

# Profile and Experience of Visitors-Divers in Marine Protected Areas Exposed to Different Management Contexts



Marina Marconi dos Santos<sup>1,2</sup>; Débora Martins de Freitas<sup>3</sup>; Guilherme H. Pereira-Filho<sup>2</sup>; Vinicius J. Giglio; Fábio dos Santos Motta<sup>2\*</sup>;

\*e-mail: limbatus@gmail.com

1 – Marine Biodiversity and Ecology Graduate Program (PPGBEMC) Federal University of São Paulo; 2 – Marine Ecology and Conservation Lab (LabecMar) Federal University of São Paulo; 3- Institute of Biosciences, State University São Paulo “Júlio de Mesquita Filho”; 4 - Reef System Ecology and Conservation Lab, Fluminense Federal University, RJ, Brazil.



Well-managed marine protected areas (MPAs) safeguard wildlife and preserve the health of ecosystems, making them attractive to wildlife tourism. Diving tourism, besides its economic benefits, provide an important tool for raising awareness and engagement in society for the conservation of biodiversity and associated ecosystem services.

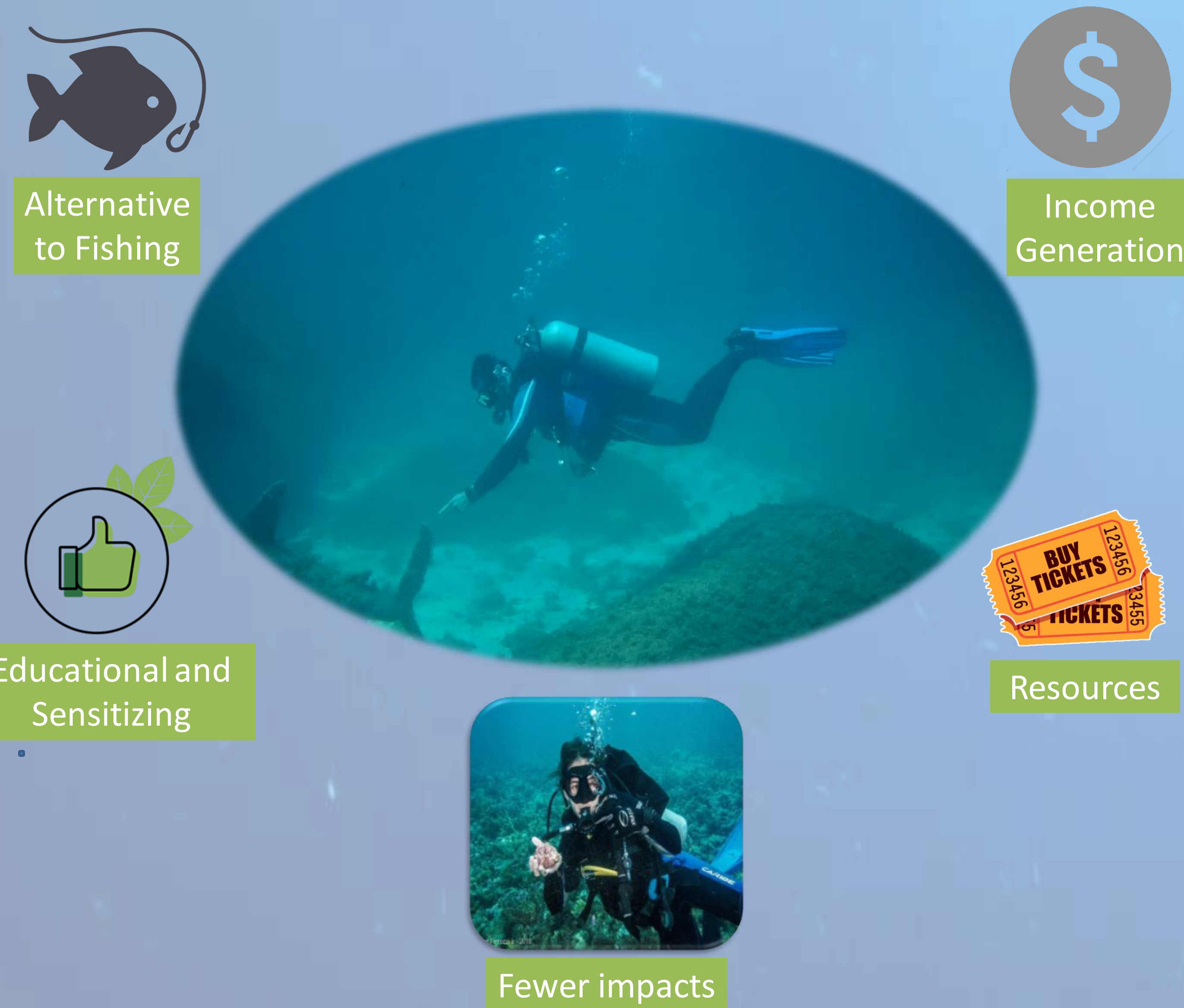


Fig 1: The benefits of diving tourism.

However, when poorly managed, recreational diving may negatively impact marine biota, reducing the diversity and complexity of fish assemblages and benthic organisms, and thus affecting visitor satisfaction and tourism potential in the region [1]. Understanding the influence of the human dimension on the dynamics and magnitude of diving impacts has proved to be as important as measuring the ecologic effects of the activity [2, 3].

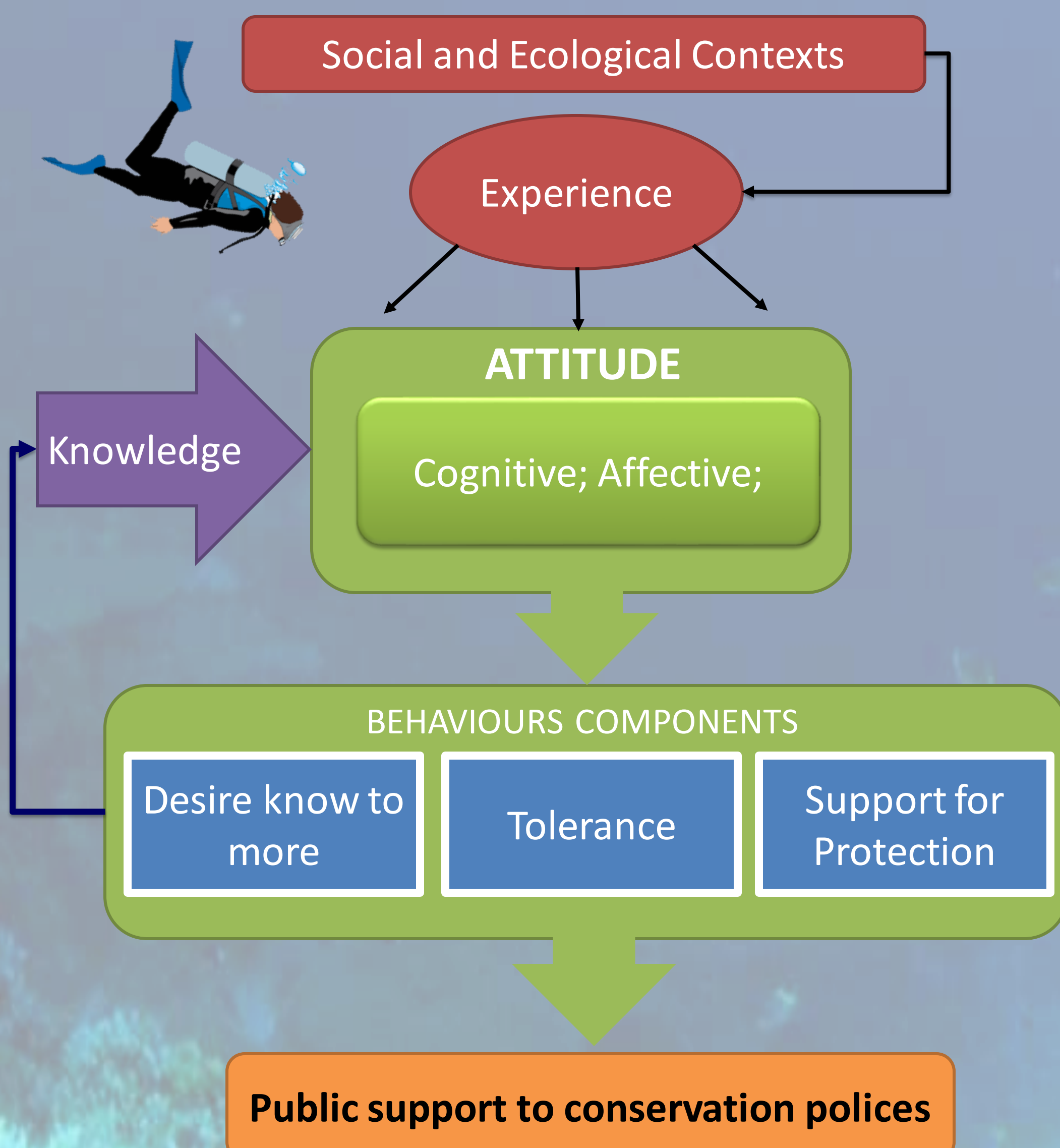


Fig 2: Conceptual framework used in this study. The experience is influenced by the social and ecological context of the visitor and the attitudes and behaviors are influenced by previous experiences affect public support for conservation policies [4].

Thus, considering that MPAs are efficient means to conserve biodiversity and ensure ecosystem services and that management characteristics affect their effectiveness, this project aims to assess the profile and experience recreational divers who visit three different MPAs.

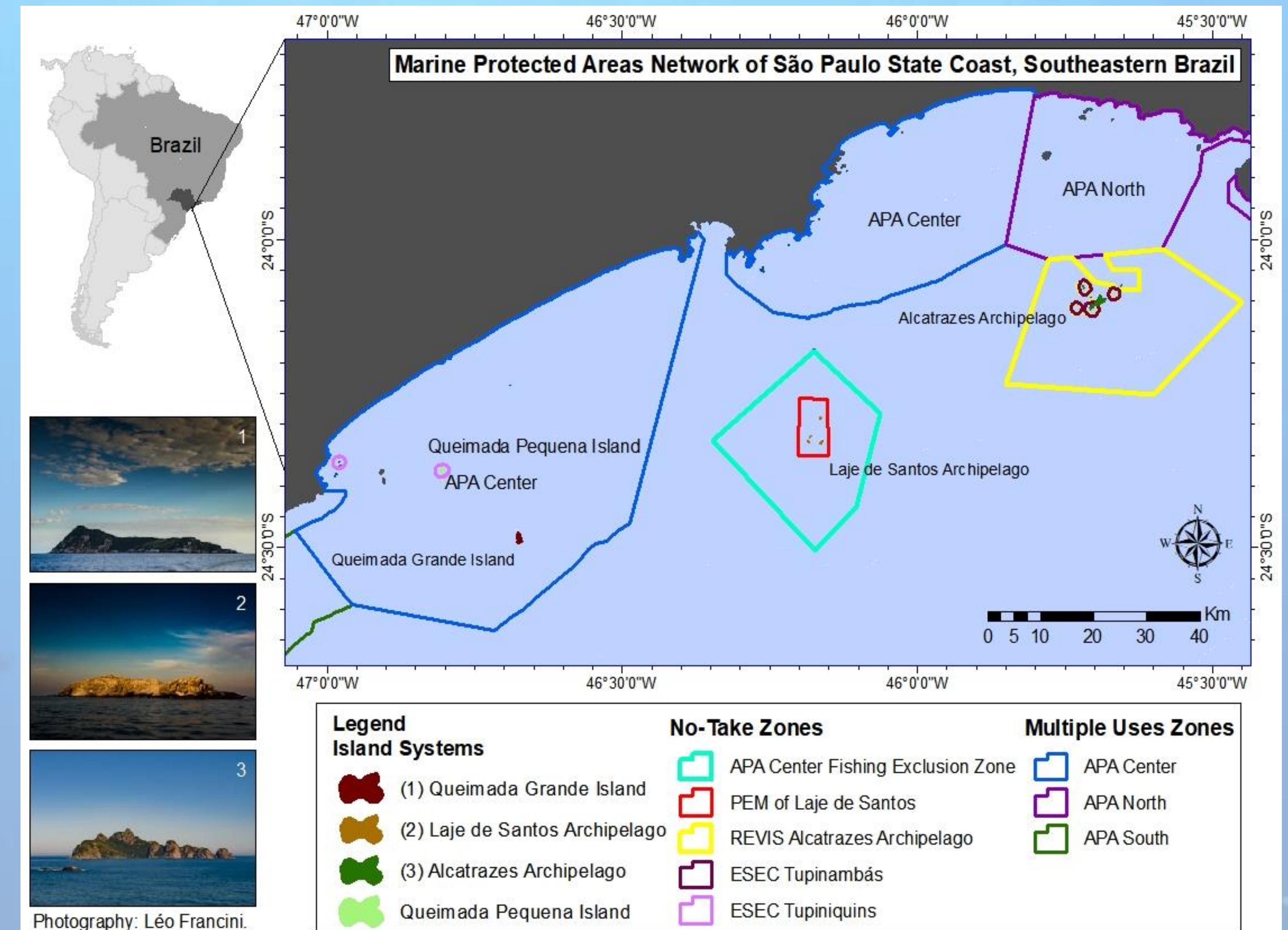


Fig 3: Marine Protect Areas where the project will be carried out.

The research seeks to investigate the relationships between the demographic characteristics of the divers, the aspects of their experience and the management of MPAs. Interviews will be conducted through semi-structured questionnaires applied to divers approaching aspects of the quality of the diving experience, including demographic characteristics, travel cost, divers specialization, preferences, motivations, satisfaction and social carrying capacity. The initiative intends to build knowledge regarding the influence of the management of MPAs on the experience of divers as well as to provide subsidies for the planning of recreational diving in MPAs under different contexts and management regimes.



Fig 4: A. Meeting with satakeholders; B. Project flowchart;

## REFERENCES:

- [1] Uyarra, M.C., Watkinson, A.R., Côté, I.M., 2009. Managing dive tourism for the sustainable use of coral reefs: validating diver perceptions of attractive site features. *Environmental Management*, 43:1-16.
- [2] Lucrezi, S., Saayman, M., Merwe, P., 2013. Managing diving impacts on reef ecosystems: Analysis of putative influences of motivations, marine life preferences and experience on divers' environmental perceptions., *Ocean & Coastal Management* 76: 52-63.
- [3] Bentz, J., Lopes, F., Calado, H., Dearden, P., 2016a. Understanding Diver Motivation And Specialization For Improved Scuba Management. *Tourism in Marine Environments*, 12: 35-49.
- [4] Acuña-Marreroa, D., Cruz-Modinoc, R., Smitha, A.N.H., Salinas-de-Leónb, P., Pawleya, M.D.M., Andersond, M.J., 2018. Understanding human attitudes towards sharks to promote sustainable coexistence. *Marine Policy*, 91:122-128.