

April 2014

Bachelor Thesis Summary

The Transformative Effect of the Preparation for the 2016 Olympic Games on Rio de Janeiro's Favelas

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Legacy¹ is a concept that evolved a lot during the history of the modern Olympic Games. In the course of the Olympic history the opportunities recognized and hoped by the organizing cities, the so-called positive legacies, seem to have increased in importance. Nowadays the expectations are big: Organizing committees do not only hope that the Games generate economic revenue, but also try to use the Olympic “moment” in order to launch urban regeneration programs and to promote social change.

The city of Rio de Janeiro is currently facing serious urban and social problems due to the presence of more than 750 favelas – or slums – that became a characteristic of its landscape. For this reason the city is an interesting case study to find out if the organization of the Olympic Games can fulfill the hopes of the hosting cities concerning urban and social legacies.

The research paper sheds light on the so-called Olympic *pregacies* (legacies occurring before the Games), and its aim is to assess the transformative effects of the preparation for Rio 2016 on the favelas. For this matter, a qualitative approach has been used, comprising an analysis of official sources and blog articles, interviews and field observation.

¹ The term “legacy” is used in the paper following Gratton and Preuss (2008), who stated “legacy is planned and unplanned, positive and negative, intangible and tangible structures created through a sport event that remain after the event”.

The analysis begins with a review of literature exposing the results of former research on Olympic legacies. The author then gives insights on the history of the favelas and the current challenges faced by the Municipality. This historical part will be followed by an explanation of the research methodology, before entering the heart of the matter: the analysis and the discussion of the results. After providing a brief overview of Rio de Janeiro's Olympic history and a description of the ongoing construction works, the author describes the way the preparation phase affects the favelas. The reader will learn about Morar Carioca and the Police Pacification Units, two programs linked more or less tightly with the Olympic Games and aimed directly at the favelas and their residents. A subchapter will also deal with the indirect consequences of the Olympic works – and particularly the construction of the new public transportation system – on the favelas. Finally, these transformative effects will be evaluated in regard to the Municipality's challenges as well as the urban integration and social insertion.

The outcomes of this research are as mixed as the Carioca population.

On the one hand, Rio 2016 is responsible for the eviction of thousands of favelados. Regardless whether forced or white – gentrification – the evictions have the same consequence: the migration of the evictees to the periphery of the city. Furthermore, the Bidding Committee promised Games of transformation and expects the Olympics to bring many years of social change. And even if the Organizing Committee brought its support to Municipality in order to promote urban integration (transport, urban norms, lighting, pavement, waste collection), the three municipal challenges pointed out in the literature review – land regularization, housing deficit, violence & drug trade – have only partially been addressed. A clear and unified regularization of land titles is still missing and the social insertion, which would for example necessitate education and health programs, seems not to be the major preoccupation of the Organizing Committee. On the opposite, evictions and resettlement in distant areas of the city, where lack of transport, health system and schools have been noticed, enhance the social exclusion. On the other hand, the Police Pacification Units (UPP) have revolutionized the approach of the police force and help the Municipality in the resolution of one of its major challenges. In the pacified favelas and their neighborhoods, violence and drug trade has significantly decreased. Even if UPP, in the end, represent a new form of domination by an armed group, the escape of the traffickers has a positive effect on the well-being and self-esteem of the favelados. After their pacification, the favelas open up their narrow streets and stairs labyrinth to the public: friends, journalists, tourist, etc. And the favelados are grateful, as pointed out by a woman in the streets of the favela of Vidigal when a team from Al Jazeera English was filming in November 2012: *“We used to see people with guns. Today, they have been replaced by cameras”*.