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ARTICLE

## Rio 2016 Olympic Games and diplomatic legacies

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study was to describe perceptions of Brazilian diplomats in regard to legacies, diplomatic legacies and strategies that have been applied by the Brazilian government to leverage possible legacies of the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. Drawing on soft power theory, I investigated whether Brazilian diplomats perceived the 2016 Rio Olympic Games as an opportunity for the country to gain diplomatic relevance in international affairs by improving its non-coercive power. I sent invitations to all ambassadors and consuls responsible for Brazilian representations abroad (N = 198). I received answers from 12 diplomats living abroad and one diplomat in charge of the department of General Coordination for Cooperation and Exchange on Sport, a department inside the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Results showed that Brazilian diplomats perceived higher chances of positive legacies related to infrastructure, positive image of the country internationally and development of elite sport in the country. Few leverage strategies for diplomatic legacies were cited by the diplomats, who understand the event itself as the most important leveraging strategy. Implications for theory and practise are discussed.

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Sport mega-events have been defined as events where four key elements are present: attraction of a large number of visitors, attraction of large media interest and broadcast, very high costs, and large impacts on the host community and population (Müller 2015). Beyond temporary impacts, long-term positive legacies represent the end sought of all sport mega-events. In some dimensions, these legacies are well defined in the literature. For example, long-term positive economic legacies are associated with influx of autonomous money, increase of permanent jobs and increase of tourist arrivals (Gratton and Preuss 2008, Fourie and Santana-Gallego 2011). Long-term positive social legacies are related to boosting sport participation and increasing investments in grassroots sport programmes (Girginov and Hills 2008, Carmichael *et al.* 2013). Positive environmental and infrastructure legacies are associated with sustainability and usefulness of the new/refurbished constructions, which include not only sport arenas, but also airports, parks, roads and public transportation (Collins *et al.* 2009, Zemel 2011). However, not all legacies have received equal attention in the literature. For instance, diplomatic legacies have rarely been empirically investigated. Theoretically, scholars have acknowledged that hosting sport mega-events is an important instrument to positively signal political and diplomatic power to other countries (Grix *et al.* 2015). Empirically, not much has been done to address diplomatic legacies.

Any type of legacy requires leverage to reach its full potential. Simply hosting a sport mega-event is not a guarantee of any positive impacts for its host (Brown *et al.* 2004). According to Chalip (2002), applying leverage strategies to maximise positive impacts of sport mega-events was a

significant paradigm shift that happened after the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. Until that event, governments and organisers considered the event itself as the intervention, which was supposed to bring positive impacts for the hosts. Chalip (2002) proposed that the event itself should not be seen as the intervention; rather it should be understood as an opportunity to implement particular interventions to foster the desired impacts. Scholars have been more willing to measure impacts than to discuss leveraging strategies applied by host cities to increase chances of positive impacts (Chalip 2006, O'Brien and Chalip 2007). Leveraging has been defined as those policies, activities, means and strategies that are applied by the host in order to maximise long-term benefits from events (Brown *et al.* 2004, Chalip 2006). Previous investigations have discussed leveraging of economic and social impacts (Chalip *et al.* 2004, Preuss 2005, Chalip 2006, Solberg and Preuss 2007). In the current study, I investigated policies and strategies the Brazilian government might have used to leverage diplomatic impacts of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games.

Specifically, the interest of the present investigation is in describing diplomatic legacies expected by Brazilian authorities as a consequence of hosting the 2016 Rio Olympic Games and current strategies to leverage such legacies. The purpose of the current study was to describe perceptions of Brazilian diplomats in regard to legacies, diplomatic legacies and strategies that have been applied by the Brazilian government to leverage possible legacies of the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. In the long run, results of the current investigation can start a new discussion about the importance of diplomatic legacies for developing countries hosting mega-events. Moving beyond the traditional economic and tourism legacies, the results can help to broaden the scope of sport mega-event legacies. From a practical point of view, the discussion presented in this article can show to the Brazilian authorities how diplomats (working abroad) have understood the process of soft empowerment of the country via hosting the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

## Diplomacy and sport mega-events

Brazil is an interesting case to discuss diplomatic legacies because it had clear diplomatic objectives when it bid for the 2016 Games. Brazil wanted (and still wants) to play a major role in international diplomacy. For example, in the candidature file for Rio de Janeiro to host the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the bid committee proposed to focus on four key strategies, which should culminate in successful Games: Engaging young people, social transformation through sport, regional outreach and global promotion (Candidature file for Rio de Janeiro to host the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games, 2009). Regarding the global promotion strategy, the bid committee understood that Rio 2016 would place 'Brazil in the global spotlight, reinforcing its status as a major and growing economy and a unique visitor destination' (p. 21). Additionally, the bid committee listed, as one of the main motivations for the country to want to host the 2016 Games, the fact that it would provide a long-term boost to Brazil's growing reputation 'as an exciting and rewarding place to live, do business and visit' (p. 19). Up to now, little information is available about how the global promotion of the country as the host of the 2016 Games has been leveraged.

Possible effects of sport mega-events on international relations and diplomatic gains for the hosts have rarely been explored in the literature. An exception is the 2016 special issue about diplomacy and sport in the *Diplomacy & Statecraft* journal (Rofe and Dichter 2016). In that issue, Rofe (2016) asserted that politics and diplomacy are interrelated and not mutually exclusive, but politics has to do with 'the message', while diplomacy has to do with 'the mode of the message'. Hosting sport mega-events has served as a mode to send messages of economic maturity to the international community. In this sense, sport mega-events should be understood more as a diplomatic tool than as a political instrument. Murray (2012) noticed that the relationship between sport and politics has been much investigated and discussed, while that between sport and diplomacy is largely unexplored. Delimiting the range of diplomacy and politics is not an easy task, because the practical difference between the two terms is oftentimes blurred.

Sporting mega-events can offer host nations ideal channels to share their diplomatic identities with the rest of the world (Rofe and Pigman 2014, Rofe 2016). However, hosting a sport mega-event is not a guarantee of positive diplomatic messages for its host. As noted by Murray (2012), while sport events can send positive messages, an underlying connection exists between such events and the dissemination of anti-diplomatic messages, such as terrorism, war and violence through sport. Murray (2012) added that sometimes 'sport is more closely associated with competition, winning, conflict, war and battle than it is with the business of peace' (p. 587). Moreover, sport mega-events have grown and become highly commercial, which can send a negative message to people around the world about human values of such events (Chappelet 2014). Therefore, because of this positive-negative duality of sport diplomacy (Murray 2012), organisers and governments should clearly define which diplomatic legacies they expect to reap and how they would leverage such legacies.

Sport mega-events have been described as powerful instruments to increase soft power and diplomatic importance of their hosts (Cornelissen 2010, Grix *et al.* 2015). However, diplomatic legacies of the events need to be leveraged as any other type of legacy (Chalip *et al.* 2004, Chalip 2006). Brown *et al.* (2004) defined event leveraging as the strategic activities created in function of the event to maximise short-term benefits and long-term legacies. Chalip (2002) reported that the organisers of the 2000 Sydney Olympics applied four leveraging strategies that impacted not only the host city, but also the whole country of Australia. First, they invested in the media to reposition the country internationally, changing its image from the 'Crocodile Dundee' country to a technologically advanced country. Second, they promoted convention tourism based on the argument that convention participants spend much more money in host cities than regular tourists. Third, Australian tourism agencies worked to minimise the crowding-out effect during the Games. Fourth, the organisers created a 'gateway strategy' to bring tourists to other parts of Australia, not only to Sydney, before and/or after the Games. Although most of these strategies were intended to leverage tourism legacies, capitalising in the international media and increasing the number of international visitors probably helped the country to improve its diplomatic status with other nations.

In another example of leveraging strategy, authorities of the city of Vancouver have applied some interventions to use the 2010 Winter Olympic Games to lever structural and social changes in the host city. The focus of the authorities in this case was on environmental legacies. A plan was designed to promote Vancouver as 'the greenest city in the world'. VanWynsberghe *et al.* (2012) described how the city council of Vancouver hired experts on environment and economy to produce a document that would link the sustainability of the city with the 2010 Winter Olympics. These experts created a strategic planning to reduce the carbon footprint, to clean the air and water of the city, to increase the number of parks and green spaces, to stimulate the consumption of locally produced food and to improve transportation by walking and cycling. Using the media exposition created by the Games, the city authorities publicised all the new sustainable initiatives, in order to inform the world about Vancouver's high levels of sustainability. As noted by VanWynsberghe *et al.* (2012), the greenest city project included not only an environmental approach, but also an economic and diplomatic approach, which aimed to enhance Vancouver's and Canada's ability to compete internationally in the growing market of social sustainability.

### **Sport mega-events, soft empowerment and soft disempowerment**

Developing countries have recently used sport mega-events to showcase economic achievements and to signal diplomatic stature via soft power (Cornelissen 2010). In the recent past, Brazil (the 2014 FIFA World Cup), Russia (the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games), South Africa (the 2010 FIFA World Cup) and China (the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games) have hosted first-order sport events. Scholars agree that one of the main motivations for these nations to host such events was to improve diplomatic relations with developed richer countries (Matheson and Baade 2004, Finlay and Xin 2010, Grix *et al.* 2015). Grix *et al.* (2015) affirmed that successfully hosting a sport mega-

event provides 'the perfect opportunity' (p. 470) for national leaders to gain soft power and persuade other leaders to do what they desire. For instance, the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games have been acknowledged for improving Australia's international image via an increase of the nation's soft power (Grix and Houlihan 2014).

However, the impacts of hosting are not always positive. During the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games, Russian president, Mr. Vladimir Putin adopted some controversial policies, such as the anti-gay law, forced evictions of residents where facilities were being constructed and openly low concerns about the environment surrounding Olympic areas. Some have argued that such policies have damaged the country's intentions of soft power improvement (Persson and Petersson 2014, Tweedie 2014). Actually, these policies promoted an international antipathy towards Russia, creating a favourable situation for soft disempowerment, which brought negative diplomatic consequences for the country. Brannagan and Giulianotti (2015) proposed that soft disempowerment happens in 'those occasions in which you may upset, offend or alienate others, leading to a loss of attractiveness or influence' (p. 706). For different reasons, China has apparently upset others and failed to improve its diplomatic ties after the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. According to Manzenreiter (2010), two main factors have contributed for this disempowerment. First, in preparing for the Games, instead of communicating China importance as a global player to the international community, the Chinese government focused on addressing domestic problems; that is, China has been more concerned with educating local people for their encounters with western visitors than with communicating its importance as a commercial partner to the world. Second, China has insisted on its 'state sovereignty', mainly in regard to its relationships with its closest neighbours, Tibet and Taiwan. As a consequence, the western media has not developed a sympathetic opinion of China as a global player (Manzenreiter 2010).

With Rio 2016, Brazil is the next on the list of developing countries hosting sport mega-events dreaming to capitalise on diplomatic legacies. Grix *et al.* (2015) asserted that Brazil is not a typical case of an emerging nation trying to use the association with sport mega-events to increase soft power and improve public diplomacy. According to these authors, Brazil is different because it has been a regional leader in South America and has used its (limited) soft power efficiently in the global market. Brazil has currently the fifth-largest population and the seventh-largest economy in the world. It has been considered an emergent country since 2001. Brazil experienced an amazing economic growth from 2006 to 2012 and expanded economically at 4% rate a year between 2006 and 2010 (Malamud 2011, Bresser-Pereira 2015). However, since 2013, the country has grown just 1.3% a year. As a consequence of this poor performance in terms of economic growth, the Central Bank of Brazil has applied very high interest rates and inflation is back, averaging 7% a year (The Economist 2015). In addition to that, the country lives a troubled political moment, where the former president Mr. Lula da Silva has been seriously investigated for corruption and Mrs. Dilma Rousseff was impeached as the president of Brazil in August 2016, for breaking laws related to public money utilisation (Watts 2016). The process of Mrs. Rousseff impeachment increased political and economic turmoil in the country just few months before the 2016 Olympic Games. In the Olympic year, the country lived a scenario of economic and political turbulence, which is likely to have affected Brazil's plans to leverage not only the economic and social legacies, but also the diplomatic legacies of the Games via soft power.

Nye (2008) defined soft power as 'the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment' (p. 94). Although soft power has been important to shape the relations of different types of political actors (e.g. individuals, organisations), it has received special attention in the relations among countries. In this century, public diplomacy has increasingly focused on development of countries' soft power instead of military or coercive power. Nye (1990) reported that the idea of soft power gained importance after the end of the Cold War, in the early 1990s, when diplomatic relations among countries moved from essentially coercive to partially coercive, partially attractive. The ability of attracting others to want what you want is one of the strongest characteristics of soft power (Nye 2008). As noted by Grix and Lee

(2013), soft power is similar to Lukes (2007) third dimension of power, which was defined as the power of shaping others' beliefs and desires in order to achieve compliance with your own ideas.

According to Nye (2008), the soft power of a country lies on three resources: its culture, its political values and its foreign policies. Sport mega-events have shown potential to promote all three resources internationally. Grix and Lee (2013) proposed that sport mega-events have advantages over other strategies to increase soft power, because when countries host events, their cultural values are presented in association with cultural values of sport. Such cultural values of sport are exacerbated in the Olympic Games, which have constantly been associated with excellence, long-term preparation and fair competition (Madrigal *et al.* 2005). Similarly, political values of the Olympic Games, such as traditional morality, enforced laws (rules) and patriotism, are also shared between the event and the host. Finally, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has a foreign policy of inclusion of people from different ethnicities, cultures and religious backgrounds. For example, the number four fundamental principle of the Olympism reads, 'The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind [...]' (IOC 2015, p. 13). In this sense, in receiving athletes, officials, and tourists from other countries, with diverse cultural and religious background, the host city/country publicise a foreign policy of non-discrimination. To summarise, when developing countries associate themselves with the Olympic Games, by hosting them, they are sending messages to other countries that they share the same cultural and political values and have the same foreign policies of those of the event. Therefore, developing countries are likely to increase their soft power by sharing values in association with the culture of sport mega-events (Cornelissen 2010, Grix *et al.* 2015).

Although hosting sport mega-events has a huge potential to promote soft empowerment of developing nations, as mentioned earlier, one should not ignore the opposite possibility: soft disempowerment. Manzenreiter (2010) and Persson and Petersson (2014) noted that, in hosting sport mega-events, countries might improve their soft power; however, they proposed that the opposite [what Brannagan and Giulianotti (2015) would later call 'soft disempowerment'] might also happen. In order to explain the link between soft disempowerment and sport mega-events, Brannagan and Giulianotti noted that such events have the so-called 'inevitable reputational risks'. Chalip and Costa (2005) explain that sport mega-events bring high levels of media exposition to the host cities/countries, which may not be well prepared to deal with consequent criticisms that accompanied such exposition. These criticisms are usually related to critical topics such as corruption, bad use of public money and violation of human rights. Manzenreiter (2010) cited the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games as an example of soft disempowerment. This author asserted that, even after successfully hosting the event, 'China was clearly denied the world's unanimous acclamation for its development and [...] Beijing Olympics failed to win over the hearts of Western publics' (p. 42). The reasons for negative perceptions about China after the 2008 Olympics are too complex, but they should be partially related to China's human right issues, environment concerns and political issues, mainly its treatment of Tibet and Taiwan (Manzenreiter 2010). Persson and Petersson (2014) suggested that Russia suffered with soft disempowerment after the 2014 Sochi Olympics, because the official rhetoric of the event was based on three facts: widespread corruption, forced evictions of residents in areas where the Olympic facilities were constructed and the repression of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights in the country. In this sense, instead of increasing perceptions of the Russian soft power by other countries, the global event contributed to expose Russia fragilities, which in turn debunked the 'Russian great power myth' (Persson and Petersson 2014, p. 2005).

Soft disempowerment may happen even before the event is staged. For instance, Brannagan and Rookwood (2016) mentioned that since Qatar was awarded the hosting rights of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, it has suffered soft disempowerment, which has been mainly motivated by four causes: allegations of bribery and corruption regarding the bidding process, violation of human rights, lack of freedom for women and homosexuals, and limitations on alcoholic beverages sales and consumption. In order to avoid soft disempowerment, Brannagan and



Rookwood (2016) suggested that policy-makers in Qatar should focus on concerns expressed by soccer fans related to crowd safety, treatment of women and minorities, sociocultural backdrop, and domestic policies and laws. However, these authors seem unsure about how much the Qatari authorities will be willing to adapt their culture to please international visitors and media. Even more complicated is the fact that some of the cultural adaptations (e.g. different treatment given to men and women in the society) are very unlikely to occur in a short period of time. Additionally, the perception of soft disempowerment might be partially explained by Qatar's motivation to host the event. Reiche (2015) explained that Qatar's main motivation to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup (and many other international sport events) is to increase its soft power, which consequently should contribute to the maintenance of 'the power of the ruling family that governs a dictatorial monarchy' (p.490). Western societies may deny improved perceptions of soft power to Qatar, as it happened to China (Manzenreiter 2010), because of the differences between western democracies and Qatar's dictatorial monarchy.

### **Rio 2016 and Brazil's political moment**

Although Brazil is quite different from China, Russia and Qatar, the host of the 2016 Games runs similar risks of soft disempowerment (or at least risks of losing the opportunity to increase its soft power). Brannagan *et al.* (2015) reported that Brazil has conquered some soft power by delivering successful sport events, in a recent past, such as the 2007 Pan Am Games and the 2014 FIFA World Cup. Nevertheless, they did not discard the possibility of soft disempowerment as a consequence of the 2016 Rio Olympic Games. Until 2014, Brazil was seen as an emerging power at the forefront discourse when compared to other similar countries (e.g. Russia, India and China). Moreover, Brazil was accepted as a global economic power with certain diplomatic importance, mainly in actions located in South and Central America (Grix *et al.* 2015). However, since 2015, Brazil has plunged in a terrible economic and political crisis, which has created some barriers for the country to leverage all possible legacies of the 2016 Rio Games. The crisis created a new scenario for the 2016 Olympic Games and for the so expected legacies. As pointed by Grix *et al.* (2015), 'past research indicates that societies with deep structural divides and fault lines – inequality in society, poverty, high crime, corruption, etc. – are very unlikely to change as a result of an SME [sport mega-event] or any hoped-for legacy' (p. 478).

The current situation of the country increases the importance of careful planning and specific leverage strategies in order to gather all possible positive legacies from the event. Since the country was chosen to host two of the most important sport events in the world, it has partially dealt with, but it has not solved its perennial social problems. Considering that social and economic problems will not be solved in the short run, the country should focus on leveraging strategies to guarantee some positive returns. Brazil might be in a unique position to leverage the legacies of the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, because it just hosted another sport mega-event of the same magnitude, the 2014 FIFA World Cup. Butler and Aicher (2015) investigated the social impacts of the 2014 World Cup on Brazil. They pointed that a large collection of media reports, from June 2013 to July 2014, indicated the Brazilian authorities had no long-term plan for the legacies of the World Cup, in terms of infrastructure and social benefits. In those media reports, the themes that appeared with the highest frequencies were inflation, displacement, mismanagement of public funds, protests and crimes. Apparently, Brazil did not have a clear plan, outlining objective leverage strategies for the expected legacies of the 2014 World Cup. Butler and Aicher (2015) noted that media coverage of the event focused on the negative impacts associated with hosting. This should not be a problem *per se*, but as highlighted by Butler and Aicher, this became a problem when the government response was primarily and uniquely combative. They proposed that being proactive in developing policies is naturally more effective than being combative when you are hosting mega-events such as the World Cup or the Olympic Games.

It is noteworthy that the Rio Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (Rio\_2016 2013) have a *Sustainability Management Plan*, which proposes three strategic objectives: planet (reducing the environmental impact of the hosting process), people (planning and delivering the Games in an inclusive manner) and prosperity (contributing to the economic development of the host) (Rio\_2016 2013). The 'planet' objective is related to four thematic areas: transport and logistics, sustainable construction and urban improvement, environmental conservation and waste management. The 'people' objective encompasses three broad areas: involvement and awareness, universal accessibility, and diversity and inclusion. Finally, the 'prosperity' objective approaches two mean areas: sustainable supply chain, and management and transparency. The plan describes specific actions in each of those areas. These specific actions should be used to guide leveraging strategies of expected legacies, which are represented by the broad areas. For example, to attain the legacy of having a better transportation system for the host city (transportation and logistics), the plan proposes a fully renovated train system, an expanded subway system and the creation of four lanes for rapid transit buses.

In 2014, Rio 2016 launched the first report about its Sustainability Management Plan (Rio\_2016 2014). In this report, authorities described the progress they made in some of the planned actions for legacies and their goals for the next couple of years. This is positive because it shows a concern with continuous control over leveraging strategies. Unfortunately, for some of the planned actions no results were presented. For instance, the report does not bring any numbers (or information) about the evolution of the public transportation plan, proposed in the original sustainability plan. The report does mention that *the aim* is to achieve 60% of transport by mass rapid systems by 2016. However, based on the report, we do not know how far or close the organising committee was from this aim when the report was released. Local and international media has reported that the two main transportation projects – the extension of the subway and the extension of bus rapid transit lanes – are both delayed and are very unlikely to be ready for the beginning of the Olympic Games in August 2016 (Reuters 2016). Both worked during the Olympics with unfinished structures. The mayor of Rio de Janeiro has recently acknowledged that the project for the extension of the subway tracks was delayed because the national development bank did not deliver the loan related to this construction (Folha\_de\_Sao\_Paulo 2016). From a positive point of view, the clear description of goals and strategies to attain these goals made in the sustainability plan allows the media to inform the population about what is working and what is not working in terms of leveraging actions for legacies.

In order to increase chances of soft empowerment, strategies of leveraging have to be careful outlined and, whenever is possible, publicised. Additionally, the description of specific actions allows the verification of how much these strategies have been attained and how far from the aim the organisers are, in certain periods of time during the preparation stage. As mentioned above, Rio 2016 has some specific strategies to leverage environmental, social and economic legacies (Rio\_2016 2013). However, for other dimensions of the legacies (Preuss and Solberg 2006), neither leveraging strategies nor specific actions have been described. For example, the focus of the current investigation – diplomatic legacies have not been formally described by any document provided by Rio 2016 organising committee. Therefore, I decided to ask about these legacies to Brazilian diplomats in international representations around the world, because they are the ones who might know about the expected diplomatic legacies and the strategies that might have been used to leverage such legacies.

## Method

The inspiration to interview diplomats came from Brannagan and Rookwood (2016). After finding diverse results regarding Qatar's soft disempowerment based on popular media commentary and data collection from actual soccer fans, they highlighted the importance 'to go beyond purely top-down analyses and instead pay equal attention towards bottom-up interpretations and



understandings' (p. 14). They added that 'in the context of acquiring soft power through sport mega-events, this is vital' (p. 14). Considering that diplomatic legacies are not officially stated in the legacy planning documents provided by Rio 2016, instead of merely relying on media reports to discuss possible legacies of this type, I sent email messages to all Brazilian diplomats in international missions, asking them about legacies in general, diplomatic legacies and leveraging strategies to deliver legacies. The structured interviews were conducted by email. The questions were sent to the diplomats and they typed their answers back to the author. The interviews were conducted during the month of March, 2016 – five months before the 2016 Games. The interviews contained four questions:

- Would you, please, cite and comment briefly three reasons why Brazil wanted to host the 2016 Olympic Games?
- Is there any expectation about diplomatic legacies associated with the fact of hosting such event? If yes, what benefits are expected?
- Has Brazil applied any strategy to leverage possible diplomatic benefits from hosting the 2016 Rio Olympic Games? If yes, would you point some of these strategies?
- So far, what has worked and what has not worked to leverage possible diplomatic benefits?

The population of interest was composed by 198 Brazilian diplomats, living abroad in 138 different countries, located in all continents of the globe. The complete list of these diplomats and their email addresses is available in the website of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs – BMFA (<http://www.itamaraty.gov.br>). I sent individual emails to each of those ambassadors and consuls. Four emails bounced back for incorrect email address or full inbox. After 15 days from the sending, I received back: four emails from secretaries saying that the diplomat was on vacation and would not be able to answer my questions; 61 emails from diplomats referring me to the BMFA; 25 emails referring me to the General Coordination for Cooperation and Exchange on Sport, a department inside the BMFA; and 12 emails giving me usable answers for my questions. I did not receive any answer from 52 diplomats or their secretaries. The remaining of the diplomats who answered the email gave me short excuses for not answering my questions.

I did not consider sending the questions directly to the BMFA, as suggested by 61 diplomats, because the questions were likely to be answered by technical staff of the ministry. My intention was not to collect data from technical staff. However, I did send the questions to the diplomat in charge of the department of General Coordination for Cooperation and Exchange on Sport, as suggested by 25 diplomats. That diplomat promptly answered the questions. The General Coordination for Cooperation and Exchange on Sport was created in 2008, aiming to help the country to narrow the bonds with other nations and promote its image abroad in the so-called 'sport decade', when the country hosted five world-class events: The Military World Games (2011), the Confederations Cup (2013), the FIFA World Cup (2014), the World Indigenous Games (2015) and finally, the Rio 2016 Olympic/Paralympic Games. The BMFA explicitly asserted that this department was created to help Brazil to use international sport events as instruments to improve its soft power in the international scenario (Itamaraty 2015). Unfortunately, the BMFA does not provide much information about how the strategic activities of this department have helped the country to attain this aim.

The final sample of the study was composed by 13 diplomats – 12 living abroad and working for Brazilian missions, and one living in Brazil and in charge of the department directly related to the use of sport as a diplomatic tool. When the survey was conducted, all 13 diplomats have been serving as ambassadors or consuls for more than 10 years, indicating that they have some experience in international relations. Thus, all of them had been diplomats when Rio was chosen to host the 2016 Olympic Games. However, none of them were in the place where they are at the time of the interviews, because according to the Brazilian law, ambassadors and consuls (usually ministers of first and second order) are not allowed to stay in the same mission (place) for more than 5 years (Brasil 1986). To keep the anonymity of the respondents and the confidentiality of

their answers, I did not describe the local of residence of any diplomat. I used letters to identify different diplomats, whenever transcripts of part of their speeches were presented.

## Results and discussion

The low response rate from the diplomats represents an interesting result. First of all, I argue that, considering the unique characteristic of the population of interest, a low response rate should be expected *a priori*. Ambassadors and consuls are the highest representatives of a country abroad. As such, they have a huge number daily activities and meetings, which might have prevented them to answer the survey. Additionally, ambassadors and consuls are political offices chosen by the chief of the state (in Brazil's case, the president). Therefore, some of them should feel uncomfortable in answering questions which might have a political connotation. The organisation of the Rio 2016 has been placed the Brazilian government under scrutiny. Thus, I would not be surprised if some of the contacted ambassadors and consuls preferred to avoid the topic, which is very delicate mainly considering the moment of political instability of the country. Considering these characteristics of the population, getting responses from 13 diplomats should not be considered a failure. Although the extrapolations to the whole population of Brazilian diplomats are not allowed, the received responses still represent the opinions of a very unique group of people with important roles in the international scenario.

Each of the asked questions created four topics for discussion: reasons to host the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, diplomatic legacies of the 2016 Games, leveraging strategies for diplomatic legacies and current results of the leveraging strategies. Considering that very little was said by the diplomats about results of the leveraging strategies, this topic is presented along with the leveraging strategies for diplomatic legacies.

### Reasons to host the 2016 Olympic Games

The three most cited reasons for Brazil to want to host the 2016 Rio Olympic Games were: opportunity for infrastructure improvements, improvement of the country image internationally and improvement of the country's elite sport (to get better sporting results in international competitions). Infrastructure improvements were mentioned by eight diplomats, who described constructions and/or reforms of sport arenas and general infrastructure (e.g. public transportation, parks and airports) of the host city. For instance, diplomats *H*, *L* and *M* focused on sporting infrastructure as a legacy. Diplomat *M* gave the following example:

The Ministry of Sport is building, reforming, and equipping four public facilities, which will serve for training and practices during the Games. The Ministry is investing R\$ 76 million in order to have these facilities ready for the Games. After the Games, the facilities will be part of the 'National Network for Sport Training', which has been built by the Ministry, not only in Rio, but in the whole country. This network represents the largest program of sport infrastructure renovation in the last 50 years in the country.

Diplomats *B*, *E*, *G*, *H*, *I* and *K* highlighted the importance of general infrastructure, as a reason for Brazil to desire to host the 2016 Games. Diplomat *G* pointed that:

The largest part of the expenses will be transformed in benefits for the local population. For example, new subway tracks will be constructed, connecting downtown to 'Barra da Tijuca' [the neighborhood where most of the sporting venues for the Games have been constructed]. The city will receive a new rapid transit bus system, connecting the international airport to downtown. Rodrigo de Freitas Lake [where rowing and canoe competitions will happen] and Guanabara Bay [where sailing events will happen] have been cleaned for the Olympic Games. Future Arena [where handball and goalball competitions will take place] will be disassembled after the Games and its structures will be used to build four public schools.

Although diplomats have mentioned infrastructure improvement as an important reason for the country to want the event, in practise, most of the infrastructure legacies stay for the host city only.

Had Brazil followed the example of Australia and used other cities as gateways (Chalip 2002), the country might have benefited, for example, from renovation and modernization of other international airports (which was started but not finished in the 2014 World Cup). This infrastructure legacy might trigger other benefits for the whole country, such as an increasing in international tourist arrivals.

Expectations about infrastructure legacies are not surprising. There is little doubt that the Olympic Games can be used as a catalyst for urban changes (Essex and Chalkey 1998, Hiller 2006). For the Rio Games, new arenas have been constructed, public transportation system has been improved and green areas in the city have been renewed. As mentioned by one of the diplomats, Brazilian authorities and the organising committee seem to have plans for the arenas after the Games. However, legacies of the two last sport events hosted by the country cast some doubts on the feasibility of the plans, mainly long-term plans for related to sport arenas. Investigating the legacies of the 2014 FIFA World Cup, Butler and Aicher (2015) did not found any media report informing about the Brazilian government's or the organisers' long-term plans for the World Cup stadiums. According to them, many of the stadiums (those located in non-soccer cities) are more likely to become white elephants. Nothen (2016) affirmed that the 2007 Rio Pan-American Games were hosted with the promise that their infrastructure would serve as the basis for the city to host the 2016 Olympic Games. This author reported that very few venues of the 2007 Pan-American were used in Rio 2016 and those who were have been thoroughly renewed. The most iconic example is the velodrome that was constructed in 2007, for the Pan-American Games; in 2013, it was demolished, because it did not meet the international standards imposed by the IOC (Barnes 2015). The new velodrome costed the organisers approximately R\$ 143 million (Filipo 2016).

Improvement of the country image internationally was mentioned by seven diplomats (*A, B, C, E, H, I* and *J*) as a reason for Brazil to want to host the 2016 Games. Diplomat *A* gave a brief explanation of how the 2016 Games could help the country to improve its image internationally:

Brazil has an undeniable amount of soft power. To me, Brazil [Rio] 2016 is linked to the improvement of this power by reinforcing the image of the country as a global partner and a global trader. Big events work as a certificate of approval. For example, it is hard not to associate the Beijing Olympics with China's rise to world power status; or [not to associate] the Barcelona Olympics with Spain's overcoming of Franco's legacy. In the case of Brazil, the 2016 Games have an important symbolic aspect, because this is the first time a non-industrialized country in the Southern hemisphere will host an event of such magnitude.

Still focusing on the improvement of the soft power, diplomat *J* highlighted some of the principles of the Olympics Games that might be transferred to the host:

From the point of view of the external politics, I hope that the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games strengthen internationally the connection between Brazil and topics such as no discrimination of any type, peaceful dialogue among different peoples, and social inclusion. Sport mega-events inspire cooperation between peoples.

Improving the country image internationally is an expected legacy for Brazil after the 2016 Olympic Games. As mentioned before, sport mega-events have been used by developing countries to showcase economic achievements and to signal diplomatic stature via soft power (Cornelissen 2010). Previous studies (Matheson and Baade 2004, Finlay and Xin 2010, Grix *et al.* 2015) showed that an important reason for developing nations to host sport mega-events is to improve diplomatic relations with developed countries. Some of the previous hosts have succeed in their attempts to increase soft power and improve diplomatic relations (e.g. Australia and the 2000 Sydney Games – Grix and Houlihan 2014), while others have failed to do so (e.g. Russia and the 2014 Sochi Winter Games – Persson and Petersson 2014). Therefore, the expectation of diplomatic legacies does not necessarily mean that the host will gather this benefit. Soft empowerment or disempowerment depends more on the leveraging strategies than on the desires of the host to showcase its international relevance (Brannagan and Giulianotti 2015). Perceptions of Brazilian

diplomats on diplomatic legacies and leveraging strategies are discussed in the next two subsections.

Opportunity to improve the country's elite sport and get better sporting results in international competitions was cited by five diplomats (*D, F, G, H* and *I*) as a reason for Brazil to want to host the 2016 Games. As noted by diplomat *H*:

The Brazilian government has invested in programs to promote elite sport, such as 'Olympic Medals for Brazil' and 'Podium Athlete' programs, aiming to identify sport talents and to make Brazil an Olympic and Paralympic powerhouse. Moreover, the facilities of the Games will be kept for the training of future Olympic and Paralympic athletes, because these facilities have international standards.

Diplomat *F* agrees that delivering better sport performance (usually translated in medals won) was one of the reasons to host the 2016 Games:

[...] it is important for us to sum efforts to conquer the highest possible number of medals in the 2016 Games. Brazil can and should be a sporting powerhouse, because this is one of the most important factors to promote a country image abroad. We should follow the tireless job of producing great Brazilian athletes. [...] Additionally, Brazil has a unique opportunity to receive sport idols from all parts of the world, which is also a prestige factor.

Some authors have pointed that international sporting success in mega-events, such as the Olympics can positively signal international importance to other countries (Van Ham 2001, Grix and Houlihan 2014). In this sense, a good on-field performance of team Brazil during the 2016 Olympic Games could help the country to improve its diplomatic stature, as desired. Rocha (2016) described some of the programmes mentioned by diplomat *H*, pointing that the Brazilian federal government has invested large amounts of money in elite sport, in detriment of educational, social and participant sport. This author concludes that this strategy might work in the short-run, but it seems more likely to fail in the long-run. With small investments in grassroots programmes, the country is not promoting the development of athletes for future competitions, betting exclusively in the athletes with potential to win medals immediately.

China has applied a similar strategy, that is, it focused on winning the highest possible number of medals in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Although the strategy worked (China finished in the first place in the medal table, beating the US in number of golds), scholars have shown that the sporting achievement was apparently insufficient to heighten China's diplomatic reliability in the western eyes (Manzenreiter 2010). Brazil's pretensions were much more modest: the country wanted to finish in the top-10 in the medals table of the Olympic Games (Ramil and Downie 2016). This would be a big leap from last edition in London 2012, when Brazil finished in the 22nd position. The dream did not come true and Brazil finished in the 13th position. Even if this dream had come true, it would be more likely to have positive impacts on domestic audiences, augmenting patriotism and national pride, than to have big impacts in perceptions of Brazil externally (Haut *et al.* 2014). Investments in grassroots programmes and support for young athletes might produce better results in the long run in the eyes of international audience (Rocha 2016).

Diplomats still mentioned other reasons that might explain why Brazil one day desired to host the Olympic Games. For instance: to boost local economy (three diplomats), to promote international tourism (three diplomats), and to improve national security and internal safety (two diplomats). Considering that these were not among the three most cited reasons and the focus of the current research is on diplomatic legacies, I did not elaborate further on these topics.

## Diplomatic legacies of the 2016 games

Diplomats answered positively the second question and listed some of expected diplomatic legacies for the country as a consequence of the 2016 Rio Olympics. There seems to be an agreement among the diplomats who answered the question about the two most expected diplomatic legacies: improvement of the country image internationally and increase of soft

power. Improvement of the country image internationally and increase of the soft power are intrinsically correlated and were mentioned by the diplomats as one the most important reasons for the country to want to host the Olympic Games (previous question). As such, they were partially discussed above. Some diplomats added important information about the process of improving the country image internationally via Olympic Games. According to diplomat *H*, the event would showcase some improvements in social and diplomatic issues:

The Games will place Brazil in the international media spotlight and will show the world that staging them was a consequence of political, social, economic, and diplomatic improvements. Such improvements have had strong impact on international public opinion, which has acknowledged the country's progress in areas such as democracy consolidation, redistribution of income and wealth, and diplomatic relevance.

However, other diplomats did not express the same optimism regarding diplomatic legacies, mainly because of the current social and political situation of the country. For example, diplomat *C* indicated that:

The construction of Brazil's international image is a long-term process. The Games are a cog in the wheel; a very positive cog. However, the current scenario is not favorable to Brazil, because there is a flood of bad news in the international press about the country. The country's economic and political [negative] issues are on a daily basis in the most important media outlets around the world. Mainly because of the economic crisis of the country, the financial resources for diplomatic interventions have been scarce. Brazilian diplomatic missions have struggled to keep the respect and admiration that have been constructed over decades.

As mentioned before, the media attention can be either a blessing or a curse, when a country intends to promote its image via sport mega-events (Chalip and Costa 2005, Manzenreiter 2010). For Brazil, on the positive side, the association between hosts and sport mega-events has promoted the hosts' culture and helped to improve their diplomatic importance (Grix *et al.* 2015). Ndlovu (2010) reported that the association between South Africa and the 2010 FIFA World Cup helped the country to publicise its culture and to diminish negative impressions related to its former apartheid political system. As a consequence, South Africa has experienced an improvement in its diplomatic relations with other countries in all continents (Ndlovu 2010). On the negative side, Brazil's current economic and political situation can hinder the achievement of diplomatic legacies. Although China did not face the same economic crisis when it hosted the 2008 Games, the negative publicity about its political relationships with other countries and the still-present power of the communist party have hindered the country's diplomatic goals (Wang 2008, Manzenreiter 2010). Since 2013, Brazil has faced very serious economic and political problems. The country has suffered with a lot of budget cuts, which have affected priority areas such as public health and education (Keppler 2016). As mentioned by diplomat *C*, Brazilian diplomatic missions have not escaped and have been working with reduced budgets. The local media has blamed the former president Mr. Lula da Silva who created 77 new Brazilian diplomatic missions around the globe, from 2003 to 2013 (Azevedo 2015). Despite the political motivations that might exist behind the media criticisms, with the economic crisis, paying all the bills of these missions has become more difficult for the country. This scenario is problematic, considering the country's aspirations of gathering diplomatic legacies from the 2016 Olympic Games.

Some economists have pointed that the basis of the Brazilian economy boost in the 2000's (more accentuated between 2006 and 2010) was the huge increase in commodity prices (Gruss 2014, Bresser-Pereira 2015). Not only Brazil's, but also other Latin America's economies have been highly dependent of commodities prices. Some have pointed that Brazil was little affected by the 2008–2011 world crisis because of the its higher commodities (mainly oil) prices, which allowed the country to build large reserves of hard currency (Bresser-Pereira 2015). However, the good moment of the commodities was gone by 2011 and hit hard the developing economies (Gruss 2014). The fall of the commodity prices has been accepted as the main international market reason for the emergence of the current economic crisis in Brazil. Internal problems such as corruption, long-term social inequality and bad administration of public resources added up to that international

scenario to create the current situation the country has faced since 2011. Specialists have considered that Brazil lost its chance to become economically stable because it did not use the favorable moment of growth to invest in the national industry (Bresser-Pereira 2015, Lima 2016). In this sense, the condition of great emergent power may have been overestimated by some analysts and by the media.

### Leveraging strategies for diplomatic legacies

Regarding strategies to leverage the expected diplomatic legacies, most of the diplomats mentioned that delivering outstanding Games would work as an efficient strategy to get such legacies. Chalip (2002) asserted that 'the event itself is not the intervention rather it is an opportunity to implement particular tactics which may fosters and nurture the impacts that are desired' (p. 8). Few diplomats reported specific strategies to leverage the diplomatic legacies. Four diplomats (*D*, *G*, *L* and *M*) cited the improvement of national security as a strategy adopted by the government to leverage diplomatic legacies. Additionally, three diplomats (*G*, *J* and *K*) cited the exemption of visas for international tourists during the Games.

When asked about leveraging strategies for diplomatic legacies, diplomat *M* cited and gave some details about safety and security plans for the Olympic Games:

Eighty-five thousand men will work during the 2016 Rio Olympic and Paralympic Games to assure safety in and security of the country. From these, forty-seven thousand will come from national [military and civil] police and will act exclusively in the city of Rio de Janeiro; thirty-eight thousand will come from the armed forces, which will act not only the host city, but also in the cities where the soccer tournament of the Olympic Games will happen – Sao Paulo, Salvador, Belo Horizonte, Brasilia, and Manaus. The Extraordinary Secretary for Mega-Events, from the Ministry of Justice, has a budget of R\$ 350 million to assure safety and security. The Secretary of Public Safety of Rio de Janeiro state has already invested R\$ 750 million in the Games safety planning. An additional amount of R\$ 300 million will be invested until the Games. The Ministry of Defense allocated R\$ 540 million, between 2014 and 2016, to the Games security planning.

Answering the same question, diplomat *L* added the concerns of the country in regard to terrorism prevention during the Games:

Combat to terrorism has received special attention mainly due to recent actions of extremist groups. Although Brazil is not considered a main target of terrorist groups, the country will receive, during the Games, a large number of citizens and authorities from countries that have been [targeted by terrorism]. [...] Under the coordination of the Secretary for Mega-Events, the country has conducted training sessions related to chemical, biological, radiologic, and nuclear defense. After the conclusion of the training, armed force personnel will be directed to the host cities [Rio and the hosts of the soccer tournament] in order to set the stage against terrorism.

Security and safety during Olympic Games has been an issue since the 1972 Munich terrorist attack against Israeli Olympic team members (Toohey and Taylor 2008). After the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US, the levels of concern skyrocketed, because the Olympic Games represent the most global event in the world. Despite the absence of problems in the last editions of the Olympics, Houlihan and Giulianotti (2012) highlighted that the consolidation of the Games as a significant arena for global politics has brought constant worries about host cities being major targets for terrorist attacks. Houlihan and Giulianotti illustrated how delivering safe and secure Games can have positive effects on soft power. As an example, they described the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Safety and Security Strategy, whose one of the main objectives were to enhance the UK's international reputation as a safe and secure place. In this sense, Brazilian investments and concerns with security, safety and risk management may work as positive strategies to leverage diplomatic legacies. In addition to policies to prevent threats to athletes, officials and authorities, management of safety risks for tourists should receive special attention from Rio 2016, because Rio was considered a low safety tourism destination (Pizam 1999). In this sense, even in the absence of



major security threats, the country could have its international image scratched if Olympic tourists suffered with robberies, pin pockets and other crimes.

Regarding the strategy of exempting international tourists from the obligation of having visa to enter the country during the Games, diplomats merely mentioned it, but they did not elaborate why this should work as a leveraging strategy for diplomatic legacies. The visa-free programme was approved by the Brazilian congress. It was valid from 1 June until 18 September and it created benefits for visitors from specific countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia and Japan (Whitefield 2016). On the one hand, this strategy may have sent a diplomatic signal to other countries, helping Brazil to improve its soft power. On the other hand, the strategy placed extra burden on the safety and security programmes, which had to think about alternative ways to screen people who entered the country during the Games.

It is worthy to mention that Brazil cut the budget for the Olympic Games security programme months before the Games started (Brunhuber 2016). In fact, the economic crisis has forced the country to cut expenses in many different areas. The government announced that some cuts should affect its plans for the Games, mainly those related to specialised urban pacification police in Rio 'favelas' (slums) (Brunhuber 2016). Although the size of the Brazil's Olympic security force was about twice that for the 2012 London Games, the major worry of security specialists was that the authorities were apparently not taking the risk of a terrorist attack seriously enough (Brunhuber 2016).

Regarding the question about what has worked and what has not worked to leverage possible diplomatic benefits, most of the diplomats thought that this was a premature inquiry. Some mentioned that diplomatic benefits need much more time to be leveraged and, at that stage (months before the Games), the host country should be still sowing to reap in the future. Others simply stated that they would not be able to answer this question at that moment. An analogy made by diplomat A attracted my attention. He said:

It is still too early for any kind of assessment [about strategies that had or had not worked]. Regarding this issue, I prefer to be like a sport commentator in the day after the game [...].

The lack of precise answers for this question is an interesting result, which indicates that most of them may not know what has worked and what has not. Considering that the diplomats believe that the event itself is the principal leveraging strategy, silence on the effectiveness of leveraging strategies is not surprising, because they have to wait until the event is over to perceive the benefits. However, the country was chosen to be the host about 7 years before the Games (i.e. in 2009). Had the government thought and applied leveraging strategies beyond the event itself, it is likely that by that time (in the year of the event) diplomats would know what had worked and what had not.

## Final remarks

Diplomats were chosen to answer the questions about diplomatic legacies of the Olympic Games because they are the stakeholders with the highest probability of knowing what has been applied in this area. Results indicated that those who responded the questions are actually engaged with the event and have strong opinions about what legacies should be expected. The same is not true regarding the leveraging strategies. This might indicate fragility in the country's planning in regard to diplomatic legacies. While the country has been precise about strategies to leverage infrastructure, social and economic legacies, diplomatic legacy has not been approached in the same way. Interestingly, the federal government has never hidden its intentions to use the Olympic Games as a platform to improve its soft power around the world.

Among the diplomats, there is a positive discourse about the impacts and legacies of the Games. Those who considered that some of legacies may not be as positive as expected associated this to external facts. For example, some of the diplomats mentioned budget cuts, economic crisis, and even the epidemic of dengue and Zika virus in the country as the factors to be blamed in the

case the country does not successfully collect all the benefits from hosting the Games. None of the respondents mentioned the lack of a leveraging planning. At least for diplomatic legacies, results of the current investigation indicate that the country may have neglected the need of more specific leveraging strategies.

Regarding potentialities of leveraging strategies, Brazil (and other similar host countries) should focus on aspects that show its commercial partners around the world that it is taking contemporary social and environmental problems seriously. For instance, using the international media interest in the Olympic country, Brazil might have used its embassies and consulates to publicise its social programmes, mainly those using sport to combat racial, gender and/or ethnic discrimination to promote social inclusion. In this aspect, Brazil must have been as specific as possible, showing the world that the country has social programmes that use sport as instrument to decrease social inequalities. Examples of these programmes are the *Second Half Programme*, which keeps kids from low-income communities at public schools after classes to practise professionally oriented sport (Rocha 2016); and *Olympic Villages Programme*, which built nine sport complexes in areas with very low indexes of human development in the Rio de Janeiro city, attending about 75,000 people (Lauritzen 2016). The same strategy should have been used to publicise specific environmental programmes conducted by the Brazilian government. Showing the host country social and environmental programmes might have worked to leverage diplomatic legacies, because international actors are increasingly looking for social and environmental responsible partners.

In addition to the lack of leveraging strategies, the use of sport mega-events to improve soft power may actually be in risk due to the country enormous internal political and social problems and turbulent economy. From 2006 to 2012, Brazil experienced some economic growth propelled mainly by the increasing purchasing power of its large population of 195 million (Smale 2012). However, after this period of growth, Brazil has been in a terrible economic crisis. In 2015 alone, the Brazilian real fell nearly 35% against the American dollar, inflation was back to two digits and unemployment increased to alarming two-digit figures (Exame 2015). Meanwhile, the social and human living conditions have been quite low for decades. The human development index of Brazil equals to 0.730, placing the country at the 85th position among 187 countries ranked by the United Nations (UNDP 2013). As a developing country, Brazil has long suffered from large socio-economic inequalities (Keeley 2015). If the country does not effectively tackle these socio-economic problems, all the efforts to send a message of international maturity to other countries may be useless. Similar to what happened to China, developed countries may deny to Brazil the status of a diplomatic mature country, no matter how efficiently the country had delivered the 2016 Olympic Games.

The 2016 Rio Olympic Games went off well, but they are unlikely to cure Brazil's longer-term and deep-seated problems of political disquiet, economic instability and mainly social inequity. Results of the 2014 FIFA World Cup lend support to this statement. Although both events have been acclaimed by the international media as well-organised and free of major problems, so far, they did not help at all to make Brazil a better country to live. Internal lack of social equity and economic stability can create soft disempowerment for Brazil in the eyes of major economic powers after the 2016 Games, hindering the country's intentions of gathering diplomatic legacies.

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