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Special Issue

Selling Paradise: A Bourdieusian Analysis of Gated Condominium Development in the Ecological Route of the Miracles, Alagoas, Brazil

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Abstract

The Ecological Route of the Miracles (REM) in Alagoas, Brazil, has undergone rapid coastal development since 2015, driven by a surge in gated condominiums (GCs). Using Bourdieu's concept of the economic field, this study analyzes the supply side of real estate production, examining developers' profiles, capital, and legitimizing narratives expressed on Instagram. Seventeen firms responsible for 65 GCs were grouped into pioneer specialists, specialists, and established broad-based companies. Patterns of spatial concentration, capital conversion, and competition emerge. A longitudinal analysis of Podium's Instagram posts (2015–2025) shows how the REM is constructed as a luxurious, exclusive, and investable paradise. Developers thus shape material and symbolic control over beach access, naturalizing social hierarchies through narratives of dreams, expertise, and privilege.

Keywords: Beach Access; Paradise; Gated Condominium; Sociology; Tourism.

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Introduction

The Ecological Route of the Miracles (*Rota Ecológica dos Milagres*) (REM, from now on) is a 23-kilometer stretch of coastline situated in the state of Alagoas, in Brazil's Northeast. This region, often referred to as the "Brazilian Caribbean" is home to light-blue waters, crystal-clear natural pools, and part of the Coral Coastal Environmental Protection Area (APACC).

Figure 1: A natural pool in the REM, the *Lage* beach, the municipalities along REM

Source: Photos of the natural pool and Lage Beach were taken during fieldwork in December 2024. The municipalities map was created on Google Earth on June 9th, 2025.

The Brazilian demographic census (Brasil, 2022) indicates that between 2012 and 2022, the population of *São Miguel dos Milagres* and *Porto de Pedras*, the two main municipalities along the REM, grew by 10.27% and 18.41%, respectively. This demographic growth has been driven by improvements in urban infrastructure, which have gradually attracted high-end amenities such as chef-led restaurants, boutique inns, beachfront resorts, and Gated Condominiums (GC, from now on). Local real estate agents note a post-2021 real estate boom fueled by pandemic-driven demand for nature-proximate coastal properties (Klinke, 2024). As the former mayor of *Porto de Pedras* observed, "where ten years ago there was nothing[1]," we now witness what real estate agents describe as a "miracle", as illustrated in Figure 2.

This "miracle" began in 2015, and by March 2025, we identified 17 builders responsible for 65 GC, either completed or under construction. Their spatial distribution reveals a clear preference for sea access and views: 26 are beachfront, 20 are within 500 meters of the beach, and only 11 are more than 500 meters from the beach[2].

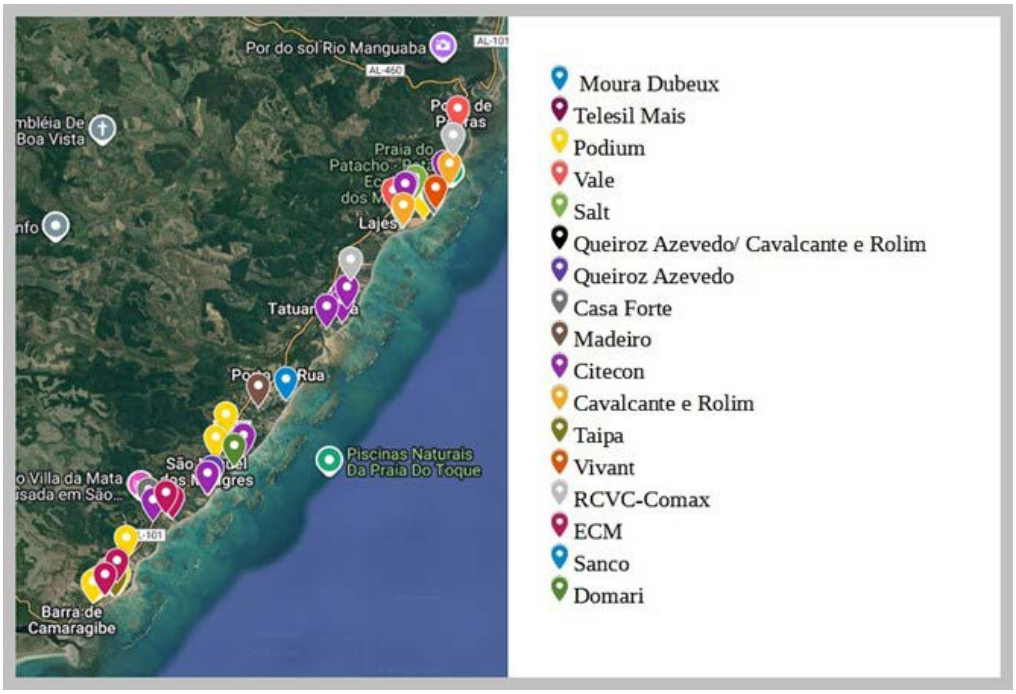
[1] Field-notes from December 2024.

[2] We mapped the 65 GC through fieldwork (Dec 2024) and online research (Mar 2025). Data were tabulated. The exact locations of eight remain unknown.

Figure 2: The "Miracle" of the arrival of a GC portrayed by a real-estate agent

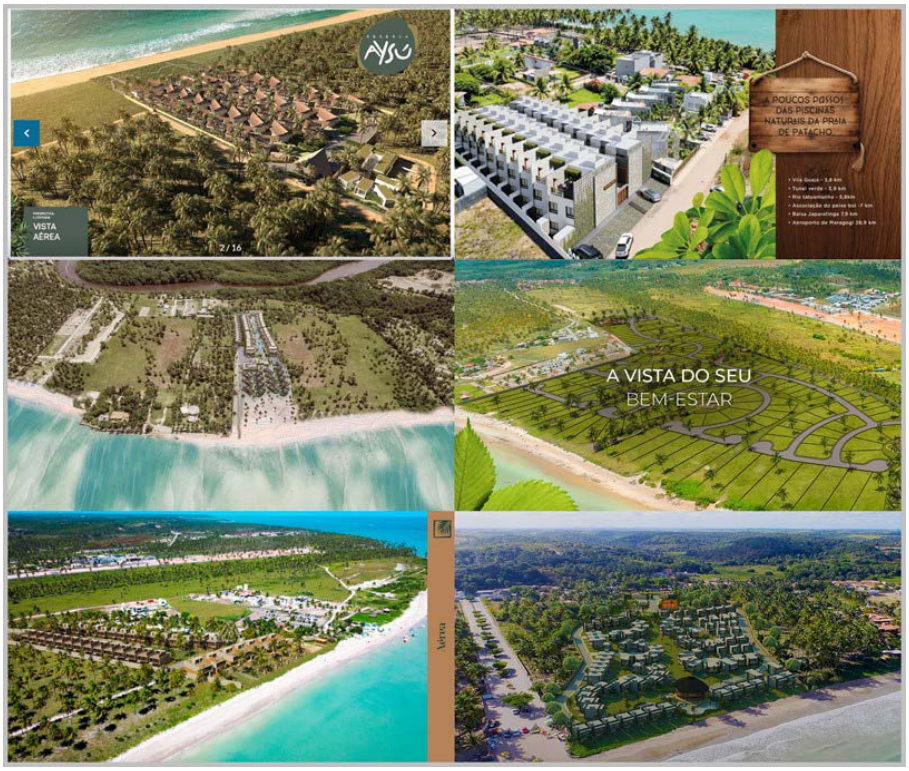
Source: Image provided to the authors by a local real estate agent. Translation by the authors.

Figure 3: 50 Gated Condominiums Spread along the REM and their 17 Builders



Source: Prepared by the authors on September 5th, 2025, using Google Maps. Google Maps could not locate 15 GC by name. Colorful pins indicate the 17 real estate builders.

Figure 4: Six examples of Gated Condominiums in the REM



In the left column, from top to bottom, the images depict Reserva Aysú, Naay, Watal. On the right column, from top to bottom: Casas Santorini, Ita Patacho, and Naluum. Source: Google Images. The photo combination was done by the authors using PhotoScape.

Alagoas has long been marked by high land concentration, low productive dynamism, and deep socioeconomic inequalities (Brandão, 2018; Figueiredo, 2021). Since the seventies, state actors have promoted tourism as a strategy for poverty reduction (Araújo and Santos, 2022). Fieldwork shows how this discourse resonates locally: a young waiter noted that new bars and restaurants had expanded income options previously limited to fishing, church activities, and public-sector jobs. Developers echo this narrative. For example, one 2022 Instagram post claimed that "tourism promotion in the Ecological Route of the Miracles is responsible for the region's development[3]." State data reinforces it: in 2025, Alagoas reported record tourism levels and identified the sector as a key economic driver (Agência Alagoas, 2025).

Tourism-driven economic development in Alagoas accelerated in 2011 with the approval of State Law Nº. 7,231, which established Special Areas of Tourist Interest (AEIT) to simultaneously promote sustainable tourism, foster local culture, and attract private investment (Alagoas, 2011). In practice, however, fourteen years later, the tourist hubs neighboring the REM continue to struggle to balance environmental protection with economic growth, facing the consequences of predatory tourism (Gazetaweb, 2025; G1 AL, 2024a). To prevent similar outcomes, REM's social agents have pursued the "Blue Flag" certification as a symbol of sustainable tourism since 2021 (G1 AL, 2024b[4]). During fieldwork, we observed a series of "for sale" signs alongside indicators of environmental licensing, as illustrated in Figure 5.

[3] Information in Figure 248 from our dataset of Podium Instagram posts.

[4] The Patacho Beach is the only Blue Flag-certified beach in Alagoas and one of 38 in Brazil.

Figure 5: "For Sale/Rent" Signs and Environmental Licenses

Source: Authors' compilation based on field research records from December 2024.

Scholars have examined the negative effects of tourism development in the REM (Barbosa, 2021), the resulting conflicts over access to natural resources (Cruz et al., 2022, 2023; Mendonça and Araújo, 2021), and the social and environmental practices of boutique inns (Camêlo and Araújo, 2018; Silva, 2016; Carvalho, 2017). While these studies offer valuable insights, two gaps remain. First, sociological perspectives are notably underrepresented. Second, there is a lack of in-depth analysis of the social agents responsible for the construction of gated condominiums.

This paper addresses these two gaps. Sociologically, it aims to contribute to debates on who claims and controls beach access, and through what narratives, aligning with Osbaldiston's (2018) view that a sociological understanding of the coastline requires analyzing how it is appropriated, represented, and transformed by diverse social actors across historical and spatial contexts. Empirically, we employ Bourdieu's concept of economic field (1997b) as a heuristic tool (Duval, 2015) to study the builders of GC. The rapid urban concentration in the REM intensifies socioeconomic and ecological pressures associated with coastal squeeze (Pontee, 2013). As beach access becomes increasingly contested, it is crucial to study the social agents who construct these 'paradisiacal' natural spaces.

In addition to this introduction, the paper is structured into four sections. The first outlines our theoretical framework. The second introduces the GC developers and offers a preliminary analysis of their positioning within the subfield of coastal real estate tourism. The third examines the Instagram content disseminated between 2015 and 2025 by Podium (the pioneering developer in the region) to trace the evolution of the *sociodicies,* or legitimizing narratives, produced by GC developers. The final section presents our concluding remarks.

2 A Bourdieusian Approach to The Rem

Physically, the REM comprises a set of municipalities stretching along a 23-kilometer coastline. It is also composed of social agents whose struggles over sea access and views are projected onto the physical space through real estate developments. According to Bourdieu (2008), when the physical properties of space correspond to the social hierarchies of agents within the social space, a reified social space emerges. This idea resonates with research by Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot (1988), which argues that the occupation of physical spaces reflects the distribution of social agents within the social space.

Although Bourdieu did not dedicate any specific work to the study of cities, his colleague Wacquant (2024) argues that the city can be understood as a space of intersecting field effects. In this sense, the REM constitutes a reified social space, bringing together intersecting field effects as new social agents from different social fields interact.

A field is "the analytical space defined by the interdependence of the entities that compose a structure of positions among which there are power relations" (Hilgers and Mangez, 2015, p. 5). In this paper, we focus on the social agents of the economic field, namely, real estate agents. Bourdieu (1997b, p. 52) notes that "the economic field is constituted by a set of subfields corresponding to what we ordinarily understand as sectors or niches within an industry." Similarly, in *The Social Structures of the Economy*, he explicitly characterizes the economic field as "a collection of structured microcosms" (2005, p. 198). He further clarifies that subfields can be segmented; for example, the aeronautical industry is divided among producers of passenger aircraft, military aircraft, and tourist aircraft (2005, p. 58). Subfields refract field disputes but possess particularities, such as the product, which in our case is coastal real estate tourism.

In *The Social Structures of the Economy*, Bourdieu (2005) analyzes the real estate market for home ownership. He identifies four levels of fields: the field of power, the economic field (in a broader sense), the housing field (as a subfield), and the field of the firm. In the section titled "The Specific Logic of the Field of Production," he argues that, rather than using the notion of sector, which aggregates competing firms as a singular agent, the concept of field allows us to understand the differences between firms and the objective relations of complementarity and rivalry among them, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of the logic of competition.

In our interpretation, Bourdieu uses the notion of field in this section both as a heuristic tool and to refer to the supply side of developers. This dual approach is precisely the focus of our paper: to delimit the effective social agents within a relational space (the subfield of coastal real estate tourism), using the idea of field (Bourdieu, 1997b) as a heuristic tool (Duval, 2015) to clarify the relations of complementarity and rivalry that shape competition over sea access and views.

The social and symbolic struggles occur between social agents whose individual and collective trajectories (habitus) provide them with a certain volume and structure of capital, positioning them within the field either to conserve or subvert its dominant legitimacy. The struggles within the field aim to impose "a definition of legitimate recognition" (Hilgers and Mangez, 2015, p. 6) and reflect that "the history of the field is the history of the internal and external struggles that animate it, the history of the distribution of the specific capital and the variations of this capital" (Hilgers and Mangez, 2015, p. 6).

Positions within the field are maintained through legitimizing narratives, or *sociodicies* (Bourdieu, 1998; Seidl, 2017), which justify social inequalities by crystallizing principles of vision and division of the social world, presenting it as a universal and incontestable order. For example, Shammas (2023) describes a Silicon Valley billionaire who justifies his wealth, even while exploiting workers, based on risk, innovation, and the social benefits he provides. The logic is similar in our case. Although real estate developers contribute to limiting beach access for local people, the narrative of saints performing economic "miracles," such as fostering regional development, persists, as exemplified by the waiter's remarks about new job opportunities. Another narrative frames the "miracle" as bringing infrastructure so that everyone can enjoy a remote paradise—albeit exclusively as beachfront homeowners or short-term renters.

Thus, examining social agents means that one cannot "tell the miracle without telling the saint[5]." This perspective is well illustrated by studies of Saint-Tropez (Bruno and Salle, 2018), Brazil's Pipa Beach (state of Rio Grande do Norte, in the northeast) (Loloum, 2017; Loloum and Aledo, 2018), and Maceió (the capital of Alagoas, also in the northeast) (Sartore, Carvalho, and Gomes, 2025), which demonstrate that forms of beach grabbing do not emerge from natural forces, but result from deliberate state intervention and coordinated actions between public and private social agents.

The pursuit of building beachfront properties constitutes one kind of beach grabbing. In this context, sociology provides tools to observe this phenomenon through the sources of legitimacy of private property (Durkheim, 1950) and to explore social agents' life trajectories, as well as the meanings and desires they attach to ownership (Bourdieu, 2000; Carruthers and Ariovich, 2004). However, in the case of the REM, one does not need to purchase private property to gain access to or views of the sea, since it is also possible to rent a property. Access is therefore not necessarily tied to private ownership and is shaped by historical, political, and cultural factors (Ribot and Peluso, 2003).

In our time frame, from 2015 to 2025, the REM experienced an increaseing in beach closures. The developers were responsible for this movement, despite the Brazilian Constitution (Brasil, 1988) guaranteeing free public access to beaches. This paradox reflects what Knierbein and Christodoulou (2025) describe as the post-political beach, where fundamental rights to nature become depoliticized and barriers to public space grow. However, the absence of organized social movements does not necessarily imply the absence of struggles. In this paper, we argue that beach-related disputes can also be approached through the lens of symbolic struggles. Symbolic struggles are contests over meaning and the recognition of what is considered legitimate in a given social space. This perspective helps explain the post-political beach by showing that beach grabbing is not only structured but also legitimized through social agents' sociodicies, which effectively suppress social contestation by framing "exclusive beach access" as a universally accepted order.

3 The Developers: The Supply-Side In Rem's Coastal Economic Field

Although we acknowledge that fully grasping the dynamics of beach grabbing in REM by private properties requires a relational analysis considering other social agents, such as hotels and inns, our aim here is to identify which types of capital condition the social struggles in the subfield of

[5] "To tell the miracle without telling the saint" is a literal translation of a Portuguese idiom used when someone recounts an event or outcome but intentionally leaves out who was responsible for it.

coastal real estate tourism, considering the case of the REM. These capitals largely refract those of the real estate subfield, which refracts the logic of the economic field. We categorized[6] seventeen development companies that arrived in REM between 2015 and February 2025 based on six types of capital. We were inspired by Bourdieu's types of capital in *The Economic Field (1997b) (*financial, cultural[7], technological, legal, organizational, commercial, and symbolic capital). Besides, we added three other types of capital that emerged inductively from our empirical observations.

Table 1: Types of Capital (Subfield of coastal real-state tourism in REM)

Types of Capital	Categories	Observations
Geographical capital	Location of their headquarters: *Maceió; REM; another locality*	Derived from empirical observations, as many are located in Maceió
Creation-Entry capital	Year of creation: *before 2000; between 2000 and 2018, and after 2019*; Year of their first launch in the REM: *before COVID-19; after COVID-19*	Derived from empirical observations, as several were created in the same year as they launched their GC.
Ownership capital	*Individuals or Partners; Family; Joint-stock company*	Derived from empirical observations
Organizational capital	Geographical scope of their developments: *REM; in the state of Alagoas; in the Northeast*	Inspired by Bourdieu's Work (1997b). They are not companies that operate at a national scale. Most only operate in Alagoas.
Commercial capital	Content analysis of their institutional slogans or taglines[8]	Inspired by Bourdieu's Work (1997b). All use slogans and taglines on their institutional websites
Financial Capital	Size of company: *micro, small, large*	Inspired by Bourdieu's Work (1997b). We could not access the firms' capital stock. We use firm size as a proxy for financial capital.

Source: Authors' compilation.

Of the 17 developers, 14 share the same geographical capital as they are headquartered in Maceió, the capital of Alagoas. Sixteen share similar "small" ownership capital because their owners are primarily individuals, families, or partnerships, typically consisting of two or three partners. While photos and brief videos of some owners are available on Instagram, detailed online information about their affiliations and educational backgrounds remains scarce.

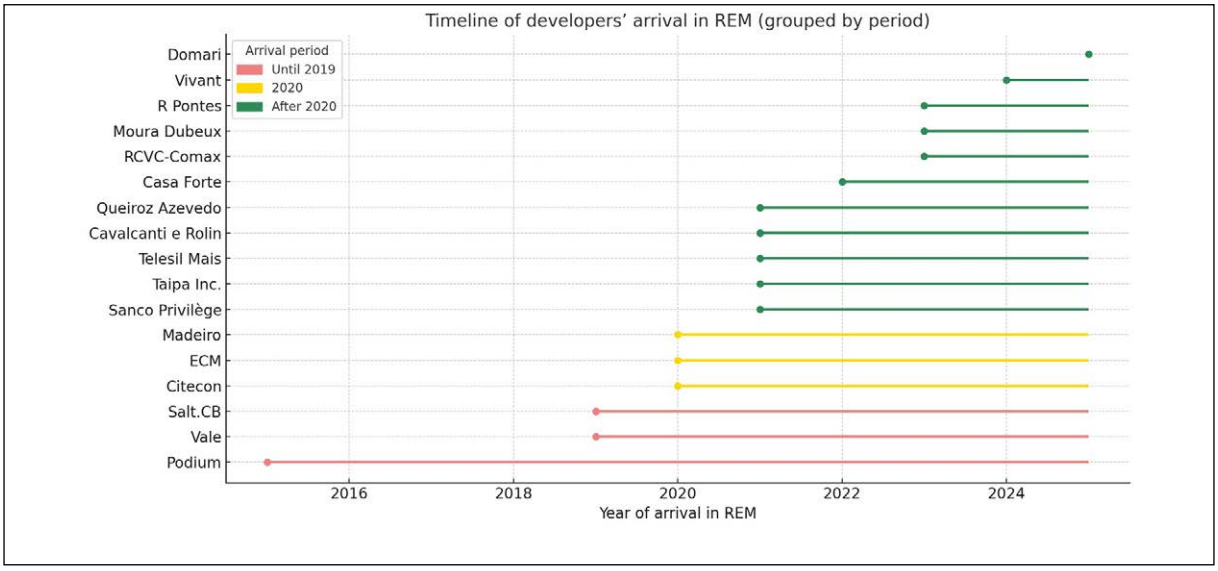
Based primarily on their creation-entry capital, we classified the companies into three groups: **pioneer specialists, specialists,** and **established broad-based firms**.

[6] Data were extracted from the Econodata platform using CNPJ (Corporate Taxpayer Identification Number) searches.

[7] Although cultural capital (professional know-how) and technological capital (modus operandi) are relevant, we lack sufficient data to systematize them.

[8] The slogans or taglines were extracted from their Instagram and/or their official website.

Figure 6: Timeline of the Arrival of Developers in REM



Source: Authors' compilation using AI.

3.1 Pioneer specialists

Three developers (*Podium, Vale,* and *Salt*) share the same creation entry capital. They were created between 2000 and 2015 and entered the REM between 2015 and 2018, before the COVID-19 pandemic. Together, they account for 15 of the 65 developments in the REM.

Podium was founded by two civil engineers from Maceió. The company initially participated in the *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* Program (My House, My Life in Portuguese), a federal housing initiative that provides affordable homes to low-income families. In 2015, *Podium* fully shifted to the high-end real estate market in the REM[9]. While its first two gated condominiums (GC) were located away from the beachfront, the subsequent seven are beachfront. In 2024, *Podium* returned to Maceió with a GC offering direct access to the waters of a lagoon island. *Vale* entered the REM in 2016 and, like *Podium*, initially developed a GC away from the beachfront (950 meters). However, its second GC (launched in 2018) is beachfront. The company has two additional beachfront GCs along Alagoas's southern coast. *Salt Boutique* arrived at the REM in 2018 and currently maintains four GCs there, although their precise locations could not be confirmed.

In terms of commercial capital, reflected in their slogans, *Podium* defines itself as a developer of "high-end projects" and a "specialist in the Rota Ecológica dos Milagres." *Vale* promotes itself as a "specialist in gated condominiums," while Salt's use of "boutique" conveys a small, highly specialized firm focused on high-end services.

In summary, among the pioneer specialists, two share the same organizational capital as they progressively expanded toward the REM's beachfront and other coastal areas of Alagoas. The three of them actively leverage their commercial capital as high-end developers and specialists in gated condominiums and in the REM.

[9] Data were extracted from the following videos: https://www.instagram.com/podiumengenharia/reel/DIhhLmETh5d/ and https://youtu.be/KJDbLwXOX5Q. Accessed on: September 2nd, 2025

3.2 Specialists

We classified ten development companies as specialists, sharing the same creation entry capital, since all were created after 2019. In half of these cases (five), the founding year coincided with their entry into the REM, suggesting they were founded specifically to operate in the region. Despite their recent arrival, these companies have driven the real estate boom, accounting for 44 of the 65 gated condominiums (GC) in the area. Of these 44, twenty were developed by *Citecon* and *ECM*. When combined with the nine GC of the pioneer *Podium*, these three companies are responsible for nearly half (29) of all developments, revealing a marked concentration of coastal appropriation.

3.2.1 Organizational capital

Of the ten specialist developers, three entered the REM in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Citecon*, founded in 2019, like *Podium*, had previously operated in the federal low-income *Minha Casa, Minha Vida Program* before shifting its focus to the region. It now leads in the number of GCs, with 11 developments, six directly on the beachfront. *ECM*, founded in 2020, has nine GCs, one beachfront, and the others up to 350 meters from the sea. *Madeiro*, also founded in 2020, has four projects, none beachfront. Although Citecon leads in the REM, it also develops in Maceió and other parts of Alagoas, as does Madeiro. The remaining eight developers operate exclusively in the REM.

In 2021, three more companies arrived. *Queiroz Azevedo*, with three GC, and *Cavalcante e Rolim*, with four. They also jointly developed three others[10], totaling ten GCs. Four are beachfront, and the rest are within 300 meters of the shore. Completing the trio, *Taipa*, the only one headquartered in the REM, launched a single beachfront project. One of its partners is a pioneering local figure organizing the celebrity-favored *Réveillon dos Milagres*.

In 2022, *Casa Forte* joined with four developments[11]. The following year, *RCVC-Comax* was founded specifically for the region, launching three projects, none beachfront. In 2024, *Vivant* and *Domari* each debuted a beachfront project; both have partners connected to *Madeiro*, signaling the reproduction of agents already active in the area.

In summary, the specialists represent a profile of newly established developers who have begun operating in the REM, driving a real estate boom. Within this group, two companies, *Citecon* and *ECM*, account for nearly one-third of all developments. Most aim to locate their projects on or very close to the beachfront. Additionally, we observe a process of capital reconversion[12], with event entrepreneurs like *Taipa* transitioning between show business and real estate development. There is also a capital conversion by one social agent working in *Madeiro*, who created his own company (*Domari*) and reached a premium spot by launching a beachfront GC in 2024.

[10] Partnerships between developers to launch projects in the REM are common. According to real estate agents interviewed, this strategy broadens marketing reach to each developer's loyal audience and reduces operational costs.

[11] We were unable to find much information about this developer.

[12] Here we adopt Saint-Martin's (2022) approach to capital reconversion, as the process was not complete: the partner of Taipa continues to be involved with the major New Year's Eve festivities.

3.2.2 Commercial capital

Citecon and *ECM* emphasize profitability in their slogans, targeting the short-term rental market. *Citecon* presents itself as a "specialist in high-return developments," while *ECM* promotes "investments with high return potential." *Madeiro* underscores its territorial exclusivity with the slogan "Exclusive developments in the paradise of São Miguel dos Milagres." *Queiroz Azevedo* and *Cavalcante Rolim* position themselves as specialists in the REM, highlighting exclusivity and high standards through slogans such as "We make the incomparable," "High-standard benchmark on the Ecological Route of Miracles," "Transforming dreams into reality with exclusive developments," and "The dream of investing in paradise begins with us." *Taipa* emphasizes "local culture, curation, charm, architecture, and sustainability with @tamojunto"[13] *RCVC-Comax* presents itself as a "developer specialized in the Ecological Route of Miracles." *Vivant* combines profitability with high-standard positioning, while *Domari* adopts a sensory language, claiming to have been "born from the sea" and to be "building experiences."

As the pioneer specialists, they stress their expertise, but also incorporate economic values such as profitability and investment into their discourse, while others also evoke sophistication through references to local culture, exclusivity ("making the incomparable"), origins ("born from the sea"), and even sensory experiences in paradise.

3.3 Established Broad-Based Firms

From 2021 onward, developers classified by us as established broad-based firms began operating in the REM. Founded between the 1980s and 1990s, such as *Moura Dubeux* (1983), *R Pontes* (1988), *Sanco* (1996), and *Telesil* (1997), most are based in Alagoas (except for *Moura Dubeux*). They are broad-based because they have developments throughout Alagoas and even across the Northeast, as in the cases of Moura Dubeux and Sanco. These four developers do not primarily focus on the REM, each having only one development by 2024. *Moura Dubeux's* profile is the opposite of the specialists: Established in 1983 in Recife (the capital of Pernambuco) by three civil engineers (and brothers), it initially focused on high-end buildings and expanded across the Northeast, currently encompassing 25% of the real estate market in the Northeast. By 2013, it had built two million square meters, and in 2020, it went public on the B3 stock exchange (located in São Paulo).

As established players in the real estate economic field, these companies are now joining the REM trend. Except for *R Pontes*, whose website promotes its sole beachfront development in the REM alongside other high-end projects under the slogan "Exclusive developments, unique concepts," the other three developers have created distinct brands, with separate online links for their beachfront offerings.

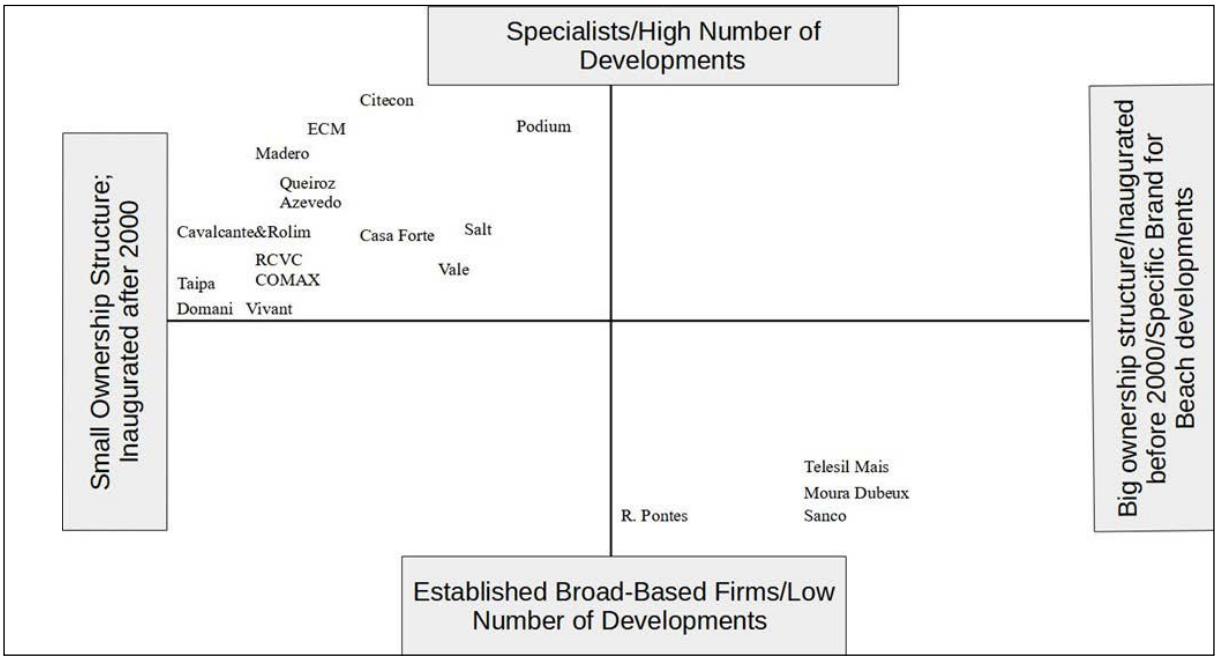
Moura Dubeux launched the Beach Class line in 1999, targeting second homes by the sea for middle and high-income Brazilian and foreign buyers. Its portfolio comprises 30 developments totaling 9,638 units and over 850,000[14] square meters, including its sole REM project, Beach Class Patacho. In 2021, *Sanco Engenharia*, whose institutional tagline emphasizes its long-standing experience in making the dream of owning a first home a reality, launched the *Sanco Privilège* brand for high-end

[13] @tamojunto is the event company that organizes the Réveillon dos Milagres.
[14] Data from Moura Dubeux's webiste

properties, selling Reserva Ayasú condominium in the REM as its sole development. That same year, *Telesil*, "the best developer in the Northeast," launched *TelesilMais* to operate in the differentiated niche, including Milagres Beach Residence in the REM. Both Sanco Privilège and TelesilMais were established in the same year they launched their first REM projects. Notably, the terms "Class," "Privilège," and "*Mais*" (plus in Portuguese) underscore the high-end positioning of the REM.

The following figure provides an initial depiction of the relational positions within the REM coastal real estate tourism subfield from 2015 to 2025, illustrating the concentration of specialist developers competing for beachfront lots with the well-established, large-scale developers founded in the 1980s and 1990s, who entered the REM later, and likewise appropriated the beachfront.

Figure 7: REM's coastal real estate tourism subfield – GC developers from 2015 to 2025



Sorce: Prepared by the author using research data.

4 The production of the discourse of rem appropriation through podium's posts (2015–2025)

This section analyzes content produced on Podium's Instagram between December 2015 and March 2025. As the pioneer developer in the REM, Podium's posts, considered by us as a form of commercial capital comprising a set of marketing discourses, allow for tracing the discursive construction of the REM over a decade. According to Bourdieu (2005), advertising not only functions as a mechanism for legitimizing and producing the value of goods, but also performs a constitutive role in the production of the economic field.

We justify selecting Instagram due to its rapid growth in Brazil, which had the world's second--largest audience in 2015 with 29 million users (G1, 2015) and reached 134.6 million accounts by 2025 (Brazomídia, 2025). Moreover, research indicates that Instagram can play a performative role in the construction of tourist destinations (Fatanti & and Suyadnya, 2015; Iglesias-Sánchez *et al.*, 2020), including the REM (Prado, 2023). We accessed the Podium's Instagram and downloaded all cover photos, the images highlighted in each post, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 8: Sample of cover photos published on Podium's Instagram

Source: Podium Instagram. Accessed 23 June 2025.

We collected 524 cover photos, numbered them as figures, tabulated them, and classified them according to their slogans. When no slogan was present, classification was based on the image. Three main categories were established: posts from the **Developer about itself** (posts featuring tips, advice, company profile, and services offered by the developer), posts about the **Developments** (posts with direct reference to the GC), and posts about the **Place** (posts emphasizing the REM).

Table 2: Podium posts from 2015–2025 by category

Year	Developer	Development	Place	Total Posts
2015	2	1		3
2017	10	4	6	20
2018	3	1		4
2019	5	10	1	16
2020	58	47	18	123
2021	23	22	16	61
2022	16	40	66	122
2023	18	74	26	118
2024	14	15	17	46
2025	3	6	2	11
Total	152	220	152	524

Source: prepared by the authors.

The table above shows that posting activity was minimal until 2019. In 2020, a turning point occurred, with a significant increase in posts about the **developer** and its **developments**. Although posts highlighting the **place** and **developments** also grew that year, it was between 2022 and 2023 that the content intensified, revealing a clearer strategy linking the GC to the REM territory. Based on Table 2, we divided the analysis of the Developer, Developments, and Place categories into three periods: T01 (2015–2019), marked by low activity; T02 (2020), identified as a turning point; and T03 (2021–2025), a period of rapid growth in projects by Podium and other developers in the REM.
Then, our analysis proceeded in two steps. First, slogans[15] were analyzed using *Voyant Tools Software*, to identify the most frequent words and the meaningful words that co-occurrence[16] to explore their associations. Second, images were categorized into three main types: (1) Landscape, featuring paradisaical beaches; (2) Human Figures, focusing on people; and (3) Infrastructure, highlighting constructions, and services. Our discussion primarily focuses on the slogans.

4.1 The Developer: Turning into an expert in Dreams, Market, Luxury, and Beachfront Privilege

Podium's cover photos reveal a process of professionalization and recognition **in tandem with the growing professionalization and recognition of the REM as a luxury tourist destination**. In T01 (2015–2019), as a pioneering specialist, Podium published 20 cover photos offering advice on beach house decoration and investment, linking dreams, audacity, and economic calculation. The company's expertise encompassed investment, decoration, and the realization of aspirations.

In T02 (2020), cover photos increased to 58 (cf. Table 01) as Instagram became the primary promotional channel during the COVID-19 pandemic. This year also saw the arrival of competing specialists, intensifying field competition. Thematic focus on tips and advice regarding beach house decoration and investments intensified, with the most frequent slogan terms being "house" (26[17]), "dream" (10), "investment" (10), "beach" (10), and "gated community" (10). Cover photo 155, published in November 2020, introduced the profitability advice: "Have you considered investing in a modern property and profiting from short-term rentals?" Podium's pioneering profile was reinforced with slogans such as "12 years building your dream" (Fig. 92 from our dataset).

In T03 (2021–2025), 74 slogans continued to underscore the developer's role as an advisor on housing (12), while also foregrounding terms such as *"invest"* (6), *"property"* (6), *"family"* (6), and *"dream"* (6). Persistent keywords included *"home," "beach," "decoration,"* and *"gated community,"* while *"market"* emerged as a new thematic element. Co-occurrence analysis shows *"house"* associated with *"privilege,"* and *"property"* and *"invest"* linked to *"beachfront," "luxury,"* and "privilege." The term *"dream"* conveys both the idea of something to be aspired to and of something already realized.

Compared with T01 and T02, when emphasis was placed on investment questions and profit, in T03, the developer increasingly introduces the idea of luxury, as illustrated by cover photo 557 from our dataset (March 2025). Other slogans highlight the company's modernization, showca-

[15] A total of 324 slogans were analyzed.
[16] For the co-occurrences, we considered the two preceding words and the two words that followed.
[17] The numbers in parentheses show how often each word appears in the corpus. For this analysis, we focus on term frequency regardless of corpus size.

sing the launch of its new website and recognition through awards granted by a Maceió/Alagoas-based organization. This logic of luxury is further reinforced by the appearance of a concierge service offered by the developer, underscoring the REM's consolidation as a high-end tourism destination. Melo (2016) had already noted the repositioning of São Miguel dos Milagres as a luxury destination where simply "being at the beach" becomes a socially distinctive privilege.

Figure 9: Representative cover photos related to the developer (T01, T02, T03)

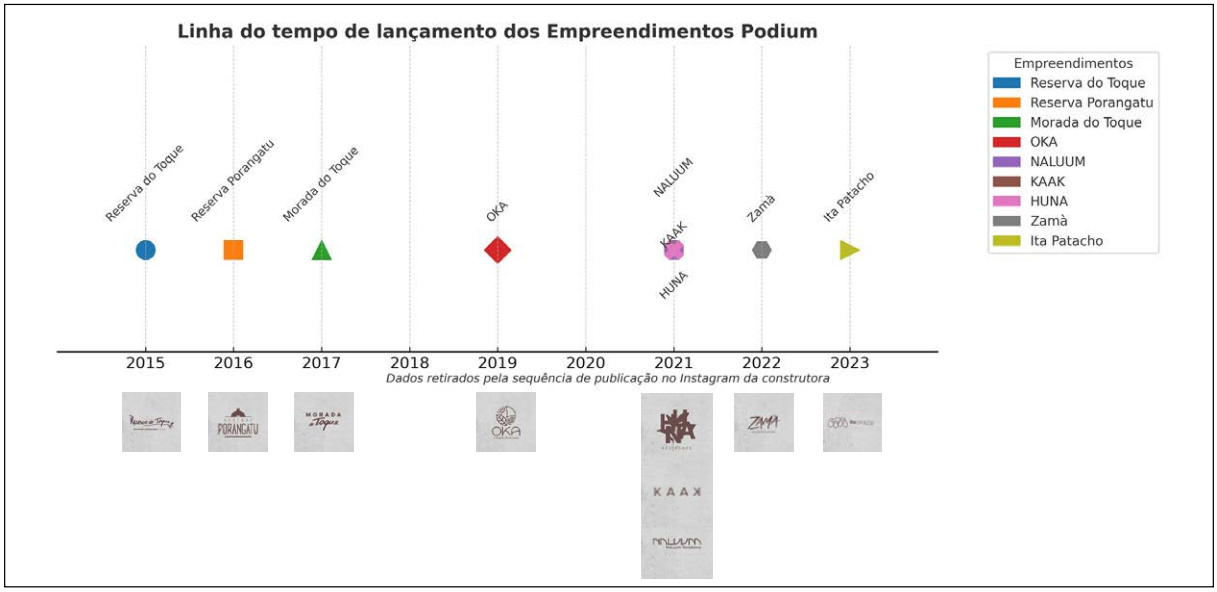
T01 (Tips, Dreams, Investment in a Beach House)	T02 (Investment and Profiting)	T03 (Investment and Luxury)
Fig. 19 from our dataset. Posted on May 29, 2017. "Make your dreams come true" (Author's translation).	Fig. 155 from our dataset. Posted on November 14, 2020. "Have you considered investing in a modern property and profiting from short-term rentals?" (Author's translation).	Fig. 557 from our dataset. Posted on March 24, 2025. "Is buying a luxury property in Alagoas worth it?" (Author's translation).

Source: Production by the authors using cover photos from the research database.

4.2 Developments: Beachfront Paradises

By 2021, the developer had launched four projects. In 2021, it launched three additional developments, followed by one in 2022 and another in 2023.

Figure 10: Timeline of Podium's developments



Source: Data sourced from the sequence of publications by the company

In T01 (2015–2019), 15 slogans related to developments were analyzed, with the most frequent words being “dream” (7) and “Miracles” (*Milagres*) (3). The developments are framed as dreams tied to something tangible, something to be built and brought to fruition. The word “Miracles” refers to the location but is also used connotatively, as in “here the miracles begin” (Fig. 46 from our dataset). The words “family” and “leisure” also appear prominently.

In T02 (2020), 25 slogans were analyzed. The most frequent words were: “Miracles” (7); “live” (3); “dream” (3); “living” (3); and “by the sea” (3). Co-occurrence analysis shows that “Miracles” is associated with the place and with the word “paradise,” while “dream” is linked to “build.” The word “living” co-occurs with “paradise,” “close to nature,” and “invest.” The term “by the sea” is associated with “high-standard,” “most beautiful coast,” and “view.” At this stage, developments are presented not only as dreams but also as high-standard investment opportunities in a paradise by the sea.

In T03 (2021–2025), 157 slogans were analyzed. The most frequent slogan words were: “miracles” (20); “sea” (15); “home” (10); “best” (9); “leisure” (8); “living” (7); “perfect” (7); “ecological route” (7); “comfort” (7); “refuge” (6); “paradise” (6); “exclusivity” (6); and “beachfront” (6). The word “sea” now surpasses “home” suggesting a focus on the outdoor experiences. Co-occurrence analysis shows “sea” associated with “beachfront,” “by the sea” “paradise,” “view,” and “privilege.” Developments are presented not merely as beach houses but as a perfect refuge, offering ocean views, exclusivity, and comfort.

Figure 12: Representative cover photos related to the developments (T01, T02, T03)

T01 (Developments as miracles and a dream)	T02 (Developments in Paradise)	T03 (Luxury developments by the sea)
Fig. 46 from our dataset. Posted on June 12, 2019. “Here the miracles begin” (Author’s translation).	Fig. 90 from our dataset. Posted on May 15, 2020. “Have you ever imagined your whole family living in the paradise that is São Miguel dos Milagres?” (Author’s translation).	Fig. 177 from our dataset. Posted on December 01, 2021. “A new luxury lifestyle is born, fully integrated with the environment: a high-end beachfront residential condominium on the Rota Ecológica dos Milagres.” (Author’s translation).

Source: Production by the authors using cover photos from the research database.

4.3 About the Miracles: From a remote place to a benchmark

In T01 (2015–2019), there were a few slogans focusing on the place (7). The most frequent words in slogans were "living" (4), "paradise" (2), "Miracles" (2), "Brazil" (2), "Alagoas" (2), and "believe in miracles" (2). At this stage, there is a clear tendency to portray the REM as a distant paradise to be discovered.

In T02 (2020), 18 slogans were analyzed. The most frequent words included "Miracles" (9), referencing the place as a "paradise," "beach", "perfect beaches," and "have you been?" The tone still emphasizes the discovery of the place as a paradise.

In T03 (2021–2025), cover photos increased to 127, with frequent words including "Miracles" (16), "paradise" (8), "ecological route" (6), and "beach" (6). Co-occurrence analysis shows that "Miracles" no longer carries the connotation of an extraordinary event but refers either to the geographic location along the Ecological Route or a benchmark. For example, five directly mention the city of São Miguel dos Milagres (with slogans such as "paradisiacal beaches," "best experience," "where is this paradise?"). Six references about the Ecological Route as a whole ("growing value," "luxury beachfront tourism," "development," "rest from festivities"), and five use "Miracles" more generically, as a benchmark linked to nature, ecotourism, dreams, and relaxation. Fieldwork, however, reveals tensions: public agents from Porto de Pedras criticize the prominence given to São Miguel dos Milagres, arguing that the "Miracles" label homogenizes the region and erases the local identities of other municipalities. This process echoes Bruno and Salle's (2018) analysis of the symbolic reconfiguration of territories by elites, as observed in Pampelonne, France.

The word "paradise" frequently appears associated with tranquility, safety, and environmental quality certification (Blue Flag). "Beach" is visually emphasized as a paradisaical, recreational, and contemplative setting, with particular attention to Patacho Beach, which has received the Blue Flag certification.

Figure 13: Representative cover photos related to the place (T01, T02, T03)

T01 (Miracles as a distant dream)	T02 (The town of São Miguel dos Milagres)	T03 (Miracle as a benchmark)
Fig. 07 from our dataset. Posted on April 04, 2017. "The Route of Miracles stands out in publications about tourism in Brazil; living in a place like this is living in paradise; #BelieveInMiracles" (Author's translation).	Fig. 135 from our dataset. Posted on September 19, 2020. "São Miguel dos Milagres will provide you with incredible landscapes, unforgettable experiences, and ear-to-ear smiles." (Author's translation).	Fig. 423 from our dataset. Posted on February 02, 2025. "Feel the spectacle of nature every day. Live Milagres." (Author's translation).

Source: Production by the authors using cover photos from the research database.

In addition to T03 slogan analysis, an image-based analysis was conducted. Outdoor activities and beach access are prominently featured. Of the 70 images analyzed without slogans, 38 depict all the elements of a paradise: crystal clear and blue water, an empty beach, a sunny day, and coconut trees (Fig. 322 below). Others bring people on off-beach activities (golf, massage, shopping, condominium views), sports, and seaside experiences (diving, stand-up paddle, surfing, kite surfing). Human figures, whether families, couples, or individuals, are consistently portrayed as white (in a state where 60% of the population identifies as non-whites), young and slender, enjoying the beach exclusively, and conveying happiness.

Figure 16: Cover photos illustrating beach uses

Fig. 368 Leisure/Family	Fig. 447 Romance	Fig. 391 Contemplation	Fig. 510 Wellness	Fig. 528 Adveture	Fig. 317 Food	Fig. 322 Paradise

Source: Production by the authors using cover photos from the research database.

5 Final considerations – social agents and their sociodicies of the supply of gc in the rem's coastal Real-State Tourism Field

Who is participating in the construction of the REM's coastal real estate tourism subfield? Using the notion of field as a heuristic tool, we observed that GC builders are primarily local social agents working in firms with small ownership structures. In our field design, we highlight factors that both align and differentiate these builders, with similarities prevailing. All of them evoke expertise in the REM, either by converting their reputation from popular to high-standard construction, as in Podium and Citecon, by launching their businesses already focused on boutique developments, as in Cavalcante and Rolim, or by creating specific brands to operate in the region, as in Sanco, Moura Dubeux, and Telesil.

The specialists concentrate their projects in the REM, with a visible concentration in the number of developments, since three companies account for 44% of all GC. Many of their investments are all in the REM, and several firms appear to have been created precisely to operate there, as their founding dates coincide with the launch of the first GC. There is also a concentration in company size, mostly small firms, often family-based or structured as small partnerships, and in their cooperative strategies, as Cavalcante and Rolim and Queiroz and Azevedo jointly build three projects without clearly disclosing this partnership. We also observed capital reconversion, as in the case of a social agent who moves between showbusiness and real estate, and capital conversion, as in the case of an agent working at Madeiro who created his own company with a first seafront development. Differences remain, since at the other end of the spectrum stand established companies with longer experience, more diversified portfolios, and wider geographic scope, although each has only one GC in the REM, located in premium seafront areas.

What are the legitimate narratives that justify developers' positions in the subfield? The REM was once a remote place, and even today, access remains difficult. Podium's owner stated in an inter-

view[18] that they were the first to take the risk of developing there in 2015. After the COVID-19 pandemic, it altered the objective conditions of the global tourism field; developers had the know-how, and the location had the attributes of a lost paradise ready to be transformed into a commodity.

By 2025, their slogans and taglines commonly referenced specialization, investment, dreams, luxury, and uniqueness. Between 2015 and 2025 these sociodicies evolved, as shown through Podium's Instagram posts. In T01, the discourse presented the beach house as a life project yet to be achieved in a paradise awaiting discovery. In T02 Podium reinforced its role as a miracle facilitator and gradually positioned itself as an expert while the property became a high end investment and a financial asset for short-term rentals. From 2021 onward Podium consolidated its symbolic authority as completed and award winning developments replaced promises, and the home became explicitly associated with luxury, exclusivity, privilege, and beachfront living. The evolution of this advertising illustrates the construction of a sociodicy that legitimizes the private appropriation of beach access under the symbolic framework of the miracle, interpreted as something once unlikely but now realized, as a dream of living in paradise, as the name of a municipality, as an investment site, and as a benchmark for luxury and sustainability. In this symbolic struggle, Podium and the other developers appear as those who operationalize an economic miracle by generating employment, municipal revenue, and income for owners and seasonal rental firms. They also provide the miracle of comfort by delivering furnished homes in a remote region, and the miracle of access to paradise as an exclusive luxury experience through concierge services.

An important observation must be made. The discourse of luxury has become a prominent trend in tourism. However, how is it possible to maintain exclusivity with 65 developments comprising at least 3,284 housing units along only 23 kilometers of coastline? This contradiction between luxury as exclusive and at the same time accessible to all is addressed by Netto and Miraldi (2017), who show that the new luxury tourism is structured around individualized experiences available to many. Although this may suggest decreasing stratification, the authors argue that luxury is not democratizing but reconfiguring distinction, as agencies differentiate between those for whom luxury is embodied and those who must learn to consume it, as illustrated by Podium's owner, who stated in an interview[19] that he had to learn what luxury meant.

This paper offers a first step toward a deeper sociological analysis of the builders reshaping access to paradise in the REM. By mapping their positions, strategies, and sociodicies, we show how local firms and established developers construct a coastal real estate subfield that transforms a once remote area into a commodified landscape of "exclusive" access. A deeper investigation of developers' cultural, educational, and family backgrounds, the payment methods enabling GC homeownership, and other builders' marketing strategies is still needed to test the hypothesis that the REM exemplifies a new luxury tourism based on the paradox of exclusive access for all. Advancing this field-oriented approach will clarify how these actors collectively structure and legitimize the ongoing enclosure of coastal access in one of Brazil's most coveted paradises.

[18] Interview available on: https://youtu.be/KJDbLwXOX5Q. Accessed on: September 5th, 2025.
[19] Ibidem

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Link to access the article's empirical data
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nAkxMJ4oNeUyoRmfI9E9NMHX4zZ_r042/view?usp=sharing

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Vendendo o Paraíso: uma análise Bourdieusiana do Desenvolvimento de Condomínios Fechados na Rota Ecológica dos Milagres, Alagoas, Brasil

Resumo

A Rota Ecológica dos Milagres (REM), em Alagoas, tem passado por rápido desenvolvimento costeiro desde 2015, impulsionado pela expansão de condomínios fechados. Com base no conceito de campo econômico de Bourdieu, o estudo analisa o lado da oferta imobiliária, examinando perfis de construtoras, capitais e narrativas de legitimação expressas no Instagram. Dezessete empresas responsáveis por 65 empreendimentos foram agrupadas em pioneiras especialistas, especialistas e firmas consolidadas. Observam-se padrões de concentração espacial, conversão de capitais e competição. A análise longitudinal das postagens da Podium (2015–2025) mostra a construção da REM como um paraíso luxuoso, exclusivo e investível. Assim, as construtoras moldam controles materiais e simbólicos sobre o acesso à praia, naturalizando hierarquias sociais por meio de narrativas de sonho, expertise e privilégio

Palavras-chave: Acesso à Praia; Paraíso; Condomínio Fechado; Sociologia; Turismo..

Vendiendo el Paraíso: un análisis Bourdieusiano del Desarrollo de Condominios Cerrados en la Ruta Ecológica de los Milagros, Alagoas, Brasil

Resumen

La Ruta Ecológica de los Milagros (REM), en Alagoas, Brasil, ha experimentado un rápido desarrollo costero desde 2015, impulsado por la expansión de condominios cerrados. Basado en el concepto de campo económico de Bourdieu, el estudio analiza la oferta inmobiliaria, examinando los perfiles de las desarrolladoras, sus capitales y las narrativas de legitimación difundidas en Instagram. Diecisiete empresas responsables de 65 proyectos fueron clasificadas como pioneras especializadas, especializadas y firmas consolidadas. Se observan patrones de concentración espacial, conversión de capitales y competencia. El análisis longitudinal de las publicaciones de Podium (2015–2025) muestra la construcción de la REM como un paraíso lujoso, exclusivo y rentable. Así, los desarrolladores moldean controles materiales y simbólicos sobre el acceso a la playa, naturalizando jerarquías sociales mediante narrativas de sueño, experticia y privilegio.

Palabras clave: Acceso a la Playa; Paraíso; Condominio Cerrado; Sociología; Turismo.

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