

Regional Development: The Study of the Southern Half of Rio Grande do Sul - Brazil

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The National Integration Department was founded in 1999 and has regional integration and sustainable development policies as one of its priorities, as well as the creation of regional plans and programs of development, establishing strategies to integrate regional economies. On the basis of the Annual Long Term Plan - PPA 2004/2007, the Federal Government commended the Integrated and Sustainable Development Programs for Specific Mesoregions, that cover a total of thirteen regions in the country. One such specific Mesoregion is the Southern Half of Rio Grande do Sul. The Integrated and Sustainable Development Forum for the Southern Half of Rio Grande do Sul – MESOSUL Forum, was founded in 2002 with the purpose of promoting regional integration and sustainable development, supporting the strengthening of the local and mesoregional social-economic foundation and inclusion, stimulating social participation, qualifying the agents involved in the development process and making sustainable use of the natural resources. Amongst the main goals of Mesosul Forum are the implementations of alternative productive chains other than traditional ones, with significant potential necessary to enforce a dynamic regional economy. Forestry and forestry; Aquaculture and Fishing; Pottery and Ornamental Rocks are examples. However, data collected shows that in spite of what is foreseen in the region development plan, it's not the productive chain of wood that has been implemented, but yet the monoculture of exotic species in order to extract cellulose, as this seems to be the interest of big transnational companies of the sector; such as Stora Enso (Fin-Sweedish) and Votorantim. There are currently three hundred and sixty thousand hectares of eucalyptus and pines cultivation in the southern half of Rio Grande do Sul, further promoting the concentration of land ownership with large environmental impact, derived from the practice of monocultures in areas of natural fields and fragile soils, associated with the intense use of pesticides.

1. Introduction

The National Integration Department, founded in 1999, has as one of its priorities the creation and maintenance of regional integration and sustainable development policies; as well as regional development plans and programs, and the establishment of strategies to integrate regional economies. For such, the Department took on the challenge to promote strengthening actions towards the federal pact through some adjustments of the regional development activities; in the national context and the globalization process, taking into consideration:

- The sustainable development means social and economic development in the search for a full citizenship realization and, therefore, an increase in productivity with competitiveness and social and economic equity amongst the regions, visioning the access to logistic infra structure as well as health, education and safety;

- The integration and the regional development take on demands related to an improvement in quality of life, labor qualification, scientific and technological development and, most especially, the respect towards cultural and territorial diversity affirming the legitimacy of the search for social equity.;

- The sustainable regional development means environmental sustainability with a rational use of the natural resources and the management of the hydro resources and the ecosystems for the benefit of the current and future generations;

The National Integration Department recognizes also that the deepening of the territorial divergences and the worsen of the social exclusion resulting from the competitiveness between companies and regions, and the contrast between the technical advances and the low levels of literacy have favored unemployment, casual work and wage concentration. In the same way the global flows of capital, information, technology and consumption have created dynamic islands in the national territory, redefining the dependency relations amongst the regions.

The actions of the National Integration Department aim the endogenous development through implementing the intra and inter regional potential and also by the wakening of cooperation amongst the Federal, State and Municipal Governments, aiming for sustainable and integrative actions.

Such policy known as the National Policy for Regional Development became a bill through the Decree # 6047 of Feb 22, 2007, that elevated it to the condition of government policy.

In this context of integrative actions and regional development we see new regional delimitations with differing territorial scales from traditional micro regions gaining importance. The differing mesoregions rise, consequently as sub national spaces conflicting between two or more states, or with neighbor countries' boarders, with

historical, cultural, social and political identities and characterized by social and institutional problems and with common economic dynamism in relation to the regions where they are inserted in.

The mesoregions are not only a regional space of integrative development actions but they also support relations marked by common characteristics, inner dependent markets and other dynamics which imprint a sub national identity to such.

To each selected and differentiated space of the Brazilian territory comes a proposal for the implementation of actions that shape a new model of management in the territory. The mesoregions are sub regional spaces of confluence between two or more federal unities of the federation, or with neighbor countries' borders, with its own cultural, social and political identities, with serious social and institutional hardship, as well as economic dynamic problems; smaller than macro regions which need incentives and a different action from the State in the development of productive and cooperative activities.

So, as for the Plural Annual Plan - PPA 2000-2003 scope, according to Ferreira, *apud* Schneider and Lübeck (2003), non contemplated areas by the policies of the Development Hub were prioritized since it was considered that the mesoregions were distributed throughout the Brazilian territory in spaces complementary to those in the National Axis of Integration and Development. In such context the general goal of the mesoregion programs was to elevate the quality of life of the residing population in the selected mesoregions; through support towards the implementation of forums and local sustainable and integrative development projects upon efficient and capable management of its actions, qualification of technicians and experts and stimulus to the structuring of chains and productive investments.

As specific objectives the document pointed out:

1. promote sustainable economic activities respecting the environmental characteristics of each selected mesoregion;
2. develop the productive sectors that cater for the needs of the population to improve the condition of their lives and strengthen the economy of the differentiated mesoregions;
3. promote the activities linked to an aggregation of the local production value;
4. support the implementation of social policies that aim for improvement in the quality of life for the population;

5. Create useful articulation ways within the many areas of the public power and the community to boost the results of the actions implemented.

These objectives, however, came together as five actions which shaped the model of management that translates, in a final analysis, the proposal inserted in the premises:

- Qualification of human resources for the management of local and integrative development in the mesoregions;
- Implementation of the planning for the sustainable development in the mesoregions;
- Mobilize the communities upon association and cooperation in the mesoregions;
- Creation of an integrated and sustainable development forum in the mesoregion.

For this scenario the National Integration Department¹ initially allowed 13 Integrated and Sustainable Development Programs for the mesoregions to promote regional development and integration, based on a shared management action of the territory through the implementation of inner municipal and inner state cooperative actions and also the integration of public policies. These Mesoregions are the following:



Picture 01 - Coverage area of the 13 Development Programs of the Differentiated Mesoregions
Source: Schneider and Lübeck, 2003, p. 37

¹ Available at: http://www.mesosul.org.br/nou-rau/document/get.php/183/mesorregiao_metade_sul_rio_grande_sul.pdf
Access on: April 10, 2010. See also ETGES, Virginia Elisabeta. Mesorregiões Brasileiras - O Portal da Metade Sul do RS – Mesosul. Available at: <http://www.fee.tche.br/sitefee/download/jornadas/2/e4-04.pdf> Access on March 15, 2010.

In regards to the Plural Annual Plan - PPA 2004/2007, the Federal Government highlighted the Integrated and Sustainable Development Programs for the Differentiated Mesoregions (PROMESO and PROMOVER), under the responsibility of the Regional Programs Area of the National Integration Department; selecting the Southern half Mesoregion of Rio Grande do Sul as one of its priorities.

According to the Plan, PROMESO² seeks the reduction of the unacceptable social and regional imbalance, starting from bringing out the potential of the active endogens – achievable and unachievable of differentiated mesoregions, in particular.

The goals are:

- induce an integrated role of the Federal Government in new special scales, preferably in sub-regions;
- promote an identification of the demands and solutions to the so called problematic regional with the effective participation of the civil society which must be organized and legitimate represented for such;
- Seek to overcome the imbalances based in the promotion of all the regions that present some kind of potential and human resources and social assets, partnerships, ability to build plans and alliances, cooperation chains amongst economic agents, cooperation between public and private institutions.

As it is a Program focused on the management of the development supported by a stimulus to any potential and economic, social and cultural characteristics of each region, the full operation of PROMESO constantly seeks social organization and orientates the local population about real possibilities of development.

The Program also incentives labor qualification and the creation of association and cooperation sectors aiming to produce an environment proper to a sustainable development in the mesoregions.

In this same scenario we can highlight the effort put towards the implementation of a basic infra structure necessary to the economic development in the regions; such as constructions that are not part of any government large scale initiatives and also easy

² Available at: <http://www.mi.gov.br/programasregionais/boletim/> , Access on: April 3, 2010.

access to low cost finances such as the constitutional funds and the development agencies.

PROMESO provides the insertion of planned actions due to the trans versatility exercise that has been put into practice in the federal public administration converging typically sector efforts into territorial spaces defined in the scope of national integration competences.

Yet, according to the same document the Program to Promote Sustainability for Sub regional Spaces was conceived in a way to be possible follow the evolution of social economic indicators of the region, therefore, allowing the government actions to be permanently adapted to the needs due to the development process.

PROMESO structure also allows the inclusion of new areas to be identified as priorities to this type of action; however, successful experiences may be left out of the Program after having achieved a satisfactory and sustainable level incorporating the national development dynamic.

The elaboration of The Integrated and Sustainable Development Forum for the Southern Half of Rio Grande do Sul – MESOSUL Forum adds to all other efforts put forward by the National Integration Department to make viable a space with the purpose of promoting regional integration and sustainable development, supporting the strengthening of the local and mesoregional social-economic foundation and inclusion, stimulating social participation, qualifying the agents involved in the development process and making sustainable use of the natural resources.

According to Roselani Sodr  da Silva, Mesosul Forum coordinator, acknowledging the need to create a place for the discussion, definition and forwarding of priority issues for the development of the Southern Half of Rio Grande do Sul is something that's been on the cards for a while. There's a need for an organization to deal with the many converging proposals and existing actions. A structure committed to streamline the proposals and willing to contribute to more meaningful breakthroughs in the ongoing programs and projects, and stimulate cooperation between the different government's instances, non-governmental institutions and the regional integration community, instigating the synergy necessary to boost the desired development. (SCHNEIDER e L BECK, 2003)

With such interest and vision in mind regional leaders met in Bage city in Rio Grande do Sul in March, 2001 to deliberate the implementation of actions for a Sustainable and Integrated Development Program for the Mesoregions – PROMESOS, in the southern half of Rio Grande do Sul.

Result of intense discussion carried out over six regional seminars along 2001 with the participation of around nine hundred regional leaderships, the Prep-Forum of the Integrated and Sustainable Development for the Southern Half Mesoregion of Rio Grande do Sul was lodged in October at the Rio Grande do Sul Parliament House, culminating with the effective settlement of the Mesosul Forum in December of the same year at FAMURS – Rio Grande do Sul Municipal Association Federation, in Porto Alegre.

2. Characteristics of the Southern Half Mesoregion of Rio Grande do SUL - MESOSUL

Mesoregions, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, are individual regions that present a form of geographic space organization defined by social and natural dimensions and own communication, which represent its own identity resulting from the way society related to that environment along time.

The Southern Half Mesoregion of Rio Grande do Sul is one of the 13 Integrated and Sustainable Programs for the Brazilian Mesoregions identified by the National Integration Department to promote integration and regional development, based on shared management actions of the territorial space through the implementation of inner municipal and inner state cooperation and public policies integration.

In documents released by the Department referring to the creation of the Southern Half Meso region we find the above mentioned as a result of a private historical process, as it was up to the early forties of XX century the richest region of Rio Grande do Sul, pointing out Pelotas, which was similar or even more thriving than the State's capital Porto Alegre.

Historically, the structuring of the productive hub of the Southern Half of Rio Grande

do Sul gets organized from Porto do Rio Grande (1736), Vale do Jacui occupation, the Missiões conquest and, later on, Pelotas city with the settlement of charqueadas and the consolidation of the city as polo of manufacturing and production trade.

In the XX century the replacement of the process of industrial livestock slaughter takes place with the introduction of sheep farming centered in the textile industry. During the first decades of the XX century the first agricultural investments appear with triticales and orizicola crops standing out at first.

The final relevant historical transformation in the Mesoregion happens with the introduction of the rice culture in wet lands at the same point when the reduction of livestock and the devaluation of raw wool due to synthetic fabrics appear.

So, the Mesoregion shows as historical structuring factors, multiple social economic elements that becomes real with the use of the fields for extensive livestock activity and irrigated rice culture in the wetlands. The dynamic of such activities and the space organization due to private habitats and cyclic crisis define the social and demographic behavior, the forms of income concentration and the consumption style of the Mesoregion.

Documents also highlight that the Southern Half of Rio Grande do Sul while sub-regional space inserted in the borders of Brazil, Uruguay and Argentine is characterized by a accentuated process of economic dynamic loss, result of difficulties in getting inserted in the expansion cycles of the Brazilian economy and, from the 80's decade in the past century where the crisis that started in the 30's decade with the end of charqueadas cycle in Pelotas deepens.

With the end of industrialization and the competition brought up with Mercosul in agriculture and livestock production, the region started to lose competitiveness and dynamism reaching staggering stagnation points, summing up poverty levels in many of its municipalities, which in many aspects was a reminder of those regions more undeveloped in the country.

The Southern Half Mesoregion of Rio Grande do Sul located in the extreme south of the country has the largest boarder area of Mercosul and its formed of 106 municipalities, occupying an area of 153.879 km² with a residing population of around 2.600.000

inhabitants, according to Census 2000 data, equivalent to around 52% of the gaúcho territory and 25% of the State's population.

The Mesoregion area covers eight COREDES – Regional Development Boards: Campanha, Central, Centro Sul, Fronteira Oeste, Sul, Jacuí Centro, Litoral, and Vale do Rio Pardo, the last two cited partially covered. COREDES are institutions of collective deliberation in the regional community under the form of private juridical entity with no profit, unlimited validity time and with the objective to advise the State's Government in regards to the definition and planning of general regional and state's development guidelines with the purpose to promote an improvement in quality of life of the population, a fair distribution of the wealth produced, social and economic development with use of the natural resources and environment preservation.

The COREDES are formed by representatives of many society segments that act decisively over collective deliberations which guide the state and regional development; reason why they are true support columns of the new model for regional development.

Yet still, according to the National Integration Department the Southern Half Mesoregion of Rio Grande do Sul' problem areas can be summed up in the following pointers:

- Growing loss of the regional economy dynamism manifested through the progressive reduction in participation of the State's industrial GDP;
- Economy based mainly in the primary sector;
- Expressive presence of large properties and reduced product diversification;
- Low capacity of absorption/retention of labor, generating rural abandon and regional migration;
- Historical difficulty in collective articulation being through associations or community actions;
- Cultural feeling based on individualism and in the lack of entrepreneurship; and
- Large part of the population from the rural and urban areas living under bad housing and sewerage conditions.

These characteristics become more evident as we observe that the region has contributed with only 16% of the total State's GDP. The municipalities present proportionally Human Development Rates (IDH) below the state's average. Therefore, this region is today one of the Brazilian regions showing social economic difficulties

acknowledged by both state and federal government.

Its economy is historically based in the farm sector's production, especially beef cattle and rice crop, activities developed in large properties throughout the region, known for capital concentration. Such activities have been supported by investment mechanisms and consolidated market trade. On the other hand, most small investments in the region have little social economic reproduction prospect and rely on little incentives.

The lack of incentives either in management qualification or financial resources end up producing a low competitive dynamism for the region's products; especially those derived from small and midsize business and handcraft art.

Even the associative initiatives seen as facilitators in terms of commercialization go through financial problems in the region and have little access to financial resources, such, that are normally available to larger enterprises.

So, Mesosul Forum wants to promote the integration of the many regional active sectors making possible the exchange of experiences amongst them, aiming to strengthen and push forward the development process in the region to insert it in the globalized economy dimension.

4. Potentialities of The Southern Half of Rio Grande do Sul

We can affirm that one of the main potentialities of Mesosul is its geographic position and the privileged climate in the Mercosul context. Furthermore, it presents good quality soil, conditions for tourism market exploration, large hydro source, plus fluvial ports and the biggest port in South America, the Rio Grande Port; and transport infra-structure in constant improvement highlighting the railway network.

According to the National Integration Department, *apud* Schneider and Lübeck (204) the use of natural resources, intrinsic characteristic of the regional economy and vocation will continue to stand out in Mesosul. However, more and more knowledge and know-how will have more value than the product generated itself. For this matter, it's essential that the strategy to apply public resources to focus on the formation of human resources with strategic vision and competitive ability, being in the private sector or public

or even in the outsource industry. Besides the cross-cut action in the formation and qualification of human resources the priority will have to be in the generation of jobs and income to the local population.

BNDS studies on the most dynamic segments of the national economy have identified in a consistent way five sectors that generate the most jobs from sector investments: i) work provided to the family (education, sport, leisure, health, domestic chores), ii) farming sector, iii) timber and furniture, iv) shoe and accessories industry and v) clothing.

Studies carried out by the National Integration Department have identified in a preliminary form eight priority productive sectors for Mesosul which should serve as base for the selection of the following action proposals:

- Potential / alternative sectors: foresting and forestry; fruit culture; fishing and aquaculture; ornamental stone and pottery.
- Traditional sectors: rice, meat and milk.

As the generation of labor is one of the priorities of the Southern half Mesoregion and those segments represent an embryo in this aspect, it's primordial that such be considered throughout the analysis process for the selection of actions to be implemented in that region. For that, it's important for all regional leaderships not to lose sight that sustainability in the development process relies on the replacement – even if slow but gradual – of low grade jobs for higher ones, that is, higher productivity derived from higher qualification and skillfulness of the ways of production.

The reorganization of the productive process upon an economic diversification process to regain development with sustainable bases in this region requires a vision of the future based on the idea that the economic activity with the highest aggregated value and talented human resources, skilled and actively working in community and healthy cities in preserved environments, attract economic investments that generate wealth and pay good salaries. The taxes generated, in turn, allow for the qualification and improvement of the public services, and the salaries paid boost consumption which in turn open new business opportunities that can be characterized as a virtuous circle of improvement in quality of life.

Based on this vision it's possible to identify three strategies to regain the growth process of the Southern Half Mesoregion of Rio Grande do Sul, according to the National Integration Department; and they are:

- Economic boost;
- Quality of life and citizenship
- Sustainable use of the natural resources.

The following guidelines are suggested to the operation of the selected strategies.

1. Economic boost

- 1.1 Economic diversification and competitiveness;
- 1.2 Education for development;
- 1.3 Improvement in the regional infra-structure.

2. Quality of life and citizenship

- 2.1 Innovative public management;
- 2.2 Good health system;
- 2.3 Education;
- 2.4 Basic sewerage;
- 2.5 Starvation eradication.

3. Sustainable use of the natural resources.

- 3.1 Rational use of the natural resources.
- 3.2 Appreciation of the regional ecologic tourism potential.

The implementation of this strategy needs the legitimacy of the proposal along the regional development role players. It's recommended that the process be conducted in tune with Mesosul Forum and all other regional leaderships.

The proposition of an institutional agenda properly validated and committed amongst the role players is expected as a result of this process. As for being an instrument of planning such agenda must be always open to welcome new strategies.

4. Analysis of the achieved results

The actions carried out until now; considering what was proposed in the Integrated

and Sustainable Development Program for the Southern half of RS – Mesosul, and what the current reality points out; permit to identify two action fronts: one, expressed in the Folder of Mesoregions under the responsibility of the National Integrated Department, where the main projects developed in the Mesoregion and the resources reserved for each one are presented; and the other action front which is under the command of transnational paper sector groups that have been investing in the acquisition of land and forestation of exotic species (pines and eucalyptus) with the purpose of producing cellulose to export.

We started by presenting the projects implemented by the National Integrated Department³, in a total of seven, for which an investment summing a total of R\$ 6.552.954,00 was forecasted.

- *Implementation, broadening and renovation of forest nursery and promotion of forestation and reforestation (2003)*

Seek to promote, from actions towards potential forestation feasibility, the structuring of a productive chain of timber and furniture. The main beneficiaries are the cooperatives and associations of small and medium size rural farmers and industries in the wood and furniture business chain, proposing to them a social economic and environmental alternative, with a bias social economic approach, generating jobs and income, as well as productive diversification, besides important ecological aspect of regeneration of native forests in the areas of permanent protection and legal reserves of the region properties. Amount invested by MI: R\$ 914.000,00.

- *Implementation of induction and productive diversification centers in the Southern Half of Rio Grande do Sul for member and settled farmers with base on fruit culture (2004)*

Fruit culture presents itself as a good alternative in the job and income generation for the region. The main objective of this project is to develop with sustainable bases the production of fruit culture in the south as an alternative for income generation and labor occupation for the settled and member farmers as a form of regional development. Orchards will be established to cater for at least 750 farmers aiming to settle men in the rural fields and guaranteeing quality products for the industries and fruit manufacturing companies in the region. Amount invested by MI: R\$ 2.761.448,00.

- *Mineral handcraft and lapidating (2005)*

This project tends to enrich the productive potential little explored in two regions until not long ago: Quaraí and São Martinho da Serra, as well as neighbor municipalities. The goal here is to promote a sustainable development of amethyst, citrus and other mineral mines through a contribution with machinery and equipment for lapidating and mineral handcraft work for raw material manufacturing; as well as support all collective learning, production and trade processes via mutual cooperation systems.

Amount invested by MI in São Martinho da Serra region: R\$ 492.000,00.

Amount invested by MI in Quaraí region: R\$ 467.612,00.

³ Available at: <http://www.mi.gov.br/programasregionais/boletim/> Access on: April 20, 2010

- *Strengthening of agricultural and ecologic seed chain – generating jobs and income to the Brazilian familiar agricultural business (2005)*

The project aims to consolidate in sustainable bases the productive chain and the chain of agricultural ecological seeds through the acquisition of the necessary equipment and machinery, as well as the qualification and permanent training of farmers and technicians involved in the process. Yet, it represents a strategic perspective to recover the autonomy of the Brazilian familiar agricultural business, strengthening and consolidating the proposal to produce its own seeds with the agricultural industrial chain fully coordinated by cooperatives and fasciations of family farmers, guaranteeing a production scale, quality, diversity and aggregation of value and income.

Amount invested by MI: R\$ 449.799,00.

- *Milk production as instrument of social inclusion for the small farmer (2005)*

This project aims to contribute with the sustainable development of the milk sector through the transformation of the raw material into industrialized product in the municipality of Santa Vitória do Palmar. The investment of resources went to the purchase of machinery and equipment for the installation of a micro milk plant which will allow for an aggregation of value and incentive the associations and cooperation amongst the beneficiaries, generating knowledge and reducing production costs for activities in small properties.

Amount invested by MI: R\$ 142.000,00.

- *Management center for the furniture chain innovation*

The project aims to create an environment able to cause a cultural change in the different links of the wood-furniture productive chain through the elaboration of a chain with furniture manufacturing companies. It also aims to aggregate value to the products of such companies through innovation, launching of products in the productive process, design, qualification of the companies in productive process, market prospect, as well as an integrated performance among companies geographically closed to one another. It reinforces the associative work and the cooperation chains and also qualifies professionals to develop products via workshops to come up with prototypes with the respective physical-mechanical trials in partnership with other agents in the field.

Amount invested by MI: R\$ 858.095,00.

- *Meso regional wine culture center (2006)*

This project is set to create a technological support structure to reduce the risk of low competitiveness in small size wineries investments in the Meso region. Investments which have begun a physical consolidation are presented in this project; however, come across technical limitations, both in the grape harvest as well as in the process and post commercialization of wine and juice. So, actions are forecasted for technical attendance and qualification of farmers and technicians; with regional coverage in wine culture and wine study degree, with the implementation of a Wine culture Mesoregional Center, forming this way, a support structure to existing initiatives from farmers united in associations or cooperatives.

Amount invested by MI: R\$ 960.000,00.

These projects have been implemented; however, there is no evaluation of the impact and results effectively achieved as for now.

Yet, the action of transnational groups in the paper sector such as Stora Enzo and Votorantim have been more aggressive and may be observed through the following facts, according to Amaral (2008):

- concentration of land ownership, in extent that the paper sector project foresees the planting of one million hectares in Rio Grande do Sul State;
- Increase of poverty in the region with the indiscriminate foresting; as it suppresses opportunities and potentialities by undervaluing natural productive skills and the region's culture. The example of what's happening in Uruguay in regards to job's generation in this sector is illustrative: 2000 Census shows that for each one thousand hectare 45 jobs are generated in the country, that is, a job for each 220 hectares'. A study on labor in Espirito Santo in the regions where Aracruz acts points out that at the time when the company sought finance approval it affirmed that each hectare would generate four direct jobs in average. With its 247 thousand hectares back then, it should have generated 988 thousand jobs. But until 2004 it had only generated two thousand jobs.
- reduction of the frontier line, a project proposed by senator Sérgio Zambiasi (PTB) and federal congressmen Vieira da Cunha (PDT) besides benefiting the cellulose industry it will also allow other ways of exploration in the State, such as the free use of Guarani Aquifer;
- "annulment" coming from the RS State's government of the Environmental Mapping elaborated by technicians of the Botanical Zoo Foundation and Environmental Protection Foundation – Fepam in 2007, which established limits for the planting of exotic forests into Natural Landscape Unities, amongst other indications;
- "creation" of a new mapping approved in 2008 to specifically attend the interests of paper companies Stora Enso e Votorantim. According to the Brazilian Environmental Institute – Ibama, this mapping serves only to legitimate all licensing procedures for the forestry and cellulose production activities without proper environmental planning in relation to the magnitude of some proposed investments already under implantation. Such mapping to be seen as an effective instrument for forestry planning should at least consider the vulnerability rate of all Natural Landscape Units (UPN) utilization percentages in each UPN and size and distance between solid trees.

Besides all findings, according to Alonso (2009), the dissemination of monocultures through foresting prevents, above all, the region secularly stagnated due to a lack of diversification in productive structures which are restricted basically to the production of rice and beef, to promote what it needs the most: diversify agricultural and farming sector activities. In other words, the solution for the region should be the antitheses of monoculture, which basically, is what it always had and sent it to the precarious stage where it's found nowadays.

5. Final considerations

The intention of Mesosul Forum implementation was to promote and broaden the ability of regional society towards economic and sustainable development in the long run, based on a boost of competitiveness to international levels with a differentiated role in Mercosul's articulation. Such actions should result in the promotion of dynamic economic activities in the job market with productive and well paid jobs for the regions' residents, permitting a solid economic base for the enrichment of life in all aspects in the Southern half. Mesosul should be recognized as a privileged region to do business with.

The systematic survey of collective demands for the Mesoregion, being of social character or infra-structure, and its remittance to many government areas was carried out from the implementation of a participative planning strategy that involved public and private institutions as well as civil society's organizations contributing this way for the qualification of human resources for the management development.

The articulation and effective participation of all Mesoregion social role players should also have as result the creation and institutionalization of a Regional Fund thus a Development Agency for the Development of the Southern Half of Rio Grande do Sul .

Adding to these initiatives Mesosul Portal was also created (www.mesosul.org.br), to sum up efforts towards making viable the implementation of a system to spread information and knowledge in the Meso region, connected to the global communication net – the Internet – allowing interaction amongst the many regional role players aiming to promote regional development.

However, apart from all of these initiatives, reality shows that the implementation of everything proposed in the Sustainable and Integrated Development Program for the Southern Half of Rio Grande do Sul is far from reaching its goals. A judicious investigation and analysis of this process is needed in order to contribute to the implementation of public policies focused in the development of the regions economically stagnated, as is the case with Mesosul.

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