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IMPACTS OF ECOTOURISM ON THE BOG OF SERRA NEGRA - BEZERROS/ PE

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INTRODUCTION

The “*Brejo da Serra Negra*” (Bog of Serra Negra) has become an area of interest of many sectors of society, among them tourism in its different forms. Ecotourism is one of the propellers of tourism and defined by the Institute of Ecotourism of Brazil as : “the practice of recreational, sporting or educational tourism using, in a sustainable form, natural and cultural assets, encouraging conservation, promoting environmental awareness and assuring the well being of the populations involved” (Instituto de Ecoturismo do Brasil, 1995). Within this perspective some questions such as : how does ecotourism is developed in the concerned area? What are the impacts caused on *Brejo da Serra Negra* (Bog of Serra Negra)? How is environmental awareness being addressed? should be answered.

The Brejo da Serra Negra has been the constant aim of ecotourism because of its very unique beauty and the fact that it is a climatic sub-humid area in the hinterlands of Pernambuco and attraction to the so-called radical sports, ecologic tours, caverns exploring as well as camping.

OBJECTIVES

This study has de objective of analyzing the impacts caused by ecotourism in the area of the Brejo da Serra Negra – Bezerros/PE. It is known that the undue and indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources (including soil use), can lead throughout the years to undesirable results such as the loss of natural properties of the soil, depletion of original vegetation, endangering of animal species lives, etc.

METHODOLOGY

Methodological resources used were initiated through a bibliographic survey followed by location visits with the application of interviews. Afterwards, a survey of ecotourism features, potentialities and local infrastructure where ecotourism is an alternative for development was performed.

LOCATION

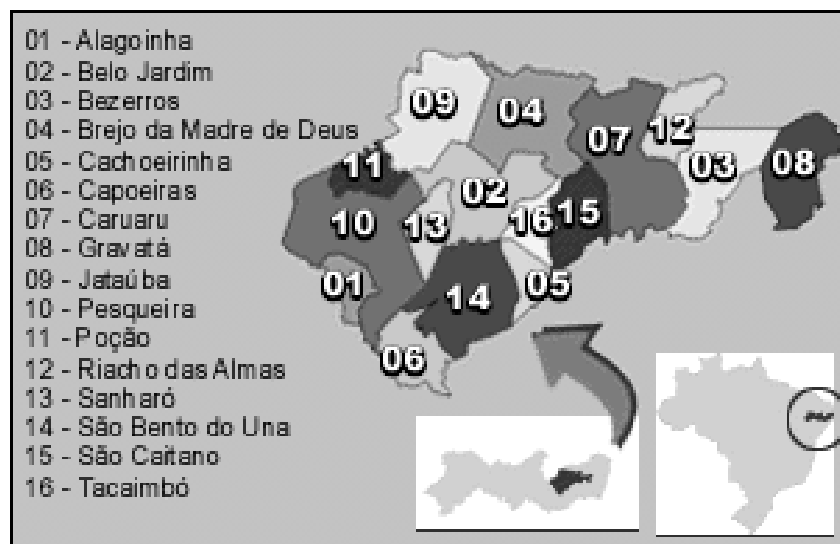
Brejo da Serra Negra (photo 1) is located in the municipality of Bezerros (photo 2) inserted in the mesoregion of the Hinterland of Pernambuco, and micro-region of the Ipojuca Valley (map 1). It is approximately 100 km from the capital of the State, Recife.



Photo 1: View of the Bog of Serra Negra



Photo 2: Bezerros' Downtown / PE



Map 1: Map of micro-region of the Ipojuca Valley

Source: <http://www.citybrazil.com.br/pe/regioes/valeipojuca/index.htm>

Brejos – Marshlands : A Definition

In Brazil the word “brejo” has different meanings depending of the region. In the South and Southeast “brejo” is understood as marshland or susceptible to flooding. In the Northeast, the meaning is different for it represents an exceptional area, humid and this humidity distinguishes it from the vicinities. “ Although in the Southeast and South “brejos” correspond to small flooded areas, in the Northeast they represent humid areas within a domain of climates where water is scarce, that is, sub-humid and semi-arid climates”(COUTINHO, 1982).

Another outstanding feature of the Northeastern “brejos” is that this different area is favorable in terms of human settlement as well as in terms of the economy, therefore, valuable within a regional context.

Formed by the effects of altitude (relief) in the case of Serra Negra of 800 to 960 m, exposure (humid mass) the Brejo da Serra Negra possesses a micro-climate differentiating it as well. These features are revealed through the axiom: “vegetation mirrors the climate”. Therefore, the pluvial-nebular forest characterizes these areas of exception present in Serra Negra.

Ecotourism X Impacts

Brejo da Serra Negra is much sought after for the practice of ecotourism due to its natural characteristics as quoted above, but the non-compliance to some of the assumptions of care for Nature that are in the core of ecotourism itself, endangers the natural assets of that area.

There are policies related to local planning concerning the building of houses, therefore, prohibiting construction in the reservation areas of the Atlantic Forest, the building of houses with more than one story high, allowing only for ground edifications establishing a limit of space between them. But, concerning ecotourism nothing has really been done.

The lack of policies for ecotourism gives room for area degradation due to no law enforcement and tourists' orientation in the location causing private groups to freely exploit the area.

Trails for ecologic tours are indiscriminately opened degrading vegetal coverage and impacting the soil; for once uncovered it becomes frail and susceptible to erosion during rainfall. Solid wastes discarded on the way are always a problem for they interfere in soil dynamics. People camping at the location are often found without the support of specialized personnel (guides) who would probably orient campers in the improvement of local conservation. (photo 3)



Photo 3 – Entrance of the “Love Cave”, a very famous place among ecotourists.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Brejo da Serra Negra is an area calling the attention of many sectors of society, among them tourism in its different forms. Considering this reality, policies should be urgently created and implemented to protect the location as well as education and inspection of activities taking place to assure the integrity of soil, vegetation and the natural assets of the Brejo.

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