



Open streets in Pelotas: Logical model and description of the planning and execution process

Ruas de Lazer em Pelotas: Modelo lógico e descrição dos processos de planejamento e execução

AUTHORS

Italo Fontoura Guimarães¹
Vivian Hernandez Botelho²
Gustavo Dias Ferreira^{1,3}
Caroline Malue Huckembeck^{1,4}
Raquel Silveira Rita Dias³
Fernanda Hernandes Figueira⁵
Eraldo dos Santos Pinheiro^{1,3}
Ana Carolina Oliveira Nogueira³
Eleonora Campos da Motta Santos^{6,3}
Matheus de Lima Weege^{1,2}
Inácio Crochemore-Silva^{1,2}

1 Universidade Federal de Pelotas, Programa de Pós-graduação em Educação Física, Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil.

2 Universidade Federal de Pelotas, Programa de Pós-graduação em Epidemiologia, Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil.

3 Universidade Federal de Pelotas, Pró-reitoria de Extensão e Cultura, Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil.

4 Prefeitura Municipal de Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil.

5 Universidade Federal de Pelotas, Departamento de Fisiologia e Farmacologia, Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil.

6 Universidade Federal de Pelotas, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Artes, Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil.

CORRESPONDING

Italo Fontoura Guimarães

fguimaraes.italo@gmail.com

Rua 3, nº 546, Loteamento Germani, Três Vendas – Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil.
Zip Code: 96080-470.

DOI

10.12820/rbafs.29e0355



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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to develop a logical model of the Open Streets Project (*Ruas de Lazer*) in the city of Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, in 2022, as well as to describe the processes of planning, agreement, and execution. This is a qualitative study that employed the technique of participant observation and the use of a logical model. The project has characteristics of shared management that mark a relevant potential in creating a bond between the university, public management, and the local population. In 2022, seven events were held, proposing cultural activities with music and dance, physical and sports activities, and health education. The project is in permanent construction and evolution, betting on the expansion of investments to achieve the immediate objectives of offering leisure activities and expanding the democratization of access to public spaces for the use of the population.

Keywords: Leisure activities; Culture; Organization and administration; Public policy.

RESUMO

O objetivo do estudo foi desenvolver o modelo lógico do projeto Ruas de Lazer na cidade de Pelotas em 2022, assim como descrever os processos de planejamento, pactuação e execução. Trata-se de um estudo qualitativo, que utilizou a técnica de observação participante e o emprego de modelo lógico. O projeto possui características de gestão compartilhada que demarcam potencial relevante na criação de vínculo entre universidade, gestão pública e população local. Em 2022, sete eventos foram realizados com proposição de atividades culturais com música e dança, atividades físicas e esportivas e de educação em saúde. O projeto está em permanente construção e evolução, apostando na ampliação de investimentos para atingir os objetivos imediatos de oferta de atividades de lazer e de ampliação da democratização de acesso aos espaços públicos para o uso da população.

Palavras-chave: Atividades de lazer; Cultura; Organização e administração; Política pública.

Introduction

Leisure is a human need and a cultural dimension, in-

volving social practices experienced in a playful way by individuals, being present in everyday life, and in all

times, places, and contexts¹. It is a complex phenomenon, intertwined with issues of socioeconomic disparities, social injustice, geopolitical trends, migration, environmental activism, as well as individual rights and collective freedoms².

On the international scene, the United Nations³ recognizes the importance of leisure for people's well-being and quality of life, highlighting it as a human right. This recognition reinforces the need to promote policies and programs which guarantee equitable access to leisure opportunities, encouraging the active participation of society in enjoyable and enriching activities. In a national context, the Brazilian Constitution⁴ also stands out, which recognizes leisure as a social right.

The National Health Promotion Policy⁵, among several aspects, includes encouraging actions that aim to increase social cohesion, enabling the population to take ownership of a quality public space, and promote activities related to their interests, such as music, theater, body practices, and physical activities.

Current initiatives which aim to offer the population the opportunity to enjoy leisure activities, include Open Streets projects, which can be found as strategic programs in municipal departments in several cities in Brazil⁶.

Considering the potential of these initiatives to improve the living conditions of the population, in the city of Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, the Open Streets Project (*projeto Ruas de Lazer*) is carried out by the Federal University of Pelotas (*Universidade Federal de Pelotas - UFPel*) and the City Hall. The project's proposal is to create temporary public leisure spaces in the city's neighborhoods, by closing streets to vehicle traffic, providing opportunities for cultural activities with music and dance, physical activities, sports, and health education. The project's intentions also include the defense of the democratization of public spaces for the use of the population. Thus, the aim of the current study was to develop the logical model of the Open Streets Project of Pelotas city, an appropriate strategy for sharing the means of implementing the project, defining and visualizing appropriate goals, prioritizing the allocation of resources, and establishing possibilities for future evaluation, through the development of logical models⁷.

Methods

A qualitative study was performed, with a descriptive approach, using the participant observation technique⁸, with a logical model proposal⁷.

The city of Pelotas, located in Rio Grande do Sul,

has around 340 thousand inhabitants. Approximately 93.3% of the population live in the urban area, and the city is divided into around 60 neighborhoods, distributed in seven administrative regions, and presents significant income disparities between these regions⁹. The city also demonstrates socioeconomic and demographic inequalities in the distribution of public leisure spaces, in addition to a limited variety of facilities for physical exercise and sports¹⁰.

The study data production took place between February 2021 and December 2022. Documentary monitoring records, present in the field diary, and written records of the Management Committee meetings were used. In addition, documentation of the events held and promotional materials for the project were also accessed, which are available on the institutional websites (UFPel and City Hall) and on the project's official Instagram page (@ruasdelazer.pelotas).

Finally, the logical model contemplated the organizational and structural aspects of the project, the products, and the perspectives of short and long-term results.

Results

Design steps

From the conception of the project to the holding of the events, the Open Streets in Pelotas project initially went through an agreement stage, held in 2021, which included several actions. First, there was a preliminary presentation of the proposal between students and professors of the Postgraduate Program in Physical Education at UFPel and to the Pro-rectorate of Extension and Culture, evaluating relevance, resources, and possibilities. Subsequently, the proposal was formalized and submitted to the evaluation boards of the Higher School of Physical Education (*Escola Superior de Educação Física - ESEF*) and UFPel. The project was then presented to the City Hall of Pelotas, seeking to establish a partnership between the university and the municipal administration, with the aim of planning and developing possible activities in cooperation.

With an institutionalized partnership, a Management Committee was created to facilitate and organize the project's work, including action strategies, a definition of locations of action and, especially, consultation and agreement with neighborhood associations, aiming to promote conscious occupation of public spaces and the development of leisure and physical activity actions for the local community. Finally, the last stage, in 2022, consisted of carrying out the project's activi-

ties, which included seven editions, all with the support of the local community.

Logical model

In order to describe the structure, process, and expected results of the Open Streets in Pelotas project (Figure 1), an overview of the project is presented, detailing factors that influenced its creation, research activities, main objective, resource structure (human, physical, and financial), and activities developed, as well as products and results expected in the short and long term.

Structure

The project is developed by UFPel and the City Hall. These institutions provide human, physical, and financial

resources, including the people involved in the Management Committee, as well as materials and financial resources for the development of the proposed activities, which can vary according to the general characteristics of the event, such as the number of people involved and available funds. Through the methodological aspects that involve the work, we can observe the lack of resources available to fully develop these activities, and to achieve the long-term objectives, such as the continuity of the events in the following years. This scenario is corroborated by the discussion in the study of Costa¹¹ on the university environment, highlighting that as a rule, university extension projects, such as Open Streets in Pelotas, compared to the teaching or research sector, are not a priority in the eyes of funding bodies in Brazil, making various

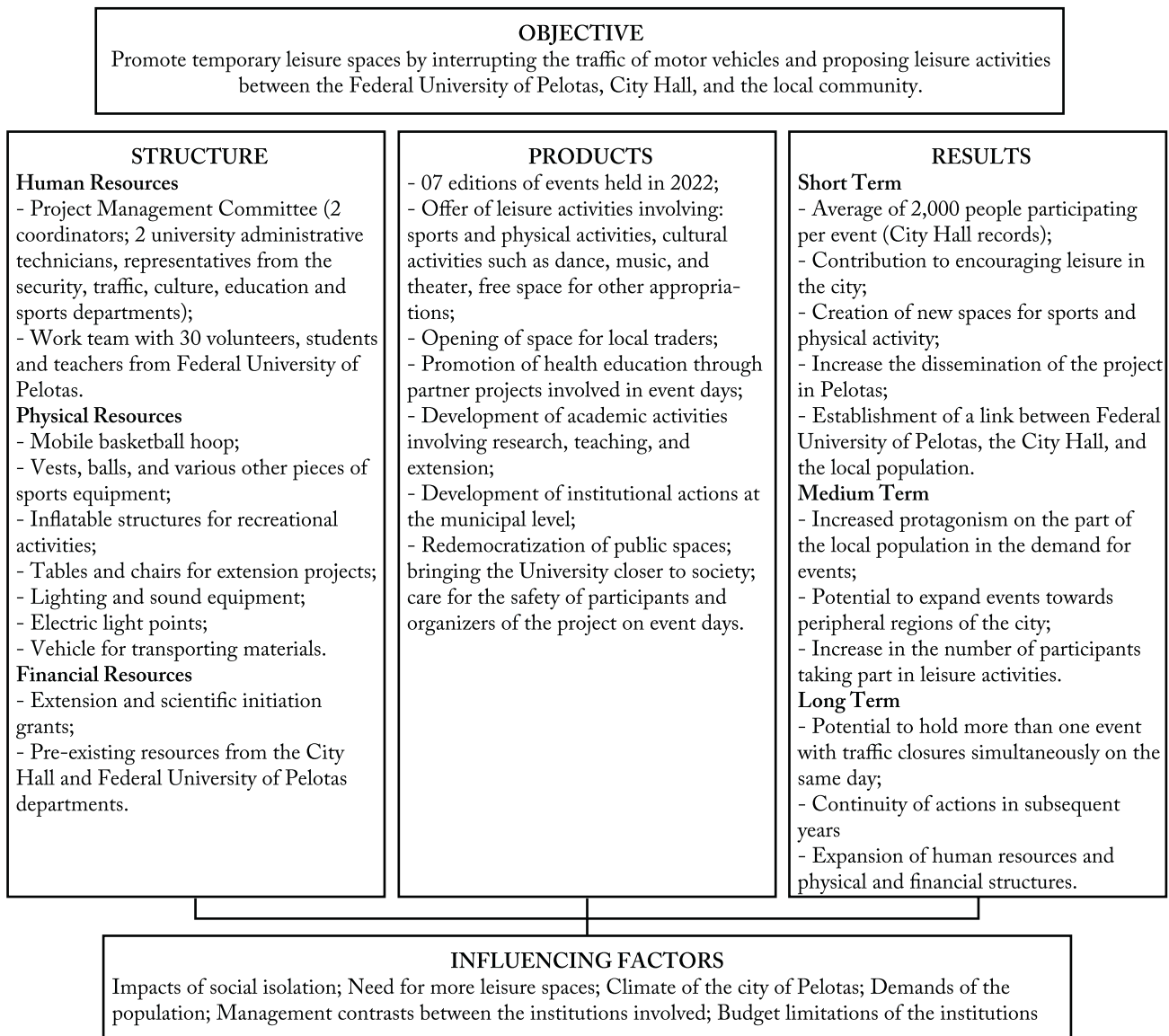


Figure 1 – Logical intervention model for the Open Streets in Pelotas project.

activities unfeasible. At the same time, within the scope of municipal management, the limitation of resources is yet another expression of neoliberalism that has been reducing the size of the State and its possibilities.

Products

The events are usually held on Sundays (only one event was held on a Saturday in 2022). Although the project aims to have a rotation of locations covered, due to the scarcity of funds allocated to public universities and limited municipal resources, in 2022 the actions were mostly held on a large avenue in Pelotas, approximately 1.3 km long. For the activities, vehicle traffic is stopped at dawn (around 5 am) and is only unblocked after the end of the event at the end of the day (around 6 pm). Activities are developed through projects and partner entities of the Open Streets project. These activities involve culture, health, music, art, and encouraging sports and local commerce. The leading role in these specific actions lies with different groups at UFPEL, such as the sports sector (Basketball, Rugby, Table Tennis, and Handball) which provide spaces for practice on site (adapted to road conditions), the Physical Education Tutorial Education Program, which develops recreational activities for children, projects that work on the theme of health with different undergraduate courses, projects that work in the field of culture and that carry out musical and artistic presentations (Choro Club, Theater Group, Urban Dances), as well as other projects, which generally develop scientific dissemination actions of what is produced at the university.

Within the scope of the City Hall, there are also actions of the Active Life Project (*Projeto Vida Ativa*, Municipal Department of Education and Sports), which provides fight modality and rhythm practices, in addition to the provision of inflatable structures for children's recreation, and a traffic school for children instructing on the use of bicycles (Traffic Department). Finally, the project also develops a street market, which aims to stimulate the movement of small local traders. This sector of the event includes exhibitors who sell products related to food and crafts, who register for free in each edition, thus obtaining the approval of the city's urban management and mobility department. All of these activities together make up the products delivered in a large, diverse and democratic space in terms of access.

Short, medium, and long term results

Through the illustrations in the logical model, short,

medium, and long-term results are expected. The establishment of the event itself immediately provides opportunities for leisure activities and contributes to the promotion of the proposed activities in different age groups, moving towards health promotion and education, local commerce, and seeking greater social justice. Another result is the mobilization of UFPEL extension projects, as well as joint work between the University and city hall. Considering the development of the project in the medium and long term, expected results include an increase in the number of roads closed for the implementation of the project, with the involvement of other regions of the city, increased involvement and protagonism of communities, increased possibilities for physical practices and activities, and permanent contact with cultural events. Finally, although it is not listed as a direct result of the project in the logical model, it is worth noting that initiatives similar to Open Streets in Pelotas also demonstrate benefits for health indicators. An impact assessment study by Velázquez-Cortés et al.¹², indicated a significant increase in physical activity among participants, ensuring a reduction in the risks of cardiovascular disease and obesity. The authors also noted that the temporary reduction in vehicle traffic led to an improvement in air quality in these regions.

Influencing factors

The Open Streets in Pelotas project was motivated by three initial influencing factors. Firstly, the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted the need to provide areas for interaction and outdoor activities for the community in times after social distancing. Secondly, the growing need for more actions involving physical leisure practices in cities, with equitable guidance of the actions^{13,14}, encouraged the creation of initiatives that would meet this demand. On the other hand, there are influencing factors that permanently interfere with the project: weather conditions on the days of events and in specific seasons of the year, demands from the population for specific activities and specific locations to be served, political-ideological contrasts, as well as possibilities for practices of involvement between the institutions that are protagonists of the project, and limitations of financial resources.

Research possibilities

The logical model of the Open Streets in Pelotas project reveals three important research items. The first possibility is the evaluation of the agreement process

between UFPel and the City Hall, analyzing the collaboration and cooperation strategies, seeking to understand the potentialities and limitations involved. Other possibilities refer to the available structure and the products/activities presented. In this sense, the acceptability of the project by the local population, seeking to understand the receptiveness and engagement of the community, is also presented as an important step. At population levels, it is also necessary to understand the scope of the events and the project, in order to understand in the future some impacts of the activities carried out from the perspective of the participants. Finally, there is a powerful space for study and reflection on a series of elements that involve our society in real life, including the political and social conflicts that exist in the territories, the role of the university and other institutions, as well as the approach to leisure itself, both in terms of what the project establishes and what our society and current context demand.

Final considerations

Through the current study it was possible to describe the process of agreement of the Open Streets project in the city of Pelotas, as well as its main structural aspects, the activities implemented, and a prospect of short, medium, and long-term results.

The project highlights the potential expressed in inter-institutional agreements, involvement with the population in decision-making, expansion of the debate on leisure spaces, and immediate action in proposing different activities that are not always accessible to the general population. On the other hand, directions for advances are also necessary in the field of investments and expansion of structural resources, so that the maintenance and expansion of the project can be carried out in subsequent years.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding

This work was carried out with the support of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel - Brazil (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* - CAPES) - Financing Code 001.

Authors' contributions

Guimarães IF: Conceptualization; Methodology; Data analysis; Research; Tool provision; Supervision; Project administration;

Data presentation design; Funding receipt; Writing of the original manuscript; Writing-review & editing; Approval of the final version of the manuscript. Botelho VH: Research; Project administration; Writing-review & editing; Approval of the final version of the manuscript. Ferreira GD: Research; Supervision; Project administration; Writing - review & editing; Approval of the final version of the manuscript. Huckembeck CM: Research; Project administration; Writing - review & editing; Approval of the final version of the manuscript. Dias RSR: Conceptualization; Methodology; Research; Data curation; Supervision; Project administration; Writing - review & editing; Approval of the final version of the manuscript. Figueira FH: Research; Project administration; Writing - review & editing; Approval of the final version of the manuscript. Pinheiro ES: Conceptualization; Research; Supervision; Project administration; Funding receipt; Writing - review & editing; Approval of the final version of the manuscript. Nogueira ACO: Research; Project administration; Writing - review & editing; Approval of the final version of the manuscript. Santos ECM: Research; Project administration; Writing - review & editing; Approval of the final version of the manuscript. Weege ML: Research; Project administration; Writing - review & editing; Approval of the final version of the manuscript. Crochemore-Silva I: Conceptualization; Methodology; Research; Data curation; Supervision; Project administration; Funding receipt; Writing - review & editing; Approval of the final version of the manuscript.

Declaration regarding the use of artificial intelligence tools in the article writing process

No artificial intelligence tools were used in the preparation of the manuscript.

Availability of research data and other materials

The contents underlying the research text are contained in the manuscript.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Open Streets (*Ruas de Lazer*) project, to the Federal University of Pelotas (UFPel), specifically to the Pro-Rector of Extension and Culture, to the Municipal Government of Pelotas for the established agreement, and to the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* - CAPES) for the financial support granted through a scholarship for postgraduate studies.


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Received: 12/12/2023
Approved: 05/27/2024

Associate Editor

Paulo Henrique de Araújo Guerra 
Universidade Estadual Paulista (UNESP),
Rio Claro, São Paulo, Brasil.

Cite this article as:

Guimarães IF, Botelho VH, Ferreira GD, Huckembeck CM, Dias RSR, Figueira FH, Pinheiro ES, Nogueira ACO, Santos ECM, Weege ML, Crochemore-Silva I. Open Streets in Pelotas: Logical model and description of the planning and execution process. *Rev. Bras. Ativ. Fis. Saúde*. 2024;29:e0342. doi: [10.12820/rbafs.29e0342](https://doi.org/10.12820/rbafs.29e0342)