

LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION STRATEGY IN RURAL PROPERTIES: WATER RESOURCES EXPLORATION IN RURAL TOURISM ACTIVITY

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ABSTRACT

Rural development can no longer be based only on traditional agricultural activities, permanently restricted to risk, the uncertainty and impoverishment factors of production. The goal of this test is to argue about the possibilities for properties diversify its tariff strategies livelihood through rural tourism developed from the exploitation of water resources available. The study is exploratory nature, using techniques bibliographical and documentary. The work breakdown structure used to examine the arguments listed is the proposal by Ellis (2000). As a result, realized that rural tourism is a possibility for the diversification of livelihood strategies of rural properties, since the water resources tend to be important sources of activities that cater for the interest in this type of tourism.

Keywords: water resources, rural diversification, rural maintenance, rural tourism.

1 INTRODUCTION

Considering the poor rural areas in Europe and Africa, studies done by Ellis (2000) show that livelihood diversification can be an alternative to overcome poor living condition in these areas. In small and medium properties as well livelihood diversification through the use of reliable resources to generate tourism and leisure activities can contribute to formulate a survival strategy, maintenance and development. This affirmative can be supported considering the fact that the rural areas are near natural resources that can be converted in tourism and leisure and also the fact that there is an increasing demand for this kind of service.

Sharpley and Vass (2006) have identified a long tradition of rural tourism in Europe and realized that it has become an efficient way for solving economical and social problems into rural areas generally and particularly in agricultural sites due to the increasing and significant demand in several countries. Dias (2005) has noticed that rural tourism has become a social need already institutionalized in many countries around the world, since developments surrounding this activity generates a greater number of interests (products and services) related to the exploration of existent natural, human and cultural resources or any others that can attract customers.

Nash studies (2006) in Scotland showed that the rural areas are featured by wealth, status and power differences. In these areas tourism is seen as a significantly relevant point of prosperity and improvement in its regions, thus it helps remote communities.

Rural tourism inclusion among income activities in rural properties including the small ones, can't be supported just by traditional agrarian activities which are in constant risk, instability and exhausted production (Almeida et al., 2000) so, it's relevant to diversify services and products that can generate regular maintenance for these properties.

On the other hand, when we observe the rural property from an increasing competitive environment subjected to several changes including that ones from international market, we can see that the farmers that are facing theses market changes need to establish some suitable strategies to enable them to face greater competition in their business activities. Despite having the idea that Brazil is highly competitive in farming activities two realities coexist in this productive space, from one side, large properties strategically supported by economies of

technological level and power, and from the other side, small farmers featured by small or medium properties facing problems such as entering the market, yielding and surviving. People's lifestyle in big cities has contributed to develop entertainment activities in some rural areas because these areas are different from their reality. Further the region hydrographic potential gives the ideal condition for adventure sports and tourism linked to the preserved environment.

Considering that some of the resources available in rural areas are connected to the geographic and climatic aspects, we assume that such resources might be strategically combined in a way that goes further than farming.

Inside this context, regarding the water resources available and its importance for tourism and leisure activities, this essay's purpose is to discuss about the small farmer's possibilities to diversify and improve their wages through the available capital that can be explored from services in rural tourism areas, especially the ones related to water resources available in the properties.

Rural tourism tends to emerge as a promising alternative which can contribute to diversify the properties' livelihood, to employ its family members, to create an interaction with different people and to make use of idle places in the properties as well. These statements are the subject of this study.

An exploratory and qualitative research was made to investigate primary concepts, some of them unpublished, and achieve our purpose. The research made through secondary sources gave us the chance to identify how this thematic has been discussed in the international academical community. The analysis made was the result of three aspects, the problem that directs the study, indicatives found in the theory and the elements identified throughout the researches already done and the missing points to be fulfilled in future researches.

2 DIVERSIFICATION AS A LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY FOR RURAL PROPERTIES

Diversification as a livelihood strategy is defined as a process in which the person or the rural family unit builds a group of activities and goods looking for better ways of living (Ellis, 2000). When area access difficulties are eliminated and opportunities of means of subsistence are identified and extended, the farmer or the family community develops the capacity to generate livelihood and improve their lives.

Barret, Reardon and Webb (2001) agree that few people obtain their living wages from just one source or use their goods or merchandise to just one activity. The authors classify these actions as primary and secondary. For them the primary actions can be also called *push factors* the ones that would be related to risk reduction (as land becomes restrict by population growing), reaction against crisis, business deal's high rates which sometimes drive rural families to auto-sufficiency in several services and goods; the secondary actions called *pull factors*, would be connected to complementary strategies implementation into activities such as cultural integration with animals from the environment and industrial products. Diversification of rural properties, according to Ellis (2000), is strongly related to the creation of diversity as a social and economical process usually existent into a family unit. This process shows the pressure factors that come from family environment as well as the opportunities that make the families adopt complexes and different ways of earn living.

For Ellis (2000), livelihood includes natural, physical, human and financial goods, and social capital. Facilities to access these goods determine rural families' livelihood and well-being. The author emphasizes that livelihood and profits are not the same, but are strongly related because individual and familiar structure and level of benefits will determine the access to these means of income and will convert them into better-off.

An essential characteristic of rural families in developing countries is their adaptation ability when it concerns survival, it means they are able to change their way of living due to the changes on the circumstances that they will face, especially strategic changes in their living and its features as well as their activities' impact on the environment (Ellis 2000).

Considering that, Ellis (1998) emphasizes matters like income system vulnerability, resiliency and sensitivity. For the author a stronger and less vulnerable income system is the one that presents high resiliency and low sensitivity, while the most vulnerable presents low resiliency and high sensitivity. Resiliency means the system ability to absorb changes and use them as an advantage. Sensitivity refers to a natural resources base susceptibility to change when facing human interferences. Ellis' work (2000) has contributed to generate a graphic to evaluate the creation of this kind of process. Figure 1 shows this graphic.

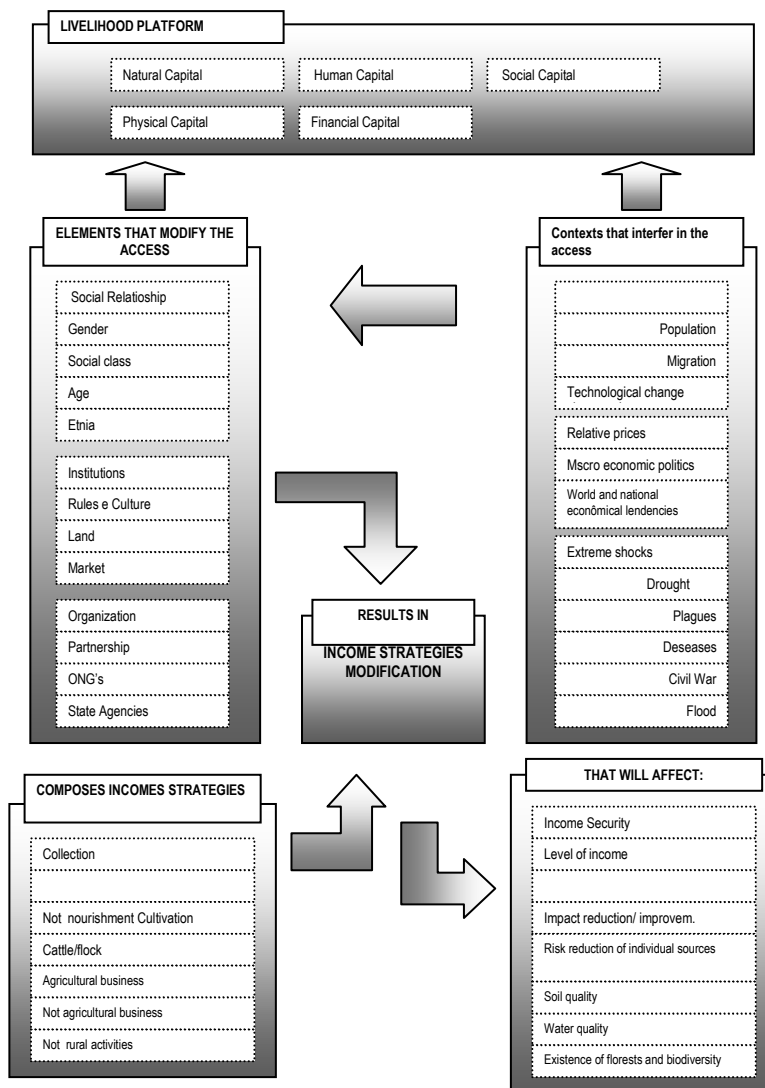


Figure 1 – A structure to analyze initiatives on rural income improvement.
 Source: Adapted from Ellis (2000).

We can explain the pattern like that: access and use of livelihood platform (goods available for people and family units) can be modified by a group of factors that include cultural, social and political matters, which yet depend on the environment tendencies or negative external factors not expected (external shocks); modification in the income platform access will cause changes in the income strategies that will include, exclude or diversify activities connected to the rural environment as well as another activities that can generate wage income and be approached by family units or people (for example, a salary from a family member’s rural or urban job can be an alternative of income) livelihood strategies modification will certainly causes impact in the individual specific aspects as well as in the family unit (income stability, reduction of productive activities impact over family income) and environmental matters (soil quality, water and forests).

It’s important to say that choices made on livelihood strategies might have positive or negative results over the family unit or for a single person. In one of Ellis (1998) conclusions diversification is seen as a social and economical process widely heterogeneous which carries several pressure and possibilities for rural economy.

Bebbington (1999) was also concerned in understanding the relationships existent among involved agents into livelihood strategies modification. Something is logical in his study: the greater the capital access is, greater will be the livelihood capacity for the family unit or singular person, that shows even more the relationship management importance to ease this access and its transformation into livelihood strategies and proper outcome.

For Ellis (2000) livelihood strategies have got activities that generate means of subsistence for the family unit and a singular person divided into activities based on natural resources, natural resources itself and non-based natural resources thus expressed: **(a)** activities based on natural resources: collect, nourishment cultivation, non-nourishment cultivation, cattle and flock; and non-rural activities such as brick production, weaving and grazing; and **(b)** non-based on natural resources activities: rural products selling, inputs and goods, and another rural services like equipments maintenance, rural manufacture, formal jobs and income transference.

In Niehof's (2004) conception livelihood's portfolio is the group of activities that rural families organize inside their properties intending to generate means of subsistence and get a determined stability from that income.

At this point it's possible to show Ellis' (1998; 2000) idea and pointing water resources that could be part of the livelihood platform, making rural diversification possible. It is showed in Figure 2

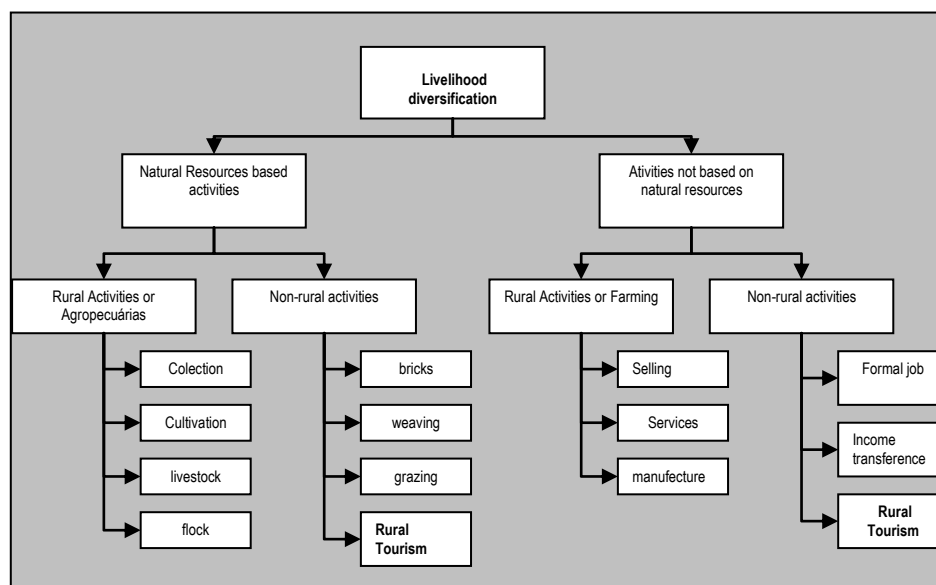


Figure 2 – Kinds of activities developed in rural properties specially tourism activities.

Source: elaborated by the authoresses base on Ellis (2000).

As we can see in Figure 2, livelihood diversification can be achieved through both ways: activities based on natural resources and activities based on nonnatural resources. Rural tourism would appear as an activity that would demand concomitant development from both activities. From one side, it would depend on water (natural) resources that would work as an attraction to the tourist perception, on the other side, tourism would represent a provided service like an activity based on non-natural resources, justified by services offered (accommodation, food, transport, and other leisure activities).

But its relevant to mention Ellis (1998) pattern applied in some studies done in several countries such as Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Kenya, that discuss rural poverty related to the livelihood diversification in a particular section (Ellis and Mdoe, 2003; Ellis and Bahiigwa, 2003; Ellis, Kutengule and Nyasulu, 2003; Freeman, Ellis and Alison, 2004).

What we can see is that Ellis's work (2000) does not offer a number of hints to solve problems related to rural poverty reduction and its causes and effects, but he gives us an insight to create and analyze livelihood politics, identifying specific components (active components, mediate and active processes) that encourage the thought about critical connection between them all.

3 WATER RESOURCES AND RURAL TOURISM

Water resources are also considered an economical good because it's not renewable, vulnerable, and specially because it's a critical resource for life's continuity on earth. Over the earth the existent water (1.370 million km) 97, 2% is saltwater. The water existing in the snow or ice corresponds to 2, 1% , drinking water is 0,6% of the total, and what is left, is found in atmospheric vapor (Setti, 1994).

It's relevant to say that Brazil has got around 12% of the world's drinking water, having the biggest river in volume and length in the planet, the Amazon river. Furthermore, over 90% of Brazilian territory receives abundant rain during the whole year and its geological and climatic features that promote a dense and large number of rivers except at the semi-arid where the rivers are poor and temporary (Social Environment Institute 2006).

Considering the country's water resources available and its diversity we can say they are relevant when compared to another regions in the world.

Yet tourism sector connected to water resources, Environment Ministerial, Water National Agency and Water Resources Secretariat, are present in three segments: tourism and leisure on about 8.000 km along the coast, ecological tourism and fishery in some of these areas like Pantanal and The Amazon Rainforest, as well as tourism and leisure in its lakes (National Plan, 2003).

What we can see is that Brazil has all the characteristics to please the visitors: beaches, forests, mountains, rivers, festivals, different food, national parks, historical places and the Brazilian hospitality. Brazilian natural way can be a permanent better off tourism source. Nowadays, tourism enterprise is the activity that shows the highest levels of improvement in the world economical context. It works with about US\$ 3, 5 trillion dollars each year and last decade it has improved its activities in about 57% (Ana, 2005).

Thus, tourism has come up to be a segment in frequent expansion in Brazil and around the world, calling people's attention to many different areas of knowledge like economy, environment, industrial technology, computer science, architecture and specially marketing (Fleischer and Tchetchik, 2005).

Having a national analysis over the money generated inside the country through tourism activity, such numbers were registered US\$ 3,2 million (2004), US\$ 3,9 million (2005), US\$ 4,3 million (2006), and US\$ 2,8 million in 2007 first semester (Tourism Ministerial, 2007).

As we can see, tourism has been an outstanding activity for Brazilian economy showing a superior outcome compared to another sectors. Although these positive aspects Matei and Santos Junior (2003) argue that the development in tourism activities brings negative impacts over society and environment that can not be ignored. Therefore, the tourism itself due its own dynamic might be also an unemployment and low income problem in long terms.

Garrod and Fyall (2000) identified eight key-elements for attraction evaluation: touristic inheritance, conservation, accessibility, education, recreation, relevance, financial, local community and quality. The authors were concerned about touristic inheritance sustainability and its failure due to natural resources exploration and use.

In this circumstances, tourism development activity even when it's looking for generating new possibilities of employment and income, it must not disconnect from preserving natural resources and historical inheritance for they are or should be the main reason for tourism enterprises.

3.1 Rural Tourism and Water Resources

Considering rural tourism, Tulik (2003) says there are a great number of approaches, concepts, and classification subjected to many criterias that make it difficult to identify the analysis. A large number of proposals try to put together kinds of tourism presenting greater groups classification, these are the most common ones: alternative tourism, tourism in a rural place, tourism in rural areas, tourism in natural and rural areas, nature tourism, cultural tourism, agrotourism, and rural tourism (Tulik, 2003; Campanhola and Silva 2000; Salles, 2003).

For Rátz and Puczkó (1998) rural tourism is defined as an activity that includes a number of other activities, services, and settings supported by farmers and rural people to bring visitors to their areas and generate new income sources for their businesses. The authors also mention that, although it seems simple to define rural tourism as "the one that happens in the country area", this definition does not include the activity complexity and its different ways and meanings for different countries. This tourism concept definition seems to be more consistent in the discussion proposed in this essay.

As for rural tourism importance in rural communities, in Taiwan for example, it works as an important element for economical activities diversification. In some communities this activity is considered a strategy from the economical point of view (Kuo and Chiu, 2006).

Through scientific literature analysis that evidences the international models of success mainly the ones implemented in Portugal, Spain, Italy and France, we can notice a stimulus for rural tourism development in Brazil (Tulik, 2003). The first evidences found about the beginning of national rural tourism come from Santa Catarina state, specifically from a city called Lages, which began in 1980's as an alternative to use the farming structure and livestock, cattle, dairy products and horses what have subsequently spread to another Mountain Regions and Santa Catarina Mountains (Serra Catarinense, expression that has been disclosed in order to be identified as a tourism area) (Salles, 2003). Cold weather, hospitality, peculiar gastronomy, landscapes, cultural particularities, and safety are some of the aspects that bear this kind of development in that region. Nowadays, Lages is considered "The National Capital of Rural Tourism".

For Cavaco (2000) rural tourism can contribute to the small farmers development activities which can be exploring the market and the opportunities to sell their products, optimizing the production through technological development observing the ecological requirements, developing ways of cooperation, improving prices through products and quality diversification as well as orientation to some niches of market (labeling, geographic indication, origin displayed, specific certificates) beyond taking the opportunities to have a complementary income and occupation.

Rural Tourism Brazilian Association (2007) shows that 92% of the business activities related to rural tourism are under women's care. In this kind of business 28% of the working force is exclusively from the family (the farmer's family); 69% are local working force (employees' family or people from neighborhood), and 3% are workers hired from the cities.

Therefore, we can agree with Bathke (2002) that rural world is no longer an exclusively agricultural place, now it has got new economical activities followed by a farmer that matches agricultural and nonagricultural activities to complement livelihood and generate employment for the rest of the family members.

What seems to be clear is that agricultural activities developed in rural areas have a relevant impact on the environment and are highly influenced by the government politics. Kuo and Chiu (2006) see a symbiotic relationship that can be established by agriculture and another practices like ecological tourism as a key-element environmentally reliable for rural areas tourism.

By analysing these activities in the rural environment from the water resources point of view Nilsson (2002) points that these ones demand a different florestation, fisheries and agricultural structure. The choice to diversificate rural property through the development of non-agricultural or livestock business demands knowledge of available opportunities that make it possible, among them, water resources.

On the other hand, Sharpley (2002) mentions that rural tourism companies tend to be small and act in a highly sazonal market facing several challenges to succeed. For the author, not all rural areas are equally attractive to the visitors and simply providing accommodation does not guarantee the demand. Development and tourism organization may require significant investment sometimes over available resources. In a strategical perspective of development the kind of tourism activity adopted depends on geographic and economic contexts, and inner factors related to the property and to the rural family. Land location can also be considered as a strategic point to achieve the enterprise success specially for the farmers that choose to use ecological and water resources available, once not all the rural areas are equally attractive to the visitors (Sharpley and Vass, 2006).

From an agribusiness view, livelihood diversification strategy in rural properties exploring water resources indicates that this activity connected to traditional agriculture, industry and enterprise, might represent a rich economical divert, new self-employment opportunities and a better off quality of life for the farmers and their families (Kitamura *et al.*, 2002).

Taking in account that rural tourism is the issue that incorporates another kinds of tourism and its water resources are something else to be explored inside the diversification process, the next discussion will present some opportunities of tourism development and leisure related to this context.

3.1.1 Fishery

Fennell and Weaver (1997) analysed the diversification potential in rural properties based in agriculture, they have conclude that fishery has got a great potential to be developed in Saskatchewan properties in Canada.

In Malasya the main activity already done in the lakes and reservatories is fishery. Fish production from lakes, river and reservatories is a valuable livelihood for the rural population. Thus, fishery comes along with ecotourism giving to the farmers an opportunity to explore their properties resources (Amback and Jalal, 2006).

Another relevant aspect in this context is aquaculture. Datas from Embrapa (2003) show an increasing of 15% in this area. More than 300 thousand people are involved in it and in many others related activities including rural places for fishing and shrimp production, feeding industry, technicians, machines and equipment manufacturers.

Another way for using water resources available in rural properties is the fishery called in Brazil *pesque-pague* (fish and buy). According to Embrapa(2003), a lot of enterprises keep some reservatories and also a place for visitors like restaurants and attractions to generate a supplementary income. As the Water Resources Notebook of Water National Agency (2005) there are some Hydrographic Regions in Brazil wich have already adopted this fishing activities: Amazone, Tocantins-Araguaia, Western Northeast Atlantic, San Francisco, Uruguay and Paraguay Hydrographic Region.

Brazil has a great water resource diversity which can be an ideal alternative for several strategies implementation to increase rural families livelihood and surroundings. Fishery is destinate to people who are looking for sports and leisure and not only fishing (Cookea and Cowxb, 2006).

3.1.2. Lakes, Rivers and Waterfalls

The geographical features associated to water resources in some regions promotes the formation of lakes, rivers and big and small waterfalls. This kind of natural resource is an important attraction for visitores and is relevant for developing tourism and leisure intertainment activities. Besides, men´s intervation over the nature creates artificial rivers and lakes that can be the base for many different tourism attractions. Gonzáles´work (2004, p. 246) about the new ways of using water resources in Iberian Peninsula within tourism finality will point to "*vela, el piragüismo, la canoa, el windsurf y el turismo de aventura en general*".

When exploring these kinds of water resources, we can say that, some properties are in advantage because of their geographical area that can not be copied. In this case, the water resource might be a competitive advantage for the farmer that is getting into the tourism market and intends to offer leisure and tourism services. These benefits will work as an extra attraction for another activities developed inside the property.

However, a large number of activities can be developed from lakes and rivers exploration. Perhaps, the most commom one is an aquatic park, followed by swimming area, fishery, sailing, aquatic ski, jetski, rafting and windsurf which are really appreciated by specific visitors (Almeida and Da Costa, 2007).

When it comes to waterfalls, Hudson (1998) mentions that several people from different ages around the world appreciate it. Beyond the view aspect, the waterfalls are the stage where radical sports are played connected to nature, climbing and rapel, are some of them. Proprety´s topographic characteristics are connected to make these waters resources available. Furthermore, water quality, weather, fauna and flora diversification can drive people to look for it for leisure and tourism.

Barbosa and Zamboni´s study (2000) indicates sustainable exploration of available water resources, as well as a large number of people involved from the region which are the axis for a cluster formation in Bonito, a small city in Mato Grosso state.

Some studies were already done related to the exploration of rural tourism and its water resources, identifying as well this enterprise as a possibility to diversify the strategies portfolio for rural properties livelihood.

3.2 Observing Rural Tourism as an Alternative for Livelihood Strategies Diversification in Rural Properties

Salles (2003) and Beni (2006) emphasize different activities worth to compose livelihood strategies in rural properties for the same reasons as Ellis (2000) did. For Salles (2003) and Beni (2006) rural tourism helps to create another profile for rural employment, being after a while a real livelihood alternative for rural population.

Strengthening livelihood strategies diversification ideas in rural properties through these activities, Sharpley and Vass (2006) identified in their studies a long tradition on rural tourism in Europe declaring it is becoming an

efficient way to solve social and economical problems in rural areas particularly in the agricultural sector. The authors also say that tourism demand has been increasing significantly in many countries around the world. Dias (2005) agrees and mentions that rural tourism is a social need already institutionalized in the most of countries around the world. For this author development need in this activity brings out a greater number of attractions (products and services) related to the existent resources exploration like infrastructure, cultural, human, or natural resources or any other one that can be interesting to the costumer or tourist.

Going through a rural tourism analysis and its use of water resources as a demand, Froehlich and Rodrigues (2000) point out some particularities related to waters resources quality and its importance for the activity outcome. According to the authors, water level and flow may be compromised by agricultural activities in the area like irrigation, agroquimical contamination, siltation as a result of inadequated agricultural practices and others.

For Sharpley and Vass (2006), the farmers' decision to diversify their properties through tourism activities associated to another activities in the same area relies specifically, on a group of circumstances like: a) economical need due a risky condition existent; b) geographical, physical, or natural features available which make the activity possible; c) the farmer's social and economical role perception what's related to the way that a rural tourism agent sees his enterprise, not only from inside, but also from the market social implications; d) the existence of demographic and lifestyles elements; e) support and availability from public sectors and government; f) the farmer's perception that rural tourism can be a good option to diversify his activities.

Froehlich and Rodrigues (2000) emphasize that in this kind of enterprise some aspects must be considered. Infrastructure deficiency identification, capability to attract and maintain the flow of tourists. Besides, an interpriser will face the lack of public and private investments to develop the local market, difficulty to find specialized employees, and inadequate institution to develop and promote tourism.

Discussing about the rural possibilities for livelihood strategies diversification, Reardon, Berdegue and Escobar (2001) mention the role of public politics linked to the rural development as a stimulus for rural properties having nonrural complementary activities with rural activities already developed in the property. The authors say that rural development politics must promote not just capital mobilization but also human resources that are outside the agricultural activity generating a positive impact over the region development transcending productive unit limits.

Financial resources access to support the initial investment needed to develop the new activities, especially nonagricultural ones is one of the problems faced by the farmers. In social terms, the National Program For Family Agriculture Strength (PRONAF) has the finality to cover this demand offering credit lines to improve the family income, strengthening agriculture and opening new employment opportunities and wages, including rural tourism and leisure as possibilities to diversify livelihood strategies that might be financed via program.

4 ANALISIS AND FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Using the analytical structure given by Ellis (2000) and presented in Figure 1 in this essay, it's possible to make some statements about the use of rural tourism as an option to diversify livelihood strategies that can be explored by rural properties.

- (1) Tourism exploration as a property livelihood strategy diversification possibility takes to a changeable perception of some available resources specially the natural, physical and human capital. The livelihood platform would be distinct from the usual and a complementray one, working on the administration of rural activities impact enfazizing natural capital because its exploration as a tourism attraction requires environment preservation. Thus, the beginning of the activity would require: (a) water resources available from natural capital, topography of the land, fauna and flora's attractions; (b) from physical capital the use of idle places in the present productive activity, capacity to absorb future modification or new intalations looking for adequating the invioronment to the oriund demands from the services; (c) from human capital the family's working force availability and capacity to develop competencies for the activities in the productive unit. Furthermore, in case of water resources exploration for diversifying livelihood strategies these strategies are highly related to the envinronmental right maintenance of natural resources.
- (2) The perception change that takes one to the use of this strategy comes out from elements such as: (a) Institutional: through a specific legislation that supports the activity; (b) Rules and culture: a good hosting service culture and urban population intention to know rural life; (c) State's organizations, associations and agencies: through mobilizing farmers stabelished in rural tourism areas stimulating them to realize the income possibilities generated by this kind of activities. Reardon, Berdegue and Escobar (2001) identified the organizations and associations as important elements for political determination in rural areas

- considering their capability to influence the state agencies. Public politics must be oriented to support non-agricultural and livestock activities in rural properties in a concomitant way to the other activities.
- (3) Modification in the population context and world and national economical changes: these ones take to the livelihood platform perception as a source of rural tourism activities. It is the search for a relieving stress caused by the urban routine that might be the motivation for this kind of activity. Besides, economical stability, economical and social development and contemporary environmental tendencies (that have worldwide scope) contribute to an availability of income and interest on services consumption connected to tourism and especially rural tourism. Therefore, the demand would work as an encouraging factor to offer this kind of service.
 - (4) As a consequence, rural tourism interlinked with water resources inside the possibilities presented in the section 3, a real possibility to increase livelihood strategies that can be used by rural properties.
 - (5) This activity can be classified as a strategy followed by nonagricultural and livestock rural activity development.
 - (6) Consequencies and effects from the diversification strategies adopted in these bases would be: (a) the rural family's income amplification through another source of money earning; (b) income level and stability for the same reason; (c) seasonality impact reduction by exploring one more activity in the property, income distribution instead of concentrates it in harvest periods; (d) individual income sources risk reduction, once there are another alternatives for income minimizes the effect of negative externalities on sectorial crisis over the productive unit. On the other hand, understanding that the person who looks for rural tourism wants to enjoy natural environment, nature, there is a necessity to preserve this resources. This new way of observing and using natural capital tends to make farmers treat natural capital in a friendly way, contributing so to the preservation and recovering of degraded areas what results in better quality of water, soil, forest reclaim and biodiversity. Through rural tourism and water exploration we obtain a diversified strategy that contributes to the livelihood enlargement in rural properties. The elements presented in the essay evidence rural tourism already as a reality for some rural properties not only in Brazil.

Furthermore, water resources tend to be important activities sources that contribute to the visitor's interest for this kind of tourism mainly when they are related to leisure activities.

However, natural resources exploration, specifically water resources gives a great number of options for diversification all likely to differentiation. Considering all the non-natural resources and the services that can be connected to rural tourism, the farmer can find options to differentiate the services and increase his competitiveness in the market.

Then study has been limited by datas about water resources as a tourism activity source in national rural areas, mainly when this activity is develop in a livelihood diversification perspective in rural properties.

This limitation perhaps indicates a research area to be explored, especially in the regions that have been historically envolved with rural tourism and that are situated in geographically privileged areas and present water resources as an alternative to be used.

Finally, it is worth to say that facing social and environmental pressures from the current aconomical system, this kind of alternative can be alike to the sustainable development ideas.

Generally, we hope that one of the tourism leisure activity adoption impact connected to the water resources with the purpose to diversificate livelihood be an enlargement of natural resources preservation, as well as life improvement for the families that depend on rural properties, in other words, environmental and social goals being shared by the productive unit and its economical goals. The remark of this kind of characteristic can also guide further studies.

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