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Olympic Games as Mega-Sport Events: Some Social-Historical Reflections on Recent Summer Olympic Games

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Abstract

This paper analyses the recent editions of Olympic Summer Games. It examines the changes and political, economical and cultural dimensions of mega-events, underlining the links among life, culture, mediascapes and cultural identities. The analysis starts with London Olympic Games 2012 and continues with the Games in Rio 2016: the primary changes in urban infrastructures and the social, political and economical transformation of the two cities together with the great impact of Olympic ceremonies in media images are introduced in the paper, with a particular reference to the symbolic representations of opening and closing ceremonies. The above mentioned events are an imaginative tour, which links knowledge, heritage, history and global values, demonstrating the interrelation between sport and other social spheres.

Sport mega-events seem to create infinite world, connected with global and local culture. The opening and closing ceremonies represent also new symbolic values, and some 'economies of imagination', which reform urban infrastructures and open new social identity and heritage.

Keywords: sport, communication, olympics.

1. Introduction

This paper examines the concept of Olympic Games as sport mega-events. In the first part, it introduces the fundamental theories of sport representations and, in the second part, it analyses the case-study of Summer Games of London (2012) and Rio (2016). Summer Games are examined, because they are historical

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events and most known in the world; moreover their audience is higher than the audience of every other Games (except for football), particularly in Italy. It focuses on the changes in infrastructures and urban life, underling the convergence between new and old media and the representation of sport mega-events. It concentrates on the impact of the converging different platforms and the cultural transformation it generates and on the opening and closing ceremonies of London and Rio, in order to explore the cultural dimension of mega-sport events.

2. The communicative nature of the Games

Olympic Games have become a 'global spectacle because of television' (Tooney, Veal, 2007: 147). They represent a great ceremony of media performance (Dayan, Katz, 1992), interrupting also daily routine, with programmes followed by a great audience. They are transnational, since they inspire universal values, and they have both local and national narration.

Each edition of the Games has a specific symbolism, which is spread through rituals such as the path and the torch relay, opening and closing ceremonies, the delivery of the medals, cultural Olympiad and other related events (de Moragas, Rivenburg, 1995; Ladrón de Guevara, Bardaji, 1992).

According to Roche from 'primary-phase' of modernization (from 1850 to 1970) to secondary-phase emerged a science and technology-based capitalism, with knowledge-based industries and worldwide mass transport. Globalisation conducted to global capitalism, to neoliberal ideology, weak global governance and 'glocal adaptations'. The new culture saw the co-existence of mass with individualized consumption, the rising importance of media industry.

At a political-cultural level, last era of globalization saw the contemporary presence of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism and several varieties of localist/anti-global reactions to these views. Contemporary individualism is linked to human rights and to a new digital form of network consumption. 'Currently the new media, particularly people's uses of the Internet, are beginning to chane the prevailing multi-media complex again and to affect the nature of the media-sport symbiosis in all its aspects' (Roche, 2015: 27).

Olympic Games are forms of spectacle that blur the boundaries of ordinary life. They mix several genres in the performance that transform sport in carnival (MacAloon, 2010). They are the primary events of global, transnational sport system (Bernstein, Blain, 2005; Martelli, Porro, 2015; Dell'Aquila, 2020).

Olympic Movement, according to Roche (2010: 108), 'has been connected with processes of nation-building and internalization since the early twentieth century, and is currently associated with process of globalization. As an

international cultural arena it has often been connected, both positively and negatively, with the politics of national identity, citizenship and rights'.

The transnational symbols and global sport create a network that include traditional values. Modern Olympic Games have become both promoter and a symbol of economic, cultural and political globalization, as seen by the sociology of sport (Burbank, Andranovich, Heying, 2001; Tomlinson, 2005; Bondonio, Guala, 2006; Bondonio, Dansero, Guala, Mela, Scamuzzi, 2007; Robertson, Giulianotti, 2009).

Summer Games are one of the most important event in the world, because of their unusual nature, which breaks ordinary life. They have an international relevance and attract a lot of international athletes (Horne, Manzenreiter, 2006).

The games develop some interconnected 'scapes' (Appudurai, 1996) in which humans, ideas, technologies, finance and image are strictly interwoven. The opening and closing ceremonies, in particular, develop the idea of embodied wellbeing that links a cosmopolitan sense of belonging, the Olympic Committee's ethics norms and a national self-narration (as seen also in sociology of consumption: see Secondulfo, 2011).

In London and Rio some national performances of an economy of thought were projected. The new economy of giving, travelling and the industry of the globalised world are decoded in local and regional registers and communicated to tourists.

These models are produced through London's and Rio's encounters with the world and create new digital collective selves. London Olympic Games were the first huge edition in which media industry lead audiences to the mode of consuming contents through multiplatform devices. 'During the London Olympics, more and more people experienced the event via "second screen", watching multiple devices at the same time' (Tang, Cooper, 2015: 18-19).

In Olympic ceremonies national self-narration takes place in different expressive/visual modes, connecting the symbolic and the material. Mega-events create a sense of human solidarity in a new space of the aesthetic, creating long-lasting brands of emotional appeals, integrating national milieu in the global one (Tzanelli, 2013).

These events are, in fact, as an enterprise engaged in knowledge production: they generate aesthetic landscapes, living worlds.

The infrastructure making this possible is a global organization generally identified as the Olympic Movement, centered in the formal institutions of the International Olympic Committee. The financial means to continue and grow this project are government funding, television fees, corporate sponsorship, and related commercial activities... This configuration tells stories and reveal meta-narratives of force and power across the planet. They

signify semiotically and influence symbolically. (Real, 2010: 235; see also Real, 2000).

The book of R. Tzanelli (2018) develops the way in which urban ecologies are reworked symbolically in cultural, economic frames. The result is the 'creation of an urban atmosphere', a sort of intangible feeling, connecting people, objects and physical settings, with a particular ambience and attunement.

Olympic ceremonies become a fictionalised self-narration of place, strictly linked to the mythical culture of a land.

These new landscapes are experienced in new ways by the actual *homo mobilis*, based on a new mobilities paradigm, involving a multi-sensory appreciation of the world, they engineer in their artwork. This invites to fuse art with technology and to overcome the difference between 'High' and 'Low' artistic production, thanks to old and new media. The notion of 'atmosphere' involves affects, emotions, ambience and a social *imagineering* which uses all media.

3. London Olympic Games

London 2012 Olympic Games were imagined to transform Newham and East London into economic model of *Festival capitalism*. All Olympic Spectacles according to MacAloon (2010: 83) are festivals, because they are 'a certain joyous mood and a time of celebration marked by special observances... a program of public festivity'.

London, in addition, has been defined a form of 'festival capitalism'. Giulianotti and others (2016: 103) refer to 'those aspects of a major public event that are organized to advance private, commercial, and free-market interests, usually with strong financial, political, and discursive support from civic authorities, such as through large subsidies, infrastructural investments, and broader 'regeneration' policies'.

This goal faced two-step politics. First, the Government used a Keynesian approach spending on facilities, infrastructure, and wider development, particularly in Newham and East London.

Secondly, Great Britain used a neo-liberal approach promoting a development of post-industrial public spaces, trying to attract transnational capital and wealthier residents and consumers.

The first action involved projects centered on the Olympic Park, aiming at establishing 12.000 permanent jobs, over 14.000 new household properties and new parks.

The second action was the development of transnational consumer projects centered on Westfield Stratford City mall, which became Europe's biggest shopping mall.

Finally, there were development projects regarding 'Metropolitan Masterplan', aiming at creating 46.000 jobs, building 20.000 homes and transforming the area of Newham in long-term education, transport, retail, and cultural provision.

These projects promoted a significant financial, organisational and cultural investment in the area of Olympic Park. This created positive legacies in term of sport entertainment, employment, social participation, community-building and environmental improvement.

Besides they caused relevant changes in British identity, with a diffusion of multiculturalism and internationalism, which are described in Olympic ceremonies.

London Olympic Games were a great media event, with almost 52 million people tuned in to the BBC to watch (a full 90 percent of the population). Before the beginning, nearly 90 percent of UK poll respondents planned to see part of the Games. According to the official websites, Internet users in London have grown from 8,7 million, with 230 million of page views of Sidney Olympic Game to 109 million LOCOG website and 10,6 million IOC sites users. The number of page views in 2012 were 8.5 billions online and 1,1 billions on mobiles.

The progressive mediation of the Olympics is an indicator in the number of views of video-streams. The video-streams passed from 628 millions of Beijing to 272 millions of Vancouver to 1,5 billions of London. We can suppose a relationship between the different but convergent use in experiencing the Games (Roche, 2017). Beijing Olympics were the first significant case of 'Digital Games'. London developed this strategy of interconnection between old media, Internet and the audience. New media helped to enlarge the participation in mega-sport events. Multi-media developed 'cultural industries', which includes the production, distribution of performance, products and services in all sectors.

'Although television was still the dominant screen for Olympic viewing, online and mobile consumption increased dramatically during the London Games. Significant positive relationship exists between and among Olympic viewing on television, on the web, and via mobile portals' (Tang, Cooper, 2015: 16).

According to the newspapers, the triumphs of English athletes created a solid community to which all classes and race belonged. National identity had been strengthened by the Games. All media contributed to national euphoria for an event proclaimed one of the most important all over the world. The costs

of hosting the event were higher than it was predicted, but the sense of national celebration was great.

The costs of the Games were estimated initially in 2,37 billion pounds, but in 2012 an investigation described the same costs such as 24 billion pounds, included public transport costs.

Corporate sponsors covered approximately 12 percent of the costs. The Games were organized by London Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG) and by the Olympic Delivery Authority (with a public-private partnership). Minnaert (2016: 71) studied the employment and skills policies of London 2012 and found that 'there was a strong commitment to use the Games as a lever of catalyst for engaging with a more local, diverse and/or inclusive workforce... [London Olympics] can be seen to have made a conscious effort to spread the Games-related job and training vacancies more widely'.

The Olympic Games became the world's greatest media and marketing event, a global celebration of athletics swaddled in corporate cash. 'This involves ongoing processes whereby social life is processed and packaged for mass visual consumption in a society increasingly oriented to appearances in the service of capitalism' (Boykoff, Fussey, 2016: 124).

This economy manipulated state actors as partners, generating public pays and private profits (see Boykoff, 2014). The result was a 'festive commercialism', with a lot of slick advertisements. This spirit is ramified in the Cultural Olympiad (events developed during the Games), and was expressed also in the claims for social and environmental sustainability.

This value is evident in London's opening ceremony, with his playful atmosphere, conferred, for instance, by David Beckham or by the spectacular show with James Bond. The mundane ritual contributed to celebrate Queen Elisabeth, the contribution of the UK to the world community, the protection of society, a memorial politics and the integration related to gender, ethnic origins and disabilities.

Just as the Beijing Games, the London Games attempted to create the image of an innovative nation that ignited the industrial revolution, most notably symbolised in the fireworks and by special lighting effects that created the impression of a river molten steel flowing down from the huge Olympic rings at the stadium. In addition, Britain was presented as the backbone of modern information society. (Bonde, 2015:101).

Olympic ceremonies transform the games into a globalised 'civilising process' (Elias, 1978) in which the global 'Olympic industry' redefines a constellation of signs, whose meaning is delimited by the various actors (sponsors, TV networks, music a.s.o.). These signs are based on consumption

and on social technologies. According to Tang and Cooper's study (2015: 14), 'more television Olympics viewing was associated with more time spent using online and mobile platforms for Olympics Games'. All media platforms combined had a global audience of 4.8 billion people, and new media worked more than old media (Billings, Hardin, 2015).

The Opening Ceremony is a case of TV event, attracting an estimated global audience of 900 millions of people, according to the International Olympic Committee. The BBC reported a peak audience of 27 millions. The Closing Ceremony had an estimated audience of 750 millions worldwide, with 23,2 millions in the United Kingdom.

IOC estimates 3,6 billions of viewers saw at least one minute of Olympic Games, with a 2,5% increase in the number of viewers versus Beijing 2008. Web contents were delivered by 190 official Games websites to 2,4 billions of people. There were a total of 8.5 billions web page views.

Every event enacts a tension between localised knowledge, heritage, history and universal values, creating brands of emotional appeal. 'The London 2012 ceremonies were a labour-intensive spectacle, turning viewers into pedagogical subjects and tourists' (Tzanelli, 2013: 20).

The production of a simulated mix of idyllic and leisurely Britain in the two principal ceremonies involve subjects in an 'imaginative touring', distancing them from their homeland. As a result of Olympic artwork becomes a cosmopolitical process.

The Opening Ceremony is a representation of both forms of nostalgia for British rurality and a celebration of a globalised idea of home, land and belonging. It presents the idea of new technology that can manipulate 'national character', with a general style of 'pop pastiche'.

It is important to highlight the introduction of Tim Berners-Lee, who remembers the human-machine landscape and the new cultures of mobility.

The ceremonial parade is very interesting, since it involves trade unionists, The Suffragette, the Beatles and 1960s social movements, with a postmodern effect that links together feminism, industrial activism and the rise of Olympic Movement in a multicultural space.

Another part of the spectacle is devoted to *carnivalesque*: there is a previous sequence in which the Queen is visited by James Bond and they get on a helicopter and then they reach the ground parachuting. The scene ended with the real entrance of the Queen accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh. This 'film' suggests that the Olympic Site and the stadium are exotic domains in a particular context of televised time.

The Mary Poppins' dance and the presence of J.K. Rowling, who seems to bridge the gap between literature and her cinematic adaptations are very spectacular too. The comedian Rowan Atkinson (Mr.Bean) is therefore a

humorous interlude which underlines the irony and carnivalesque of the convergence of travel, art and athleticism.

The next segment analyses the weekend rituals of an ordinary family. It discovers also Mini Cooper and the transformation of intimate relationships in the network society, with the aid of several pop bands (The Who, Sex Pistols, Queen, Sugababes, Underworld, a.s.o.). This musical medley replaces the presence of the Queen with the pop band pastiche, in a general emotional bond made by neo-tribalism (Maffesoli, 1996).

In the following section the hymn 'Abide with Me', with fifty dancers who combines European and Indian forms of dance, underlines the theme of a spiritual travel as a process generating peace and the role of tourism and socio-cultural mobility.

This segment continues with the introduction of the athletic teams. Here the Olympic sacred time is linked to a playful time, because the athletes meanwhile make friend, record and take a pictures of the event. Individual consumption merges with the extraordinary simulation. Later we assist to-the introduction of cycling, that appeals to link the philosophy of slow travel with the aesthetic use of technology. This is the impression of the Cauldron lighting moment, which promotes the value of utopian democracy and solidarity. The Cauldron is itself a symbol of history and of the promise of 'safe and green' Olympics: an element of an ecology of civilisation.

The eruption of pyrotechnics in the Stadium and the Olympic Park underlines a ceremonial fireworks convention, but it also speaks about the ArchelorMittal Orbit, who symbolises the synergy between mind and body. The Orbit seems a DNA sequence and translates the cult of the memory into modern biology and into a sort of 'celestial pilgrimage'.

The orbit's metaphysics of mobility partake in the story of the Rings: at the end of the ceremony we connect via a filmed narrative to the Olympic balloon that is by now up the mid-stratosphere, from where we see our blue planet from afar. The celestial pilgrim, the cinematic tourist and the musical fan converge in these last two minutes. (Tzanelli 2013: 76).

The journey from ancient values and Athens's Games reach a new 'global community', which lives on screen, on the stage and on the old media, with a global mix between archaic superscripts and contemporary aesthetic desires and identification.

Also the Closing Ceremony of London 2012 underlines the centrality of leisure, tourism and work, linking Olympic tradition to post-modern spectacle. The extinguishing of the Flame seems an allegory to represent the survival of antiquity in the national modernity. The artistic journey in this ceremony brings

Olympic values in the post-modern realm of travel and symbolic pilgrimage.

Media and sport created a political, economical spectacle which enforced the aesthetical, celebratory space, with a rich symbolism, that produced 'geographies of difference', a vortex of images underlying the Olympic values. Public aids, economic performances and symbolic appearances were strictly interwoven. London 2012 became a great case of an aesthetical and relational interconnection among public intervention, private profit and a cultural 'spirit of celebration' (see Tzanelli 2013, Hassan, Mitra, 2015). The regeneration of urban landscapes changed the street policy and was linked to a life- and environment-related vision.

4. Rio Olympic Games

Brazil FIFA World Cup 2014 and Rio Olympic Games 2016 were an attempt to improve its glocal image. Mega events were seen as a public diplomacy, to promote multilateral relations, to reflect economic and political conquests in both domestic and global level through these international platforms.

Traditionally, sport in that country promoted social integration, particularly in football. Politicians have spurred the growth of spectators and sport has historically helped the government to achieve its nationalistic goals.

President Luis Inacio da Silva created a Ministry dedicated to Sport and the government sustained the bidding campaign for FIFA 2014 and for 2016 Olympic Games. These megaventures had to create a new urban structure, promoting social inclusion. This event gave to Rio a great visibility and reinforced the image and status of Brazilian economy. For government Olympic Games had to show Brazilian modernity through a civil, organisational and urban growth of the world population. This fact demonstrated that politics will reinforce the country among the leaders of other countries.

'In summary, soft power is the historically constructed capacity of conquering power (status, position, evidence, influence, distinction) in the international arena through non-coercitive internal and external actions and policies in culture, political values and foreign policy' (Schausteck de Almeida, Marchi Junior, Pike 2016: 143).

Against this mega-events there were, however, public demonstrations in the streets in June 2013, with a heavy-handed police response. In more than 350 cities, thousands of people went into the streets to protest against police brutality. Their opposition was both against the corruption scandals about Lula's Workers' Party, and against the poor conditions of public health, education, and transport system. People protested against the FIFA event and

asked the government to improve the quality of public services.

The new president Rouseff announced measures for the healthcare education and transport, but these attempts led to a weakening of the country's democracy.

The Olympic Games were supported by Rio de Janeiro city, which search for promoting urban development and city marketing. New programmes were announced and they promised to improve the living conditions by eradicating poverty and upgrading slums.

The poor community saw its houses demolished. Poor people had to decide if having a financial compensation or being relocated in western zones. The masterplan reinforced the concentration of facilities at Barra da Tijuca and with the regeneration of the port area. This zone became the main centre of the Games. Another program was dedicated to the construction of 250 km of segregated bus rapid transit (BRT) and to extend the underground system. Other great infrastructure were the Olympic Park (developed via a public-private company) and the Athlete's Village (financed by private sector, with a public financial package). In addition, there were defined some ecological interventions, such as the clean-up of the waters of Guanabara Bay and the planting of 34 million trees. The BRT routes did not solve everyday traffic problems. Olympic Park during Rio Games was built in open spaces. It had to be integrated with new and old areas for future uses: the original plan has been modified during the execution of the project. There is the example of the relocation of the Olympic aquatic stadium, which was relocated to the south of the park, to change the urban place of the new velodrome and the tennis area. The International Broadcast Center had to become a business and educational campus, but it did not take place after the Games.

The arenas and cultural facilities have kept a more modest character after the Olympics. 'The mega-event puts particular emphasis on a wealthy area of the city, which despite representing the possibility of a more compact Games, has marginalised the rest of the city' (Horne, Whannell 2016: 27). The transformation of Olympic Park had been directed by private sector. The new plan did not follow the original guidelines and created blocks with more separation between residential areas and green areas (Latuf de Olivera Sanchez, Essex 2017: 106-108).

The athletes' village in the complex of Ilha Pura was created adopting the model of isolated towers. Ilha Pura has been opposed to the traditional neighborhood with different typologies and people with different social background. The athletes' park, next to the Olympic Park, seemed more a concrete urban square: sculptural elements replaced trees and the public space appeared empty. It had been designed to host music festivals in Rio until November 2016, when music events were relocated.

‘All the projects presented, although just a part of Rio Olympics infrastructure, have one characteristic in common: the distance between them and the city’s inhabitants’ (Latuf de Olivera Sanchez, Essex 2017: 114). The BRT routes and the new Line 4 metro helped tourists during the Games, but did not help common citizens. The architecture was not directed to create a sustainable, mixed-use community and areas, such as Barra de Tijuca, were much less connected with the city. Urban plans had to avoid social exclusion, as in the Olympic Park and had to create more favourable conditions for all segments of society.

As a consequence, Rio had a process of gentrification and widespread eviction. Around 70.000 residents of Rio had been displaced to construct Olympic infrastructures. One favelas, which gained media attention was Via Autodromo, in front of the Olympic steamroller, where more than 600 families lived. The residents organised a great protest against Olympic stadiums, but there was a militarization in Rio, which helped to contrast the protest.

Police resorted to violent operation across Rio. In the first week, there were more than eight firearms shooting per day. From January through October 2016 the murder rate was up 18 percent. The security operation provoked many deaths and the violation of human rights.

Before the Games it was marked a public campaign denouncing human right violations, militarisation of the city, police violence.

The Olympic Ceremony and the Museum of Tomorrow represented this sense of crisis, heightened by the lack of political direction and producing some metaframes of reality. The Museum is strictly linked to ‘infrastructural urbanism’, because it was part of the huge project to revitalise *Porto Maravilha*, with the construction of underground tunnels, a tram service, and kilometres of walking. However, during the Games, the subway served only for the tourists; cariocas were boxed out (see the critics of Boykoff, 2017).

The Museum was built for purposes of scientific education and tourism and his architecture critiques and disrupts society’s codes and enables active participation in the community. In the museum there is fusion of nature, environment and technology to debate the population growth, bio-ethics and postmodern issues. It caused a movement of periods that serves as preamble to global capitalism, while relocating these movements in Rio’s socio-political reality (with favelas and poverty).

‘Nonetheless, architecture and urban design must work together in the process to ensure that “spaces” will become “places” and that the city will not only be attractive to tourists but will become an inclusive, renovated urbanity for its inhabitants’ (Latuf de Olivera Sanchez, Essex 2017: 117-118).

Three months since the Olympic Games, the State of Rio was not able to pay its bills and was obliged to approve an austerity package which reduced wages and pensions (Zimbalist, 2017).

From the media point of view, the Games described 'a marvelous city', an example of mega-sport event. According to the International Olympic Committee (2016), the average television viewer watched over 20% than London Games, with 584 TV channels, more than 270 digital platforms and hundreds of social media platforms on the Games. Half of the world's population watched the Games. The digital coverage was over 243.000 hours.

The audience of digital platforms increased of 10%. There were over seven billions of video views of official contents. If television coverage was higher 13,5% than London 2012, the digital coverage increased of 198,6%.

In Brazil, 90% of people who had access to TV watched at least some coverage of Rio Games: there had been a 117% increase over the 86 millions of Brazilians that watched London 2012.

The opening and closing ceremonies were equally examples of worldmaking practices and illustrated a battle between the heritage of slum crime and the enthusiasm for Brazilian art form (samba, *bien vivir* in general). The opening ceremony was an exploratory journey of Rio's and Brazil's cultures in the world. The induction with Luiz Melodia 'Aquele Abraco' with the aerial images of Rio illustrated a nostalgia for an Olympic Eden, with samba schools and pop cultures.

Then the spectacle featured the "Birth of Life", with the Amazon rainforest and the formation of the indigenous peoples and the historical arrival of European, Arab and Japanese peoples. This history ended in the next segment "Metropolis", in a highly-technologised world, in which the urbanisation and the destruction of environment were represented.

The next segment speaks about Brazilian construction of geometrics of space, to compensate with the colonisers' inability to map indigenous territories.

This leads to Rio's centre and its poetics and music, which opened the celebration of Gisele Buendchen, who smiled at the performers, giving so recognition to Rio's favela population. The model communicated a passion for connection, globalisation and cultural changes, opening Brazil to a new era.

The next segment illustrated the condition of urban favelas and their transformation, with a new ethics of care for the environment and solidarity. Samba and the performers underlined the cultural experience of the favelas and the impulse to overcome scarcity, vulnerability and exclusion.

The symbolic journey from industrialism to post-industrialism was concluded by the introduction of the Torch and the lighting of Olympic Cauldron. The Cauldron gave a final festive atmosphere of an educational-tourist journey between history and a globalised present.

In the Closing Ceremony the dance and the music were recreated in a particular *Carioca* atmosphere. Tzanelli wrote that 'her obvious connections to the city's post-authoritarian material heritage and Afro-Brazilian cultural capital, allows for a synecdoche to form between *Carioca* affective: atmosphere and urban space, so as to reinscribe pleasure and desire in the urban project' (Tzanelli, 2018: 125-126).

This atmosphere communicated in symbolic ways the aspect of lifestyle or aesthetic impression of the Self, that linked Rio to Brazil's post-dictatorial. Left-wing culture, connecting the audience to contemporary technologies (such as digitised music and TV or the Internet broadcasting).

The dance routine symbolised the progression from immobile vagabondage to mobile post-modern tourism, which introduced Brazil and his immigrants in information society. This was also the sign of the transition from modern *Homo Faber* to glocalised post-modern *Homo Mobilis*, strictly linked to new media and social networks. Mega-events represented 'economies of imagination', that made sustainable future worlds in mega-city's rhythms.

The theme of technology, ecology and sustainability are the goal of Tokyo Games 2020, which probably will be a high-tech spectacle, mixing old Japanese temples and samurais with new urban spaces and technological mobilities.

In 2016 Handover Ceremony, Tokyo underlined both the return to the world of arts and the rise of new community living in harmony with nature, with a reference to the dangers of hypermobility and to the demise of ancient sociality and traditions. The ceremony represented these contrasts with references to human and natural disasters such as the Great East Japan Earthquake and the ensuing tsunami disaster. The city of Tokyo became a cultural and intellectual venue, ordering the place's symbolic values and structuring its activities and roles within networks of local, national and global institutions.

The global impact of Rio Olympic is difficult to be understood. The mega-event had a cultural development, with the diffusion of 'economies of imagination', linked to digitalization. The ceremonies opened new cultural landscapes and representations of Rio.

For the city and Brazil, the mega-event brought an amplification of existing contradictions in society, developing the wealthy area of the city, and displacing more residents. The cultural reconstruction of Rio post-modern and social identity, clashes with the transformation of urban planning, the displacements of many residents and the marginalisation of part of the city.

5. Conclusion

According to Roche, we can study Olympic mega-events as ‘urban “place-makers”’. That is they often involve new constructions, on the one hand of sports- and related event-facilities complexes and on the other hand of community-related developments in housing and employment’ (2015: 177). The urban impact of sport event involves significant improvements in transport, communication and hotel infrastructures.

In addition, they develop new urban communities, with their housing, employment and other needs. London has been highly transformed by Olympic Games; Rio de Janeiro only partially transformed, owing to his poverty problems. The secondary phase of modernization is based on mega-events as catalysts of wider urban changes, with new transport infrastructures (extensions of subways, roads and airports), new telecommunication infrastructures and new urban housing and community developments.

While, as in earlier generations of the modern era, sport mega-events created iconic places (monuments, architecture a.s.o.) illustrating the ideal of progress, in the latter phase the changes of infrastructures and communications aim at interpreting the meaning of progress linking it to the urban quality of life and the environmental conditions.

Olympic Games influence urban policy, life and values and change also mediascapes and cultural identities. They are deeply interconnected through the global flows of money, people, technology, ideas and culture, as seen by the modern sociology of sport (Bernstein, Blain, 2005; Martelli, Porro, 2015; Craig, 2016).

As a form of ‘Festival capitalism’ (MacAloon, 2010), they overcome the boundaries between old and new media, high and low artistic production, opening new worlds and new cultures. In London Olympics new aesthetical space were interwoven with public intervention, private profit and a spirit of celebration. In London mega-sport events helped to recreate urban spaces and media cultures with an ecological, multicultural perspective.

These ceremonies underlined the centrality of leisure, tourism, work, history and tradition with post-modern values. The legacies of London 2012 included a strong financial, organizational and cultural investment in the area of Olympic Park, highlighting the development of employment, social participation, community-building and environmental improvement.

As a result of this development, British identity changed partially, becoming more international, as demonstrated in the symbolic representation of Olympic ceremonies.

‘With the London Games’ emphasis on the welfare state, women’s liberation, multiculturalism and human rights, Daniel Boyle clearly envisioned Britain as the cradle of the Western liberal ideals of an open and tolerant society’ (Bonde, 2015: 111). Ceremonies delivered us a playful spectacle, capable of

linking old and new England and high and low culture, with a post-modern mix of values.

Rio Olympic Games had a more political impact. The transformation of the city did not have only positive effect, owing to the mistake in planning urban transformation. It improved public transport access and new housing for the middle classes and caused a lot of protests. This generated public campaign against government, riots, police violence. Some academics describe 2014 Fifa World Cup and 2016 Olympics as 'Rio's ruinous mega-events' (Braathen, MascarenasSorboe, 2015). For the citizens, the Games amplified social and urban contradictions, dividing population.

The mega-event promoted an urban change in Rio, that privileged the wealthy area of the city. The result was not an inclusive, renovated urbanity, but the marginalisation of part of the city.

'The legacy of the built environment created by the Rio Olympics appears to be counter to the creation of a sustainable, mixed-use community, and the area is poorly connected and integrated with the rest of the city' (Latuf de Oliveira Sanchez, Essex 2017: 115). New infrastructures were built between the wealthy and the poor part of the city. Moreover, the new urban planning obliged to displace around 77.000 residents, causing great social protests.

Even if Rio increased his political 'soft power', the new architecture did not create the favourable conditions for all segments of society. The legacy of Rio Olympic Games included a reflection on the way through which the city had been re-built and the need of a more participatory design processes and open debates. It appears important to transform the original planning of Olympic infrastructures, in order to find a better balance between the original interests and those of the local community and residents. New programmes should ensure that urban spaces will become social places, attractive to create an inclusive city.

The symbolic representations of mega-sport events, however, joined the aspects of post-modern Afro-Brazilian cultural capital. They attempted to transform Brazil from authoritarian material heritage into 'economies of imagination', linked to the new media. Olympic ceremonies were an attempt to connect the traditional Brazilian heritage with the information society, the values of ecology and sustainability. These approaches seemed to express the intention of the new global sector, named 'Sport and Development for Peace'.

'There are political actors associated with "humankind", with policies centred on the making of *global civil society*. ... These political actors tend to prioritize "progressive" social causes, such as the use of sport to promote human development, peace-building, human rights, social justice' [Giulianotti, 2016: 210; see also Craig, 2016].

Mega-events represented 'economies of imagination', linked to ecology and sustainability, as in Handover Ceremony of Tokyo Games 2020. The old world of Japanese samurais and temples was mixed with new technological worlds, to promote new styles of life in harmony with nature.

Sport mega-events can be seen as a mediatised public ritual that interrupts everyday routines. They create infinite worlds connected with global and local cultures, revealing the absence of inclusive civic order and its malady, and the attempts to reconstruct new models of social life.

Olympic mega-events art and architecture underline the contemporary global imageries by a connection between environmental (climate change) and social (wars, a.s.o.) catastrophism. The production of worldmaking underlines global culture and national, cultural traditions.

Art and tourism produce constantly and experimentally new future worlds free of the necessity of global networks and open to new cultural and natural habitat (Tzanelli, 2013, 2018).

This underlines the complex and multidimensional aspect of mega-sport events, with their political, economic and cultural products. London and Rio olympics demonstrated the complexity of mega-events and the development of different and divergent sub-systems dynamics, which we can explain with a relational point of view.

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