


From sea bathing to sports on beaches and sea areas

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Abstract

This article aims to understand the sociocultural appreciation of coastal spaces in the tropics from the perspective of conventional modern maritime practices. Starting with therapeutic and recreational activities on the beaches and sea areas, such as Sea Baths and Sun Bathing, this study includes an analysis of contemporary sporting, aquatic and nautical recreation, with a specific emphasis on kitesurfing. The methodological approach uses a database and fieldwork carried out by the Coastal and Leisure Urbanization Research Group of the Urban and Regional Planning Laboratory of the Federal University of Ceará. The understanding is multiscalar, and the theoretical assumptions are associated with urban geography and leisure. The two main developments are first, nautical sports, especially kitesurfing, which is the newest variable for the incorporation and modernization of the beach in the tropics. The second is the formation of a global phenomenon materialized significantly in different contexts, such as the Northeast of Brazil and the coast of Ceará, in particular.

Keywords: urbanization; kitesurfing; tropics; nautical sports; Northeast of Brazil.

Introduction

Before the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, in Western Europe the beach was considered a territory of "fear" (DELUMEAU, 1978) and "a void" (CORBIN, 1988). Over time, a new configuration appeared, and the maritime became a strategic locus of

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sociability, associated with the therapeutic and leisure pursuits of the elites at the time. Initially, the aristocracy embraced Sea Bathing in the seaside resorts. They were followed by the bourgeoisie, which was anxious to enjoy and consequently faithfully reproduce the lifestyle conceived and implemented by the nobility (*Civilisation des Moeurs*) (ELIAS, 1973).

Their elitist character and other limitations of the period, mainly in the field of transport, meant these practices were slow to spread beyond the European continent. Given its climate, with mild temperatures compared to the North of Europe, the Mediterranean was the point of the greatest effervescence of this new fashion (CORBIN, 1988; URBAIN, 1996). It took decades for this frontier to expand, which occurred along two lines: "Sea Baths" and "Good Breathing." The elites in the "New World" (American Continent) adopted sea bathing by reproducing the customs implemented by their Old-World peers; in Florida, for example. In Brazil, the Royal family and the court established themselves in the coastal capital, Rio de Janeiro (LINHARES, 1992; COSTA, 2013). Based on Lavoisier's theory of "Good Breathing" (CORBIN, 1988), new treatments sprang up, which together with sea bathing attracted a significant number of the European upper class to the coastal environment (mainly islands) of the Tropics.

The vitality and strength of the logic of the increasing value of beaches continue to the present, implying a process of constant updating, the ratification of the popularization of the taste for the sea and the maritime in a social perspective (mass effect) and concomitantly on a global scale. At the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, new users have arrived in beach areas, making the urban landscape more complex through the exercise of eminently therapeutic (still practiced but not in a hegemonic way) and recreational (hegemonic) practices. Above all, modern sporting maritime practices (nautical and aquatic) have introduced a new aesthetic standard, no longer based on healthy (Sea Baths) or slender and tanned (Sunbathing) people. Instead, athletic bodies are ideal, nurtured by the image of the practitioner's interaction with nature, under the title of Adventure

Sports or "Sport de Nature" in French (AUDINET; GUIBERT; SEBILEAU, 2017).

Regarding these sporting practices as social theatre turns the beach into a space of innovations, where different actors interact, build and rebuild sociability, producing public spaces directed to revelry and leisure (URBAIN, 1996; RIEUCAU; LAGEISTE, 2008).

These practices occur in centers around the world, derived from the modernization of locations and the modification of activities developed in other environments and now restructured as representative of the seaside. Sports such as surfing, windsurfing, beach soccer, beach volleyball, and kitesurfing have been created or adapted for the beach and the sea. New tourist ventures have grown alongside them, including Spas, Resorts, Condo resorts, and Water parks. Tropical countries with extensive coasts and warm, ventilated sandy beaches have become one of the protagonists. Dantas (2016) emphasizes the effervescence of these transformations, presenting evidence for the coast of northeastern Brazil. The intention is to organize stretches of the northeast coastline for what are generally called *tourist activities*. Private investments are sought for the construction of hotel networks and complex real estate projects, as well as to increase the number of tourists in these places. The results are touristified stretches of the Brazilian coastline, which are also enjoyed by the local populations.

These city and village spaces receive visitors because of the continued attraction of their maritime condition. This is the central objective addressed in this text. In theory, this incorporation is renewed by promoting nautical and beach sports, which often takes place alongside the organization of annual celebrations and festivals. The intention is to demonstrate a global phenomenon that is observed in different contexts, such as the coast of Ceará in the Brazilian Northeast.

The methodological approach uses a database and fieldwork carried out by the Coastal and Leisure Urbanization Research Group of the Urban and

Regional Planning Laboratory of the Federal University of Ceará. The methodology underpinning this study employs three guiding principles to establish a multiscalar understanding, strengthened by theoretical assumptions from urban and leisure geography. We begin with a review of the contemporary international bibliography on modern maritime practices, focusing on the work of Spanish and French authors. Next, statistics from international sports associations, the Brazilian Ministry of Tourism, the Wind Atlas of Brazil and the Secretariat of Tourism of the State of Ceará were used to collate and analyze global, national and regional data. Qualitative fieldwork was a vital component of the research; the material was collected on the beaches of the coast of Ceará through observation techniques, field notes, and question and answer sessions with key interviewees.

The text consists of three topics and the conclusion. The first, the reproduction of new maritime practices characterizes the process of innovation and modernization of maritime recreational practices, in which sports play a prominent part in the contemporary era. The second part addresses the role of sports and leisure on the beach and in the sea drawing on evidence from around the world and giving emphasis to the Northeast of Brazil. The role of sailing sports in the appropriation, transformation, and incorporation of new seaside resorts is examined. The third section, Kitesurfing in the Northeast and Ceará, explicitly details the importance of this sport and its relationship with coastal settings that have already been transformed by earlier shoreline leisure activities. Following orthodox praxis, the conclusions reveal the main results of the research and point to new investigations.

The reproduction of new maritime practices

Like other modern nautical practices, seaside sports stem from activities developed by traditional populations (CORBIN, 1988); swimming and surfing are the most ancient of these. In the West, they were also re-signified with the

incorporation of new routines and improved due to the availability of new materials to manufacture the equipment.

Writing about Brazil in the early sixteenth century, Lery (1994) and Thevet (1997) described the native people as excellent swimmers, comparing them to dolphins. In the Mediterranean, Corbin (1988) also exalted the aquatic skills of young fishermen in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Related to the reinvention of beaches in the West, swimming took on a new connotation as an activity for men that displayed their virility in facing the sea (CORBIN, 1988). The sport reached the Northeast of Brazil, with competitions involving local young men held at the beginning of the twentieth century, called the "Heroic Trials." From the 1970s, sea swimming expanded to national and international scales and was part of the Ironman Triathlon from 1978 and incorporated into the Olympic Games in Sydney (2000).

Surfing is believed to have originated in the Polynesian Islands. It gained new forms in the interwar period and began to spread on the American West Coast, mainly on beaches in Southern California. The first national and international championships were organized from 1974.

The two sports mentioned above now have a professional dimension involving Western and Southern Countries. On one level there are organized professional championships, but there is a substantial group of amateur athletes from a broad social base. The latter, mainly surfers, do not have the same elitist character as the other contemporary maritime activities mentioned. They have varied economic profiles and communicate through an international information network, composed of members from both the West (GUIBERT, 2006) and Southern Countries, who search for the ideal location, coastal environments with a high incidence of waves.

Technological innovations resulting from new materials have led to the development of new sports. Traditional forms of diving, using sophisticated equipment, and extreme free diving both evolved from swimming. New types of surfboards made bodyboarding possible. Adding sails, kites or paddles to

surfboards introduced the new activities of windsurfing, kitesurfing and stand-up paddle, respectively.

Nautical and aquatic sports exist on a much smaller scale than real estate-tourism dynamics, but their consequences are the result of full articulation with the world scenario. They are an "alternative" system with a high power of adherence to new information technologies. They adapt well to the pre-existing infrastructure and interact intensely with the maritime environment.

The sobriquet "alternative" helps to understand these practices, as do the terms "out of time" and "out of space" used by Sebilleau (2017), based on Bordieu. In short, they are different from mass tourism.

In the Southern countries, the interaction with nature, which is connected to the best season for waves and good winds in paradisiacal places, attracts rising flows of practitioners from other states and countries to the beach areas.

Paradoxically, their presence is a strategic element in dealing with the challenges of seasonality (GUIBERT, 2011). Events such as competitions and championships are sponsored by governments and major enterprises, usually producers new materials, clothing, and tourist-real estate. Thus, in recent years, these visitors have become loyal customers of the hotel sector, typically small hotels and inns in metropolitan areas; others stay in second homes, referred to by Spanish scholars as "Residential Tourism" (ANDREU, 2005; ALEDO, 2008; NIEVES, 2008; DEMAJOROVIC et al., 2011; FERNÁNDEZ MUNOZ & TIMON, 2011; TORRES BERNIER, 2013).

Sports and leisure on the beach and the sea

The modernization of coastal areas since the end of the nineteenth century is an essential phenomenon in understanding the consolidation of the taste for the sea and maritime. As part of this process, new infrastructure such as promenades, piers, and walkways are built, along with new leisure facilities, including restaurants, hotels, theme parks, and aquariums, to attract new visitors. Maritime practices are reinvented and adapted to the beach or the sea. Augustin (2007) gives the example of Lacanau-Océan in southwest France, describing the new multiple practices, including sports.

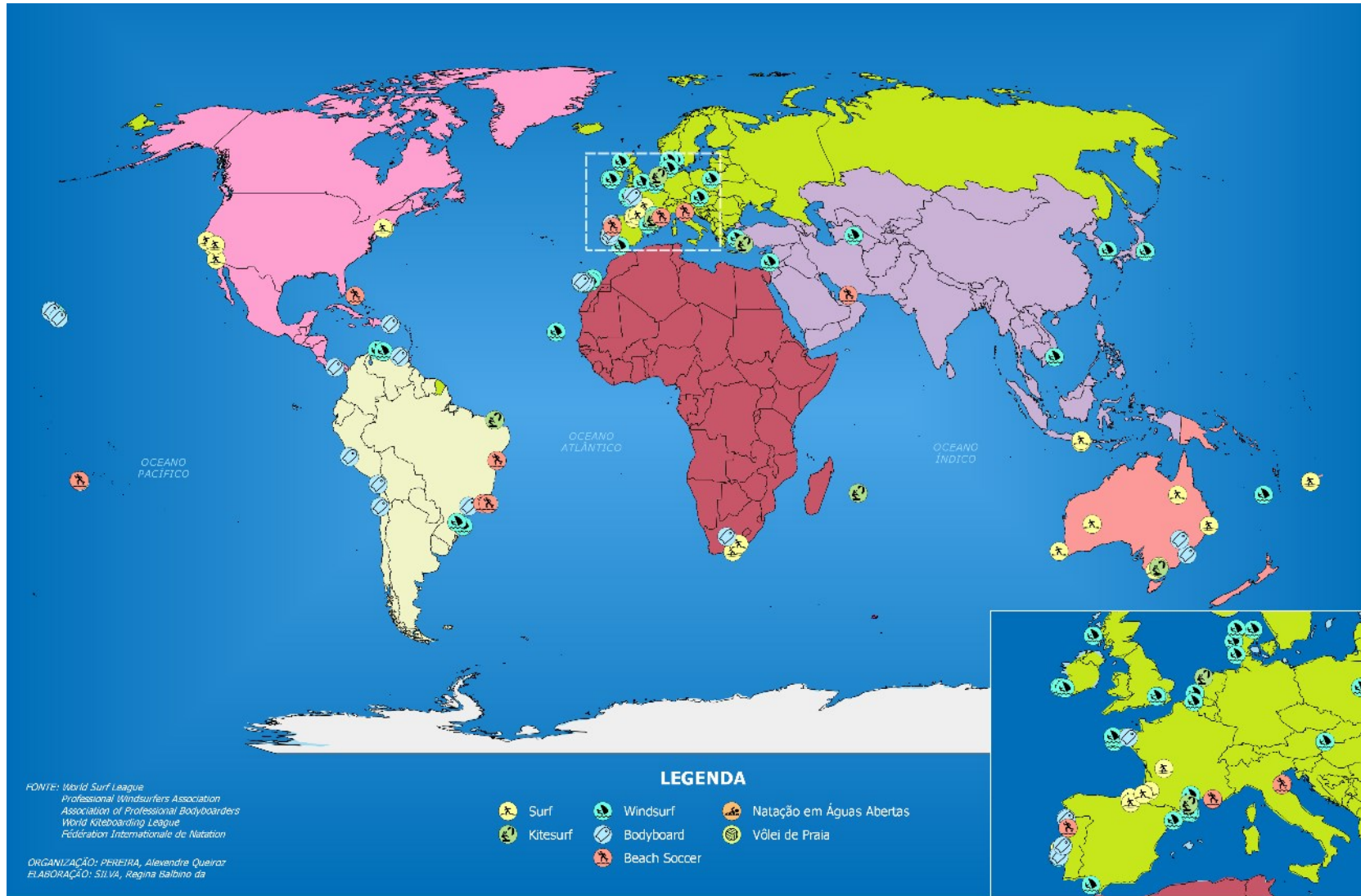
Beach and nautical are thought-provoking indicators of the massification of the taste for seafront environments. Involving both professionals and amateurs, the level of organization has established a world circuit of seaside locations that are notable for the practice of different sports. The former compete in national and international events held by confederations on preselected beaches. In the case of the latter, there are striking dissimilarities. The first is a large number of sportspeople who do not have links to associations or promoters. Also, amateurs tend to frequent more maritime locations, which they select for their natural conditions, such as wind intensity and the height and frequency of the waves, the quality of the physical structures offered, including access and accommodation, and immaterialities like images shared online.

We outline the locations of the venues of the world stages of the different modalities: surfing, kitesurfing, windsurfing, bodyboarding, swimming in open water, beach soccer, and beach volleyball. There is an apparent concentration on European coasts and the tropical shores of South America and Oceania, with a particular emphasis on the coastlines of Portugal, Spain, Brazil and Australia (figure 1). World famous archetypal beaches have materialized, such as the Pipeline (Hawaii), the Gold Coast (Australia), Saquarema and

Copacabana (Rio de Janeiro-Brazil), Papeete (Tahiti) and Praia Grande (Portugal).

The leading practitioners of these sports select these iconic landmarks, which inspires amateurs to adopt the new forms of recreation. The competitions have a positive impact on the flow of tourists and vilegiaturists, who travel from different continents to famous beaches and others with similar environmental conditions.

Figure 1. Worldwide circuits of coastal sports.



Source: World Surf League, Professional Windsurfers' Associaton, Association of Professional Bodyboarders, World Kiteboarding League, Fédération Internationale de Natation and International Football Federation.

Although these sports represent a set of activities developed in marine environments, the number and variety of beachgoers are swelled by complementary activities. In Brazil, a range of contemporary maritime practices is observed on the beach itself, including suntanning (Sun Bathing as reported by Urbain in 1994, in France), functional training, beach tennis, and footvolley. At sea, there is more diversity and includes pursuits with motorized equipment, surfboards, and boats (Table 1).

Table 1. The diversity of practices on the beach and in the sea.

Nautical/marine sports and practices	Practices and sports on the beach (sand area)
Surfing, windsurfing, kitesurfing, stand up paddle, jet-skiing, canoeing, rowing, triathlon, bathing, sailing, sport fishing, diving and underwater hunting, wakeboarding, kayaking, water skiing, bodyboarding, and swimming.	Beach soccer, beach volleyball, footvolley, beach tennis, shuttlecock, suntanning, and functional training.

Source: Documentary research and fieldwork in the period 2015 to 2017.

The process of reinvention and production of modern-day maritime practices is due to the openness of beach areas to globalization. They are reception spaces for international-metropolitan *vacanciers* and autochthones, making them spaces of convergence and cultural exchange. When studying the activities on the shores of French Polynesia, Blondy (2013) comes to a challenging conclusion. The author detects differences between international, metropolitan and local tourists. Beaches that concentrate autochthones are used as meeting places and do not necessarily have leisure practices. On the island’s public beaches the global (sports, for example) and the traditional (fishing) coexist in a hybrid fashion. Thirdly, there are the westernized urban beaches, and in these cases, the more urbanized the beach, the fewer traditional actions are perceptible.

Without discarding Blondy's (2013) findings, it is evident that in Brazilian touristic beaches new modalities have spread to autochthones, especially the younger age groups, which reinvent and incorporate them as leisure possibilities. Along with the social dialectic, there are other relevant dimensions; in this sense, it is worth highlighting the beaches' natural features, which make them such attractive environments.

As in many tropical areas, the climate and geomorphology of the coastline of northeastern Brazil, where attractive sandy sediments predominate, favor the multiplicity of practices mentioned above. The variation of the tides demarcates the Beach Face, the area "where the processes of flow (swash) and reflux (backwash) of the waves occur; its morphological analog is the beach face" (SILVA, G., 2006, p24). The origin of waves can be local or from the sea, with "significant mean heights of 1.1m, a frequency of 5s and period of 15m" (CLAUDINO SALES, 2007, p.239). When the sea "gives way" the foreshore is wider.

Inspired by Blondy's methodology (2013), from 2015 to 2017, we did extensive fieldwork on the metropolitan beaches of Fortaleza-Ceará, the results identified the trinomial location / user / practice in these areas.

Figure 2. A generic model of the beach strip



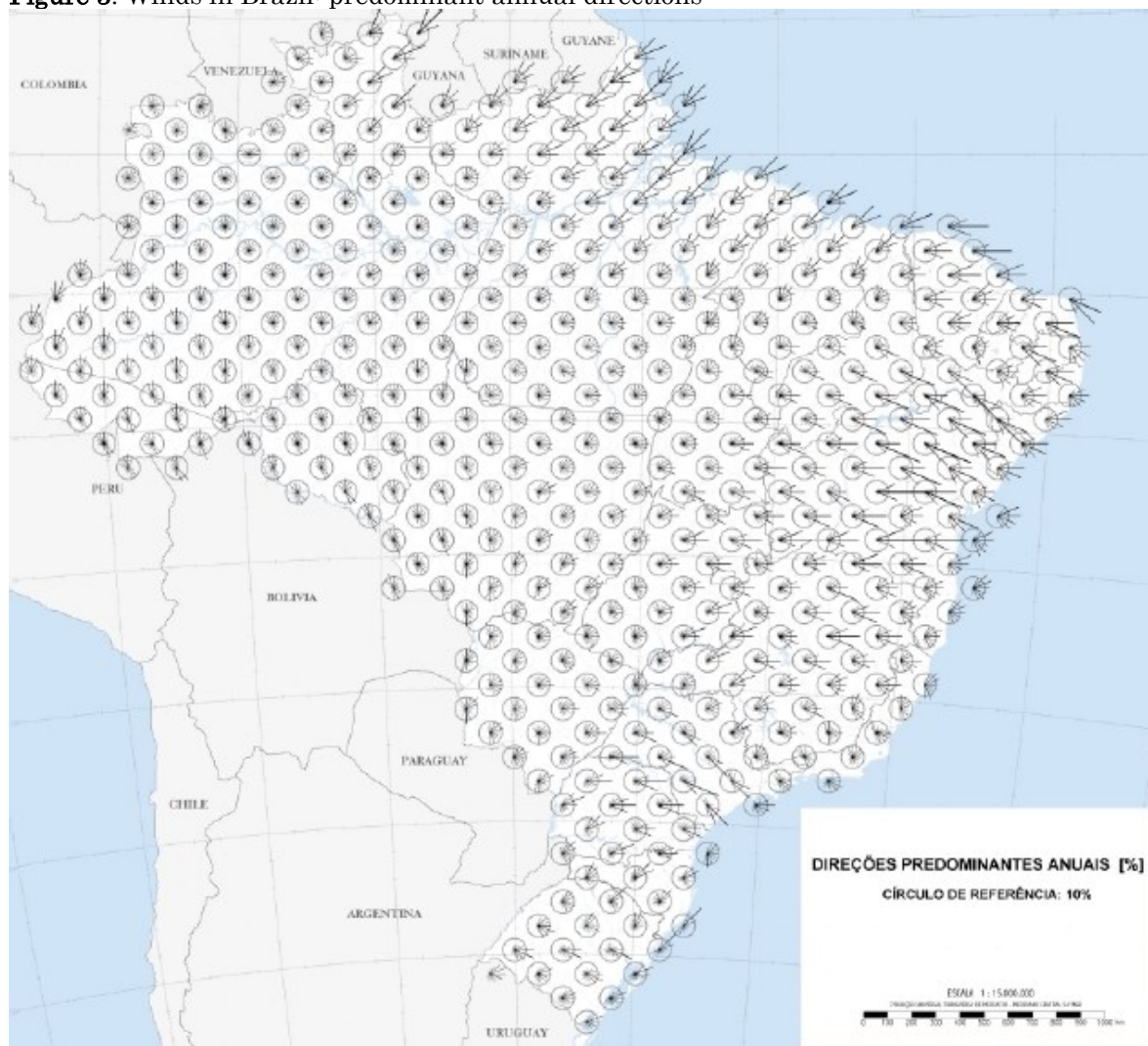
Source: Fieldwork. Authors' elaboration

The image in figure 3 shows the locations of different activities. Windsurfing, kitesurfing, surfing, bodyboarding, and swimming take place at point A, which is a predominantly aquatic space, where waves form. The constant fair winds contribute significantly to the development of these sports. Closer to the sand the waters are calmer, and sea bathing is the principal maritime practice, for both children and adults. The sandy beach concentrates dozens of activities; the most popular are sunbathing, beach volleyball, soccer, beach soccer, beach tennis, and children's games. To the rear are the services that keep the users in the vicinity, including walks and roads on the seafront, as well as restaurants, hotels, inns, resorts, and theme parks, offering patrons leisure, gastronomy, and sociability.

The submerged areas, used for sea bathing, are the zones where destabilized waves break, forming the surf, where the dissipation of the wave energy occurs. The temperature of the marine waters remains comfortable for bathing throughout the year, due to a latent heat flux "three times higher than the seas in higher latitudes" (CONTI, 2010, p.4).

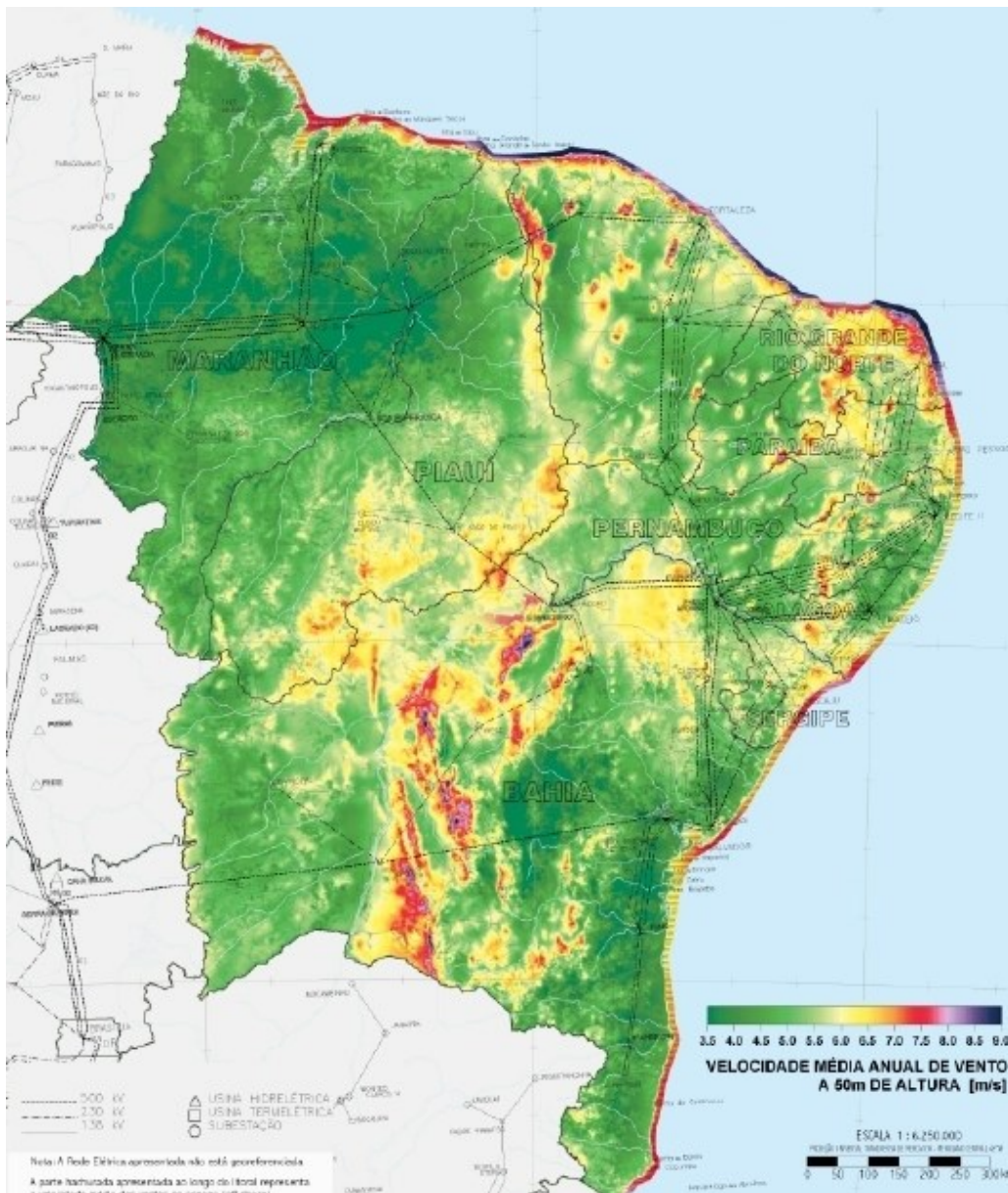
The continuous winds and breezes mitigate the high temperatures. According to Moura (2008), the average velocity of the air flow is 3.7 m / s, with peaks of 4.6 m / s recorded in September and October. Figures 3 and 4 show the strong and constant incidence of winds in Brazil's coastal zone, and more precisely, the Northeast. It is due to these wind conditions that the Brazilian Northeast has joined the "world circuit" of the regions valued and visited by adepts of nautical sports, such as surfing, sailing, and kitesurfing.

Figure 3. Winds in Brazil: predominant annual directions



Source: Atlas of Brazilian Wind Potential, 2001.

Figure 4. Annual wind speeds in the Northeast of Brazil.



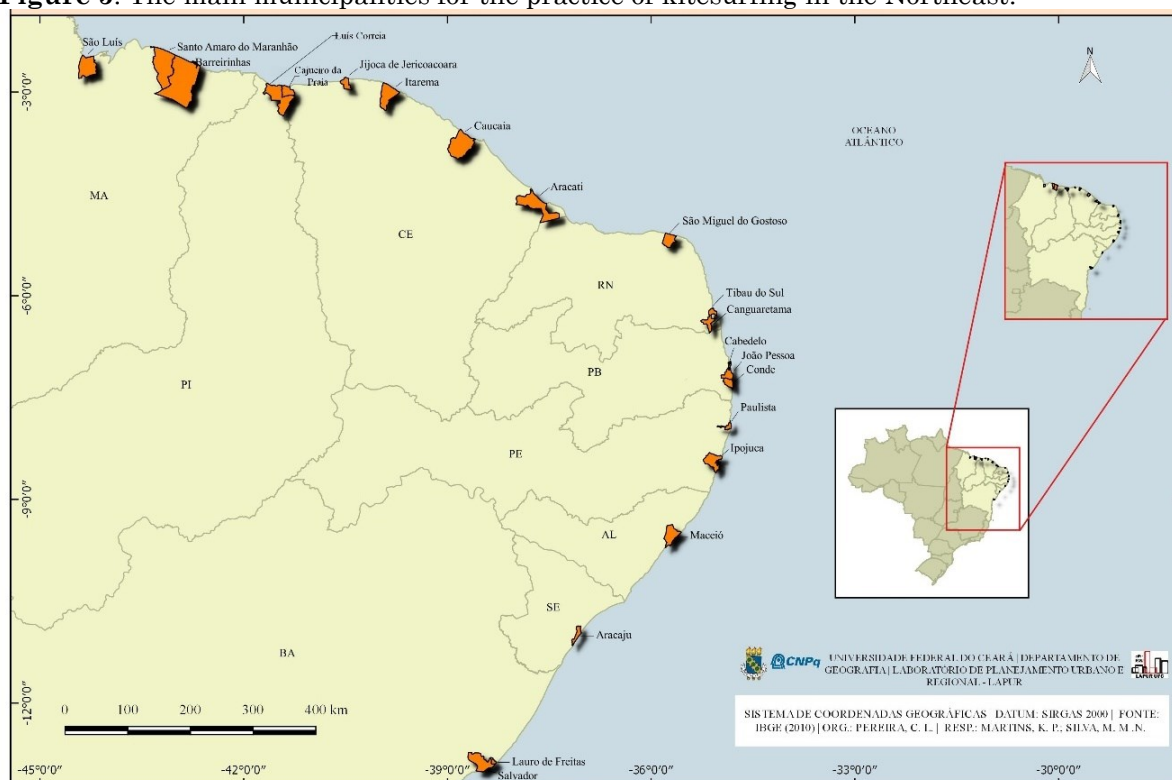
Source: Atlas of Brazilian Wind Potential, 2001.

Kitesurfing in the Northeast and Ceará

Researchers from the Coastal and Leisure Urbanization Research Group of the Urban and Regional Planning Laboratory of the Federal University of Ceará, used electronic websites, specialized magazines, and sports journals to identify the Northeastern municipalities that most attract and receive

kitesurfers. There are 21 municipalities whose beaches are patronized by professionals and amateurs. Figure 5 shows the places selected by kitesurfers in all the states of the Northeast region of Brazil. The beaches selected are iconic hubs, with a higher intensity and use. However, there is the possibility of new parts of the coast continually being incorporated into the itinerary.

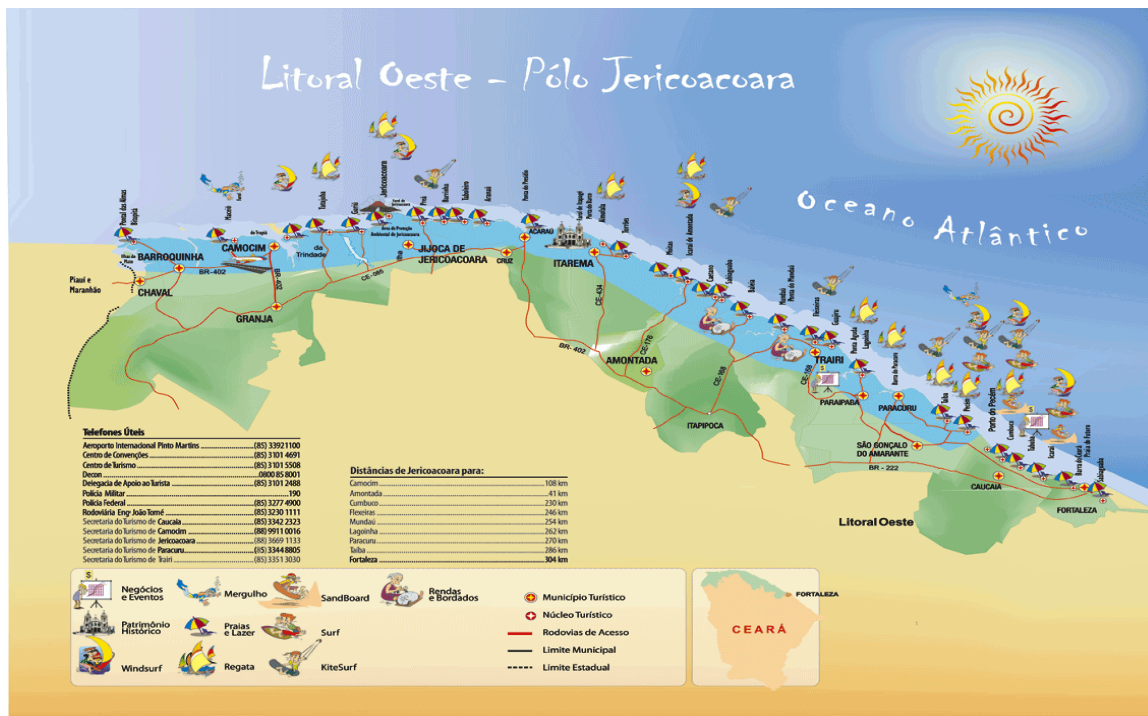
Figure 5. The main municipalities for the practice of kitesurfing in the Northeast.



Source: Specialized electronic sites, fieldwork, and interviews.

The spread of kitesurfing along the coast of the state of Ceará, Northeastern Brazil, has formed a network of beaches and villages previously destined for *vilegiatura* (PEREIRA, 2014), which have become support points for the long sailing routes between Cumbuco (Caucaia) and Jericoacoara (Jijoca de Jericoacoara). Visitors travel more than two hundred kilometers with their boards and kites, selecting places to rest and reorganize their route (figure 6), using second residences, hotels, inns, and other tourist infrastructure.

Figure 6. The coastline of the State of Ceará and the indications of nautical sports.



Source: Promotional material. The Government of the State of Ceará, Brazil

Leisure and lodging ventures are created and adapted to meet the demands of the practitioners of these sea and wind sports. Qualitative research carried out by the Coastal Urbanization Study Group (LAPUR), consulted websites and magazines specialized in kitesurfing, as well using the Google Maps tool to identify the availability of inns or hotels, shops, workshops and schools catering to these visitors.

Kitesurfing demands a relatively more skilled infrastructure than other seafront practices common to the northeastern coast. These are shops and workshops that repair the materials used in the sport; kitesurfing schools; as well as accommodation created explicitly for this market (the collection and transport of sports equipment and people to auspicious places). There are several cases where the owners of the enterprises are kitesurfers or former practitioners, who can provide specialized services and attract more clients. Based on data from the Ministry of Tourism, Table 2 lists the tourist

classification of the municipalities with the highest incidence of kitesurfers and the number of enterprises able to attend to these clients.

Table 2. Northeastern municipalities with a higher incidence of kitesurfers and their respective tourism categorization, according to the Ministry of Tourism.

STATE	CITY	Tourist Categorization	Number of Properties
MA	Barreirinhas	C	1
MA	Sao Luis	A	1
MA	Southampton	D	0
PI	Cajueiro da Praia	D	4
PI	Belt	C	2
CE	Caucaia	B	7
CE	Itarema	D	4
CE	Jijoca de Jericoacoara	B	9
CE	Aracati	B	1
RN	São Miguel do Gostoso,	C	1
RN	Tibau do Sul	B	2
RN	Canguaretama	C	1
PB	CABEDELO	C	1
PB	João Pessoa	A	1
PB	Count	C	0
PE	Ipojuca	A	0
PE	Paulista	A	1
SE	Aracaju	A	0
AL	Maceio	A	1
BA	GLS Lauro de Freitas	C	1
BA	Salvador	A	3

Source: MTur, 2015. Prepared by Claudio Pereira.

As a result of the flows of amateur athletes, nature-based coastal sports reconfigure municipalities recognized for their tourist amenities and new destinations in states and municipalities, which are still developing new

structures. Thus, the dissemination of practices like kitesurfing has a double spatial effect: First, it increases the range of activities and attractions in the coastal hubs that offer other modern maritime practices, such as the Costa dos Coqueiros in Salvador, and the Costa Sol Poente in Fortaleza. Additionally, it inserts villages and new resorts, such as Cajueiro da Praia in Piauí and Barreirinhas in Maranhão, into the logic of the appreciation of coastal spaces, which join the network of places urbanized by leisure practices and the flows of city dwellers from regional, national and international urban agglomerations.

Final considerations

The variety of sports and recreations created or adapted to coastal locations are a sign of the continuous reinvention of the beach and the maritime as social products, which feedback into already widespread practices, such as maritime *vilegiatura* and tourism.

The international circuits of sea and beach sports are a worldwide, commercial model of dissemination of symbolic and networked places. Scattered throughout the continents, these beaches have become icons and archetypes of ideal areas for both professionals and amateurs. The natural geomorphological and climatic features are complemented by support, transport and subsistence infrastructures that provide the conditions required to attract increasing numbers of *vacanciers* and sportsmen and women; surfing and kitesurfing are prime examples of this.

The coast of the Brazilian Northeast is part of this network, above all, to serve the interests of thousands of nonprofessional travelers. Where once the white sails of the artisanal fishermen's rafts predominated, there are now the colorful sails of the kitesurfers.

Recently there have been theoretical-conceptual developments resulting from a dialogue with French researchers regarding sports-based leisure and tourism practices (AUDINET, GUIBERT, SEBILEAU (2017); GUIBERT e SLIMANI (2011); SEBILEAU (2017)), which has culminated in analyses of the inhabitants of the host cities, who are enchanted by the new marine and aquatic activities. These investigations also consider recreational activities like beach soccer, beach volleyball, and walking along promenades, which are based on the same principles, and tourists who attend festivals linked to the maritime agenda.

This study validates Duhamel's (2018) thesis regarding the viability of tourist spaces and the existence of leisure-related dynamics, and it is from this perspective that researchers must endeavor to understand contemporary reality.

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