

# Local responses to tourism development on the North-Eastern coast of Brazil: the case of the municipality of Maragogi in Alagoas State

Respostas locais para o desenvolvimento do turismo na costa do Nordeste do Brasil: o caso do município de Maragogi, no Estado de Alagoas

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In an era in which tourism has gained increasing importance for local/regional development, Brazil's Ministry of Tourism (MTur) has created innovative policies to tourism development and planning, with an implementation focus on the coast of the country. The MTur's mission states clearly that its aim is to develop tourism as a sustainable economic activity, focused on the creation of jobs and earnings of hard currency, contributing to the promotion of social inclusion. As the North-East region of the country pioneered some of such policies, there has been massive tourism development along the coast of this region. This paper investigates tourism development in the north coast of the state of Alagoas where a 103km-long reef barrier works as the main tourist attractor, with direct influence on land-use and social development. This paper uses spatial and local development theories as a framework to understand the impacts of tourism growth both on the territory and society in Alagoas with an emphasis on the municipality of Maragogi, Alagoas's second most important tourist destination. Methods include interviews with local residents and public officials, observation, photographic survey, and examination of Google Earth images. Findings reveal that there have been different spatial and development responses to tourism in three different parts of Maragogi. Historical land-use patterns and varying capacities of residents to exploit tourism as an economic activity are the two main causes for the variations in the local responses to tourism development in this coastal municipality.

Keywords: Public Policy; Territory; Tourism; Development; Quality of life

Em uma época em que o turismo tem vindo a ganhar cada vez mais importância para o desenvolvimento local / regional, Ministério do Turismo do Brasil (MTur) criou políticas inovadoras para o desenvolvimento do turismo e planejamento, com foco na implementação da costa do país. A missão do MTur afirma claramente que seu objetivo é desenvolver o turismo como uma atividade econômica sustentável, com foco na criação de empregos e ganhos de divisas, contribuindo para a promoção da inclusão social. Como a região Nordeste do país, pioneira em alguns de tais políticas, houve o desenvolvimento do turismo em massa ao longo da costa da região. Este trabalho investiga o desenvolvimento do turismo no litoral norte do estado de Alagoas, onde uma barreira de 103 quilômetros ao longo do recife funciona como o principal atrator turístico, com influência direta no uso da terra e desenvolvimento social. Este trabalho usa teorias do desenvolvimento espacial e local como um quadro para entender os impactos do crescimento do turismo, tanto no território e sociedade em Alagoas, com ênfase no município de Maragogi, o segundo mais importante destino turístico de Alagoas. Os métodos incluem entrevistas com moradores locais e funcionários públicos, observação, levantamento fotográfico e exame de imagens do Google Earth. Resultados revelam que houve diferentes respostas espaciais e desenvolvimento para o turismo em três partes diferentes de Maragogi. Padrões históricos de uso da terra e capacidades variadas de moradores para explorar o turismo como uma atividade econômica são as duas principais causas para as variações nas respostas locais para o desenvolvimento do turismo neste município costeiro.

Palavras-chave: Políticas Públicas; Território, Turismo, Desenvolvimento, Qualidade de vida

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many countries around the world have adopted tourism as an economic development alternative (MATARRITA-CASCANTE, 2010; ARAUJO, 2009; ANDERECK, VALENTINE; VOGT, 2005; TOSUN; JENKINS, 1996). Development strategies often include the formulation of public policies, which is the case of Brazil. The federal government expects tourism to contribute to the economy of the country usually under the assumption that economic growth will lead automatically to development. As a consequence, local tourism-led development connected with these policies has created new possibilities to economically stagnant regions, mainly on the coastal zone of the North-East region of the country.

The economic importance of tourism to destinations has been the object of a number of studies around the world usually under the argument that tourism growth can help gain hard currency for the government, can improve revenue generation for local communities, and can bring new opportunities for private-sector investments. In developed countries, such as France, USA, Australia, Spain, Italy, and Canada tourism contributes a significant part of the Domestic Gross Product (DGP) (Table 1). To some extent, there has still been an emphasis on the economic dimension of tourism worldwide, despite the fact that from the 1990s onwards research has increasingly called attention also to the negative social effects that tourism can generate (RODRIGUES, 2006; BARRETTO, 1995).

Table 1: Contribution of tourism to DGP in selected developed countries.

France	USA	Australia	Spain	Italy	Canada	Switzerland
11,8%	11,6%	11,1%	8,4%	7,2%	6,5%	5,5%

Source: Compiled from Beni (2004).

The economic importance of tourism is not restricted to developed countries. For example, in Latin-American countries tourism has also made a contribution to the regional economy. There was an increase of 30,7% in the demand of international tourists to Latin America in the 1992-2002 decade. Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Venezuela, Chile, Colombia and Paraguay are the countries that have captured the largest part of this international tourist demand regionally (BENI, 2004). Data published by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in 2011 show an increase of 7% in the flow of international tourists worldwide in 2010 in relation to 2009, with revenues estimated in US\$ 919 million. In the same decade, Latin America experienced a 10% increase in the arrivals of international tourists, a phenomenon that is indicative of the increasing importance of tourism for the regional economy.

However, there is evidence that economic growth *per se* will not necessarily lead to overall progress (MATARRITA-CASCANTE, 2010; SEN, 1999; VEIGA, 2005; CRUZ, 2000). Despite a long-term emphasis on economic development over the last decades, poverty and environmental degradation have often been persistent in regions in which massive volumes of capital have been invested in development projects, particularly in developing countries. As a response to these problems, since the 1990s there has been a change in tourism planning and policy strategies both in Brazil (CRUZ, 2006) and in other countries (COSTA, 2001), a phenomenon that has been seen as an emerging new planning paradigm. There is a shift away from centralization and economy-centric policies to also include the environmental, social and cultural dimensions of development (OLIVEIRA, 2003; SACHS, 2000).

From the 1990s onwards Brazil's federal government has created comprehensive policies to encourage tourism development in the country. Given its natural assets, the coastal zone of the country's North-East region has benefitted substantially from such policies. However, in some coastal municipalities local economic and political forces, poverty, and historical land tenure systems have influenced on how local communities have responded to policy, sometimes lessening potential positive impacts. This study examines local responses to tourism development in the coastal municipality of Maragogi, Alagoas state, Brazil, using a contextualized approach rather than a tourism-centric paradigm (BRAMWELL, 2003).

Each host community, with their particular historical background, cultural heritage, land tenure systems, and power relations, should respond in varying ways to tourism development.

So, it is necessary to understand the response to tourism policies and to tourism development in different territories so that the local context can be taken into consideration during policy formulation and implementation, thus improving the likelihood that tourism policies and development can help to improve the quality of life in host communities.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 QUALITY OF LIFE

Over the last decades, there has been considerable criticism in the tourism literature, and also in other fields of study, about the use of the concept of development based only on economic growth (MATARRITA-CASCANTE, 2010; SACHS, 2004; SEN, 1999; FURTADO, 1974). There is now wide evidence that in many developing regions sustained economic growth did not result in substantial social improvements in the quality of life of the population. In order to improve the quality of life of the population in poor communities, SACHS (2004) advocates that development strategies must contribute to develop the capacity of individuals by strengthening their vocations, creativity, and by creating differentiated policies for the poor in these communities.

In addition, it has also been suggested that development necessarily has to lead to improvements in the quality of life of the populations that are the target of tourism policies (MAX-NEFF, 1998; BUARQUE, 1993). For example, to improve living conditions in tourist destinations tourism should help residents to meet their needs and foster the development of human potentials. Max-Neff (1998) classifies human needs into two complementary categories - *existential needs*: being, having, and doing; *axiological needs*: subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity, and freedom.

So, the potential contribution of tourism to development ought to be framed as a two-sided coin, that is, tourism must deliver effective material benefits to host communities – dimensions that are associated with existential needs – and, at the same time, tourism must also contribute to immaterial human dimensions – associated with axiological needs – which usually are not emphasized by those that are focused only on economic growth.

From the 1950s, the concept of development based only on economic growth began to face criticisms. That was because in many poor countries that were going through significant economic growth there had not been the same rate of improvements to the quality of life of the population, that is, the population was not being benefitted through increased access to services and goods (VEIGA, 2005). With the emergence of the sustainable development concept in general (WCED, 1987), and in the tourism field in particular (BRAMWELL; LANE, 1993) there started to be an ever-present argumentation according to which economic growth had to lead to the creation of collective rights and to provide new opportunities for the population in order to enhance *human development*. In general, such improvements to human development should be measured on the basis of poverty reduction, improved medical care, education, treated water, wider territorial coverage of sewerage systems, appropriate housing schemes, fair labor market, social assistance, and political and civil freedom (VEIGA, 2005).

So, the concept of *quality of life* is imbedded in the more general concept of the *development* concept, that is, people living in host communities need to have access to dignifying living conditions. Such positive change in the quality of life in the destinations of underdeveloped and developing countries is expected to be the result of a deliberate search on the part of local residents for continuous improvement to their living conditions. Barbosa (1996, p. 72) posits that “[...] the ultimate objective of development is to improve the quality of life of human beings [...]”. In addition, the author suggests that a concern with pursuing development goals has to do directly with political decisions.

However, it is quite complex to understand the real meaning of quality of life. According to Max-Neff (1998), the needs and the actions to meet these needs are distinct phenomena. The first aspect – human needs – is of an infinite character. Trying to meet human needs is part of a

continuous process of change which varies from culture to culture, from time period to time period, as can be deduced from the following quotation:

“La persona es un ser de necesidades múltiples e interdependientes. Por ellas las necesidades humanas deben entenderse como un sistema en que las mismas se interrelacionan e interactúan. Simultaneidades, complementariedades y compensaciones (trade-offs) son características de la dinámica del proceso de satisfacción de las necesidades” (MAX-NEFF, 1998, p. 41).

This way, it can be deduced that when tourism grows in a given region or place, the development of tourism activities may lead the local population to perceive new human needs and desires that might not have been arisen if tourism had not developed in that region or place.

The second aspect of the notion of quality of life that was mentioned above – meeting human needs – is represented by things such as food, shelter, education, and public health care. Each one of these items relates to the satisfaction of a particular type of need, as mentioned by Max-Neff (1998), namely: food and shelter relates to subsistence needs; education and scientific investigation relates to the need to understand the world.

Meeting human needs may take place in relation to varying intensities, and concerning three distinct and simultaneous contexts. These contexts are as follows: 1) the relation of the individual with himself; 2) the relation between the individual and the social group to which he pertains; and 3) the relation of the individual with his immediate environment (MAX-NEFF, 1998). These three different and interrelated contexts express the subjective character of the term *quality of life*. At the same token, it is implicit the importance of undertaking profound qualitative scientific investigation in order to fully understand the real dimensions of that concept.

## 2.2 TERRITORY

Territory is a polysemic term. It has been used as synonym of area, political jurisdiction or space, among others meanings. For some geographers (SANTOS, 2006; HAESBAERT, 2004; CORRÊA, 1995), the concept of territory involves much more than that. For example, territory can be framed in an holistic way, to include the natural resources of a region, land tenure systems, and the different social classes or traditional groups living in that region. For Santos (2006) it is the diverse uses of natural and cultural resources of a region by individuals pertaining to different social classes or groups, together with power relations, that are the most important factors that determine the nature of a territory, as well as how the territory will change over time, and who benefits from development. That is the concept of territory that is used in this study.

With tourism development, infrastructure, equipments and the services that form the base of the tourist industry add to the natural and cultural resources and to the previous uses in that region. As a consequence, tourism changes the environment and the landscape, and it intermingles with residents in their daily routines. So, tourist territories overlap substantially with the territory of other users, with the potential to help shape friendly territories or otherwise to worsen existing social, economic, and cultural conflicts, aspects that in some cases are overlooked by public officials during policy formulation and implementation.

A key assumption underpinning public tourism policies is that tourism will inevitably create jobs and income for residents of host communities, leading to improvements in their quality of life, as discussed in the previous section. In addition, tourism is also expected to support local livelihoods and culture, involving the local population positively in the tourism development process. However, tourism entrepreneurs, developers, land speculators, and public officials usually do not ask residents of host communities if and how they want tourism to be developed in their towns, villages or communities (ROUX, 2004). So, very often when tourism is introduced in developing areas tourist activities tend to have a significant impact on the territory, changing where and how resources will be used.

Another key issue in the context of tourism development and the territory is that public policies are often designed and implemented as if the target regions were social-, economic- and politically homogeneous. However, the reality of emerging destinations usually is contradictory, with uneven power relations, and with mixed standards of living. So, local contexts will inevitably affect the performance of tourism policies in various ways, frequently with unpredictable consequences for destinations. The unpredictability of the potential positive and negative effects of tourism development on the territory can be easily deduced from Figure 1. Each of these potential consequences taken separately is complex enough for scientists to develop a full understanding of their future development once they are in motion, let alone claim the possibility of understanding their interrelated consequences.

*Figure 1: Positive and negative effects of tourism in tourism areas.*

<b>Positive Effects</b>	<b>Negative Effects</b>
Generation of income and jobs in communities.	Limited access to formal jobs because of the high level of specialization required by the sector, especially in poor areas.
Multiplier capacity that impacts upon other sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, fishing, artifacts, civil construction, land market, transports and commerce.	Effects of seasonality on the offer of jobs which are available mainly in the tourist season. That becomes a problem when the local population depends heavily on the jobs in the tourism sector.
Positive effects on the external balance of payments.	Creation of poverty areas around tourist places.
Re-distribution of income as wealth is spread spatially.	Social costs related to expansion and maintenance of infrastructure that is created to attract tourism investments.
Generation of taxes for the government.	Limited access on the part of local residents to improvements in basic and tourist infrastructure.
Encouragement for external capital investments.	Inflation on the prices of products that are commercialized locally.

Source: Compiled from: Coriolano (2006); Ruschmann & Solha (2006); Barretto (1995); Edgell (1990); Rodrigues (2006); Cruz (2006).

In an interesting study regarding tourism development in Recife, in the North-eastern state of Pernambuco (Brazil), Castilho (2000) found evidences of territorial selectivity in the distribution of tourism in that city. Most public and private investments that were delivered through fiscal incentives were directed to local segments with greater capacity to invest in tourism equipments and services. Local administrative elites justify the infrastructure works that were implanted in tourism areas as being necessary for the development of the city. The rationale is as a given territory qualifies to receive larger numbers of tourists it will directly or indirectly promote local socioeconomic tourism-based development. So, territory stands out as a key factor that is observed when identifying the areas of a city to receive new investments in infrastructure development.

In tourist coastal regions, spaces and facilities such as squares, sporting courts, and stages for artistic and cultural performances, community health centers, and bank agencies are usually located near tourist routes or recreation districts. Services and infrastructure usually become relatively scarce in areas away from tourist routes and recreation districts. Then it becomes evident that there is some sort of social selection as to which parts of a city will benefit from allocations of tourist infrastructure and facilities. While better located areas will benefit directly from local tourism-induced improvements, those areas that are located away from investment areas will have virtually no material or socio-cultural benefits, with reduced access to educational, health, work and citizenship facilities.

As mentioned above, powerful social groups justify changes regarding territorial re-configurations, location of new tourist works as well as related to the infrastructure that is required for tourism development as necessary for local development. In fact, this type of discourse is usually present in several public policies pertaining to the federal, state and

municipal administrative levels. However, there appear to be strong academic, scientific and empirical evidence that the desired tourism-led local development may occur selectively to some social groups, and not to the social fabric as a whole. A key reason for the unequal spatial distribution of tourism development benefits appears to result from the social and historic characteristics of the territories that are targeted by tourism policies.

### 3. STUDY METHODS

#### 3.1 SETTING THE CONTEXT

As a destination that has been developing for over four decades, the state of Alagoas provides an excellent opportunity to understand if and how tourism has contributed to development. According to Alagoas State Tourism Secretariat (SETUR/AL), tourism contributes approximately 19% of Alagoas state's economy. That is important because Alagoas has experienced a significant decline in its main economic activity, namely the sugar cane agro-industry (CARVALHO, 2009), an activity that in many aspects dates back regionally to the 16th century (DIÉGUES JÚNIOR, 1980). Based on the *latifúndio* and large-scale deforestation of the Atlantic rain forest, historically the sugar cane plantation has produced wealth for a handful of powerful families and wide-spread poverty for the majority of the population (ARAUJO; MOURA, 2011; LIRA, 2005).

In an attempt to diversify the economy of Brazil's north-eastern region, the federal government has invested heavily in the development of infrastructure to attract private-sector investment in tourism. To attain tourism-based development, from the early 1990s onwards there have also been significant institutional and organizational developments. According to Cruz (2006), from the end of the 1980s onwards there was a major paradigm change in federal public tourism policies and planning in Brazil. In the past, policies focused on economic development at any cost, centralization, national-regional geographic scales, state as regulator / intervener, and nature as an object of attraction. These policy orientations were modified over the last two decades respectively to: focus on sustainable development, decentralization / participative management, regional-local geographic scales, liberalization / lack of state regulation, and nature as an object of attraction *and protection*.

In the 1980s, with Alagoas state experiencing rapid tourist development (ARAUJO; POWER, 1993), Maragogi, Alagoas's second most important destination, started to emerge. Maragogi is a coastal municipality located approximately 130 kilometers to the north-east of Maceió. While Maceió (Alagoas main destination) relied on the fact that it is the state capital, with hotels, airport, natural assets, and rich and varied gastronomy, Maragogi relied mainly on its pristine nature, with the *Galés* (a sand and coral reef barrier) that stretches all along the coast of the municipality being the main tourist attractor. In addition, the sparsely occupied littoral of Maragogi had picturesque fishermen's villages, with coco-nut trees dominating the landscape and 20 Km of unspoiled beaches.

The historical socioeconomic development of the territory of Maragogi was highly influenced by land tenure patterns dating back to the first years following the abolishment of slavery in Brazil in 1888. This context affected ways in which local populations responded to tourism development, in three different places on the coast of Maragogi. These places are the following ones: 1) the village of *São Bento* - five kilometers south-east of the town of Maragogi; Maragogi, administrative center of the homonymous municipality; and the Barra Grande / Peroba villages, four kilometers and 12 kilometers north-east of the town of Maragogi, respectively. Given their similar contextual characteristics, the two places will be treated in this study as if they were an only place.

#### 3.2 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data collection strategies included open interviews (NEUMAN, 1991) with 27 informants – local residents and public officials, during the October 2010-February 2011 period. Residents

would only qualify as informants if they had been living in the area for at least 20 years. Interviews were conducted in Portuguese and included open-ended questions exploring the respondent's views about the past and present local socioeconomic conditions as well as to whether tourism had contributed to improvements in their quality of life. Interviews with public officials explored their perceived views about the role of tourism in the local development of the municipality of Maragogi. Also, data collection included observation, mainly in relation to infrastructure, social services, housing standards and the landscape.

Data were analyzed and interpreted using a qualitative approach informed by the theoretical framework that was developed for the study, formed by the concepts of development / quality of life, and territory. Long-standing residents of these areas are direct and indirectly affected by tourism development, a context that qualifies them to express their views as to whether and how tourism had helped to improve their quality of life. Also, the study employed visual examination of Google Earth's images to understand land-use patterns in the coast of the municipality of Maragogi.

The research design had ethical clearance by the Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Alagoas (UFAL).

#### 4. RESULTADOS E DISCUSSÃO

Historical elements that form a given territory, as well as the ways in which these elements interact with each other over time as guided by power relations, set the basis to understand how different social groups respond to tourism development. The territory consists of the natural framework and resources, land tenure systems, the social groups within the limits of the territory, as well as the socioeconomic uses these groups are involved with (SANTOS, 2006). In the municipality of Maragogi, these territory elements interacted in diverse ways as tourism emerged and developed, with distinct patterns taking shape in São Bento, Maragogi, and Barra Grande / Peroba.

##### 4.1 SÃO BENTO VILLAGE

São Bento was historically formed by former slaves that were freed from 1888 onwards with the abolishment of slavery in Brazil. They moved gradually to areas close to the sea (the current São Bento Village) and most of them became fishermen. Also, they grew subsistence crops in coco-nut trees *sítios* (small properties) in which the owners, who lived elsewhere, gave permission for these former slaves to build their houses. Their houses (known in Brazil as *casas de taipa*) were built with tree trunks, rafters and laths fixed together with nails and lianas and other materials, and then filled with clay. The houses were covered with dried leaves of coco-nut trees, as a local resident commented:

“We would address the owner of the *sítio* and ask for permission to build a house among the coco-nut trees. He would look around, measure a piece of land and say that we could build the house. Then a group of men would go to get wood from the mangrove or forest, build the frame of the house and fill the walls with clay and cover the house with coco-nut tree leaves.” [Local resident]

This socioeconomic and cultural scheme that has operated in São bento for at least 100 years was quite stable, to the benefit of both the owners of the land and the local fishermen. When tourism emerged in the area, external land speculators started to make bids to buy land in São Bento to trade in the tourism market. However, as the land was owned by wealthy people who were happy with their way of life, they resisted the bids. Because of that, the residents of the *sítios* continued to live in the area. So, the natural landscape and large tracks of the land of the *sítios* have been preserved, contributing for the current open spaces and landscape that attract tourists.

The people of São Bento have responded to tourism in two main ways. Fishermen sell their catch to local hotels, restaurants and bars. Also, the sale of a traditional local artisan biscuit called *sequilho* to tourists and day visitors has expanded significantly, to the point that those involved with this activity have created an association in order to exploit the tourist market more effectively. In addition, some local women find jobs or temporary work in hotels, restaurants or bars during the tourist season. So, residents of São Bento have responded to local tourism development by developing strategies to exploit the activity informally and to improve their domestic budget. Comparing their conditions of life prior to and after tourism insertion in the local community, residents perceive that tourism has helped to improve their livelihoods, as an informant commented:

“When I was seven, I used to go to Porto Calvo (town located 23 km from São Bento) to sell mussels because nobody would buy them in São Bento. Nowadays, it is different – there is local demand for mussels because of tourism. Also, mussel collectors make *sequilhos* and sell them to order or by the side of the road. In the tourist season sales are good because there are many cars and tourists that stop to buy *sequilhos* and other types of products that we produce. All fish catch and mussels are bought by local hotels and restaurants.” [President of São Bento's Fishermen's Association and active mussels collector]

So, tourism has brought new socioeconomic possibilities for the residents of São Bento who had basically fish, mussels and subsistence crops as their traditional livelihoods. However, the improvements in their quality of life do not appear to meet all aspects of their existential and axiological needs (MAX-NEFF, 1998) because they are not free to fully exploit tourism's development opportunities as they did not own the land in which they lived when tourism began to develop locally. In fact, they had to adapt to exploit informal businesses associated with tourism's activities.

#### 4.2 TOWN OF MARAGOGI

In the town of Maragogi, local responses to tourism development have been quite different from those of São Bento. As Maragogi is the administrative center of the municipality, in the early 1980s this town concentrated most of the basic and social infrastructure of the municipality. Because of that, it attracted the first hotels, bars and restaurants and other key tourist services. According to respondents, in the early 1990s land speculators were quite active in this town trying to buy properties to be commercialized with the tourism industry. However, differently from the residents of São Bento, who did not own the land they lived in, in Maragogi many fishermen and other residents owned small *sítios* and lots, and usually they lived in brick houses of their own property. So, as tourism developed they had more freedom to exploit the industry in a pro-active way. Because of that, their response to and views about tourism differ substantially from those of the residents of São Bento, as many residents of Maragogi were key actors who helped build the local formal tourism supply.

Many fishermen and owners of small pieces of land that resisted the pressure of land speculators in Maragogi were able to establish positive links and dialogs with external tourism entrepreneurs, a context that allowed these residents to tap positive results from tourism and pro-actively look for ways to exploit the activity in a direct way. A number of such residents built bars, restaurants and small hotels (*pousadas*), and offer raft and boat rides to tourists who wish to visit the municipality's coral reef barrier. As the tourist life cycle of Maragogi evolved, heavy competition from external actors came in but as the mentioned local residents owned their land and part of the local business sector, they continued in the industry, and that has contributed significantly for the improvement of their socioeconomic living conditions, realizing to some extent tourism's much expected development benefits.

Nowadays, the local residents that exploit tourism in Maragogi desire earnestly every year for the return of the tourist season because, as they commented, they obtain a lot of benefits from

tourist activities. Naturally, they perceive tourism in a positive way, as can be seen in the following comment:

“In the Summer, everybody earns money; they work in restaurants, *pousadas*, as beach vendors; others offer raft rides and many sell handicraft products; others let their houses to tourists. Maragogi gets crowded, sometimes there are no more houses to be rented in town.” [Resident of the town of Maragogi]

The involvement of residents of Maragogi with the local tourism supply has made quite a positive impact on their socioeconomic status. Respondents informed that a number of them now live in even better housing conditions in comparison with the early 1980s; they usually have their interests represented in the town's legislative house (*Câmara de Vereadores*); and many of their children have obtained university degrees or are currently attending university. So, it looks like that both the existential and axiological needs (MAX-NEFF, 1998) of many residents of Maragogi have been met as a consequence of their being able to exploit the development opportunities that were brought by tourism.

### 4.3 COMMUNITIES OF BARRA GRANDE AND PEROBA

The historical background of Barra Grande / Peroba; the type of tourists they receive; and tourism development patterns are quite different from those of Maragogi and São Bento. In the early 1980s, both Barra Grande and Peroba consisted of *sítios* of coco-nut trees with fishermen's *casas de taipa* sprinkled all along the coast under the coco-nut trees and close to the sea. The fishermen did not own the land of the *sítios* but they owned their *casas de taipa*. These fishermen depended almost solely on fishing as their livelihood.

In the late 1980s, Barra Grande and Peroba began to attract people interested in building or buying second homes. Individuals coming from Maceió (Alagoas state capital), Recife (capital of the neighboring state of Pernambuco and regional metropolis), and from surrounding richer municipalities – both from Alagoas and Pernambuco – developed an interest in these areas. In order to occupy the most privileged lands these visitors used the following strategy: 1) they bought cheap lots located far from the beach and near rivers and mangrove swamps; 2) they built small brick houses; 3) next they offered these houses in exchange for the fishermen's *casas de taipa* located in privileged areas close the beach; 4) fishermen, who had always dreamed of living in a brick house, exchanged their *casas de taipa* for brick houses (away from the sea and in insalubrious places; and to close the cycle, the old *casas de taipa* were demolished to give way to modern second homes.

The development of this urbanization process resulted in a belt of second homes in Barra Grande and Peroba - a process still in expansion. From the mid-1990s onwards the area also started to attract large condominiums, hotels and resorts which, according to respondents, offer just a few jobs for the local population as formal hotels require well-trained personnel who are not to be found locally. So, tourism based on second homes, condominiums and resorts in Barra Grande and Peroba has led to a profound re-organization of the local territory, with a large part of the previous local population of fishermen having moved to areas that are situated distant from the sea to give way to a tourism development pattern with which the fishermen and other locals did not manage to get involved in any significant way.

Comparing the impacts of tourism on the quality of life of the residents of Barra Grande / Peroba with that of São Bento and Maragogi, it is clear that these residents to some extent were “victims” of tourism development, as their existential and axiological needs (MAX-NEFF, 1998) were not met in any significant way as they were not prepared to exploit the opportunities brought by tourism. As a result, the re-organization of the territory induced by tourism has displaced fishermen from their houses near the sea and confined them in insalubrious areas.

Examination of how tourism developed in these three places of the municipality of Maragogi offers evidence that the poverty alleviation, social inclusion and sustainable development objectives put forward by the federal government associated with tourism development have fallen short of attaining their full objectives. Tourism benefits were distributed unevenly in the territory according to local land tenure systems, existing social relations between land owners

and residents, the formal education level of residents, and private-sector strategies to exploit the municipality's natural and cultural resources for tourism development.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Local responses to tourism development in Maragogi have varied according to the spatial distribution of the territorial characteristics of this municipality. This case study provides evidence that the location of natural resources, the nature of land tenure systems, economic and political forces, formal and traditional resource use, and power relations – key components of territory – bear on the way communities relate and respond to local tourism development in developing regions. In Maragogi, different land tenure systems operating in the three places that were studied, their geographical location and relation with infrastructure provision, as well as the perception of local residents as to the development opportunities brought in by tourism had a clear impact on how the residents of each place have responded to tourism development.

In São Bento, the rejection of land owners to bids to buy their lands impacted positively in the improvement of the quality of life of local residents as they were allowed to remain in the local properties. In addition to having a place in which to live, local residents were able to exploit tourism development informally, selling their fish catch, mussels and a local traditional biscuit to tourists and local hotels, bars and restaurants, however with clear limitations concerned with the fact that these residents do not own the land in which they live.

In the municipal administrative center of Maragogi, the concentration of basic infrastructure; a more democratic land tenure system; and a positive vision of local residents regarding the development possibilities brought in by the emerging tourism industry, have led to an important impact in the quality of life of numerous residents. As these residents did not feel the need to sell the houses in which they lived or the small properties some of them owned, they were able to invest in the construction of small-scale hotels, bars, restaurants, and other tourist services. As a result, they have experienced significant improvements in their quality of life.

In the case of Barra Grande / Peroba, in addition to these places having very scarce basic infrastructure and also considering that the local residents did not perceive the development opportunities tourism would bring, these residents were caught in a land development strategy designed by outsiders that had the power to displace local residents from their houses that were located near the sea. As a result, they ended up living in insalubrious areas, deriving virtually no benefits from tourism development.

Considering the study's findings, the following suggestions are hereby put forward: a) it is important to develop more systematic research in Maragogi and in the rest of the north-eastern Brazilian coastal region, in order to understand how the historical background of a given territory, together with the local political, economic and cultural contextual framework, may work as a barrier to tourism development or may improve the potential for tourism's contribution for the quality of life in host communities; b) public officials and policy formulators should take the local territorial characteristics on board when formulating and implementing tourism public policies, particularly in developing regions where the benefits of policy are often taken for granted in a context in which the local government usually lacks the planning and management capacity and expertise that are required in order for them to exploit tourism's development potential in a significant way.

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