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## RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND COUNTRYSIDE DIVERSIFICATION: STUDY ON RURAL TOURISM PRACTICES IN THE BRAZILIAN PAMPA BIOME REGION

*DESENVOLVIMENTO RURAL E DIVERSIFICAÇÃO NO CAMPO:  
ESTUDO SOBRE PRÁTICAS DE TURISMO RURAL NA REGIÃO DO  
BIOMA PAMPA GAÚCHO*

*DESARROLLO RURAL Y DIVERSIFICACIÓN EN EL CAMPO:  
ESTUDIO SOBRE PRÁCTICAS DE TURISMO RURAL EN LA REGIÓN  
DEL BIOMA DE LA PAMPA BRASILEÑA*

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**ABSTRACT:** This study analyzed practices of tourism in rural properties in the Brazilian Pampa biome region, taking into account the sustainability element, and analyzing how these actions can promote rural development in the region. It is a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive research, carried out using the multiple case study method, the data being collected through interviews, and visits/observations, and analyzed through with a categorical content analysis and interpretative analysis. This study concluded that tourism in rural properties is still going to be a planned and structured practice that seeks to meet the visitors' desires to know the countryside and to experience what the place has to offer, such as fauna, flora, habits, costumes, traditions, and typical gastronomy. In fact, it was found that rural tourism is a viable activity, and an income complement with a development potential to the region. With regard to sustainability, yet some practices still disregard the theme, it was observed that there is a concern related to the maintenance of green areas, to the preservation of fauna and flora, and of water resources. The pluriactivity of rural households can be observed, but, when it comes to thinking about sustainability, a greater synergy stills lacks.

**KEYWORDS:** Rural Tourism; Sustainability; Field Pluriativity; Environment.

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**RESUMO:** Este estudo analisou práticas de turismo em propriedades rurais da região do bioma Pampa brasileiro, levando em consideração o elemento sustentabilidade e analisando como essas ações podem promover o desenvolvimento rural da região. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa, exploratória e descritiva, realizada utilizando o método do estudo de caso múltiplo, sendo os dados coletados por meio de entrevistas e visitas/observações e analisados através das análises de conteúdo categorial e interpretativa. Os resultados mostram que o turismo nas propriedades rurais ainda caminha para ser uma prática planejada e estruturada, que busca atender os desejos dos visitantes de conhecer o campo e vivenciar o que o local tem a oferecer, como fauna, flora, hábitos, costumes, tradições e gastronomia típica. De fato, o turismo rural mostrou-se uma atividade viável e um complemento de renda com potencial de desenvolvimento para a região. Em relação à sustentabilidade, ainda que algumas práticas desconsiderem o tema, observou-se que existe uma preocupação relacionada à manutenção de áreas verdes, à preservação da fauna e flora e dos recursos hídricos. A pluriatividade das famílias rurais pode ser observada, mas, quando se pensa em sustentabilidade, falta uma maior sinergia.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Turismo Rural; Sustentabilidade; Pluriatividade no Campo; Meio Ambiente.

**RESUMEN:** Este estudio analizó las prácticas turísticas en propiedades rurales de la región del Bioma de la Pampa brasileña, considerando el elemento de sostenibilidad y analizando cómo estas acciones pueden promover el desarrollo rural en la región. Esta investigación es cualitativa, exploratoria y descriptiva, utilizando el método de estudio de casos múltiples. Los datos se recolectaron a través de entrevistas y visitas/observaciones, y se analizaron mediante análisis de contenido categórico e interpretativo. Los resultados muestran que el turismo en propiedades rurales está en camino de ser una práctica planificada y estructurada, que busca satisfacer los deseos de los visitantes de conocer el campo y experimentar lo que el lugar tiene para ofrecer, como fauna, flora, hábitos, costumbres, tradiciones y gastronomía. De hecho, el turismo rural resultó ser una actividad viable y un complemento de ingresos con potencial de desarrollo para la región. En relación a la sustentabilidad, aunque algunas prácticas desconocen el tema, se observó que existe una preocupación relacionada con el mantenimiento de las áreas verdes, la preservación de la fauna y flora y los recursos hídricos. Se puede observar la pluriactividad de las familias rurales, pero en lo que respecta a la sostenibilidad, falta una mayor sinergia.

**PALAVRAS CLAVE:** Turismo Rural; Sustentabilidade; Pluriactividad en el Campo; Medio Ambiente.

## INTRODUCTION

Through a historical lens, we can point out that the rural environment in Brazil has been undergoing major transformations in recent decades. This way, with the so-called new ruralism, the countryside is now being used for new activities. Not only does the farmer produce raw material (primary commodities), but he/she is also discovering the potential of performing other agricultural and non-agricultural activities through pluriactivity (i.e. the diversification of practices). It is in this context that the planning and the promotion of tourist activities in rural areas start being considered options for rural properties as an income complement, as an alternative for regional development, and for the conservation of existing historical, cultural and environmental countryside inheritances.

Tourism can promote socioeconomic development, generate local, direct and indirect jobs, and income, and it is also capable of influencing many areas: political, cultural, economic, and social. In this sense, the practice of rural tourism can be considered as a means of teaching people about the activities developed in rural areas related to history, agricultural production,

and local and regional traditions (Blanco, 2004; Dias, 2003; Machado, 2005). However, we should highlight that activities related to tourism practices must belong to a responsible management that takes into account environmental and sustainability issues. Also, the rural properties must preserve their surrounding environments. In this sense, they can allow rural tourism maintenance in the long term (Azevedo & Rodrigues, 2015; Caliari et al., 2016; Cipolat et al., 2019; Schmidt et al., 2016).

In Brazil, Rio Grande do Sul is a state with vast tourism options, ranging from ecological and sports tourism, including sun and beach tourism to gastronomic and historical-cultural tourism (Rio Grande do Sul, 2020). In this sense, rural tourism is shown as an important activity to be explored for the economy of the state's municipalities, which contributes to the heterogeneous range of products and services developed, especially those related to sustainability (Bidarte & Costa, 2017; Caliari et al., 2016; Cipolat et al., 2019). In addition, the Pampa biome covers more than 60% of the state's territory, being one of the most important ecosystems in the world, having fauna and flora diversity, a variety of landscapes, and population socio-cultural expressions unique and exclusive. It is a natural, genetic and cultural heritage of national and global importance.

In Santana do Livramento, a municipality of state in the Brazilian Pampa biome region (also known as Pampa Gaúcho), for example, properties are operating in rural tourism, with Estância da Glória and Fazenda Palomas being pioneers in this segment. The combination of rural tourism with the Brazilian Pampa biome certainly constitutes a differential for visitors compared to other places, which represents an attractive, innovative and current theme for scholars, and therefore it is relevant to study it here, in this article.

In this context, the questions are: What are the tourist activities developed by the rural properties' owners of Estância da Glória and Fazenda Palomas? Do these activities take into account the sustainability element? How can these actions promote rural development in the region? In this investigative perspective, through a multiple case study on Estância da Glória and Fazenda Palomas, this study aimed to analyze the sustainable tourism practices developed in rural properties, taking into account the sustainability element, and analyzing how these actions can promote rural development in the region.

This article is divided into six sections, considering this introduction. The following section brings the theoretical framework on rural development and on countryside activities' diversification. The third section deals with sustainable rural tourism. The fourth section presents methods and research techniques used to develop this study. Then, in the fifth section, we discuss the results of our research regarding selected cases related to sustainable rural tourism in the Brazilian Pampa biome region. Finally, the last section brings the main conclusions of this article and also suggestions for future research in the same area.



## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND COUNTRYSIDE ACTIVITIES' DIVERSIFICATION

Throughout the twentieth century, many realities of the rural world could be observed in several countries. This way, countless discussions emerged on subjects such as: being a part-time farmer, promoting non-agricultural activities in rural areas, having multiple jobs, seeking diversified income sources, etc. Hence, the fact that the rural is now recognized for new roles that go beyond agriculture and farm production. Bertrand Hervieu (1996) emphasizes this idea in his work by describing the great ruptures observed in contemporary societies from the agriculture and rural world point of view since the end of the twentieth century.

In the 1980s, changes and economic difficulties in Brazil affected the agricultural sector and stimulated many owners to diversify productive activities on their rural properties. The alternative found by some owners residing in the states of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul was to open their properties to visitors who would like to spend the weekend getting to know and experiencing the day-to-day farm life. Shortly afterward, these owners realized that they could offer an overnight stay, which culminated in the creation of several rural lodges (Brazil, 2004)

When confronted by the existing literature, we realize that there are several development theoretical approaches used to think about the rural. However, only in the 1990s did the subject attracted researchers in Brazil. In this context, we can highlight the works of Graziano da Silva, Grossi and Campanhola (2002), Schneider (2003), and Kageyama (2004). In this context, new perceptions of rural tourism began to gain strength and visibility, since it had (and has) positive aspects, such as: economic strengthening and diversification; the possibility of developing rural areas; an active role in culture, history and environmental valorization and conservation; the generation of local, direct and indirect jobs, as well as income; an alternative way of occupying the rural space; etc.

As for these many positive aspects of rural tourism, from the late 1990s on there has been a significant increase in the number of owners working in this segment in Brazil. However, due to the owner's low professionalism and their lack of technical base, negative issues also arose when their activities' implementation began to progress. In this sense, we can point out issues related to environmental degradation, legal problems, and environment and tourism activity de-characterization. Hence, as a means to reversing these issues, public policies containing specific actions and projects were developed for the rural tourism segment (Brazil, 2004).

As shown in Table 01, some elements contributed to the very start of discussions on rural development in Brazil. In this sense, the emergence of the new Brazilian rural features is due to the modernization process itself, where the rural can no longer be considered exclusively agricultural because of the population growth and their occupation with non-agricultural activities. Therefore, the rural world is bigger than the agricultural one, since it incorporates activities previously considered as hobbies or exclusive to small enterprises. This way, it was transformed into profitable businesses: now there are multiple fee-fishing ponds, leisure sites, country houses, fruit farming, floriculture, besides a series of services, such as restaurants, clubs, farm-hotels (Graziano da Silva, Grossi, & Campanhola, 2002; Brazil, 2004).

Rural development integrates new products and services into new markets. "Activities such as landscape management, nature conservation, agrotourism, organic agriculture, regional specialties production, direct sales, among others, are considered new practices that make rural development a multifaceted process" (Kageyama, 2004: 384). In addition, rural development seeks a new paradigm, hence the creation of new products and services for new markets, with different aims, such as the production of public goods (landscape); generation of income complement to the owner; preservation and conservation of natural, cultural and historical heritage; valorization of culture and regionalism; visitors' integration with the local history; the search for synergies with local ecosystems, the economy of scale with the rural households pluriactivity (Azevedo, & Rodrigues, 2015; Blanco, 2004; Caliari et al., 2016; Cipolat et al., 2019; Dias, 2003; Machado, 2005; Ploeg, 2008).

**Table 01:** Elements that triggered discussions on rural development in Brazil

**Element 1 - The growth of family agriculture as a political category**

- Discussions about family agriculture and its potential as a social, economic and productive model for the Brazilian society and its consolidation as a political category in the 1990s helped it to assume an extraordinary legitimacy and to become a reference in opposition to other equally powerful notions, such as agribusiness.

**Element 2 - The role of the State growth and expansion**

- Its origins are due to an approach diversification which supported agrarian reform settlements and credit for family agriculture, and also addressed issues such as food security policies, tried to combat precarious forms of work, sought land regularization, and supported traditional populations (quilombolas, ribeirinho population) and territorial development actions. The main actions were the agrarian reform acceleration, the creation of the Special Extraordinary Secretariat for Land Affairs, transformed into the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA, in Portuguese) in 1998, the creation of the Rural Development Secretariat (SDR-MAPA, in Portuguese), also transferred to MDA, and the creation of the National Program for the Strengthening of Family Agriculture (PRONAF) in 1996 which became the main public policy for small farmers in Brazil.

**Elements 3 - Changes in Political and Ideological Scopes**

- These changes occurred through the agrarian elites acceptance, because they were forced to change their position regarding social and compensatory policies and agrarian reform issues. This scenario was also shaped during the 1990s by the construction of an argument that aimed at presenting the differences between the Brazilian producers agriculture universe, based on the idea of the existence of an opposition and a polarization between family agriculture (production of local consumption products, domestic market) and the employer-enterprise (export commodities production). This way, a dualism translated into practice arises in a fierce political and ideological dispute between agribusiness and other forms of production, usually grouped around family agriculture and rural development.

**Element 4 - Environmental Sustainability**

- This element derived from an increasing criticism about the "green revolution" agricultural model, driven since the mid-1980s, and from the attempt to internalize the environmental issue into alternative technical, ecological, organic and other nomenclature models (Almeida, 1999; Ehlers, 1996). The growing interest of scholars in converting the notion of sustainability into a theoretical framework and development model (Altieri, 1987; Almeida, & Navarro, 1997), made both the political ecology activists, who advocate for an "alternative agriculture", and the scholars of sustainable development end up providing important contributions to the debate on rural development, which started being called "sustainable" because of these movements

Source: Adapted from Schneider (2010).



Historically, the concept of pluriactivity emerged in France during the 1980s with the agricultural policy redirection, which was a result of the agricultural overproduction crisis in the 1970s. However, in Brazil, this process occurred differently. It happened during the period of re-democratization (the 1980s) as a result of the rural workers' social struggles and the conservative modernization model legitimacy crisis. This way, the debate about the viability of small family farms reemerged strongly, especially with the creation of the National Program for the Strengthening of Family Agriculture (PRONAF, in Portuguese) and with the constitution and consolidation of the concept of family farming.

Concerning this scenario, it is possible to point out that studies allow us to conclude that, although it has existed for a long time in rural areas, pluriactivity is a stable and diversified phenomenon that has only recently been studied under this denomination. It is also known that pluriactivity is a strategy of rural families' social reproduction, who turn to external activities for different reasons (adaptation, reaction, lifestyle), that is, poverty is not the only reason.

As for this literature, it can be stated that the practices of non-agricultural activities in rural areas are increasingly responsible for the countryside economic occupation by the introduction of new strategies in the rural properties' management, with rural tourism being one of these practices. In this sense, we can indicate some examples of Brazilian municipalities where rural tourism is verified: Apodi, state of Rio Grande do Norte (Azevedo, & Rodrigues, 2015); Bento Gonçalves, Garibaldi and Monte Belo do Sul (Marques, & Santos, 2014) and Dois Irmãos (Blanco, 2004), state of Rio Grande do Sul; Blumenau, state of Santa Catarina (Reis, & Vavassori, 2013); Castrolanda, Entre Rios and Witmarsum (Soares et al., 2017) and Quatro Pontes, Marechal C. Rondon, Itaipulândia, Medianeira, Foz do Iguaçu, São Miguel do Iguaçu and Matelândia (Schmidt et al., 2016), state of Paraná; Ilhéus, state of Bahia (Araújo et al., 2017); Planaltina, state of Distrito Federal (Duarte, & Pereira, 2018); and Santana do Livramento, state of Rio Grande do Sul (Bidarte, & Pinto, 2021; Caliaro et al., 2016; Cipolat et al., 2019).

## **SUSTAINABLE RURAL TOURISM**

The interaction of the big urban centers' people with the rural environment is considered as a new global trend because the tourist no longer wishes to be just a spectator of his/her trip, but a protagonist who actually experiences the culture in the new destinations visited (Idestur, 2013; Brazil, 2004). As for tourism activities, the practice of rural tourism is developed in productive properties combining agricultural practices and valuing the direct contact of the tourist with the place's culture which can also generate development actions and provide the historical, cultural and natural heritage rescue and regional valorization (Azevedo, & Rodrigues, 2015; Bidarte, & Pinto, 2021; Caliaro et al., 2016; Carvalho, Lima, & Kastenzholz, 2014; Cipolat et al., 2019; Dias, 2003; Machado, 2005; Pérez, 2013).

Following the guidelines of the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism (MTur, in Portuguese), tourist activities in rural areas comprise the services, equipment and products offer of: lodging; food; reception; visits to rural properties; recreation, entertainment, and pedagogical activities linked to the rural context; among other actions characterized as tourism or that constitute the visitation reason (Brazil, 2004, 2010). Their ordering and strengthening require the articulation of government

agents' actions in partnerships with the private sector, the community involvement, and the adequate infrastructure – not to forget the professional training of the people involved in the process. Brazilian rural tourism has been presented as an entrepreneurial opportunity that allows the development of income complement alternatives and the countryside occupation. Also, it enables the construction and support of an interdependent sectors chain of activities and social actors (Azevedo, & Rodrigues, 2015; Bidarte, & Pinto, 2021; Blanco, 2004; Caliarri et al., 2016; Cipolat et al., 2019; Marques, & Santos, 2014). A rural tourism project usually presents the region's natural attractions, ecological trails, and archaeological sites. All these places must respect the principles of sustainability, since planned and executed tourist activities based on sustainability strengthen the local and regional culture preserving the social identity, promoting the cultural diversity of communities, groups and regions, and motivating people (Azevedo, & Rodrigues, 2015; Brazil, 2007).

Visiting rural properties is an ancient and common practice in Brazil, but just a little more than twenty years ago it started being considered an economic and tourist activity. Brazil has enormous potential for cultural richness and natural landscapes, where activities related to rural tourism can be developed. Nowadays, there are countless rural estates scattered throughout the country, initiating and developing tourism activities. There is also the encouragement of some state and municipal governments. This is also seen in several countries, such as Argentina (Schlüter, 2015; Mattioli, 2021), China (Liu, & Wong, 2019), Spain (Castrillon, Canto, & Cantorna, 2009; Martín et al., 2017), Estonia (Bardone, & Kaaristo, 2014), Georgia (Khartishvili et al., 2019), Hungary (Lakner et al., 2018), Iran (Hemmati, 2020), Italy (Garau, 2015), Mexico (Pérez, 2013), New Zealand (Mackay, Perkins, & Taylor, 2014), Portugal (Carvalho, Lima, & Kastenzholz, 2014), Romania (Tiberiu et al., 2018) and Vietnam (Long, & Nguyen, 2018).

## METHODOLOGY

As mentioned, this paper aimed to analyze the sustainable tourism practices developed in rural properties in the Brazilian Pampa biome region (also known as Pampa Gaúcho) of Santana do Livramento, State of Rio Grande do Sul-Brazil, taking into account the sustainability element, and analyzing how these actions can promote rural development in the region. To achieve it, methodologically this paper was built under bibliographic and documentary research, with a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2009), through a multiple case study (Yin, 2015) carried out in rural properties pioneering rural tourism in the municipality. Because there are few researches that analyze sustainability in rural tourism in the Brazilian Pampa biome region, this article constitutes a relevant contribution to the field of study.

Data were collected through interviews with rural owners and visits/observations (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2009), which allowed the researchers to verify, record, and better understand how the element of sustainability was being considered in rural tourism in the Brazilian Pampa biome region. In addition, the owners kindly provided the researchers with photographs of the properties and some tourist activities carried out on them, which illustrate the results section. The use of multiple sources of data collection made it possible to understand and interpret the sustainable actions developed by the rural properties' owners, enriching this study with details through data



triangulation (Flick, 2009; Yin, 2015).

The script used during the interviews was based on the literature review (Table 2) of Azevedo and Rodrigues (2015), Bidarte and Pinto (2021), Blanco (2004), Brazil (2004, 2007, 2010), Caliari et al. (2016), Carvalho, Lima and Kastenholz (2014), Cipolat et al. (2019), Dias (2003), Graziano da Silva, Grossi and Campanhola (2002), Kageyama (2004), Machado (2005), Marques and Santos (2014) Pérez (2013) and Schneider (2003, 2010).

**Table 2:** Questions used during the interviews

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The property history and characteristics, and its insertion in rural tourism.</li> <li>2. What are the agricultural activities carried out here?</li> <li>3. What made rural tourism become an alternative income activity to this property? Was there planning and any kind of technical advice?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. How is the work team constituted?</li> <li>5. How is the access to the property?</li> </ol> </li> <li>6. What kind of structure and what facilities are offered on the property?</li> <li>7. What activities and tourist attractions are offered? Are they offered all year long? How does the process occur? Is it interactive? Is it contemplative?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. What products/services are available for the tourists?</li> <li>9. Where does the food used for the property come from (vegetables, milk, meat, eggs)? Is there agroecological management? What plants are cultivated? Is there sample tasting? Are horticultural products sold here?</li> </ol> </li> <li>10. What are the sustainable practices carried out on the property? Are there any sustainable energy sources?             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. How do selective waste collection and waste composting work?</li> <li>12. How do effluent and wastewater treatment work?</li> <li>13. How is water conservation and management controlled?</li> </ol> </li> </ol> |
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Source: Elaborated by the authors. Based on the literature review.

The rural owners authorized the recording and use of the properties' names, signing the Informed Consent Form (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2009). The interviews were conducted in the early afternoon, with an approximate duration of 60 minutes each. After the interviews, the rural owners guided the researchers through the properties, showing and explaining their structures, facilities, activities, and attractions, which lasted until sunset. At this moment, the observation was carried out, which allowed researchers to better understand how the sustainability element is being considered in rural tourism practices at Estância da Glória and Fazenda Palomas by their owners (Collis, & Hussey, 2005; Creswell, 2007).

Data were submitted to categorical content analysis (Bardin, 2016) and interpretative analysis (Creswell, 2007; Flick, 2009), respecting the validity criteria of their collection in qualitative research, such as completeness, homogeneity, exclusivity, objectivity, and adequacy (Bardin, 2016). The results of this article are presented below, starting with notes on Sustainable tourism in the Brazilian Pampa biome region, and then presenting the case studies at Estância da Glória and Fazenda Palomas.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE BRAZILIAN PAMPA BIOME REGION: CASE STUDIES ON ESTÂNCIA DA GLÓRIA AND FAZENDA PALOMAS

In Brazil, the Pampa biome covers 63% of Rio Grande do Sul's territory. It is worth highlighting that the Pampa biome also extends to the territories of Argentina and Uruguay. Regarded as one of the most important ecosystems in the world, the Pampa biome is unique, with species of plants and animals that do not exist anywhere else in the world. In addition, its population socio-cultural expressions are unique and exclusive.

The Brazilian Pampa biome, also known as Gaucho Pampa or Campos Sulinos, is located within the largest proportion of natural preserved areas in Brazil, occupying 176.5 thousand km<sup>2</sup> - i.e. about 2% of the national territory. The landscaped and urban architectures of the old estancias, the charqueadas, the stables, and the extraordinary natural beauty portray the diverse historical phases of Rio Grande do Sul. The beautiful prairies of the Pampa biome region and its fauna and flora diversity make it possible to practice ecotourism and to experience the nature preservation, on trails and hiking, abseiling, and climbing in the main natural refuges (used by those who took part in the revolutions fought in this microregion of the border, such as the Farroupilha Revolution and the Federalist Revolution of 1893).

Amidst the cattle and sheep farming and the horse breeding, the practice of rural tourism makes it possible to experience the countryside life. And in addition to the observation of the different manners of the rural farmer in working the land and managing the cattle farming, it is also possible to enjoy the countryside culinary with varied typical dishes, such as the sheep's neck-ends, the charque, and the traditional gaucho barbecue. Concerning the pastries, we can highlight the sweet rice, the ambrosia, and a great variety of jams and fruit jellies.

When it comes to culture, the Pampa biome region shows its historical richness through old buildings, in the landscapes crossed by coxilhas (hills) and prairies, and by being marked by several deeds during the Farroupilha Revolution. The richness of folkloric cultural manifestations in traditional dances, traditional festivals, and typical gauchesque dances as well as wool, leather, and wood handicrafts make Rio Grande do Sul peculiar. However, even with such potential, the exploitation of rural tourism in the Brazilian Pampa biome region is still incipient. This way, measures that can add value to the entrepreneurs that form the basis of this activity are yet to be taken.

Santana do Livramento, a municipality of Rio Grande do Sul, is part of the tourist region called "Pampa Gaúcho", located in the so-called "Gaucho border" microregion (Picture 01). According to the interviews and data collected, it was verified that the process of implementing rural tourism in the municipality occurred in 2005, with courses promoted by the National Service for Rural Apprenticeship (SENAR, in Portuguese) and the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE, in Portuguese). Also, through the Rural Union, new owners showed interested in diversifying their activities by implementing and performing rural tourism practices.



**Picture 01:** Location of Santana do Livramento in the state of Rio Grande do Sul/Brazil



Source: Elaborated by the authors. Based on images from the Internet.

In 2008, the first tourist route was created and called Martin Fierro. This route covers the Brazilian Pampa biome region and has as its central theme the “epic guasca” verses. The rural itinerary was carried out in two wineries: Almadén Vineyards and Cordillera de Santana Viticulture. This itinerary was also divided into four rural properties: Estância da Glória, Fazenda Palomas, Estância Vento Aragano and Estância Cerros Verdes. This project aimed to provide the possibility of getting in touch with the regional language, the gastronomy, the countryside life, the new forms of economic occupation of the region, thus enabling the tourist to learn a little about the history of the region. The itinerary included the city center, a visit to the exhibition hall that has a collection about the gaucho culture, a visit to the house where José Hernandez stayed in his exile in Santana do Livramento, and where the gaucho folklorist Paixão Cortês was born.

In the following years, in spite of the initial stimuli and Martin Fierro route creation, there was a period of discouragement, disagreements, and changes in the city's administration. This way, the unleashing of these factors led to the weakening of rural tourism activities. It was only five years later, in 2010, that the mobilization and discussions on the practice of rural tourism in the region reemerged. Therefore, this scenario allowed the continuation of the process and the formation of a new group consisting of Estância da Glória and 16 other entrepreneurs.

Thus, in December 2010, Livramento-Rivera Integrated Tourism was created, and this system included lodges, wineries, tourist routes and trade in Brazil and Uruguay. Among the participating lodges were: Arteché, Cerros Verdes, Estância da Glória, Fazenda Palomas, Guest House Pousada Guimarães, Pousada Del Bosque, Pousada Lunarejo, Pousada La Vivienda, Pousada Rural Vento Aragano, Recanto Verde. The participating wineries were: Almadén, Don Noel Winery, Viñas del 636 and Cordillera de Santana Viticulture.

The tourist routes suggested were the international city tour, the Pampa Gaúcho wheel, and the wine route on the gaucho border. In the Trade area the places suggested were: Loja

Nativa, in Brazil, and, in Uruguay, Barão, Camibag, Casa América, Casa de los Importados, Cara Oriental, Class, Colonial, Córdoba, Dante and Siñeriz Freshop. A website was also created to publicize the route. Unfortunately, the process was weakened again, and the meetings between the participants did not happen anymore. Also, there are no data on the efficiency and effectiveness on the implementation of the Livramento-Rivera Integrated Tourism project due to the lack of continuity of participants' involvement.

Simultaneously with this initiative, in 2009 the municipality of Santana do Livramento was benefited by the URB-AL Project, with which the participation of new entrepreneurs started again. According to the interviews made in this research, the contact made by those in charge of implementing the program was constant, but after its consolidation, the information about the implementation and operationalization of the actions proposed in the URB-AL III project and information about the funds' destination was not reported. For those interviewed, this neglect creates discontent since there is a need for improvements, especially on the routes roads and on the roads that allow access to the properties. On July 19, 2014, a new meeting was held with the participation of Santarém municipal government representatives - Mayor and Secretary of Tourism - at the request of Estância da Glória's owner with the purpose of trying to rescue the Livramento-Rivera Integrated Tourism Group.

## **ESTÂNCIA DA GLÓRIA AND FAZENDA PALOMAS**

Estância da Glória started its activities in 1917. It is a family rural property and its main activity is cattle farming. Currently, it belongs to six brothers, and it is managed by one of them, Mr. Luiz Carlos Santana, who has leased the whole property. Estância da Glória is located in the environmental protection area (APA, in Portuguese; Ibirapuitã Environmental Protection Area, created by Decree No. 529 of May 20, 1992) in the Cerros Verdes region, 20 km from the city center.

Estância da Glória has promoted rural tourism activities since 1995, and it is considered one of the pioneers in rural tourism in the region. Initially, Estância da Glória promoted some activities of visitation more focused on cattle farming, such as horseback riding, auctions, dinners, and nature contemplation tourism. According to the interviewee, it was only ten years later, in 2005, amidst the search for an alternative income complement for the property that a more orderly and planned structuration began through a process of rural tourism implementation and formalization. This way, they invested in infrastructure and qualification. In this brief account, Estância da Glória's owner made it possible to notice that his property has a rich history, with culture and traditions built over the years. Also, that he is engaged in order to participate and contribute in the process of rural tourism development in the region.

By its turn, Fazenda Palomas was founded in 1897. It is located at Vila Pampeiro, in the rural area of Santana do Livramento. It is a family business which is currently managed by the fourth generation of the same family. Its engagement with rural tourism began in 1995 with the current owner Atilio Ibarгойen. The Farm works with different activities - it works mainly with beef cattle, sheep farming, and horse breeding. Therefore, rural tourism was eventually implemented as an auxiliary income complement to other activities. Fazenda Palomas also offers lodging for tourists, from Thursday to Sunday, only by previously booked reservations. After some time,

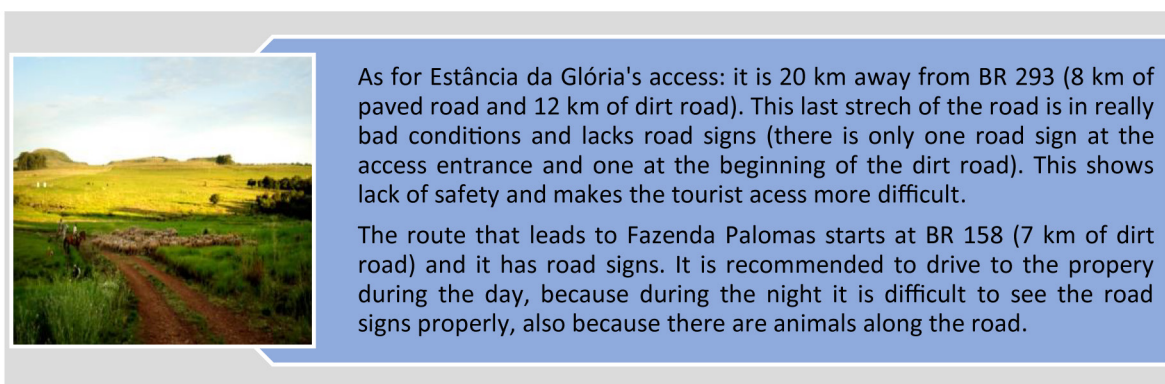


Fazenda Palomas started to operate during the holidays, and the period may not be from Thursday to Sunday.

## ACCESS

It is extremely necessary to provide the conservation of vicinal roads and dirt roads in the municipality by maintaining their drivability and by allowing them to have adequate environmental conditions (Bidarte, & Pinto, 2021; Caliarí et al., 2016; Cipolat et al., 2019). It is important to highlight that despite of their strategic importance for rural tourism, these roads suffer from a lack of maintenance which brings environmental and economic damages. This way, rural tourism is negatively affected, and the environment is harmed in the process of soil erosion. Picture 02 shows the access characteristics of the properties.

**Picture 02:** Access to Estância da Glória and to Fazenda Palomas



Source: Elaborated by the authors. Based on the collected data.

Due to the lack of maintenance of the roads, the owner of Estância da Glória has major complaints about the access conditions of his property, since this neglect makes access difficult, leading to the decrease of guests at some periods of the year because the road causes damages to the vehicles. Hence, the financial losses are also remarkable. After 21 years, the owner of Fazenda Palomas paralyzed tourist activities due to the poor traffic conditions of the vicinal roads and dirt roads that give access to the property, whose conservation and maintenance is the responsibility of the municipal government. It is important to mention that this is the main obstacle reported by both interviewed, as the precarious structure of these roads inhibits the flow of tourists and compromises the economic viability of the activity.

## STRUCTURE AND FACILITIES

According to the literature review, in order to develop rural tourism, it is necessary to meet the characteristics needed for this tourism segmentation, such as attractions, adequate infrastructure, and the tourist services and products demanded (Azevedo, & Rodrigues, 2015; Bidarte, & Pinto, 2021; Caliarí et al., 2016; Cipolat et al., 2019; Marques, & Santos, 2014; MTur, 2007; Reis, & Vavassori, 2013; Schmidt et al., 2016; Soares et al., 2017). It is not necessary to create new structures in the properties, but to adapt what exists to guarantee comfort and safety to the tourists. The structures can be residential or B&B, but must maintain their rustic features. Picture 03 present the structure and facilities offered in the properties studied.

**Picture 03:** Structure and Facilities of Estância da Glória and Fazenda Palomas



Estância da Glória has three chalets. Each one can lodge up to 12 people. The facilities have good quality standards. The chalets have bathrooms with electric heating. The chalets also have a typical rural décor and are located in a privileged area of the property with a view to the lagoon.



There is a large living room with a rustic decor, a large fireplace and many artifacts that tell a bit of the place history. It is a common area for the guests, who can rest and interact. It is also often used to host events for up to 50 people). The kitchen has both wood and gas stoves, a refrigerator, and more equipment and furniture that are shared by guests.



At Fazenda Palomas the lodging is classified as Casa Fazenda (Farm House). The headquarters has a solid structure because it counts on thick walls built with stones of Cerro de Palomas. It is an original demonstration of the place's history. The facilities are integrated in an 800m<sup>2</sup> area. These facilities bring the typical rural lodge structure with four suites (with open TV, air conditioning, minibar and baths with hot water).



The living room has a fireplace and a wine cellar. It is a cozy place that mixes the rusticity of the wooden furniture and the wall made of stones. It also has an office and a reading room. In the dining room there is a large table, a complete kitchen with a wood-burning stove and a balcony with an Uruguayan grill.

Source: Elaborated by the authors. Based on the collected data.

In the properties studied, the priority is authenticity and rusticity, but always with comfort and quality. The guests' demand goes throughout the whole year, but during the holidays there is a greater demand, mainly during the winter, due to visitors who seek the typical cold of the region. Guests usually stay for an average of two to three days.

## ACTIVITIES AND ATTRACTIONS

The rural environment offers countless services and activities to its visitors. Several national studies (Araújo et al., 2017; Azevedo, & Rodrigues, 2015; Bidarte, & Pinto, 2021; Blanco, 2004; Caliari et al., 2016; Cipolat et al., 2019; Duarte, & Pereira, 2018; Marques, & Santos, 2014; Reis, & Vavassori, 2013; Schmidt et al., 2016; Soares et al., 2017) and international studies (Bardone, & Kaaristo, 2014; Carvalho, Lima, & Kastenholz, 2014; Castrillon, Canto, & Cantorna, 2009; Garau, 2015; Hemmati, 2020; Khartishvili et al., 2019; Lakner et al., 2018; Liu, & Wong, 2019; Long, & Nguyen, 2018; Mackay, Perkins, & Taylor, 2014; Martín et al., 2017; Mattioli, 2021; Pérez, 2013; Schlüter, 2015; Tiberiu et al., 2018) show cases in which the owners take advantage of the properties' potential to develop tourist and/or recreational activities in rural areas, related to the use of natural, historical and cultural resources.



The activities and attractions at Estância da Glória and Fazenda Palomas vary according to the year and to the seasons. During the summer and the spring, they offer more attractions, since these seasons have longer days. During the winter, activities are greatly reduced due to nature's own cycle. In the following pages, we present some tourist services and equipment, as well as tourist activities that can be developed in rural properties or in the region, as shown in Picture 04.

**Picture 04:** Promoted Activities and Attractions at Estância da Glória and Fazenda Palomas



The activities offered to tourists by Estância da Glória are: horseback riding and hiking (where you can observe the local fauna and flora), fee-fishing ponds, carriage rides, stream baths, baths in the Macaco Waterfall and chimarrão circles. The countryside culinary includes lamb barbecue, traditional parrillada, arroz de carreiro (a rice-and-meat specialty), and other typical dishes of the gaucho cuisine. There are also typical snacks and desserts such as ambrosia and jams.



It is possible to take part in the stable work with horses, cattle and sheep, and to learn the ways of dealing with the animals. The guest can also visit other properties and wineries in the region. This is possible because there are some partnerships with Almadén Winery and Cordilheira de Santana, which offer free tours and free wine tasting.



As for Fazenda Palomas attractions, we can point out: animal handling, its plantations, the ecological issue, the place's history, the farm's routine and its gastronomy, which offers typical food - sheep meat is one of its specialties.

At the property young sheep slaughter is an activity promoted in order to provide sheep meat tasting and commercial distribution to the tourists.



Fazenda Palomas also offers wine tasting and the possibility of visiting the vineyards. Local honey, strawberry and fruit producers take their products to be offered to tourists during meals at the farm. Eventually some products are sold so the tourist can taste the local products.

The goal is to offer foods produced locally, without transportation from other locations and without making them with preservatives. This way it is possible to serve regional homemade natural food, as well as products produced and harvested on the property.

Source: Elaborated by the authors. Based on the collected data.

According to results also obtained by Bidarte and Pinto (2021), it is important to mention that the creation of the Environmental Protection Area (APA, in Portuguese) was crucial so that animals which belong to the Brazilian Pampa biome fauna could be observed again. Some examples of these animals are: mergulhão (*podilymbus podiceps*), perdiz (*nothura maculosa*), preá (*cavia aperea*), quero-quero (*vanellus chilensis*), ratão-do-banhado (*myocastor coypus*),

tatu-mulita (*dasyopus hybridus*), sorro (*Iycaolopex gymnocercus*), zorrilho (*conepatus chinga*), etc. In addition, the flora diversity enriches ecological trails that can be made in the properties.

The Environmental Protection Area of Ibirapuitã is the largest conservation area of this category in the state of Rio Grande do Sul and the largest unit that protects ecosystems in the Pampean region and part of the Ibirapuitã river basin. It was created in 1992, occupying an area of more than 315 thousand hectares, with temperate countryside and forest formations. It is worth mentioning that one of the reasons for its creation is to promote environmental education, scientific research, and ecological or rural tourism, since it presents numerous opportunities for their development (for detailed information, see Ministry of the Environment, 1999). The landscape potential of the Environmental Protection Area of Ibirapuitã is immense. There are wetlands, fields, forests, hills, rivers, and slopes, which together create a unique, differentiated landscape, free from the monotony of homogeneous landscapes. Included in tours of the property, this great scenic value can be better explored. The work team is made up of the owners and employees who assist in the activities of the lodges. There is no tourism professional to assist in the activities. The tourist is received and welcomed by the team that tells a little about the place's history, roots, products, and rural activity. The activities offered intend to put the tourists in direct contact with the countryside chores and to introduce them to the hospitality characteristic of the countryside gaucho people.

Both owners opted for welcoming and personal rural tourism, which is different from traditional mass tourism, since it provides the visitor a direct contact with the owner (Brazil, 2004, 2010). In this sense, we can point that it is essential to consider the carrying capacity of properties, because any presence of visitors and tourist activities can cause impacts. Carrying capacity considers how many visitors a place or environment can support without irreversibly deteriorating or de-characterizing, as well as without a decline in the quality of the visitors' experience. Being tourist and/or recreational activities in rural areas, the carrying capacity deserves attention in the planning and management of the visited destination, so that it takes place under sustainability conditions (Bidarte, & Pinto, 2021; Mattioli, 2021).

## **ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY RELATIONS**

According to the literature review, the practice of rural tourism intends to promote a harmonious coexistence between people and nature. In this sense, it must be carried out with environmental and socio-cultural responsibility. Rural tourism activity happens due to the richness of its attractions. The natural beauty, together with the socio-cultural preservation conditions (traditional handicrafts, typical foods, historical heritage, etc.) are part of this wealth (Azevedo, & Rodrigues, 2015; Bidarte, & Pinto, 2021; Caliari et al., 2016; Carvalho, Lima, & Kastenholz, 2014; Cipolat et al., 2019; Garau, 2015; Hemmati, 2020; Khartishvili et al., 2019; Liu, & Wong, 2019; Mattioli, 2021; Pérez, 2013; Schmidt et al., 2016; Schlüter, 2015; Soares et al., 2017; Tiberiu et al., 2018). The properties studied have potential for landscapes and natural resources that can be explored and transformed into tourist activities. This potential is attractive to tourists from urban areas, who leave urban and gray to experience rural and green. The diversity of flora and fauna of the Brazilian Pampa biome present in the properties enriches the route of trails and ecological hikes. There is a lot of scenic beauty in the landscape of the Brazilian Pampa biome, with several natural elements



that can have their use expanded. Considering the principles of sustainability, the owners are interested in exploring the natural resources of the properties, which is encouraged by the Ministry of Tourism of Brazil – MTur (Brazil, 2007). Picture 05 present the environmental and sustainability relations in the properties studied.

**Picture 05:** Environmental and Sustainability Relations at Estância da Glória and Fazenda Palomas

	<p>At Estância da Glória, the water supply is piped and treated. The wastewater is destined to the sump systems, built with the supervision of the supervisory bodies, following the legislation. The energy is supplied by a energy distributor, with no other sources of energy being considered environmentally more adequate and sustainable.</p>
	<p>As for the disposal of garbage produced on the property, there is a trash bin shared with other residents of the area that is 12 km away from the Estancia. The garbage is collected by the municipal government. There are no other ways of waste disposal, nor reuse or recycling.</p>
	<p>Most of the food served is produced at the Estância, which is self-sufficient in meat (bovine and ovine), milk, eggs and some vegetables. It also produces jellies - the sweet pepper jelly is sold at property and is well-appreciated by the tourists. Only honey is received through a partnership with the neighborhood beekeepers. Also, fish caught in the stream by visitors are prepared and eaten at meals.</p>
	<p>At Fazenda Palomas, the water consumption is carried out with rainwater collected by the gutters, and stored in a large reservoir. They also have an artesian well with water from the Guaraní Aquifer.</p>
	<p>Another practice mentioned is the use of wood-burning stoves with a serpentine. This way so the bath water is heated by the wood that heat the food in the stove.</p>
	<p>The waste generated is collected and the organic waste is separated from the inorganic waste. Inorganic waste, composed of glass, cans and paper, is taken to the city and delivered to recycling companies, thus avoiding the contamination of groundwater. Organic waste, such as remnants of peel and food, is used to make food for pigs.</p>
	<p>The sewage treatment is carried out with several sump systems with filter</p>

Source: Elaborated by the authors. Based on the collected data. Based on images from the Internet.



It is important to point out that there is a concern with the use of products to clean the property with low impact and with little toxicity. This way, they opt for organic products in order to avoid soil pollution. Another issue mentioned by the owner concerns agrotoxics and the water and food given to animals. He said their priority is the well-being of everyone, hence the attention given to the cleaning and maintenance process of the whole property.

This way, according to the interview, there was a concern with environmental issues and with sustainability, citing, for example, riparian forest, the green area maintenance, and in the fauna, flora, and water resources preservation. Hence, according to Bidarte and Pinto (2021), Caliaro et al. (2016), Cipolat et al. (2019), and Schmidt et al. (2016), it is possible to highlight a behavioral change regarding rural landowners, since they are becoming more and more worried about environmental questions. At Fazenda Palomas, for example, since 1980 the owner has been concerned with the environment. In addition, the owners believe in the importance of obeying the Brazilian environmental legislation.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, it was possible to verify that the rural tourism in the properties analyzed can be considered as a planned and ordered practice which is promoted with the aim of providing a better quality of life to the tourist. This way, by observing that rural tourism in the Brazilian Pampa biome region takes advantage of the natural richness of the region's fauna and flora, typical habits, gastronomy, and traditions, we could point out that the properties meet the tourist's desires to know the countryside and to experience what the place has to offer and becomes a viable activity and an income complement.

However, it was also verified that some structuring actions of this tourism modality need to be made in order to allow rural tourism to become a development element in the region. In this sense, it is also important to continue working on the projects and implementing them, that is to say, it is necessary to consolidate rural tourism as a leisure option for the tourist that comes to Santana do Livramento or passes through it. The lack of public support, especially concerning the roads, the access routes and signaling maintenance is an obstacle to be faced by the farthest properties. The slowness of investments and the Municipal Secretary of Tourism lack of efforts were also pointed out by one of the interviewees as difficulties, but not as impediments, since he follows his activities and awaits the support and feedback of the municipality's Administration. Therefore, it was observed that all the historical and cultural wealth, and all the Pampa's unique characteristics are little explored as a tourist activity in the municipality.

As for the environmental and sustainability issues, we highlighted that there is a concern in the riparian forest, green area maintenance and in the fauna, flora, and water resources preservation. However, some practices still disregard the theme. For example, in one of the properties, there was not a proper place for solid waste disposal, there was not water reuse, and not even the use of renewable energy sources. Pluriactivity is present, but the sustainability aspect is still lacking, whose foundation is the synergy of the environmental, social, and economic pillars. In addition, we understood that sustainable practices are fundamental and that they work in favor of the environment when applied on rural tourism.



In this sense, through this research, it was possible to confront theoretical concepts with empirical reality. It was also possible to consider that the establishment of the pluriactivity in the countryside is of vital importance for the countryside growth and development. In this way, not only does it constitute an income complement, but also a paradigm shift.

The experience developed in the municipality of Santana do Livramento around rural tourism, in fact, proves to be a pioneering, innovative, and entrepreneurial initiative in that market. Although this study only considers the view of the supplying agents, its continuity, including the view of the demanding/interested agents (as tourists, government, entrepreneurs, residents), can certainly bring new contributions, by providing a panoramic view of the complexity of rural tourism in the studied municipality. Thus, as notes for a research agenda, we believe in the relevance of studies on entrepreneurship and innovation in rural tourism.

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**Carina Cipolat:** Participated in the elaboration of the entire article. The author is responsible for, and agrees with, all the material prepared and submitted to this journal.

**Marcos Vinicius Dalagostini Bidarte:** Participated in the elaboration of the entire article. The author is responsible for, and agrees with, all the material prepared and submitted to this journal.