

**PLURALITIES IN MEANINGS OF NATURE WITHIN THE  
SOCIOENVIRONMENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF 'PRAIA DA CINELÂNDIA'  
BEACH**

PLURALITÉS DU SENS DE LA NATURE À PARTIR DES PERCEPTIONS SOCIALES ET  
ENVIRONNEMENTALES DE LA PLAGE DE CINELÂNDIA

PLURALIDADES DE SIGNIFICAÇÃO DA NATUREZA A PARTIR DAS PERCEPÇÕES  
SOCIOAMBIENTAIS DA PRAIA DA CINELÂNDIA

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**Abstract**

The paper presents a research at Praia da Cinelândia, a beach in Aracaju, Sergipe (Brazil), which aimed to map the socioenvironmental perceptions of the beach looking at its (physical and symbolic) structures of occupation. Three field instruments were used to collect the data: (a) direct systematic observations with photographic records and notes in field diaries; (b) sociodemographic questionnaire; and (c) structured interviews with beach goers and business owners placed on the beach. Sociodemographic data were analyzed quantitatively and data from the field diaries and interviews were analyzed using Qualitative Textual Analysis. Among the results we highlight: (a) the occupation of Praia da Cinelândia is heterogeneous, especially on weekends, constituting a territory of pluralities; (b) the heterogeneity results in a social cartography that brings together different socioenvironmental perceptions about the beach, setting the tone for contradictory moral attributions about the people that occupy the space and about the uses of the territory; (c) there is an evident tension about the limited access to the low-income population, with notable symbolic gentrification; (d) with regard to the business owners placed on the beach, there is an attempt by the government to limit the occupation process, however, in a disorganized fashion; (e) the formulation of specific public policies for the management of spaces on the Praia da Cinelândia can represent an important ecopedagogical process in which different actors who go the beach regularly can be included in decisions that will have direct influence on the socioenvironmental perceptions of that 'place'.

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## Résumés

L'article présente une enquête réalisée à Praia da Cinelândia (Brésil), dans le but de cartographier les perceptions socio-environnementales de la plage à partir de leurs structures d'occupation (physiques et symboliques). Les données ont été recueillies à partir de trois instruments de terrain : (a) des observations systématiques directes du site, avec des enregistrements photographiques et dans un journal de terrain ; (b) questionnaire sociodémographique ; (c) des entretiens structurés avec des baigneurs et des commerçants. Les données sociodémographiques ont été analysées quantitativement et les données des journaux de terrain et des entretiens ont été analysées à l'aide de la méthode d'analyse textuelle qualitative. Les résultats de la recherche sont: (a) l'occupation de Praia da Cinelândia est hétérogène, en particulier le week-end, la constituant comme un territoire de pluralités ; (b) l'hétérogénéité se traduit par une cartographie sociale qui rassemble différentes perceptions socio-environnementales sur la plage, étant le théâtre d'attributions morales contradictoires sur les sujets d'occupation et les usages du territoire ; (c) il y a une tension évidente sur la limitation de l'accès à la population pauvre, avec une gentrification symbolique notable ; (d) en ce qui concerne les commerçants, il y a une tentative du gouvernement de limiter l'occupation, mais de manière désorganisée ; (e) la formulation de politiques publiques pour la gestion des espaces sur la Praia de Cinelândia peut représenter un processus éco-pédagogique dans lequel différents acteurs qui fréquentent la plage peuvent être inclus dans les décisions qui auront une influence sur les perceptions de cet espace.

**Mots-clés:** Côte ; Politiques publiques; Justice environnementale; Territoire; Marché des loisirs.

## Resumo

O artigo apresenta os resultados de uma pesquisa realizada na Praia da Cinelândia, em Aracaju, Sergipe, tendo como objetivo mapear as percepções socioambientais da praia a partir de suas estruturas de ocupação (físicas e simbólicas). Os dados foram coletados a partir de três instrumentos de campo: (a) observações sistemáticas diretas do local, com registros fotográficos e em diário de campo; (b) questionário sociodemográfico; e (c) entrevistas estruturadas com frequentadores e comerciantes da praia. Os dados sociodemográficos foram analisados quantitativamente e os dados dos diários de campo e entrevistas foram analisados a partir do método de Análise Textual Qualitativa. Entre os principais resultados da pesquisa, destaca-se: (a) a ocupação da Praia da Cinelândia é heterogênea, especialmente aos finais de semana, constituindo um território de pluralidades; (b) a heterogeneidade da Praia da Cinelândia resulta em uma cartografia social que reúne diferentes percepções socioambientais sobre a praia, sendo palco de atribuições morais contraditórias sobre os sujeitos da ocupação e os usos do território; (c) há uma tensão evidente sobre a limitação do acesso à população de baixa renda, com notável gentrificação simbólica; (d) no que tange aos comerciantes, há uma tentativa por parte do poder público de limitar o processo de ocupação, porém, de forma desorganizada; (e) a formulação de políticas públicas específicas para a gestão dos espaços da praia da Cinelândia podem ser representativas como importante processo ecopedagógico no qual diferentes atores que frequentam a praia podem ser incluídos nas decisões que terão influência direta nas percepções socioambientais desse espaço.

**Palavras-chaves:** Litoral; Políticas públicas; Justiça ambiental; Território; Mercado do lazer.

## Introduction

The beach is a peculiar territory, a narrow 'edge' between land and sea and, in urban contexts, between the city and the 'wild' nature. The United Nations (UN) estimates that 40% of the world's population lives less than 100 kilometers from the sea (ONU, 2017) and that 80% of all tourism activities in the world take place in coastal areas (ONU, 2020). Brazil has a high demographic density on its coastline, and sun and sea tourism is the main reason for travel for both Brazilians who live in Brazil and foreigners (MINISTÉRIO DO TURISMO, 2020; 2022). These data are important not only for the tourism sector. In Australia, for example, where 87% of the population lives less than 50 km from the coast (AUSTRALIA STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT, 2021), there are a number of studies that show how living near the coast (on the 'edge') interferes with the formation of culture and the production of meanings about the environment (WINTON, 1993; DREW, 1994; HUNTSMAN, 2001).

Seen as a territory, that is, encompassing the inter-actions of those who (co)inhabit it and being influenced by power relations in which different spatial and use representations are established (SANTOS, 2006), the beach offers rich opportunities for studies on human-nature relations from the most diverse investigative lines. Among them, there is an emerging body of research (see SARTORE; COFFEY, 2019) more focused on analyses on the social representations of beach and nature that are constructed in different geo-epistemological contexts (CANAPARO, 2009) of beach, including direct relations between these representations with particular phenomena, such as education, leisure, markets etc.

From this context, this article presents the results of a survey carried out at Praia da Cinelândia, one of the most frequented beaches of the Atalaia Beachfront, the most urbanized stretch of the coast of Aracaju, in the state of Sergipe, Brazil. Based on the premise that nature is present at different levels of complexity and extension in public spaces, such as the beach, the survey aimed to map the socio-environmental perceptions of Praia da Cinelândia based on its physical and symbolic structures of occupation. The data used for this mapping were collected using three field instruments: (a) direct systematic observations of the site, with photographic records and field diaries; (b) sociodemographic questionnaire; and (c) structured interviews

with beachgoers and business owners. The data were subjected to quantitative analysis (socioeconomic data) and qualitative analysis (textual analysis of the field diaries and interviews).

The choice of Praia da Cinelândia to carry out the research is justified especially by its plurality: (1) it is one of the most frequented beaches in the city of Aracaju, (2) it has a wide diversity of public and private physical structures, and (3) it has a diversified frequency of people. In addition to the greater proximity of Praia da Cinelândia to the central parts of the city (compared, for example, to the beaches of the Southern coast of Aracaju), the beach is one of the most frequented of the Aracaju coast due to its proximity to the neighborhoods of Atalaia (which is among the most expensive square meters of the city) and Coroa do Meio, neighborhoods with a much higher population density than those near the beaches of the South-coast. Access by bus is also facilitated as it is relatively close to the bus terminal. In addition, the beach has structures for access (wooden boardwalk to the beach) and permanence (food trucks; beach bars; shower; sports courts). The beach also commonly turns into a place of parties, from youth gatherings that take place regularly on Sundays to large events with stages set up in the sand for musical shows and for the city's New Year's Eve party, besides being the starting place of the electric cars of the pre-carnival party of Aracaju (Pré-Caju).

These characteristics make Atalaia Beach not only one of the most frequented of the Aracaju coast, but also one of the most heterogeneous as to who actually 'uses' the beach, commonly bringing together people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The compilation of some statements of the beach business owners demonstrates this reality:

Here it varies, you know. Tourists and people from the neighborhood come here.

It is more people from the city, but there are tourists too.

Most people are from Aracaju.

Tourists in the summer time, you know. And in the winter, it's the locals.

Natives are the ones who always come here.

People from the city are the ones who buy here. Outsiders, like tourists, seldom come here.

Man! Here's the low-income people, you know.

It's low-income people and residents from the capital.

Tourists and low-income people from here too. But the bigger audience is the people from here.

Tourists! Most people here on the coast are tourists.

Tourists come from time to time to visit, you know. There are more residents. (Business owners).

This heterogeneity makes the space highly relevant for understanding the pluralities of socio-environmental perceptions of the beach, this being a microcosm of the pluralities of possible human-nature interaction. We understand, therefore, that (a) Praia da Cinelândia is a powerful space of socio-environmental interactions, (b) it is socially conformed as a space signified among imaginaries of ‘wild nature’ and ‘urban environment’, and (c) people when occupying this space are conditioned by physical and symbolic structures that affect these processes of signification.

In this context, territorialities such as those that occur at Praia da Cinelândia are materialities of the dominant values of the current society. As such, they are normative and conditioning in the way they (re)produce these values by (rein)forcing experiences standardized by collective representations that signify the space. Such characteristics are present at many other beaches, especially urban ones, around the planet (acknowledging, upfront, the different cultural particularities in different geo-epistemological contexts). On the one hand, we have the different legislations that regulate the urban space, as well as the physical structures that are thought by urban planning experts. On the other hand, we have the perceptions and the concrete forms of occupation. In this study, we present the perceptions of the human-nature relationships at Praia da Cinelândia for a broader discussion about the configuration of urban beaches as public spaces of social interaction.

## **Theoretical preface**

The presence of physical structures, such as the commercial and leisure equipment at Praia da Cinelândia, is relevant for the analysis of socio-environmental perceptions, because at the same time that such structures offer a variety of movement stimuli that are potentially converted into specific meanings of beach and nature, they also limit the experiences of movement according to what is projected and imagined (with)in the structures (RODRIGUES, 2018; 2019a). There is also a direct relationship between the physical structures present at the site and the opportunities for access to the site, a relationship that is sensitive to questions about how such structures facilitate access (especially looking at the physical dimensions of the structure) and how (and to whom) such structures potentially limit access (especially looking at the symbolic

dimensions of the structure). In this context, questions about how the structures at Praia da Cinelândia influence the experiences of beachgoers and how much these influences have an ecological<sup>4</sup> inclination are of interest to the conducted survey.

The choice for a beach frequented by a heterogeneous group of people is justified by the idea that perceptions about the beach, in the case of social constructions, are influenced by temporality and by the complexity of interactions mediated by the social subjects who share experiences at the beach. Thus, the life histories of the individuals who frequently go to the beach and the individuals who trade on the beach, in all their social, cultural and economic amplitudes, are relevant in elucidating the processes of ecological interactions awakened by the collective use of the beach. In a 'rhizomatic' perspective, expressed by Deleuze and Guattari (1995), the experience of being in urban territories is permeated by a logic of capillarity in which the subjects individually experience the physical territory at the same time that they are affected by the system of social signs that produces their symbolic reality. This process of 'territorialization' occurs as the individual connects with the existing diversity, with other individuals, and with the different flows encountered in their urban experiences.

In this perspective, the stories of human beings are the result of trajectories that are distinct, but connected through their 'co-existence'<sup>5</sup>, highlighting the constant and transforming movement of beings that are not static objects in the world, but that are being-to-the-world via their interactions (STEVAUX; RODRIGUES, 2012). In this constant and continuous movement of co-existence and inter-action the individuals make their 'readings of the world' (FREIRE, 2013), thus, signifying their own world. This philosophical basis is supported by phenomenological currents, such as the phenomenology of perception (MERLEAU-PONTY, 1996) and the Science of Human Motricity (SÉRGIO, 2003), and ecophenomenological currents, such as ecomotricity (RODRIGUES, 2018; 2019a), the phenomenology of the body (INGOLD, 2000; 2011) and ecophenomenology itself (BROWN; TOADVINE, 2003).

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<sup>4</sup> 'Ecological' meaning an ecosomaesthetic-environmentally ethical-ecopolitical inclination (more on this triad in: PAYNE, 2013; 2015; PAYNE et al., 2018).

<sup>5</sup> 'The idea of presenting the term in this way is justified by the need to emphasize the human character that is implicit in the expression, that is, to emphasize the 'living with', which means to consider the complex web of relations of human being-ones-with-the-others-to-the-world. It is important to emphasize the dynamic character of the expression, presented especially by the use of the hyphen (quite common in phenomenology), because men and women are not in the world, as static objects, they are always being to the world, in a constant and transforming movement' (STEVAUX; RODRIGUES, 2012, p.5).



## Materials and methods

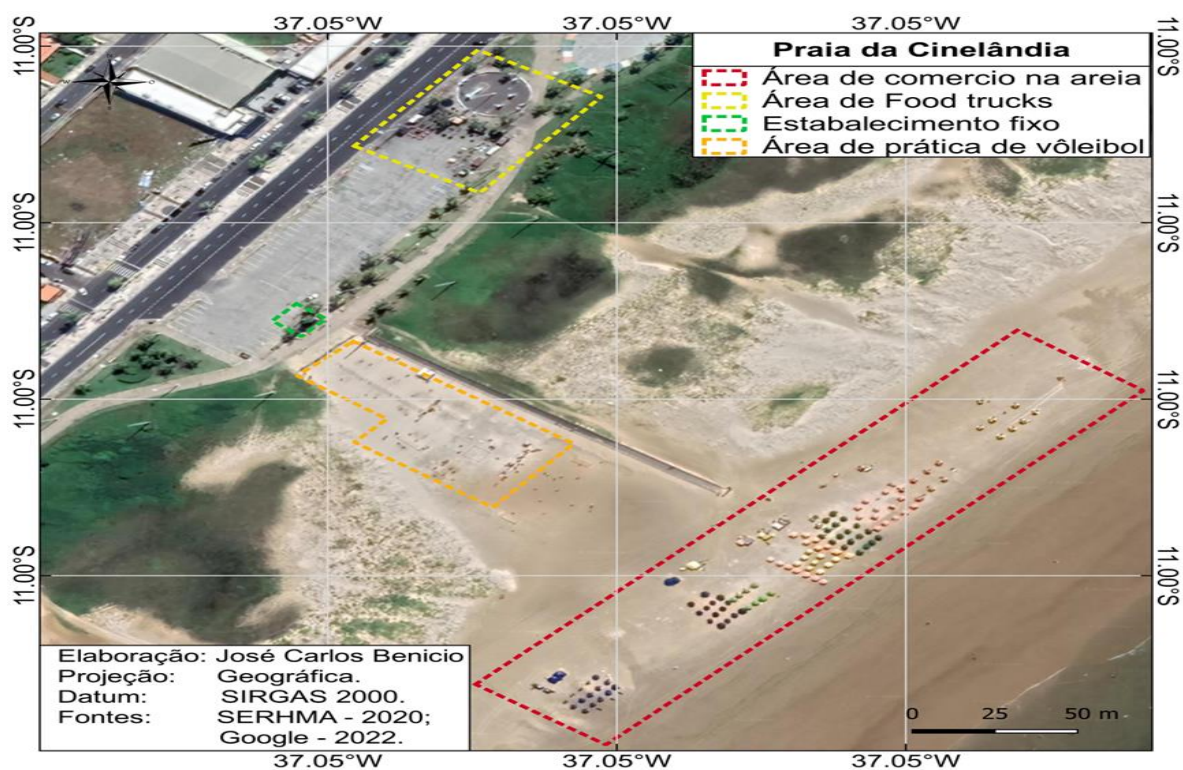
The research had as spatial focus the territory of Praia da Cinelândia, located in the Atalaia beachfront, an urban neighborhood of the city of Aracaju, Sergipe, Brazil. Praia da Cinelândia is frequented by residents of the Atalaia neighborhood and by visitors who access the beach by paved roads, with their own vehicle or using ride-hailing services (there is a parking lot in front of the beach), by bus (there's a bus terminal 1600 meters away) or by the bike path that connects the coast to the city (although there are stretches between the city and the coast that are not connected via the bike paths). Praia da Cinelândia is in the coastal region known as 'Passarela do Caranguejo', where there is a large presence of establishments that offer food and lodging, as well as other services.

In the specific territory of Praia da Cinelândia, focus of the research, there is the presence of different structures that offer paid and free services. Among the structures that offer paid services we highlight: Food trucks and beverage kiosks around the parking lot and 'toes-in-the-sand' beach bars (dotted lines in yellow, green, and red in Figure 01). Among the structures that offer free services we highlight: Sand courts for beach sports (dotted line in orange in Figure 01) (although the courts are also used for paid private lessons, their use is free), wooden walkway for access to the beach (next to the courts in Figure 01), and freshwater showers at the exit of the walkway to the beachfront area.

The study population was composed of beachgoers and business owners of Praia da Cinelândia aged 18 years or older. Data collection was performed on different days of the week (including weekdays and weekends) and at different times of the day for a broader understanding of the dynamics of occupation of the territory. In the case of the business owners, an attempt was made to interview the totality of the present universe –owners of 08 food trucks (which occupy fixed places in the parking lot), 01 fixed establishment (kiosk) near the entrance of the boardwalk that leads to the beach, and 25 beach bars (mobile structures set up and taken down daily), totaling 30 collaborators. Most of the business owners who were not willing to participate in the survey justified their decline by the lack of time or by affirming they were not the business owners (although they were informed that this would not be a problem). On the other hand,

the selection of the beachgoers was random, driven by the perception that they would be people who possibly had free time for the interview. Most of the beachgoers who were not willing to participate in the survey also justified the decline by the lack of time and the exposure to the sun, since the interviews were conducted outdoors. Based on these selection criteria, the study was conducted from a sample of 23 people, 14 beachgoers and 08 business owners who offer paid services at Praia da Cinelândia. In order to preserve the identity of the subjects it was decided to give each subject a figurative name, inspired by elements that constitute the processes of occupation of the beach. In this article the statements are identified as being of ‘business owners’ or ‘beachgoers’.

**Figure 01:** Location map of Praia da Cinelândia.



**Source:** Created by José Carlos Benicio from data collected from SERHMA (2020) and images from Google Maps (2022). **Translations:** Red dotted area: Trade area on the sand; Yellow dotted area: Food truck area; Green dotted area: Fixed establishment; Orange dotted area: Area for the practice of volleyball.



The corpus of the study was elaborated from three instruments:

(1) Field diaries from direct on-site observations, including the capture of reference images. For the photographic records of the territory of Praia da Cinelândia, a camera was used to record the spaces of interest for the research, including the entire environment around the beach. The objective was to geographically map the space to support the theoretical discussion of the study (CULLEN, 1983). In addition to the photographic images, the field diary was composed of descriptions of the interactions observed during the field visits, understanding that the phenomenon is what is shown to the researcher who intends to understand it as a result of an interrogation. After a first visit to the site with a more comprehensive look, the following script was created as a guideline for the field diaries: (a) Photograph parking space and the strip of sand; (b) Photograph leisure equipment; (c) photograph devices of the territory; (d) Photograph local infrastructure; (e) Photograph locations with high potential for human-nature interactions; (f) Free observation recorded in the field diary. At this stage, there was no interaction with people. Once finalized, all the elements of the field diaries were transformed into narratives in the form of text. (2) Sociodemographic questionnaire aiming at the social contextualization of the collaborators, with the following script: (1) Age; (2) Gender; (3) Schooling; (4) Profession; (5) Self-declaration of color; (6) Marital Status; (7) Religion; (8) Self-assessment of the economic situation; (9) Monthly family income; (10) Neighborhood where he/she lives; (11) Housing (own or other); (12) How long have you had business in this space? (business owners only); (13) Tourist or resident? (beachgoers only); (14) How long have you been coming to this space? (beachgoers only); (15) How often do you come to this space? (beachgoers only). (3) Interview with open questions with the collaborators selected for participation in the research. The collaborators were people who attended or worked at Praia da Cinelândia at the time of the research. During the interviews, the subjects were invited to talk about their experiences at Praia da Cinelândia. The collaborators were invited to participate in the research after receiving all

the information about the study and reading the Free and Informed Consent Form that establishes the ethical guidelines of the research. The interviews were conducted orally and in loco, being recorded in audio format using a cell phone. Subsequently, the audios were transcribed to text, which were totally faithful narratives to the original statements.

The interview with the business owners had as main focus (a) the dynamics of the physical occupation of the beach and (b) perceptions about Praia da Cinelândia of those who experience the territory daily, with the following script: (1) Talk about your history as a business owner here at Praia da Cinelândia; (2) Who would you say is the target audience of your business?; (3) Did you need any authorization to settle in this space? Who had to authorize it?; (4) Do you currently need any permits to keep your business in this location? Who needs to authorize it? How is the inspection done?; (5) Did you have to pay any fees to settle in this space? Who is the fee paid to?; (6) Do you currently need to pay any fees to stay in this space? Who is the fee paid to? How is the inspection done?; (7) Do you have a time frame that you can occupy this space, or is it indefinitely? Who defines this time frame? How is the inspection done?; (8) What has changed at Praia da Cinelândia since your arrival until today?; (9) Would you change anything in Praia da Cinelândia? Why would you promote this change?

The interview with the beachgoers had as main focus the narratives about their experiences at Praia da Cinelândia and perceptions about the territory, with the following script: (1) You come to Praia da Cinelândia to do what, exactly?; (2) Why do you choose to come to Praia da Cinelândia instead of other beaches?; (3) Would you change anything in Praia da Cinelândia? Why would you promote this change?; (4) Would you like Praia da Cinelândia to have something more than it has today? What, exactly?; (5) And is there anything today at Praia da Cinelândia that you wish wasn't there? What, exactly?; (6) Do you consider the space of the Praia da Cinelândia to be of public and free access?; (7) Do you see any difficulty in accessing Praia da Cinelândia?; (8) Praia da Cinelândia has several commercial structures, for example, beach bars, food trucks, coaching for beach sports, paid running groups etc. In your opinion, do these commercial structures limit or stimulate people's access to the beach?

The sociodemographic data (collected by instrument 02) were analyzed quantitatively, being presented through graphic representations of the relative percentages. Data from the field diaries and interviews (collected by instruments 01 and 03) were analyzed using the Qualitative Textual Analysis (QTA) method, proposed by Moraes (2003). QTA moves between content analysis and discourse analysis, assigning to the author the process of interpreting meanings for the basis and production of a final text. The method aims at the (re)construction of knowledge from understandings that emerge on the studied theme by going through five stages, namely: Unitarization, categorization, description, interpretation, and argumentation.

Unitarization is the process of attributing meaning to units within the larger text, observing the following stages: Selection of the corpus, dismantling of the texts, and codification of the units of meaning (assignment of titles). In the categorization process, the units of meaning are organized, ordered, and grouped into categories that aim to express understandings of the phenomena investigated; each category is named and presented descriptively and interpretively as a whole. In the description stage, possible elements emerging from the analyzed texts are presented from the created categories, using excerpts from the original texts produced by the research subjects. In the interpretation stage, the empirical data dialogue with significant points of the theoretical framework, creating relationships between the empirical descriptions and the theoretical aspects of the bibliographic research. Finally, in the argumentation stage, the conclusions emerging from the analysis are presented, including intuitions that were not foreseen during the process and the construction of a metatext with descriptive character of the analytical whole of the research, interweaving the empirical, theoretical, and perceptive fields of the investigator.

In addition to the metatext from the QTA, research data referring to direct observations were represented by a mental map created from the social cartography of the territory, highlighting the dynamics of occupation of Praia da Cinelândia through the perspective of several subjects. The created mental maps gather significant points regarding interactions observed during visits to Praia da Cinelândia. Social cartography is a methodological instrument that aims to construct maps considering multiple dimensions, encompassing the collective and participatory knowledge necessary for the

production of knowledge present in the territory (SILVA; SCHIPPER, 2012). The cartography of the human-nature relationship in the city highlights sensitivities of this relationship beyond the topographic characteristics of urban natures, involving perceptions and meanings that entail anthropological, social, historical, biological, and geographical constructions (SANTOS; SILVA, 2015).

**Figure 02:** Mental map highlighting the social cartography of Praia da Cinelândia.



Source: Created by the authors. (consult the Translation<sup>1</sup>)

## Results and discussion

The mental map presented as Figure 02 at the end of the last section demonstrates the complexity of the investigated territory, and the diversity of problems that can be raised as a focus of discussion in studies that address human-nature relations looking at interactions on the beach. Considering that the mental map is only a clipping of the reality that was made possible by the data collection in the research, we understand that the complexity of the territory and the potential for studies is even greater than that highlighted by the map. Thus, in this section of presentation and discussion of the results we will focus on evidence that we highlight as highly significant

in view of the general framework of collected data considering the objective of the study, that is, the investigation of the socio-environmental perceptions of Praia da Cinelândia by mapping the physical and symbolic structures of occupation of the beach.

To this end, we will describe relevant categories according to the proposed objective and present specific empirical data from the research to support the descriptions. Considering the limitation in the number of characters of this publication, we will not present a specific section with quantitative data related to the sociodemographic questionnaire. It is important to note that the quantitative data confirm the demographic plurality of the people that go to Praia da Cinelândia. The survey data are available in their entirety in Santos (2022).

Figure 03 shows a mosaic of words constructed in the *WordClouds.com* software from all the statements of the research collaborators, beachgoers and business owners.

**Figure 03:** Mosaic of words created from the discourses of the collaborators of the research.



**Source:** Created by the authors. (consult the Translation<sup>ii</sup>)

If we consider only the three words that stand out the most in the mosaic we reach a very representative definition of the territory: Nature as a public space. However, what does that mean, exactly? And what would be the value of the



apprehension of nature as a public space? The words that appear less prominently in the mosaic show important characteristics of nature as a public space in the perception of the collaborators: Urban or untouchable, sociocultural environment of practices, contact, experiences, socialization, resources; hence, of problems, speculation, exploitation, discrimination; place of leisure, self-care, health, contemplation, physical activity; with regulation, safety, structure, and access being important points. By contrasting the mosaic with the mental map presented as Figure 02 we can observe many points in common. The categories that will be presented in this section develop some of these points as important conclusions of the research. However, before presenting the categories we will describe key terms used in the discussion in the way they were meant by the research collaborators. This conceptualization was elaborated by the authors based on the discourses of the research collaborators.

- ✓ **Practice of physical activity** – Interactions with the environment with intentionality towards health, especially associated with sports.
- ✓ **Self-care** – Interactions with the environment with intentionality towards body aesthetics or relaxation.
- ✓ **Socialization** – Interaction between subjects, especially from different social classes.
- ✓ **‘Natural’ nature** – Environment free of human intervention.
- ✓ **Local structure** – Physical frameworks that enable diverse interactions with the environment.
- ✓ **Environmental problems** – Impacts arising from human interventions on the environment.
- ✓ **Public safety** – Set of rules that must be followed to ensure social welfare.
- ✓ **Regulation of access to space** – Establishment of rules that limit the right to occupy, be, or remain in the space.
- ✓ **Access** – Physical and symbolic possibility of entering a reality.
- ✓ **Accessibility** – Structural facilities found in the space that makes it inclusive.

## Praia da Cinelândia as intentionalities of interaction

From a phenomenological perspective, beach meanings are closely associated with the intentionalities of individuals when interacting with the beach space. For example, the meanings of Praia da Cinelândia can be very different for a surfer, for a fisherman, for a tourist, and for a business owner who works there. The intentionality that guides the interactions of each of these actors with the beach defines, to a large extent, the possible and present meanings of the human-nature relationship. Chart 01 presents some units of meaning that show intentionalities of interaction of the research collaborators (beachgoers) with the Praia da Cinelândia.

**Chart 01:** Units of meaning that highlight intentionalities of interaction of the research collaborators with Praia da Cinelândia.

<b>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I come here to walk.</li> <li>✓ I come to Praia da Cinelândia to surf and teach surf lessons.</li> <li>✓ I come to enjoy the volleyball space.</li> <li>✓ Play soccer.</li> <li>✓ And most of the time to ride my bike.</li> <li>✓ I train a little bit in front of the beach.</li> <li>✓ But during the weekdays I find it quieter to take a walk and surf.</li> <li>✓ My functional fitness training, which is just in front of Praia da Cinelândia.</li> </ul>
<b>SELF-CARE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ To get a tan.</li> <li>✓ When I'm stressed, the place to relax is here.</li> <li>✓ It's the place to relax.</li> <li>✓ Well, as I'm going to the beach, I want a day of leisure.</li> <li>✓ Currently I have been coming to Praia da Cinelândia with the intention of relaxing.</li> <li>✓ I come here to swim, rest, and start the day.</li> </ul>
<b>SOCIALIZATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ To be with friends.</li> <li>✓ Walk the dog.</li> <li>✓ It is a better known beach.</li> <li>✓ It is a beach with a greater number of people.</li> <li>✓ In fact, I find Praia da Cinelândia crowded.</li> <li>✓ I find the environment of Praia da Cinelândia interesting, because it mixes different audiences, different groups.</li> <li>✓ We get to see several different groups of people, different ethnicities, from different ghettos... I think that's cool.</li> <li>✓ I think the environment of Praia da Cinelândia... I think it's interesting, because it mixes different audiences, different groups, so you get to see at Praia da Cinelândia... such a diverse audience.</li> </ul>

**Source:** Created by the authors.

The units of meaning in this category were divided into 03 major groups: Physical activities, self-care, and socialization. The beach as a favorable place for physical activities is a well-sustained conception in modernity, as highlighted by the advertisement of Orla Sul (Figure 04), a project under construction that continues the Atalaia beachfront towards the South coast of Aracaju. In fact, the broader relationship between nature and physical activity is well consolidated in modernity, especially as an evolution of outdoor education schools (for example, Scouting and Outward Bound) and sports in nature (RODRIGUES, 2019b).

**Figure 04:** Billboard at Praia da Cinelândia associating the beach with the practice of physical activities.



Source: Research archives.

Likewise, nature as a source of inspiration for relaxation and meditation has been consolidating itself as a discourse and practice since the romantic accounts of writer-explorers, such as John Muir, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry David Thoreau (Rodrigues, 2019b). Thus, it is not a great surprise that these intentionalities are very present among the discourses of the collaborators. In both of these cases, of physical activities and self-care, there is a direct relationship of interaction with nature, including as actions that depend on this interaction.

The perspective of socialization, in turn, is constructed from the perception of Praia da Cinelândia as a territory of cultural sharing. In this context, there is no direct relationship with nature, but with the social territory conceived as Praia da Cinelândia. Peyvel (2012) shows the correlation between the different forms of interaction on the beach in Vietnam depending on the group that frequents it: If they are domestic beachgoers, they go to a beach with a physical structure, for example, with a shed. If they are Western tourists, they go to another beach, with a physical structure of more isolated parasols, preserving a more individualistic experience. What would then be the feature of Praia da Cinelândia to attract people for socialization in this territory? The description of the next category raises significant points of this question.

### Praia da Cinelândia as nature

Nature was the most prominent word in the mosaic presented as Figure 03. The relationship between beach and nature may seem obvious, but if we consider the multiplicity of possible meanings for the beach from different intentionalities of interaction (as discussed in the previous category), the association of the beach predominantly as nature is important and significant, especially in the case of an urban beach and considering that the word nature was not used in the questions of the interview script (that is, there was no tendency directed by the questions towards this meaning). Chart 02 shows some important subtleties of the associations between beach and nature identified in the discourses of the Praia da Cinelândia beachgoers.

**Chart 02:** Units of meaning that show associations between beach and nature.

<p><b>'NATURAL' NATURE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ It is... natural nature, so to speak. Not the artificial nature; it would be that perspective.</li> <li>✓ It would be better if the beach sand were not occupied with these bars and kiosks. I do not think that's cool.</li> <li>✓ So that nature would be more preserved.</li> <li>✓ I wish it had fewer people, if possible. To have more silence, less movement, less visual pollution, just really have nature.</li> <li>✓ I think those bars need to be removed from the sand.</li> <li>✓ I wish there were no beach bars on the sand, and no kiosks.</li> <li>✓ No, I believe I would not change anything, because here I think you see the beach as it should be, you know. No structure.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ It's you with your feet in the sand, just a beach chair and a tent. I think the essence of the beach comes from there.</li> <li>✓ For people like me, who enjoy a more isolated experience, something more private, it's not an attraction.</li> <li>✓ Well, it greatly depends on each case, you know. Here on the beach sand, I believe, as I said, that it is not cool, because you have an intimacy with the beach, without any structure, more reserved.</li> <li>✓ I like the area clean, and by clean I mean free of vendors; well, not the vendors themselves, but the structures that are set up here and occupy physical space, it's more about that.</li> <li>✓ I think the fixed space should be up there, on the sidewalk; on the beach sand I wouldn't want to see occupied fixed spaces.</li> <li>✓ Sometimes to stay on the beach as such, so that we had more contact with nature itself, with sand, access to the beach... I would like that more.</li> <li>✓ You see the sea from the edge of the sand, so the sea is cleaner in the visual sense. There are not many barriers between me and the sea.</li> <li>✓ I see the sea much more open, so my relationship with the sea has more meaning, since my childhood.</li> </ul>
<p><b>LOCAL STRUCTURE</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Well, I usually come here because of the shower, as it is easier for students to take a freshwater shower after the classes.</li> <li>✓ Specifically on Praia da Cinelândia because of the volleyball space.</li> <li>✓ It's an environment with a long sidewalk.</li> <li>✓ It has a better structure for beachgoers.</li> <li>✓ Structures of... of toilets, structure really, basic!</li> <li>✓ Tidier, cleaner bars, I don't know.</li> <li>✓ I carefully observe the food there in the bars and I see that there is no water to wash it, so how do they serve, right?! It's a matter of hygiene, I think the area here has no basic structure whatsoever.</li> <li>✓ In the aspect of service and structure, everything is so outdated, you know.</li> <li>✓ I'm going to exemplify some things here... service, it's already very... very poor.</li> <li>✓ Because nowadays we only have volleyball and surfing here at Praia da Cinelândia, you know. There could be more sports, like beach tennis, sand volleyball among others.</li> <li>✓ Well, I think the area here is quiet, cool, despite not having adequate structure.</li> <li>✓ Well, nowadays, as there is the new promenade... this promenade in my opinion was built in a way that preserved the wind, the passage of the wind, for example.</li> <li>✓ And at the same time you have a sidewalk with great extension.</li> <li>✓ I talk more about extension than width, but I mean free extension, so I like this condition of walking more freely, on the sidewalk.</li> <li>✓ I loved this construction, I loved it.</li> <li>✓ No, I think the way it is it just need to be improved, you know?</li> <li>✓ Improve that structure.</li> <li>✓ I wish it had more sports and encouraged more people to come to the beach to play sports.</li> <li>✓ A lifeguard tower, I think it is quite important, because there is a large pond of water further on, so it is somewhat flat, but suddenly it gets deep.</li> <li>✓ The beach bars could be more organized.</li> <li>✓ Because here there are beach bars, coconut water, grocery stores, everything close. I think it's more about that.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ They stimulate, because it's kind of a showcase, you know. For people to go participate and get to know these structures.</li> <li>✓ Some of them stimulate... For example, a practice of physical activity on the beach, for those who like physical activity, can be stimulating.</li> <li>✓ I think it stimulates because in the morning, people play a lot of sports here.</li> <li>✓ I go for a walk at six o'clock in the morning and I see a lot of people in action, I think it stimulates.</li> <li>✓ So the person might get interested in something, like: someone's doing physical activity and the person might look at it and be interested in that.</li> <li>✓ And regarding the bars, due to their number, people can have a preference and simply choose which one they would like to go to, as well as the beach bars. Uh... I think that's it.</li> <li>✓ They stimulate people's access to the beach. Uh... and today we would like to see an improvement, you know, because nowadays these beach bars are removable.</li> <li>✓ Every day the guys set it up and take it down, and this is a very hard work for them who have to come here to set it up. If there were kiosks here, as in Aruana and Mosqueiro, it would make it easier, you know, for people to come to the beach more often.</li> <li>✓ In a way it stimulates, it brings well-being.</li> <li>✓ And the practice of sports, you know, so that not only bathers go to the beach.</li> <li>✓ I think it stimulates, more than it limits. Right?</li> <li>✓ At first it seems like something that stimulates, because there are these things that come up, so a lot of people come attracted by that.</li> <li>✓ But up there, on the concrete part, I believe it does... I believe it attracts people who sometimes come to have a snack or drink coconut water, like me, you know. I came here to train and took the opportunity to come to the beach, so I believe that it stimulates people.</li> <li>✓ Today I find it more interesting than the promenade! Because the beach is not just the part of the sea, right?! It's all that is involved.</li> </ul>
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**Source:** Created by the authors.

The perspective of Praia da Cinelândia as nature highlights very well the dichotomy in the discourses of the collaborators about the presence or not of structures on the beach. This is because the structure can be considered to be both an attraction and a limiting factor for access to the beach. On the one hand, the structure offers greater accessibility and services that can be attractive as different forms of interaction with the environment. On the other hand, they inevitably occupy a physical space on the beach and delimit the forms of interaction with the environment in the occupied space, thus also creating symbolic barriers from the occupation. This contradiction has already been highlighted by Urbain (2002, p.269), who demonstrated that the French, when asked about what kind of coastline they dream of, mostly answered 'of the one in which nature is preserved'. However, in the period of the study (1991), 20% of the French coast was already urbanized.

**Figure 05:** Structure for the practice of physical activities and sports in the sand.



**Source:** Research archives.

**Figure 06:** Fixed commercial structures at Praia da Cinelândia.



**Source:** Research archives.

On the one hand, an experience of nature associated with comfort and consumption. On the other hand, nature as an untouched and reserved paradise of the pages of nature tourism magazines (in this sense, also idealized as a dream of consumption).

**Figure 07:** Area of Praia da Cinelândia occupied by beach bars.



**Source:** Research archives.

**Figure 08:** Praia da Cinelândia early in the morning, before the arrival of the beach bars.



**Source:** Research archives.

Also, it is not uncommon for this dichotomy to appear in the discourse of the same person, who first advocates in favor of the structure and in the next moment shares desires for a ‘wild’ beach. As stated by Urbain (2002), the ecological morality of beach preservation and of the bath ‘religion’ coexist, and the desire for both things don’t seem to be contradictory in the discourse of those who go to the beach. This gap between one thing and another is common and is not new, even if it comes from the same person. The most interesting thing is to understand the contents of the statements to identify the current status of the overlap between the (often idealized) idea of wild nature and the form of urban occupation of the coast. The statement of one of the business owners presented below is a good example of this dilemma:

At first it seems like something that stimulates, because there are these things that come up, so a lot of people come attracted by that, but once these things are established and people understand themselves as owners of that place, that environment, then the effect is reversed, because you see that those people who are there, controlling that environment that was attractive, start to regulate the access to that particular environment. So, I think that’s a double-edged sword, because you have to pay attention; at the same time that you want people to thrive in the use of space, you also have to keep an eye out, uh... if this is democratic and if it does not limit the movement of people from a certain point on. You see bars down here that a person established, on public sand and suddenly, that person who established the bar has already become the owner of the sand; at first the person is circulating and from then on starts to control and say: No, the peanut seller cannot come in here to sell peanuts in my sand. In the same way this can happen here very easily... There just needs to be lack of control and lack of a democratic view of space, and overnight there can already be a bar or an establishment that controls access, saying who can actually circulate in the sand or enjoy that space (Business owner).

The statement shows, as a report of someone who experiences the territory and its tensions, how the issue of the occupation of the public space of the beach by private structures is closely associated with the social constructions of ‘beach’, more specifically, or of ‘nature’, more broadly. There is a legal dimension to the issue, since we understand that private structures on the beach inevitably limit access (physically and symbolically) to a space that, according to the Brazilian constitution, should be of open, unrestricted, and free access (BRASIL, 1988). However, beyond the legal issue, we can approach that issue as a socio-environmental problem, since the presence or absence of private structures on the beach highlights the cultural perceptions of ‘beach’ and ‘nature’ in specific contexts.

At the same time, the structural organization of the beach influences human-nature interactions in these specific contexts. For example, beaches in Australia have no structures in the sand, except for lifeguard clubs that provide services to the community (SARTORE; COFFEY, 2019). In fact, attempts to establish structures on the sand of the beach in Australia by the private sector always encounter strong resistance from the community, which claims the right to free and unrestricted access to the beach while maintaining the space free of physical structures. If structures exist, they should be moralized in the form of a facility, for the benefit of the public, as is the case with Surf Life Saving Clubs. According to Urbain (2002), the public structure, such as the examples of parking lots, bike paths, and walkways with access to Praia da Cinelândia, promotes a transformation towards urbanization, breaking with the imaginaries of the ‘wild’ beach / nature. However, these structures are contextualized in the field of ‘public good’, of open, unrestricted, and free access to space, unlike private structures.

From this comparative example, some important questions can be raised: Why is there this resistance to structures on the beach in Australia and not in Brazil? What does this distinction show about the conception of beach and nature of Australians and Brazilians? How do the daily experiences on Australian and Brazilian beaches influence the conception of beach and nature of the respective beachgoers?

## **Praia da Cinelândia as a conflict**



Because there's more people coming here, from many apartment buildings and people from a higher social class. So these people don't want to share the space with those who have always frequented the beach here, so how do we regulate this environment now? (Beachgoer).

The statement of the epigraph is of a beachgoer who highlights the growing elitism in Praia da Cinelândia. In fact, on the other side of the street, in front of the beach, are the apartments with the highest prices per square meter of the entire Aracaju waterfront. There is also a high-end gym and a few restaurants situated between the buildings. On the other hand, the local newspaper (NUNES, 2021a; 2021b) denounces the transformation of Cinelândia into '*favelândia*' (in reference to the '*favelas*', Portuguese word for slums), referring to the disorderly occupation of beach bars, and to food trucks that irregularly occupy the parking area. Some of the conflicts resulting from this clash of socioeconomic realities are evidenced by the units of meaning of Chart 03 with statements of the collaborators who frequent Praia da Cinelândia.

**Chart 03:** Units of meaning that highlight conflicts at Praia da Cinelândia.

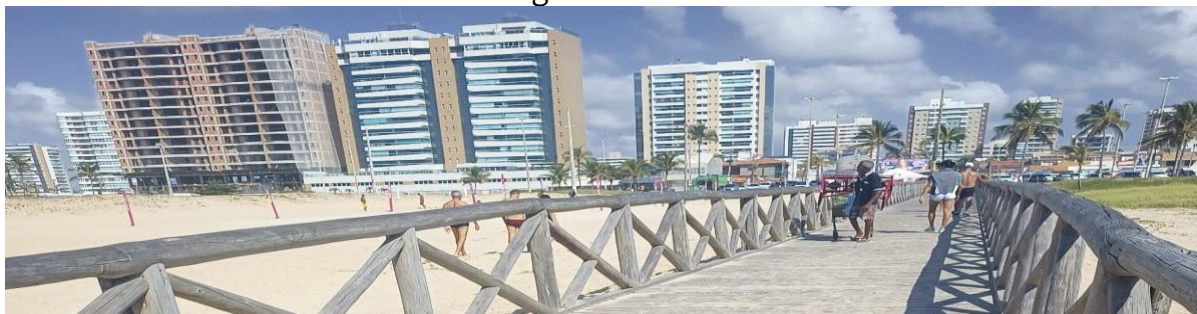
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What impresses me the most here is the lack of awareness of people, especially on the weekend.</li> <li>✓ On Monday, when I come to teach classes, you can barely see the sand on the beach, due to the amount of garbage.</li> <li>✓ We find dead animals, mostly turtles because of straws, plastics, and plastic waste that people end up leaving on the beach.</li> <li>✓ I think Friday, Saturday, Sunday maybe, I don't know the day, but there is an occupation on the weekends of economic exploitation.</li> <li>✓ Yes, I would change... the environmental awareness of people.</li> <li>✓ The beach bars could be organized, because there is pollution, mess, visual pollution.</li> <li>✓ I'm a fisheries engineer, I know there are many environmental impact factors, but as long as you have an inspection, I don't see a problem, you know?</li> </ul>
<b>PUBLIC SAFETY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I even think it's safe, during the week and etc.</li> <li>✓ During the week, weekend, there are some police cars. Public safety.</li> <li>✓ The police car is parked over there, but I think during the week it's a little bit more, they leave it more, like... There is one here, you know.</li> <li>✓ It's that on the weekend it becomes... How can I say? People come here to drink and make a fuss, so there is a lot of robbery, a lot of fighting.</li> <li>✓ What people are complaining about here a lot is the drug issue at this point, you know.</li> </ul>
<b>REGULATION OF ACCESS TO THE SPACE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ What I sometimes find weird is... For example, from my point of view. I think it's weird that... The way the city hall, the state, tries to insert itself here.</li> <li>✓ It's an irregular way... Trying to delimit who can attend Praia da Cinelândia. That for me, I think it's weird, it's something that, I think... It is a critical point, you know.</li> <li>✓ There is a segmentation, like... wait a moment, how do we regulate who frequents Praia da Cinelândia? And suddenly, overnight, the site here is heavily policed.</li> <li>✓ No, there are lots of people from the periphery who are coming to Praia da Cinelândia and then we have to segment this here. Why?</li> <li>✓ There's been police roundups, but it's only for a specific group, not in a general, broad way.</li> <li>✓ So, I wish those people there were not here during the weekend... drinking, smoking, gambling, and fighting.</li> </ul>

**Source:** Created by the authors.



From the report of the collaborators we understand that Praia da Cinelândia is frequented by a diverse public during the week and on weekends. We also understand that a significant part of the beachgoers are from the Atalaia neighborhood itself, a place of real estate expansion and appreciation.

**Figure 09:** Walkway at Praia da Cinelândia and real estate expansion of the Atalaia neighborhood.



Source: Research archives.

We also understand that the people who frequent Praia da Cinelândia typically make use of the existing structures, especially the beach bars, the fixed shops, the sports courts, and the bike path, in addition to the beach itself for walking, surfing, and other physical activities and recreational practices. However, there is an asynchrony in this order: On weekends, especially on Sundays, Praia da Cinelândia becomes a meeting point for young people, including many who inhabit peripheral neighborhoods of Aracaju and who do not normally frequent the Atalaia beachfront.

Contrary to what many think, middle-class and upper-class people are a large part of the beachgoers here, who are residents of Atalaia. The only time when that differs is on Sunday afternoon, when people from the peripheries are the ones who come here. They arrive and end up occupying the part of the beach and at the end of the day they occupy the place here (laughs). That is what differs, but all the other days of the week people who come here to walk, ride a bike or even with the cars, and to play footvolley are these upper middle-class people (Business owner).

The space is transformed into a different stage than usual – and by usual we mean the space as it is conceived and experienced most of the time. Pereira (2012) describes how these diverse appropriations of Praia da Cinelândia occur depending on the day of the week and the time of day in his master's thesis. The music, the movements, the relationships, the interactions, the norms, the moralities and their conceptions of positivities and negativities change.

The events of social asynchrony typically highlight the conflicts of society, even the most veiled ones (the COVID-19 pandemic is a good example – see RODRIGUES; LOWAN-TRUDEAU, 2021). As shown in the epigraph of the beginning of the description of this category and in Chart 03, some of the conflicts of Praia da Cinelândia become very evident: (a) the visual pollution of the beach as a problem of organization and awareness ‘of the crowd’, with emphasis on what occurs on weekends; (b) greater tranquility during the week, contrasted with the ‘hustle and bustle’ of the weekends, with emphasis on policing in the area only on weekends; (c) the regulation of access explicitly targeted to a specific audience. Some statements of the business owners reinforce the conflicts in evidence:

And what also needs to improve here is the fight against drugs. On Sunday for instance, the situation is very difficult, you know.

It’s a lot, a lot... it disrupts the business, you know. A lot of people out there fighting, prostitution, it’s... a lot of drugs, uh... All of this here needs to improve, you know.

I would only change the Sunday, which is the day that the minors stay here making a fuss, which greatly disrupts the business. But apart from that, everything is OK  
(Business owners).

The conflicts highlighted are of socio-environmental nature. The growing appreciation of the beach as a space/product of leisure and health creates demands and tendencies to the creation of structures directed to leisure and health, as well as to the appreciation of housing closer to the beach (a process also accelerated by the creation of access structures and services near the beach). One of the consequences of this process is the gentrification of people who do not have the money to keep up with these trends, driving them away from the beach.

Among the social problems of gentrification we highlight with this example environmental injustice, especially in the perspective of environmental racism, as people who live on the outskirts of the city do not have the ‘privilege’ of access to the beach (or, broadening the discussion, to nature). On the one hand, due to the difficulties of going to the beach (remembering that the nearest bus terminal to Praia da Cinelândia is 1.6 km away). On the other hand, just as limiting, because of the symbolic structures that

inhibit the presence of people who do not identify with the normative order of the territory. Among the units of meaning in Chart 02, in the description of the previous category, we can observe several statements in favor of more structure, or a better structure. Based on the discussion proposed in this category, the questions that remain are: What would be the socio-environmental consequences on Praia da Cinelândia with the increase or improvement of the structures? How would such consequences affect the different people who frequent Praia da Cinelândia?

## **Praia da Cinelândia as business**

Bars, kiosks, and beach bars; drink carts; surf lessons and rental of bikes or diving masks; vendors offering water, beer, and mate tea, popsicles, sweets and coconut candies, skewers and shrimp pies, grilled rennet cheese and mini *acarajés* (shrimp and bean dumplings), beach sarongs and hats, sound boxes and cell phone holders, Amazon sandalwood roots, bronzers and sunscreens, beading collars and feather earrings. The products vary according to the geography and local culture, but the business is part of the conception of the Brazilian beach. As already discussed, the naturalization (in the Bourdieusian sense) of commerce on Brazilian beaches says a lot about the social representation of the beach within the scope of Brazilian culture. Popular criticism (which comes from the community) in relation to commercial structures on the beach is not something common in Brazil, highlighting a moral complacency with this reality. This is quite different, for example, from the aforementioned example of Australia, highlighting that the Australian beach culture is different, built from other moral codes. However, the absence of the popular manifestation against commerce on the beach does not mean the complete absence of conflicts.

In an article published in 2019, Sartore, Pereira, and Rodrigues discussed the case of a lawsuit filed by the Public Prosecutor's Office of Brazil (MP) advocating for the demolition of almost 50 beach bars on the coast of Aracaju. The action, based on environmental justifications, was associated with a broader movement of the MP on commercial structures built in marine areas (crown/trust land) of the Brazilian coast, resulting in the demolition of several of these structures in different states of Brazil (SARTORE; PEREIRA; RODRIGUES, 2019).

Having lived during the period of this legal action in Aracaju, with the case even being a research theme (valid for two of the authors of this article), and understanding the impact of the potential demolition of the bars on the daily experiences of the local community, it was surprising to observe how the case did not gain much notoriety as a community conflict. Overall, the case unfolded as something between the MP and the owners of beach bars in Aracaju. As the problem of commerce on the beach seems to involve more directly the public agencies, responsible for applying the laws that guarantee open, unrestricted, and free access to public space, and the business owners who occupy the public space with private structures, Chart 04 presents units of meaning of the business owners who participated in the survey, offering some indications of possible conflicts over the process of commercial occupation of Praia da Cinelândia.

**Chart 04:** Units of meaning of the business owners who participated in the survey.

<p><b>Appropriation process</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Since September last year we came and took a part of the point here to sell and market our products.</li> <li>✓ Since July, we got the license for the whole space, and we are now also selling coconut water and everything else.</li> <li>✓ About 5 or 6 years ago, more salespeople started coming.</li> <li>✓ I started selling freezer pops, and from the freezer pops I started to have the beach bars here on Praia da Cinelândia, you know.</li> <li>✓ I have worked here at the kiosk for 5 years. But I've already worked on the beach sand before.</li> <li>✓ I sell fried potatoes and I also have my drink and food tent.</li> <li>✓ The only issue is this one: Now we are not allowed to pass with the carts by the walkway, so we go through the sand.</li> <li>✓ They divided the parking lot in half, so that we stay on our side and the tourists park there.</li> <li>✓ The tents down there have changed, now they are standardized and do not remain overnight. The tents are removed so as not to bother tourists.</li> <li>✓ If I could change something, I would like them to give new tents to everyone, as they promised: Tents, tables, parasols, all registered.</li> <li>✓ They registered everyone, for us to pay the taxes, but so far they have not done any of this, so we are all waiting.</li> <li>✓ Well, the tents for us to be able to work... each one should have their fixed tent, so as to avoid that situation of setting up and taking down every day, you know.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sense of belonging</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ I've been here for 20 years, Cinelândia began here with the ice cream shop.</li> <li>✓ I am one of the oldest founding sellers at Cinelândia.</li> <li>✓ I've been working here since I was young, I'm always here going back and forth.</li> <li>✓ Uh... well... All my life I've been here, you know. When I was young and after being married too.</li> <li>✓ I've always been a regular of Praia da Cinelândia, since the area here was not paved, it was only sand, with a single road.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ From then on I'm here every day from Monday to Sunday, that's my routine.</li> <li>✓ It's been over 40 years since I got here.</li> <li>✓ I've been here since I was 12, nothing has changed, the same thing.</li> </ul>
<b>Subsistence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Well, this is the livelihood of those who are street vendors, individual, you know.</li> <li>✓ I'm a cheese seller, so I'm always in the rush, back and forth, selling cheese.</li> <li>✓ This beach here is better to work on, to make money.</li> <li>✓ So we keep selling our products and earning our living.</li> </ul>
<b>Authorization to occupy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Yes, the city hall and EMSURB, which granted us the authorization.</li> <li>✓ No, there is no need. The person just marks the place, and the inspector comes here and registers.</li> <li>✓ You keep coming every day, you know, but after you already have a fixed point, you can come on Saturdays and Sundays and on holidays.</li> <li>✓ Some respect, while others do not... they even fight for the point, squeeze it a little bit, I need to live too.</li> <li>✓ From time to time no. EMSURB has already passed here and has already taken everyone's papers. But they haven't regulated anyone yet, we're waiting here.</li> <li>✓ There's also... it's all there at EMSURB, for them to decide what they're going to do for us there.</li> <li>✓ It was the mayor who established us here.</li> <li>✓ We had to go to EMSURB, for them to authorize us to work here.</li> <li>✓ The authorization is from the city hall.</li> <li>✓ Yes! EMSURB had to authorize.</li> </ul>
<b>Prerequisite to occupy the space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ There is a fee to stay here, paid to the city hall as well.</li> <li>✓ There is no payment. They want the beach clean, so it's leaving the beach clean and getting the garbage from the ground, you know.</li> <li>✓ Not yet. The documents are all there at EMSURB, for them to decide what they're going to do.</li> <li>✓ Not yet, because it is still in the process of legalizing the issue of health surveillance and other things. But we're going to pay, everybody's going to pay.</li> <li>✓ They still don't charge, not yet.</li> <li>✓ Yes, all business owners pay.</li> <li>✓ Any cart or kiosk here on the sidewalk pays.</li> <li>✓ There is collection, so every month you receive a bill charging your fee.</li> <li>✓ Not yet. Not yet, but there will be.</li> <li>✓ No, no. There is no charge for us here.</li> </ul>
<b>Time of occupation of the space</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ours is indefinite, I can't tell you what differs.</li> <li>✓ There is no deadline, we have to set it up at 6 a.m. and take it down at 6 p.m.</li> <li>✓ No, there is no deadline.</li> <li>✓ There's a period, it's in court because of that, you know. They want us to leave, everyone to leave the place here, but it's still in court.</li> <li>✓ We used to have a tent, everything was here in the sand, on the strip, but now we take it out, it's a mobile structure.</li> <li>✓ Set it up and take it down every day. They provided it for us, for us to be able to work.</li> <li>✓ They are permanent. These kiosks here are the oldest on the waterfront, you know.</li> <li>✓ Because in the beginning we could not close, today we can already close from 4 a.m. to noon. Because if we close for too long, they might take the food truck, you know.</li> <li>✓ No. They want you to set the tent up and, after the movement is over, take it down.</li> </ul>

Source: Created by the authors.



The first units of meaning of Chart 04, associated with the process of commercial appropriation of Praia da Cinelândia, constitute a small sample of the breadth of commercial possibilities associated with the beach (joining the introductory paragraph of the description of this category). In this context, the beach is seen as a field of opportunities open to the creativity of the seller who carefully observes the demands of a potential market. The appropriation of space is closely linked to a sense of belonging and the perception of the right to exploit the land for subsistence, as evidenced by the following units of meaning in Chart 04. In fact, the business owners on the beaches of Aracaju, especially the older ones, are typically local people, including those from the beach bars on the South coast (SARTORE; LEITE; RODRIGUES, 2023). Thus, there is an association to the sacred in the perception of the right to use the land for subsistence, creating a symbolic distinction with the profane of capitalist profit represented by more recent bars shaped by the logic of European beach clubs, some even having Europeans as owners (SARTORE; LEITE; RODRIGUES, 2023).

However, when we enter into the practical plane of these dynamics of occupation, we are faced with a real hodgepodge. The units of meaning associated with the dynamics of occupation (need for formal authorization, definition of prerequisites to apply for the occupation of space, determination or regulation of time of occupation of space) form a Tower of Babel, to the point that we do not have enough consistent data to point to any pattern, other than the lack of pattern. We work with two hypotheses: (a) different establishments are operating under different regulations, including the possibility that some have already encountered inspections and others have not; (b) some of the owners may have been wary of revealing data that could harm them in some way, fabricating responses to protect themselves.

What is evident is that there is no standardized regulation for the legalization of commercial establishments at Praia da Cinelândia, or at least an inspection that guarantees regulation. If there were a regulation that guaranteed the legality of the occupation we would have a pattern in the responses of the collaborators, and there would be no reason to possibly manufacture answers to protect themselves (if this was indeed the case, remembering that this is only a hypothesis). The lack of regulation

generates a confusing relationship between the government and the merchants, explicit in some statements that show dialogues and agreements on where and how merchants can establish themselves, while there is the installation of barriers to prevent merchants from using the wooden walkway.

**Figure 10:** Barriers to prevent beach tent owners from using the walkway.



Source: Research archives.

A more present action of the public power could bring important socio-environmental benefits to Praia da Cinelândia, regardless of the regulations applied. On the one hand, the prohibition of the occupation of public space by private structures would guarantee open, unrestricted, and free access to the site, as well as the possibility of expanding the public structure, such as bathrooms, changing rooms, and support structures for firefighters and lifeguards, possibly including educational initiatives, such as dynamics associated with environmental awareness and experiences of teaching corporeal practices such as open water swimming and surfing. On the other hand, the standardization of commerce, for example, by public bidding, would guarantee the ordering of the space (as opposed to disorderly occupation), the definition of criteria for periodic inspection (based on the bidding contracts), the possibility of professionalization of the merchants (bringing benefits to the merchants and to the public), and the active participation of the community in the process of configuration of the space. On the last point, there is a great ecopedagogical potential in the creation of dynamics of public participation in the definition of the criteria for the elaboration of public bids and in the choice of the enterprises that will occupy the public spaces, putting the conflicts of interest and the symbolic disputes of meaning of the beach in evidence.

## Conclusions

The main results of the study presented in this article are: (a) the occupation of Praia da Cinelândia is heterogeneous, especially on weekends, constituting a territory of pluralities; (b) the heterogeneity of the occupation of Praia da Cinelândia results in a social cartography that brings together different socio-environmental perceptions about the beach, being the scene of contradictory moral attributions about the subjects of the occupation and the uses of the territory; (c) there is an evident tension over the limitation of access to the low-income population, with notable symbolic gentrification; (d) with regard to merchants, there is an attempt by the government to limit the occupation process, but in a disorganized way, with attempts to create barriers and symbolic exclusions represented by created difficulties in the access and permanence of merchants on the beach; (e) the formulation of specific public policies for managing the spaces of Praia da Cinelândia, especially with regard to commercial occupations on the beach, can be representative as an important ecopedagogical process in which different actors who frequent the beach could be involved in decisions that will have a direct influence on the socio-environmental perceptions of this space.

The playful imaginary associated with the beach can generate a perception of triviality in relation to this space. However, if we return to the perspective of 'nature as a public space' constructed from the word cloud associated with the discourses collected in the research (Figure 03), the beach is the best option for access to nature as a public space in coastal cities, along with urban parks. Public spaces perceived as nature in urban contexts, especially in larger cities, have an enormous ecological value, especially when understanding the difficulties of access of most of the urban population to green areas outside the city, usually the case of state and national parks, for example. In this context, the discussion about the occupation (including commercial) of the beach should be framed within the scope of socio-environmental conflicts, since the dynamics of occupation condition the socio-environmental perceptions of the beach and, more broadly, of nature.

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<sup>i</sup> Central concepts – Comerciantes --> Business owners; Frequentadores --> Beach goers; Praia da Cinelândia --> Praia da Cinelândia; Necessidade de Educação ambiental --> Need for Environmental Education; Gentrificação --> Gentrification; Visita em Lócus --> In-loco visit; Tribos diversas --> Diverse tribes. In purple: Appropriation; Belonging; Local movement Subsistence; Public safety; Social stigma; Occupation; Authorization; Time of occupation; Prerequisite to occupy; Spatial alterations; Changes in the environment. In light blue: Physical activity; Socialization; Self-care; Nature; Environmental problems; Public safety; Discrimination; Regulation of access; Access/accessibility; Public health; Structure; Resource of exploration; Real estate speculation; Urban mobility; Sociocultural space; In yellow: Socioeconomic difference; Unregulated occupation; Socio-environmental conflicts; Subsistence; Precariousness of work; Pollution; Lack of public structure; Fixed and mobile structures. In dark blue: Socioeconomic differences; Socioenvironmental conflicts; Segregation; Interactions; Violence.

<sup>ii</sup> Sociocultural --> Sociocultural; Espaço --> Space; Praia --> Beach; Ambiente --> Environment; Prática --> Practice; Especulação --> Speculation; Contato --> Contact; Problemática --> Problem; Do --> Of; Estrutura --> Structure; Contemplação --> Contemplation; Recurso --> Resource; Acessibilidade --> Accessibility; Intocável --> Untouchable; Mobilidade --> Mobility; Ambiental --> Environmental; Socialização --> Socialization; Ao --> To; Física --> Physical; Imobiliária --> Real estate; Acesso --> Access; Atividade --> Activity; Meio --> Environment; Lazer --> Leisure; Vivência --> Experience; Urbana --> Urban; Local --> Local; Natureza --> Nature; Autocuidado --> Self-care; Social --> Social; Regulação --> Regulation; Exploração --> Exploitation; Segurança --> Safety; Saúde --> Health; Público --> Public; Discriminação --> Discrimination; Enquanto --> Whereas.