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The Impact of the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games on the Visitor Economy: A Human Rights Perspective

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Highlights

• The importance of the human rights legacy of sport mega events in relation to the visitor economy is illustrated using the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games as a case study.
• The reciprocal relationships between human rights legacy and the visitor economy are explored.
• The findings of this research point to a mix of positive and negative human rights impacts on the host community and on the visitor economy following the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Learning Objectives

• To understand the concept of human rights legacy in relation to sport mega events.
• To examine how the human rights legacy of a sport mega event intersects with the visitor economy.
• To analyse the interdependence between the human rights legacy of the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the visitor economy.

Introduction

Being internationally celebrated events, the Olympic Games have been proclaimed as symbolising ideals such as sportsmanship, solidarity, peace, equality, and human dignity

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Since its conception, Olympism has not only been about the organisation of the Olympic Games but has been framed as a philosophy blending sport, culture, and education, and embodying universal fundamental ethical principles (Bizarro et al., 2016). Organising the Olympic Games has an impact on the visitor economy of the host city (Duignan, 2019), the visitor economy being understood in this chapter as a driver for sustainable and inclusive regional, social, and economic development. The Olympic Games can indeed lead to positive social transformation (McGillivray et al., 2020) and urban development of the host city (Pappalepore and Duignan, 2019) and is usually associated with a surge in tourism. The hosting of the Games also increases the cultural offer in the host city and country through the opening of educational centres, museums, and staging of festivals showcasing local culture before, during, and after the Games.

Although there are positive benefits to hosting the Games, scholars and pressure groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch among others have shown that hosting the Olympic Games can aggressively erode human rights (Crout, 2018). Suppression of free speech, maltreatment of migrant workers, and arbitrary arrests, occurring in the planning stage of the events and sometimes justified by authorities to create ‘safe’ spaces for visitors, have been commonly highlighted (Worden, 2015). The organisation of the Olympic Games can also enhance the level of corruption in the host country and can in particular benefit the elite strata of the population, leaving the poorest at the margin of the event. Talbot and Carter (2018) highlighted a surge of forced removal and police violence towards the local population in the lead up to the Games, while Gaffney (2016) observed accelerated patterns of gentrification of the host cities. As reported by Duignan (2019), it can also lead to the marginalisation of small local business during and after the hosting of the Games.

In turn, hosting the Games has the potential to ‘create a more politicized and engaged citizenship’ as emphasised by Braathen et al. (2015, p. 268). Owing to the increased media attention they draw, the Olympics have also been a platform for activists to bolster human rights causes such as those outlined earlier, give a voice to the less powerful, and advance educational campaigns (Adams and Piekarz, 2015).

The human rights discourse has been pre- eminent in the discussion around sports mega events since 2008 (Horne, 2017). As Parent and Smith-Swan (2013, p. 4) discuss, mega
events are ‘those events which, by their size or significance, provide significant attention, financial and economic impact, attendance/tourism and prestige to the host region, venue and/or organization’. Problems arise when trying to reveal harm to local populations in relation to sports mega events and their potential impact on the visitor economy. Their status as media magnets, their symbolic appeal, and their consensual power contribute to the negation of negative social consequences and deter criticism (Sánchez and Broudehoux, 2013, p. 148). A historical lack of resistance to mega events recognised by Horne (2018) is linked to the politics of denial on the part of mega event organisers: human rights abuses are ‘unrecognised, ignored or made to seem normal’, making it difficult to take action and resolve issues as their mere existence is not even acknowledged (Horne, 2018, p. 16). The nature of the Olympic Games can lead to evident tensions in terms of the visitor economy (Muller, 2017). While large-scale regeneration of the host city featuring major urban development and infrastructure projects is undertaken to host the Games, to attract tourists, and to boost the visitor economy in the long term, this can sometimes be to the detriment of the local population and their human rights.

**Research Aims and Objectives**

Identifying a lack of consistent assessment of sports events’ impact on human rights, Adams and Piekarz (2015) conceived a push/pull theoretical framework to evaluate the impacts that mega events have on human rights. Even though the model is expressly described in terms of impacts, this model can be understood in the framework of what is commonly termed as the ‘legacy’ of a sporting mega event, which is defined as ‘all that remains and may be considered as consequences of the event in its environment’ (Chappelet, 2012, p. 77). The human rights model, as proposed by Adams and Piekarz (2015), thus examines a multifaceted aspect of the event legacy that encompasses both tangible and intangible structures and allows a systematic assessment of mega events in the light of human rights. In this chapter, we explore the human rights legacy of the 2016 Olympic Games, as the human rights legacy of an event is intrinsically linked to the visitor economy (Adams and Piekarz, 2015).

This important issue in terms of the legacy of the Games serves as the rationale to the research aim we explore: what are the human rights issues that surrounded the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and how do they intersect with and impact on the visitor economy? Moreover, the research objectives read as follows: (i) to explore the concept of
human rights legacy in relation to sport mega events; (ii) to better understand how the human rights legacy of a sport mega event intersects with the visitor economy; and (iii) to analyse the interdependence of the human rights legacy of the Rio 2016 Games and the visitor economy of the host city and country.

It can be argued that if human rights, and in particular those of the local population within the host country and city, are promoted and reinforced then an event can contribute positively to the visitor economy. The event can also encourage sustainable and inclusive regional, social, and economic development through the empowerment of the local community. Alternatively, if human rights of the local population are neglected or eroded – through displacement, police violence, community disruption, gentrification, or marginalisation of people and places – it can negatively impact the visitor economy as the conditions for a sustainable and inclusive development will not be met.

**Theoretical Framework**

![Fig. 11.1. Model of sports events and human rights impacts. (From Adams and Piekarz 2015.)](image-url)
With relation to the analysis undertaken here, the conceptual model developed by Adams and Piekarz (2015) (see Fig. 11.1) will be utilised as it categorises five key human rights themes: freedom, protection, access, equality, and ability. In turn, it labels impacts that the event has on human rights as positive pushes that promote them or negative pulls that erode them. The model has three elements: the points of interaction; the system modifiers; and the mechanisms for leverage. The points of interaction refer to the place where the event process (i.e. not only the sports event itself but also elements linked to the event staging) bisects with people’s lives. Namely, they relate to the land use in terms of the construction of sporting facilities and associated infrastructure developments; to sport event activities in terms of health social and psychological benefits for the community; and to work and employment practices in terms of job creation and quality of employment. The system modifiers are the factors that can modify these impacts of the event process on people’s lives. They comprise the scale of the sports event (amount of resources needed) and the nature of the political system (degree of civil liberties, democracy or authoritarianism, judicial system). The mechanisms for leverage are the tools that allow the impacts to be ‘levered’ – that help positively push or adversely pull human rights. They include violence, protests or demonstrations, educational campaigns, and a shared symbolic experience. We utilise the five themes developed by Adams and Piekarz (2015), and use these to note positive and negative impacts that the Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games had on human rights. We also examine the impact that human rights issues have on the visitor economy in this case study.

**Literature Review**

The cornerstone of human rights is considered the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (Giulianotti, 2004, p. 358). The Declaration puts the notion of human dignity or personhood at the centre of its discourse, and is centred upon individual rights, rather than collective rights (Giulianotti, 2004, p. 358). It is the expression of a universalist position on human rights that judges or makes ethical demands on countries according to the notion of human dignity that is common to everyone (Adams and Piekarz, 2015). Additionally, human rights are referred to as being indivisible, interdependent, and inalienable (Dowlin, 2017).

Human rights may be defined as ‘moral or legal entitlement(s) that others are duty bound to respect’ (Barnes, 1996, p. 47). This definition stresses the legal side of the concept, but human rights are now acknowledged to be ‘moral norms, with political content and social,
cultural, anthropological and economic implications’ (Andreassen et al., 2017, p. 5). On the same line, Brownell (2012, p. 315) notes that ‘human rights are not pre-given moral truths, they are constructions’. Competing interpretations of what human rights are can be found, given that rights are intrinsically political and contingent (Kidd and Donnelly, 2000, p. 133). A demonstration of differences in human rights consideration is brought by Talbot and Carter (2018), in the context of the Rio Olympic Games: while activists framed housing issues such as evictions as human rights abuses, the mainstream media did not report these issues using the same vocabulary and were more prone to frame issues such as police brutality in terms of human rights violations.

Three main themes can link human rights to sports: the right to participate in sports, sport and the human rights of specific groups of persons, and the achievement of human rights through sport (Donnelly, 2008), the latter being the focus of this chapter. The achievement of human rights through sport is the circumstance where sport is used as a tool to secure and support the compliance with and improvement of other human rights. For instance, sport can advance the right to equal treatment or non-discrimination, as laid out in article 2 of the UDHR. Nevertheless, according to Donnelly (2008, p. 386), historically only one instance has been identified where sport has been undoubtedly involved in promoting human rights: the campaign against apartheid in South Africa. His claim is that, by isolating the pro-apartheid South African sports federations, the international sport community delivered a powerful message and contributed significantly to the human rights campaign.

Methodology

The research discussed in this chapter can be considered an instrumental case study as a case is examined to provide an insight into a broader issue (Stake, 2000, p. 437). The research consists of an assessment of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games in the light of the relationships between human rights legacy and the visitor economy. In other words, we examined how hosting the Games impacted on human rights in terms of access to housing, public spaces, education, opportunities for work, cultural expression, and leisure, as well as the right to security of person, freedom of expression, and protection from arbitrary arrests, and in turn how the visitor economy both influenced and was impacted by these issues.
The data collected for this research consist of documents made public by governments, international or national non-governmental organisations, organising bodies of the event, newspapers, and grassroots activist groups. The data were extracted from reports of the Comitê Popular (a local grassroots activist group gathering popular organisations, syndicates, non-governmental organisations, researchers, students, and those affected by the World Cup and the Olympics), Amnesty International (especially for police violence and killings), Terre des Hommes (especially for evictions and children rights), Freedom House (which offers expert-scoring data regarding a country human rights assessment on standardised scales), and the Rio Organizing Committee (ROCOG). News articles from Globo, BCC, The New York Times, The Guardian, and other media outlets as well as journal articles were also used to ratify and complement this information. To check and ensure the accuracy of findings, the researchers examined evidence from different sources – examining discrepant information from the sides that favour the event versus those that criticise and oppose it.

The approach undertaken here to measure human rights can be described as ‘evaluative’, because it aims to determine the degree of compliance of the Rio Olympic Games with established norms – human rights as defined by the UDHR (Langford, 2017).

Case Study Analysis

On 2 October 2009, after losing two previous bids, Rio de Janeiro won the approval of the IOC to host the 2016 Olympic Games, making Brazil the first South American nation to do so. A decade of mega events would be crowned by the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio, following the 2007 Pan American Games and the 2014 FIFA World Cup. This symbolised Brazil’s ‘take off’: amid the global economic recession, the ever-emerging nation had finally entered the world stage (The Economist, 2009). Bolstering Brazilian enthusiasm and advocating for the benefits of the Games, an IOC representative declared that the Games ‘will benefit local citizens and the whole country for decades’ (IOC, 2016). ROCOG (2016, p. 35) promised to ‘support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights’.

Days before the start of the event, nothing seemed natural about hosting the Olympics: one in two Brazilians opposed hosting the Olympics, and two out of three thought that the Games would bring more problems than benefits to the country (Datafolha Instituto de Pesquisas, 2016). Their discontent erupted into a wave of protests questioning the legitimacy
of this so-called mega event. If it ever existed, the conciliation between the view of the organisers and of the local population was no longer sustained (Brum, 2016). Human rights activists strongly contested the worthiness of such an event, bringing to light the disrespect of international human rights throughout its production. Grassroots groups, such as the Comitê Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas (Popular Committee for the World Cup and Olympics), were established to confront and expose sports mega events on issues such as police violence, housing rights, and environmental damage (Crout, 2018). Contrastingly, the IOC voiced little concern over the impact that the Games had on Cariocas, as Rio’s residents are known (Zimbalist, 2017, p. 8).

**System Modifiers**

The Olympic Games were staged in four areas of Rio: Deodoro, Copacabana, Maracanã, and Barra da Tijuca (ROCOG, 2016, p. 4). According to the Olympic Public Authority, their cost neared R$41.03 billion (Filipo, 2017). This sum was composed of three main elements (Comitê Popular, 2015, p. 140): projects exclusively related to the hosting of the event (R$7.23 billion), the Organizing Committee expenses (R$9.2 billion), and the public policies plan budget (R$24.6 billion). In terms of people involved, along with the 10,500 athletes participating in the Games, over 150,000 people including 50,000 volunteers, contributed to staging the event (ROCOG, 2016, p. 15).

A key point to consider is how the host country’s political system can mediate the impacts of the mega event on human rights (Adams and Piekarz, 2015, p. 229). Regarding political rights, Freedom House (2017) gave Brazil a score of 2 out of 7 (the strongest rating being 1): Brazil is a federal republic governed under a presidential system, with free and fair elections and multiple parties that vigorously compete against each other, although factors such as pervasive political corruption limit the functioning of the government. In the years leading up to the Olympic Games, Brazil was mired in a deep economic recession and intense political turmoil, as corruption began to spin out of control. Operation Lava Jato (Car Wash), investigating bribery, money laundering, and bid-rigging, exposed dozens of politicians, triggering a crisis that later led to Dilma Rousseff’s trial and subsequent impeachment by the Senate (Rubenfeld et al., 2016). This epitomised the recurring issue of corruption among elected officials in Brazil, which results in policies that are unduly influenced by private or criminal interests. This pervasiveness of corruption can shape the mega event impact on
human rights because the Olympic Games represent a huge opportunity for profit for private actors. As a result, politicians are exposed to bribery, and under the pretext of event planning and urban development to attract and satisfy visitors, can disregard the public interest and the human rights of the country’s citizens.

In terms of civil rights, Freedom House (2017) gave Brazil a rating of 2 out of 7 because of factors such as discrimination against minority groups and women, as well as organised crime and a police force that undermines the rule of law. Freedom of assembly and speech are constitutionally protected but weakly enforced when it comes to journalists focusing on organised crime or corruption: they are subject to physical attacks, threats, and murder (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2018). A high level of violence caused by clashes between drug gangs, military police, private militias, and the police results in high homicide rates (26 per 100,000 residents against a global average of 5 per 100,000) that predominantly affect young and black people (Freedom House 2017; World Bank, 2018). Torture and extrajudicial killings by the police have been reported, notably in Rio (Amnesty International, 2015). Yet, officers are rarely prosecuted or held accountable (Freedom House, 2017).

Freedom of assembly is generally respected (Freedom House, 2017). Peaceful demonstrations took place in 2015 and 2016 showing public discontent for corruption scandals, the economic crisis, the Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games, and calling for Rousseff’s impeachment. Still, police use of excessive force and rubber bullets has been noted at assemblies. Freedom of association and freedom of religion are constitutionally protected, and non-governmental organisations can operate freely in a variety of fields. Even though Brazilian law prohibits discrimination based on race, gender, disability, or social status, the country is still marred by discrimination. The black population suffers from higher rates of homicide, poverty, and illiteracy (Freedom House, 2017). Rio de Janeiro is characterised by a notorious socio-spatial segregation embodied in favelas – slums where socio-economic, political, racial, and cultural markers exclude residents from the citizen rights enjoyed by others (Holston, 2008, cited in Braathen et al., 2015, p. 167). As for the justice system, it is overburdened, inefficient, and exposed to external pressures, and access to it for victims varies greatly according to the individual’s income (Freedom House 2017).
Event Points of Interaction: Land Use

The construction of sporting facilities and infrastructure related to the event or accelerated by it such as roads or diverse urbanisation projects can create tensions regarding the land where people live (Adams and Piekarz, 2015, p. 227). The most visible form of these tensions is evictions: when the government forcefully expels people from their properties to make way for new constructions. According to the City Hall of Rio de Janeiro, between 2009 and 2015, 22,059 families were evicted in the city, totalling 77,206 persons (Prefeitura do Rio, 2015). The Comité Popular (2015, p. 20) estimated that the eviction of at least 4000 families could be directly linked to Olympic infrastructure developments, and specifically to four projects:

- Roadworks associated with Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors.
- The expansion works for the international airport Tom Jobim.
- The installation or reform works for sports equipment/infrastructure.
- The works revitalising Rio’s harbour.

While these major projects were prioritised by the local government to convince the IOC that visitors would be safe (Broudehoux and Sánchez, 2015), they came to the detriment of the local community: the eviction process was widely reported by the press and academic articles because of the human rights violations it entailed. Raquel Rolnik, the former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, urged Brazil to stop evictions (O Globo, 2011; United Nations, 2011).

Under the pretext of building infrastructure for visitors, residents were arbitrarily deprived of their property. This process was marked by a lack of democratic consultation and information for the communities, as they did not have access to urbanisation projects involving their living areas. For example, in Largo do Tanque, the residents received an eviction proposal by a government official: on his file, the ‘Rio Olympic City’ logo could be seen but none of the residents had access to information regarding the works that would be done in that place or the reason why there was such a hurry to start the works (Comité Popular, 2015, p. 22). The sustainability of the Games can be questioned given the treatment of local citizens.

Arbitrary and opaque decision making in the process of evictions suggested unequal treatment between members of the community. Even regarding the indemnities given,
negotiations did not follow any clear criteria. For instance, in Vila das Torres, most of the families received compensation of between R$8000 and R$17,000 but, in some cases, these reached amounts as high as R$55,000 with no criteria (Comitê Popular, 2015, p. 23). Furthermore, the government weakened freedom of association by undermining community organisations and individualising negotiation processes with families, with the objective of debilitating their position (Comitê Popular, 2015, p. 38).

Additionally, the City Hall disrespected the right to housing and caused homelessness, as the indemnities offered could not guarantee access to other properties (Crout, 2018, p. 40). When alternatives were suggested to the victims of evictions, they were often distant properties. As a result, some children had to move to areas dominated by militia gangs, where they lost the ability to access education, medical care, and social services, and where they are exposed to the risk of sexual or labour exploitation (Terre des Hommes, 2016, p. 6).

The citizens’ ability to maintain their physical, social, and psychological wellbeing and to access welfare services were further disrespected with practices such as evictions within 24 h, subjecting residents to degrading living conditions, and forcing them to live among the rubble (Comitê Popular, 2015, p. 39). Moreover, not only were the citizens deprived of access to an impartial legal system to assist them in their struggles, but the justice system was used as a tool against citizens (Comitê Popular, 2015, p. 38). Indeed, the lack of access to fair hearings to stop developments denoted an unambiguous violation of human rights and was perhaps the central element enabling all the abuses.

**Event Points of Interaction: Sporting Infrastructure**

The sporting infrastructure built for the Rio Olympic Games brought a mixture of positive and negative human rights impacts as it enhanced the right to participate in sports and the right to leisure, while in other instances it removed previously available opportunities to the community and visitors. Positively, the Deodoro X-Park, including the Whitewater Stadium, the Olympic BMX Centre and a public leisure area, was used by the local community and visitors alike for bathing and recreation before and after the Games (ROCOG, 2016, pp. 49–51). The Olympic Park, including the Olympic Training Center, Tennis Center, Velodrome, and Maria Lenk Water Park, was the main legacy in terms of sporting infrastructure and
contributed to the practice of sports by high-performance athletes (Prefeitura da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, 2016).

Contrastingly, the City Hall chose to build the Olympic Park on the land that housed the only autodrome of the municipality, which dislodged the athletes of the sport (Comitê Popular, 2015, p. 73). Additionally, two iconic facilities for athletics and swimming in the past, the Célio de Barros Athletics Stadium and the Júlio Delamare Water Park, were closed in 2013 (Dislacio, 2018). As part of the ‘Maracanã reforms’, undertaken to make way for a greater influx of visitors for the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics, they were planned to be demolished (Oliveira and Gismondi, 2008). The closure of these facilities not only deprived the population of their ability to maintain their physical wellbeing through sport, but also hindered the various socio-educational projects that were underway in the area. While the government may have undertaken these reforms to accommodate the needs of visitors, undermining the local community’s rights can have adverse effects on the visitor economy in the long term. As discussed by Brannagan and Giulianotti (2015), negative publicity that follows controversial decision making can have a commensurate negative impact on the profile of a city: where a city has a negative public image, it is less likely that tourists will be minded to visit.

**Event Points of Interaction: Work/Employment**

The creation of jobs is framed as one of the main justifications by governments to legitimise huge investments and convince the public of the benefits of sports megaevents. An event of the magnitude of the Olympic Games can indeed create many jobs directly (people who directly contribute to the event staging) or indirectly (people who gain from the influx of visitors’ capital resulting from the event staging). However, any creation of jobs is not intrinsically beneficial for people: the quality of the jobs should be carefully examined. As regards this case study, the City Hall of Rio was accused of repressing an informal market of street vendors and of overlooking abusive work practices by big corporations (Comitê Popular, 2015, p. 55)

According to the Comitê Popular (2014) report on street vendors, the city of Rio followed an Olympic pattern set by Seoul in 1988 and Barcelona in 1992, as it discriminated between citizens who could enjoy the city and its public spaces and those who were considered
obstacles to the consecration of the Olympic City – having their liberties curtailed and their rights violated. Aiming to end ‘urban disorder’, the City Hall carried out a wave of repression against street vendors based on a rhetoric of beautification of the city, incentivisation of tourism, and protection of sponsors. This can be also linked to the concept of ‘camouflaging’ (Pauschinger, 2018), as the so-called less desirable aspects of the city are masked and visitors’ attention is shifted towards perfectly engineered and tourist-friendly attractions (McGillivray et al., 2020).

In ‘formal works’ directly related to the Olympic Games, the precariousness of work was observed, which weakened the right to just and favourable conditions of work and remuneration. The poor working conditions and violations of workers’ rights were perpetrated by a consortium of companies but can also be blamed on the neglect of the state and municipal supervisory bodies, and on the pressures exerted by the IOC to deliver the necessary infrastructure in time.

Some of the most serious breaches of human rights were the cases, uncovered by the Public Ministry of Labor of the State of Rio de Janeiro, of practices comparable with slavery (Da Escóssia, 2015; Puff, 2015). The perpetrators of these violations were the companies Brasil Global Serviços, responsible for works in the Ilha Pura residential complex (location of the Olympic Village) and Living Amparo Empreendimentos Imobiliários, responsible for works in the Media Village. The contractor kept workers in degrading conditions, housing them in accommodation with cockroaches, mould, accumulated litter, bare wires, beds in tight spaces, and no ventilation (Da Escóssia, 2015).

On the positive side, the right to work was enhanced by the staging of the event and the resulting influx of visitors, as 70 new hotels were built in the city during the preparation for the Games, contributing to 10,000 direct jobs and 32,000 indirect jobs (ROCOG, 2016, p. 38). The aim of this appears to have been to prepare a lasting legacy as far as tourism is concerned, which would reach beyond the Games. The Organizing Committee (2016, p. 42) supported the exercising of this right with inclusive work and recruitment practices, with no discrimination based on social origin or disabilities. Indeed, it contracted the 22,000 cushions needed for the athletes and media villages from social enterprises, which provided work for women from Rio’s most vulnerable neighbourhoods. The equality of rights also materialised in the headquarters of the Organizing Committee, where employees with disabilities could
work autonomously since the building had ramps, signage in Braille, elevators, and tactile flooring for guidance (ROCOG, 2016, p. 47). A diversity and inclusion engagement programme included a programme for the hiring of people with intellectual impairment, a dedicated programme for the hiring of athletes with an impairment, and an internship programme with affirmative action (ROCOG, 2016, p. 94).

**Mechanisms for Leverage: Protests, Riots, and Violence**

Brazil is a country with critical problems regarding violence in the public forces that particularly affect black and young people. One of the professed Olympic legacies by Brazilian diplomats was the improvement of national security (Rocha, 2017). However, instead of serving as a positive point for integrating minorities and lessening this warlike logic that characterises the police forces in Rio, mega events represented a period of normalisation and aggravation of this situation. The mega events organised in the city were described as a tool to criminalise black people and to repress favelas and the poor (Comitê Popular, 2015, p. 101; Gibson, 2016). The official numbers seem to confirm that: between January 2009 and July 2016, 2713 people were killed by the police in Rio de Janeiro, the majority of these being young black men (Amnesty International, 2016).

Generally, an aggravated violation of the right to life, liberty, and security of person can be observed. Amnesty International (2016) identified some of the most significant outcomes linked to the hosting of the Olympic Games. There was a dramatic increase in killings by the police in the run-up to and during the Olympic Games. When comparing the numbers of killings reported in the months leading to the Olympics (April, May, and June 2016) with the same period in the previous year, the number of people killed by the police increased by 103% (Amnesty International, 2016, p. 7), suggesting a direct link between the aggravation of police lethality and preparation for the event. During the period of the Games, at least eight people were killed during police operations in the favelas (Amnesty International, 2016, p. 9).

Again, these violent and repressive measures, often mandated by the government under the pretext of ensuring a safe environment for visitors, can lead to the exact opposite effect. As Brannagan and Giulianotti (2015) discuss with relation to Qatar, hosting mega events can lead to increased scrutiny and ‘soft disempowerment’, where the nation receives negative publicity and an associated decrease in positive public profile – leaving damaging effects on the visitor economy well beyond the event.
Additionally, the further militarisation of the city public security, with thousands of military troops being deployed in the name of security for visitors or terrorism prevention, worsened the violence targeting the black and poor population and served as an activist intimidator (Boykoff, 2017). Striving to present an image of Brazil as safe for visitors (tourists, investors, and athletes) Brazilian officials harmed the welfare of others – especially favela residents (Barbassa, 2017, p. 170). Pacifying Police Units, the flagship security programme in preparation for the Olympic Games, involved announcing in advance the entrance and sustained presence of police and military forces into favelas where criminal organisations operated and then introducing social programmes (Barbassa, 2015, p. 40; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2016, p. 98). These interventions brought mixed results: they were credited with reducing homicides; however, officers on these units were contrastingly criticised, for unlawful killings, daily shoot-outs, and other human rights abuses (Comitê Popular, 2015, p. 112; UNODC, 2016, p. 98). Apart from the deaths caused, armed violence also entailed the closures of schools, impacting children’s right to education (Terre des Hommes, 2016, p. 19).

Several incidents denoted how the event may have been used by some as a mechanism for leverage for advancing the human rights of a specific group or supporting a cause, yet also how in some instances their freedom of speech was curtailed under the justifications of security for visitors or the protection of sponsors. For instance, an Iranian woman was prevented from showing a sign in support of women’s rights while a man was impeded from showing a flag demanding justice for the killing of his son at the hands of the military police (Amnesty International, 2016, p. 12). This silencing was enabled by the approval of the Lei Geral das Olimpíadas (General Law of the Olympics), which prohibited the use of flags ‘for purposes other than festive and friendly manifestation’ (Lei no. 13.284, 2016), thus expelling people from sports facilities for wearing T-shirts with slogans or carrying other signs of protest (Amnesty International, 2016, p. 12).

Furthermore, peaceful protests and demonstrations were quashed by security forces, imposing restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and of peaceful assembly. Activists seized the Olympic moment to throw a spotlight on police repression, widespread evictions, and disregard for health and education (Boykoff, 2016). In that context, the police used indiscriminate and excessive force towards adolescents with practices such as throwing
tear gas, stun grenades, and rubber bullets, as well as verbally abusing and threatening young protesters (Terre des Hommes, 2016, p. 20).

**Mechanisms for Leverage: Education**

Another important point to consider is the educational campaigns or initiatives that are undertaken before, during, or after the event. In the context of the Rio Olympic Games, these campaigns were undertaken by the Organizing Committee, governmental organisations, corporations, and associations. As a result, they predominantly supported people’s right to education, which encompasses elementary education as well as technical and professional education (United Nations, 1948). Additionally, some initiatives called for equal treatment for all members of the community, enhancing people’s right to non-discrimination.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and schools, ROCOG (2016, p. 97) created the Transforma education programme, which offered pedagogical support to physical education teachers, mentors, and pedagogical coordinators in the form of information, teaching materials, training courses, and school challenges (Belem et al., 2018). The programme reached over 10,000 schools and 5 million students across Brazil. It taught Olympic values and new sports, yet the long-term benefits of it can be put into question: there were no significant effects for life in society and about half of the professionals who participated in it stopped using the teaching materials 1 year after the conclusion of the Olympic Games (Kirst and Tavares da Silva, 2018). This again means the sustainability of the Games can be called into question, bearing in mind the relatively brief impact of this education programme.

**Mechanisms for Leverage: Culture and Leisure**

The Rio Olympic Games created more opportunities for cultural expression and reinforced residents’ right to participate in the cultural life of the community, a human right declared in article 27 of the UDHR. Indeed, the event opened up new public spaces and gave people the chance to generate collective memories (Garcia, 2016). The Casa Amerela served as a cultural, social, and educational centre for the community and was redeveloped ahead of the Olympics. The Games also served as an opportunity to renovate the Porto Maravilha (Rio’s harbour) and transform it into an ‘Olympic Boulevard’ with various cultural offerings like the
scientific Museu do Amanhã (Museum of Tomorrow) and the Museu de Arte do Rio (Museum of Art in Rio) available for the local community and visitors alike. Furthermore, street artists were encouraged to produce graffiti artworks on old warehouse walls (Garcia, 2016). With regard to the visitor economy, these initiatives could have positive benefits as they could inspire tourists to visit the city for years afterwards.

However, even though the ‘Cultural Olympiad’ programme, embedded in the Olympic Games, aimed to promote culture through attractions and shows, it was not sufficiently disseminated among spectators according to Todt et al. (2018). As a result, they claim, Olympic spectators knew little about it or did not attend events related to it. Moreover, socio-political and economic issues and a lack of coverage after the event prevented cultural moments from having any long-term significance (Garcia, 2017). An illustration of this point is the Olympic Boulevard: despite having demonstrated its potential as a cultural and leisure centre, it now remains empty and monotonous, casting a shadow of doubt into the long-term nature of the cultural Olympic legacy (Latuf de Oliveira Sánchez, 2018) and on its ability to attract tourists after the event.

In addition, the Rio Olympic Games were criticised by civil society groups for deepening the economic exploitation model (Comitê Popular, 2015, pp. 75–85), negatively impacting the community’s right to participate in sports. Marina da Gloria, situated within the Flamengo Park cluster, which is part of the cultural heritage of the city and an area historically dedicated to the practice of sports, was commercially exploited by companies constructing shopping malls and restaurants. The Estádio de Remo da Lagoa (Lagoon Rowing Stadium), which is a historically important centre for rowing practice and for school projects, was privatised resulting in the construction of movie theatres, restaurants, and bars. Rather than promoting grassroots sports and the participation of all the community in sports, the Olympics served as a smokescreen that legitimised the privatisation of areas traditionally reserved for sports. This process involving the creation of monochromatic corporate spaces has been described by Duignan (2019) as the production of ‘urban blandscapes’ that dilute local offerings within the context of neoliberal cities and mega sport events.
Theoretical Framework Revisited

The findings discussed in this chapter allow us to refine somewhat the theoretical model developed by Adams and Piekarz (2015). First, the findings point to a certain temporality of human rights impacts going beyond the static push/pull effect of the original model. Some of the positive initiatives, notably related to education and culture, seem to have lost significance after the Games. If a mega event does not leave sustained policies or funding for the development of the education and culture – which the Rio 2016 Olympic Games seems not to have done – its impact on rights fades away. The interdependent nature of human rights, which is not entirely captured by Adams and Piekarz’ (2015) model, is also significant. For example, individuals may enjoy their right to education only if other ‘core rights’ are respected. It seems clear that the right to education is only truly relevant in the context of secure living conditions.

With regard to the visitor economy, it is clear that human rights issues can negatively impact on the intended legacy of a mega event. The visitor economy could be worked into the model developed by Adams and Piekarz (2015), as a factor in the long-term legacy of any mega event. Positive change may take place with one intended aim being a positive public image – this in turn attracts tourism. However, as in the majority of our findings, negative change in terms of human rights appears to have taken place during preparations for the Rio Games, and also post-Games through the closure of facilities that were previously publicly available. The aim to develop a stronger visitor economy is arguably a push factor influencing positive change. Equally, however, where political regimes do not respect human rights, this can be a pull factor that may impact negatively on the legacy of an event.
Fig. 11.2. Revised theoretical framework.

**Concluding Thoughts**

The overall findings of this research point to a mix of positive and negative human rights impacts of the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and on the visitor economy of the host city. On a positive note, affirmative action included persons with disabilities and from underprivileged communities in the workforce. New sports and leisure centres were built. Freedom of expression and association was reinforced by protesters demonstrating and using the platform of the event to raise issues. Several initiatives by the Organizing Committee, government, companies, and associations constituted positive mechanisms for leverage of the human rights to education and to participate in the cultural life of the community – albeit with limited long-term impacts. These wider economic and social successes associated with the hosting of the Games can positively contribute to the quality and inclusivity of the visitor economy.

The urban transformation and the construction of new facilities seem the most likely draw for tourists who may wish to visit an Olympic city. Moreover, various stakeholders took advantage of the Games and the associated media attention to promote Rio’s iconic buildings
and landscapes, culture, and heritage, and foster the brand of the city. This can potentially boost the visitor economy.

However, within the context of urban redevelopment, the Games’ land use displaced thousands of people, violating the right to housing and several other human rights through abusive practices used by the government in the eviction process. Under the pretext of creating safe spaces for visitors and safeguarding their image of the city, the government’s violence towards poor and black communities was aggravated, with the militarisation of the city impacting on the right to life, protection, education, and justice. Attempting to mask the city’s socio-economic problems and undesirable aspects for sponsors and visitors, freedom of expression was undermined as protesters were targeted by the police and street vendors were driven out of public spaces. Then, the privatisation and commercialisation of public spaces historically reserved for recreational use restricted access to the local population in favour of private enterprises such as shopping malls – thus diminishing local offerings and reinforcing Rio’s image as a neoliberal city. None of these issues seems likely to attract visitors to Rio, and the 2016 Games might lead to what Brannagan and Giulianotti (2015) term ‘soft disempowerment’. Looking into the long-term legacy of the Games, it appears possible that the light shone on human rights issues may have a negative impact on the image of the city and country and, therefore, on visitor numbers to Rio.

**Linkage to Inclusive and Sustainable Development, and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**

This chapter shows that human rights and inclusive and sustainable development are intimately linked as the respect of the human rights of the local population is at the core of the visitor economy’s ecosystem. In other words, human rights of the local population and the visitor economy are interdependent. Moreover, it demonstrates the processual nature of the impacts of sport mega events on the visitor economy: impacts can occur pre-, during, and post-events with short-, medium-, and long-term consequences. As this case study has illustrated, the human rights legacy of the Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games appears to be contrasted and contributes to the visitor economy of the host city in a complex way. A careful consideration of the human rights of the local population, at all stages of the event organisation, is therefore essential to build an inclusive and sustainable visitor economy.
• Goal 1, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8: As the study shows that inclusive and sustainable economic development cannot be achieved without safeguarding and promoting human rights of the local population.
• Goal 2, SDG 10: As our findings illustrate how a sport mega event can simultaneously deepen and reduce inequalities in the local population of the host city.
• Goal 3, SDG 17: As our work primarily looks at which stakeholders are central to the promotion of human rights and to positively impact on the visitor economy.

Policy and/or Practical Implications

• Implication 1: A careful consideration is needed to assess how the human rights of the local population can be eroded or promoted before, during, and after the hosting of a sport mega event in order to positively contribute to the visitor economy.
• Implication 2: The protection of human rights should be embedded in the legacy plans of the Organizing Committee from day 1 of the event planning process.
• Implication 3: A participative approach associating key stakeholders is essential to develop an inclusive and sustainable visitor economy.

Self-Assessment Quiz

• What factors can mediate the impacts of a mega event on human rights?
• What are the main points of interaction a mega event can have on the local community’s human rights?
• How does a human rights legacy intersect with the visitor economy?
• What kind of impact on human rights tends to extend in the long term, beyond the mega event?
• Can impacts on the visitor economy come at the detriment of the local population?
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### Appendix 11.1: A Summary of Key Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human rights dimension</th>
<th>System modifiers: political system</th>
<th>Event points of interaction: land use, work/employment</th>
<th>Mechanisms for leverage: protests, violence, riots, education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Freedom: of assembly, of expression, of association** | - Repression of demonstrations  
- Murders of journalists focusing on crime | - Community organisations delegitimised | - Spectators prevented from showing political messages  
- Issues raised regarding women rights, right to just remuneration, to health, and education |
| **Protection: of property/right to housing, from slavery** | - Residents arbitrarily deprived of property and demolition of houses | - | - |
| **Access: to impartial judicial system, to fair hearings** | - External pressures  
- Varies according to income | - Municipal Prosecution Office is an eviction machine  
- Punishing of people who had recourse to justice  
- Work practices comparable with slavery | - Extrajudicial killings and arbitrary detentions |
| **Equality** | - Black suffer higher homicide rates  
- Black and women underrepresented in politics  
- Corruption: policies influenced by criminal/private interests  
- Socio-spatial segregation in favelas | - Discrimination against street vendors, repressed and cleared off public spaces  
- Affirmative action: inclusion of workers from underprivileged backgrounds | - Campaign to change attitudes towards persons with impairment |
| **Ability: to maintain physical, social and psychological wellbeing, to access education, to participate in sports and cultural life** | - Threats, pressure coercion, trauma of living among rubble  
- Exploitative work practices  
- Thousands of jobs directly or indirectly created | - Killings by police, unlawful raids  
- Closure of schools following militarisation  
- Education and skills programmes and training  
- New cultural centres, museums, sports centres, improved community spaces | - |