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2016 OLYMPIC GAMES: SOCIAL IMPACTS FOR PUBLIC PARKS GOERS

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Jogos Olímpicos de 2016: impactos sociais para frequentadores de parques públicos

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this work was to analyze the positive and negative social impacts of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil for public park goers. Sports megaevents have gone through tremendous changes since the 1960s. In the 1990s, they became a kind of business, an instrument of commercial, political, urban and media interest, aimed at profits and the image of the host nation. Consequently, there has been a lot of competition on the choosing of the next host nation, and they say the games bring significant improvements to the host nations in economical, social and urban aspects, besides the repercussion of the country's image, which will be reflected internationally and could generate a higher number of tourists and bigger foreign investments, and in this way contribute to boosting the local economy. It is, therefore, essential that host nations conduct research to inform public policies of sports and leisure targeted at minimizing the negative social impacts and amplifying the positive ones at such events. Field and bibliographic data were used as method procedures for this mixed-methods investigation. The field research was done through questionnaires for public parks goers. Most public park goers said that the positive impact of the 2016 Olympic Games is social interaction, but the negative is the high budget.

Keywords: Sports, Public Policies, Leisure activities, Population, Quality of life.

RESUMO

Este trabalho tem como objetivo analisar os impactos sociais positivos e negativos dos Jogos Olímpicos de 2016 para frequentadores de parques públicos. Os megaeventos esportivos passaram por mudanças significativas desde os anos de 1960, concretizando-se nos anos de 1990, tornando-os fonte de negócio, um instrumento de interesse comercial, político, urbano, midiático, visando aumentar os lucros e a imagem do país sede. Por consequência, passou a proporcionar disputas acirradas por sediamiento, com a justificativa de melhorias no país sede nos setores econômicos, sociais, urbanísticos, além da repercussão da imagem do país, que serão refletidos internacionalmente, podendo gerar a entrada de um maior número de turistas e maiores investimentos estrangeiros, de modo a alavancar a economia. É, portanto, fundamental que o país sede conduza pesquisas para dar base para a construção de políticas públicas de esporte e lazer, com o intuito de que sejam ampliados os impactos sociais positivos e reduzidos os impactos sociais negativos de tais eventos. Foi realizada pesquisa bibliográfica e de campo como procedimentos metodológicos para este método misto de investigação. A pesquisa de campo foi realizada por meio de questionários com os frequentadores de parques públicos. A maioria dos frequentadores de parques públicos apontou como impacto social positivo dos Jogos Olímpicos 2016 a interação social e como negativo os custos econômicos.

Palavras-Chave: Esportes, Políticas Públicas, Atividades de lazer, População, Qualidade de vida.

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INTRODUCTION

Brazil had the unique opportunity of hosting two sports megaevents in a row—the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This was not Brazil's first attempt at hosting a megaevent, as they put in bids for Brasilia 2000, Rio de Janeiro 2004, and São Paulo 2012. According to Curi¹, the Pan American Games of 2007 in Rio de Janeiro opened the doors for Rio to host the 2016 Olympic Games. The Pan American Games were highly regarded by the international sports federations because they were the first ever games in South America and were successful for the quantity of young athletes who had the opportunity to watch them live and this resulted in Olympic education. With several sports mega-events held in Brazil, the country has earned some unusual names such as “Sport Tsunami”² (p.1). Such terms/phrases show the vast impact that sports mega-events have in a relatively short period of time. While nations around the world spend billions to host these events, the owners of such events like FIFA and the IOC have selected developing nations with the intent to foster economic development. However, tickets to these events can be a significant part of the GDP of developing countries, which in Brazil's case is US\$40 bi. Despite high investments, real economic returns do not materialize. However, recent research has shifted to analyzing the social influences that

sport mega-events provide^{3,4}. Therefore, this article aims at analyzing the positive and negative social impacts of hosting such events in Brazil. The focus is on public policies managers of sport and leisure and public park goers. Our assertion is: if the infrastructure is well used, these events can provide significant social benefits and sports opportunities to the whole nation.

METHOD

This investigation employed quantitative methods: questionnaire-based to gather data from public parks goers around the event locations. During the field research, the research team spoke with the public park goers and asking them to complete the questionnaires, which occurred three months prior to the event. The questionnaires were distributed to N=300 individuals (n=100 at each major city in Brazil: São Paulo, Campinas and Piracicaba), in various public parks (e.g, Ibirapuera Park in São Paulo, Portugal Park in Campinas and Rua do Porto Park in Piracicaba). We considered these locations among the best to locate individuals who are interested in sports and who can have an interest in the 2016 Olympic Games. The questionnaires were given out to men and women over 18 years of age and more than one alternative was possible when answering the questions in case the individual was learning impaired.

The questionnaires consisted of items related to positive social impacts, negative social

impacts, government support of mega-events, and quality of life. Given the field based nature of the data collection, all measures were single item. After the questionnaires were completed, we came to the third stage of the research: the quantitative analysis of the questionnaires. We had the theoretical grounding of the first stage of the investigation as a base. We considered the measurement areas in the analysis of the questionnaires: (1) social positive impacts (civic pride, economic benefits, community participation, health, development of the community and social interaction, etc.), (2) negative social impacts (costs, safety risks, traffic jams, misuse of resources, health, etc.), (3) government support (the perception of the government role in the allocation of resources), and (4) quality of life (the perception that life will improve through various actions in social policies). The field research did not present any type of risk to the interviewees and it was approved by the Research on Ethics Committee, record 24/2015.

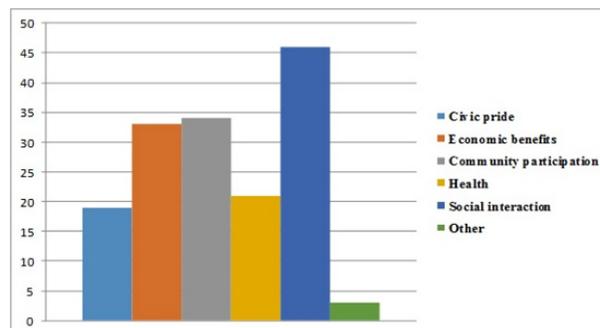
Results and discussion

Question 1

The first questionnaire item asked: “What are the positive social impacts of the 2016 Olympic Games and other sports megaevents in Brazil (anchored civic pride, economic benefits, community participation, health, social interaction, or others). The results are

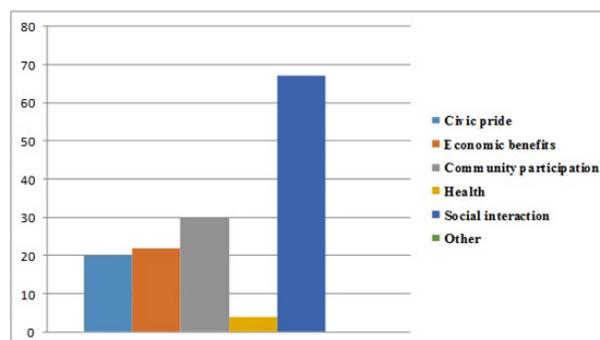
presented in graphics 1-3 for the respective cities.

Graphic 1 - Campinas – Portugal (Taquaral) Park



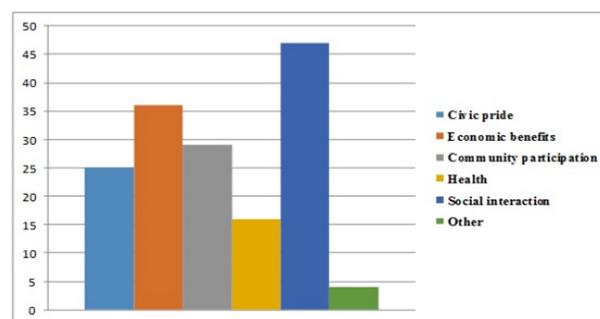
Question 1 to Campinas park goers

Graphic 2 - São Paulo – Ibirapuera Park



Question 1 to São Paulo park goers

Graphic 3 - Piracicaba – Rua do Porto Park



Question 1 to Piracicaba park goers

The results indicated that the main positive social impact the Olympic Games would bring from the three cities was the idea of “social interaction”. The agreement on this aspect is

clear not only among Brazilians, but also among tourists. However, this interaction is restricted to the people taking part in the event, irrespective of being volunteers, athletes or supporters, who can go to the venues to watch competitions live; whereas most of the population cannot afford either the high priced tickets or all the goods related to the games. Access is also restricted to sponsors in many areas of the venues, making it harder for social interaction among a greater number of people from various countries, social classes and cultures. Accordingly, event organizers should be concerned with maximizing wider social interaction by allowing more people to take advantage of the events. For instance, hold free cultural presentations in the nearby areas to the stadiums or some kind of street fair close to megaevents where people could buy typical Brazilian products. Moreover, public viewing locations should be made available for those without tickets to the events, so they can still feel and sense the public spectacle of the Games.

The results also indicated that “community participation” was the second aspect most mentioned by public parks goers in São Paulo, Campinas and Piracicaba. The population becomes more engaged towards events which happen in their place of primary residence. However, as it has been discussed in the bibliographic revision, Brazilians did not have the chance to vote for or against the hosting of the games, since this was decided by the government

and sponsors who manipulate, construct and manage the processes of social control according to their own hidden agendas. They do not take into account the population’s needs as most of the projects which are due to happen according to what some managers stated, could create more engagement from the community and other benefits, which do not happen after the events are over. The venues end up being privatized and the participation of the community is overshadowed by the few who do not care about the legacy, but are the decision makers.

The third biggest positive social impact of the 2016 Olympic Games and sports megaevents in Brazil mentioned in the cities of São Paulo and Campinas, and the second in Piracicaba, was “economic benefits”. Although the media continually emphasized the economic benefits to the host nation, research has consistently shown they do not materialize. According to Motrivivência Publishing⁵, there is an accumulation of capital in sports megaevents and the ones who will benefit are private institutions, travel agencies, contractors and sponsors, once the latter are the only ones who can sell goods in or around the official venues, not allowing local vendors⁶. Very high construction costs for massive stadium and facility projects paid with tax payers money, unfinished constructions and all sorts of overbilling are mentioned in the literature. Miagusko⁷ described the cost of the 2007 Pan-American Games in Rio de Janeiro was nine times higher than the estimated budget and

that there was a loss of \$884,7 mil in overbilling and unfinished constructions. In addition to high costs, we still have corruption, overbilling and privatization, which are commonplace in Brazil, making it more difficult to believe that mega-events bring or will bring economic benefits to the population.

One thing that justifies the economical benefits that the country gets is the “alavancagem”, as aspect pointed by some studies⁸. The authors consider the “alavancagem” as being the multiple investments made on the hosting country due to the realization of the sports megaevents, justified by the expectation of development, especially economic that a megaevent can generate. The authors discuss and defend on the text when talking specifically about the tourism that “(...) There are many ways on how tourism impacts the people’s lives and the daily relations of those who live in the host cities, granting, like that, tangibility and concreteness”⁸ (p.97). Throughout the 2016 Olympic Games, the city of Rio de Janeiro hosted, according to information given by Brazil⁹, 1.2 mi visitors. This elevated number of tourists (equivalente to some big brazilian cities like Campinas-SP, Brazil) meets the studies of Fourie and Gallego¹⁰, which brings data of a study on various countries who already hosted sports megaevents, confirming the hypothesis that these megaevents raise the number of tourists in the year in which the event is taking place.

The elevated number of tourists in the host country also corresponds to the data collected

from those surveyed that social interaction is the most mentioned positive impact of the sports megaevent. Since there are more tourists in the city, there is also increased chance of interaction between them and the locals, amplifying the possibilities of cultural exchange. The media’s role in circulating information about the megaevents could also contribute to the reverberation of the megaevent aside from its specified duration time, affecting positively the hosting country in terms of political, economic and social benefits.

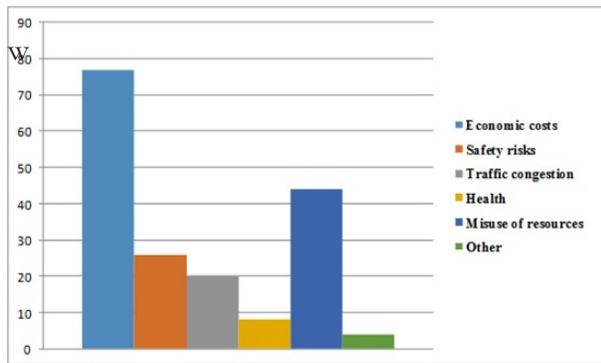
The positive impact related to “health” was rarely discussed in the three cities. Considering that the country does not have a reliable and good health system, we do not usually believe there will be any improvements because of the mega-events. Due to the current political, economic, social and cultural scenarios in Brazil, the positive social impact of “civic pride” was also not widely discussed and it was in the fourth position in São Paulo and Piracicaba and in the fifth in Campinas.

In the city of Campinas, for the alternative “others”, people wrote: “worldwide visibility”, “cultural legacy” and “encouragement to sports practicing” - things that are related to mega-events. Due to all the media coverage, the host nations are seen by billions of people all over the world and this environment created by the media can generate more access to sports practice and will result in cultural legacy. In the city of Piracicaba, “encouragement to sports practice” was mentioned. Two people said “none” and one said “political projection”.

Question 2

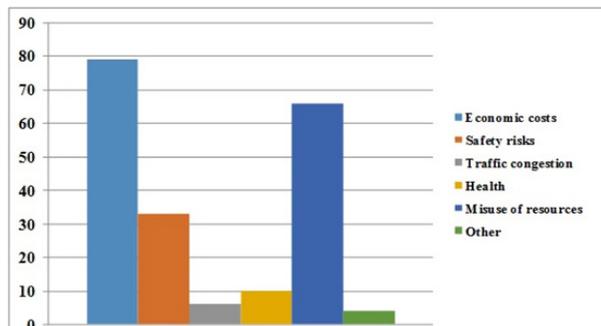
The second questionnaire item asked: “What are the negative social impacts of the 2016 Olympic Games and other sports mega-events in Brazil (anchored by economic costs, safety risks, traffic congestions, health, misuse of resources, and others). The results are presented in graphics 4-6 for the respective cities.

Graphic 4 - Campinas – Portugal (Taquaral) Park



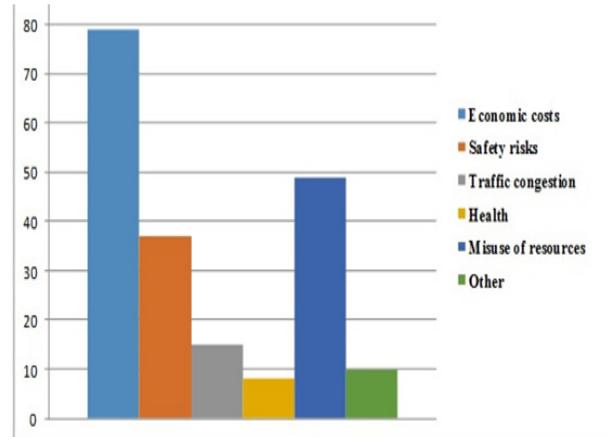
Question 2 to Campinas park goers

Graphic 5 - São Paulo – Ibirapuera Park



Question 2 to São Paulo park goers

Graphic 6 - Piracicaba – Rua do Porto Park



Question 2 to Piracicaba park goers

In São Paulo, Campinas and Piracicaba, the results about the negative social aspects of the 2016 Olympic Games and other sports mega-events in Brazil were very similar. The number one negative aspect pointed out by public parks goers in the three cities was “economic costs”, followed by “misuse of resources.” The negative aspect of “safety risks” was considered third, due to the high criminality rate in the city of Rio de Janeiro, where there was an increase of police reports in the first semester of 2016, according to the Institute of Public Safety. “Health” was not pointed out by the public parks goers. However, this can be an obstacle to the country because of some epidemics, which are a very serious matter in Brazil and they could also contribute to lower ticket sales to the games and also decrease the number of tourists willing to visit the country. “Traffic congestion” was also not considered very important to those surveyed. People did

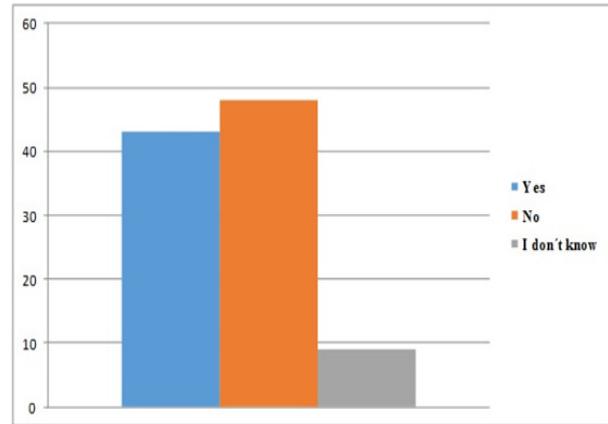
not think that was significant since they do not live in Rio de Janeiro, but this will be an issue because of the extra people in the city. Some other cities will host some football games, both men's and women's. Among them are Brasília, Belo Horizonte, Manaus, Salvador and São Paulo. There must be some other traffic infrastructure improvements in the future and not only because of sports mega-events. However, there is no doubt that mega-events contribute to some improvements of streets, roads and public transportation vehicles.

As to "others" for negative aspects resulted from mega-events and the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil, they mentioned "construction overbilling" (n=7e) and "corruption" (n=5). In the city of Piracicaba, the following were also mentioned: "none", "shift of attention from current political, economic and social problems" and "false impression of optimism". In Campinas, they mentioned "lack of planning" and "waste of money". In São Paulo, they mentioned "eviction of people".

Question 3

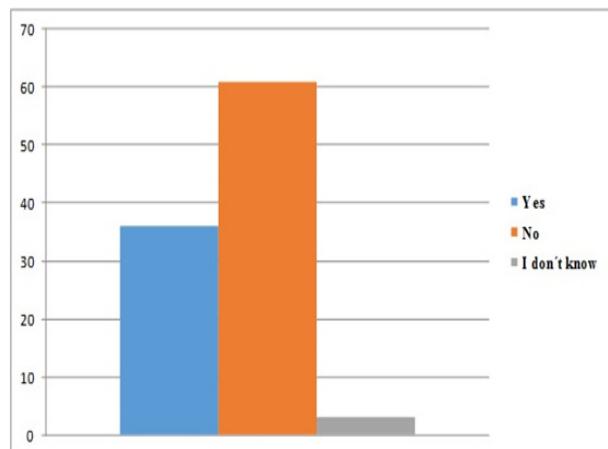
The third questionnaire item asked: "Should government authorities be the only ones responsible for the allocation of resources (costs) of sports mega-events in Brazil (anchored by yes, no, and I don't know). The results are presented in graphics 7-9 for the respective cities.

Graphic 7 - Portugal (Taquaral) Park



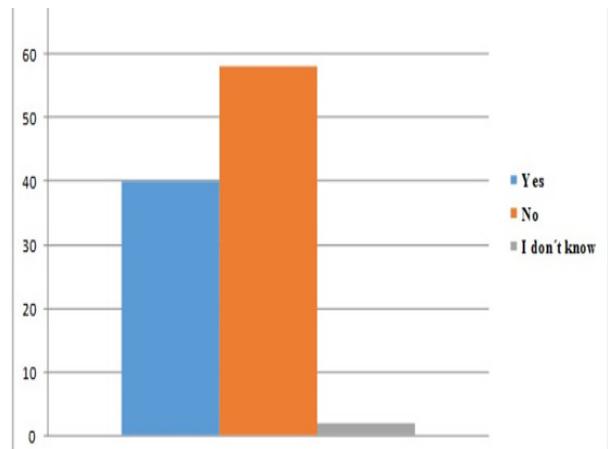
Question 3 to Campinas park goers

Graphic 8 - São Paulo - Ibirapuera Park



Question 3 to São Paulo park goers

Graphic 9 - Piracicaba - Rua do Porto Park



Question 3 to Piracicaba park goers

Most people do not think the government authorities should be the ones responsible for the allocation of resources (i.e., costs) of sports mega-events in Brazil. Marcellino⁶ states that the Brazilian government and sports leaders said that both the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games would be funded by the private sector; stating that the population was aware of spending costs. However, they have used tax payer money and this situation could affect the legacy of the games negatively. Proni¹¹ (p.61) makes a comment about the costs of the 2016 Olympic Games:

“The initial budget was US\$ 13,92 bi, from which US\$ 11,1 bi (79,7%) corresponded to expenses with urban infrastructure, whose responsibility is the State’s, whereas US\$ 2,82 bi (20,3%) would go to sports venues and operational costs of the mega-event. Expenses directly associated to competitions would be financed by the IOC (31%), by local sponsors (20%), by ticket sales (14%) and by government subsidies (36%)”.

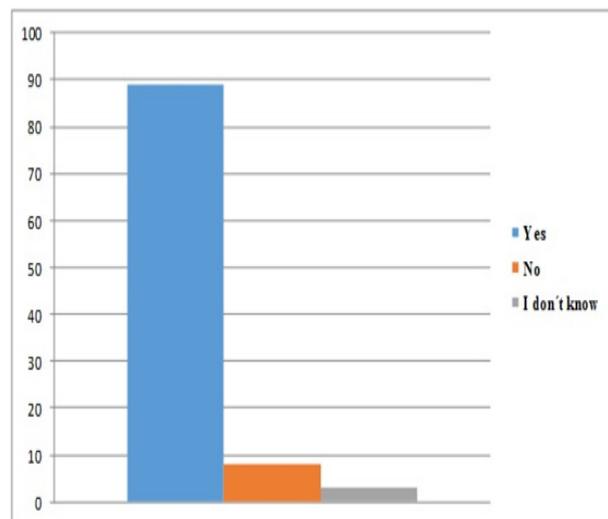
We can see that the State would be investing more than the private sector, if we consider that the economic return will go to the companies and entities involved. In the end, the population who answered that the government authorities should not be the main financiers will be footing the bill.

Question 4

The final questionnaire item asked: “Does life improve through social policies of sports and leisure? (anchored by yes, no, I don’t know). The results are presented in graphics 10-12 for the respective cities.

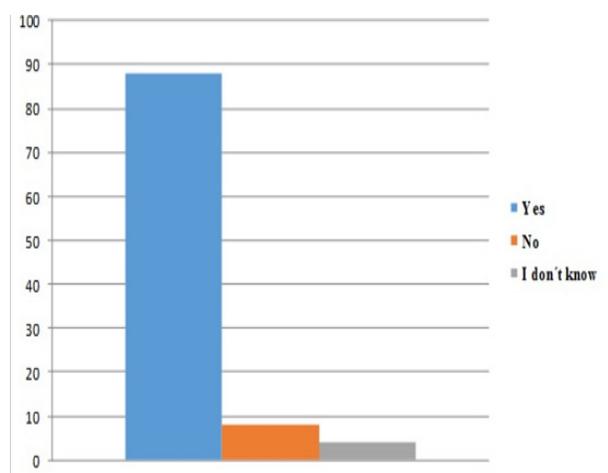
Graphic 10 - Campinas – Portugal (Taquaral)

Park

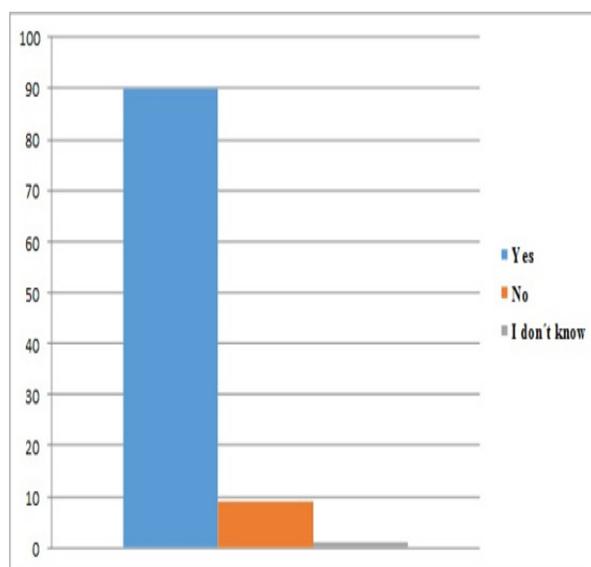


Question 4 to Campinas park goers

Graphic 11 - São Paulo – Ibirapuera Park



Question 4 to São Paulo park goers

Graphic 12 - Piracicaba – Rua do Porto Park

Public policies of sports and leisure created at their workplaces have brought improvements to people's lives. These policies have benefited students, teachers, civil servants and society because they are forms of motivating sports practice and also culture, leisure and social interaction, which will definitely improve their quality of life. As pointed out by public parks goers, public policies do contribute to improving people's quality of life. According to Rigoni et al¹² the term quality of life can have different meanings. The authors give as an example two different views of quality of life, one in which the concept is based on biological aspects, and another, in which there are several determinants that point to the quality of life, which has to do with people's daily lives, including the form of food, work, leisure, relationships, social behaviors, among others. This second view is especially interesting for the reflections developed here for the interpretation of graphics 10, 11 and 12.

The subjects who answered the questionnaire consider that the public policies of sports and leisure improve the life of the people, that is, the population's access to sports and leisure, as well as spaces and equipment related to these elements of culture, are fundamental for the integration in the daily lives of people the habit of practicing sports and the experience of leisure activities.

Conclusion

Negative aspects of mega-event hosting decisions have been cited numerous times in the extant literature, which were affirmed in this study as well. From the alternatives in the questionnaire, "economic costs", "misuse of resources" and "safety risks" were the most often discussed and, shows that these problems not only exist, but they can intervene directly on public issues. For example, while a positive event legacy to the population would be focused on health, education, housing, and etc, this was not the case for the recent mega-event in the nation. Instead, due to widespread corruption and the perception of the government not putting the people's interests first, the resources were seemingly directed at those projects and infrastructure improvements that could yield the most political visibility.

Finally, we have concluded that the positive and negative aspects found in the literature are in accordance with the aspects pointed out by public parks goers. While sports

mega-events generate both positive and negative impacts and legacies to the host nation, they can be viewed as more harmful than helpful to host nation residents. That stated, the social value of these events should not be understated. If performed and staged correctly, host nation residents can feel a greater sense of connectedness and socialization. However, these effects are highly temporal and to date, these feelings have yet to be empirically confirmed in the literature. Accordingly, a necessary and sweeping change is needed for both hosting decisions and the motivations for nations, like Brazil, to accept the daunting financial and social burden that comes with hosting a sport mega-event. Without proper leveraging and support, more examples like Brazil will no doubt etch their negative story into history. Moreover, for Brazil in the future, a lasting change is necessary regarding sports mega-events, which should be focused on the social, economic and cultural benefits for the population, and not on the money-making machine the event can be in which only a few benefit and the image is sold only for a profit and to attract investors. If well used and well managed, mega-events can contribute to relevant transformations for the country in cultural, social, political and economic terms.

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Observação: Os autores declaram a não existência de conflitos de interesse de qualquer natureza.