

Socio-Sporting Projects, Violence Prevention and Suburban Youth in the City of Rio de Janeiro

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1 First touches

This paper envisages analyzing how sports, such as football, basketball, taekwon do, swimming, volleyball and others, are practiced by poor young people in some suburban areas in Rio de Janeiro, within territories marked by intense and extensive experience of violence. This violence may involve armed conflict between traffickers, clashes between police and criminals, fights among funk groups or between organized groups of football clubs fans. These people live in economically and socially degraded areas, as shown by two victimization surveys conducted by NUPEVI¹ (Zaluar et al, 2007).

Sports are often presented as a solution to prevent violence in poor neighborhoods, mainly in favela²s, and among youth at risk, who are vulnerable to the charm of weapons, cars, and easy money, which hide a less attractive side: death, the loss of friends, neighbors and relatives, or other lifelong sequels, whether physical, emotional or social. But are sports able to “save” poor youth by offering them new opportunities, new paths, and expanding the fields of opportunities in Planning Area 3³ (AP 3) – the region of Rio de Janeiro most marked by drug trafficking, gunfire and high rates of violent crime, especially murder?

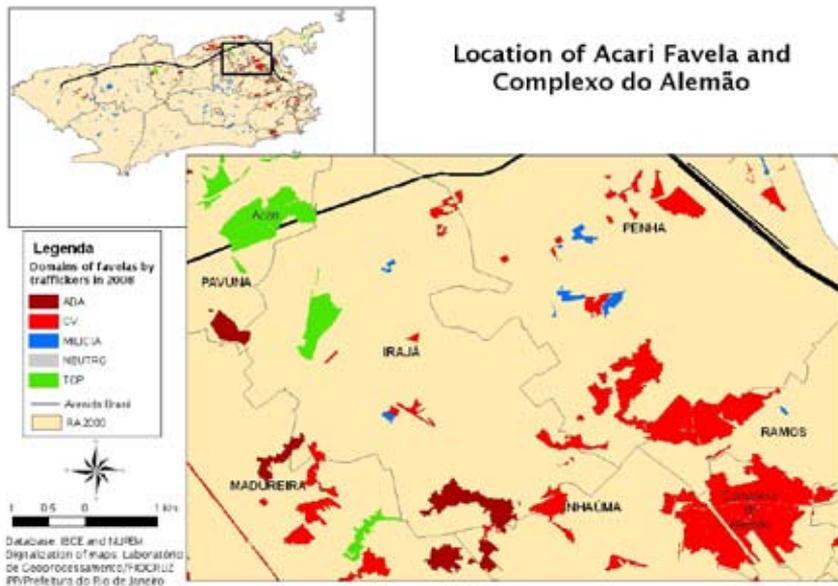
1 NUPEVI, Núcleo de Pesquisa das Violências (Center for Studies on Violences)

2 Favela is the unofficial name for the officially defined sub-normal urban area, where informality and lack of property

Rights are the main features. Nowadays favela is called community, a less pejorative name.

3 At the last week of November 2010, the slums of “Complexo do Alemão” and “Vila Cruzeiro” have been occupied by state police and supported by men and means of navy and army. Several drug dealers leave the slum, some were arrested and others were killed in police confrontation. The police occupation may remain at these two slums where there are no more armed drug dealers and the civil rights are now being reestablished.

The following map shows the location of Acari and Alemão⁴ favelas in the city of Rio de Janeiro and the domains of favelas by traffickers. This map – another product of Nupevi’s researches – reports the domains of favelas during the year of 2008, and they are represented by Amigos dos amigos (ADA), Comando Vermelho (CV), Milícias and Terceiro Comando Puro (TCP).



This region, according to NUPEVI’s two victimization surveys and to the reports of crime victims, is one of the most violent in the city: there is a high rate of assault among men in the streets and squares of their own neighborhoods. Moreover, the percentage of people who have lost relatives, friends and neighbors to murder is the highest in the city.

We begin with this reflection on the role of sports: what happens if young people frustrated by the formal education offered by the State,⁵ disenchanted with a formal political process immersed in scandals that has led to the weakening and disengagement of civil society (Souza & Lamounier, 2006: 43-60),

4 The following websites helps to identify the Complexo do Alemão:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/claudiolara/110401589/lightbox/>
http://oglobo.globo.com/fotos/2007/06/29/29_MHG_rio_penha.jpg

5 According to Armazém de Dados (a program developed by Instituto Pereira area Passos, of the municipal administration of Rio de Janeiro), the average of years of schooling of household heads in the neighborhood of Vigário Geral is 4.5 years.

turn to sports – mostly football – to “win in life,” but these sports are not able to rescue them and their families from poverty? Given that the young participants in these sports are also informed by the discourses of social projects, school and their families, about the importance of sports in socialization, what effect can social sports projects have in distancing participants from violence?

Before we proceed, we must specify what it is to be young and be considered to be within the category known as “youth.” Strict and natural criteria, such as date of birth and age group, are of little help and of low sociological potential in this regard. To be young has a specific meaning in each culture, since it is a social and not a biological construct. Moreover, each social group has generational and social disputes, with several representations of youth, some of which collide with each other.

In this paper we use the definition given by Bourdieu (1983), who understands youth as the time when an individual begins to make his own choices – about the clothes he will wear, about the friends with whom he or she will share experiences and interact in life, the groups to which he or she will belong, what songs he or she will listen to and even whether to cheer for the same football team as his or her father. This author also sees the category in relative terms, observing “we are always older or younger than someone.”

In addition to being thought of as a means of preventing violence, sports and leisure are rights guaranteed in the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, along with other rights such as universal access to healthcare. They are included among the social rights won by Brazilian society through the democratization process and written in the country’s laws:

Article 217. It is the duty of the State to foster the practice of formal and informal sports, as a right of each individual, with due regard for:

1. the autonomy of the directing sports entities and associations, as to their organization and operation;
2. the allocation of public funds with a view to promoting, on a priority basis, educational sports and, in specific cases, high performance sports;
3. differentiated treatment for professional and non-professional sports;

This right led to the expansion of the practice of sport and leisure among the working classes promoted by the State, since they might not always have access to these practices in traditional private clubs, gyms, parks, etc., except in lower-class clubs and associations. But this is only feasible if

investments are made, as some of these places charge for admission or tuition. Considering the opportunity to practice sports as a right implies an expansion of the welfare state, initially limited to social rights regarding healthcare, education and public assistance. However this concept also involves the perception that healthcare and education mean much more than treating illness, providing medicine or schools and textbooks

In many countries today, the sport that mobilizes most professionals and amateurs in tournaments and championships that become spectacles for large or small audiences, is football. Following rules established in the nineteenth century (Wisnik, 2008) by the British and rapidly spreading through the British Empire and throughout the world, football became a game whose rules were designed to insure that the opponent would not be physically eliminated. This is a key element in Norbert Elias' (1993). concept of the civilizing process. Football developed within a broader social context in which improvements were being made to the parliamentary game. The fact that one group takes power, in the case of the parliamentary game – or wins, in the case of the sport – does not mean that the losing team should be eliminated or killed.

This means that football introduced new elements in the history of games: a) the idea that any team could win the match; b) the fact that both teams play under the same rules; c) the transmission of notions of respect for rules and teamwork; d) the idea of unpredictability, which would increase the need for attention and the tension among players and fans, expecting the outcome of the match – all this made football something magical, where the weaker could defeat the stronger as if in a fairy tale.

While football has become global, with players⁶ (Damo, 2005) from various parts of the world, local components such as the family, belonging to a particular region, state or city, as well as multiple ties are factors that connect a fan to a certain club continue important in defining who cheers for Manchester United, Liverpool, Chelsea, Juventus, Internazionale, Roma, Barcelona, Real Madrid, Olympique de Marseille, Bayern Munich, or even, Fluminense, Flamengo, Botafogo, Vasco da Gama, Corinthians, Sao Paulo, Juventude, Fortaleza and others. Intense loyalty to a team is often expressed through membership in an organized fan group. Rivalry between these

6 Cf. “Pé-de-obra”, in the original. This expression was created by the anthropologist Arlei Damo, as a reference to “mão-de-obra” (the Portuguese expression for “manpower”) and is used in reference to football, whose performance depends mainly on the use of the feet.

groups often leads to fights, even murder and other uncivilized behaviors. Their supporters, their history with the cities, districts, regions, social bonds formed by and in accordance with football – no matter how globalized may be a match between, for example, Manchester United and Internazionale Milan, it will always be a match between Englishmen and Italians.

Are these the local aspects of globalized football? The “Glocalize” (CANCLINI, 1997), that is, the idea that globalization promotes movements of both global and local factors at the same time and in the same locations, spreading flows and cultural practices. Moreover, it is important to remember that this practice is hegemonically masculine, and has even been called by Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning (1993) as a “reserved male space”, where men are told early to practice, and women discouraged from doing so⁷.

Another dimension of football is the fact that it is multi-generational for professionals, amateurs and spectators. Parents introduce their children to football, and at the same time can play football with their friends in informal matches (known as “*peladas*”), or with their children, can play in public squares, official schools, Olympic Villages, or public schools and district clubs.

Nor surprisingly, following the official trend, former famous soccer players manage or lend their names to largely supported unofficial sports projects. Other former players also adhere to social and sports projects, but without engaging in the well-known ones, supported by the media and large corporations (Ribeiro, 2003). There are, therefore, various kinds of sports projects in Brazil, but I will be concerned only with the governmental Olympics Vilas in Rio de Janeiro.

2 Ethnography of the sports field in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro

The context of inequality and poverty in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro serves as background for the fieldwork in the Municipal Olympic Villages Clara Nunes (VOMCN) and Carlos Castilho (VOMCC), in the respective neighborhoods of Fazenda Botafogo and Grota, Complexo do Alemão.

In addition to their location within AP 3, the two Olympic Villages were chosen for ethnographic fieldwork because they are in the neighborhoods

7 Even so, women have become increasingly present in football throughout the world and in Brazil in particular. The Brazilian footballer Marta Vieira da Silva for example has won several medals of “footballer of the year” since 2007.

with the lowest Human Development Indexes of the city of Rio de Janeiro. This allowed us to study the impact of public sports projects in the regions most degraded in terms of quality of life.

2.1 The Clara Nunes Municipal Olympic Village, in Fazenda Botafogo

The goal of the ethnographic field research was to understand how a social-sports project, in one of the poorest and most violent regions of Rio de Janeiro, and one with the most severe and hostile presence of the military police – the AP 3 – can help prevent the violence suffered and committed by teenagers.

The ethnographic work gave us the opportunity to see the “flesh and blood” behind the statistics, in the sense that Malinowski used the expression in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. That is, only ethnography allows us to capture the wide variety of meanings that sports have for those young people engaged in some sport at the Olympic Villages. These include: the impact on the expansion of social networks among students, parents and teachers, forming the social capital of these actors; the expansion of world views, by attempting to instill values through the practice of sport and leisure; the relationship of students with their parents and relatives and a sense of individual and family “salvation” through sport; the sense of victory as a result of concerted effort and teamwork; and finally, a glimpse of a new, plausible and palpable field of possibilities (VELHO, 1999) for those subjects.

We investigated how sports have been practiced in this space, recording the views of young people who practice sports and the viewpoint of professionals involved in the design of the Olympic Village (both teachers and employees). We also examined how sports are presented as a possibility to escape poverty, and prevent violence through the professionalization and socialization of young people.

The region of the Olympic Village is, according to the statistical data recorded in a victimization survey conducted by NUPEVI / IMS / UERJ in 2006-2007, one of the most deeply marked by the experience of violence and the tremendous suffering it causes. This survey also contained socio-demographic data about the region that will help us understand these tragedies. In addition, we also used the 2000 Census and subsequent surveys⁸ conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, to investigate data about the region.

8 National Household Sample Survey [Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra Domiciliar - PNAD].

According to this Institute in this region 60% of the householders in the neighborhood have eight years of schooling, 37% of residents live at slums, even then in the whole city is 20%. Live expectancy at birth is around 67,41 years, infant mortality is of 31,05 per 100.000. The probability of survival until the forty is 90,1%, what means that 10% of local population dies before the 40 years old.

This Olympic Village has 7,000 square meters in area and is one of the eight built by the municipal government. It is located in Fazenda Botafogo, a lower-class neighborhood formed by housing built in the 1970s by residents who were moved out of slums in more prosperous and central areas of the city. It is also characterized by being an industrial region that has suffered from changes in the world of labor that have occurred in recent decades. It is commonly known as the Olympic Village of Acari, because the region of influence of the Acari neighborhood became famous due to the constant violence resulting from clashes between police and traffickers, smugglers and traffickers and a historical "occupation" of the slum by the Department of Public Safety, in the mid-1990s. A group known in Rio de Janeiro as the Mothers of Acari – in an allusion to the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires – organized themselves to denounce the disappearance of their children, occurred in the same decade and attributed to the military police of that region, and never explained. The neighborhood of Acari was also famous for the existence of a market known for selling stolen goods.

The Olympic Village welcomes students from several nearby neighborhoods, but most students come from Pavuna, Acari, Coelho Neto and Barros Filho, although we have found parents and students from Honorio Gurgel and Rocha Miranda, for example, which are distant neighborhoods.

The Olympic Village is officially open from Tuesday to Sunday, and offers 11 sports (athletics, basketball, capoeira, indoor and outdoor football, handball, gymnastics, judo, swimming, taekwondo and volleyball) and other artistic, cultural and educational activities (aerodefense, choir, dance / jazz, ballroom dancing, crafts, music / percussion and English classes). All activities that are free of charge are presented by 21 teachers and helped by the same number of support staff, including interns, cleaning and security personnel. The VOMCN also has professionals of the socio-educational sector, who are responsible for providing special attention to the poorest and the most

“problematic”⁹ students, and who integrate the work at VOMCN with that of the local public schools.

The 7,000 square meters are divided among a swimming pool, skate park, a covered multipurpose court, a football field, facilities for individual sports or for those that do not require a court with marked lines, as well as practice spaces, a small theater, administrative offices and male and female locker rooms. During the ethnographic fieldwork, a source revealed that the monthly cost of operating a space like this is around US\$ 115,000, covering the costs of water, cleaning, maintenance, payment of teachers and staff and others.

The Olympic Village is fully funded by the municipal administration of Rio de Janeiro (PCRJ), but is administered by the School of Social Work of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-RJ), which won a public bid to manage the facilities. There are eight Olympic Villages operating in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and two others were scheduled for completion but have been delayed. All of them are fully funded by the municipality, except for that at Maré, which is partly funded by private companies, especially the state petroleum company, Petrobras.

According to the former coordinator of the Olympic Village, who at the time of the fieldwork had been in office for more than two years, 6,000 students attend each year (of these, 2,000 were younger than 18) including infants, children, youth, adults and seniors. There is no age limit for entry, but children and adolescents are required to prove enrollment in a public or private school. Users of all ages must present a medical certificate indicating that they are in condition to conduct sports. This certificate is not offered in the Village and has to be obtained from a public or private clinic.

Most of the students come from poor families, most are below 18 years old, and there are few students between 18 and 30 years old. The VOMCN’s coordinator, a black man of about 30, who has a bachelor’s degree in Physical Education, stated:

This is the stage when the community resident is forming his family. I saw this a lot in the *Pro Jovem*, last year I participated in this project. I saw that most young people between the ages of 18 and 24 had three or four children. Ninety percent. In these families, some worked, others not, and they completed high

9 Those considered problematic present more violent behavior, disrespect teachers, staff and colleagues, or are regularly involved in fights.

school. There are many people in high school. I think until earlier, 16-24 years. And, consequently, we lose a lot of students at this age group. And also the grown man, he does not attend the activities, since he is working. We're very sorry about this absence.

When they enter the labor market, and due to the fact that most of them have to help to support a family many young men in this age group have to give up their sporting activities at VOMCN. They only have time for sports on weekends, holidays or during weekday evenings.

A significant number of students are considered to have special needs deriving from, either physical or mental disabilities. These attend separate classes that include special psychomotor activities. In late 2007, these students participated in a tournament among all the disabled students of the Olympic Villages of Rio de Janeiro. They got as far as the last stage and reached third place in the indoor football competition.

The Village is open throughout the year, with a short recess for Christmas and New Year. In January and February, it functions as a summer camp, receiving young people who practice sports as leisure, without having to learn the basics and more specific techniques and rules of each sport. During this period, attendance at the Village triples. According to the coordinator, this occurs because there is no set schedule for classes, and the teachers are not concerned with rules and techniques, but only with recreational activities. He also told us that during the summer they try to attract new students to the more organized activities during the rest of the year.

Márcio, one of the oldest employees of the Village, works in the administration at VOMCN, and believes that the summer camp is a good chance for the Village to show that it is a good opportunity for students who only sought recreation during the summer:

And one detail: through this camp, parents and students will feel that this is the right place for them to stay. If they realize that if the camp provides this treatment, and offers this diversification, what about the normal activities? Then it sparks their interest, and they ask their parents to allow them to enroll and attend.

Interestingly, the “camp” is not sought by the so-called “regular students” who attend the village the rest of the year and are more interested in deepening their sporting competence. On Saturdays and Sundays throughout the

year, the VOMCN is restricted to recreational activities, except for the football field, which is reserved for groups of football players, usually older than 20 or for companies that reserve space for their employees to play football.

Each student can enroll in four different classes at previously scheduled times. This limit is due to the increased demand for the activities undertaken at the VOMCN and to the impossibility of increasing its capacity.

From Tuesday to Friday, during the months that correspond to the official public school year, the VOMCN is open from 7am to 5pm, when the regular activities mentioned above are offered. On these days, they learn more specific rules for each sport, greater depth is placed on the fundamentals of sports, the motor aspects of the students are observed, presence and punctuality are required. In this way, sports discipline is instilled in them.

In addition to the village there is a CIEP (Integrated Public Education Center) that is open full time and serves first to fourth grade elementary school students. The indoor court that serves the VOMCN was originally owned by the CIEP, but was ceded to the Village which, in turn, promised to offer the space and classes to students from the center. During the day, students leave their classes and are brought to the court, where they perform physical, recreational and sports activities separately from the VOMCN students.

One of the most recurrent discourses offered by VOMCN's professionals is that this is not a football school, club, or a bodybuilding gym. They say they feel included in a social and sports project with special characteristics: they have better equipment than other projects; they also have their own physical space, and do not need to stay outdoors in the streets and squares in the rain or under a scorching sun. They have a demarcated, well maintained space, built just six years ago, with several covered areas and with constant maintenance, as we observed during the research.

Another recurrent discourse is that options to expand the youths' horizons are presented, as reported by an employee who has been working there for two years. In the words of another VOMCN worker, a football teacher, who has a bachelor's degree in Physical Education with considerable experience in social and sports projects, as well as in samba schools:

If we observe how people behaved when they begin at the Olympic Village and after we have presented the ethics and citizenship, we see how it has affected

the lives of children and young people... This work is important in the lives of young people and children because it provides socialization, it gives them a new view of community, poverty, opens a little wider view, opens a little better view of what the person may be. This expands their view and removes the reference from people who should not have a reference to them¹⁰. So you end up creating a healthy environment for people who attend here.

Nevertheless, the idea of salvation, redemption, and that the option of the Village represents “the path of goodness”, make up an almost messianic view common in the speech of officials and teachers at the Olympic Village. As reported by another employee of the Village, who has been working there since activities began:

Here you deal with people in need. And you have to do what? You have to regain the self-esteem of these people, and here we work with many people and try to show them that the correct path is not what they are trying to follow, but what we’re trying to show them.

The VOMCN project seems to be less vulnerable to changes in municipal political parties, although the current coordinator is the fifth in six years, and each new coordinator changes the staff. It must be highlighted that the closing of VOMCN and the end of its work seems less likely than in other projects for young people, despite the constant change of coordination.

The project has, according to the coordinators, guaranteed continuity, even if the professionals are not sure whether they will remain employed and that there might be shifts in focus at the village, from a socio-educational model, like the current one, to a model of competition and training of high-performance athletes. During the research, the focus and function of the village were necessarily social, and sport was presented from the perspective of socialization and citizenship. The people interviewed displayed a “fear” that a policy change would lead the Village to adopt a model of high performance sports training, giving up the focus on violence prevention and socialization.

Nevertheless, shortly after recording the interviews, when the recorder has been turned off and small formalities fade, some respondents indicated that the coordination suffers pressure from city council members and local community leaders to hire young professionals, often with no qualifications

¹⁰ That is, well armed and violent drug traffickers.

or expertise to deal with the public in question according to the patronage demands of the local political culture. They feared that people who had worked in recent elections would be employed as “payment” for the “favor and service” provided. There were no complaints about a lack of sporting equipment or about delayed wages, but concerns were expressed about the problems of violence in the regions surrounding the VOMCN. However, we did not notice during the ethnographic research, nor was there any mention during the interviews, of any invasion by traffickers or police or signs of gunfire, bullet holes or even graffiti on the walls of the Village, which could indicate the presence of drug dealers. It is as if the Village were a respected area, protected from the shootings and attacks common in ordinary buildings in the region.

One of the activities pursued by the more regular students and those who attend the summer camp is swimming. This is because, besides being an activity not commonly found in the region, especially in public spaces, it is a new activity, and is open to students of all ages, from the newborn to the elderly. The practice of swimming has the following guidelines, informed by the coordinator:

We have family swimming, starting at six months of age up to three years, in which the guardian must be with them, it is his obligation. The person directly responsible may be the father, grandmother, or a sibling over 18. There are two swimming classes for the family, one for children from six months to three years, and another for those from three to six. For students over six, when the motor abilities are already acquired, we have football, volleyball, basketball, handball and swimming. They go through an individual adjustment, a motor process, an adaptation after an initiation, a special education. Whether he (she) will become a future member of a pre-team, we have to provide guidelines to them.

Maintaining the current status of the Olympic Village means that it would not have as its central focus the training of athletes, but the search for inclusion, ie, the preparation for collective life, for citizenship. This is despite the fact that the name “Olympic Village” can give the idea that it is a space for training athletes. This does not in any way interfere with the fact that some of the professionals have referred students who excel in sport to professionally organized football clubs or football schools. Some of these students stay at the Village, others return and others lose contact.

A physical education teacher at the Village, who also has extensive experience in social projects and happens to be the coordinator of another project in the city, when asked if students come back to give some thanks, or were willing to give something back to the Village, declared:

There were even some kids that I took to a [professional football] club, and they came back looking for me. I have been here since 2002 and now and then one or another child comes here just to see me. But I have not seen anyone want to return to the village. Once I went to a street festival and a student was working in a tent and would not let me pay the bill. That was how he tried to reciprocate.

The truth is that the functions at VOMCN, include both the training of athletes and the training of citizens. Working with the possible tensions that this peculiar dual function creates for a project located near five poor and violent communities of the city of Rio de Janeiro is a task that requires intense, constant and intensive care. It represents an attempt to solve a dilemma raised by academics in departments of Physical Education and Social Sciences: to socialize or to professionalize?

The professionals of the Olympic Village adopt a dual perspective. They try to treat each student according to his/her (dis)abilities, “treating the different differently”. No-one is excluded through the so-called “cut” at VOMCN.¹¹ Yet, professionals emphasize that one way to handle the frustration felt when a student realizes they will not become a professional athlete is by showing them the different ways sport helps to shape that individual citizen and future professional by offering alternative paths. For instance, they may become professional athletes, not at small or large football clubs, but as physical education teachers, physical trainers, masseurs, physiotherapists, or employees in projects like those at the Olympic Village.

Márcio, a former official of VOMCN, affirms that:

He [the trainer] has to be prepared for these hardships because we know that the Olympic Village is not a club, not an official school, or a gym. So he must always talk with his student. Or talk to the students, contact them, introduce

11 Cutting: the process of selecting which teenagers will have access to football clubs, football schools or training enters among adolescents from various regions of the country to become professionals. On days of “cutting”, the young people demonstrate their skills that will result in their selection or exclusion.

them. He has to prepare the student for these adversities. For example, we were working on the Pan-American Games. What is the role of the Village? It was to make the student understand why the volleyball arena was in Copacabana. They analyzed Copacabana, studied the geography, established an interdisciplinary relationship with the school. Why was that sport occurring there? Therefore, you'd come to Rio de Janeiro, he would explain volleyball. So some things have to be talked about with the students, so they can understand why. I'll take an example: why was he never an athlete? Why didn't he come etc? ... So you have to discuss things so there is no frustration.

Thus, the idea conveyed by the professionals is that to succeed in sport one needs training, perseverance, tenacity and respect for the rules. This helps young people realize that the "true and lasting achievements" of life do not come suddenly or easily, but are the outcome of effort and achievement. Football serves as a metaphor: "to succeed in life or in sport it is necessary to comply with certain rules, and be prepared to train, and fight assiduously to achieve their goals" (ZALUAR, 1994). Being a winner in sports does not mean, according to teachers, to professionalize the youths in it, but making them understand its symbolic efficacy that helps them to be prepared for adult life: knowing how to lose, knowing how to compete on the basis of the same rules for all players, learning how to conduct oneself in life with discipline and respect for others (*ibid.*). However, unfortunately these lessons compete with the opposite values of disrespect for rules, winning at any cost and immediately, disrespecting the opponents, seeing rivals as the enemy that has to be destroyed.

Another important aspect is the fact that most of the professionals who work at the Olympic Village have extensive experience in social projects and are trained in physical education. One of them works on projects related to samba schools, and is the main samba-master of one of the most leading schools. Another has his own nongovernmental organization (NGO) that operates in a social-sports project in partnership with the private sector. There are also employees who wanted, while young, to be professional athletes, but were not successful and now work with sports in another way. These examples can serve as a source of hope by offering an alternative path for young people who also want to become professional athletes yet will not be able to achieve this ambition.

The VOMCN's coordinator declared:

I come from Maré, where I began as a trainee in 2001 and took this journey. I was a teacher in Maré in 2002 and therefore I am from the Olympic Village, right? I went to Campinho in the CEMASI project, then returned and worked in Maré, but for a very short period, then went to Gamboa as a teacher reference and then coordinated Acari.

2.2 The Carlos Castilho Municipal Olympic Village, in the Complexo do Alemão

At the entrance to the Grota favela, which is part of the Complexo do Alemão, in the Ramos neighborhood, lies the Carlos Castilho Municipal Olympic Village (VOMCC), on Itararé Road. It is flanked on one side by the site of an old underwear factory (Poesi) that was imploded in 2008 to allow the construction of new homes that were part of the PAC¹² in progress in the region, and on the other by a garbage dump. The access to the Aurora shantytown, which is smaller than the Grota, also passes along the Olympic Village.

The VOMCC is located within the XXIX Administrative Region (RA) of the Complexo do Alemão, which encompasses 12 shantytowns¹³ in the neighborhoods of Ramos, Olaria, Penha, Bonsucesso and Inhaúma. According to the 2000 census, 65,000 people live in this RA, but other sources count more than 200,000 people living there nowadays.

Also according to IBGE live expectancy at birth is around 64,38 years, infant mortality is of 40,15 per 100.000 and 80% of the householders have eight years of schooling. The probability of survival until the forty is 87,40%.

Because of its size and situation, the Complexo do Alemão has been carefully studied¹⁴.

This Olympic Village has a pool, skate park, gymnasium and multi-

12 *Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento* (Growth Acceleration Program), of the Brazilian federal government.

13 Morro da Baiana, Morro do Alemão, Alvorada, Marinha, Morro dos Mineiros, Nova Brasília, Pedra do Sapo, Palmeiras, Fazendinha, Grota, Vila Cruzeiro, Morro do Adeus.

14 Data from the portal *Rio Como Vamos* show high rates of violence in the region in the following categories: "total deaths by legal intervention" (9.6 deaths by legal intervention – police action – per 100,000 inhabitants, by place of residence); "juvenile deaths by legal intervention" (65.82 deaths by legal intervention – police action – of males from 15-25 per 100,000 people in this age group, by place of residence); "assault on children" (2.12 admissions of children aged 0-14 in public healthcare units for reasons related to possible aggression per 100,000 inhabitants in this age group, by place of residence); "resisting arrest" (40.3 deaths in confrontations with police per 100,000 inhabitants by place of residence).

sport courts, classrooms used for sports such as *capoeira*, tae kwon do, karate, ballet, and others, and a small library for tutoring. It is open from Tuesday to Sunday for regular activities, and has classes that teach the fundamentals of sports during the week and provides recreational programs on the weekends. The VOMCC is open 12 months of the year and is also used as a summer camp in January. At summer, according to interviews, the matriculated students go to visit relatives in other parts of the city or in other states. Another possible explanation is that the matriculated students do not like to attend the VOMCC for just recreational activities since they prefer sports training, and do not want to confuse these two different activities, once that during January the Olympic Village becomes a summer camp just like the VOMCN.

The village has a coordinator who is responsible for managing the space and activities, and a small infirmary for first aid, a socio-educational department, consisting of psychologists and educators who minister to the most “difficult” students, a sector for learning support and additional administrative staff such as filing reports, timesheets, registrations and providing information for students, parents and guardians.

Anyone can register at VOMCC, and as at the Acari Village, they can live in any area of the city. Minors, however, must have authorization from a parent or guardian and prove school enrollment.

According to the coordinator, the VOMCC serves 6,000 people a year, and also has many elderly people registered. Each student can enroll in four class categories on different days and times, provided there are openings. The coordinator reported that the categories most in demand are swimming and football. Swimming is the most popular, attracting people of all ages and genders, while football is limited to young men.

This unit is also funded by the Rio de Janeiro municipal government although it is administered by an NGO awarded the commission through competitive bidding. This process does not impede, according to data collected during the field research, interference from local politicians in the selection and appointment of professionals to the VOMCC. Nor does it ensure a good working relationship with NGOs. During the fieldwork, for example, cleaning and security staff reported that they had not received their salaries for the past three months.

2.3 In the fieldwork

Come on, teacher? It's five to two. I want to play football, damn it!

I heard these words during fieldwork at VOMCC as I watched students arrive for a football class at the beginning of a very sunny afternoon in 2008. It was a VOMCC student reminding his teacher of the long-awaited moment, and who was pushing for the activities to start soon.

The statement was important, because it highlighted not only the student's respect for the authority of the teacher, not as an educator, but as a service provider, turning the relationship between student and teacher into one between client and consumer. It may also indicate the direct and indirect lessons from sport, such as respect and cooperation.

Statements by teachers during the interviews revealed a paradoxical and intriguing form of mediating conflicts with more rebellious students. It was not surprising that teachers from the Olympic Village sought to speak with parents, even with local leaders.

But the fragility of the power and prestige of the professionals at the VOMCC was revealed by the fact that two teachers reported that they had to speak with local drug lords to get certain students to calm down and cooperate. After this, they said, students began behaving better during classes. This seems to be a contradiction, since it meant seeking respect from a field that collides with the values and rules of the Village, a violent life style that the sports project tries to prevent. In doing so, the teacher somehow recognizes the power of local drug dealers, lending legitimacy to them, thus apparently entering into contradiction with the sport ethos of the Olympic Village.

During participant observation, we noticed considerable aggression among the students. This aggression was seen in football matches even among students who had been working and playing together for some time. On one warm and sunny afternoon, as a teacher was being interviewed, another was chastising one of his students. According to this professor, he did so for two reasons: the student had hit a colleague and verbally disrespected the teacher who had told him to stop. In cases such as these, the teachers use the following tactics: After a first offense, the student is sent home, and if in the next class, the deviant behavior continues, the student would only be allowed to attend classes if a parent or guardian comes to the Village to discuss the child's behavior. If there is a third recurrence, the student is excluded from that activity.

One physical education teacher, who recently began coaching football at VOMCC, and is a former resident of the region, said he uses two quite contradictory discourses and two different practices to curb inappropriate behavior among students, as discussed below. He said the most difficult students were among those between 13 and 19, exactly the more vulnerable age to the traffickers' lure. For thirteen's he said to be necessary use discourses and practices more comprehensive, for nineteen's he admitted to use authority discourses and practices.

What leads a youngster to practice a sport at VOMCC? There are a wide range of answers to this question because a plethora of factors lead children and adolescents to participate, or cease to participate, in the Olympic Village.

Similarly to VOMCN, younger students, although initially brought by their parents, may be enrolled on the advice of a doctor. In these cases, they are usually signed in swimming classes.

Jaqueline, a 30-year-old black housewife, is in her second marriage, and lives in the Grota neighborhood. She has not completed high school, and has two children, from different fathers. The eldest is eight and studies at a municipal school. The youngest is five, and attends a local private nursery school. Her current husband, whom she classified as a "brown-skinned guy," works as an unlicensed mason's assistant, and earns about two minimum wages per month (approximately US\$500) when there is work. He has little formal education, like his parents. (though she does not know how many years of study). She attends her eldest son's classes at VOMCC, where she meets mothers from other communities in the Complexo do Alemão as well as from the community where she lives. She explains why she has put her child in swimming lessons on Wednesdays and Fridays.

My son had problems with his lungs. I had to rush him to the emergency room regularly. He had bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia. A doctor said swimming would help him and a neighbor told me about the Village and that it was free. So I enrolled him here. The doctor said it was the most complete sport. I mentioned it to a neighbor and she told me about it.

She says that she enrolled in the Village, but does not practice regularly because the schedules are not compatible with hers and because she says she cannot always take her son. But she acknowledges improvements in her son's quality of life after he enrolled in the Village.

When he came, he was more silent, quiet and coughed a lot. Now he is more enthusiastic, has more friends and gets on better at school.

Although she has no other specific data or parameters to indicate the improvements she has noticed in the life of her eldest son, this perception is commonly attributed to sporting activities. Health, prevention, remediation or even maintenance, are the reasons for entering and continuing to attend the Olympic Village.

Conversations with other mothers during the children's swimming lessons cover a number of issues, such as tales of shootouts, killings of drug dealers or drug users in debt, and violent actions by armored police vehicles. But apart from the sad stories, the mothers also discuss their churches, the routines of their husbands, boyfriends or lovers, and complain a lot about their children's schools, long considered inhospitable places, with low quality education and poor conditions. Even so, the mothers refer to schools by saying: "it's bad, but it'd be worse without it." In these conversations, information about the best school, best health clinic, the actions of each neighborhood association and its representatives reveal perceptions about the community. In short, the VOMCC enables them to strengthen their social ties, that is, sociability based on trust and reciprocity antidotes against violence.

2.4 In the name of the father

One of the reasons for joining the VOMCC is professional. We cannot say that it is the sole, or even the main reason, and to make any responsible statement about its importance it would be necessary to conduct a survey among students and their parents. But during fieldwork, we did find some students who wanted to become professional athletes.

Among the students observed, we were struck by a 12-year-old boy whose father, brought him in a professional uniform everyday: football shoes, socks, shirt and an official shirt of the Botafogo team. The father, a former Botafogo player, has a high school degree and is now a small businessman in the region. They do not live in the Alemão community, but in the Ramos neighborhood.

The father hopes that his son will have a more successful career than he did, and although they cannot be considered low income, the professionalization of his son would provide his family better living conditions and a career where the father had not been able to achieve much glory. Dressed more

formally than most parents, with a long-sleeved shirt, jeans and well-shined shoes, the father watches his son on the field, giving tips and guidelines, but discreetly, as if he only wanted his son to hear and understand. The father knows the region of the Olympic Village, and thinks that, in addition to providing a social opportunity, it provides a professional one as well, because the teachers are good and dedicated professionals who teach the basics of sport and even good behavior. He believes that because it is called an Olympic Village indicates that it is a place dedicated to training athletes. The fact that his son is in VOMCC provides him greater visibility and he can be “caught” by scouts while learning the fundamentals and practicing football in a more orderly and disciplined manner.

In addition, the father wants to ensure that his child has a diet suitable to a future athlete. He controls not only his son’s food, but his behavior as well when he goes to bed and when he wakes up, and restricts access to other physical activities that could cause unnecessary strain on an athlete. The father affirms that he requires rigorous discipline from his boy to prepare him for professional life. He also demands that his son get good grades at school. His child is in the seventh grade at a private school in the region, and says he follows his performance at school: “Being a football player does not mean you cannot read, write and study.”

The son, Daniel, appears to accept the project that is encouraged and “managed” by his father. He shows disposition in the matches, and appears committed, enthusiastic and dedicated during the activities. Upon arrival, even though the training had already started, he was soon assigned to one of the teams, showing that the teachers also encourage his project. The boy sees his father’s plan as something clear and certain and repeats his father’s discourse. He wants to continue taking classes at VOMCC, and maintain the diet and rigorous discipline to become a high performance athlete. In relation to his school, he says he is a good student, attends all classes, gets good grades and likes mathematics. Daniel says he is training with other students, but feels different, as if he had been chosen, predestined, a bearer of a gift and is almost certain that he will become a professional athlete, as indicated by the different clothing he uses.

Other students express a mix of sarcasm, admiration and contempt, but at no time do they show aggression, which may be a sign of respect. According to the teachers, the relationship with other students had not

always been like this. There was more tension when Daniel began to attend classes and considerable efforts were needed to improve the atmosphere.

Another student, Pintinho, is also counting on becoming a professional athlete. He is 12 and brown-skinned, and attends the fifth grade at a regional public school. He lives in the neighboring community of Pedra do Sapo. His mother was born in Northeastern Brazil and his father is from Rio de Janeiro. His mother graduated from high school and works as a cleaner; his father is an assistant baker. Pintinho has lived in the same community since he was born, having only moved from one street to another. His mother has been to VOMCC only twice, to enroll him (when she was told about the Village by a neighbor) and then to ask the teachers about his future as football player. She has never returned and he said she asks little about his activities. When asked if his parents encourage him more at school or at the Village, he answered both, but that they always ask about the Village.

Pintinho recognizes his achievements in the Olympic Village: he made friends living in the same favela whom he did not know before, as well as other youths from other favelas and neighborhoods (Ramos, Inhaúma and Olaria). He said he is now “smarter” at school, and has even been praised by his teacher and also understands that VOMCC teachers teach “things about life.” That is, they offer advice, ideas and attitudes about citizenship, health care and tips for everyday life.

His goal in VOMCC is to open paths that will lead to professional opportunities:

The teachers here sometimes take us to train in a club. One day I will go and I will do well because this is the chance of my life.

We notice that when asked what position he wanted to play, he did not mention any, but when asked about his idols, he gave many names: Romario, Adriano, Zico and Maradona; idols with different personalities, and from different epochs. Pintinho admits that he never saw Maradona and Zico play, but he knows they were great stars. Although he does not know exactly which position they played, he knows that Zico and Romario played for Flamengo, which is his favorite team.

The chance of his becoming a professional player is the chance to leave the poor and dangerous favela, bringing his family along. Without realizing the difficulties a football career presents, Pintinho believes that by achieving

professionalization with the aid of teachers, it is his duty to maintain the family together because they are his parents, and “of course” he has a debt to them. Once again, the strong sense of generational reciprocity is present among poor youths.

His life is typical of those who live in slums. He constantly hears gunfire, has relatives involved in trafficking, witnesses executions and knows that older friends have lost friends in the armed clashes and attacks. Pintinho says school is a “cool” place but that the teachers are absent a lot because they are afraid of stray bullets (to which he is used). This missing teaching discourages him, because it undermines the classes and he regularly comes home early.

Although his mother does not accompany her son to the Olympic Village, the Village serves as a space where other migrant mothers and fathers and can rebuild their social networks, fragmented by their arrival in a new city. Although most migrants come to the slums through pre-established contacts with relatives, friends or acquaintances that are already established there, their social networks are fragmented. They must reconstruct their set of connections, since these are needed to get new jobs, and information about healthcare, schools, religions, besides creating social links, whether of friendship, or simple acquaintances. The Olympic Village can be helpful in that regard.

My fieldwork identified other routes that led young people to it. Some sources indicated that the Village seeks out students within the communities. In these cases, students do not come alone, through an official presentation, or by an introduction from neighbors, relatives or friends. They arrive as guests as if they had been chosen on the basis of supposed talent, skills or gifts.

This process works as follows: a member of the VOMCC visits locations where sports are practiced in the communities and selects the young people that he thinks may have special skills. At the VOMCC, they are trained by teachers who were aware that the student was “fished,” from the community.

During the activities, if the student shows skills development, and is able to grasp the technical fundamentals, and if during the matches his talents and gifts are revealed, he may be referred to a professional club, official football school or training center. If he is accepted, the employee who indicated him receives financial compensation, which is split with the teacher who trained him. The status of this teacher would increase even without financial compensation.

If we ascertain the student comes to the VOMCC because of obvious reasons (friend, neighbors, warnings, advertisements, etc.), and also because of pressure from his parents that envisage, his professionalization as a football player, the signing up at the Olympic Villa has a symbolic meaning. It refers to reciprocity - the gift and counter-gift - between parent and child (Damo, 2005), pointing to the solidarity between generations. Some children believe they have a due to their parents and become a famous and rich football player may be the way to the payment. In this case, family pressure for a youth to become a professional athlete can be even greater, because of the expectation created that their child may be “discovered” by an “agent.”

Nevertheless, sad stories are reported by students, parents and teachers. Roberto is black, 38 years old and has lived in the Complexo do Alemão since he was born. He has a bachelor’s degree in Physical Education from UNISUAM¹⁵, and is the son of a couple from Espírito Santo State who moved to Rio de Janeiro when they were young. His father drove a taxi and his mother was a housewife. Roberto has been married four times and says he was a rebel when he was younger. He is the father of three children, two girls and a boy.

Not unlike the students, he also said he has lost several friends to drug warfare and although he has lived a long time in the Complexo do Alemão, reveals surprise with the crack wave that has invaded this community and others. He said there is a place in the Jacaré favela, where some girls will “do anything” for the drug. His opinion about drugs is not positive, and it could not be different, as we will see in the following quotation, but he believes that an addicted youth hinders the future of the country, because drug addicts cannot study work, or hold on to money:

Children and adolescents are the future of society. And a good portion are addicted to hard drugs. Marijuana is increasingly the normal cigarette for them. There are times that if they do not have money to buy drugs, they inhale pure ether, paint thinner or acetone. The problem of crack is that its effect is very fast, and less prolonged, they use it more, so it becomes more expensive. But if these addicts practiced sports, they would not take those risks.

The neighborhood ties helped him find out something that, according to him, is a real bombshell in his life: his own son, born from his first marriage,

15 A private institution in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro.

is involved with trafficking. Roberto said he made several attempts to prevent his son from going down that path. He said he tried to help him find a job, and talked constantly with his mother, but his involvement with trafficking appears to have been inevitable. Although his son had friends who were killed in clashes with other drug gangs or the police, this was not enough for him to give up drug dealing. He also says that he provides his son with everything he needs, but that there are similar situations in his family:

His friends are influencing him. He knows both sides, good and bad, There are parties, we go, New Years eve, on his birthday, we give a party. And I think there is a lack of a more fixed job. As I am the owner of a key making shop, he thinks he can go anytime he wants, so he thinks he has no responsibility. What is missing is for him to take responsibility. His problem is that he wants to keep going like this. There was a guy with a rifle, and he was on the back of a motorbike. If the police comes, everybody loses. Got it? What leads him to this is friendship and employment. I talked to him. I was born and raised in the slum, I know lots of criminals and don't deny it to anyone, a lot of them played football with me. And the other thing is that girls give more value to a guy who is carrying a pistol, a rifle, than to workers. That's the way it is.

Roberto said that some “good” neighbors warned him about the route that his son was taking, what shows there is collective efficacy but the concern of neighbors is not enough:

The friends called me and warned me that my son is doing this and that. A neighbor is always coming and warning me. Why don't we do this. What we do not want for our child, we do not want for the children of others. In the community, good people do that. “Your son is walking with Joe, you should know and will give you an idea. Call the guy and if you do not want to believe, you just have to put up with it; if you do, it's all right.

This statement helps us realize the difficult experience of parents, relatives and neighbors of youths who venture into the world of drug trafficking. It also reveals solidarity, as a reaction to trafficking and the pain over the possible loss of a child. It provides an example of how a collective effort may contribute to violence prevention and crime reduction (D'Araujo, 2003). In other words, closer social interaction and moral ties among neighbors, a willingness to act together to solve community problems and the establishment

of mutual trust are vital elements in improving the collective everyday life and the sense of community. These factors allow neighbors to believe that they can tell a father that his child is involved with drug trafficking and crime. Only then can the father be aware of what is happening, call his child to speak and try to dissuade him from these activities. Despite revealing skepticism about his ability to “save” his child, the father is at least warned and has a chance to establish a dialogue, talk to the child about the risks and cost of his actions.

Although the majority of teachers of collective sports interviewed emphasized the social aspect of the Alemão Olympic Village, as it happened in the Acari Village, a teacher of a sport individually practiced presented a different view, akin to the professional athlete to be discovered and motivated:

I've been working at the Olympic Village for four years. And in the Olympic Village, you have to get the kid who was on the street, perform social work and lots of things. - I have been competitor since I was a kid, I try to teach it to the athlete. So when I arrived at the Olympic Village, I found that it was stocked with athletes. Here is where you find great athletes, because through the difficulties that they have here, they come and sometimes overcome the difficulties. We have an athlete who was champion three times in Rio; there is one who has his black belt judo examination next week and is one of the best in Rio de Janeiro, he comes from a poor community, his house is 3mx3m, made of wood and he could have become a trafficker. And there are others.

If a student at the Olympic Villages in Alemão or Acari does not become an athlete coach, teacher, or enter a related profession, he nevertheless had contact with the foundations of modern sport. Although they are taught the logic of unbridled capitalism – of winning at any cost – students are presented reasons, lessons and ideas to believe in the values learned in these spaces.

It is common to find students who expressed profound distaste for school and formal education, hopelessness about the future the school can offer, and boredom in attending school. Also, the students from the Village recognize the importance of speaking correctly when one of them makes a serious mistake or finds it difficult to understand basic math; they know they have social and civil rights, and this makes the teachers appreciate notions of citizenship, law and order, which can give new value to education and school. Moreover, the teachers also emphasized there is the constant enhancement of

the employee value, of the respect to rules, of victory on one's own merits.

The gains of students, parents, teachers and project managers and all those who attend the Olympic Villages go far beyond the realm of sports such as the expansion of social networks and the widening of horizons and professional opportunities – in sports and other fields. Students at the villages also discover new social values, new identities, and alternative life experiences. That is, the Olympic Villages also influence the daily lives of all these people.

3 Extra time

Society invests in sports as an opportunity to vulnerability of poor young people who are easily seduced by the charm of weapons and power of the traffickers. The investment – if not well crafted – can be a trap, once the world of sports is highly seductive and competitive. The dream of escaping poverty and the desire to leave the poor regions vulnerable because this war is undeniably felt by the poor youth, but the strength of this dream may be transformed in an enormous frustration. However, I made it clear that the students' speech – of betting on sports for social and economic salvation, attempting to professionalize – is one among others of the several speeches heard at the Olympic Villages.

Fieldwork revealed other ideas, usages and effects the youngsters find in sports. The idea of becoming a physical education teacher – probably inspired by the image of a teacher of the Village – is one of these options. The use of sport to prevent health problems, or because of a doctor's recommendation, was also commonly mentioned in interviews and during participant observation.

The field research made it possible to capture the immense creativity of students and teachers in giving sports new meanings. One student, for example, after training swimming became a fireman; or the old guard who was fond of sports, got a bachelor's degree in Physical Education, then joined the Olympic Village as a teacher and created a new sport: the "aerodefense".

Involvement in sports can thus create new opportunities, expectations and alternatives for youth who attend the Olympic Villages analyzed in this study. Participants learn the fundamentals of several occupations and professions that could allow them disseminate these practices.

A major contribution of sport to these communities, however, is in the transmission of social values. Values that encompass the idea of team play, as

well as the idea of winning – in life or in sports – based on one’s own merits and fair play. The practice of sports teaches that the investment of time and personal effort consolidate success.

The young residents of the regions where the Olympic Villages of Acari and Alemão are located can find, in the sports projects analyzed here, alternatives that produce socialization based on rules that value tolerance and fair play. They also learn that defeat and victory may be the unexpected outcome of games, and that victories are built over time and through hard work. Sports also have their limitations, which go across other spheres of life, and have various dangers and challenges, announced by the lure of prestige and desire for a wealthy life.

Football in Brazil, as DaMatta (1997) affirmed, also plays a role of providing justice for social groups that cannot find it in other spheres of social life, and instills a concept of masculinity that does not operate along the lines of hyper-masculinity.¹⁶ This may allow practice of the sport to provide significant results for reducing the levels of violence presented at the beginning of this paper. But if not accompanied by efforts in other fields, sports alone are not enough.

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¹⁶ Hyper-masculinity: set of traits concerning sexual assault: sexual attitudes cruel to women, alcohol use, aggression, domination and danger valued as masculine characteristics (Zaluar, 2004).

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