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# **Spatial distribution (2015-2017) of homicides in the city of Natal/RN (Brazil) and its (non-)relations with touristic areas**

**Jean Henrique Costa<sup>1</sup>, Hionne Mara da Silva Câmara<sup>2</sup>, Thadeu de Sousa Brandão<sup>3</sup> and Ivenio do Espírito Santo Hermes Junior<sup>4</sup>**

## **Abstract**

This article aims to analyze the current homicide rates in the city of Natal/RN since 2015 until 2017, spatializing the data categorically throughout the city's neighborhoods, in order to pinpoint locations that are most representative of homicide violence. This study seeks to understand in what ways (if any) the systematic occurrence of homicide violence interferes with the dynamics of tourism in Natal. The study was conducted using secondary quantitative data obtained in OBVIUM Annual (2018), a crime analysis publication of OBVIO Observatory of Violence in Rio Grande do Norte. The intersection of these two realities – homicide violence and touristic destinations – showed that the homicide rate in Natal usually occurs (but not exclusively) in peripheral areas, outside locations highly valued by the middle class and local elites as cultural and economic hotspots. It has been also observed that points of interest and tourist destinations are located in specific areas in the city considered “upper class”: the Southern Zone and the Eastern Zone. These regions are also considered to have the best service infrastructure in areas such as health, education, commerce and public

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<sup>1</sup> Professor da Universidade do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte - UERN (Adjunto IV com Dedicção Exclusiva). Professor permanente do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciências Sociais e Humanas (PPGCISH/UERN). Doutor em Ciências Sociais (PGCS/UFRN). E-mail: prof.jeanhenriquecosta@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Bacharel em Turismo (UERN) e mestranda em Ciências Sociais e Humanas (UERN). E-mail: hionnemara@gmail.com

<sup>3</sup> Sociólogo, Mestre e Doutor em Ciências Sociais pela UFRN. Professor Adjunto de Sociologia da Ufersa e do Mestrado em "Cognição, Tecnologias e Instituições" (CCSAH/Ufersa). Coordenador Acadêmico do OBVIO – Observatório da Violência Letal do Rio Grande do Norte. E-mail: thadeu.brandao@ufersa.edu.br

<sup>4</sup> Arquiteto e urbanista, pesquisador e escritor vencedor do Prêmio Literário Tancredo Neves. Coordenador de Pesquisa do OBVIO – Observatório da Violência Letal do Rio Grande do Norte. E-mail: ivenio.hermes@gmail.com

security. Consequently, the location of homicide violence (peripherals) does not coincide with “well-lit areas” (spaces valued by capital) that are touristic destinations. Thus it is observed that homicides occur most frequently in areas with low socio-spatial development, implying that, in terms of the relationship between tourism and public security, the locations that are most visited by tourists end up not intersecting with locations where most homicides take place.

**Key Words:** Tourism; Public Security; Urban Violence; Homicides; Natal/RN

## **Introduction**

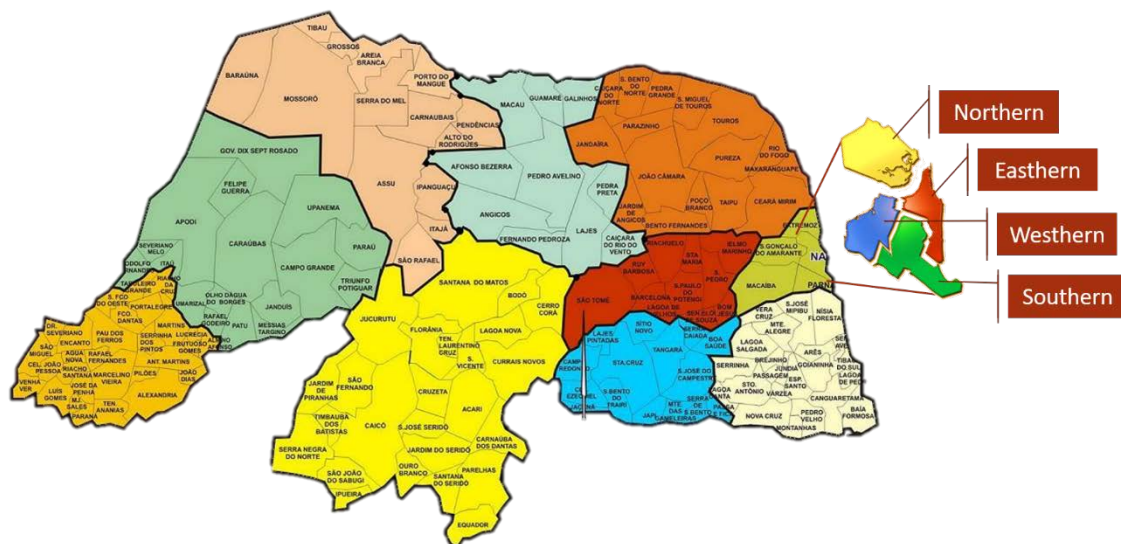
The implementation of public policy aimed at tourism is a structuring factor to the welfare of such activity and the well-being of visitors/tourists (Bornhofen, 2008). The commitment of public and private institutions that determine tourism policies is to provide circumstances that enable tourists to stay in or visit a given location. Basic services such as: water supply, energy, telephone and communication services, cleaning services, information services and signs for tourists, professional training of employees and public security should be considered. Public security, the last item mentioned above, is becoming an aspect of great concern due to the increase of urban violence in many Brazilian cities. Bornhofen (2008) confirms this when he says that the basic rights of tourists are extremely important, however public security presents an extra concern due to the significant growth of violence.

The increase of violence in Brazil is becoming a risk factor and a threat to the entire society. Hermes (2015) states that mortality can usually be related to increasing indexes of social and economic inequality, which makes it such an important indicator of social violence. Among the many forms of violence, homicide is considered the most serious crime. Homicide generates a bigger impact than other forms of violence because it is an irreversible act.

Homicide violence in Brazil presents a continuous and accelerated growth since the 1980's (Nóbrega Júnior, 2011). The firearm is the main instrument of this type of crime in Brazil (Hermes, 2015).

Nóbrega Júnior (2011) states that among the five Brazilian regions, Northwest has presented a significant impact regarding to the number of homicides. The city of Natal, capital of the state of Rio Grande do Norte – RN, presented a total of 6.074 cases of calculated homicides (Hermes and Brandao, 2015) from 2015 to 2017, and Natal is the largest city and has the largest concentration of income in Rio Grande do Norte (Hermes, 2015). It is also considered the “entrance gate” of Rio Grande do Norte’s tourism, centralizing in its space a significant part of touristic activity from RN.

The city is divided in four administrative zones illustrated at the location map bellow (map 1). There is, in its context, a notable spatial segregation relating to homicide distribution. The robbery, assault and drug trafficking crimes are fundamentally connected to areas with high economical potential (Hermes, 2015), and the homicide crimes are related, predominantly, to zones and neighborhoods of low income and higher social vulnerability.



Map 1: State of Rio Grande do Norte with the County of Natal and its four zones.

The homicide violence in Natal, as may be seen in table 1, reaches 28,17% of the state’s total (Hermes and Brandao in OBVIUM Annual, 2018).

**Table 1: Homicide Violence (2015-2017) Natal compared with rest of the state of RN**

Categories	2015	2016	2017	RN State Total	%
Natal	506	583	622	1.711	28,17%
Other Cities of RN	1.164	1.413	1.786	4.363	71,83%
<b>RN State Total</b>	<b>1.670</b>	<b>1.996</b>	<b>2.408</b>	<b>6.074</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

Source: OBVIUM Annual I (2018)

The current study aims, thus, to describe the occurring homicide rates in the city of Natal/RN, in the years of 2015 until 2017, spatializing them through all neighborhoods of the city, in order to point out the more dominant spaces of the called homicide violence and, thenceforth, understand in which way (if the case) the occurrence of homicide violence interferes in the dynamic of touristic activity in Natal. The objectives are to characterize and spatialize the main touristic spaces in Natal, in order to verify the interfaces between these spaces of visitors' circulation and the problematic of urban violence in the city. This study aims, therefore, to correlate the homicide violence spaces with the spaces of bigger circulation of tourists in the city of Natal, between 2015 and 2017, aiming to comprehend some vicissitudes present in the interface between tourism and the public security variable.

## Material and methods

The present study was held by means of bibliographical research, quantitative research – founded in the secondary data collected in Hermes (2015) and Hermes and Brandao in OBVIUM Annual (2018) expressed in tables of statistical analysis with the studied data.

The data concerning the homicides were lifted by Hermes and Brandao in OBVIUM Annual (2018), starting from the metadata methodology<sup>5</sup>, that works on the fundamentals of criminal analysis, reorganizing existing databases to support a more in-depth study of existing standards that sometimes go unnoticed by a less attentive researcher. The methodology of interpolation (insertion of reworked information in a concatenated form within an analysis system) and parameterized data from different sources or databases, from a dynamic collection process called the Multisource Platform

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<sup>5</sup> HERMES, Ivenio; DIONISIO, Marcos. **Do Homicímetro Ao Cvlimetro: A Plataforma Multifonte e a Contribuição Social nas Políticas Públicas de Segurança**. 2. ed. Natal: Saraiva, 2014. 110 p.

created by Hermes and Dionisio<sup>6</sup>, and therefore, a deeper analysis which consists in a concatenation of data obtained in diverse reliable sources.

The areas of touristic interests of the city were identified through the proposal project of urban monitoring carried by the State's Public Security Secretariat<sup>7</sup>.

There were observed, starting from the data about homicides occurred in Natal in the years of 2015 to 2017, the stains of homicide violence in the delimited spatial and temporal cutouts.

Methodologically, the study identified and compared the areas of touristic interest in the city of Natal with the areas of bigger incidence of homicide violence, aiming to verify the tessiture of the encounter of these variables in this space.

## **Results and discussion**

The number of homicides in the big cities of Brazil related to actions of violent character corresponds to the highest rates of the American continent. The indexes of violence that have as bigger consequence homicide are increasing since the 1980's in Brazil (Souza; Lima, 2006). When it comes to Brazilian regions, Northeast leads the ranking.

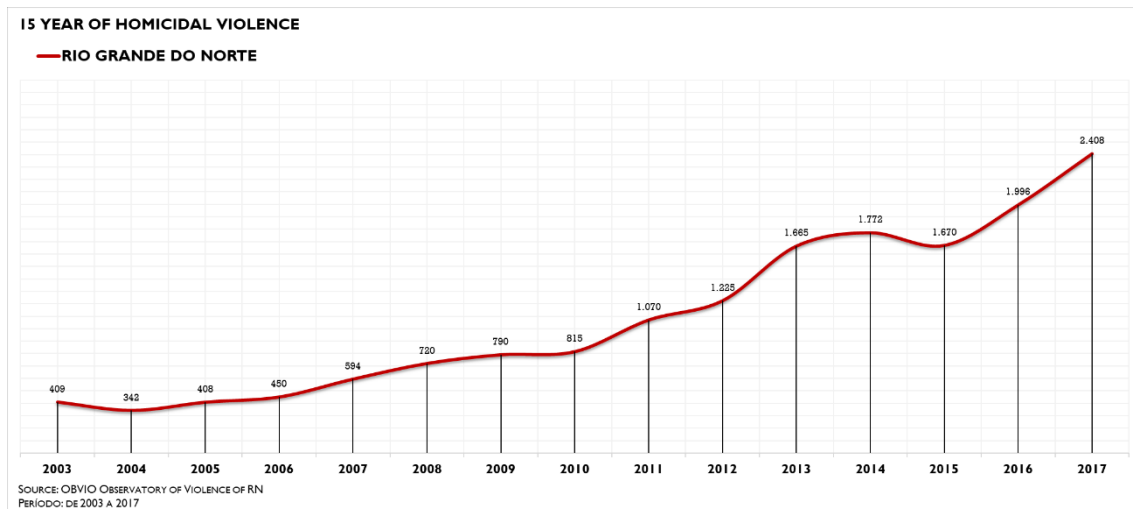
The Northeast region, according to Nóbrega Júnior (2011), in the year of 1996, calculated 8.119 deaths, in 2008, 16.729, a percent increase of more than 100% in series. In 1980, the rates were smaller than 10 homicides per 100 thousand inhabitants, admitted as reasonable by the World Health Organization (WHO) and by the United Nations.

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<sup>6</sup> HERMES, Ivenio. **Metadados 2013: Análises da Violência Letal Intencional no Rio Grande do Norte**. 2. ed. Natal: Saraiva, 2014. 145 p.

<sup>7</sup> "The urban waterfront of the capital was divided in macro and micro-areas, each one with an acting diagnosis. The stretches last from the Fortaleza dos Reis Magos – Fortress of Three Kings – until the beginning of Via Costeira – Coastal Route; from Via Costeira until the Convention Center [CCN]; and from CCN until the Morro do Careca. And still micro-areas in the beaches of Areia Preta, do Meio, Artistas and do Forte, along the waterfront of Ponta Negra and Ponta Negra's village [...]. Other areas of touristic interest, for instance the stretch Tirol-Petrópolis (gastronomic area), the Salgado Filho Avenue [...] and the set Capim Macio (considered a leisure area) were incorporated to the touristic interest area". In: PORTAL DO GOVERNO DO RN. **Área de interesse turístico de Natal terá monitoramento 24 horas**. August 21<sup>st</sup> of 2014. Available on: <http://www.rn.gov.br/Conteudo.asp?TRAN=ITEM&TARG=38446&ACT=null&PAGE=null&PARM=null&LB=L=Materia>. Access in Aug 25<sup>th</sup> of 2015.

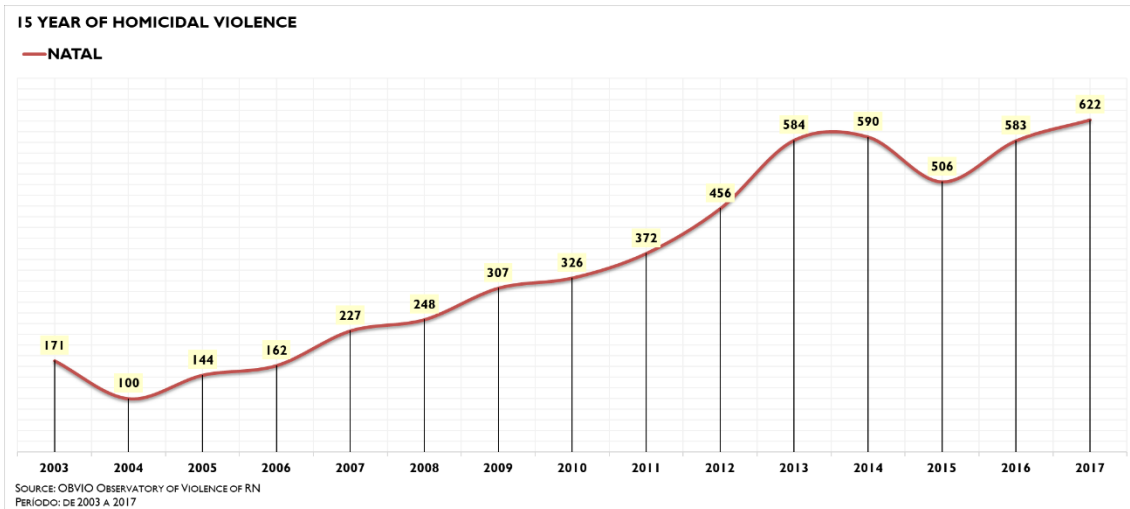
In Rio Grande do Norte, in the decade of 2003/2013, the number of deaths quadruplicated, and it kept going until 2017.



*Graphic 1 - of Homicidal Violence from 2003 to 2017 in the state of Rio Grande do Norte.*

Inside this reality of homicide seen in Rio Grande do Norte, it is located the city of Natal, capital of the state. Worldwide known by its beautiful beaches and diverse attractions that motivate the arrival of tourists from all over the world, however, the city is also a scenario of a visible social-spatial segregation.

A brief record with the data of such series has presented that in 2003 the number of deaths in Natal was 171 fatalities; a slight degree less in 2004 with 100; in 2005 with 144; in 2006 with 162; in 2007 with 227; in 2008 with 248; in 2009 with 307; in 2010 with 326; in 2011 with 372; in 2012 with 456 and in 2013 with 584. The total percentage of deaths in Natal in this series has calculated and increase of 241,5%, putting the city in a colossal position of increasing violence within the state, actually in 1<sup>th</sup> position among other cities (OBVIUM Annual, 2018).



*Graphic 2 - of Homicidal Violence from 2003 to 2017 in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte.*

Natal has lived for a few years with the constant increase of the incidence of homicide violence, installed mainly in the Northern and Western Zones, which are considered peripheral zones.

Following the series above, Hermes and Brandao in OBVIUM Annual (2018) have pointed in the year of 2014, 590 homicides, with 506 in 2015, 583 in 2016 and 622 in 2017.

The homicide violence works as a species of thermometer in which it is possible to measure the threshold achieved by violence in a general way. In a quick verification of the numbers we will see that starting from the 1980's and in the following decades there was verified in Brazil a significant growth in the homicide rates, it is what the following editions of the Map of the Violence by Julio Jacobo Waiselfisz proves.

In this respect, Hermes et al (2015) point out that for the past thirty years a tendency of generalizing violence is being formed. From 1980 to 2012 the author notices an increase of deaths of young people and young adults, especially male sex from extreme causes as homicide, suicide, and death by trafficking; there is a male and young excessive mortality (Hermes et al, 2015).

According to Waiselfisz (2011, p. 06), the continuous increment of violence in daily routine is something representative and problematic in the organization of modern societies lives, especially in the urban centers.



Still referring to region Northwest and more specifically to the state of Rio Grande do Norte, the Map of Violence 2014, whose register covers the decade that goes from 2002 to 2012, reveals to the region a gradual rise of numbers, with some exceptions, each year overcoming the mark of the previous year. Thus, in the year of 2002, first year of the analysis period, the rate of homicide per 100 thousand inhabitants was 22.4 coming to the end of the period at 38.9 in the year of 2012, an important growth of more than 70%. In the state of Rio Grande do Norte the elevation of homicide rates per 100 thousand inhabitants to the period is even bigger, with some oscillations for more and less in the first years of the featured decade, as from the year of 2006 the numbers have showed a gradual growth, registering in 2012, last year of the period, the number of 34.7 homicides per 100 thousand inhabitants, a growth superior to 200%, therefore, considerably significant.

Natal and its metropolitan region which is composed by 12 counties have witnessed a significant growth of the expressed violence in the increasing number of homicides. According to Hermes et al (2015) and Hermes and Brandao in OBVIUM Annual (2018), from 2015 to 2017, 3.507 people were victims of CVLI or “Conduitas Violentas Letais Intencionais” – Lethal Intentional Violence Behavior, a most complete terminology for homicide. Natal, Parnamirim and Sao Goncalo do Amarante, still according to Hermes and Brandao lead the ranking being responsible for over 70% of the events. There are many reasons for those lethal crimes, the capital of the state, before considered as a quiet city, today shows in media as a scenario of many conflicts and deaths that start hunting the region (Hermes et al., 2015).

**Table 2: Homicide Violence (2015-2017) Metropolitan Region of Natal**

Counties of the Metropolitan Region	2015	2016	2017	Total	%
Natal	506	583	622	1.711	48,79%
Parnamirim	135	175	154	464	13,23%
São Gonçalo do Amarante	78	103	131	312	8,90%
Ceará-Mirim	55	89	145	289	8,24%
Macaíba	67	68	99	234	6,67%
São José de Mipibu	31	50	53	134	3,82%
Extremoz	33	35	66	134	3,82%
Nísia Floresta	24	35	47	106	3,02%
Monte Alegre	5	9	22	36	1,03%
Maxaranguape	5	7	22	34	0,97%
Vera Cruz	2	10	20	32	0,91%
Iemo Marinho	5	5	11	21	0,60%
<b>Total</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>3.507</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

Source: OBVIUM Annual I (2018)

Natal and Parnamirim present more disparate HDI (Hermes et al., 2015), concentrating areas in which this index is high and others that extreme poverty predominate, what can reveal that the inequality condition allied to the abandonment by public power represent aggravating factors of homicide violence. Being the biggest city of the state and also having the biggest income concentration, Natal has 1.711 violent, lethal intentional crimes, which consists in 28,17% of the state's total (Hermes and Brandao, 2015) and also 48,79% Metropolitan Region's total.

**Table 3: Homicide Violence (2015-2017) County Zones of Natal**

County Zones	2015	2016	2017	Total	%
Northern	212	239	276	727	42,49%
Western	185	212	218	615	35,94%
Eastern	70	77	66	213	12,45%
Southern	30	41	49	120	7,01%
Deaths in Hospitals	9	14	13	36	2,10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>506</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>622</b>	<b>1711</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

Source: OBVIUM Annual I (2018)

Also, it can be noticed that there were deaths in hospitals which were sub notified, being impossible to attribute its occurrence in any administrative zone.

From the secondary data collected in Hermes and Brandao (2018), it is noticed that each zone in Natal presents singularities as far as spatiality of homicide violence.

The Northern Zone, according to table below, had, in the years of 2015 until 2017, a total of 727 homicides, presenting the most dangerous neighborhoods Nossa Senhora da Apresentação, Pajuçara, Lagoa Azul and Potengi.

**Table 4: Homicide Violence (2015-2017) Northern Zone of Natal**

<b>Neighborhoods</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Nossa Senhora da Apresentação	51	72	86	209	28,75%
Pajuçara	35	53	42	130	17,88%
Lagoa Azul	31	36	56	123	16,92%
Potengi	41	36	35	112	15,41%
Igapo	34	26	28	88	12,10%
Redinha	20	16	29	65	8,94%
<b>Total</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>727</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

Source: OBVIUM Annual I (2018)

Together, the four neighborhoods were responsible for almost 80% of the homicide violence cases in the analysis period. Nossa Senhora da Apresentação, first place of the list is also the most deprived of public policies, with a large rate of irregular territorial occupation, the most populous and most violent (Hermes et al. 2015).

As it may be seen in the table above, the dynamic of homicide violence occurs mostly in the neighborhoods of Nossa Senhora da Apresentação, Pajuçara, Lagoa Azul and Potengi, that are concentrated in non-touristic areas of the city. It is visible in the city of Natal that the neighborhood Nossa Senhora da Apresentação, for instance, does not live touristic reality in its space.

Currently, after the construction of the Newton Navarro bridge, in the year of 2007, that connected Eastern Zone (urban beaches) to Northern Zone (Redinha beach), has been occurring a turistification process of some spaces in Northern Zone, notably those which give access to the Northern coast of Natal (beaches in nearby counties). However, we still cannot infer that in Northern Zone, even in the most central areas, there is a touristic dynamic.

**Table 5: Homicide Violence (2015-2017) Eastern Zone of Natal**

<b>Neighborhoods</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Rocas	14	13	13	40	18,87%
Cidade Alta	13	22	3	38	17,92%
Alecrim	10	11	16	37	17,45%
Mae Luiza	10	13	12	35	16,51%
Santos Reis	6	4	7	17	8,02%
Praia do Meio	4	4	6	14	6,60%
Tirol	8	2	3	13	6,13%
Petrópolis	1	4	2	7	3,30%
Lagoa Seca	3	1	1	5	2,36%
Ribeira	1	2	2	5	2,36%
Areia Preta	0	0	1	1	0,47%
Barro Vermelho	0	1	0	1	0,47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

Source: OBVIUM Annual I (2018)

In the Eastern Zone of Natal the table 5 shows that between the years of 2015 and 2017 the number of cases of homicides was 212, being the neighborhood Rocas the biggest concentrator of such crime. There were 14 cases in 2015, 13 cases in 2016 and 13 cases in 2017, totalizing 40 homicides.

The Eastern Zone has the biggest concentration of neighborhoods comparing to the Northern Zone. However, the numbers of homicides are notoriously smaller when compared to Northern Zone that has the smallest concentration of neighborhoods and is not inserted in the context of touristic activity.

The Eastern Zone concentrates urban beaches and important business districts, besides neighborhoods and corridors that concentrate an expressive range of bars and restaurants. Therefore, the Eastern Zone is spatially inserted in a – real and potential – touristic area of the city.

Spatially, in Mãe Luiza, there is a certain correlation between the homicide violence area and touristic dynamics, explained, respectively, by social-spatial inequality existing in the neighborhood and adjacencies and its proximity with the Via Costeira – Coastal Route – and Parque das Dunas (touristic areas).

The Western Zone in table 6 presents a certain approximation in its numbers with the Northern Zone. Between 2015 and 2017 there were 615 murders having as main neighborhoods in terms of concentration Felipe Camarão and Planalto, together count 264 cases between 2015 and 2017.

**Table 6: Homicide Violence (2015-2017) Western Zone of Natal**

<b>Neighborhoods</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Felipe Camarão	61	53	52	166	26,99%
Planalto	31	33	33	97	15,77%
Quintas	25	27	44	96	15,61%
Bom Pastor	20	21	26	67	10,89%
Cidade da Esperança	14	20	13	47	7,64%
Cidade Nova	12	22	8	42	6,83%
Dix-sept Rosado	9	7	20	36	5,85%
Guarapes	8	10	8	26	4,23%
Nordeste	2	12	10	24	3,90%
Nossa Senhora de Nazaré	3	7	4	14	2,28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>615</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

Source: OBVIUM Annual I (2018)

The table 7 presents the numbers of homicides in Southern Zone of the city of Natal, totalizing 60 homicides in the course of two years in analysis. It is notorious the reduction of homicide violence when compared to Northern and Western Zones. The neighborhood Ponta Negra, between the years of 2013 and 2014, has totalized 21 homicides and is far from being the neighborhood with biggest incidence of this crime.

**Table 7: Homicide Violence (2015-2017) Southern Zone of Natal**

<b>Neighborhoods</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Ponta Negra	15	7	13	35	29,17%
Lagoa Nova	1	12	14	27	22,50%
Pitimbu	1	7	7	15	12,50%
Nova Descoberta	4	6	4	14	11,67%
Neopolis	3	4	6	13	10,83%
Candelária	5	3	2	10	8,33%
Capim Macio	1	2	3	6	5,00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

Source: OBVIUM Annual I (2018)

The Southern Zone of the city, represented in table 7, has totalized in the period at issue 120 homicides, being thus, visible the discrepancy of the numbers if compared to those presented to Northern and Western Zones of Natal, representing only 14% of the total of homicides from the first and 16% of the latter. It is noticed, therefore, that in spaces more likely to touristic activity development, where in fact it happens, the Eastern Zone and especially the Southern Zone of Natal, where is located Ponta Negra, the neighborhood of biggest touristic potential of the city, the homicide violence is far from reaching the level of the numbers presented by the other two zones of the city, Northern and Western. According to Hermes et al., Northern and Eastern Zones concentrate a

vast majority of violent, lethal and intentional crimes, making Southern Zone an absolute minority; Northern and Western Zones have the lowest development index, the lowest presence of social equipment and public policies, together they concentrate 80% of the violent, lethal and intentional crimes (2015):

The Southern Zone in Natal concentrates the biggest number of touristic equipment of the city, including a variety of establishments such as hotels, restaurants, bars, clubs, night clubs and others, as well as a differentiated range of services directed to tourism. The Via Costeira and its extension reaching to the neighborhood Ponta Negra concentrated the 'space' par excellence of touristic activity in the city.

The Southern Zone today concentrates the biggest number of touristic equipment of RN. Ponta Negra, a touristic neighborhood, concentrates the biggest number of hotelier establishments of the city, aggregated to these, bars, restaurants, inns, hostels, touristic services as car rental companies, travel agencies, among other services and equipment that can be observed in the locality. The neighborhood nowadays has shopping malls, bars, restaurants, gas stations, bakery shops and convenience stores, car rental companies, travel agencies, drugstores, schools, crafts fair, supermarket, all turned to touristic activity and to the upper-middle class that lives in its proximities (Silva et al, 2006, p. 145).

It is noticed, through the tables that have been showed above, that there is no correlation between the spaces of homicide violence and the eminently touristic spaces.

### **Final considerations**

The data presented during the study reveal that in Natal there is a clear spatial distinction between the touristic areas and the dominant spaces of homicide violence. Such observation, rationally expected, demonstrates itself in the data of homicide violence in the city. It is possible to affirm that spaces that concentrate a bigger economical appreciation do not experiment the dynamic of homicide violence. Thus, it is understood that the tourist visiting the city of Natal, and as a general rule frequenting the modern spaces of touristic activity, does not experiment this kind of lethal violence.

Surely the forms of violence perpetrated against the tourist concentrate in the dynamics of thefts and robbery, these also present in central and economically privileged areas in the point of view of public policies.

Referring to organization of local security policies aimed to tourism, this should focus exactly on the dynamic of thefts and robbery against the tourist, since in Natal, in the areas more affected by homicide violence, there is no striking presence of the touristic activity, except maybe for the proximity with the neighborhood Mãe Luiza or even some areas surrounding Northern Zone.

The areas where the biggest part of homicides happens are highlighted by its low social-economic condition, and not because of the touristic activity. This does not reveal any direct risk to the life of visitors that, in turn, lie in the favorable zones of the city, in which the violence in form of homicide is rare and, in some neighborhoods, even null. The homicides, as seen in this article, tackle especially groups of lower income, lower schooling and peripheral zones, data that diverge from the profile of tourists in Natal.

Thereby, it is possible to still demystify a certain media drama that correlates the growth of urban violence with the reduction of touristic visitation index in the city. From the point of view of homicide violence, in Natal the cases are, in accordance with the data above, almost null. Attacking against tourist's life in Natal has been more casual than a result of a structural illness in the city. This does not mean that there should not be policing in touristic areas. On the contrary! However, and that is the main point, an effective policy of public security should embrace the entire city, not only certain islands of spatial valuation.

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