62 - LEISURE AND SPORTS EQUIPMENT IN THE CITY OF BARRA DO GARÇAS, MATO GROSSO, BRAZIL

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INTRODUCTION

Leisure became a field of academic study starting in the eighteenth century with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, due to the large concentration of people working long hours in urban areas, generating high stress. Urban workers began to demand more time to rest, such as weekends off and paid vacation periods, among other social rights. As these rights were gradually achieved, the amount of free time increased, as did the need for leisure activities to fill this time and venues suitable for these activities.

The movement to create leisure spaces thus gained impetus. According to Silva et al. (2009), the objective was nothing less than to transform social life, by improving the quality of life and providing means for ordinary citizens to engage in pleasurable activities. These spaces are of great importance, because according to Santini (1993), while it is possible to engage in leisure activities without any purpose-built equipment, there must at least be venues where people can fill their available time with leisure activities. Hence, above all the available free time must have corresponding space (Marcellino, 2006).

According to Silva et al. (2009, p. 3), "these spaces and pieces of equipment existing in urban centers should be multifunctional and suitable for any cultural interest, open for use by individuals in their different aspects."

Even in regions that have a reasonable number of these leisure spaces with their various pieces of equipment, their use is not always optimized, be it due to lack of knowledge by the public at large or insufficient word-of-mouth among community residents. When these spaces are built, there is often insufficient concern over who will use them and what opportunities for leisure can be experienced (Silva et al., 2012). These spaces, when they exist, are often established and maintained by private initiative, and the spaces open to the general public are often of poor quality due to neglect by the public authorities (Marcellino, Barbosa and Mariano, 2006).

Due to this shortage of public leisure spaces and equipment, people become isolated and wind up spending their available free time at home. According to Marcellino, Barbosa and Mariano (2006, p. 61), "to fight against this individualization of leisure, it is increasingly necessary for public officials to create leisure policies that focus on spaces and equipment."

In light of this, our purpose here is to identify the specific leisure and sports areas and pieces of equipment in the city of Barra do Garças, MatoGrosso state, focusing on their state of conservation and pattern of distribution. More specifically, the purpose is to verify if there is equal distribution of these spaces and their equipment in the city. Our hypothesis was that they are concentrated in the central regions of the city, hindering access by people from less favored social classes, who tend to live in peripheral neighborhoods.

This investigation is relevant to provide support to public officials to help plan and implement more effective policies for fairer distribution and better maintenance of leisure and sports areas and equipment in the city. The study also brings clarifications to the population about the leisure and sports equipment available in their neighborhoods and the importance of expanding the number of places to engage in sports and leisure activities and of proper maintenance and renovation of the existing venues.

This investigation was carried out by means of bibliographical research and a field study to describe the current situation. For this purpose, we divided the city into four parts – the southern, eastern, northern and western regions – as a way to better identify the distribution of these spaces and their equipment. The field study consisted of systematic observations, recorded in a daily log, and taking photographs.

Having discussed the importance of cities as places able to provide leisure for their people, provided there is proper planning and adequate distribution of public leisure and sports equipment, we now examine the definition of leisure and sports equipment and the classifications and functions of the different types, including the difference between specific and non-specific equipment, focusing on the situation in the city of Barra do Garças. We find that the leisure spaces are unequally distributed, because the great majority of these spaces are located in the central regions of the city, making access difficult to poorer people living in outlying neighborhoods.

LEISURE AND SPORTS EQUIPMENT: THE REALITY IDENTIFIED

According to the field study carried out in the four regions of the city of Barra do Garças, of the 67 neighborhoods, only 12 have some type of public facility containing equipment for leisure and/or sports activities. These included an Olympic village two multi-sport gymnasiums (one of them interdicted), two sand courts, four multi-sports courts (one of them totally abandoned and only one having a roofed area), three grass fields, four playgrounds (two very poorly maintained), one hiking/jogging path (alongside the functioning gymnasium), six sets of parallel bars (three of them rusted and infrequently used), two skateboard ramps and twelve third-age fitness areas (academiasparaterceiraidade - ATIs).

Table 01: Distribution of public sports and leisure equipment by region.

Region \ equipment	South	East	North	West
ATI*	2	3	3	4
Skateboard ramp	1	1		
Set of parallel bars	5		1	
Hiking/jogging path	1			
Playground	2	1	1	
Grass field	1			2
Multi-sports court		3		1
Sand court	1	1		
Olympic village				1
Gymnasium	1		1	
Total	14	9	6	8

*Third-age fitness area

Based on the field study, as indicated in the table, there is a concentration of equipment in the southern region, which contains the central neighborhoods of Barra do Garças, supporting our hypothesis. With the centralization of these venues, the lower income people, who tend to live in outlying areas, are deprived of nearby spaces for leisure and sports activities, requiring spending time and money on transportation to enjoy these spaces. Another problem observed is the lack of community knowledge of the spaces and their equipment, and consequently of the opportunities to use these venues, making them more likely to use private facilities that charge for use, such as fitness centers.

According to the data collected, the most prevalent pubic facilities are the ATIs, which are also to a certain extent more equally distributed around the city. Another fact that stands out is the large percentage of improperly maintained playgrounds, which causes many children to use the ATIs to play despite the placement of signs indicating "Apparatuses not recommended for children", a situation that undermines the intention of providing spaces specifically tailored for older people to exercise.

In fact, these spaces targeted at the elderly are used by people of all age ranges, except those not in proper condition for use. According to Silva et al (2009), this happens because most of these spaces and their pieces of equipment are multifunctional, making them suitable for use by anyone. Consequently, these venues are attractive to the public in general, especially because they are free of charge (Rechia, 2008).

The table below presents the number of neighborhoods in each region of the city and those that have some type of public equipment for leisure or sports.

Table 02- Number of neighborhoods per region

Region	Number of neighborhoods	Neighborhoods that have sports and leisure equipment
East	8	3
West	32	5
North	15	2
South	12	3

This table reveals the unequal distribution of the public spaces with leisure and sports equipment. For example, the western region has 32 neighborhoods, of which only five have some type of equipment, a rate of only 15.6%. In contrast, of the eastern region's eight neighborhoods, three (37.5%) have some type of equipment. The graph below shows the neighborhoods and the types of leisure or sports equipment in each, even more clearly showing the lack of homogeneity among these regions.

Anchieta	1
Amazonas I (BNH)	5
Recanto das Acacias	1
Dermat	1
Santo Antonio	5
Vila Velha	5
São Benedito	7
Centro Comercial	1
Campinas	1
Jardim Nova Barra	2
Vila Maria	2
Ouro Fino	1
Piracema	1
Outros 54 bairros	0

Chart 01: Distribution by neighborhood of types of leisure and sports equipment in Barra do Garças.

This chart provides visual evidence of the unequal distribution of leisure and sports equipment. Of the thirteen neighborhoods that have some type of equipment, seven only have one type, while the São Benedito district has seven types of equipment, all in one park facility. As can be seen, a large number of neighborhoods have no space or equipment for leisure or sports activities, leaving the population without opportunities to relax and/or exercise in their spare time. It appears that provision of spaces and equipment for leisure and exercise is not a priority of public officials, forcing the majority of the city's people to travel to other neighborhoods to find these opportunities, mainly in the central region, or to pay for memberships in private fitness centers.

Even in the neighborhoods that have some type of equipment, in most cases there is no protection against the sun and rain, restricting use mainly to the morning and late afternoon hours, and only on days without rain. A further consequence of this exposure to the elements is that many of the pieces of equipment are rusted or even missing parts, placing users at risk of injuries. This clearly shows the lack of proper planning and interest by the public authorities in caring for these spaces and their equipment. In this respect, in many neighborhoods, the residents themselves do what they can to maintain the spaces and protect them against vandalism. While this places an additional burden on the local community members, it also has the advantage of increasing awareness. According to Marcellino, Barbosa and Mariano (2006), participation of the community is fundamental to spread knowledge and convey value to leisure and sports venues, and to instill an attitude of preservation and revitalization. For these same authors, "private initiatives are being taken and deserve support, but the public power cannot be absent" (p. 61).

In the opinion of Silva et al. (2009), these spaces and pieces of equipment, when properly preserved and maintained, make an important contribution to social welfare. According to Marcellino, Barbosa and Mariano (2006, p. 62), "besides the effort to establish new spaces, care should be taken to preserve the existing ones." This is being done by some residents of determined neighborhoods observed in this study. For Marcellino (2009, p. 24), "even in cities that have a reasonable number of these spaces, their use is not always optimized," making them merely places for pedestrians to circulate instead of places for rest, contemplation and entertainment, thus becoming "non-places", spaces unsuitable for any type of gathering (Augé, 1994). Hence, we can observe the importance of the relationship between people and spacebecause the identification with a place becomes clearer the stronger the sentimental and affective connection the place offers (Graeml, 2007).

Therefore, demands from society for maintenance, construction and improvement of spaces for communities are increasingly important (Silva et al., 2009). One of the possible channels for this is the implementation of policies for the leisure sector that are properly connected to the other socio-cultural areas. According to Allen (2011), for this to occur, greater

participation is necessary of the population in the discussion, plans and projects of municipal authorities.

Marcellino (2007) also confirms this by saying that it is important before building or installing a specific venue or piece of equipment to learn the aspirations and needs of the community in question, to allow the correct choice of the type of space or equipment. Therefore, it is important for planners to pay heed to the needs of the local population and to elicit their input to increase the quality of life, by means of actions to establish spaces and install equipment according to popular demand (Silva et al., 2009). Chemin (2007, p. 193) says that “leisure in the majority of communities consists only of using the few spaces and pieces of equipment offered, without previous consultation on peoples' true needs in this area.” Hence, demand for popular participation is important by the public, to express their real needs, so that the public authorities will not establish leisure and sports venues arbitrarily and not in line with the local community's interests.

For everyone to have access to leisure activities, it is not enough to have community participation and suitable infrastructure. It is also necessary to have better living conditions, jobs, salaries more in line with reality, decent education and health services and proper housing. As put by Allen (2011), it is not enough to make leisure and sports spaces available to guarantee the people will use them. It is necessary for public policies on leisure to plan them adequately, encourage their use and properly maintain them, especially by allocating the necessary funds for upkeep.

These are some important points that, if taken seriously, can sensitize people to the importance of leisure spaces to the quality of life. There is not always proper understanding that leisure is just as important as other claims by society and should occupy an important place on the list of what is considered “necessary”.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to the data collected in this study, the pattern in Barra do Garças is the same as in most other Brazilian cities studied, with an over-accumulation of leisure and sports spaces and equipment in central regions. In these cases, it is fundamental for municipal authorities to pay more attention to planning spaces and equipment through public policies to benefit the entire community. We believe that the data presented here can be useful for the formulation of more effective and fair public policies. For this to happen, it is necessary for local residents to participate with municipal authorities, to express their real needs and desires. It should be recalled that it is not enough just to have a space or piece of equipment, it is also necessary to consider the best location to maximize accessibility and to allocate sufficient resources for regular maintenance, revitalization and improvement, to make sure people can enjoy safe and secure leisure activities. For this to occur, the population and public authorities need to recognize that these spaces and pieces of equipment are a collective asset that must be conserved.

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LEISURE AND SPORTS EQUIPMENT IN THE CITY OF BARRA DO GARÇAS, MATO GROSSO, BRAZIL
ABSTRACT

This study presents a panorama of the distribution of public leisure and sports spaces and the corresponding equipment in the city of Barra do Garças, MatoGrosso. It is a qualitative and exploratory study, in which we identify unequal distribution of such spaces in the city, with a concentration in the central regions. The findings provide support for planning and implementing public policies for better distribution of leisure and sports equipment.

KEYWORDS: Leisure and sports equipment, public policies, cities.

ÉQUIPEMENT DE LOISIRS ET DE SPORT DANS LA VILLE DE BARRA DO GARÇAS, MATO GROSSO, BRAZIL
RÉSUMÉ

Le But de cette étude est de présenter un aperçu de la distribution des équipements de loisirs et de sport dans la ville de Barra do Garças. Il s'agit une recherche qualitative de type exploratoire qui a identifié une distribution inégaledes équipements de loisirs et de sport dans la municipalité de Barra do Garças-MT. Il y a eu une concentration de ces équipements dans les régions centrales de la ville et cette étude présente des outils pour que le gouvernement puisse planifier et mettre en œuvre des politiques publiques efficaces en ce qui concerne la distribution des équipements de loisirs et de sport.

MOTS-CLÉS:Équipement récréatif, politiques publiques, municipalité.

EQUIPAMIENTOS FÍSICOS DE OCIO DE LA CIUDAD DE BARRA DO GARÇAS, MATO GROSSO, BRAZIL
RESUMEN

Este estudio tiene por objetivo presentar un panorama de la distribución de los equipamientos físicos deportivos de ocio de la ciudad de Barra dos Garças – MT. Tratase de una investigación cualitativa del tipo exploratoria que identificó una distribución no igual de los equipamientos físicos deportivos de ocio en el municipio de Barra do Garças-MT. Se ha verificado una concentración de estos equipamientos en las regiones centrales de la ciudad el que ofrece subsidios para que el poder público pueda planificar e implementar políticas públicas efectivas en respeto a distribución de los equipamientos físicos deportivos de ocio.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Equipamientos de ocio, políticas públicas, municipio.

EQUIPAMENTOS FÍSICOS ESPORTIVOS DE LAZER DA CIDADE DE BARRA DO GARÇAS-MT
RESUMO

Este estudo tem por objetivo apresentar um panorama da distribuição dos equipamentos físicos esportivos de lazer na cidade de Barra-do-Garças. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa do tipo exploratória que identificou uma distribuição desigualitária dos equipamentos físicos esportivos de lazer no município de Barra do Garças-MT. Verificou-se uma concentração desses equipamentos nas regiões centrais da cidade o que oferece subsídios para que o poder público possa planejar e implementar políticas públicas efetivas no que diz respeito à distribuição dos equipamentos físicos-esportivos de lazer.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Equipamentos de lazer, políticas públicas, Município.