cerrado biome, an



extremely sensitive vegetation, being contemplated with six months of rain and six months of drought. The devastation caused the rainfall rates to decrease, decreasing the humidity of the air, causing an increase in the number of fires.

Thus, the sixteen municipalities were included in the semi-arid region of the Northeast in 2018 (a desert biome that takes up much of the northeast region of the country), after the vote in the House and the Federal Senate. At the time, the rapporteur of the Committee on Regional Development and Tourism (CDR) of the Senate, João Alberto Souza (MDB / MA), justified that the incorporation was due to climate change that eventually caused the reduction of rainfall levels, caused by changes in land use, the replacement of family farming by extensive monoculture. (SENATE, 2018).

In this sense, due to the sensitive environment, it is believed that caution is necessary in the elaboration and structuring of tourism in the Municipality of São Bernardo, paying attention to the segments that cause less impact to the environment, as well as valuing the natural and social elements as part of the constitution of identities, individual and collective. Thus, it is proposed in this project, to analyze the possibilities of tourism in accordance and respect with the present sociocultural aspects.

2 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article sought to analyze the National Tourism Policies, seeking to take into account government initiatives and the realities experienced by most Brazilian municipalities, especially those located in the Baixo Parnaíba Maranhense, in the Brazilian Northeast. In this sense, a brief survey of the history of the region was made, which, without a shadow of a doubt, we must return to address at an opportune moment, as well as the dynamics and relations existing between the countryside and the city.

It was possible to perceive, thus, that the proposals made by the central government are diluted or disappear before the established context, either by the lack of knowledge of the potential of tourism as an economic activity by local managers, by the incomprehension of the function they occupy or by using these arguments, even if subliminally, to justify the inoperancy, the interference, having power as the end in itself, its taking to ensure the perpetuation of reality.

In any case, it is indisputable the tourist potential that the Region and the city of São Bernardo have, especially with regard to the segments of Ecotourism and Adventure Tourism. Taking into account the reservations made in relation to Adventure Tourism, a plan of action in four stages is proposed, such as: i) the survey of the possible adventure activities to be developed in the municipality and region, advising beforehand, canoeism (due to the existing water wealth), cycling (already practiced by the local population), *hiking* (nature trails) and *trekking* (trail with overnight); ii) the structuring of lodging facilities consistent with the public; iii) the technical training of adventure



tourism drivers, taking into account the ABNT standards; and iv) the consolidation and sale of the tourist destination.

As for Ecotourism, the institutionalization of a Park or Reserve would not be the end, but the beginning to think about the structuring of the segment, being able to create: i) the Cerrado Observation Center, in a coordinated effort with the Federal University of Maranhão/São Bernardo Campus; ii) survey and analysis of the way of life and culture of the region; and iii) a unit of interpretation and environmental education, evidencing the uses of natural spaces by the local population.

These initiatives could give strength to the Region and to São Bernardo, diversifying the economy, promoting the reduction of the advance of soybeans, preventing even more significant climate change. The Park and/or Reserve would not do this, only with its institutionalization, but could be the beginning for the development of an environmental awareness on the part of the population. In addition, the fact of forming the Region as a tourist destination can lead to economic decentralization and, consequently, to a greater participation of society in the economy.



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