

TOURISM, INCLUDING AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: THE ROLE OF AMESNE MUNICIPALITIES

TURISMO, INCLUSÃO E RESPONSABILIDADE SOCIAL: O PAPEL DOS MUNICÍPIOS DA AMESNE

TURISMO, INCLUSIÓN Y RESPONSABILIDAD SOCIAL: EL PAPEL DE LOS MUNICIPIOS DE AMESNE

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Henrique Schiochet Sottoriva¹, Jéssica Talia Barcelos², Vera Lúcia Steiner³

ABSTRACT

This article investigates how the municipalities of the Association of Municipalities of the Upper Northeast Slope (AMESNE) can articulate tourism and social assistance to reduce territorial inequalities and promote productive inclusion. The central research question seeks to understand how tourism can be structured as a tool for social transformation, going beyond the economic aspect to consolidate itself as an intersectoral public policy. The general objective is to analyze the role of the AMESNE municipalities in the integration between tourism, social responsibility, and assistance policies, aiming at sustainable and inclusive regional development. The specific objectives involve: (i) outlining a socioeconomic panorama of the municipalities in the region; (ii) mapping the structure of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS) and its interaction with tourism policies; (iii) identifying local initiatives in social and community-based tourism; and (iv) proposing strategies to strengthen productive inclusion through tourism. The methodology adopted is applied in nature, with a qualitative approach, of an exploratory and descriptive character. Documentary analysis and statistical survey techniques were used, based on secondary data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), the Single Registry (CadÚnico), the Bolsa Família Program, official reports from AMESNE and SUAS, as well as national and state normative documents. Data processing involved content analysis (BARDIN, 2016) applied to plans and legislation, descriptive statistics to highlight social inequalities, and spatial analysis through georeferencing (QGIS and ArcGIS) to map vulnerable families and social protection structures. Methodological triangulation (FLICK, 2018) was employed to integrate qualitative and quantitative data, providing greater reliability to the results. The literature review consisted of an analysis of public policies on tourism and social assistance. The results show that, despite the high tourism and economic potential of the region, significant inequalities persist, highlighted by the concentration of vulnerable families. The inequalities became evident through high GDP indicators coexisting with significant social vulnerabilities, highlighted by the number of families registered in the Unified Registry and beneficiaries of the Bolsa Família Program. The structure of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS),

¹ Master's student in Tourism and Hospitality. Universidade de Caxias do Sul.
E-mail: henriqueschiochet@gmail.com Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-9776-5944>
Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/0084302335388825>

² Master's student in Tourism and Hospitality. Universidade de Caxias do Sul.
E-mail: jessica.taliabarcelos@gmail.com Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8745-6071>
Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/4497325002607256>

³ Post-doctorate in Law. Universidade de Caxias do Sul. E-mail: vlsteine@ucs.br
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1982-0730> Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/1817048552645934>

composed of 49 CRAS units and 13 CREAS units, is presented as a basis for territorial social protection actions. Corroborating this evidence, it was observed that the structured presence of SUAS, associated with community-based tourism practices, professional qualification, and cultural appreciation, strengthens the social dimension of ESG, potentially reducing dependence on income transfers, generating job and income opportunities, and strengthening social cohesion. The study concludes that integrated tourism and social assistance policies have the potential to transform AMESNE into a benchmark for fair, sustainable, and inclusive regional development.

Keywords: Tourism. Social Assistance. ESG. Public Policies. AMESNE.

RESUMO

O artigo investiga de que forma os municípios da Associação dos Municípios da Encosta Superior do Nordeste (AMESNE) podem articular o turismo e a assistência social para reduzir desigualdades territoriais e promover a inclusão produtiva. A questão-problema central busca compreender como o turismo pode ser estruturado como ferramenta de transformação social, indo além do viés econômico para consolidar-se como política pública intersetorial. O objetivo geral é analisar o papel dos municípios da AMESNE na integração entre turismo, responsabilidade social e políticas de assistência, visando o desenvolvimento regional sustentável e inclusivo. Os objetivos específicos envolvem: (i) traçar um panorama socioeconômico dos municípios da região; (ii) mapear a estrutura do Sistema Único de Assistência Social (SUAS) e sua interação com políticas turísticas; (iii) identificar iniciativas locais de turismo social e de base comunitária; e (iv) propor estratégias para fortalecer a inclusão produtiva via turismo. A metodologia adotada é de natureza aplicada, com abordagem qualitativa, de caráter exploratório e descritivo. Foram utilizadas técnicas de análise documental e levantamento estatístico, com base em dados secundários provenientes do Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), Cadastro Único (CadÚnico), Programa Bolsa Família, relatórios oficiais da AMESNE e do SUAS, além de documentos normativos nacionais e estaduais. O tratamento dos dados envolveu análise de conteúdo (BARDIN, 2016) aplicada a planos e legislações, estatística descritiva para evidenciar desigualdades sociais e análise espacial por meio de georreferenciamento (QGIS e ArcGIS) para mapear famílias vulneráveis e estruturas de proteção social. A triangulação metodológica (FLICK, 2018) foi empregada para integrar dados qualitativos e quantitativos, conferindo maior confiabilidade aos resultados. A revisão bibliográfica consistiu em análise das políticas públicas de turismo e assistência social. Os resultados evidenciam que, apesar do elevado potencial turístico e econômico da região, persistem desigualdades expressivas, destacadas pela concentração de famílias vulneráveis. As desigualdades ficaram evidentes pelos altos indicadores de PIB convivendo com vulnerabilidades sociais expressivas, destacadas pelo número de famílias inscritas no Cadastro Único e beneficiárias do Programa Bolsa Família. A estrutura do Sistema Único de Assistência Social (SUAS), composta por 49 unidades do CRAS e 13 do CREAS, é apresentada como base para ações territoriais de proteção social. Corroborando essa evidência percebeu-se que a presença estruturada do SUAS, associada a práticas de turismo de base comunitária, qualificação profissional e valorização cultural, fortalece a dimensão social do ESG, podendo reduzir dependências de transferências de renda, gerar oportunidades de trabalho e renda e fortalecer a coesão social. O estudo conclui que políticas integradas de turismo e assistência social têm potencial para transformar a AMESNE em referência de desenvolvimento regional justo, sustentável e inclusivo.

Palavras-chave: Turismo. Assistência Social. ESG. Políticas Públicas. AMESNE.

RESUMEN

Este artículo investiga cómo los municipios de la Asociación de Municipios de la Alta Vertiente Noreste (AMESNE) pueden articular el turismo y la asistencia social para reducir las desigualdades territoriales y promover la inclusión productiva. La pregunta central de la investigación busca comprender cómo el turismo puede estructurarse como una herramienta de transformación social, trascendiendo el aspecto económico para consolidarse como una política pública intersectorial. El objetivo general es analizar el papel de los municipios de la AMESNE en la integración de las políticas de turismo, responsabilidad social y asistencia, con miras al desarrollo regional sostenible e inclusivo. Los objetivos específicos incluyen: (i) delinear un panorama socioeconómico de los municipios de la región; (ii) mapear la estructura del Sistema Único de Asistencia Social (SUAS) y su interacción con las políticas turísticas; (iii) identificar iniciativas locales de turismo social y comunitario; y (iv) proponer estrategias para fortalecer la inclusión productiva a través del turismo. La metodología adoptada es de naturaleza aplicada, con un enfoque cualitativo, de carácter exploratorio y descriptivo. Se emplearon técnicas de análisis documental y de levantamiento estadístico, con base en datos secundarios del Instituto Brasileño de Geografía y Estadística (IBGE), el Registro Único (CadÚnico), el Programa Bolsa Família, informes oficiales de AMESNE y SUAS, así como documentos normativos nacionales y estatales. El procesamiento de datos implicó análisis de contenido (BARDIN, 2016) aplicado a planes y legislación, estadística descriptiva para resaltar desigualdades sociales y análisis espacial mediante georreferenciación (QGIS y ArcGIS) para mapear familias vulnerables y estructuras de protección social. Se empleó triangulación metodológica (FLICK, 2018) para integrar datos cualitativos y cuantitativos, brindando mayor confiabilidad a los resultados. La revisión bibliográfica consistió en un análisis de políticas públicas en turismo y asistencia social. Los resultados muestran que, a pesar del alto potencial turístico y económico de la región, persisten desigualdades significativas, resaltadas por la concentración de familias vulnerables. Las desigualdades se hicieron evidentes a través de altos indicadores de PIB que coexisten con importantes vulnerabilidades sociales, resaltadas por el número de familias registradas en el Registro Único y beneficiarias del Programa Bolsa Família. La estructura del Sistema Único de Asistencia Social (SUAS), compuesto por 49 unidades CRAS y 13 unidades CREAS, se presenta como base para las acciones territoriales de protección social. Corroborando esta evidencia, se observó que la presencia estructurada del SUAS, asociada a prácticas de turismo comunitario, cualificación profesional y valoración cultural, fortalece la dimensión social de los ASG, reduciendo potencialmente la dependencia de las transferencias de ingresos, generando oportunidades de empleo e ingresos, y fortaleciendo la cohesión social. El estudio concluye que las políticas integradas de turismo y asistencia social tienen el potencial de convertir a AMESNE en un referente para el desarrollo regional justo, sostenible e inclusivo.

Palabras clave: Turismo. Asistencia Social. ASG. Políticas Públicas. AMESNE.

1 INTRODUCTION

The region of AMESNE (Association of Municipalities of the Upper Slope of the Northeast) represents one of the most important poles of Rio Grande do Sul in economic, cultural and tourist terms. Composed of 37 municipalities, this region has tourism as one of its main economic activities. However, behind the enchanting landscapes and industrial strength, there are social challenges that require an integrated approach between economic development and social institutional responsibility (AMESNE, 2025).

Figure 1

The AMESNE region



Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

Such challenges require an intersectoral and integrated approach, which articulates economic development with social inclusion, equity and territorial justice, based on the strengthening of Social Institutional Responsibility (BRASIL, 2025).

Culturally, the region reflects the rich diversity of southern Brazilian culture, marked by the influence of European immigrants — mainly Italians, Germans and Azoreans — as well as by the contributions of indigenous and African peoples, whose presence, although historically marginalized, is fundamental for the formation of regional identity. Typical festivals, gastronomic knowledge, religiosity, architecture and artistic expressions are constitutive elements of local daily life and are consolidated as important tourist and identity assets. This

cultural multiplicity, in addition to attracting visitors, strengthens community bonds and can be mobilized as an instrument of territorial development based on valuing roots and promoting cultural citizenship (AMESNE, 2025).

However, despite the economic advances and the prominence in macroeconomic indicators, the region still faces significant internal inequalities. Municipalities with high *GDP per capita* and a high human development index coexist with localities that face severe restrictions on access to basic rights, such as housing, income, sanitation, health, and education (IBGE, 2025).

In urban centers considered centers of wealth, such as Caxias do Sul and Bento Gonçalves, the realities of vulnerable peripheries coexist, with populations exposed to situations of poverty, food insecurity, domestic violence, and structural discrimination. This contrast reveals the importance of building a development model that goes beyond economic growth and is committed to social justice, territorial cohesion, and respect for diversity.

In this sense, public policies that integrate the economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions are indispensable to ensure a more balanced and inclusive future. The strengthening of the social protection network, through the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS), and the articulation with tourism as a tool for productive inclusion and appreciation of cultural territories are convergent strategies.

The implementation of the Rio Grande Plan, for example, with a focus on structuring investments and qualification of human capital, points to a long-term vision that recognizes the impacts of climate change, regional inequalities and the need for intergovernmental integration. Joint action between municipal and state governments, academic institutions and civil society is crucial for the proposed transformations to be effective and legitimate.

In addition, the State Social Assistance Plan of Rio Grande do Sul (2020–2023) highlights the urgency of ensuring the rights of the population in situations of vulnerability, emphasizing the role of the State in ensuring access to basic and special social protection, income, work, and community life. This guideline dialogues directly with the challenges faced by the municipalities of AMESNE, where the social protection of the territory, combined with endogenous development strategies — such as community-based tourism, rural tourism and cultural tourism — can be decisive for the promotion of equity and social autonomy.

The strengthening of Social IR as a public management tool based on data, evidence, and intersectoral agreement expands the possibilities of decision-making that is more sensitive to inequalities. It makes it possible to map vulnerabilities, plan policies in an

articulated way, and value territories not only as spaces for tourist consumption, but as places of life, memory, and belonging (BRASIL, 2025).

In this direction, tourism, as an economic and social activity, has been consolidated as an important vector for the promotion of social inclusion and sustainable territorial development.

The expansion of social tourism, which goes beyond leisure and consumption, seeks to democratize access to tourist experiences, ensuring that vulnerable segments of the population can actively participate in this sector and enjoy its benefits. This perspective reaffirms tourism as a social right, capable of strengthening community bonds, valuing cultural identities and fostering the local economy.

In Brazil, recent public policies, such as the National Tourism Plan (2024-2027), reinforce the commitment to the democratization of access, professional qualification, and the productive insertion of people in situations of social vulnerability. The strengthening of integrated networks between tourism and social assistance is essential for the sector to effectively contribute to the reduction of regional inequalities and the promotion of social justice.

In addition, the articulation between tourism and social protection policies enables the construction of inclusive tourist environments, which respect the cultural, ethnic, generational and gender diversity of local communities. This integration enhances the development of tourist itineraries and activities that value traditional knowledge and promote community participation, expanding economic opportunities and the feeling of belonging.

Therefore, when thinking about tourism as an instrument of productive and social inclusion, it is necessary to overcome the fragmented view of public policies, building integrated and intersectoral strategies. This expanded focus contributes to tourism moving from being just a mechanism for generating revenue to becoming a space for the realization of rights, citizenship and human development.

In summary, the AMESNE region is a multifaceted territory, of great economic and cultural relevance, whose tourism potential must be understood as part of a broader strategy of sustainable development. For this development to reach all segments of the population, especially the most vulnerable, it is essential to adopt an integrated approach that unites economic growth, social responsibility, cultural appreciation and territorial inclusion.

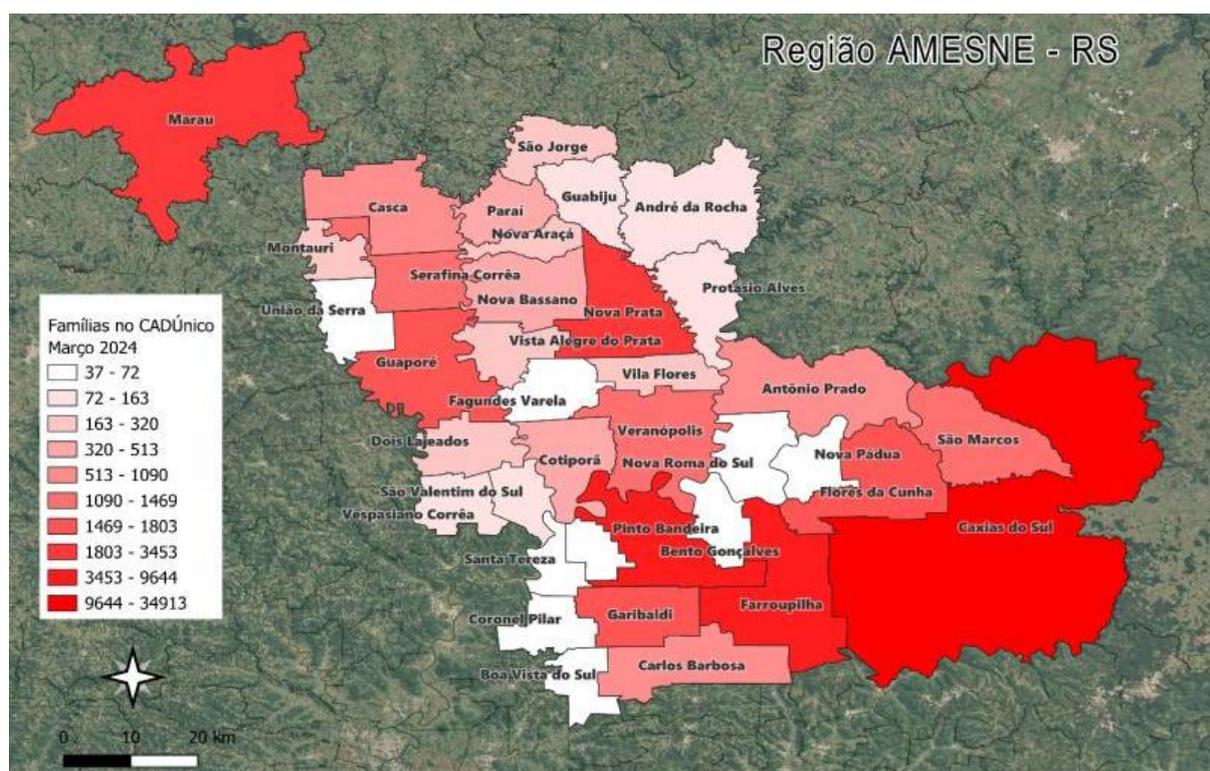
Thus, the challenge is to build public policies that not only boost the economy, but also strengthen citizenship, equity and collective well-being, making AMESNE a reference not only for prosperity, but for social justice and regional cohesion.

2 SOCIOECONOMIC OVERVIEW OF AMESNE

Although the region has high development indicators, many of its municipalities have a significant portion of the population enrolled in the Unified Registry for Social Programs (CadÚnico), and beneficiaries of the Bolsa Família Program, reflecting internal territorial inequalities (BRASIL, 2025).

Figure 2

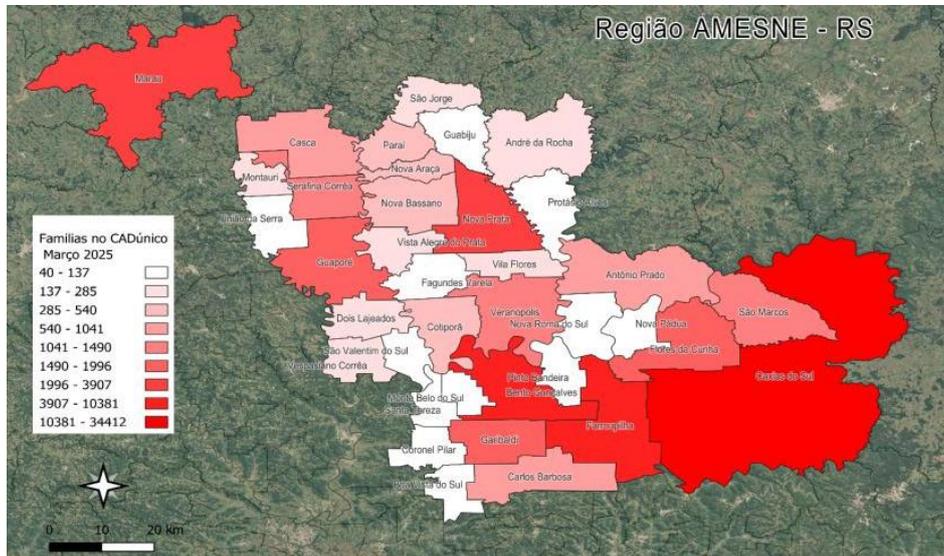
Distribution of families enrolled in CadÚnico in AMESNE municipalities in 2024



Source: prepared by the authors (2025).

Figure 3

Distribution of families enrolled in CadÚnico in the municipalities of AMESNE in 2025



Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

In the period between March 2024 and March 2025, the AMESNE region presented, in general, an increase in the number of families enrolled in the Unified Registry. This growth reflects both the expansion of the reach of public policies and a possible increase in socioeconomic vulnerability in several municipalities.

Municipalities such as André da Rocha and Bento Gonçalves recorded significant increases in registered families, from 147 to 215 and from 9,644 to 10,381, respectively. This increase indicates a greater demand for social inclusion and access to government programs that serve families in poverty or extreme poverty. Other municipalities, such as Farroupilha and Marau, also showed relevant growth, with Farroupilha going from 6,250 to 6,798 registered families and Marau from 3,453 to 3,907. This movement suggests that these localities may be expanding the coverage of social policies or facing economic challenges that drive the enrollment of families in the system (Brasil, 2025).

On the other hand, there are municipalities that presented small variations or even a slight reduction in the number of families enrolled, which may be related to registration update processes, improvement in socioeconomic conditions or other local factors.

In the region as a whole, the increase in the number of people enrolled in the Unified Registry points to a growing demand for social programs and the importance of maintaining and expanding these policies to ensure inclusion and support for families in vulnerable situations.



3 INSTITUTIONAL/SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND TERRITORIAL INCLUSION

The Bolsa Família Program represents an important mechanism of the Social RI for the promotion of territorial inclusion and the fight against poverty in the AMESNE region. Between March 2024 and March 2025, there is a general downward trend in the number of benefited families in several municipalities, which may reflect both socioeconomic advances and registration adjustments in the program.

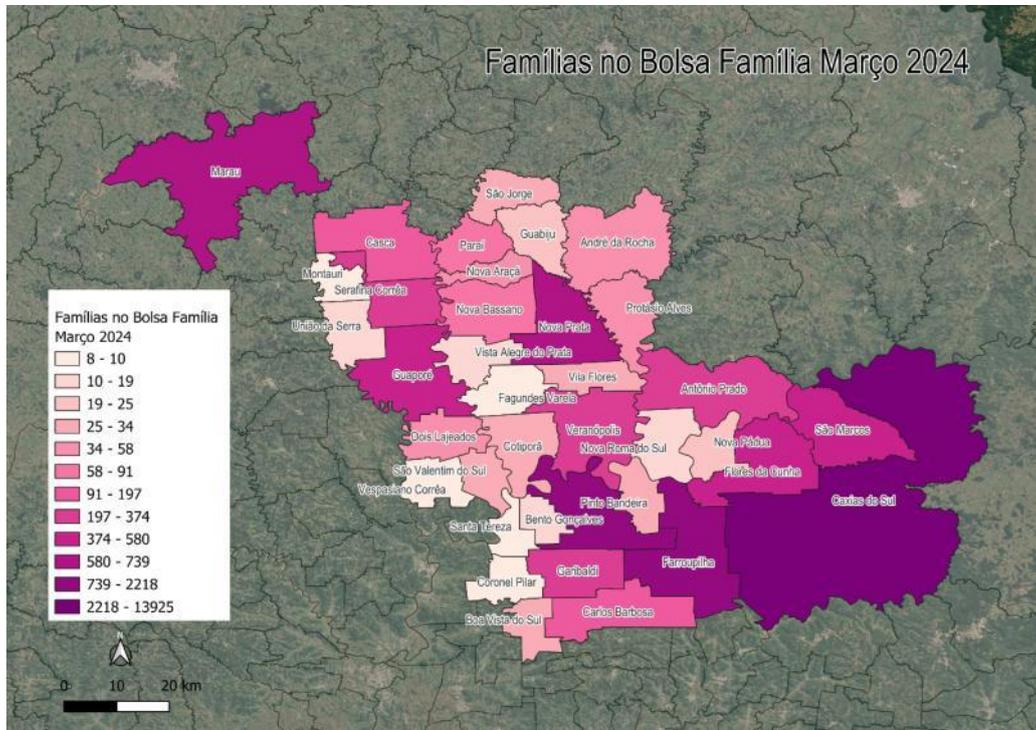
For example, in the municipality of Bento Gonçalves, the number of families in the Bolsa Família reduced from 1,913 to 1,738, and in Farroupilha, the decrease was from 2,315 to 2,218 families. This drop was also accompanied by a reduction in the total number of people benefited — Bento Gonçalves went from 5,344 to 4,829 people and Farroupilha from 6,248 to 5,902 people (IBGE, 2025).

However, there are relevant exceptions, such as the municipality of Marau, which showed a significant growth in the number of benefited families, from 650 to 1,118, and an increase in the number of people served from 2,670 to 3,109, reflecting an expansion of the program's coverage in this location. Guaporé also registered growth in the number of benefited families, from 580 to 654, and people assisted, from 1,588 to 1,722. In financial terms, the monthly amount transferred by Bolsa Família followed the variations in beneficiaries, with a general reduction in most municipalities, but with occasional increases where there was growth in coverage, such as in Marau (from R\$626,958 to R\$729,592) and Guaporé (from R\$382,894 to R\$424,940) (IBGE, 2025).

As we can see in the figures below:

Figure 4

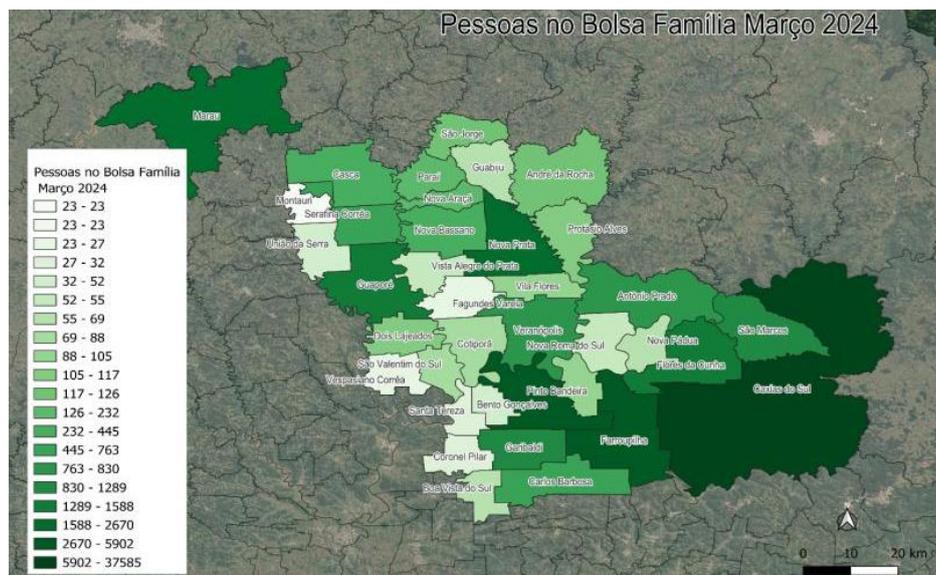
Distribution of families in the Bolsa Família in the municipalities of AMESNE in 2024



Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

Figure 5

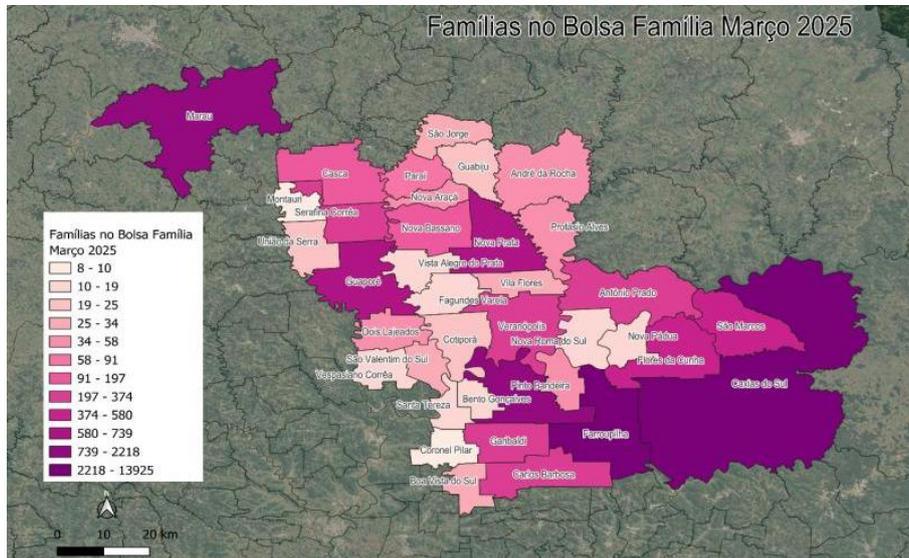
Distribution of people in the Bolsa Família in the municipalities of AMESNE in 2024



Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

Figure 6

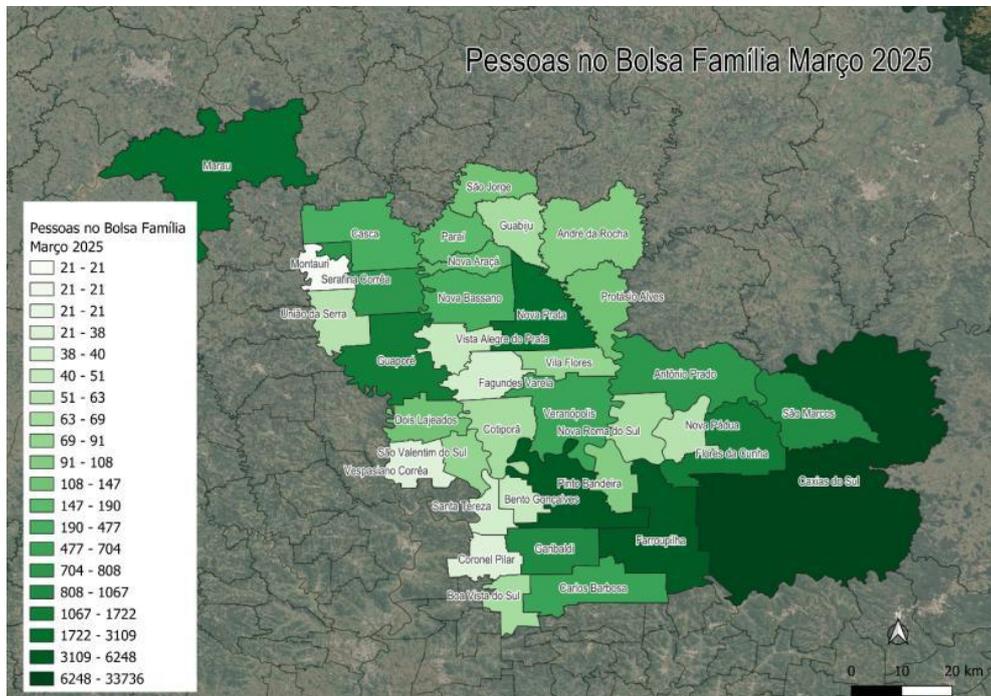
Distribution of families in the Bolsa Família in the municipalities of AMESNE in 2025



Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

Figure 7

Distribution of people in the Bolsa Família in the municipalities of AMESNE in 2025



Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

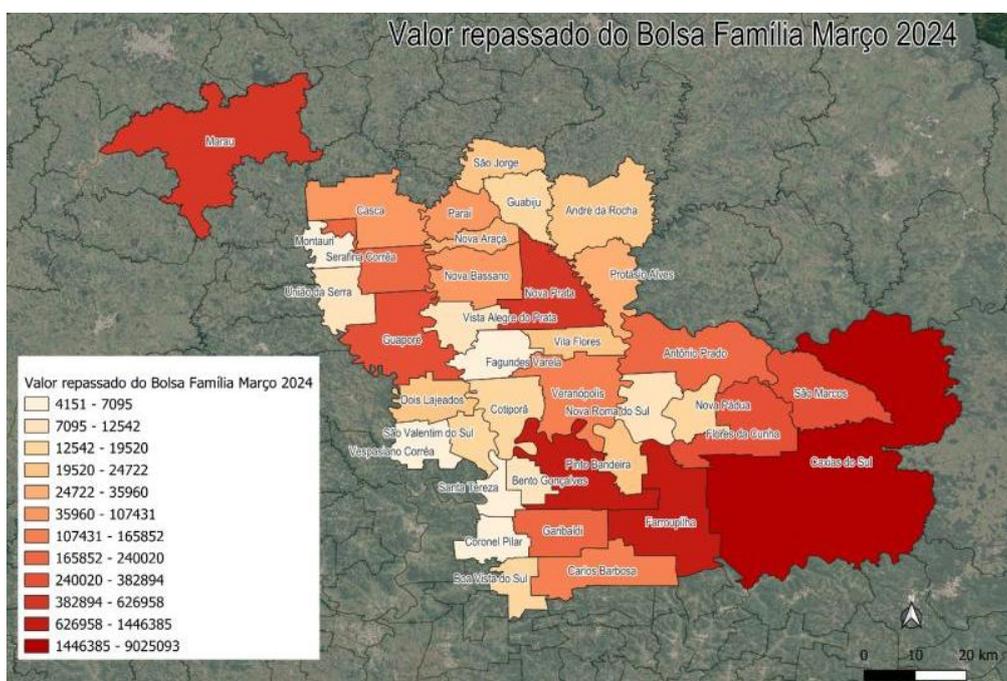
These movements reflect the dynamics of Social IR in the region, which seeks to adjust benefits according to the local socioeconomic reality, promoting territorial inclusion by

ensuring that families in vulnerable situations have continuous access to essential resources for their subsistence and development.

Thus, the analysis of the monthly amounts transferred by the Bolsa Família Program in the AMESNE region between March 2024 and March 2025 reveals a downward trend in the total volume of resources allocated to the program in most municipalities. This reduction accompanies, in many cases, the decrease in the number of families and people benefited, which may be linked to registration revisions, improvement in the income conditions of part of the population or changes in eligibility criteria (BRASIL, 2025).

Figure 8

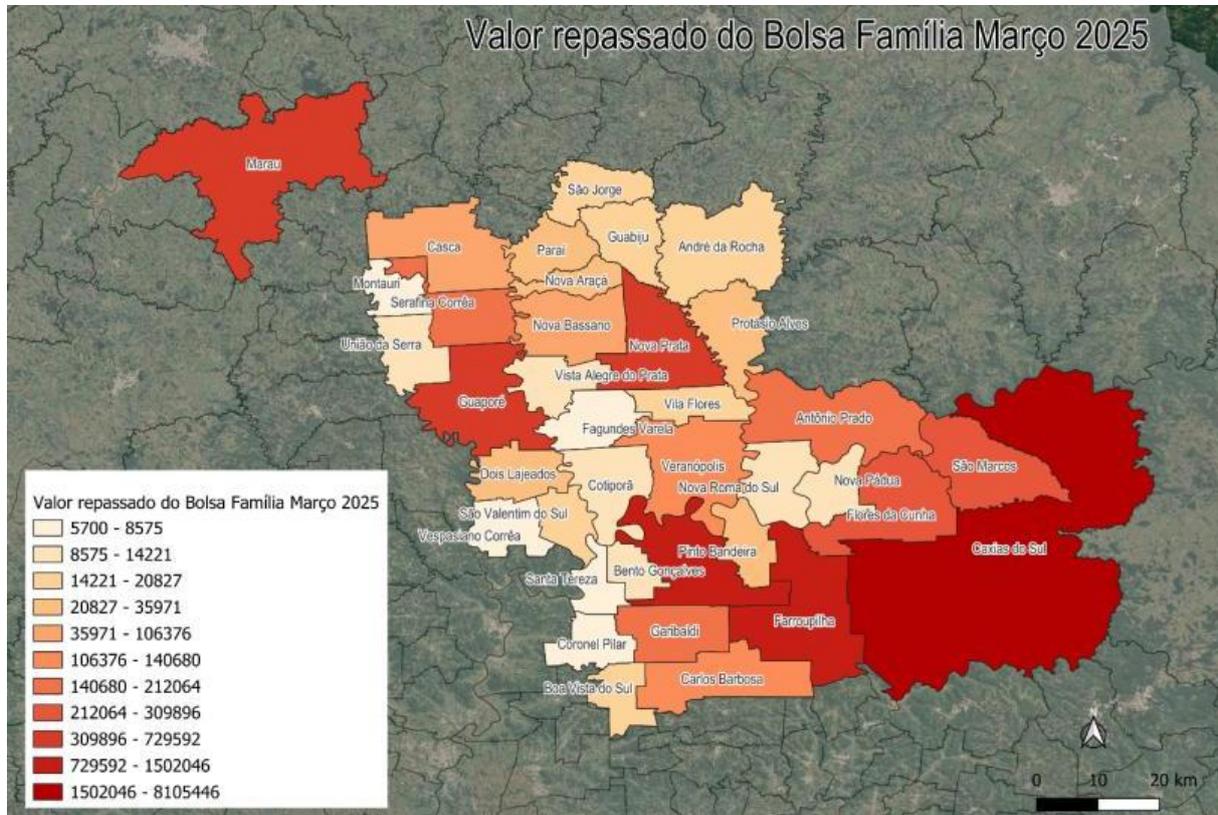
Amounts transferred from the Bolsa Família in the municipalities of AMESNE in 2024



Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

Figure 9

Amounts transferred from the Bolsa Família in the municipalities of AMESNE in 2025



Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

We can see that the municipality of Caxias do Sul, for example, showed a significant drop in the amount transferred, from R\$ 9,025,093.00 in March 2024 to R\$ 8,105,446.00 in March 2025. A similar situation occurred in Bento Gonçalves, with a reduction from R\$ 1,221,695.00 to R\$ 1,067,796.00, and in Veranópolis, which went from R\$ 165,852.00 to R\$ 140,680.00.

On the other hand, some municipalities recorded an increase in the transfer of resources, especially Marau, which received R\$ 729,592.00 in 2025, compared to R\$ 626,958.00 in 2024 — a direct reflection of the increase in the number of families and people served in the municipality. Guaporé also had an increase, with a transfer of R\$ 424,940.00 in 2025, compared to R\$ 382,894.00 in the previous year. In smaller cases, the growth was more slight, such as in Cotiporã (from R\$ 17,751.00 to R\$ 13,420.00), or Protásio Alves (from R\$ 28,018.00 to R\$ 29,124.00). Such variations indicate specific and localized movements in the profile of the benefited families, as well as in the territorial coverage of the program (Brasil, 2025).



These data reinforce the role of Bolsa Família as a dynamic and adaptable public policy, adjusting to the socioeconomic realities of the territories. In addition, they show how regionalized monitoring of financial transfers allows Social RI to identify trends, correct distortions, and ensure that resources efficiently reach the families that need it most.

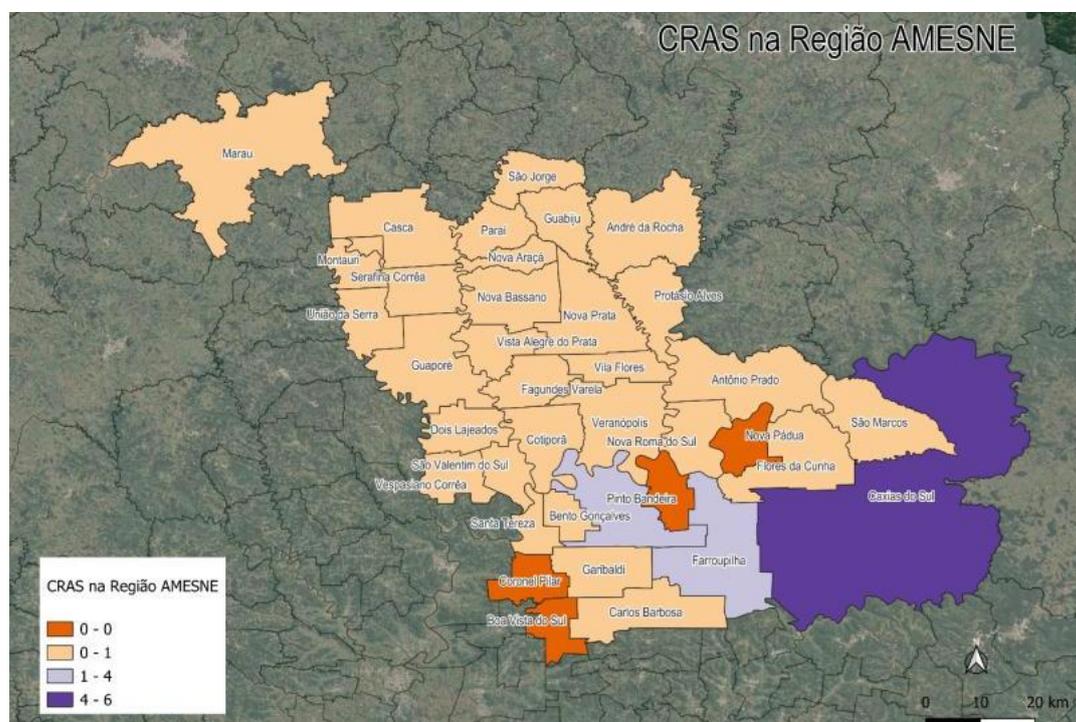
The implementation of Social Institutional Responsibility practices in the municipalities of AMESNE involves recognizing these inequalities and acting with local strategies that articulate public policies, tourism and social inclusion. Encouraging community entrepreneurship, locally-based tourism and the use of traditional knowledge are possible paths.

In 2025, the AMESNE region has a total of 49 CRAS (Social Assistance Reference Centers) units distributed among the municipalities, in addition to 13 CREAS (Specialized Social Assistance Reference Centers) units. These facilities represent the fundamental structure of the social assistance policy, being responsible for ensuring the access of vulnerable populations to services, programs and social benefits.

The presence of CRAS in all municipalities in the region demonstrates the commitment to basic social protection and the capillarization of care. Municipalities with larger populations, such as Caxias do Sul, have up to 6 units, which reinforces the articulation between the volume of demand and the installed structure. Smaller municipalities, such as André da Rocha, Boa Vista do Sul, Coronel Pilar, Santa Tereza and others, have 1 unit, ensuring minimum territorial coverage.

Figure 10

Number of CRAS in the municipalities of AMESNE

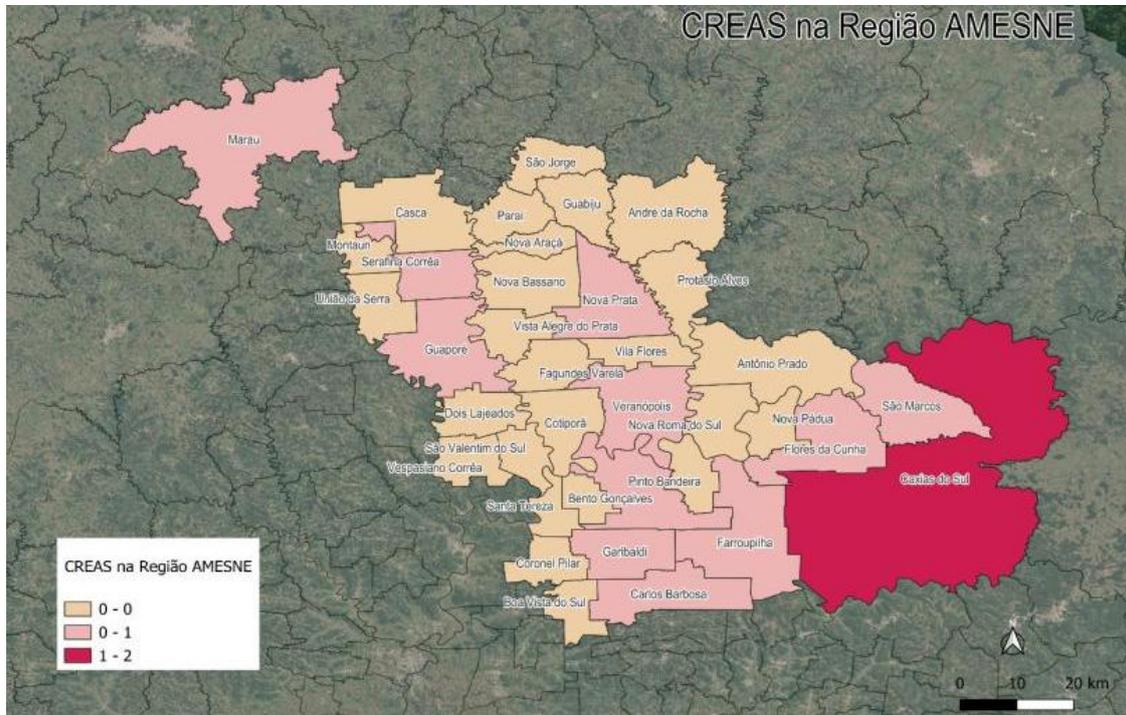


Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

CREAS, in turn, is present in 13 municipalities, all of larger size or regional relevance, such as Bento Gonçalves, Caxias do Sul, Carlos Barbosa, Farroupilha, Flores da Cunha, Guaporé, Marau, Nova Prata, São Marcos, Serafina Corrêa, Veranópolis and other urban centers. The function of CREAS is focused on special social protection, focusing on cases of rights violations, such as domestic violence, abuse and neglect, requiring specialized technical teams.

Figure 11

Number of CREAS in the municipalities of AMESNE



Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

The available structure allows the strengthening of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS) in the region, ensuring that families in vulnerable situations have where to seek support, guidance and access to the benefits network. The data show that, despite the population and economic differences between municipalities, there is a coordinated regional effort to maintain an active and territorialized social protection network, strengthening the role of Social IR as an instrument of social inclusion and development (RIBEIRO, 2024).

Thus, the 2025 data show that the AMESNE region has a consolidated structure of social assistance service, with the presence of CRAS in all municipalities and CREAS in 13 of them. This distribution demonstrates the regional commitment to ensuring access to public social assistance policies, respecting the different local realities. The articulation between the municipalities and the maintenance of this equipment strengthen the SUAS and reaffirm the Social IR as an effective instrument of inclusion and territorial organization in the promotion of social rights (RIBEIRO, 2024).

More than an institutional apparatus, this network represents a concrete commitment to social justice and the democratization of access to basic rights, such as health, education, work and leisure. The capillary presence of CRAS and CREAS contributes to the service being carried out in a decentralized way and close to the reality of the communities,

respecting the principles of equity, citizen participation and intersectoriality. This territorialized logic of action is aligned with the SUAS model, which organizes services by levels of social protection (basic, medium and high complexity), with the family and the territory being the structuring axes of the actions.

In addition, the strengthening of SUAS at AMESNE also allows us to think about inclusion from a broader perspective, which goes beyond emergency assistance and encompasses human development actions, strengthening community bonds and promoting family autonomy. An example of this is the services offered within the scope of the PAIF (Protection and Integral Care to the Family) and the SCFV (Service of Coexistence and Strengthening of Bonds), which not only provide care, but create concrete opportunities for individuals in situations of social vulnerability to become protagonists of their life projects.

In this context, it is necessary to highlight the role of tourism as a public policy that can dialogue with social assistance and expand its inclusion effects. The articulation between SUAS and tourism, although still incipient in many territories, represents a strategic opportunity to strengthen local capacities, generate income and promote cultural belonging. Social tourism — understood as a practice of accessible leisure, appreciation of local culture and community mobilization — emerges as a powerful tool for integrating economic development and social justice.

Experiences such as those developed in the municipality of Antônio Prado – RS, for example, demonstrate that it is possible to articulate professional training actions with the demands of the tourism sector, such as maid, waiter, gastronomy and service courses, promoted through partnerships between social assistance, the S system and the state government. These initiatives, while fostering the qualification of local labor, contribute to reducing dependence on income transfer programs, promoting the autonomy of subjects and their productive insertion in the territory.

However, it is necessary to advance in the construction of a public tourism policy that goes beyond the instrumental logic of preparing the workforce for the market. Social inclusion through tourism should not be restricted to the economic dimension, but rather encompass the right to tourist experience, mobility, leisure, access to natural and cultural heritage, and community participation in decisions about the use and development of territories.

To this end, it is essential to invest in tourism education with a social focus, promoting training actions in schools, CRAS and communities on social rights, the role of tourism and the role of local populations in the construction of the region's tourist identity. Tourism should

be understood as an intersectoral public policy, capable of dialoguing with policies of assistance, culture, youth, solidarity economy and the environment.

Also, practices such as community-based tourism and solidarity tourism can be stimulated as strategies for local protagonism and productive inclusion. These modalities value traditional knowledge, strengthen community bonds, and promote the circulation of the economy within their own territories, with respect for ethnic, generational, cultural, and gender diversity.

Finally, the strengthening of the social assistance network in AMESNE, combined with an expanded conception of social inclusion that integrates tourism, reaffirms the region's commitment to a model of integral human development, in which people are recognized in their dignity, diversity and creative potential. Social RI, in this sense, is no longer just a registration system and becomes an instrument of territorial organization, social justice, and regional strategic planning, which can — and should — incorporate cultural, tourist, and community dimensions into its actions.

4 TOURISM AS A TOOL FOR TRANSFORMATION

Tourism can consolidate itself as an important vector of productive inclusion in the AMESNE region by valuing the local identity, cultural heritage and territorial diversity of the municipalities. By integrating practices such as handicrafts, family farming, rural tourism and ethnic-cultural tourism, the sector contributes to boosting local economies and generating income opportunities for families in situations of social vulnerability. According to Font and Lynes (2018), responsible social practices are fundamental in the context of sustainable tourism, with the inclusion and well-being of local communities being decisive factors for its lasting success. The authors argue that it is necessary for companies in the tourism sector to get involved with the communities where they operate, providing jobs, fostering economic development and valuing local culture. Complementing, Steiner (2024) mentions that this type of action contributes both to raising the quality of life in the communities involved and to strengthening the brand image and increasing public loyalty.

The analysis of the region's data demonstrates the coexistence of diverse socioeconomic realities. Municipalities with a strong rural predominance, such as Boa Vista do Sul (83% rural), Coronel Pilar (88%), Pinto Bandeira (70%), Monte Belo do Sul (69%) and Vista Alegre do Prata (66%), have great potential for the development of community- and

existing public policies, tourism can cease to be just an activity focused on consumption and leisure to assume the role of a tool for social transformation, community strengthening and economic dynamism of the territories.

The strengthening of tourist itineraries that integrate artisanal production, typical cuisine, visits to rural properties, memory tourism and the appreciation of local cultural manifestations represents a concrete opportunity to generate decentralized and sustainable income, respecting the socio-cultural singularities of the region. These itineraries not only attract visitors, but also stimulate the local population's sense of belonging, rescuing and valuing historically invisible identities (SALAMON; SOTTORIVA, 2025).

In this process, the social assistance protection network existing in the AMESNE region — with its 49 CRAS and 13 CREAS — becomes a fundamental ally in the construction of tourism with social responsibility. The infrastructure already installed, based on a territorialized and participatory logic, can be mobilized to offer support to families, foster professional qualification, promote tourism education workshops and encourage solidarity and cooperative entrepreneurship practices. SUAS, by focusing on the family and the territory, shares with social tourism the concern with equity, dignity and social justice.

The articulation between social assistance equipment and tourism initiatives also favors the inclusion of audiences historically excluded from tourist experiences — such as the elderly, people with disabilities, women in situations of violence and young people in situations of vulnerability — promoting access to the right to leisure, mobility and cultural enjoyment. Through actions such as the Service of Coexistence and Strengthening of Bonds (SCFV), it is possible to develop workshops on handicrafts, gastronomy and oral history, which become products and tourist experiences with local identity.

In addition, training programs — such as those already carried out in municipalities such as Antônio Prado, with courses aimed at the hospitality, gastronomy and cultural tourism sectors — demonstrate that productive inclusion can be planned in a way that is sensitive to the territory and its demands, promoting real job opportunities and income based on local potential. This approach avoids the simple instrumentalization of the vulnerable population to fill gaps in the market, placing it at the center of decisions and the collective construction of development projects (SALAMON; SOTTORIVA, 2025).

Thus, by articulating public policies, cultural identity, territorial belonging and economic dynamism, tourism in AMESNE can consolidate itself as a concrete and transformative strategy, capable of strengthening the local economy, expanding social inclusion, stimulating

community organization and contributing to regional development with justice, sustainability and dignity. To this end, it is essential to understand tourism not only as an economic sector, but as a right, an intersectoral public policy and an instrument of citizen construction (VILELA; COSTA, 2020).

More than an activity aimed at visitors, tourism can — and should — be an experience lived by those who live in the territories. Tourism that promotes cultural exchanges, strengthens family and community bonds, encourages intergenerational coexistence and values traditional knowledge, is configured as a true policy of inclusion and human development. In short, tourism, when articulated with SUAS and committed to the principles of equity, participation and co-responsibility, can be a fundamental vector in the construction of a fairer, more inclusive and resilient AMESNE.

5 METHODOLOGY

5.1 EPISTEMOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is part of the qualitative-interpretative paradigm, with a phenomenological approach, considering that it seeks to understand the articulation between tourism, social assistance policies and productive inclusion from social perceptions and institutional data. The perspective adopted is dialectical, allowing us to examine contradictions between economic development and territorial inequalities (MINAYO, 2017).

The research is anchored in the conception of public policies as dynamic and intersectoral processes, influenced by multiple actors and socioeconomic factors (BALI et.al., 2021). The Social Responsibility and ESG framework serves as a theoretical matrix for analyzing the integration between tourism and social assistance, considering its environmental, social, and governance dimensions (STEINER, 2024).

5.2 NATURE AND TYPE OF RESEARCH

The research is of an applied nature, aimed at producing knowledge aimed at solving practical problems in the municipalities of AMESNE. As for the objectives, it is exploratory and descriptive, as it seeks to map phenomena that have been little investigated and characterize the interactions between tourism, SUAS and social inclusion.

The approach is qualitative, privileging the understanding of the meanings attributed to social programs and tourism by the public agents and communities involved.

In addition, a documentary and statistical survey is used to quantify aspects of social vulnerability, ensuring data triangulation (YIN, 2021).

5.3 SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL DELIMITATION

The study includes the 37 municipalities that are part of the Association of Municipalities of the Upper Slope of the Northeast (AMESNE), in Rio Grande do Sul. The documentary analysis covers the period from March 2024 to March 2025, compatible with the last update of data from the Unified Registry, the Bolsa Família Program and the municipal GDP per capita.

5.4 DATA SOURCES

The information was collected from:

- Secondary bases:
 - Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2025);
 - Unified Registry for Social Programs (CadÚnico);
 - Bolsa Família Program (Ministry of Development and Social Assistance, 2025);
 - AMESNE reports (2025);
 - Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS) – data from CRAS and CREAS.
- Normative documents and plans:
 - National Tourism Plan 2024–2027;
 - MTur Ordinance No. 10/2025;
 - State Social Assistance Plan (2020–2023);
 - Social IR (regional instrument of social management).
- Scientific literature:
 - Articles and books that deal with public policies for tourism, ESG and social inclusion (VILELA & COSTA, 2020; STEINER, 2024; FONT & LYNES, 2019).

5.5 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The collection took place in three stages:

1. **Documentary analysis** of federal, state and municipal plans and legislation, identifying guidelines for tourism and social assistance.
2. **Statistical survey** of socioeconomic data (GDP, CadÚnico, Bolsa Família) to characterize territorial inequalities and map social vulnerability.

3. **Territorial mapping** through georeferencing (QGIS and ArcGIS software), evidencing the distribution of vulnerable families, the presence of CRAS/CREAS and potential tourism integration axes.

5.6 ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The data were processed through:

- **Content analysis** (BARDIN, 2016) applied to documents and public policies, identifying thematic categories: (i) social tourism; (ii) productive inclusion; (iii) intersectoral governance.
- **Descriptive statistical analysis**, with calculation of frequencies, means and percentage variations, seeking to evidence relationships between social vulnerability and tourist potential.
- **Spatial analysis**, allowing the visualization of territorial inequalities through thematic maps (CadÚnico, Bolsa Família, GDP per capita).

The triangulation between documentary, statistical, and theoretical data ensured greater validity and reliability of the results (FLICK, 2018).

5.7 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Among the limitations are: (i) dependence on secondary data subject to underreporting; (ii) absence of interviews with municipal managers and beneficiaries, which could deepen local perceptions; (iii) time restriction of the analysis to a period of 12 months, which may not capture long-term structural variations.

6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion are interspersed with the text, below each map.

7 CONCLUSION

The performance of the municipalities of AMESNE must be guided by a systemic vision that articulates economic development with the overcoming of social inequalities, recognizing tourism as a strategic vector for productive inclusion and strengthening of local identity. The data presented show a region marked by deep territorial, economic and social diversities, which require calibrated and integrated political responses, built from the recognition of local realities and active listening to the communities involved.

The socioeconomic panorama reveals municipalities with high levels of GDP per capita, such as André da Rocha, which registers R\$ 142,922.95, alongside locations with significantly lower per capita income, such as Pinto Bandeira (R\$ 24,212.76) and Santa Tereza (R\$ 28,949.13). This economic disparity points to different realities that coexist in the region, imposing the need for public policies adapted to each context, whether predominantly rural or urban. Regional inequality, if not addressed with redistributive policies, tends to accentuate social exclusion and limit the possibilities of sustainable and equitable development.

In addition, the presence of vulnerable populations is evidenced by the numbers of families enrolled in the Unified Registry and beneficiaries of the Bolsa Família. Municipalities such as Guaporé, with 1,996 registered families and 654 beneficiaries of the program, and Marau, with 3,907 families enrolled and 1,118 covered by the Bolsa Família, exemplify the concentration of significant social demands.

These data indicate the relevance of the role of income transfer policies and social monitoring for poverty alleviation in the region, as well as the need for productive inclusion strategies that break the cycle of dependence and promote autonomy for families.

In this context, the structure of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS) stands out as an essential foundation for the consolidation of territorial, participatory and humanized public policies.

The existence of 49 CRAS units, present in all AMESNE municipalities, and 13 CREAS units, located primarily in urban centers, ensures a capillary network of reception, guidance and monitoring of families in vulnerable situations. This infrastructure not only meets immediate needs, but also functions as a platform for capacity building, strengthening family and community bonds, and promoting strategies to overcome structural inequalities.

By providing guidelines for territorial planning and the integration of social policies with economic initiatives, the Social IR emerges as an indispensable instrument for modern and effective public management.

By mapping and understanding the local reality in depth, public managers can formulate more precise actions, oriented towards the creation of real, permanent and sustainable opportunities. In this sense, tourism, as an economic, cultural and social activity, can be enhanced beyond its traditional function, assuming a transformative role in the promotion of social inclusion and the dynamization of territories.



The valorization of local identity, handicrafts, family farming, rural tourism and ethnic-cultural tourism are elements that can boost regional development with respect to diversity and sustainability. Integrated with tourism, these sectors promote income generation for the most vulnerable families, while preserving traditional knowledge, strengthening the sense of belonging and rescuing the collective memory of the territories. It is in this scenario that tourism is configured as a transversal instrument capable of connecting culture, economy and citizenship, contributing to the construction of a new model of regional development.

This articulation between tourism and productive inclusion not only contributes to the economic diversification of municipalities and to the reduction of dependence on traditional sectors, but also promotes the strengthening of the social and cultural capital of communities.

The involvement of families, especially those inserted in SUAS services, reinforces the importance of public policies that are planned and executed based on values such as social justice, equity, popular participation and co-responsibility. Tourism, in this context, is no longer just a destination or a consumption activity, and becomes an experience of social transformation.

In addition, by thinking of tourism as a right and not a privilege, its reach and social function are expanded, effectively integrating it into human development strategies.

The implementation of social tourism policies, the promotion of education for and through tourism, and the creation of accessible and inclusive tourist itineraries represent promising ways to ensure that vulnerable populations can also enjoy the symbolic, cultural and natural assets of their own territories. This is especially relevant in a region like AMESNE, where the cultural, historical and landscape heritage is vast, but not always accessible to the resident population itself.

Finally, the implementation of a public policy that combines tourism development with the overcoming of poverty reaffirms AMESNE's commitment to the promotion of human and social development. Steiner (2024) corroborates by stating that the tourism sector has a unique opportunity to take the lead in this transformation, by establishing a new model of excellence in business management that integrates economic success with environmental and social responsibility.

The consolidation of SUAS and Social IR as instruments of integrated and humanized management strengthens the construction of fairer and more sustainable public policies, capable of ensuring that the benefits of economic growth reach all layers of the population,

especially the most vulnerable. In this process, tourism takes on a new dimension — not only as an economic engine, but as an expression of citizenship, participation, and justice.

In this way, the AMESNE region finds in tourism and social assistance strategic allies for the promotion of inclusion, equity and regional development. When thought of in synergy, these two fields expand their reach, strengthen the social fabric and lay the foundations for a more prosperous, egalitarian and sustainable future for all its municipalities, reaffirming the role of people and communities in building their own paths of transformation.

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