Sport and leisure public policy in nova lima: from agenda setting to implementation

A política pública de esporte e lazer em nova lima: da definição da agenda à implementação

Política pública de deporte y ocio en nova lima: de la definición de la agenda a la implementación

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Abstract
Studies on the topic of public policies have grown in the academic environment. Understanding the policies developed in our reality is an important step in this direction. This text aims to analyze the implementation process of the public policy of sports and leisure in the city of Nova Lima. It ranges from the identification of the problem and the establishment of the political agenda for the issue. The used methodology was the analysis of documents and semi-structured interviews with the managers of the Municipal Secretariat of Sports and Leisure - SEMEL, of the city of Nova Lima in the past two administrations. As results we can consider that the agenda is formed from the demand arising from different spaces and subjects, characterizing visible players influencing decision making as to which problems or issues will comprise the political agenda. It is feasible to consider that sports and leisure policies in the city of Nova Lima are close to the top down model.
Keywords: Public policy; Agenda; Implementation.

Resumo
Os estudos sobre a temática de políticas públicas têm sido crescentes no meio acadêmico. Entender as políticas produzidas na nossa realidade tem sido um importante passo nesse sentido. Esse texto objetiva analisar o processo de implementação da política pública de esporte e lazer na cidade de Nova Lima, a partir da identificação do problema e da formação da agenda política para essa temática. A metodologia utilizada foi a análise de documentos e entrevista semiestruturada aos gestores da Secretaria Municipal de Esporte e Lazer – SEMEL, da cidade de Nova Lima das duas últimas gestões. Como resultados podemos considerar que a agenda é formada a partir da demanda vinda de diferentes espaços e sujeitos, caracterizando os atores visíveis influenciando na tomada de decisão sobre quais problemas ou questões comporão a agenda política. É viável considerar que as políticas de esporte e lazer na cidade de Nova Lima aproximam-se do modelo top down.
Palavras-chave: Política pública; Agenda; Implementação.

Resumen
Los estudios sobre el tema de las políticas públicas han ido en aumento en el ámbito académico. Comprender las políticas que se producen en nuestra realidad ha sido un paso importante en esta dirección. Este texto tiene como objetivo analizar el proceso de implementación de la política pública de deporte y ocio en la ciudad de Nova Lima, a partir de la identificación del problema y la formación de la agenda política para este tema. La metodología utilizada fue el análisis de documentos y entrevistas semiestructuradas a los directivos de la Secretaría Municipal de Deporte y Recreación - SEMEL, de la ciudad de Nova Lima en las dos últimas administraciones. Como resultado, podemos considerar que la agenda se forma a partir de la demanda proveniente de diferentes espacios y sujetos, caracterizando a los actores visibles que inciden en la toma de decisiones sobre qué problemas o temas compondrán la agenda política. Es factible considerar que las políticas deportivas y de ocio en la ciudad de Nova Lima se aproximan al modelo top down.
Palabras clave: Política pública; Agenda; Implementación.

1. Introduction

Nova Lima has, according to data from the 2010 demographic census of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Ibge, 2015), a territorial unit area of 429.004 square kilometres, a human development index (HDI) of 0.813 and an estimated population of 95,577 inhabitants. It is one of the main cities in the Belo Horizonte metropolitan region, the capital city of Minas Gerais. The city was considered one of the ten best Brazilian cities to live in due to its HDI, classified as very high. This index relates to a decrease in the rural population and a significant increase in the municipality's population, caused by the growth of horizontal and vertical condominiums, resulting from the real estate expansion that the city goes through since 1980. From this perspective, it can be inferred that the city has a high HDI due to the population growth that has been accommodated in the luxury condominiums in its surroundings. However, it also presents social inequality and the poverty incidence among the population is significant, which shows the need for research on the topic of public policies, especially regarding social rights.

In Brazil, the last three decades registered a significant expansion of analytical reflections and empirical studies related to the public policy issue. Fialho, et al., (2020) affirm that in the past decades there have been advances in public policies, because they have turned to a diversity of social areas. In some way, it can be said that this occurred parallel to, and possibly as a reflex of, the construction and reconstruction process of the Brazilian welfare state after the Federal Constitution of 1988, from which government action became more expressive, particularly in the field of social policies. (Menicucci, 2018). Thus, the relevance of the analysis of public policies and their management in the country has been expressed in practical terms. The Brazilian literature has sought to build or refine analytical models useful for understanding the policies generated in our realities, thus, it is up to the public policy maker to perceive, understand and select the actions that will be implemented (Mendes & Mello, 2022).

2. Methodology

This article aims to analyze the public policy of sports and leisure implementation process in the city of Nova Lima, from the identification of the problem and the establishment of the political agenda for this topic; investigating how a specific issue becomes important at a given time to the level of integrating or not the government agenda and how the actions are implemented. After all, why do some problems become important to the point of being part of the government agenda and others not? To conduct this study, qualitative research was employed as methodological procedure and a combination of document analysis and field research was conducted, employing semi-structured interviews and field diary recording techniques and informal conversations, as advised by Gil (2002). The analyzed subjects were the sport and leisure managers of the Municipal Secretariat of Sport and Leisure of the city of Nova Lima - Minas Gerais.

In this sense, some questions asked to the interviewees were relevant in understanding the agenda make-up. The questions were based on elements that considered the daily routine at the Secretariat; the functions developed by those in charge; the work meetings, the configuration of the groups for these meetings and their frequency; the agenda organisation; the way the demands were presented and the actions developed; in addition to the report on how decisions were made until arriving at implementation.

The speeches, analyses and the theories on public policy enabled this text to be written from this introduction, followed by a theoretical discussion on the public policies agenda, which subsidized the notes on the development of the sports and leisure agenda in the studied city. Subsequently, we discuss theoretically about the implementation of policies on sports and leisure, and finally, we make considerations about the shaping of the agenda and the implementation of sports and leisure policies in the city of Nova Lima.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The agenda in public policies

Social problems and demands become part of the government agenda when they attract the interest and attention of policymakers. But how do these problems or demands effectively become considered important by policymakers, i.e. why does an issue become part of the agenda? The identification of the problem is the first step for it to happen. After this identification, there is the preparation of the agenda, which, according to Locks (2014), "is a multiple set of issues on which governments and the individuals related to them focus their attention at a given time" (Locks, 2014, p.46), i. e., it is a set of problems that draw the government's attention and can be solved through public policies.

Thus, a public policy intends to solve a social problem politically recognised as public. "Problem definition has to be very careful and take into consideration social, political and economic problems that are visible to the whole community" (Azevedo, 2014, p.38).

In the 1960s, the first studies carried out on the issue of the agenda were characterised by a strong relationship between the governmental agenda-setting process and the expansion of democracy through popular participation. Once the problems have been raised, the second step is to include them in the agenda, which can be classified as systemic and institutional or governmental, based on the Cobb and Elder theories (1971). "Marked, especially, by the discussion arising from traditional Political Science, the major innovation of these studies lies in the distinction between the systemic agenda and the governmental agenda" (Capella, 2015, p.15).

The systemic agenda regarded as more general, encompassing problems and those of the diverse political and social actors with which the State and society are concerned. For example: the problems that may have an international dimension, such as the economic crisis, terrorism, environmental problems, among others. The governmental agenda, on the other hand, also called institutional, relates to problems that functionally depend on the consensus or competence of the public authority, such as the by-laws of a local entity. In this case, political leaders directly control the agenda items and choose which ones they will address (Souza, 2006).

Azevedo (2014) understands that the systemic agenda represents a set of problems of public interest, but which do not necessarily correspond to the priorities on institutional agendas. It has a more abstract, more general and broader character in its scope and domain. It relates to the institutional agenda to the extent that only some of the many problems are placed on the institutional agenda. The institutional agenda represents a set of problems of public interest, considered as possible issues for action. "These are proposals that the public authority has decided to tackle. An important point to highlight is that the greater the disparity between the two types of agenda, the greater the intensity and frequency of conflict within the political system." (Azevedo, 2014, p.39).

The growth of this topic is strengthened from the theories developed by Downs (1972), dealing with the existing relationship between the role and the functioning of public opinion for the emergence of issues and formulation of public policies (Capella, 2015). Thus, the decade of 1980-1990 marked by the emergence of major theoretical models seeking to analyze not only the moments of small and gradual changes, but also the moments of rapid and significant change in the government agenda. "The multiple flows models by John Kingdon (2003) and Baumgartner and Jones (1993) emerge, then, as the main theoretical and methodological innovations in studies of government agenda setting and change in the United States" (Capella, 2015, p. 15) and inspired studies in Brazil.

Another phase of the development of the theme comprises the dissemination of these models and their application. Thus, the consolidation of the models and the adjustments made during the late 1990s and 2000s moved towards empirical

experimentation in the analysis of the agenda-setting process and towards more systematic explanations of the dynamics of policies and their change processes, which evidences how recent are the studies on the subject (Capella, 2015).

The most recent phase presents both methodological advances and the overcoming of territorial limits, with the wide dissemination of models for the analysis of the most distinct political systems around the globe. The creation of the Comparative Agendas Project (CAP), which has the participation of more than fifteen countries from four different continents, marks the early 2010s as a moment of progress in comparative studies, based on the adoption of a common methodology. Considering that the literature on the agenda since the 1970s has been produced by these authors, based on the US context, this recent trend has contributed to broaden the understanding of the limits and possibilities of the theories of agenda and change in public policies in several countries, as Capella explains (2015).

Exemplifying the approximations and reflections favoured by the CAP model, taking into a much smaller dimension and a local issue, the comparison model was mentioned. One of those interviewees made a comparison of what happens with sports and leisure in Nova Lima and in another city in the State of Minas Gerais: "It's very complicated, it's a situation that makes one weep, you know. And you see the history of some cities around us, smaller than us in terms of structure, but they have a neat little court, a gymnasium... Santa Bárbara, have you ever been to Santa Bárbara? Go there and look at their sports structure [...] (interviews 3-14)." It is interesting to note that another research subject also mentioned the same city, expressing himself in a very similar way: [...] I travel a lot you know, I've been in Santa Barbara now, I see how municipalities much smaller than ours, have this issue much more refined (interviews 7-9).

And they go on comparing the issues of leisure equipment and structure between cities, providing an opportunity to understand the limits and possibilities of the agenda and change in public policy theories:

> There is a little gym in a corner of the hill, two bleachers on one side and on the other, tiny, the court is not tiny, small, basic cement bathroom, nothing fancy, but there is one there, there is one there, there is one there. And look at Santa Barbara and look at Nova Lima! See the revenue of one and the revenue of the other. And you can't understand how we are lagging so far behind, so far behind. I say this because we haven't invested for many years. And you won't manage to invest in one administration, not two administrations; it's a job for many years (interviews 3-14).

> The very infrastructure of the places, the squares, the sports structure, the gymnasiums, the programmes, the theatres, museums, libraries, so I think that all of this, everything that a person has the capacity to spontaneously seek as leisure, has developed much more in other places than here, [...], but I think that if we do not have a policy aimed at education for leisure, and understand that these opportunities indirectly generate education, health and safety, we will not evolve, we will not evolve (interviews 7 -9).

In Brazil, studies on public policies experience a period of expansion in recent decades, so it is possible to notice that this field is marked by a multiplicity of case studies on specific sector policies, reported in theses and dissertations. Frequently, however, these discourses are disconnected from the international debate and literature. They still lack deeper theoretical reflections (Souza, 2006 and Capella, 2005, 2015). Considering the international context, some authors focused on the topic. This is the case of Kingdon (1984), which shall serve as the basis for discussions on the sports and leisure agenda of the municipality of Nova Lima, which shall be presented in this topic.

3.2 The agenda setting in nova lima

Agenda setting, the first and perhaps most critical stage of the public policy cycle, refers to the way in which problems emerge, or not, as the target of government attention. What happens at this early stage has a decisive impact on the entire policy process (Howlett; et al., 2013). The way and manner in which problems are recognised will tell us much about how they are, or are not, addressed.

The literature indicates some ways in which demands enter the political agenda. In Brazil, (...) "although a recent academic concern, the studies on the government agenda setting are growing and deepening" (Locks, 2014, p.46). Agenda can be understood as

> the list of issues or problems which receive some serious attention at any given time from government officials and from non-government individuals who are not close to those officials (...) Out of the set of all conceivable issues or problems to which officials might be turning their attention, they actually pay serious attention only to some, and not to others. Thus, the agenda-setting process limits this set of conceivable issues to the set that actually becomes the focus of attention (Kingdon, 1984, p. 3-4).

Inspired by Kingdon's theory (1984), I use the discussion of the agenda-setting model and the alternatives in the policy formulation process to construct the discussion on the implementation process, based on the public policymakers' decision. The theoretical model proposed by Kingdon "seeks to explain how these structural elements - ideas, individual action, the dynamics of networks and policy communities, elements of the political and economic system - combine to affect the policy-making process" (Capella & Gonçalves, 2018, p. 13).

This author, based on studies on the U.S. federal government's public health and transportation policies, reinforces that decisions in public policy depend on a set of processes that include: the configuration of the agenda, the specification of alternatives from which an option is to be realized, the choice between these alternatives, and the implementation of the decision. In his multiple streams model, the author considers that the agenda change is the result of the convergence between three streams: problems, solutions or alternatives (policies) and politics. According to Faria (2003), this theory aims to analyse the process of policy formation, "the time issue is crucial, since the adoption of a given policy alternative is seen as dependent on the simultaneous occurrence of particular events and on certain actors' actions" (Faria, 2003, p. 24).

Capella (2005), in analysing Kingdon's model, states that in certain circumstances, these three flows (problems, solutions and political dynamics) are brought together, generating an opportunity for change in the agenda. Therefore, when a problem is recognised, a solution is available and political conditions make the moment propitious for the change, a "convergence between the three flows occurs, making it possible for issues to rise to the agenda" (capella, 2005, p.10).

Thus, the fundamental concern lies in the first two processes, called pre-decisional stages: agenda-setting and policy formulation (Capella, 2005 & Faria, 2003).

In an attempt to understand these priorities in the agenda setting, I sought initial information on the holding and frequency of meetings defining the demands of sport and leisure.

> I did not identify, in the assessed documents, minutes of meetings held at the Secretariat. Many documents that I found reveal the operationalization (for example: internal communication, request for material, summoning of staff to work in the events, among others), not the planning. Unless the meeting minutes are in a reserved place separate from my field of research, it seemed to me that the meetings are not formally recorded. I saw some notes that I called "meeting scribbles". It is worth noting that I did not attend any meetings during this period (Field Diary, 2018).

For the research subjects, the meetings take place " frequently, despite the fact that, since it is a small secretariat, I think it is not necessary to have these meetings, as we are here on a daily basis, so the demands come here and we make things happen in real time" (interviews 2 -3). It is worth noting that "the dissociation between planning and implementation or the lack of concern with the requirements of implementation increases the chance of failure of public policies" (Carvalho; et al., 2010). Other times, the demands to be contemplated are decided in meetings held periodically and, most often, in meetings that occur according to the need. The hierarchy is present: "Actually, there is a team meeting with the Secretary, plus the 'leisure director', the administrative and spaces maintenance staff. And then we hold a meeting by team" (interviews 3-3). This

confirms Kingdon's considerations (1984) who noted that the administration still features prominently in the agenda setting process. This is what the representatives of the current administration (2017-2020) reported:

> We hold periodic meetings with the management staff, which are: the sports department, leisure and events department, the sports and community divisions, the maintenance division and the administrative staff, to evaluate the actions, assess the public spaces, evaluate the results and the demands we have, both in terms of material, financial resources and human resources. [...] In practice, they are short, since they are periodic, but we do it whenever it is necessary or due to an event, or due to some fact, right? Thus, we have the discipline of holding them biweekly; nevertheless, they happen weekly, don't them? Or even twice a week, but according to what we are experiencing (interviews.1-3).
>
> Today, today they are according to demand, for example, school games, we meet with the sports staff, we discuss what will happen, and based on that we start to assign each one's role in that event; today it happens more. Last year we planned to meet once a week to discuss the secretariat's actions, but not now, nowadays, we only have such and such competition, we sit here, we meet, we see what is needed and then we start the execution (interviews 4 -3).

When analysing the two statements, one observes that the issues may become part of the agenda through the dissemination of ideas, in professional circles and among political elites; or changes in the agenda may be the result of a change in the control of the party or of the intra-ideological balances of the party, caused by elections (Kingdon, 1984). With regard to the analysed administrations, even though they are different political elites, the format of how they hold meetings is similar, since the meetings take place periodically with the people or sector heads, for subsequent reporting to the team:

> We had the (pause) let me see, quarterly, right? Every three months we had meetings with everyone, with all the staff. Then monthly, with the "sport director" I had a meeting and the head of department had a weekly meeting, it was in the hierarchy of posts, right? The higher ones had a meeting every week, then the meeting was every fortnight, then it was a monthly meeting and quarterly meeting with everyone. Except that in all the Secretariat's activities, all the civil servants participated. Therefore, every time we had an activity, we met with everyone beforehand (interviews 5-3).

And the statements continue highlighting the hierarchy and the holding of meetings on demand:

> The demands were coming, as I told you, from several divisions, by the diverse divisions, which were, there were four at the time and for leisure sometimes the Secretary or the Secretary depends on the time, ne? They called each representative from their area to hurry up, to do something more separately. When it was general then it was more with an administrative focus, more in this sense [...] when the demand came, we saw the need, we were called by the Secretary or by the Secretariat and we would discuss the demand and make the decision to seek compliance or not (interviews 6- 3).
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> It was according to demand, there was no Friday meeting like that, no, not like that. [...]. Before deciding what to do, we would make a detailed analysis of the situation of that sports area in the city, what would be the best strategies, and then we would develop a specific programme. On a daily basis it was more common for us to have operational meetings, right? To control the management. Then, I would meet with these division heads, right? To know if the tasks were being accomplished, how things were going? Therefore, if we needed a more specific intervention by me or by the secretariat, I could have this precise notion. (Interviews 7-3).

It is noticeable from the statements that the agenda will be set based on the demands, in meetings that define the actions, which are held periodically, according to the hierarchy of posts. However, these meetings are not regular. There is no rule to define meetings or gatherings. The coordination dictates the teams' ways of working. Therefore, the demands come from " top down", the administrative section of the city hall, or are presented by the community or other sectors, through the city council, neighbourhood associations, religious communities and churches, non-governmental organisations, among others: "Currently, they exist, but the demands, there is the Santo Antonio festival, and we need a tent, a sound system, a chemical

toilet and we try to supply them [...] Churches, the Santo Antonio festival, community demands, the Pilar festival ..."
(interviews 2-7).

When demands arise, regardless of their origin, the team meets with the perspective of addressing them. This issue is "strongly linked to the development needs of improvements in political-administrative processes, which allow the increase of implementing activities" (Lima and D'ascenzi, 2013, p.101). When the issue relates to how the demands arrive and how to comprise the agenda, these issues are highlighted in the current 2017-2020 administration as well:

> Yes ... There are two ways: one is when people come to us, which is the way it worked, it was working, right? Until the end of last year, right? Thus, it still works, but it's not only this one, now we are looking for new projects in new sports, new modalities, right? Just to enrich our schedule. (Interviews1-7).

> In the case of the leisure streets, yes, specifically, we have all the planning for them, the day, place, the attractions they will have and so on, but the neighbourhood parties, when there is a demand, then we see what we can do on a case by case basis. (Interviews 2 -7).

It can be inferred that the problems enter the governmental agenda for sport and leisure in Nova Lima in a poorly planned way, although the actors are very important in the formulation and, why not say, in defining the agenda:

> My administration was a collective management; it was a democratic management, where everyone knew what their duty was, right? Their right, their obligation, but we are talking about public things. Therefore, I always valued participation, I think I was even too annoying because we had weekly meetings; we had fortnightly meetings (Interviews 5-3).

According to Capella (2005), the core of Kingdon's model is based on the idea that actors are influential in defining the government agenda, while others exert greater influence in defining the alternatives. Thus, he divides the participants into two groups: the first group of actors is called the visible cluster of participants. Visible participants are characterised by those who receive considerable attention by the press and the public. These can be: the country's president, individuals appointed by the president, the legislature, and participants in the electoral process, interest groups, the media and public opinion. All visible actors are directly related to the problem flow. I identify these actors when demands and problems arise from other sectors, as interviewees commented:

> From top down, in the sports sector there is a specific date, the dates come from the top down, right? Thus, the school games, JIMI, this whole structure (interviews 6-7).

> Oh, the directives today are guided solely and exclusively by the Secretary, he is in charge today, then they are passed on to me and I execute them. Oh, the Cabinet, you see? Some demands come from community associations. So they pass these demands on to the Secretary, he passes them on to me, and we...the team executes them (interviews 2-7).

> The demands came basically by request or via the neighbourhood association, some community leader, but they also came via the Mayor's office, a demand from the City Council, we sometimes did it, right? We supported other activities in partnership, not only for the community, sometimes there was an event, the union's own club, for example, which was having a party, requested our support and we were there to help. (Interviews 6-3).

The second group defined by this author is called the hidden clusters of participants, which comprise the communities where ideas are generated and put into circulation (policy communities). They are represented by civil servants, stakeholders' analysts, parliamentary advisors, academics, researchers and consultants. The invisible actors relate to the flow of alternatives (ideas) and have a determining action. Thus, their participation primarily occurs on the decision agenda:

> Everything is studied here on a case by case basis, we don't have the means to make a plan today, and do you understand? (Interviews 2-7).

> In the leisure area, apart from the set events, which I already mentioned such as Carnival, the Homeland Week, the Christmas holiday, the year-end party, the horse festival, these are events with set dates, the rest would happen, they would come and we would plan them. [...] (Interviews 6-7).

It is worth stressing that there are still other players in the process that also influence the governmental agenda, additionally to the players that take part in the administration, there are the players from the Legislative Power. An example is the requests for events made by the city councillors, who constitute the city's legislative power. Besides this, another group of influential actors are the participants in the electoral process, comprising mainly political parties and campaigners. Parties can promote an issue on the governmental agenda through their government programmes: "when the PCdoB party took over the Ministry of Sports, its proposal was a programme to be developed in partnership with the States and in partnership with the Municipalities" (interviews 5-1). Hence, it can be said "that the government always dominates the government's political agenda" (Capella, 2005, p.21).

A strong idea in this regard is that, from the perspective of sports, the calendar is established by the State government events, such as the Minas Gerais School Games (JEMG) and the Minas Gerais Inland Games (JIMI). "We have teams and we encourage the schools to participate and hold the internal competition; based on the internal competition, we select the champions to represent Nova Lima in the micro-regional phase, which involves the surrounding cities, then it moves on to the regional phase and finally to the state phase". (Interviews 4-3).

Thus, it is considered that there is a sports policy in the city and that it is continuous. It happens frequently. Hence, sport in the city has a pre-established agenda and it works accordingly.

> Within my area of competitions, we have some that are traditional and predetermined in the calendar; one example is the school games. We have an obligation to hold them every year, as the ranking of these schools influences their participation in the other stages of the competition. It's part of the agenda. (Interviews 4-7).

> We have an annual plan. It is collectively built. And we are concerned about trying not to have two events at the same time, since we lack an adequate public to compete. Because, sometimes we have a citizen who plays futsal, plays other modalities of sports, as well. If you invite the same public at the same time of the year, there might be low demand. We try to stagger them to avoid problems. Then, we have to be careful not to let it happen. Some of them are proposed by the state, and we participate. The school games, the schedule comes from the state. (Interviews 3-7).

> Well, it was, it had a schedule pre-determined by the State Government, right? Those competitions did not depend on us, but those depending on us, of course we were the organizers, right? But there was a pre-determined agenda and that we planned. But the planning was all based on major events, which we could not change: school games, JIMI (interviews 7-7).

On this subject, Arretche (1998) comments that, in federative states, from the decentralization, the local government units' decisions for implementing a given public policy are protected by the principle of sovereignty. This is due to the fact that the 1988 Federal Constitution did not designate responsibilities in the implementation of sport and leisure public policies to any federated entity (Starepravo & Santos, 2018). Therefore, they are dependent on the discretion of rulers, since they are not regulated by a norm, or State policy.

Thus, adopting a social program proposed by a more comprehensive level of government or transferring attributions in social policy presupposes the adherence of the government level to which one intends these attributions to be transferred, since decisions at this level of government are legitimated by the principle of sovereignty. The State, when planning sport

events, establishes the political agenda for specific actions, as explicitly stated in the remarks above, acting as an example of visible actors in the process, when it establishes the sport agenda in the municipality.

3.3 Implementing the agenda

Public Policy can be seen in many ways. It can be a tool to solve a particular problem or be understood as a conflict of ideas and interests; it can be the outcome of the power game dynamics, among other perspectives. Based on the assumption that the duty of public authorities is to anticipate needs by planning and implementing actions in a way that enables the creation of conditions for socioeconomic development, public policy targets ensuring social rights. The implementation of public policy can be understood as a process through which objectives can be changed, resources mobilised to meet and fulfil objectives. It can even be seen as a process of changing the policy one wants to implement. If unplanned, it can lead to the failure of a policy (Carvalho; et al., 2010).

Implementation is an important phase in public policy. In Brazil, recently, these reflections are improving, although implementation studies are developed internationally for some decades. This issue presents itself in a scarce way or it can be considered non-existent in the Brazilian literature, which comprises studies focusing more on the elaboration, control and evaluation of public policies. Thus, almost all the content found refers to recent works of authors from the United States and Europe (Carvalho; et al., 2010). However, Menicucci (2018) considers that studies have expanded in such a way that it is perhaps no longer possible to consider implementation as the missing link of public policy studies, as it was considered some time ago. This implementation phase follows the decision-making and it precedes evaluation. It is the phase in which rules, routines and social processes move from intention to action, being considered highly important.

It is at this stage that political intentions will be transformed into tangible actions, after decision-making. The implementation process is a very complex phase, as it involves actors with different interests in its execution, as well as considering different social, economic, political and technological contexts. (Azevedo, 2014).

Thus, once a problem has made it onto the policy agenda, once various solutions to address the problem have been formulated, and once the government has set policy objectives and decided on the course of action, it is then the government's responsibility to put the decision into practice. This is the implementation phase, which comprises the effort, knowledge and resources employed to translate policy decisions into action (Howlett; et al., 2013).

There are two conflicting currents that shape the planning: the first believes in a top-down planning model, justifying that the authorities would have greater control and should decide what and how the political actions will be implemented. This is the case of the municipality in question, as confirmed by the respondents' replies to this research.

The top down approach is based on the fact that the implementation policy starts with a decision in the political sphere, usually in central government, i.e. the decision starts from the top down. The same author argues that there are six necessary and sufficient conditions for effective implementation of objectives: 1) clear and conscious objectives; 2) programme based on adequate causal theory; 3) legally structured implementation process; 4) committed staff; 5) maintenance of political support by stakeholders over time, and 6) changes in socio-economic conditions cannot undermine the programmes. This implementation model assumes a functionalist and technical view that public policies should be developed and decided by the political sphere, conceiving implementation as a mere administrative effort to find the means to the established ends (Sebatier, 1986).

The second advocates planning from a bottom-up model, from the perspectives of social agents who, in this view, know the policy better, as they are closer to local issues (Silva, 2012). It is characterised by the freedom of bureaucrats and a network of actors to organise and shape public policy implementation. In this model, there is greater technological limitation,

but the implementers have greater participation in the analysis of problems and the search for solutions during implementation and, subsequently, the decision-makers have the possibility of validating the practices already tested. In summary, planning corresponds to a process dependent on the relationships of trust among the diverse interested and influenced parties in the decision-making process.

In this model, the format that the public policy takes after decision-making is not definitive and the policy is modifiable by those who implement it on a day-to-day basis; therefore there is greater discretion on the part of managers and bureaucrats[1].

The bottom-up approach starts by identifying the actors involved, their objectives, strategies and activities. It then uses contact to develop a network comprised of actors and groups genuinely involved in the planning, funding and except for governmental and non-governmental programmes. In this case, decisions are made from the bottom up because these actors, known as "neighbourhood actors", have enough knowledge and power to adapt public policies according to the needs of their constituencies, as well as to meet their own personal demands (Azevedo, 2014).

The difference between the top down and bottom up models is that a researcher observing implementation from a top down perspective will initially pay attention to the documents that formalise the details of public policy (objectives, punitive or rewarding elements, delimitations of the target group, etc.) and then check for implementation failures in the field. A researcher using the bottom-up perspective, on the other hand, starts from empirical observation of how public policy has been applied in practice, the strategy of the implementers, the practical problems and obstacles, to then identify "how public policy should be", understand the whys of the disconnects and try to understand how the policy-making process arrived at prescriptive inaccuracies.

The learning in this type of research goes back to the fact that the top down model is the most suitable for raising the causes of failures in the implementation dynamics, frequently recognised as the administration's fault; while the bottom up model is the most fertile for identifying failures in the dynamics of solution elaboration and decision making, considered as the politician's responsibility. In some cases, one approach may be more important than the other and, in other cases, both are equally relevant, considering the different stages of the complex and dynamic implementation process. This leads to the understanding that implementation is a dynamic stage. "It is in itself a process of its own significance, which is not only restricted to the translation of a given policy into action, but which can change the policy in itself" (Carvalho; Barbosa and Soares, 2010, p. 5).

The success of implementation will relate to the appropriateness of its top-down or bottom-up direction, the type of policy and the environment in which it is implemented. No single model will be dominant or fit all policies, nor all circumstances or organisations. On the other hand, they are not mutually exclusive. They are, in fact, providers of relevant information about the implementation process. Furthermore, there are factors relating to the characteristics of the negotiation process; the nature of the policy focus; the actions and relationships between implementers and their ability to adapt and to accept and adapt to unforeseen events; the team' characteristics; and political, economic and social conditions. This is how implementation models become relevant.

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[1] It is worth highlighting that this research does not aim to study frontline bureaucrats and their discretionary power. The relationship between policy implementation, organisation and bureaucracy is relevant because it sheds light on the face of a crucial problem: why policies succeed or fail. Analyses of this relationship indicate that the discretionary power of street-level bureaucrats is decisive in the distribution of public goods and services; therefore, the action of these agents is a relevant variable for the success of policies. However, this is not the focus of this research, so the bureaucrats at the street level were not research subjects, even though we understand that the discretionary power of the operators who work at the counters, in the infirmaries, in the classrooms and on the streets is decisive in the execution of public policies. The resources offered by the organisation are, in general, less than those necessary for the proper performance of tasks, and the formal rules do not account for all actual cases, which requires the discretionary intervention of low-level actors for the agency to function, distributing goods and providing services, i. e., this discretion is a necessary condition for public policy to be implemented. (Oliveira, 2012).

4. Final Considerations

Studying public policies is challenging and, at the same time, stimulating. It is challenging due to the characteristics and complexity of the public sector, especially due to the importance of these actions in the Brazilian reality. Stimulating, because it is a relevant discussion for the promotion of the rights ensured in the Constitution and that has been gaining space in academic productions and institutions in our country.

The objective of this study was to analyse the process of implementing a public policy on sports and leisure in the city of Nova Lima, based on the identification of the problem and the setting of a political agenda for this topic...

Regarding policies, it was found that the agenda is formed from the demand coming from different spaces and subjects: from other sectors of the City Hall, the City Council and sectors of the community, such as neighbourhood associations, churches and non-governmental organisations. These are the visible actors influencing the decision making about which problems or issues will comprise the political agenda. As far as sport is concerned, the calendar is determined by State government events, such as the JEMG and JIMI. Thus, even understanding that the implementation phase of policies is a dynamic stage, it is feasible to consider that sports and leisure policies in the city of Nova Lima are close to the top down model, in which the decision starts in the political sphere and is characterized by the authorities' greater control and decision.

In general, sports and leisure are used disregarding their human development value, whether in the cultural, social or personal context. Frequently, it is associated with the condition of redeemer of social problems, especially in political speeches, which are constituted as a government propaganda strategy.

Accordingly, an innovation is the education to make everyone aware of participative sports and leisure policies, considering their preparation, implementation and assessment, i.e., all phases of the policy, implementing a management that emphasizes innovations, both in relation to decision-making processes and in relation to the implementation of actions. It is verified, considering the speeches, that this does not happen in the studied city.

Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the reasons for the discredit of the public policies for sports and leisure in the municipalities, since they are configured as a possibility of access to the less privileged and dissemination of the secured social right to the people of Nova Lima.

I hope that further research can be instigated by the discussions in this text, covering other important phases of public policy such as monitoring and evaluation that were not necessarily the focus of this text, as it emphatically considers the agenda and implementation

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