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# PhD Research Topic: Design Attributes, Characteristics and Values of Beach Precincts

## OVERVIEW

The topic for this research is the urban design of a particular case of human settlement: the urban beach precincts found on the coast of the Gold Coast, Australia. Urban design attributes, characteristics and values are the focus of an examination of three selected examples of different beach precincts. Urban design theories and practices have generally arisen from the study of places in existing towns and cities and very few studies have explicitly explored the conflicted and contested urban design along beachfronts. This study attempts to explore the design of the public spaces that provide the gateway to recreational, restorative and other benefits of access to the natural environment of the beach in an urban context, by examining the relationships between the use of the public spaces of beach precincts by residents, visitors and tourists, and the urban design attributes and characteristics and the values of beach precincts.

This study intends to contribute to the narrative on urban design theory of cities and the creation of policies and guidelines that mediate the spatial and physical characteristics of place to meet the social and cultural needs of the users of beach precincts. Development in coastal cities like the Gold Coast has spatial relationships unlike those found in the cities that have provided the majority of urban design analysis, theories and guidelines. The spatial relationships that are described between the core and periphery of the city form in those theories have not recognized the need to incorporate the particular socio-spatial relationships that apply to the public realm of beach precincts of linear coastal cities.

The adopted method uses convergent sources of evidence from an urban design analysis of the precincts, a literature review of public space, urban design guidelines, environmental behaviour, coastal science and beach management. Data collection took place in two phases. The first phase was by urban design analysis, non-participant observation, a beach use questionnaire and a photographic visual preference survey. The first phase was used to form questions for the second phase of the research through a Delphi group of informed experts from different stakeholders in the urban design, planning, development, management and user groups. The method design relied on a pastiche of hermeneutic phenomenological approaches by observations, enquiry, and discourse analysis.



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Diagram illustrating the typological model of Gold Coast beach precincts

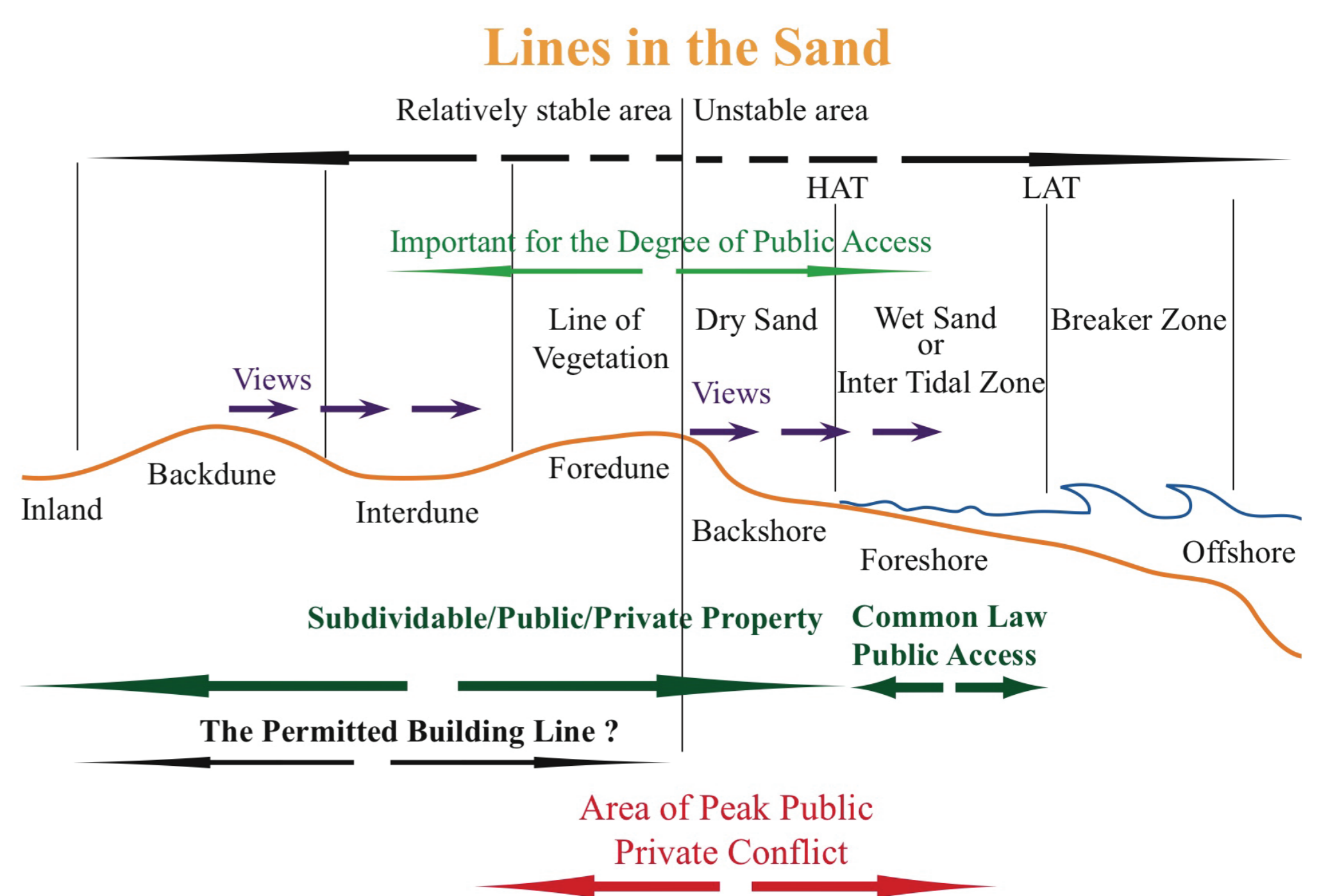


Diagram illustrating the key dimensions in a beach precinct by transect