

Distinctive appropriations of the beach: a historical-sociological approach in the context of Brazilian coastal leisure

Apropriações distintas da praia: uma abordagem histórico-sociológica no contexto do lazer litorâneo brasileiro

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Abstract

this text aims to present the historical-social process of development of coastal leisure and, at the same time, to discuss the systems of distinction and the symbolic conflicts established within the scope of Brazilian coastal leisure. As regards its methodology, this is a historical-sociological study which surveys the literature and documents available on the web. The analysis of the empirical material collected was theoretically supported by Pierre Bourdieu and Norbert Elias. After collecting and analyzing the data, we found out that the beach was not always reserved for leisure activities. On the contrary, it took a long time for individuals to appropriate the coast for recreational purposes. However, regardless of the types of appropriation of the space, the beach has routinely been marked by inequalities and symbolic conflicts between people.

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Such conflicts, in turn, remain current and dissolve the thesis of the beach as a democratic space.

Keywords: Leisure, Beach, Pierre Bourdieu, Beach holiday; Sociology of Leisure

Resumo

Este texto tem por objetivo apresentar o processo histórico-social de desenvolvimento da vilegiatura marítima e, de forma paralela, discorrer acerca dos sistemas de distinção, bem como dos conflitos simbólicos instaurados no âmbito do lazer litorâneo brasileiro. Em termos metodológicos, trata-se de uma pesquisa histórico-sociológica de dimensão exploratória da literatura e de documentos socializados na *web*. Em relação às análises do material empírico coletado, mobilizou-se os referenciais teóricos de Pierre Bourdieu e Norbert Elias. Após o levantamento e análise dos dados, constatou-se que a praia nem sempre foi um local reservado a atividades de lazer. Pelo contrário, foi em uma escala de longa duração que os indivíduos se apropriaram do litoral com fins recreativos. Contudo, independente dos tipos de apropriação do espaço, a praia rotineiramente tem sido marcada por desigualdades e contendas simbólicas entre as pessoas. Tais conflitos, por seu turno, permanecem atuais e dissolvem a tese da praia como ambiente democrático.

Introduction

Weekend on the beach. People spread all over the place, coming from different social backgrounds. They circulate in this space, apparently freed from the great responsibilities that make up their intense routine. They seem to enjoy a democratic collective idleness, regardless of the different capitals (either cultural, economic, social, or symbolic) they might own. They relax, do sports, eat and drink, exchange glances, and talk about different subjects. They remain attentive to all the movement around them, observe the idyllic beauty of the place, experience some short or long-lasting leisure time, each one with their own appropriations and specificities.

In fact, they share a multifaceted, plural, and diversified space, which is not free from conflicts and tension, even if in a disguised manner. At least, this is the hypothesis that underlies our analysis in this text. For this reason, we emphasize that the relationship between human beings and the ocean nature has not always been amicable or with the same characteristics that this social activity has in contemporary society.

To sum up, a long process of relationship between the individuals and the beach was necessary to make it a leisure destination¹. In other words, human beings, in fact, developed in the long-term different appropriations of the coastal territory. However, when the beach became a privileged site of visitation in the last few centuries, it also became a legitimate place of social distinction, even if in a more implicit way in the last few decades.

Within such context, we understand that individuals may use the beach according to their possibilities and social conditions, that is, by means of a *habitus*² which determines the way the leisure environment is appropriated. Thus, although the place communicates a sense of equality, it seems possible to observe disparities between diverse social groups. When found in the same space, unequal social groups in a collective leisure context, which is also conflicting and where power relations are sometimes shadowed, create a curious social dynamics, one that must be investigated from the sociological and historical standpoints, as already carried out by Champagne³ and Corbin⁴.

Although the studies mentioned above are quite revealing, such effort has not been intensified in the literature, mainly in the last few decades, when the dynamics of movement in the natural environment were radicalized as a result of a new motor contract⁵ and as the product of a new social framework which Beck⁶ called the second modernity. In other words, facing the side

¹ SCHOSSLER, Joana Carolina. Sol e mar: Veraneios no litoral gaúcho no início do século XX. In: SOARES, Carmem Lúcia. (Org.). *Uma educação pela natureza: a vida ao ar livre, o corpo e a ordem urbana*. Campinas, Autores Associados, 2016, pp. 239-261.

² *Habitus* is an old “Aristotelian-Thomistic” concept (BOURDIEU, 1990) whose function is to promote a rupture with the “Cartesian philosophy” (mainly family and school) and works as a regulating matrix of conducts so that “[...] without doubt one can find in the *habitus* the active principle, irreducible to passive perceptions, of the unification of the practices and of the representations [...]” (BOURDIEU, 1996a, p. 77). BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Coisas ditas*. São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1990. BOURDIEU, Pierre. *A miséria do mundo*. Petrópolis, Vozes, 1997. BOURDIEU, Pierre. *As regras da arte: gênese e estrutura do campo literário*. São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1996a.

³ CHAMPAGNE, Patrick. Les paysans à la plage. In *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, Paris, 1975, Vol. 1, n° 2, pp. 21-24.

⁴ CORBIN, Alain. *O território do vazio: a praia e o imaginário ocidental*. São Paulo, Companhia das letras, 1989.

⁵ SOUZA, Juliano de. Educação Física reflexiva – problemas, hipóteses e programa de pesquisa. In *Movimento*, Porto Alegre, 2019, Vol. 25, pp. 1-15. SOUZA, Juliano de. *Do homo movens ao homo academicus: rumo a uma teoria reflexiva da Educação Física*. São Paulo, LiberArs, 2021. SOUZA, Juliano de. Movência: um elogio ao esporte. In *Movimento*, Porto Alegre, 2023, Vol. 29, pp. 1-17. SOUZA, Juliano de; OLIVEIRA, Vinicius Machado de; GARCIA, Rui Proença. Um novo contrato motor nos domínios do esporte, lazer e Educação Física? Aportes para uma teoria reflexiva do movimento humano. In *Revista Brasileira de Ciências do Esporte*, Brasília, 2022, Vol. 44, pp. 1-9. OLIVEIRA, Vinicius Machado de. Impacts of reflexive modernization in the context of sports, tourism, and leisure activities in nature: a theoretical review. In *Journal of Leisure Research*, 2023, pp. 1-18.

⁶ BECK, Ulrich. *Sociedade de risco: rumo a uma outra modernidade*. São Paulo, Ed. 34, 2011.

effects of the modernity success⁷, in the context of a reflexive modernization, natural spaces such as the beach, became places more often enjoyed by different visitors, regardless of the capital they own or the social position they occupy.

However, considering this image of democratization of the seaside environment built in more recent times, the hypothesis defended here is that the dynamics of social distinction remain as active as those experienced in past centuries among different social groups, even if, to a certain extent, the space shared generates the false sensation of social inclusion. Aiming to test the scope of this work hypothesis, we sought to introduce, by means of a historical-sociological investigation, some aspects of the process of development of the coastal leisure and, at the same time, discuss the distinction systems and the symbolic conflicts observed in the Brazilian coastal leisure environment.

Theoretical-methodological route

This is a historical-sociological study of exploratory-analytical nature. It is also characterized by its diachronic and synchronic perspective starting from a long-term dynamics⁸ to a more contemporary view. The data collection and analysis⁹ were carried out as follows: [1] Survey of sources (scientific articles, books, newspapers, magazines, photographs, pictures, webpages, and blogs); [2] Reading the material and observing its visual content; [3] Data analysis; and [4] Socialized conclusions in the study.

Regarding the criteria employed in the selection of the sources used, it seems relevant to emphasize that the material was obtained per convenience according to the principles of exploratory research, in which researchers are free to select whatever they consider more suitable to the problem and objectives proposed for their investigation¹⁰. In other words, there are documents or sources that are more revealing than others, thus, it is not necessary to carry out a systematic review to extract the most relevant data related to the study purposes.

Therefore, no specific criterion was employed in the selection of content, even if strategic words were used as descriptors in the search throughout the

⁷ BECK, Ulrich. *A metamorfose do mundo: novos conceitos para uma nova realidade*. Rio de Janeiro, Zahar, 2018.

⁸ ELIAS, Norbert. Para a fundamentação de uma teoria dos processos sociais. In: NEIBURG, Federico (Org.). *Escritos & ensaios 1: Estado, processo, opinião pública*. Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar, 2006. pp. 197-231.

⁹ GIL, Antônio Carlos. *Métodos e técnicas de pesquisa social*. São Paulo, Atlas, 2008.

¹⁰ GIL, 2008. OLIVEIRA, Maria Marly de. *Como fazer pesquisa qualitativa*. Petrópolis, Vozes, 2016.

different sources surveyed such as “beach”, “seaside destinations”, “coast”, among others. By using these descriptors, it was possible to locate blogs and webpages that presented content related to the topic as well as reference to other sources. Furthermore, the documents found on Google Scholar in the format of articles also evidenced new sources. Thus, we gradually built up the socialized database used in this research.

As regards the analytical treatment, it seems relevant to highlight that the study was theoretically supported by the relational theories put forward by Pierre Bourdieu and Norbert Elias. Among the reasons why this theoretical background was chosen is the fact that those authors’ *modus operandi* provided a complementary conceptual framework for the understanding of the dynamics of social realities in a logic that involves dialogically individual and society, agency and structure. In such context, we relied on the structural notion of field to identify how the seaside social space structure is constituted bearing in mind the concepts of capital, habitus, distinction, bodily hexis, domination, and symbolic violence to realize how inventive appropriation occurs in the action context analyzed. In agreement with Bourdieu’s contributions, we included some principles of the civilizing process theory by Norbert Elias to understand the historical development of coastal leisure on a long-term scale.

The process of building up the historical-social act of going to the beach as a leisure fact

From the most ancient civilizations, the seaside universe has always been present in the imagination of individuals, and manifested in different ways, either in the stories found in the Bible, to mythological accounts, travel reports, great sea crossings by migrants and other stories linked to that environment¹¹. However, regardless of the appropriation of that space by human beings, the relationships with the beach or the sea were never lived and shared in the same way. This means that over time and with the advancement of civilizing processes, individuals’ relations with that environment changed and gained other contours.

Taking that into account, humans were observed to explore and interact with the seaside territory over the centuries in a gradual process of learning about the space, up to the point when they felt comfortable to take it over due to the control of fears related to the desertic scenery of beaches at the time¹².

¹¹ SCHOSSLER, 2006.

¹² Ibid.

In other words, it took a long time and a process of psychological and social change for the agents to set more joyful bonds with that space. This presented certain emotional cost to past generations who had to overcome their fear of that environment. This means that if today we have a harmonious relationship with that space it is because our ancestors took the initiative to change their perception of the coast. Therefore, on a long-term scale, little by little and in synchrony with the development of the civilizing process¹³, beaches were humanized and linked to pleasure, leisure and tourism destinations¹⁴.

Regarding the knowledge of when beaches became a place of close visitation, this period is not well established in the literature, as a function of the difficulty in setting a concrete period for the instauration of the act of going to the beach with entertainment purposes¹⁵. However, there are records, mainly in Europe, stating that beaches were not always places destined to leisure activities, which were appropriated in very distinct ways in the past¹⁶.

In the Middle Ages, for example, many Europeans avoided closeness to the sea because they believed that those waters were somehow associated with diseases or plagues that could cause devastation in the regions where they resided. Also, in remote centuries, beaches were not interpreted as a peaceful space but rather as a remote desert, a terrifying place distant from the civilization¹⁷.

Therefore, at a first glance, we might say that the ocean in the imagination of those individuals was mainly associated with heinous representations and punishment, a place that provoked feelings of fear associated with the supposed fury of the sea and the human beings' respect to the sea nature¹⁸. These feelings, according to Corbin¹⁹, were built up over

¹³ ELIAS, Norbert. *O processo civilizador: uma história dos costumes*. Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar, 2011.

¹⁴ PEREIRA, Alexandre Queiroz. A vilegiatura marítima moderna: Múltiplas escalas espaço temporais. In: _____ (Org.). *A urbanização vai à praia: Vilegiatura marítima e metrópole no Nordeste do Brasil*. Fortaleza, Edições UFC, 2014. pp. 21-60.

¹⁵ MACHADO, Helena Cristina F. A construção social da praia. In *Cadernos do Noroeste, Série Sociologia*, 2000, Vol. 13, nº 1, pp. 201-218.

¹⁶ CORBIN, 1989. VIGARELLO, Georges. *Limpo e o sujo: uma história da higiene corporal*. São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 1996. DÉSSERT, Gabriel. Os caminhos para a cura. In: GOFF, Jaques Le. *As doenças têm história*. Portugal, Terramar editora, 1991, pp.273-359. SCHOSSLER, Joana Carolina. "As nossas praias": Os primórdios da vilegiatura marítima no Rio Grande do Sul (1900- 1950). 2010. 222f. Dissertation (History Master's Program) – Faculdade de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul – PUC, Porto Alegre, 2010.

¹⁷ LENCEK, Lena; BOSKER, Gideon. *The beach: the history of paradise on earth*. Londres, Pinguim books, 1999.

¹⁸ SCHOSSLER, 2016.

¹⁹ CORBIN, 1989.

time, largely due to the Bible story of the deluge provoked by God (Figure 1), whose fateful episode, as believed by some, shows that the sea could promote the destruction of the human civilization, which resulted in such a fear of the ocean. In such context, the threat of a big flood, even if God promised that the world would not end by water, but rather by fire, resulted in great cautious by the individuals since according to God's words, the sea would have some manifestation at the end of times in the series of disasters occurring in the period preceding the final judgement²⁰.

Figure 1: The deluge, Francis Danby, 1840.²¹



Added to the recognition of the divine cholera over the centuries there are other elements that associate the sea territory with negative outcomes and bad happenings, mainly in the period marked by the Middle Ages toward its end. If Christians, on the one hand, avoided the ocean, on the other hand, there were lots of individuals willing to use that environment for their misdemeanors. For example, the Norman and Saracen invasions against Christians, pirate attacks, and the assault of shipwreck looters, smugglers, and beach criminals, in addition to sea wars that revealed how the seaside territory could be dangerous to the human life. Another factor was the black plague that started to disseminate throughout the ships²². All these facts explain

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Work by the Irish painter Francis Danby portraying the Biblical Deluge. Retrieved from: <<https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/asset/UQEvcW0Jc6ARBw>> Access on: 01 Aug 2024.

²² CORBIN, 1989.

why the coast was for a long time so strongly refuted by individuals in their entertainment schedule or as a leisure destination.

However, between the 18th and the mid-19th century, mainly in Europe, this situation started to change, and beaches became an environment visited with purposes related to body education as medical prescription. In general, initially, the link of different groups to the coast started due to medical theories raised at the time, under the allegation that a sea bath could cure body and mental pains and diseases in a society that was affected by physical and spiritual decadence²³.

It was in this context that people started to have a more harmonious interaction with beaches, motivated by the discourse stating the healing power of those waters, associated to sea baths. At that time, with the eminent development of industrial society and the appearance of the first side effects of modernity, the urban context was not the best place to purify one's body. For this reason, natural environments started to be searched, and, in a great dose, also associated with the strong medical discourse defending the benefits of sea baths that were advertised in medicine manuals or scientific studies of that time, mainly in British societies, where the adhesion to cold baths in the sea was accepted by the wealthier classes²⁴.

In Brazil, it seems relevant to emphasize that the process of occupying beaches was quite similar to that occurred in Europe, although therapeutic sea baths were only consolidated in the second half of the 19th century, also motivated by studies such as the publication of the “*Manual do Banhista*” (The Bather's Manual) or “*Estudo dos Banhos de Mar*” (A Study of Sea Baths) by Manuel Vieira da Fonseca socialized in 1876²⁵. Those practices originated in Europe reached Brazil mainly via the English culture also synchronized with the sports arrival²⁶. However, it is important to point out that in Rio Grande do Sul, for example, German immigrants had great influence in the dissemination of sea baths in the region since they were aware of the therapeutic discourse linked to the sea waters²⁷.

Nevertheless, before the dissemination of the “therapeutic beach” in Brazil, the Brazilians also had to modify their relationship with the seaside

²³ WALTON, John K. *The English seaside resort: a social history 1750–1914*. New York, St Martin's Press, 1983.

²⁴ SCHOSSLER, 2010.

²⁵ PEREIRA, 2014.

²⁶ SCHOSSLER, 2010.

²⁷ PEREIRA, 2014. SCHOSSLER, 2016.

territory since in the early 19th century, mainly on the beaches of Rio de Janeiro, the coast was still seen as an unhealthy space²⁸. This occurred because due to the lack of basic sanitation networks, the ocean was one alternative for the disposal of sewage or other waste that the population produced and discharged. This evidence is confirmed by the work that slaves²⁹ developed at the time since they were to a large extent, the ones responsible for transporting such material to those waters (FIGURES 2 and 3).

Figura 2: Tiger slaves, Jean Baptiste Debret, 1820-1930.³⁰



Figura 3: Tiger slaves, lithography by Henrique Fleiuss, 1861.³¹



Therefore, until the therapeutic beach was conceived, the agents had to rethink the uses ascribed to that territory. In other words, if the idea was to get

²⁸ HUGUENIN, Fernanda Pacheco. *O mito da praia democrática: um ensaio sobre Ipanema, sua bossa e seus banhistas*. Campos do Goytacases, Essentia Editora, 2019.

²⁹ Those workers were known derogatorily as “tiger slaves” since when they carried human feces in the containers, the content tended to leak on their skin, forming some strips, which gave them the nickname.

³⁰ Ver: PEREIRA, Vinícius. Quem eram os escravos ‘tigres’, marcantes na história do saneamento básico no Brasil, 2019. Retrieved from: <<https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-50526902>> Accessed on: 01 Aug 2024.

³¹ Semana Ilustrada. *Tigreiros*. Rio de Janeiro, n. 5, p. 36, 1861.

closer to the sea environment with medical purposes, they could not continue with such an unhealthy practice as disposing of contaminated material in those waters. For this reason, underlying this idea, over time and with the advancement of the civilizing process³², the agents built up the understanding that the natural environment provided better quality of life when contrasted with the urban space. In fact, when higher social classes became aware of that, going to the beach seeking alleged medicinal prerogatives became an aspect of distinction among the social classes.

Therefore, this conception of a “therapeutic beach” inherited from a habitus of social class allied to medicine, was based on the discourse of body excellence, in which the seaside visit was interpreted as a way of obtaining the ideal body. That view, in the bourgeois society imagination, could not be made concrete in the caotic urban and industrial sceneries of those times since the city was seen as a zone that favored the dissemination of pathologies, due to the pestilent habits of the time³³. For this reason, regarding beaches, the first factor of social classification appears in a condition that those that cannot go out the city are theoretically considered outsiders³⁴.

The pursuit of an ideal body introduced by the dominant classes of the 19th century – those who owned bigger economic capital – also introduced strategies of symbolic conflict between the different social groups regarding the idea of a privileged body. Such practice reveals what is called class habitus since the body results from the individuals’ existence conditions, whose more natural characteristics such as body shape and posture reveal deeper characteristics of the habitus³⁵. In such context, the bourgeois class appropriated the beaches with the prerogative of perfect bodies, thus creating the first symbolic conflicts in that field. Moreover, according to Mukerji³⁶, the bond that elites established with beaches went beyond the ideal body, demonstrating a clear symbolic strategy of ostentation of a higher position (Figure 4).

³² ELIAS, 2011.

³³ MACHADO, 2000.

³⁴ ELIAS, Norbert; SCOTSON, John L. *Os Estabelecidos e os Outsiders: sociologia das relações de poder a partir de uma pequena comunidade*. Rio de Janeiro, Jorge Zahar, 2000.

³⁵ BOURDIEU, Pierre. Como é possível ser esportivo? In: BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Questões de sociologia*. Rio de Janeiro, Marco Zero, 1983, pp.136-153. BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Os usos sociais da ciência: por uma sociologia clínica do campo científico*. São Paulo, UNESP, 2004. BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Esboço de auto-análise*. São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2005.

³⁶ MUKERJI, Chandra. Reading and writing with nature: social claims and the french formal garden. In *Theory and Society*, 1990, Vol. 19, n°. 6, pp. 651-679.

Figure 4: The bathing hour at Trouville, Eugène Boudin, 19th century.³⁷



The beach used for leisure was revealed more prominently only in the 20th century, when the conception of medicinal beach was gradually replaced by that of the “ludic beach”. One of the specificities marking the conversion of the therapeutic beach into a leisure beach refers to the time of use since the former occurred in colder times, while the latter preferred hotter times to enjoy heat peaks³⁸. Therefore, the beach as a leisure environment corresponds to the appreciation of hot elements that characterize relaxation, decreased tension, and increased libido, while the therapeutic beach was associated with cold elements, which represent moderation and austerity³⁹. From that point onwards, the first leisure relations with the seaside nature were naturalized.

To sum up, with society approximation to the beaches with leisure purposes, the temporary stay in the seaside nature appears as a resort, where people recreate the imaginary beach as a “natural sanctuary” of leisure and

³⁷ Work by the French painter Eugène Boudin depicting bath time in Trouville, France around the second half of the 19th century. When observing the painting, we can see a group of people on the shore and others in bathsuits who reveal very little of the body at that time. This and other works by Eugène Boudin are available at: <<http://www.eugeneboudin.org/The-Bathing-Hour-At-Trouville.html>> Access on: 01 Aug 2024.

³⁸ MACHADO, 2000.

³⁹ Ibid.

social distinction between classes, mainly the elites⁴⁰. However, it seems relevant to highlight that even before the recreational beach was intensified in the 20th century, in the 19th century a structure to receive bathers started to be built, namely, the first seaside resorts and the construction of the first bungalows⁴¹ or the bath machines (Figures 5 and 6)⁴² in Great Britain, which provided for the new social demands generated by individuals⁴³.

Figure 5: Mermaids at Brighton, Willian Health, 1829.



Figure 6: Ostend Beach in Belgium in 1900.



Therefore, according to Pereira⁴⁴, new configurations of the beach beyond medicinal conceptions started to be verified in the 18th century. Those included nature observation, entrance of new social classes, swimming popularization, and more private access for families and children, among other aspects. However, only later, in the late 19th century and early 20th century, did the beach sand become a space of entertainment and exposure to the sun, unlike previous periods when the coast was mostly visited in colder months. Thus, from the first decades of the 20th century onwards, seaside

⁴⁰ PEREIRA, 2014.

⁴¹ Dressing cabins

⁴² Bathing Machines were small wooden cabins on wheels that were used by women in the 18th and 19th centuries for sea baths. In fact, those cabins aimed to provide privacy for women during their stay on the beach. They could be pulled by horses. Figure 5 is a picture painted by the British painter Willian Health and shows how women used the bath cabins in 1829 on the shore of Brighton in England. Likewise, Figure 6 shows the intense use of bath cabins in Belgium around 1900. Both images are available at: <<http://www.magnusmundi.com/as-maquinas-de-banho-do-seculo-19/>> Access on: 01 Aug 2024.

⁴³ PEREIRA, 2014.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

resorts started to disseminate all over the world motivating people's taste for the sun and the ocean⁴⁵.

The advent of ludic beaches changed the relationship with sand, sea, and sun, which was mainly displayed in the outfits and body exposure (Figure 7)⁴⁶. The incorporation of these new manifestations ascribed more meaning to the bodily hexis for valuing athletic and tanned bodies⁴⁷. Furthermore, decades later, nudism and naturalism practices linked to the seaside scenery started to emerge in society⁴⁸.

Figure 7: The enchanting *Posto 6*, Copacabana Beach, Rio de Janeiro, 1930.⁴⁹



With increased adhesion to coastal leisure, a gradual process of urban development started around the resorts, where the urban patterns started to hybridize with the beach, in both the design of buildings and houses, and in the construction of streets and public spaces⁵⁰. Next, a series of urban

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ FREITAS, Joana Gaspar de. O litoral português, percepções e transformações na época contemporânea: de espaço natural a território humanizado. In *Revista da Gestão Costeira Integrada*. 2007, Vol. 7, nº. 2, pp. 105- 115.

⁴⁷ CORREA, Sílvio Marcus Correa. Germanidade e banhos medicinais nos primórdios dos balneários no Rio Grande do Sul. In *História, ciência, saúde-Manguinhos*, 2010, Vol. 17, nº. 1, pp. 165-184.

⁴⁸ ANDRIEU, Bernard; NOBREGA, Terezinha Petrucia da. O naturismo como ecologia do corpo: Um exemplo vivido na praia de Tambaba, Paraíba, Brasil. In *Licere*, 2016, Vol. 19, nº. 4, pp. 34-59.

⁴⁹ CARETA. *Os encantos do posto 6*. Rio de Janeiro, n. 1126, p. 16, 1930.

⁵⁰ PEREIRA, 2014.

infrastructure reached the seaside such as road and transport improvement, opening of restaurants, cafés, bed and breakfast, hotel, and other services that turned beaches into advanced urban civilization centers on the sand⁵¹.

In Brazil, the same movement was observed, and from the second half of the 20th century onwards, when the visits with entertainment and leisure purposes started to be intensified on Brazilian beaches, a structure of access and landscaping was built on the coast, which included transportation by trams and the entrance of urbanism and landscaping in resorts to better serve their guests, mainly the elite⁵². In fact, soon time spent on the coast became common in the life of Brazilians, mainly in more visited beaches such as those in Rio de Janeiro, where the tourism phenomenon became the main attraction of the city (Figure 8). Soon, with the conversion of the therapeutic beach into a ludic site in the last century, beaches became venues for display of social relationships⁵³.

Figure 8: Copacabana Beach, Rio de Janeiro, 1967.⁵⁴



⁵¹ SCHOSSLER, 2010. SCHOSSLER, 2016.

⁵² PEREIRA, 2014.

⁵³ URBAIN, Jean-Didier. *Sur la plage*. Paris, Éditions Payot, 1996.

⁵⁴ A história de Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil. Retrieved from: <<http://copacabana.com/historia-de-copacabana-1/>> Access on: 01 Aug 2024.

To sum up, with the inauguration of the recreational beach, people spent more time on the beach and developed activities that went beyond simple seaside nature contemplation and sea baths, beaches became space of interaction, social relations, body exposure and very particular codes of appreciation. With the sun exposure, the agents started to get rid of the everyday outfits and adopted clothes associated with that environment, that is, lighter garments which exposed parts of the body. As a result, bodies gained great visibility, provoking exchange of glances and a body surveillance system. In this new beach configuration, directed to leisure, nature is converted into a show not only to be watched, but also to be explored under diverse perspectives.

In fact, beaches gained new meanings and were ascribed different appropriations by the different groups that visited them, which, when analyzed, allow the observation of how the logic structure of the leisure field changed, mainly in relation to the external resources associated with the beach that created new meanings. For this reason, we sought to verify how Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theory can be applied to understand such social manifestation on the beach.

The act of going to the beach as distinctive and conflicting leisure

Studies on seaside leisure in the Sociology area are still scarce and appear as an incipient practice in the academic field⁵⁵. In general, since the scope is associated with leisure, the scientific community might have directed its efforts to other issues that they see as are more attractive or relevant such as aspects referring to the ecological, economic, architectural, urban, and tourist fields, among others. Therefore, there is a vast field of investigation regarding coastal leisure that deserves and must be the target of the scientific enquiry due to the productive space of social research that the seaside environment presents, mainly following reflective modernization, which contributed to radicalize the dynamics of movement in the natural environment⁵⁶

⁵⁵ BIDEF, Jennifer; DEVIENNE, Elsa. Plages, territoires contestés. In *Actes de la Recherche em Sciences Sociales*, nº. 218, 2017. SARTORE, Marina de Souza. Bares pé-na-areia e a farofada na praia: uma análise durkheimiana das distinções público/ gratuito-privado/pago no litoral de Aracaju-SE. In *Repocs*, 2019, Vol. 16, nº. 32, pp. 219-238.

⁵⁶ SOUZA, 2019. Id., 2021. SOUZA; OLIVEIRA; GARCIA, 2022. OLIVEIRA, et al., 2023.

Although empirical-theoretical studies on the social uses of beaches are still scarce, this does not mean that the coast has not been a topic of discussions in human and social sciences in Brazil. Conversely, even if in fewer numbers, the specialist literature presents substantial and relevant studies developed in the country such as the works put forward by Huguenin⁵⁷, Pereira⁵⁸, Ribeiro⁵⁹, Schossler⁶⁰, Ribeiro⁶¹, and Bartelt⁶², among others. In general, those studies are relevant because they gathered elements for reflection upon the social agents' approach to beaches. Furthermore, those reports presented solid evidence and arguments questioning the alleged democracy experienced on beaches, mainly in countries where coastal leisure is one of the most productive sources of free-time entertainment and distraction. For this reason and based on such understanding, we seek to advance in this section deepening the discussion about the myth of a democratic beach in the leisure field.

First, although many countries still consider beaches to a certain extent federal properties and democratic public spaces, this does not necessarily expresses or guarantee that the seaside space is totally open to everyone. Far from that, in many places around the globe, beaches are eminently private and allow restricted access to certain groups that occupy a dominant position in the social tissue. In fact, those groups build their luxurious mansions, as well as hotels, inns, resorts, and private clubs on the sand, which prevents broader public access to the beach⁶³.

Therefore, either by legal or illegal means, those groups located in the social hierarchy dominant pole put all their effort to guarantee certain exclusiveness on the coast. Ribeiro⁶⁴, for example, investigated 55 beaches located in the municipality of Angra dos Reis in the state of Rio de Janeiro-Brazil and found out that great part of the beaches showed characteristics

⁵⁷ HUGUENIN, Fernanda Pacheco. *As praias de Ipanema: liminaridade e proximidade à beira-mar*. 2011. 267 f. Thesis (Social Anthropology Doctorate Program) – Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade de Brasília, Brasília, 2011. Id., 2019.

⁵⁸ PEREIRA, 2014.

⁵⁹ RIBEIRO, Carlos Henrique de Vasconcelos et al. *Sociologia pública e as praias cariocas: a praia é de todos?* In *Movimento*, Porto Alegre, 2014, Vol. 20, nº. esp., pp. 139-150, 2014.

⁶⁰ SCHOSSLER, 2016.

⁶¹ RIBEIRO, Irene Charada. *Contradições entre o público, o privado e o comum: lutas pelo direito à praia contra processos de privatização em Angra dos Reis, RJ*. 2017. 178f. Dissertation (Geography Master's Program) – Instituto de Geociências, Universidade Federal Fluminense, Niterói, 2017.

⁶² BARTELT, Dawid Danilo. *Copacabana: biographie eines sehnsuchtsortes*. Berlin, Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 2020.

⁶³ RIBEIRO, 2017.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

of irregular appropriation of the space such as buildings invading the sand (Figure 9), construction of helipads on the shore (Figure 10), installation of decks, walls or iron bars, all of this signaling exclusiveness and preventing, to a certain extent, the movement of outsiders close to those households.

In such context, even if Brazilian laws⁶⁵ exist to protect constitutionally the individuals' right to access beaches, in a context in which social inequalities are noticeable, those laws can be easily superseded⁶⁶ whenever those groups that own more capital express their desire to subvert the system logics⁶⁷. Therefore, more influential and powerful agents can find breaches in the law and also have the strength to loosen the norms that prevent beach privatization. For this reason, keeping a close relationship with political authorities might result in privileges such as the flexibility of environmental laws that could prevent the construction of households in environmental preservation areas on the coast.

Figure 9: Mansion with helipad advances onto the sand in *praia grande* beach, photo by Júlio Cezar Guimaraes, 2017.⁶⁸



⁶⁵ The Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 defends that the navy lands found in Brazil belong to the country, and are, therefore, for universal enjoyment and common use.

⁶⁶ HUGUENIN, 2019.

⁶⁷ BOURDIEU, 1996a.

⁶⁸ DAFLON, Rogério. Em Angra, uma aula sobre praias privatizadas. Retrieved from: <https://apublica.org/colecaoarticular/2017/11/em-angra-uma-aula-sobre-as-praias-privatizadas/#_> Access on: 01 Aug 2024.

Figure 10: Helipad on the Morcego beach: ostentation invades the ocean, photo by Júlio Cezar Guimaraes, 2017.⁶⁹



However, we must bear in mind that it is not always necessary to break the law to reach private interests related to coastal leisure. Considering this topic, we can cite the schemes created by the elites to hamper the use of beaches by individuals of lower social classes. One example is the lack of interest of the state in creating better access to certain beaches, thus favoring those that own private and proper means of transportation to reach certain islands in more remote areas. Such spaces become the preferred resorts among the rich and famous, not only as a way to distinguish them, but also do place them away from those residing in suburbs, as observed by Huguenin⁷⁰ and Ribeiro⁷¹.

According to Bourdieu⁷², social agents are involved in sets of choices or alternatives that are already presented in a distinctive unequal way in the social tissue. This means that depending on the capital owned by the individuals

⁶⁹ DAFLON, Rogério. Em Angra, uma aula sobre praias privatizadas. Retrieved from: <https://apublica.org/colecaoarticular/2017/11/em-angra-uma-aula-sobre-as-praias-privatizadas/#_> Access on: 01 Aug 2024.

⁷⁰ HUGUENIN, 2011.

⁷¹ RIBEIRO, 2017.

⁷² BOURDIEU, Pierre. *A distinção: crítica social do julgamento*. São Paulo, Edusp, 2007.

they are situated in certain fields, and this might reveal how much they can stand out in that space. Obviously, this is not something unintentional, on the contrary, agents have a “sense of distinction” as defined by Bourdieu⁷³. In general, individuals are aware of what distinguishes them, mainly the groups established at the dominant axes of the social relationships. In other words, elites can accumulate capital, thus they obtain greater “distinction gains” or use “distinction strategies” better as explained by Bourdieu⁷⁴. This explains, to a certain extent, the never-ending search for selectivity and exclusiveness on the beach by the higher social groups in society.

Therefore, regarding their access, beaches are not as democratic as they seem to be since some places are reserved for more specific groups. Moreover, it seems relevant to emphasize that the access of lower classes to the coast does not necessarily indicates a democratic context since the existing inequalities would remain as apparent as before, and distinction mechanisms would become more intense between the groups⁷⁵. Also, according to Bourdieu⁷⁶, when lower social classes manage to somehow enjoy consumption goods and the dominant agents’ practices, those groups that are higher in the hierarchy tend to stigmatize the uses other groups make of the goods and practices ascribed to the nobler classes.

One example can be observed in Rio de Janeiro, when the Rebouças Tunnel was opened in the late 1960s linking the extreme north and south zones of the city and allowing residents of the periphery easier access to the south of Rio de Janeiro, mainly with the arrival of the bus lines that favored lower classes to access the beach in Rio de Janeiro⁷⁷. Such movement from the suburbs to the coast was seen as rather weird and prejudice spread from the dominant circles, who had been enjoying exclusiveness on the beach and saw the shore as an extension, or, in other words, the yard of their households.

In general, the south zone residents were neither happy nor friendly with the arrival of new users on the beach. Conversely, they soon showed their dissatisfaction and disgust toward the newcomers from poor communities in Rio de Janeiro. All sorts of derogative adjectives were used to describe them and signal that those individuals did not belong to the space once only

⁷³ BOURDIEU, 2007.

⁷⁴ BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Meditações pascalianas*. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2001.

⁷⁵ BOURDIEU, 2007.

⁷⁶ BOURDIEU, 2005.

⁷⁷ HUGUENIN, 2019.

occupied by the high class of the south zone⁷⁸. A documentary broadcast by the Brazilian press in the late 1980s entitled “The poor go to the beach”⁷⁹ revealed peculiarities of this conflicting leisure among groups, reinforcing the extreme discomfort the elites felt for having to share that space with people coming from the suburbs of the city.

During the interview, when the beach goers from the south zone were asked about the presence of individuals coming from the slums, they soon sought to emphasize that the beach should not be open to the residents of the suburbs, because they were unaware of the etiquette or habitus of that social location. That posture by the elites sounded as a “distinction strategy” as well as the imposition of that microcosm dominant class. About that, Bourdieu⁸⁰ explained that domination is only connected to economic settings, but also to other segments of social life, where the agents located in the dominant group employed cognitive structures to reinforce and legitimate their symbolic domination within the different fields where they circulated, thus trying to regulate their desired classification systems. This is, evidently, a type of symbolic violence because even if they had conquered the right to circulate on the beaches the residents of the suburbs were automatically classified as outsiders on the sand, just for not owning the same capitals as those of the south zone residents.

It seems relevant to mention that over time the social structure of the seaside in Rio de Janeiro started to mirror, to a great extent, the division experienced in the context of that city. This means that even if people could circulate on the different beaches, they were configured according to the style of their belonging ethos, really endorsing the symbolic domination, in which people started to recognize their place and, somehow, accept such division plan. This is one of the central characteristics of domination and symbolic violence, where such notions start to operate without the agents becoming aware of them, even if they are in a passive position or subjected in the social relationship⁸¹.

One irrefutable proof of such subordination is observed in the discourse naturalized around the myth of the democratic beach, where the symbolically dominated classes also defend and reinforce the myth idea. Although it is

⁷⁸ HUGUENIN, 2019.

⁷⁹ Documentary released in 1989 on the Rede Manchete of television showing the arrival of residents of the suburbs on the beaches of the south zone of Rio de Janeiro.

⁸⁰ BOURDIEU, 2005. Id., 2007.

⁸¹ BOURDIEU Pierre. *O poder simbólico*. Rio de Janeiro, Bertrand Brasil, 2009.

quite contradictory, it seems relevant to mention that those groups are not socially equipped to understand this perspective and, therefore, accept such belief as natural. However, one must also consider that even the elements associated with the beach are confusing to those observing them, since when looking at almost naked individuals, close to each other, sharing the same space, one might have the sensation of a democratic atmosphere. Even the most curious observers such as the paradigmatic case of the anthropologist Roberto da Matta, who defended the hypothesis that on the beaches, a type of dissolution of inequalities occurred since the differences were automatically overcome in that space⁸².

However, in deeper analyses as proposed by Hugenin⁸³, Andrade⁸⁴, and Ribeiro⁸⁵ among others who investigated the myth of the democratic beach, we notice that the coastal leisure keeps more inequalities than an egalitarian atmosphere among the agents who share that space. In fact, the very idea of people interacting harmoniously in the same context tends to be dissolved when social actors are found distributed into different tribes on the coast rather than mingling, even if this might occur on occasion. In other words, the groups seek to share the fields that confirm their social capital and habitus⁸⁶.

Taking that into account, we can use the organization of the Ipanema region in Rio de Janeiro as a reference since when moving through the sand strips that limit the different beaches, one can see the diverse groups distributed according to their ethos. The Arpoador beach, for example, is one of the main destinations of poor classes, which is derogatively known as the “farofa beach”, because the users coming from the suburbs usually bring food from home, and “farofa is a kind of cheap food eaten by travelers in the past”. Between *Posto 8* *Posto 9*, it mainly shelters the LGBTQIAPN+ community (Figure 11); while in part of *Posto 9*, there are also agents who use cannabis, where the famous “weed parade” sometimes occurs (Figure 12); close to it,

⁸² DA MATTA, Roberto. Na praia, a reforma da sociedade. *O Globo*, 25 jan. 2006. Retrieved from: <<https://www2.senado.leg.br/bdsf/bitstream/handle/id/396433/noticia.htm?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>> Access on: 02 Aug 2024.

⁸³ HUGUENIN, 2011.

⁸⁴ ANDRADE, Luís Guilherme Albuquerque de. *O espaço público da praia: reflexões sobre práticas cotidianas e democracia no Porto da Barra em Salvador*. 2015. 139 f. Dissertation (Architecture and Urbanism Master's Program) – Faculdade de Arquitetura, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Salvador, 2015.

⁸⁵ RIBEIRO, 2017.

⁸⁶ BOURDIEU, 1990. BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Razões práticas: sobre a teoria da ação*. Campinas/SP, Papirus, 1996b. BOURDIEU, 1996a.

in Posto 10, the last beach in the Ipanema neighborhood, is the space mostly frequented by the elite of Rio de Janeiro⁸⁷.

Figure 11: Close to Rua Farma de Amoedo, the beach remains crowded even on weekdays, photo by Daniel Silveira, 2016.⁸⁸



In general, the configuration shown in documentaries, news reports and studies demonstrates that social agents tend to organize in tribes on the seaside, this condition ends up deconstructing, to a certain extent, the belief that these groups enjoy leisure as one and the same community. In fact, such division mimics the stratification of society, where the beach as a microcosm reproduces tacitly the same segmentations and social struggles of larger fields⁸⁹. Moreover, it seems relevant to note that this division of groups on the beach is not only associated with the economic dimension, but also to the system of dispositions or conduct codes associated with that field or

⁸⁷ HUGUENIN, 2019.

⁸⁸ The flags flying above the sand, between the Posto 8 and Posto 9 beaches, signal the presence of the LGBTQIAPN+ community in that space. See: Rodrigues, Matheus. G1 lista de dicas para público LGBTQIA+ aproveitar o Rio de Janeiro. Retrieved from: <<http://g1.globo.com/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/2016/10/g1-lista-dicas-para-publico-lgbt-aproveitar-o-rio-de-janeiro.html>> Access on: 01 Aug 2024.

⁸⁹ BOURDIEU, 2001. BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Homo Academicus*. Florianópolis, UFSC, 2013.

tribe⁹⁰. In other words, to be part of a certain social ethos, one must share the same principles, that is, the habitus that shapes the group identity⁹¹.

Photo 12: The weed parade toward *Posto 9* of Ipanema beach, in Rio de Janeiro, photo by Cezar Loureiro, 2012.⁹²



We understand that residents of the Rio de Janeiro suburbs go to Arpoador beach rather than to *Posto 10* exactly because they feel more comfortable and belonging to that space. Therefore, if they went to beaches visited by other social classes, they might feel as outsiders and would definitely be seen as outsiders⁹³ since their bodily hexis and their position display a style and behavior that do not match that environment habitus.⁹⁴ Thus, differences would be too apparent to be ignored as verified by Champagne⁹⁵ when studying the arrival of peasants to the French beaches in the 1970s.

⁹⁰ Id., 2001. Id., 2013.

⁹¹ Id., 1990. Id., 1996b. Id., 1997. Id., 2001. Id., 2013.

⁹² Weed parade held in 2012 in the South zone of Rio de Janeiro, after the Federal Superior Court (STF) authorized this kind of demonstration. See: VEJA. *Marcha da Maconha termina em confusão no Rio*. Retrieved from: <<https://veja.abril.com.br/brasil/marcha-da-maconha-termina-em-confusao-no-rio/>> Access on: 15 December 2020.

⁹³ ELIAS; SCOTSON, 2000.

⁹⁴ BOURDIEU, 1990. Id., 2001. Id., 2007.

⁹⁵ CHAMPAGNE, 1975.

In that study, Champagne carried out an ethnographic immersion on the French seaside and verified that when the peasants arrived on the beaches, they clearly expressed in their bodily hexis a different position from that of the classes that owned greater economic and cultural capital and that set the conduct codes related to that social microcosm. Therefore, the way the peasants accommodated themselves, their outfits, the way they moved and behaved on the beach, indicated characteristics that allowed others to easily spot them in that scenery. Large bodies, heavy steps, and irregular tan were the elements that denounced clearly their belonging to the group of farm workers⁹⁶. For this reason, even if they might acquire some of the appropriation techniques of the higher classes enjoying the seaside, their bodies still evidenced the features of a rural life since from all agents' manifestations, those related to the body are the most difficult to change⁹⁷. "What is learnt through one's body is not something that, as a specific knowledge, can be held in front of oneself, but it is something "one is"⁹⁸.

Although things have changed quite a lot since the 1970s, systems of distinctions and inequalities were not reduced or softened with the arrival of post-industrial societies. Far from that, as verified up to this point, classifications regarding the bathers' classes and habitus are many and varied. As a result, not even the nudity of the bodies on the sand can erase the differences between those social agents. In other words, the tribes scattered on the several beaches which form the seaside, mainly in the Brazilian coast, show distinct colors, postures, and tastes, according to their class habitus⁹⁹.

Within such a multifaceted scenery, color, for example, is one of the marking features in their identification. In Rio de Janeiro, the beaches that are closer to the communities tend to be the destination of black people, while *Posto 10* is usually related to white visitors¹⁰⁰. Therefore, when any of the classes decides to change spaces, the skin color evidences that the agent is not natural in that field, thus defying the hierarchy of color on the beach¹⁰¹. Besides the color expressed by the skin, another aspect that might denote

⁹⁶ CHAMPAGNE, 1975.

⁹⁷ BOURDIEU, Pierre. Notas provisórias sobre a percepção social do corpo. In *Pro-Posições*, 2014, Vol. 25, nº. 1, pp. 247-256.

⁹⁸ BOURDIEU, Pierre. *Le sens pratique*. Paris, Minut, 1980. p. 123.

⁹⁹ BOURDIEU, 1996b.

¹⁰⁰ HUGUENIN, 2019.

¹⁰¹ FARIAS, Patrícia Silveira de. *Pegando uma cor na praia: relações raciais e classificação de cor na cidade do Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Secretaria Municipal das Culturas, Depto Geral de Documentação e Informação Cultural, Divisão de Editoração, Coleção Biblioteca Carioca, 2003.

the ethos of belonging is the body. For example, the attention given to body aesthetics, in which being slim and free from supposed imperfections might be a distinction factor characteristic of a specific place.

In such context, beaches become a stage where bodies are displayed as verified by Chaves¹⁰² when studying the behavior of individuals with athletic bodies on the beaches of Salvador in Bahia/Brazil. According to that researcher, beaches become a stage of competition where not only do the users compare their bodies, but they also monopolize spaces destined to sports, thus intimidating social agents who do not display similar aesthetics. Likewise, on the beaches of Rio de Janeiro, such as *Posto 10* or *Pepê* beach, which are famous for being known as the space of fit bodies¹⁰³. Such places, certainly, are not the destination of social agents who have body issues since if one does not match the local body standard, intrinsic and extrinsic discomfort might be generated.

Obviously, amidst this conflict between bathers to keep a specific bodily hexis according to the beauty standards set in the social tissue, agents who own more economic capital have better conditions to afford aesthetics and dietary procedures to achieve the idealized body. As a result, on beaches where the body capital is valued, possible irregularities such as excess body mass and flaccidity are characteristics that break the rules of that environment. For this reason, on beaches where a fit body is not necessarily a rule, agents who do not possess a privileged bodily hexis tend to feel more comfortable¹⁰⁴.

However, this does not mean that agents with less capital, mainly from the suburbs, are resigned to the body capital they own or that they are passive in relation to body care. Conversely, social actors from lower social classes are not indifferent to the possibilities of body intervention. The only difference between the classes is the capital distribution, in which individuals who have less resources need to find alternatives to continue writing their biographies. Evidence of such reflection is the way women from the slums take care of their bodies, for example, when the young women sunbathe on the top of their houses in Rio de Janeiro¹⁰⁵. Even if the “woman sunbathing on the roof” does not have the same conditions as wealthy women, she still fights to get

¹⁰² CHAVES, José Carlos Oliveira. *Corpo “sarado”, “corpo saudável”? construção da masculinidade de homens adeptos da prática da musculação na cidade de Salvador*. 2010. 185f. Dissertation (Community Health Master's Program) – Universidade Federal da Bahia, Salvador, 2010.

¹⁰³ HUGUENIN, 2019.

¹⁰⁴ BOURDIEU, 2007.

¹⁰⁵ HUGUENIN, 2011.

tanned and makes a point of highlighting her natural features that were not artificially sculpted¹⁰⁶.

According to this understanding, coercion over the body in lower social classes is not absent, even if material and cultural conditions influence the way such regulations are incorporated¹⁰⁷. According to the French sociologist, symbolic domination of the body acts as a magical force, that is, although there is no physical violence forcing one to keep fit, symbolic forces linked to the individuals' predispositions might lead the agents to invest in their bodies¹⁰⁸. Obviously, in times of reflective modernization¹⁰⁹, such relation between individuals and their bodies is not a social imposition on the individual, but rather a reflective awakening that prompts social actors to write their body autobiography¹¹⁰ and match the field and groups they are close to.

However, the body is not the only distinction factor in coastal leisure. There are, evidently, dispositions and consumer goods that clearly differentiate the groups on the beach. Considering these items, it is clear that economic capital levels interfere in the way the agents enjoy leisure on the beach. When considering food, for example, people coming from the suburbs usually bring food from home since their households are usually far from the beach. As a consequence, those groups tend to stay longer on the beach since they need to compensate for the time they spend from their homes to the seashore. Those agents coming from the suburbs and slums are usually called “*farofeiros*” on Brazilian beaches (Figure 13).

¹⁰⁶ Id., 2019.

¹⁰⁷ BOURDIEU, 2007.

¹⁰⁸ BOURDIEU, 2001.

¹⁰⁹ BECK, Ulrich; GIDDENS, Anthony; LASH, Scott. *Modernização reflexiva: política, tradição e estética na ordem social moderna*. São Paulo, Editora da Unesp, 2012.

¹¹⁰ SOUZA, 2021.

Figure 13: Family on the beach.¹¹¹



On the other hand, those from higher classes that live close to the shore can choose the part of the day they want to spend on the beach since their homes are very close, they can come and go whenever they feel like. Thus, they tend to take only the indispensable as they do not really need to stay there, unlike the ones belonging to other social classes who need to put up

¹¹¹ ALVES, Débora Mariotto. *Farofada na praia, sim, mas com saúde*. **Gazeta do Povo**, 27 dez. 2014. Retrieved from <<http://www.gazetadopovo.com.br/vida-e-cidadania/verao/farofada-na-praia-sim-mas-com-saude-ehrgwyb8kbq62lb1ha5stz2a6>> Access on: 16 Aug 2024.

a kind of camping structure on the sand for not being able to return to their homes and come back easily. However, such behavior does not imply that the elites come empty-handed to the beach only aiming at contemplating the natural environment. On the contrary, they own resources that differentiate them completely from the other classes, which allow them to enjoy coastal leisure from different possibilities. For example, while the “poor” children play with the sea waves, which in Brazilian Portuguese is called “*jacaré*”¹¹², rich kids can afford a jet ski, stand up paddle, kite surf, or paragliding, in fact, a series of resources that optimize their leisure time.

Therefore, there is strong evidence that beaches as leisure spaces are not that democratic since different people own different capitals and resources, even if they get access to the same space on the coast. Very soon inequalities are spotted, mainly when interpreted in the light of theoretical reference such as Pierre Bourdieu’s ideas, which help us to deconstruct, unveil, and face the frailties around the myth or thesis of a democratic beach widely advertised in the common sense, and sometimes even in academic settings approaching the theme.

Far from exhausting the theme, but without space to advance in this text due to the structural limits of a scientific article, themes like tourism, violence on beaches, body hyper sexualization, workers’ invisibility, racial prejudice, class tastes, moving practices, among others could not be discussed here. However, a great research agenda is suggested here regarding the social investigation space linked to coastal leisure.

Final Considerations

At first, when carrying out a historical incursion into human beings’ social relations with the coastal nature, we found out that individuals established different uses and purposes for the coast over time. In general, the historical journey revealed that beaches were not always spaces for leisure and entertainment. It was only in the transition from the 19th to the 20th century that this natural space started to be associated with a leisure idea. This means that some changes of long-term sociogenetic and psychogenetic nature were necessary to turn the beach into a locus of free time entertainment.

If, on the one hand, ludic beaches are recent, on the other hand, conflicts and inequalities between classes in that space have been discussed

¹¹² Slang used to name de act of projecting the body from the sand through the sea waves.

for a while, even before the coast gained ludic characteristics, beaches were already fields of disputes and systems of distinction between the agents. Those symbolic disputes continued over time and gained new elements inherent in contemporary times, even if not so evident in the common-sense view. To sum up, these were the aspects addressed in our study to challenge the myth of the democratic beach.

Taking that into consideration, when addressing a series of aspects linked to the beach goers' habitus, based on Bourdieu's thought, we observed that beaches are not exactly a place where inequalities are ignored. In other words, although the nudity of the bodies might suggest egalitarian groups, a more attentive look into the structure and disposition of classes reveals that the uses of that space are different since the diverse social ethos do not own the same capital and the same distinction strategies. Thus, symbolic violence and domination take place even if the agents might not be aware of them.

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