

## The potential of the city of Araguaína – TO, to touristic receptivity considering the dynamics of its urban pattern



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### ABSTRACT

Touristic activity represents an important option as a social, economical and cultural motivator for a specific area. But consistent tourism cannot exist

without the building of civility. Urban beauty and security should be seen as civility factors. The city of Araguaína – TO developed itself with no order, which contributed to its poor urban aesthetics. The city has a specific land use regulation but there is no government inspection to accomplish it. There are obstacles on the sideways that difficult pedestrian access making many of them walk on the streets risking their lives. The aim of this research was to understand the perception that the city's inhabitants have of the accessibility to the walkways, their safety to the inhabitants and to the tourists. It was also verified if they know that there is a specific regulation that sets the use of the sideways. The method used in this research was developed in the qualitative dimension by bibliographic research intending theoretical consistency, as well as, quantitative form, through the questionnaires applied to the Araguaína's population.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Urban texture, Security.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The urban space is not the only territory for the practice of tourism, but it is the most important, as it is, par excellence, a place of social and cultural encounter. The tourist, when making a trip, looks for places that offer a pleasant ambience and, the lack of it, can interrupt a trip when it represents his own displeasure. So the more quality, the better.

According to Yázigi (2003), the choice of a tourist destination is almost always based on a set of goods and services called "factors of civilization". The locality must offer leisure facilities such as cinema, theater, library, squares and parks, basic sanitation, cleaning, well-planned urban arrangement, in short, a city that is adequate and provides quality of life for its residents, because a city will only be good for tourists if it is good for those who live in it.

The city of Araguaína, despite lacking natural tourist attractions, could, due to its location and the population contingent it reaches, develop Business Tourism and Events. Despite this possible potential, the municipality lacks basic infrastructure for its development, demanding economic and human investment.



The municipal policy of urban development, of the municipality of Araguaína, has legal instruments such as the Master Plan, the Building Code and the Municipal Code of Posture that aims to order the full fulfillment of the social functions of the city and urban property. However, in a study previously developed by us, and presented at the XV Encuentro of Geographers of Latin America in Cuba, it was observed that many sidewalks are used inappropriately, altering their primary use, which is the circulation of people. Obstacles hinder the free access of pedestrians, forcing many to travel on the road of vehicles putting their lives at risk. Therefore, the question that remains is: how will a city receive tourists if it does not offer comfort and safety to its pedestrians? Thus, the general objective of the present research was to verify the opinion of residents regarding the accessibility of pedestrians to sidewalks and whether they offer safety to them and to the tourists who visit them. It was also verified if they are aware of the legal instruments that regulate the use of pedestrian roads.

## 2 TOURISM AND URBANITY

Basic premises for the development of tourism, lodging, transportation and gastronomy are not enough to guarantee tourist demand. The field of travel goes much further. Tourists also experience the city, which must offer mobility, sustainability and safety solutions, as the city is a place of meeting, of conviviality. In addition, it is important to value, beauty, ethics and aesthetics of urban spaces in what can be apprehended by those who experience them. Therefore, the organization of urban spaces and their relationship with inhabitants and tourists is important as it strengthens bonds and reflects on their well-being.

When we talk about space, we usually think of that space that is measurable in its three dimensions, height, length, and width, and we rarely realize that this is just a bounded aspect of space. This is the concrete aspect of the place. What about the people who experience this space? We experience the city in such an obvious way that its peculiarities do not attract our attention and we do not even question them (BOLLNOW, 2008; CARLOS, 2007).

A broader concept is offered by Santos (2009), who considers space as the set of fixed (a bridge, a city, a house, a square, a library) and flows. For him, the fixed elements, fixed in each place, can allow acts that alter the place itself and, new or renewed, flows can recreate environmental and social conditions, redefining places. But, still for the author, nowadays, "the fixed ones are more and more artificial and more fixed to the ground; the flows are increasingly diverse, wider, more numerous, faster" (p.62). On the other hand, the author offers another possibility: that of the territorial configuration on the one hand, and the social relations on the other, since the territorial configuration is not the space, but the materiality and the life that animates it and its real existence is only given to it by the fact of social relations.



The urban space, represented by streets, sidewalks, buildings, squares, automobiles and, of course, people, is given to us in an ambivalent way, as a stimulator and repressor. This space, for Bollnow (2008) is not a neutral and constant medium "but is filled with meanings in the vital relations of opposing actions, and these meanings, in turn, change according to the different places and regions of space".

Cities can be divided, according to Borja (2003) *apud* Sousa (2010) into *urbs*, *civitas* and *polis*. The *urbs* is its physical dimension defined by human agglomeration, in a territory of functional and social diversity and by its demographic density. The *civitas* is its social dimension and is, par excellence, the place of citizenship. It must be based on the equality of citizens of a heterogeneous society and prioritize coexistence and tolerance. And finally, we have the city *polis*, which represents its political dimension. It must be the place of the politics of participation, of proximity and representation of the collective identity of society, as well as of opposition, mobilization and social expression and change in power relations. It is important, for an adequate urban environment, that these three dimensions exist and interrelate.

When one observes today's cities, in general, one realizes that the problems are increasing at a faster rate than the possibilities of solution. Does the model of the modern, or postmodern, city respond to the needs of its inhabitants? Does the urban reality allow it to be lived as a human, individual and collective experience? Is it possible for urban spaces to become viable for citizens and for them to offer an improvement in the quality of life, understood, here, in the fullness of man's biopsychosocial roots?

Cities, built on universal principles, have a restrictive character, where the economic prevails over the political, the experiential and the symbolic. In the same way, the main concern of planners, administrators and urban planners is with the city and the physical territory, while the human dimension is left aside. Its proposals for planning, revitalization, occupation or reorganization of spaces do not take into account local and peculiar characteristics of that population and the way in which the inhabitants live, perceive and imagine the space in which they build their lives. In addition, administrators and planners guide their intervention policies by principles enunciated almost a century ago, whose thinking emphasizes business without worrying about improving the living conditions of its citizens (LIMENA, 2001).

Some elements are important for the understanding of cities and, among these, one is paramount: the way of looking at the city. Far from translating only partial images, it reveals "qualities" of the urban space. A conscious gaze captures the imaginary present in every moment of everyday life. Casting a glance, therefore, on the city, allows us to identify the relationship between it and thought itself, between the private and the public, "between the spaces of intimacy and the great urban



collective spaces, between the emergence of different forms of sociability and the signs that sustain them." (LIMENA, 2001, p.39).

When we stop to look at the city, we can observe the heterogeneity that exists there: the ways of life, the ways of living, the use of land by various economic activities, among others. On the one hand, installed on public land or in litigation, the favelas, where the disorderly construction of spaces prevails and with little or no infrastructure. On the other, middle-class and high-end apartments, townhouses and mansions on tree-lined streets. In the "noble" neighborhoods the streets are empty, in the "popular" neighborhoods the street is almost an extension of the house. This contradictory and unequal way of occupying spaces is a reflection of the social inequality that still exists, especially in developing countries.

It is also important to return to the need to reinsert in the analysis of cities what is the relationship between time and space that is contained therein, which is often elided. The rhythm of the city marks people's lives in such a way that they end up losing identification with the place and with other people. Your life changes as quickly as the city reproduces. The space for meeting, partying, fun almost disappears; street banter decreases; trees are destroyed and squares are transformed into concrete (CARLOS, 2007).

After the Second World War, in order for countries to remain capitalist and democratic, their policies had to address issues of employment, good housing, social security, welfare, and the creation of ample opportunities to build a better future. Thus, the reconstruction, reformulation and renovation of the urban fabric became an essential ingredient for the realization of this project (HARVEY, 1992). The tactics of rebuilding cities in Europe varied from place to place, according to the degree of destruction during the war, political control, or the degree of the state's commitment to the well-being of its citizens. England adopted, for example, strict planning legislation, restricting and replacing suburbanization with the planned development of new cities. Measures were also taken to eliminate squalid dwellings and build houses, hospitals, schools, factories, among others, through rational planning procedures. For Harvey (1992), these measures reflected the concern, expressed in the laws, with the rationalization of spatial patterns and circulation systems so that they could promote equality, at least of opportunities, economic growth and well-being.

While several European countries relied on the British solution, the United States, on the other hand, undertook quite a different urban reconstruction. Rapid and loosely controlled suburbanization was developed by private individuals, but subsidized by government-funded housing systems and by public investments in the construction of roads and other infrastructure. The strategy to remedy the deterioration of the city center was through the demolition and reconstruction of these spaces. In this way, the entire New York metropolitan area was remade through the construction of freeways and bridges, the planning of urban parks, and urban renewal.



Although the solutions found between Europe and the United States were different, Harvey considers that it would be erroneous and unfair to claim that the "modernist" solutions found to the dilemma of post-war urban development and redevelopment were a failure. War-torn cities were quickly rebuilt and reasonably successful in reconstituting the urban fabric, preserving full employment, contributing to social welfare, improving material social facilities, and generally facilitating the preservation of a capitalist social order threatened in 1945.

Jacobs (2000), unlike Harvey, considered the reconstruction of American cities not as reconstruction, but as devastation of cities. For her, projects for low-income people have become centers of delinquency, vandalism, and social helplessness. On the other hand, housing projects for middle-income people were considered by her as "wonders of stupidity and subjection, deprived of all the joviality or vitality of city life" and, in her view, luxury housing projects have an "insipid vulgarity". Still, according to her, cultural centers would be unable to sustain a good bookstore, civic centers would just not be avoided by "bums" and sidewalks "go from nowhere to nowhere." The author also made harsh criticisms about the increase in car traffic and the modernist urban ideology that highlights autonomous individual works and separates the uses of the city, creating lifeless cities, emptied of people.

Like Jacobs, several authors, including Gehl (2013), Santos (2009) and Lefebvre (2001) criticize the modernists for having shifted the focus to individual constructions rejecting the city and the space of the city. Along with modernism, in the 1960s, with the *boom* of the automobile industry, a large number of vehicles invade cities around the world causing several and flagrant transgressions that it is almost impossible to assess the damage to the quality of cities.

In this more than half century, since 1960, discussions and studies developed by researchers and theorists on the life and death of cities, have contributed to progress in practical urban planning and traffic planning, creating, in many urban areas of the world, conditions for urban life and pedestrians, giving lower priority to car traffic. But in many urban areas, especially in Third World countries, the problem of traffic remains, if not has increased.

Even so, the human dimension has been forgotten and left haphazardly in the urban planning of most cities in the world, as well as giving little priority to pedestrian areas, public leisure spaces and the function of urban space as a meeting place for residents and tourists. And, the people who still use the city's space, for the most part, are increasingly mistreated by limited spaces, obstacles, pollution, noise, dirt, risk of accidents, among others.

According to Yázigí (2003, p.38), the city "provides rich possibilities for exchange and opportunities for growth: they are the space for the development of civilization, par excellence". And, still for the author, building civilization in the city must have as principles the human condition and its bodily dimension above all interests to development; the relationship between the city and democracy;



memory preservation; provision of quality public spaces, without ever privatizing them; basic infrastructure networks such as sanitation, communication, security; relentless fighting crime; abundant vegetation and aesthetic beauty.

Conceptualizing quality of life in the urban space is difficult to measure. It can be said, *a priori*, that quality, within the city, is the result that combines certain general characteristics, among them, safety, environmental quality, mobility and leisure opportunities, with awareness of the differences of the population, especially those of age group and physical limitations. These characteristics endow the urban with hospitality, which is an important virtue of citizens and indispensable for tourism. Urbanity and citizenship are historically, etymologically and culturally linked to the city and, therefore, to the essence of hospitality, welcoming, receptivity and well-being. The city must encourage and welcome. Without these conditions, there can be no talk of civilization, much less of tourism.

If we look at the urban fabric of most Brazilian cities, we will see that public managers ignore how much the organization of adequate urban space can influence the longer stay of tourists and the well-being of its residents. We are not only talking about the aesthetic issue of our cities, but also about the official disregard for public affairs, also in relation to violence, corruption, social inequality, the misunderstanding of what democracy is, among others (YÁZIGI, 2003). Perhaps the biggest problem of public management lies in the choice of planners and administrators based on their political performance to the detriment of people who have technical knowledge. In the city of Araguaína, this model is repeated.

### **3 EVENT AND BUSINESS TOURISM, THE CITY AND THE TOURIST**

Event and business tourism is considered a tourist activity because, when it takes place in a locality, it uses all its transport structure, means of lodging, food and beverage establishments and, in a way, moves all local commerce. As a result, this segment contributes considerably to the economic and social development of the city, and often of the region where the activity takes place. The benefits are reflected in the generation of jobs, in the improvement of the quality of the workforce, in the redistribution of income, in the capture of foreign exchange, in the increase of tax collection, among others. And, all these factors, if well managed by the government, will bring improvement in the quality of life of its residents. In addition, business and event tourism collaborates in the dissemination of the natural, cultural and social attractions of the region hosting the event and uses these resources when their demand is not so significant on the part of leisure tourists.

According to data from the Ministry of Tourism (2010), the leisure tourist has a stay of around twelve days and spends an average of US\$ 80.6 per day. On the other hand, business and event tourists have a shorter stay, with an average of eight days, but their daily expenditure is higher, approximately





US\$ 112.9 per day. In addition, about fifty percent of these tourists travel accompanied, which results in a significant increase in foreign exchange for the locality.

When choosing a city to host an event, several factors are taken into account. Among them, according to Canton (2009), its attractions, facilities and accesses that guarantee the flow of people to, and in, the locality. It is also necessary to remember that cities are attractive for tourism because of all that they represent as works of human societies, as places of encounter, of coming and going, of happening in general. As well as the organization, the urban design, the care with the quality of public spaces and the urban management that offers good signage, comfort, safety and accessibility also reflect the level of urban hospitality expected by tourists.

If, on the one hand, tourists must be satisfied, on the other hand, it is not possible to ignore the expectations and behaviors of the populations that live in the places that receive this flow. The city, thus conceived, will find a great opportunity to heat up its economy and develop. In addition, the organization of events and the development of business tourism can also contribute to the cultural enrichment of its community through the exchange between them and the participants themselves.

The tourist, in a way, has a bit of the *flâneur*<sup>1</sup>. "Wandering" through the cities allows you to observe the historical and cultural details of the city. It is where he improves his relationship with space, with time, with the other. But walking through cities requires more than legs and feet. It requires sidewalks where you can walk without too many interruptions or obstacles. For a walk to be pleasant and comfortable, pedestrian paths need to be relatively free and unimpeded, without having to swerve or be pushed by others. It is also necessary to remember that disabled people, the elderly and children have special needs so that they can walk without hindrance. Also, people with shopping strollers, baby strollers and walkers need more space (GEHL, 2013).

Senseless interruptions, in the vast majority of cities around the world, force pedestrians to swerve and get on and off sidewalks and, by having to move between vehicles, put their lives at risk. In the city of Araguaína this is a constant.

#### 4 URBAN CONTEXT: ARAGUAÍNA

The region where the city of Araguaína is located today (Figure 1) was populated by the primitive forest-growing inhabitants of the Carajás tribe. Its pioneering, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), took place in 1876 with the arrival of João Batista da Silva and his family, coming from the State of Piauí. Later, with the arrival of other families, the village was formed, which found it difficult to progress due to the lack of roads and the challenging geographical and climatic conditions (IBGE, 2014). In 1953, Araguaína, formerly called Lontra, was

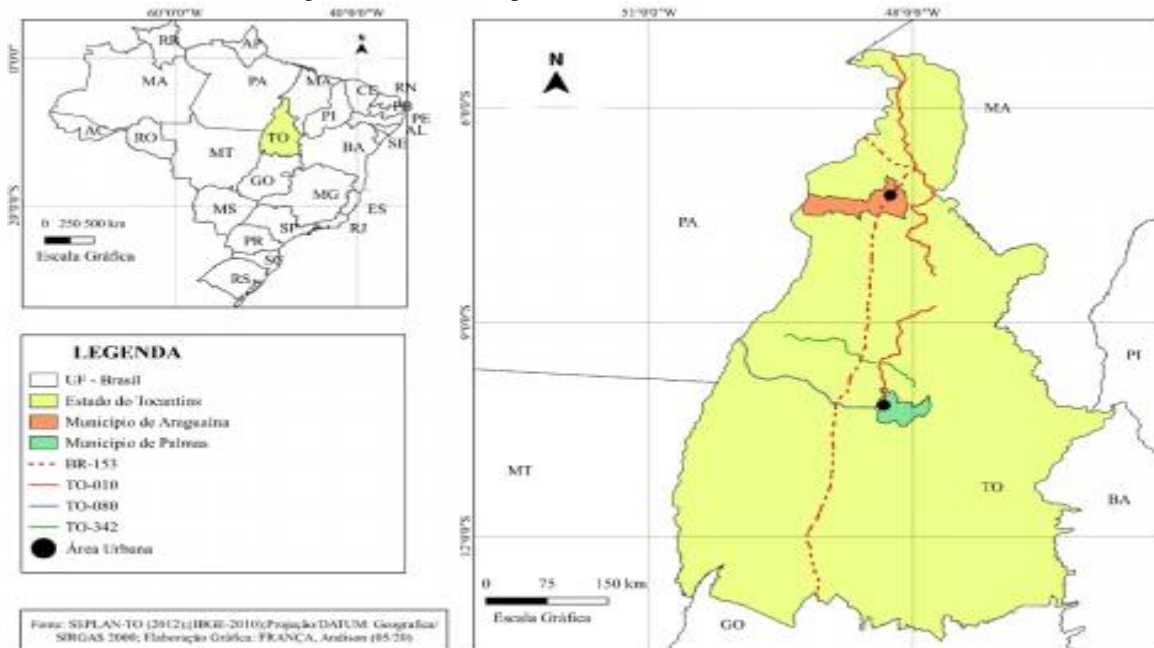
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<sup>1</sup> A person who wanders through a city with no apparent purpose, no commitment, only attentive to the history of the place and the search for aesthetic and erotic adventures (WHITE, 2001).



transformed into a District and, in 1958, the Municipality of Araguaína was created, whose urban development process occurred in a disorderly manner. It was only in 1960, with the construction of the Belém-Brasília highway (BR-153), one of the main highways in northern Brazil, that the city effectively began its economic and social development.

Figure 1. Political map of Brazil and the State of Tocantins.



Source: SEPLAN-TO; Projection/DATUM; Geography/SIRGAS 2000; Graphic Elaboration: FRANCE, Anderson (05/20).

The city of Araguaína (Figure 1), located at a highway junction, is about 380 km from the capital Palmas. It has an approximate population of 186,000 inhabitants according to IBGE data (2021) and is the second largest municipality in the state. In addition, it is strategically located, which makes it the main city in a coverage area of approximately 1,800,000 inhabitants, maintaining direct commercial relations with cities in the states of Tocantins, Maranhão and Pará. It is also surrounded by large, medium, and small farms that contribute to the economic development of the city through agriculture and livestock (IBGE, 2019) which makes it the largest economy in the state.





Figure 2. Central street of the city of Araguaína (Rua Cônego João Lima).



Source: Personal archive of Elisabeth Sydow (ES)

It is important to remember that the quality of urban landscaping is primarily of interest to its residents and that only through their relationship of esteem with the space, it will be possible, eventually, to arouse the interest of tourists, visitors, and passers-by.

The municipality of Araguaína does not have a tourist vocation, as it does not have relevant natural attractions, or others, that can contribute to the development of tourism. But, due to its economic characteristics and its capacity to cover a contingent of approximately 1,800,000 people, it could develop event and business tourism.

## 5 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES AND RESULTS

The basic research carried out was guided by the interest in systematically dealing with all possible data to be collected regarding the aspects of the use of sidewalks by pedestrians and commerce in general in the city of Araguaína-TO, through the perspective of the residents of this locality. To this end, the design or design of the present research was descriptive-exploratory, as this method provides a broad view of the research object, as well as the survey or *survey*. According to Freitas *et al.* (2000), the survey makes it possible to obtain elements that demonstrate characteristics, opinions or actions on a specific theme, from people who represent a certain population. The collected data were obtained through the application of a semi-structured questionnaire, whose instrument aims to produce quantitative descriptions that facilitate the collection with large groups of people.

The first five questions of the questionnaire aimed to sociodemographically characterize the respondents through questions related to their age, place of residence, gender, education level and average monthly income. In the second part of the questionnaire, questions were formulated to investigate the respondents' perception of the situation of pedestrian roads, their knowledge of the rules for the use of these roads and their understanding of the degree of safety of sidewalks in the movement of pedestrians and tourists.



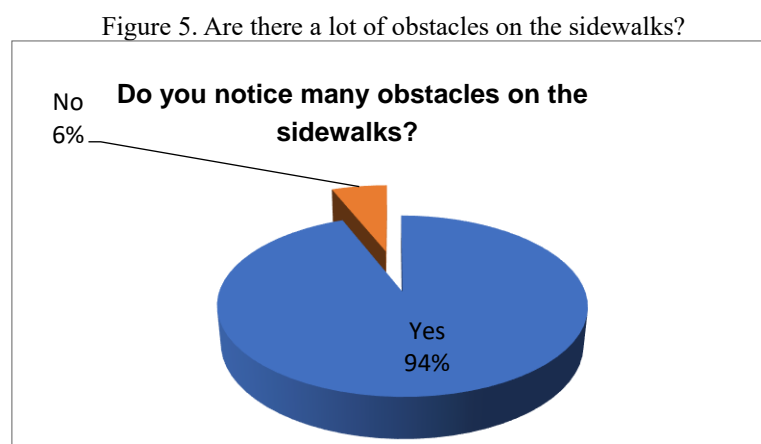
The sample that answered the questionnaires was composed of 173 people, including women and men over 18 years of age, without distinction of creed, race or socioeconomic level. Data collection through the quantitative method tool, i.e., questionnaires, were applied between February 19 and 26, 2020. The amount of 173 people was arrived at through the chi-square hypothesis test with a minimum of 5 observations in each cell ( $5 \times 5 \cdot 25 \times 5 = 150$ ). In this case, 150 cases should be sufficient, but considering the possibility that a questionnaire response would be very unusual and infrequent, which could distort the table, a sample of 173 people was chosen.

The sociodemographic profile of the sample shows that, for the most part, they are between 18 and 28 years old (53%); are female (60%); have incomplete education (40%) and have an income of up to R\$ 1,000.00. As the questionnaire was applied randomly, there was a diversification of the neighborhood in which they lived.

When moving through the city, it is observed that many pedestrians, even though there are sidewalks for their circulation, walk along the road intended for vehicles. For this reason, the interviewees were asked if they normally walk through the city on the street or sidewalk? The answers indicated that 56.4% of the people usually walk on the sidewalk, 23% said they walk on the street and 20.6% alternate their walk between the street and the sidewalk.

When asked if, in the neighborhood where they live, there are many spaces without sidewalks, 69% of respondents said yes, that there are many places without sidewalks and 31% answered no, that there are no spaces without sidewalks.

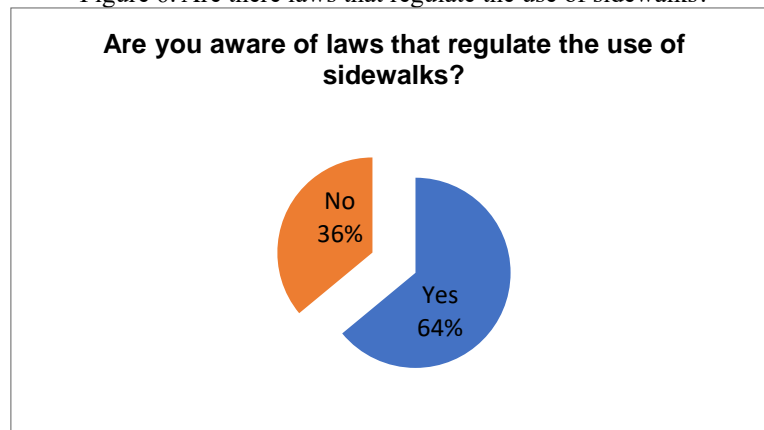
Regarding the perception of the interviewees in relation to the number of obstacles on the sidewalks, the vast majority (94%) answered yes, that they perceive that the sidewalks have obstacles. Only 6% answered no, that they do not observe obstacles on the sidewalks, as shown in Figure 5.



Regarding the knowledge of the individuals investigated about the existence of laws that require sidewalks to offer safety and free access to pedestrians, most (64%) are aware of the existence of these laws. And 34% do not know them (Figure 6).

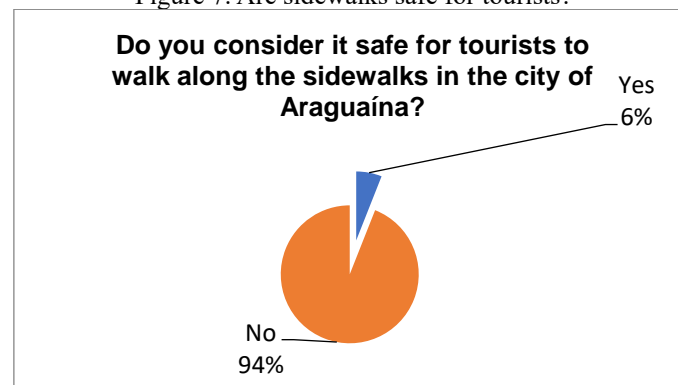


Figure 6. Are there laws that regulate the use of sidewalks?



Regarding the question of whether sidewalks offer safety to tourists when they pass through their roads in the city of Araguaína, it is observed in Figure 7 that 94% of people say that these sidewalks do not offer safety to tourists and 6% say that yes, that sidewalks are safe for their circulation.

Figure 7. Are sidewalks safe for tourists?



## 6 FINAL THOUGHTS

We believe that the greatest challenge for the construction of a city that offers quality of life to its inhabitants and, consequently, to tourists, lies in the establishment of order in the public sphere and the exercise of citizenship by the population. Only the populations that live densely in democracy have public managers who privilege, first, their residents, and who have citizens capable of freely exercising their citizenship, which is not yet the case in Brazil.

What can be observed, from the results of the survey, is that most respondents understand that a sidewalk with obstacles, or spaces that should have a pedestrian path and do not, cannot offer safety to pedestrians and tourists. In addition, most of them are aware of the existence of laws that do not allow the inappropriate use of pedestrian roads and, even so, do not charge the government to inspect and comply with it. The question that remains is: do they lack the exercise of citizenship? Or is it that those who are born into disorder become so familiar with the landscape without ethics and aesthetics, that they don't realize it, or are little bothered?



The criticism we make of the lack of ethics and urban aesthetics and, specifically, of the inappropriate use that is made of sidewalks in the municipality of Araguaína is for the search for a new socio-geographical order, against the formal model of development and urban organization established here and for the search for true social justice. It is worth remembering that the poor are not beings without ethics or aesthetics, but poverty is, because it robs the poor of their dignity.

It would be up to the citizens to review the municipal postures so as not to distort an order and organization of development, to technically train their staff of servants and to supervise so that businessmen and residents do not commit arbitrariness to the community. Among them, the inappropriate use of spaces for pedestrians, works in disagreement with what is established in the legal instruments, visual pollution, excessive noise and everything that can harm the quality of life of its residents.

However, if the municipal government does not seriously address soil degradation, poverty, the disorderly occupation of public spaces, in short, without the organization of the territory in all its complexity, it will hardly be able to create tourist demand for the municipality, whether through event and/or business tourism, or any other possibility generated by the activity. Without forgetting that the landscape is a factor of development and is of interest to its own residents and that only in a relationship of esteem for the space will it eventually arouse the interest of tourists and visitors.

Final observation: this study was carried out in 2020 and it should be noted that in recent years, due to a new municipal management, the city has shown improvements in its urban infrastructure, making it a little more pleasant. But, despite this, there is still a lack of care with urban cleanliness, sparse vegetation, implementation of adequate urban transport, access to the municipality by air and road and, above all, respect for traffic rules, so that traffic can be carried safely.



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