



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

MASTER'S DEGREE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

FINAL DISSERTATION IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

**Olympic Games: communication, lobbying and politics in
international sport events**

Successes and failures, the case of Rome 2020 and the perfectible bid

Advisor:
Michele Sorice

Assistant advisor:
Pier Luigi Petrillo

Candidate:
Luciano Di Blasio
ID N. 616422

Academic Year 2012-2013

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
CHAPTER 1 - COMMUNICATION AND LOBBYING FOR THE OLYMPIC GAMES: THE GENERAL PARAMETERS.....	6
1. THE BID	12
1.1. BRAINSTORMING	15
1.2. INTEREST.....	18
1.3. PRE-BIDDING	20
1.4. BIDDING STRICTU SENSU (FORMAL BID).....	25
2. THE LEAD-UP	29
3. HOSTING.....	32
4. AFTERMATH.....	34
CHAPTER 2 - THE BEIJING EXPERIENCE: THE TRIUMPH OF SELF-CELEBRATION	37
1. THE BID	37
2. LEAD-UP	46
3. HOSTING AND AFTERMATH	52
CHAPTER 3 - THE LONDON EXPERIENCE: PURE LEGACY ALL THE WAY.....	55
1. THE BID	55
2. LEAD-UP	64
3. HOSTING AND AFTERMATH	68
CHAPTER 4 - THE RIO PROJECTION: ON THEIR WAY TO... ..	73
1. THE BID	73
2. LEAD-UP	79
3. CRITICALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES	81
CHAPTER 5 - THE ROME 2020 SURRENDER: THE FAILURE OF A (MISSED) CHANCE.....	84
1. THE EMBRYO.....	84
2. THE PROMOTING COMMITTEE	85
3. THE ELEMENT OF DISCONTINUITY: GIOVANIROMA 2020	90
4. THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	94
5. DROPPING OUT OF HEAVEN	98
CHAPTER 6 - CONNECTING THE RINGS: TOWARDS A GENERALIZED HOSTING MODEL?	105
1. FINDINGS.....	105
2. SUCCESSFUL GAMES	107
3. FUTURE DIRECTIONS	108
CONCLUSION	112
BIBLIOGRAPHY	114
WEBOGRAPHY	121
APPENDIX.....	127

Introduction

Olympic Games are now widely recognized as the greatest international event in sport. They are also one of the most profitable events in the world. They are able to catalyse billions of people in front of TVs and computers to follow the actions of their national teams' athletes. Sponsors fiercely fight to gain visibility during the Games, aware of the absolute power enshrined in sport as a commodity.

Nonetheless, from the point of view of the cities, there is widespread debate about the actual convenience of bidding for hosting such a gigantic event. The city entitled to host an edition of the Games has to go through a gigantic workload from up to ten or nine years before the event takes place, up to several years after it. A growing part of the public opinion is becoming more and more sceptical about the benefits originating from the Games, both in terms of economic costs and of future legacy they may (or may not) leave behind.

Therefore, this dissertation falls in the long standing debate about the convenience of hosting the Games. The purpose is to try and understand whether hosting the Olympic Games is still appealing to cities all over the world. This paper analyses the communicative and lobbying efforts of the latest Olympic bids in order to see if these could be classified as successful and, if so, whether this is a perception given by a very good lobbying effort catalysed by intense communication, or if they could be considered the best possible Games in "absolute terms".

To do so it is important to understand why cities may want to host an edition of the Games, and what are the main criticalities in doing it. The first chapter will focus on the main phases of the Olympic Games, from bidding all the way to the aftermath.

Following the opening detailed theoretical part, a series of chapters that aim at providing real examples of Olympic Games, in order to understand if the theory is matched in practice. In particular, chapter two and three will be dedicated to the latest editions of the Games, Beijing 2008 and London 2012. These will provide for detailed

exemplification from bidding to aftermath. Chapter four will present the challenges of an Olympic City in the making, focusing on Rio de Janeiro, the next in line in hosting the Games in 2016. Chapter five, instead, will focus on a failed bid for the most recently awarded Games, the 2020 edition, as Rome had started the bidding process, before unexpectedly dropping out. All the chapters entitled to bring forward examples will be articulated in a more narrative way, in order to facilitate usability. The analysis of Rome will provide for an in-depth “behind-the-scene” description of political and communicative equilibriums, leading to the formulation of an organic summary in chapter six. This final chapter will also include a reasoning about the findings, in order to understand if hosting a Games is still worth for cities, and if criticalities emerged during the course of the dissertation, how these should be addressed.

It has been decided to focus on the most recent Games because these best connect with the present reality of the world, and in the attempt to draw a future model of hosting it is important to focus on examples that are at least as close as possible to the present. Many positive example of hosting the Games can be found in the past. Los Angeles 1984, for example, whose budget was dealt with in an innovative way. Or Barcelona 1992, whose city’s regeneration makes it one of the most successful Games in terms of legacy. Nonetheless, both these editions faced a very different world environment. Globalization had not yet completely fulfilled, its strengths and weaknesses being still hidden from the majority. The Internet, one of the symbols of globalization, had not yet become what it is now in terms of quality of information and global circulation.

Furthermore, among the most recent editions, it was decided to focus on the Summer Olympic Games for the sake of conciseness. These have usually bigger budgets and, in general, lay out as bigger events.

Indeed, throughout the dissertation, the expression “Olympic Games” will not only mean the sixteen days of play *strictu sensu*, but it

will refer to the whole process involved in their making, from the bidding for hosting up to the aftermath. Moreover, for reasons of conciseness, most of the times it will be omitted to refer to the Paralympic Games as well, even though they are included in the more general expression “Olympic Games”.

It is now time to turn page and dive into the fascinating Olympic world.

Chapter 1 - Communication and lobbying for the Olympic Games: the general parameters

Since the purpose of this dissertation is quite ambitious, it is important to start off from the general ideas of the analysis. This first chapter is split in two main parts: the former is dedicated to acknowledging what communication, lobbying and marketing are and their implementation in the field of the Olympic practice, while the latter will expand on the how these should, in theory, put into practice with the purpose of organizing the Olympic Games. The second part of the chapter will therefore include an in-depth analysis of the main phases of the Games – in their broader sense – and of the relative stakeholders.

At the time of this paper being developed, TV networks around the globe are broadcasting several spots advertising the live coverage of the upcoming 2014 Winter Olympic Games hosted by Sochi, Russia. These ads are reaching an enormous number of people all over the world, but the vast majority of them might be shocked if they knew that is only the smallest part of the peak of an immense iceberg. The communication process for a city hosting the Games is both long lasting in time and characterized by several heights along the way: a long road that is closely intertwined with strategic development plans, strong lobbying and structured marketing procedures. When bidding, leading up and hosting the Games, cities are tossing a 3-dimensional coin with complex faces that require great professionalism, passion and most of all a great deal of imagination. Not to mention a brazen face!

First of all, what is communication and how is it deployed for the Olympic Games? Moreover, why do we talk about lobbying and marketing in close association to communication? These may seem quite obvious questions to answer, but the very meaning of these concepts will help us get into the Games.

Quite intuitively, according to the Oxford Dictionary, Communication is “the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium”.¹

Therefore, almost all actions undertaken by humans in a globalized (i.e. highly connected) world will result in communication practices. But when it comes to international sport events that involve many actors from almost all sectors of society, it wouldn't be unfair to assert that the communication is political. It may seem an odd association of terms, but we are reminded by McNair², through the words of Denton and Woodward, that political communication could be defined as the

pure discussion about the allocation of the public resources (revenues), official authority (who is given the power to make legal, legislative and executive decision), and the official sanctions (what the state rewards or punishes).³

More specifically, as a matter of fact, what McNair defines as the “purposeful communication about politics”⁴ actually involves:

- a) All forms of communication undertaken by politicians and other political actors for the purpose of achieving specific objectives.
- b) Communication addressed to these actors by non-politicians such as voters and newspapers columnists.
- c) Communication about these actors and their activities, as contained in news reports, editorials, and others forms of media discussion of politics.

These three points are embraced and exploited in the efforts of those in charge of bidding and organizing an Olympic Games, as it will be shown in details in the upcoming pages of this chapter. Therefore, Olympic Games are clearly subject to political communication.

Moreover if, according to the Financial Times, marketing could be defined as a set of “activities to design and sell a product or service by considering buyers' wants or needs, for example where and how they will buy it, how much they will be willing to pay”,⁵ then it is not difficult

¹ <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/communication?q=communication>

² Cf. Brian McNair, *An introduction to political communication*, New York, Routledge, 2011, p. 3.

³ Robert E. Denton and Gary C. Woodward, *Political Communication in America*, New York, Praeger, 1990, Cit., p. 14.

⁴ Brian McNair, op. cit., p. 4. Italics in the original.

⁵ <http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=marketing>

to see why the word marketing will pop up throughout a dissertation about the communication of the Games: in order to be successful, an event has to be “sold” to generate profit that will cover the expense burden of the organisers, and possibly produce a surplus that will benefit those primarily affected by the planning, organizing and actual hosting of the event. Therefore, marketing steps in as the set of tools arranged to sell a product, and communication is possibly the strongest of these tools, because it allows interaction between “sellers” (Olympics organizers) and “buyers” (more or less all the other stakeholders). For now, we could say that marketing communication configures as that branch of Olympic communication aiming at connecting commercial actors with potential customers, but to do so these actors must interact on several levels with institutions in charge of the Games, and with the media.

As for lobbying, a little more explanation may be necessary, since only a few are familiar with its actual features. According to professor Liborio Mattina from the University of Trieste,

“lobbying has been understood, in its most restricted meaning, as one or more face to face meetings, promoted by the representative of a group, with legislators to direct them favourably towards the requests of the group represented.”⁶

Once again, communication shows up as the prominent tool for carrying out specific tasks: generally speaking, a lobbyist will represent an interest and will try and convince those in charge to direct decisions towards the interests of the group he or she represents. Therefore, broadly speaking, lobbying actions are not difficult to imagine in an Olympic organization: many parts of very different milieus are involved and quite often some will need to convince others. Moreover, as we will see in the proceeding of the chapter, Olympic Games organizational dynamics do embrace lobbying in all its facets, from the widely accepted and regulated more Anglo-Saxon approach of institutional lobbying, where rules, interests and meetings are clear and known, to the more unfortunate lobbying where everything is blurred behind secrecy driving

⁶ Liborio Mattina, *I gruppi di interesse*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2010, p. 151.

many into the mistaken definition of bribery. This is not always the case, but we will expand on the topic in the section dedicated to bidding, where many stakeholders must lobby in order to reach their goal: win the right to host the Games.

In order to deeply understand the functionality of communication, marketing and lobbying in the Olympic world, a time-based approach was chosen: through a detailed analysis of all the stages of the Games, it will be possible to clearly underline what is needed to successfully bid and host the Games, while uncovering the best strategies of communication, marketing and lobbying each and every stakeholder should enact, virtually with the ultimate aim to frame a standard set of actions to put forward.

There are a fixed timeline and a number of stakeholders involved in the hosting of the Olympic Games. It is essential to have a grasp of both of them, and foremost to analyse what stakeholders should do and when in time.

Let's start from the timeline. There are several phases concerning the organization of the Olympic Games, generated essentially from the schedule issued by the International Olympic Committee. We group them and identify four main stages: the bidding, the lead-up, the hosting and the aftermath. In particular:

1. Bidding: this is the initial stage, when the embryo of the Olympic city is conceived. It goes from the moment National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and cities' governing bodies decide to bid for the Olympic Games all the way to the day when that specific edition of the Games is awarded to host city. It is possible, and important, to identify a few sub-phases, in particular:
 - a. Applicant City phase – nine years before the Games, when cities are selected and put forward by their respective National Olympic Committees as “Applicant Cities”. There is a certain deadline set by the IOC before

which these cities must submit their official application file to the IOC.⁷

- b. Candidate City phase – roughly eight years before the Games, the IOC evaluates the application files and the cities that meet the application criteria become Candidate Cities. Then these cities must present their detailed Candidature file. The IOC Evaluation Commission then visits all the cities and issues a report highlighting possible strengths and weaknesses of the bids. Seven years before the Games, a couple of days before the final vote, Candidate Cities delegations join IOC members at the official IOC Session where they perform their final presentations. A series of votes are carried out until the official Host City is elected.⁸

2. Lead-up: from the moment the IOC president proclaims the Host City to the Opening Ceremony of the Games. This is a seven year long stage that proves extremely intense to the bidding committees that becomes the Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games.
3. Hosting: this is the sixteen days period starting with the famous Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games and concluding with the as much known Closing Ceremony.
4. Aftermath: this period has no clear definition in time, because some claim it's the two year period after the closing ceremony during which the OCOG is still officially active, while others imagine a longer period, as long as it would take to set and assess the so called legacy of the Games.

Each and every of these moments have very peculiar communication strategies that need to be carried out by specific people or group of people. Before going into the details of each phase, here is a list of those who could (or rather should) be involved throughout these

⁷ See <http://www.olympic.org/content/olympic-games/bidding-for-the-games/>

⁸ Ibid.

phases, we define them stakeholders, as “any group of individuals who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives”⁹, and we group them in four categories, i.e.:

1. Institutional stakeholders:

- a. Local Government (the Mayor, the city council, or any other equivalent body)
- b. National Government
- c. The Bidding Committee (or promoting committee)
- d. The Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games (this is usually created through a juridical transformation of the Bidding Committee)

2. Sport:

- a. The International Olympic Committee
- b. The National Olympic Committee
- c. The athletes

3. Citizenry:

- a. Local citizens
- b. National citizens

4. Commercial stakeholders:

- a. The Olympic Partners (TOP)
- b. Sponsors
- c. Commercial partners

5. Media & press:

- a. Host broadcasters
- b. Right-holder broadcasters
- c. International media

⁹ Paul Kitchin, “Financing the Games”, in John R. Gold and Margaret R. Gold (edited by), *Olympic cities. City Agendas, Planning, and the World’s Games, 1896-2016*, New York, Routledge, 2011, p. 132.

d. Press

6. Non governmental stakeholders:

a. National and international NGOs of any kind

b. Local associations and movements¹⁰

To further elaborate, we shall highlight that according to the IOC, these stakeholders can be grouped in two “layers” strongly connected with the symbols of the Olympic Experience – sport, torch, city, culture, ceremonies. The inner layer, closely connected to the Olympic Experience core, represents the “Games clients and service culture”.¹¹ The outer layer features the organization and management circle: it “includes the shared vision and objectives, the services, facilities and operations delivered by the Organisers in collaboration with the IOC and Clients [...] over a lifecycle of the Games organization.”¹²

In the following section of the chapter an in-depth analysis will be carried out following the temporal development of the organization of the Games.

1. The Bid

In order to approach the bidding process, possibly the most fascinating piece of communication and lobbying practices in the international relations of sport (and beyond), one shall wonder: who decides to have a city bid and, most prominently, why? Even considering that when the show begins with the Opening Ceremony, billions of people, and peculiarly the people of the host city (and country), are amazed by the greatest show on Earth, and go absolutely mad for the accomplishments of their favourite players, for the magnificence of the infrastructures and of the show, we have to bear in mind the abnormous costs in time, efforts and prominently in funds that are needed in order to accomplish such an event on a global scale.

¹⁰ Cf. Ibid. , pp. 132-134.

¹¹ Cf. IOC, *2020 Candidature Acceptance Procedure*, Lausanne, IOC, 2011, p. 12.

¹² Ibid.

Let's investigate where the bidding embryo generates and what drives these people to file an application dossier to the IOC.

According to the composition and attitudes of the country, the first inputs of a bid are conceived by the mayor of the city (or a high representative of the city council), the NOC president (or a high representative of his/her staff) or a national government representative, usually after consultation with major private business representatives, or the other way around. The main hypothesis on why they choose to bid is easily associated with the idea of profit: a very big investment, generally a mix of public and private resources, for an interesting return in commercial, touristic and infrastructural revenues. It all seems very straightforward, apart from the fact that such an investment has almost always proved consistently unprofitable,¹³ due to the fact that either costs were underestimated to begin with, or gains were overestimated. Then again, the number of cities bidding for hosting has been almost constant through the last 30 years, with either four, five or six contestants for each edition, with the sole exception of the latest Games to be awarded,¹⁴ the 2020 Olympic Games, where only three cities competed, possibly due to special circumstances. Many hypothesis have been formulated on why politicians would rather go forward with a bid even when the economic odds (and economic studies) are against it. Sometimes the perception around these reasons is quite biased according to the country of origin of the politicians: even though the general trust in the good will of the politicians for their people's sake is very low, it could change deeply between countries like Italy or Brazil, where confidence in politics is almost absent due to the myriad of bribery scandals surrounding politicians, and places like the more trustworthy Northern Europe countries (especially Sweden, Norway, Finland) or China, where the one party polity takes the relationship between citizens and politics to a whole different perception.

¹³ Marcel Van Der Berg and Michiel De Nooij, "The bidding paradox: why rational politicians still want to bid for mega sports events", in *Discussion Paper Series*, Tjalling C. Koopmans Research Institute, Utrecht University, N.13, 09 (2013), p. 2.

¹⁴ Molly C. Tolzmann, *Global localities: Olympic bidding as a case study in globalization*, *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics*, Routledge, published online 17 Sept. 2013, p. 7.

That being said, we could identify two sets of political reasons why politicians would want to bid: self-centred and general. In the former we include personal electoral motives¹⁵ and coherence – those who may have spoken positively about the possibility of a bid will find it inconvenient to prove themselves unreliable changing their mind.¹⁶ The latter includes regional economic development, tourism growth, sustainable development of a specific region,¹⁷ the possibility of raising political support for side projects that could be tied to the Olympic bid (and that would otherwise be delayed or never approved), a biased reading of history that will have them underestimate the net balance between costs and benefits, the fact that the media will generally be in favour because their interests are highly at stake, and opposing the media could be political suicidal for many politicians, especially at a local level. One last reason, belonging the second category proposed, deserves a much central stage: the “psychic income”.¹⁸ This is a relatively new aspect of broad social gain that is being considered in research nowadays: opposed to tangible economic effects that seldom follow through, academics are evaluating the feelings boosted in the population of the city and/or of the country of host as a possible intangible effect. Depending on how the lead up goes and on the communicative skills of the OCOG, together with the actual success of the Games themselves, people may be pervaded of feelings of happiness and pride. The former can enhance the perceived quality of life of citizens, and therefore their productivity in the society (at their workplaces, in social-friendly activities and more). The latter, instead, can either provoke more happiness or be instrumental to the politician, again for electoral reasons: as a matter of fact, many political entities do campaign on the values of the so called national pride. In any case, it is important not to underestimate the power of real feelings people may experience: it is never easy to bent the numbers to perceptions, but in a

¹⁵ Cf. Jean-Loup Chappelet, (edited by), *From initial idea to success: a guide to bidding for sports events for politicians and administrators*, Lausanne, Sentedals Consortium, 2005, p. 9.

¹⁶ Cf. Marcel Van Der Berg and Michiel De Nooij, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹⁷ Cf. Jean-Loup Chappelet, (edited by), *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁸ Marcel Van Der Berg and Michiel De Nooij, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

new conception of sustainable development, it might well be the case. In general, it will always be a matter of trust between politicians and their potential electorate.¹⁹

The reasoning behind the decision to bid is part of a very early stage of the bidding process. In a further elaboration of the bidding phase, instead of the only two stages previously exemplified, we identify four sub-stages within the bid phase, which we identify as Brainstorming, Interest, Pre-bidding and Bidding *strictu sensu* (Formal bid).²⁰

1.1. Brainstorming

This is the very early stage of the bidding procedures, well before the formal constitution of a promoting or bidding committee: after the embryo of the bidding has been conceived, the bearer of the idea must lobby the other major stakeholders of the phase to make sure there is agreement and support. It is imaginable that the city mayor and the president of the NOC agree on the bid, therefore they seek national and local governments (regional, provincial, or else) support. Moreover, it could be interesting, according to the political situation of the country, to try and approach the opposition forces at all levels of the government: they may be interested in supporting the bid for electoral reasons (such as counteracting the proactive actions of the majority), and the future bidders would gain an enormous advantage if they managed to raise a bipartisan backing because it will ensure the IOC and other major stakeholders that in case of changing majorities, the Olympic projects won't experience any setbacks. As a matter of fact, the politics of a city involved with the Games are generally "robust and volatile":²¹ robust because the specific weight of politics is always high in decision-making processes, but also volatile because politicians often change their minds and, moreover, they may get out of office due to electoral alternation.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid*, pp. 15-16.

²⁰ These definitions have been developed by the author of this dissertation.

²¹ Richard Cashman, *Impact of the Games on Olympic host cities: university lecture on the Olympics* [online article]. Barcelona, Centre d'Estudis Olímpics (UAB), 2002, p. 10.

At the same time, prospective bidders will seek the support of two major groups of stakeholders that will be pivotal in convincing the IOC committees, institutions and general public that the bid is worth: the media and private investors. The latter will need to be convinced on the assumption of commercial gaining as well as investment opportunities in various fields, such as infrastructure, transportation, tourism, or for great advertising possibilities (banks and other tertiary sector companies will be interested). There may be a differentiated approach to the former instead, depending on various factors: first of all, media are not only a mean of information and entertainment, it is important to bear in mind they represent an interest too. They are usually the representatives of an industry of production and marketing of products of mass interest. Even though we have a few examples of national media solely controlled by the governments (e.g. China above all), most of the countries have media organizations privately owned and controlled.²² As a matter of fact, the relationship between sport and the media could be seen as even stronger considering that “several owners of media corporations are also owners, or shareholders, of professional sport teams”.²³ That being said, as they exercise an interest themselves, prospective bidders must be very careful: after detailed research, they must draw a line between those who may be interested in supporting the Games, and those who may not, or may even be fiercely opposing them. Usually, those who are right-holders of the most recent host or upcoming Olympic Games will surely be interested in keeping their game on for broadcasting the following editions²⁴ as it could be very profitable. Likewise, international corporations who own media across several countries, may find it more profitable – for marketing reasons – to lobby for the Games to be hosting in one of the countries they are

²² Cf. George H. Sage, *Globalizing Sport. How Organizations, Corporations, Media, and Politics Are Changing Sports*, Boulder (CO, USA), Paradigm Publishers, 2010, pp. 141-143.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

²⁴ The broadcasting rights of the Olympic Games are sold directly by the IOC, after the host city has been decided. Instead, the permanent host broadcaster of the Olympic Games is the Olympic Broadcasting Services (OBS). “The IOC established Olympic Broadcasting Services (OBS) in 2001 to serve as the permanent host broadcaster for the Olympic Games, eliminating the need to continually rebuild the broadcast operation for each edition of the Games.” See <http://www.olympic.org/olympic-broadcasting>.

present more than in others. Why do they find it profitable? Some scholars identified the so called “global media/sport-production complex”²⁵, an ever growing associational category where media corporations, transnational product, marketing and advertising organizations and sport organizations bond together: it is identified as a complex because it is a win-win situation for its members considering that sport organizations receive monetary incomes through the selling of broadcast rights, media make up for the money they spent on buying the rights through the advertising investments of commercial organizations that are willing to sell products. Clearly, the more power of attraction is enshrined in the event to be broadcasted, the more companies are willing to trigger this revenue-generating complex. And if, as Roche stated, the Olympics are “the leading contemporary global mega-event”,²⁶ then it is not difficult to connect the dots.²⁷

Once this scheme is clear, perspective bidders must decide whether to contact all or part of the media, and what to try and agree with them: since this is a very early yet strategic moment for the upcoming evolution of the bid, bidders may want to agree on keeping the perspective candidature “secret” to public opinion, in order to secure all major stakeholders back up first. Or, if they feel public opinion could be easily dragged on board, they could agree to start and address general audience mildly. Generally, this proves to be quite a risky strategy, especially if perspective bidders have not yet secured the support of important NGOs, credible organizations able to catalyse or de-catalyse consent towards a public matter such as the Olympic Games.

However, even if prospective bidders manage to strategize well around the media corporations, there is a new dimension of the public arena that has been gaining unprecedented attention in the last two decades: the Internet. Through this global public arena theoretically

²⁵ George H. Sage, *op. cit.*, 2010, p. 146.

²⁶ Maurice Roche, *Mega-events and modernity: Olympics and expos in the growth of global culture*, London, Routledge, 2000, p. 99.

²⁷ Cf. George H. Sage, *op. cit.*, 2010, pp. 149-161.

anyone could interact with anyone, and with specifically designed strategies they could catalyse positive or negative attention towards anything. Thanks to the Internet, the so called public sphere has now become a truly global public sphere,²⁸ meaning that a more democratic approach to the diffusion of information can be carried out, but also opening up to a whole new series of issues, such as controlling the actual quality of the information released through the Web. Therefore, considering that it is virtually impossible to control the information circulating online - unless you practice a very undemocratic strategy of censorship as we have been witnessing at times in places like China or Russia, but reaching your objective only internally, usually opening yourself up to fierce criticism from abroad -, it may be a good strategy to leak to the media that a bid is being conceived, capitalizing the comparative advantage towards those who knew nothing about it and therefore will need some time to strategize against the bid, a time span that can be used by prospective bidders to start off with lobbying efforts towards building up a positive attitude towards the bid. Nonetheless, in the majority of the cases, though, approaching the media aggressively with a bid proposition can prove wrong: the risk of the Internet sphere is relatively high, but in the first phase of the bidding procedure, a secrecy strategy shall prove more effective. We will see how the most recent bidders have dealt with this issue in the following chapters.

It is important to remark that, even though we have imagined the embryo of the bid to originate more likely from the NOC or from the mayor, if it is any of the other stakeholders willing to push for a bid, the lobbying process and the support that need to be found will always revolve around the major figures described in the latest paragraphs.

1.2. Interest

We identify the “interest” phase as the intermediate stage of the bidding that follows the previously described brainstorming, and runs all the way through the day, established by IOC and usually around

²⁸ Cf. David Rowe, “The bid, the lead-up, the event and the legacy: global cultural politics and hosting the Olympics”, in *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 63, 2 (2012), p. 290.

nine years before the hosting of the Games, when the bidding must be formalized by the NOC in the form of interest to have a city accepted as an Applicant City.²⁹ This is the moment when a formal Promoting (or Bid) Committee is generally instituted with the scope of officially start working towards the assembling of a bid file: there will be an incredible workload for all those involved first hand in the Committee from the end of this phase (when formal interest is expressed to the IOC) all the way towards the Closing Ceremony.

At this point, it is important for the Promoting Committee to officially constitute, and straight after to implement its own Public Relations body, because at this stage the embryo of the bidding will have to be made public, not advertised, but in theory the general audience may hear about it and specialists of the Games will surely learn about the city bidding, therefore it is vital to be prepared with a first idea on how to brand the Games of the city in question positively and with a team of strong PR officials that can develop a strategy for counteracting in case of strong criticism or general negative review (that could originate from different sources). Since “public relations involves research and analysis, policy formation, programming, communication and feedback from a variety of publics”,³⁰ it is important for the Committee to be ahead of time with its own PR team.

During this transitory phase it is important to have established a strong relationship with the media that may not necessarily be used explicitly at this point, by having a laid out strategy on stand-by that could be activated in case of crisis management is always important.

Through the PR team it could be interesting to draft a plan to approach relevant portions of the city people through recognized opinion leaders to try and understand if they would support the bid and, if not, why. Contextually, rallying a few experts on topics that are sensitive to the Games (urbanization, environment, housing, etc...) may

²⁹ Cf. IOC, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 29.

³⁰ Yvonne Harahousou, Chris Kabitsis, Anna Haviara and Nicholas D. Theodorakis, *The Olympic Games: a framework for international public relations*, in Sandra M. Oliver (edited by), “Handbook of corporate communication and public relations. Pure and applied”, London, Routledge, 2004, p. 144.

be a good idea, together with having widely appreciated national athletes (better if internationally known) expressing their enthusiasm about the idea of hosting. These press releases should still be sporadic, so that general audience is left with a feeling of candour, and not with one of blunt deception.

1.3. Pre-bidding

Only a few days after the NOC has informed the IOC of the name of an Applicant City, the Candidature Acceptance Procedure must be signed together with payment of the Candidature Acceptance Fee.³¹ From that moment on, the city is officially addressed by the IOC as Applicant City. At this point, the Bid Committee has first and foremost to focus on the development of a file that, while matching the IOC criteria for bidding for the Olympic Games, at the same time it strongly lobbies among the lines in several directions to secure official support for the bid, especially with those who will be mostly affected by the decision of bidding, and those who usually represent their interests on the field: citizens and NGOs. Professor Cashman, Director of the Centre for Olympic Studies at the University of New South Wales (Australia), states it clearly:

To win a bid to host an Olympic Games a city must develop a plan that is attractive both to the IOC but also to host community and key interest groups in the host city. Unless there is strong support across the board for an Olympic bid – bipartisan political support and an absence of active lobby groups against the Games – the bid is bound to fail.³²

In order to clarify the best strategic approach of a Promoting Committee in drafting a bid file that is catchy in all these directions and able to be sold to perspective stakeholders through efficient communication and lobbying efforts, we will analyse the most relevant parameters of the IOC regulations and the main sensitive topics for reaching political support and ensuring active counter lobbying to be at a minimum.

³¹ For the 2020 Olympic Games bid, the non refundable fee was US\$150,000. Cf. IOC, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 29-32.

³² Richard Cashman, *op. cit.*, 2002, p. 9.

First of all, in general the IOC believes that the Games should work with inspiration through innovation as their ultimate goal. To do so, the tangible core of the product (which are the Games) shall be focused on Excellence, while a broader and inclusive tangible and intangible experience shall be based on Relevance, i.e. doing the right thing.³³ Practically, this vision shall be put in practice by the bidding committee demonstrating that all the stakeholders actively involved in the bid “share a common vision, mission and value”,³⁴ the spirit of collaboration and a mechanism of integrated management among the parties shall be planned and be able to work functionally, a high level of personalization since the “Olympic Experience is not homogenous and needs to be personalized and adapted to specific context”,³⁵ and last but not least, a “backward planning” approach. This last advice appears to be quite interesting: the IOC is suggesting to design the Olympic Games starting from the vision, from how the committee is imagining its Games to be, and then working backward to design them all the way back to the bidding itself. This approach, together with the idea of the “360° Games Management Philosophy”,³⁶ should help identify all stakeholders that will or may be involved from the beginning, and it should help anticipate many otherwise surprising elements of the development strategies.³⁷

Another essential parameter for the IOC is sustainable development, closely fostered together with the idea of legacy:

The Olympic Games are above all about sport and the athletes, but they can be a catalyst for change and produce important sustainability outcomes if they are planned, managed and conducted in a way which minimizes the adverse environmental impacts and effects.³⁸

These parameters are important to the IOC mainly because they reflect the growing awareness of the general audience about environment and sustainable development practices, therefore it is

³³ Cf. IOC, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 11-13.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

pivotal to talk to representatives of the most accredited NGOs in sensible sectors (think, for example, of WWF or Amnesty International) and lobby them into supporting the bid. If they express a negative feeling about the bid, it is important to address their issues scientifically and to try and lobby them into support, maybe even including some of their proposal in the file, in order to show openness to confrontation. A common mistake would be to drag into the debate very small and critical organizations that are only seeking media attention: a strong PR team will know them through efficient background research, and a proper strategy can be laid out, for example not acknowledging them at all on the level of the debate.³⁹

The feasibility of the project should be assessed by a neutral commission of experts that will supposedly help the Committee head towards the best direction in terms of planning the best possible bid. As a matter of fact, as far as the financial management is concerned, this is a compulsory request of the IOC:

As soon as [...] a bid committee is created, and no later than three months after publication by the IOC of the list of Applicant Cities, such [...] organization shall designate an independent expert responsible for auditing the financial management of the candidature and shall inform the IOC and the IOC Ethics Commission of the name of the chosen expert. The NOC undertakes to provide the IOC with the audit report in accordance with the IOC's instructions.⁴⁰

The positive results of such studies should be greatly emphasised, together with the general ideas and projects of the bid, and presented to the citizen of the city: confront them in several ways, through open debate sessions for example, listen to them to give them the feeling of inclusion. One key argument to be highlighted is public spending, especially during the bidding phase: people may fear that a lot of money is being spent and that it will be wasted in case of an unsuccessful bid. They have to be reassured with proof that at the

³⁹ Cf. Stephen V. Ward, "Promoting the Olympic City", in John R. Gold and Margaret R. Gold (edited by), *Olympic cities. City Agendas, Planning, and the World's Games, 1896-2016*, New York, Routledge, 2011, p. 157.

⁴⁰ IOC Executive Board, Rules of Conduct Applicable to all Cities wishing to Organise the Olympic Games, Lausanne, IOC, 2007, p. 1.

bidding stage the amount of money spent is negligible because no infrastructural project is started from scratches at that point.⁴¹ The Committee can play it clever: since most of its members are coming from the city council or from the NOC, they can certify that their wage is being paid as workers of the city council and the NOC. Moreover, those projects that were already in the making before the bid – and that would surely benefit from the awarding of the Games – should be completed and the citizenry must be aware: convincing reassurances about public money are among the most efficient ways to keep general audience positive and supportive. Raise their support and certify it with official documents like a city referendum or a survey. The second option is usually safer in terms of predictability of the result.

In a continued process from the previous phase, it is important to increase the public awareness while growing public support is witnessed, activating some sort of virtuous circle. Signed petition in support of the Games shall be sought among opinion leaders in sport, culture, and other sensitive fields.

Since this is the phase that precedes the submission of the official application file, from a mere yet pivotal communicative point of view, it would be advisable to obtain the official support of the national government – a compulsory requirement of the IOC concerning the financing of the Games – well in advance of the deadline, to try and show confidence and strong support. Ministers of different areas shall express their support through official press release that later could be included in the official file.

Last but not least, it is important to seek the support of the young generations, for two main reasons: first, the IOC values youth support, especially if not artificial. Second, these will be the most active citizens in the near future, therefore it will be their city and if they don't like it they will most likely sabotage the leading up of the Games.

At this point, the Bid Committee shall be ready to submit the application file to the IOC. It contains the bidding city replies to the IOC

⁴¹ Richard Cashman, *op. cit.*, 2002, p. 9.

questionnaire that is divided in 11 chapters: vision, concept and legacy; sport and venues; environment and meteorology; accommodation, transport; medical services and doping control; safety and security; technology and energy; legal aspects and custom and immigration formalities; government and public support; finance and marketing.⁴² Apart from the mere technical sections, the first one and the last two are particularly interesting in terms of communication and lobbying. The Bidding Committee is asked by the IOC to provide the vision of their Games, together with their motivations for willing to host, their beliefs in the peculiar long term benefits for the areas that would be interested by the Games, and what would be special about their city that would enhance the quality of the Olympic Games in general.⁴³ The IOC cares about your vision because the marketing message that could come out of it can be very valuable:

There has to be an overarching marketing proposition around which the bid can cohere in an intellectual sense. To be successful, this will first involve a simple and easily grasped idea of the intended event as it will be delivered at that particular time and in that particular city. In addition, and very importantly, it must also demonstrate that the event will be a historically momentous realization of the internationalism and altruism of the Olympian ideal.⁴⁴

In terms of communicating your vision and your message, three often underestimated tools may prove very valuable to help built the conceptual Olympic City first, and then contribute in fuelling the marketing message, becoming at the same time high commercially saleable: the logo, the mascot and the payoff. The logo is a “key identifier for the bidding campaign. This would usually embrace a combination of Olympic imagery and various iconic signifiers of the bidding city[...] It has to be capable of being reproduced in many different media”.⁴⁵ Similarly, the payoff must embrace in a few catchy words the philosophical conception of the bid, while the mascot usually enforce active participation, from the creation of the design that could

⁴² Cf. IOC, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 54.

⁴³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁴⁴ Stephen V. Ward, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 161.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

be out of a contest, all the way towards its human personifications interacting with the general audience.

As for the institutional section, the IOC requires a covenant from the government guaranteeing, in particular, that the city will host the Games (fulfilling its contract completely), and “free access to and free movement around the host country for all accredited persons on the basis of a passport and the Olympic identity”.⁴⁶ Moreover, the IOC is explicitly interested in knowing the electoral situation of the years preceding the Olympic Games: as previously stated, it would be a score point to seek early bipartisan political support.⁴⁷

1.4. Bidding strictu sensu (Formal bid)

After the Application file has been submitted and evaluated positively, a city is officially a Candidate City. At that point, the Committee has almost a year before submitting the official Candidature file, i.e. the actual bid file.

Central it may be, but a city's candidature file is generally reckoned to be less a vote winner than a vote lose if it reveals any significant deficiencies relative to other cities.⁴⁸

As Stephen Ward is brightly signalling, the quality of the bid file can only be significant in a negative way. It means that all the general parameters of the bid file must be followed sharply, in order to avoid any disappointments. Information about the venues, the transportation system and the logistics, the financial management and social and institutional commitment must be as good in standards as the other bidders. Yet again, the ultimate choice is in the hand of the IOC members who will decide the Host City in the official Session, and their vote is secret: it means there is no definitive proof – other than respecting official requests of the bidding – of what makes a bid successful at the ballot box. Therefore, a lot of speculation has been surrounding this very stage of the bidding, because many are eager to know the approach of the IOC members so that they can strategize on

⁴⁶ IOC, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 97.

⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Stephen V. Ward, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 154.

how to win the bid. The months following the submission of the candidature file and preceding the IOC voting Session are of the outmost importance from the point of view of lobbying and communication: the Committee and its PR team must find a way to convince IOC members to vote for them. One great occasion that was previously used to lobby them was the official visit all voting IOC members would pay to bidding cities, but this often resolved in practices that many felt too close to bribery. Therefore, during the last twenty years, and especially in light of a few scandals surrounding bidding committee that were undermining the credibility of the Olympic Games,⁴⁹ the IOC refurbished its regulations for applying for hosting the Olympic Games, trying to tighten up a few loose ends. For example, in February 2007, its Executive Board adopted a text containing the “Rules of Conduct Applicable to all Cities wishing to Organise the Olympic Games”, where some ethics principles and rules are now clearly stated. For example, according to article 11:

there shall be no visits by IOC members to the cities, nor by the cities to the IOC members. If an IOC member has to travel to a city for any reason, he or she shall inform the IOC Ethics Commission beforehand. The city may not take advantage of this occasion for the promotion of its candidature, nor cover the costs and other expenses linked to such a visit, in particular travel and accommodation.⁵⁰

Other regulations in the same document prohibit any gift or promise among Olympic parties:⁵¹ this effort of the IOC to tackle an obvious breach of the Olympic ideals may have triggered a more subtle strategy among bidding cities to discredit the opponents. For example, there are no rules about lobbying the IOC members during other official IOC meetings such as the theme conferences (“Women and sport”, “Sport, culture and education”, etc.): if any of these will be hosted during the bidding race, a specifically arranged PR team will be sent, officially to represent the NOC, but between lines to indirectly convince IOC members to support their bid at ballot. Since there will be many

⁴⁹ Cf. George H. Sage, *op. cit.*, 2010, pp. 210-211.

⁵⁰ IOC Executive Board, *op. cit.*, IOC, 2007, pp. 3-4.

⁵¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 3.

occasions like these, a Bidding Committee shall have a strong and numerous PR team so to be able to miss none of them.⁵²

Another way to raise consent around your bid is prove that other bid are worse than yours. Officially, this is quite a tough task to perform, considering Article 13 of the already mentioned Rules of Conduct:

The cities shall refrain from any act or comment likely to tarnish the image of a rival city or to be prejudicial to it. Any comparison with other cities is strictly forbidden. No agreement, coalition nor collusion between the cities or their NOCs aimed at influencing the result is permitted.

Therefore, the only way to discredit the opponents is to go through tertiary channel, non depending from the NOCs or the bidding committees. This is when the genius of Ed Hula steps in: in 1992 he founded the website Around the Rings (AtR), the absolute leading source of Olympic information. Since it “has become just about the only source of information for the IOC and its members”,⁵³ Around the Rings “gets referred to by all the big cities in the bidding process, though international companies that look to use him can quickly become dependent upon him”.⁵⁴ Basically, the more its importance and credibility was growing, the more committees and officials would leak to AtR major information, especially those that would jeopardise others bids. That is why cities and companies keep subscribing, “as an insurance so that they won’t get bad publicity. It’s almost like a knowledge or PR protection racket”.⁵⁵

Moreover, since the official visits have been scraped out of the book, the final IOC selection meeting has increased its centrality: it is one last chance to lobby directly to those who will vote, and since the vote will be soon after the Bid Committees have spoken to IOC members, the most convincing team may well be successful. Before the vote, all Bidding Cities are entitled to hold a presentation

⁵² Cf. Stephen V. Ward, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 156-157.

⁵³ Alan Tomlinson, “Lording it. London and the getting of the Games”, in John Surgen and Alan Tomlinson (edited by), *Watching the Olympics. Politics, power and representation*, London, Routledge, 2012, p. 7.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

comprehensive of a promotional video. Usually the presentation must last between thirty and forty-five minutes, depending on the number of finalists, and it is followed by a fifteen minute question time.⁵⁶ The attention to details during these presentations must be of the highest standards: videos should be more emotional than technical in order to catch IOC members imagination. They have to be able to “see” the Olympic City wannabe in front of them. At the same time, the technical aspects shall be addressed during the presentation and in case of specific questions. It is pivotal to decide who is going to be on stage for the presentation: it could be anyone, from Bidding Committee members to national government officials, to kids or athletes. It is usually a matter of balance and credibility: a good mix is widely recognized as the best approach, but it really depends of the kind of people available. If the President or the Prime Minister are charming and convincing, then they should be allowed on stage. It is important to take risks at this point, but they have to be well calculated.⁵⁷ There are very strong examples of success and failure of stage lobbying, especially in the latest bidding sessions, we will go through some of them in the following chapters.

Yet, alongside such strong presences, the key figure in final presentation will always be the leader of the bidding team. The necessary quality of conviction, persuasion and self confidence that will have been well tested in the earlier stages of the bidding process now have to face their ultimate test. [...] these figures have to capture in their words and body language the essence of their city’s case. They also have to make it look easy, which certainly is not.⁵⁸

After the questioning for all Candidate Cities, the ballot starts: the eligible IOC members are asked to vote.⁵⁹ If no city receives an absolute

⁵⁶ For example, at the latest voting Session, to award the 2020 Olympic Games, “on 7 September 2013, the cities each had 45 minutes to give a presentation to the Session, followed by 15 minutes for questions. The cities presented in the order of drawing of lots, carried out by the IOC Executive Board in December 2011.” See <http://www.olympic.org/2020-host-city-election>

⁵⁷ Cf. Stephen V. Ward, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 158-160.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁵⁹ “Only those IOC members who are not nationals of countries for which there is a candidate city in a round are permitted to vote.” See <http://www.olympic.org/2020-host-city-election>

majority, a new vote will be casted, until an absolute majority⁶⁰ is reached. Every time, the city with the least votes is eliminated. Statistically, votes are tied and there are as many ballots as to reach a situation of one two remaining candidates. Once the Host City is elected, the decision is officially announced by the IOC president through the Announcement Ceremony: Bidding Committees usually organize live coverage of the announcement in strategic and central spots of their cities (e.g., Trafalgar Square for London 2012 in 2005, and the Copacabana Beach section facing the Copacabana Palace for Rio 2016 in 2009), and the announcement of the IOC President followed by exultant celebration of the awarded city Committee at the Session and joyous emotion back in the City's main square are among the iconic images of every Olympic Games.

2. The Lead-up

After a Candidate City wins the ballot, it is announced as the Host City for that specific edition of the Games, and it signs the Host City Contract with the IOC, certifying its obligations towards the IOC and officially becoming a Host City. If the favourable media have played their part as previously agreed, national pride in the vast majority of the country's population will be at a high: winning is always winning, and somehow an Olympic Games bid resembles sport in its very competitive nature.

From a mere legal point of view, the Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games (OCOG) must now be created: this is usually morphed from the Bid Committee that basically changes its name, legal status and grows in size, but keeps its directorate.⁶¹ This Committee will have to work very hard throughout the seven years that separates the

⁶⁰ "The votes of members not taking part in a round of voting or who abstain, as well as invalid electronic voting entries, are not taken into account in the calculation of the required majority." See <http://www.olympic.org/2020-host-city-election>

⁶¹ Cf. Christopher A. Shaw, "The Economics and Marketing of the Olympic Games from Bid Phase to Aftermath", in Helen Jefferson Lenskyj and Stephen Wagg (edited by), *The Palgrave Handbook of Olympic Studies*, Basingstoke (UK), Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 253.

awarding to the actual hosting, a period that is commonly defined as “lead up”: construction and promotion will start intensely, the former causing disruption to the city’s normal lifestyle, the latter indirectly riling many in several sectors. At this point the OCOG will have mainly a double-headed opposition that must be counter-fought through a strong communication strategy, and possibly through actual facts that could be used as the basis for the communication strategy. The more the opposition is right in their contesting ground, the more the communication strategy will have to be impressive to overcome it. The two opposing groups shall be, on one side, those who will be affected by any decision taken by the OCOG through their development plans (i.e. mainly the local residents), while on the other those who have “lost”, those who have decided to commercially bet against the bid for whatever reasons, and are now tragically bound to see their competition’s revenues grow through the commercialization of the upcoming Games. The latter shall include part of the media, and they will most likely be the voice of the opposition too.

There is a list of topics that constantly come up in leading up to the Olympic games, and that could be standardized to a certain extent. We will have a brief look at them since these topics will be the core of the communication agenda of the OCOG. First of all, parts of the city become an ongoing building site, causing disruption to normal business. The gigantic building site opens up to natural concerns about the preservation of the environment, in particular the protection of significant cultural and physical environments. In some cases, in order to make space for the Olympic Park and Village, the OCOG is forced to ask the city council to bulldoze some suburban areas, where usually many lower income people live. These people will be forced out of their shelters and will eventually end up displaced. Moreover, in order to make the bid look competitive, usually Bid Committees make wildly

positive estimates of the costs, and they usually raise exponentially, or some hidden costs end up being paid through public finances.⁶²

In general, it is not unconventional that many promises made during the bid, especially towards the most effected part of the citizens, won't be respected. This all political intrigue leads to a critical response of the general audience. According to professors de Moragas Spà and Kennett of the Centre d'Estudis Olímpics UAB,⁶³ general criticism emerges during the central part of the septennial frame, as part of an evolving feeling that they classify as follow:

- I. Expectation (6 to 4 years before);
- II. Mistrust and general criticism from local press (4 to 2 years before);
- III. Consensus (1 year before)
- IV. Euphoria, local solidarity and limited criticism from the media (year of the Games)⁶⁴

Therefore, the PR teams of the OCOG have to work, "using" the more collaborative media, to address the "mistrust" phase possibly enduring to the positive emotions of the "Expectation" phase. Many may have been raising doubts about the actual benefits deriving from bidding and hosting, and consequently they will keep a strong eye of the carrying out of the venues and everything else to contest the OCOG and prove they were right. They will therefore generate negative publicity, which may easily be picked up by international media, since the Host City will be more and more under a scrutinizing eye the closer the Games get. Since cultural differences may also play a role in interpreting some issues from abroad (think, for example, of the human rights limitation China imposes on Tibet and how it was depicted during the Games: public opinion in mainland China had a fairly different view of the matter though), the OCOG and its communication team must try to be as "open and transparent as possible".⁶⁵ In any case, a damage control strategy should be implemented and ready to be deployed in

⁶² Richard Cashman, *op. cit.*, 2002, p. 11.

⁶³ "The Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) [...] promoted the creation of the Olympic Studies Centre in 1989 for the purposes of research, documentation, training and dissemination of information on Olympism and sport." See http://ceo.uab.cat/ceo_uab.asp

⁶⁴ Miquel de Moragas Spà and Chris Kennett, *Olympic cities and communication* (online article), Barcelona, Centre d'Estudis Olímpics UAB, 2005, p. 6.

⁶⁵ Richard Cashman, *op. cit.*, 2002, p. 11.

order to control criticism, especially if it gets overly picked by international observers of any kind. One possible way to counteract on negative stories is to overwhelm the audience with positive ones: a good example is the torch-relay and the programs regarding the myriad of volunteers that will be trained and deployed massively during the Games in many circumstances.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, it is virtually impossible to imagine to control and annihilate all criticism. This is the curse brought by the globalisation, which has a strong relationship with the Games: clearly, modern Olympic Games are both a product and booster of globalisation, their retaliation being mainly critical anti-globalisation.⁶⁷

Through real life examples, we will analyse some controversies and the strategic approach of different OCOGs to address them in the following chapters.

3. Hosting

After almost ten years since the embryo idea of the bid, it is finally the time for the actual show to take off: the Summer Olympic Games usually take place in a timeframe of sixteen days and are officially ushered by the so called Opening Ceremony. This is the very last strong tool in the hands of the OCOG in terms of communication before handing over, almost completely, to the media. The Opening Ceremony gives the opportunity to represent in a live show the idea of the Olympic City the OCOG had in mind and worked so hard in trying to build in front of the stakeholders. The imaginary of the Olympic City will be based on a personalization of the Olympic Movement ideals, with a synthetic adaptation of the semantics involved. The Opening Ceremony will reach people all over the world through the media coverage, and at the same time incorporate very peculiar messages and aspects of the local community involved. Therefore many identify a

⁶⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 11-12.

⁶⁷ Cf. Miquel de Moragas Spà and Chris Kennett, *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 7.

“glocalisation” condition of the message put through international broadcasters.⁶⁸

According to professors de Moragas Spà and Kennett, in recent years ceremonies have all structured similarly, highlighting three main parts: “introduction and presentation of the host country’s culture; a celebration of the Olympic rituals; and a final celebration expressed through the culture of the host.”⁶⁹ The stadium is usually converted into a gigantic TV studio. It is in this very moment, during the Opening Ceremony, that the OCOG virtually gives up its strategic hegemony on communicative power, handing it implicitly to the media: general audience all over the world will see the show put together by the OCOG, but they will watch it through the TV coverage of the broadcasters, who will be able to select their angle and add their own commentary.

From the celebrative opening all the way through the Games, journalists are in control: the coverage is at the highest level, and the ritual function of sport is renewed in its multifaceted experience. According to Roche, there are three main functions that strongly connect such mega sport events with the people: first of all, in marking life events, they help build a marked temporal and cultural framework of personal identity; furthermore, at the national community level, they mark the establishment or the growth of the nation-state consciousness, because they are unique occasions to merge together and reinterpret imaginatively the past, present and future of the country. Last but not least, thanks to media coverage, they promote the national identity of the host country and of the participating athletes internationally, promoting them.⁷⁰

As imaginable, during the sixteen days of the Games the coverage of the Games will vary according to the culture and the attitudes of the destination country broadcasts: of course, sport events will gain a rather majoritarian attention, but media will evaluate the quality of the

⁶⁸ Miquel de Moragas Spà and Chris Kennett, *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 7.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷⁰ Michael Real, “Reflections on Communication and Sport. On Spectacle and Mega-Events”, published online by SAGE on behalf of the International Association For Communication and Sport, 2013, pp. 37-38.

Games based on a set of (quite fixed) criteria where the quality of sports' action will be more than secondary. These criteria usually include:

- quality and efficiency of the organization
- transport: punctuality and speed
- facilities and services (particularly those provided to the journalists themselves)
- security
- environmental impacts
- impacts of the Games on urban change
- technology used
- economic factors related to the Games
- general infrastructure
- political use of the Games
- citizens' participation [...], the atmosphere created in the city and the sports venues
- the treatment of journalists by volunteers
- the spectacle created during the ceremonies
- adaptation of the Games to the demands of sustainability⁷¹

It may seem unfair, but the quality of the Games to bequeath to history will be assessed through these parameters, during the Games: it doesn't matter what has been written or said before, if the review is positive after those two weeks, there is a great chance the Games being classified and passed on to history as successful.

4. Aftermath

To be fair, once the emotional hangover of the Games *strictu sensu* is released, there shall be a more objective assessment of the quality of the Games. The days of the Games are obviously the core part of the entertainment, but to turn a city inside out for almost ten years and evaluate the quality of the Games relying on the sixteen day event may prove not only unfair, but wrong too.

Therefore, many have been focusing on the idea of legacy: this is something the IOC introduced in its envisioning of the Games during bidding some time ago, but considering its strict relationship with the peculiarity of the locations, it has been very tough to define and, consequently, to assess properly. Moreover, from a mere communicative point of view, the majority of the audience across the world may never hear about the outcomes of the envisioned legacy of a specific Host City,

⁷¹ Miquel de Moragas Spà and Chris Kennett, *op. cit.*, 2005, pp. 10-11.

since the OCOG usually dismantles after a maximum time of twenty-four months, and once the Games are closed, its activities are usually merely legal: no PR skills are deployed to keep people informed regularly about the post-Games development of the Olympic sites (and else). As a matter of fact, the OCOG only survives to keep up with the OGGI project, the Olympic Games Global Impact, an IOC project that “covers an 11-year period, starting with the bidding stage through the hosting of the event itself to 2 years after the event being held.”⁷² This is the first attempt of the IOC to actually recognize and evaluate the idea of legacy. But up until recently, after the Games it all suddenly settles down and the general euphoria seems to abandon OCOG official too. It is important, therefore, to try and define, while broadly and generically, what actual well laid out legacy could stand for.

First of all, we discover from the 2002 IOC Symposium “The Legacy of the Olympic Games: 1984-2000” papers, that legacy can be “positive and negative, direct and indirect, tangible and intangible, hard (measurable and relating to money) and soft (less measurable)”.⁷³

According to Gratton and Preuss, by cross-referencing the structures that mega-events need and that cities can provide, there are six event structures that are usually preserved after an event. These are:

- infrastructure
- knowledge, skill-development and education
- image
- emotions
- networks
- culture⁷⁴

While it would be very interesting to elaborate on the whole of them, we shall now focus our attention on structure number three: image. One of the legacies of the Olympic City is the image of the city itself: being able to communicate a different idea of the city,

⁷² Chris Gratton and Holger Preuss, “Maximizing Olympic Impacts by Building Up Legacies”, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, London, Vol.25 (14), 2008, p. 1923.

⁷³ Nola Agha, Sheranne Fairley and Heather Gibson, “Considering legacy as a multi-dimensional construct: The legacy of the Olympic Games”, in *Sport Management Review*, Vol. 15, 1, (Feb. 2012), p. 131.

⁷⁴ Chris Gratton and Holger Preuss, *op. cit.*, 2008, pp. 1925-1929.

contradicting a previously settled negative stereotype can completely change the significance of the city on a global scale, enhancing tourism and economic exchanges in general. The only way to try and change the image of the city is to plan a very intense and well structured PR strategy, with key elements of communication and marketing, that shall be played at the key moments of the Olympic path of the city by its major stakeholders. Of course, there is a percentage of uncertainty around the security of the positive outcome of the strategy, since the city will be at the core of what we have previously defined as the new global public sphere, where anyone can have a say and it is virtually impossible to damage control them all. In general, nonetheless, we can state that a good strategy in communication is itself part of the legacy of the Olympic Games, underlining once again the key role played by communication in mega sport events.

Chapter 2 - The Beijing experience: the triumph of self-celebration

On August 29, 2004, Athens hosted its Closing Ceremony of the XXVIII edition of the modern Olympic Games, passing the baton to the Chinese delegation, and officially inaugurating the XXIX Olympiad. At that point, the Chinese dream started to become a more impelling reality.

It took a hundred years for China to answer the third question asked by Nankai University students in the famous “Three Questions About the Olympics”: professor Zhang had attended the 1908 Olympic Games in London and, fascinated by the philosophical values of Olympism, primarily its idea of fair-play, decided to bring them back to his students in Tianjin. The three questions asked by the students in the following seminary were: when would the first Chinese athlete take part in the Olympic Games? When a Chinese athlete would first win a gold medal? When would China first host the Games?⁷⁵

This chapter will briefly go through the main phases of the 2008 Olympic Games, with particular focus on the aspects that have been analysed from a theoretical point of view in the previous extract of the dissertation, in order to highlight the significant positive and negative key-points, if any, of the Chinese Olympics.

1. The bid

It is important to underline that, as for many other cities awarded the right to host, Beijing did not succeed at its first attempt. In 1993 the Chinese government had put forward a strong bid, but had been defeated by Sydney by two votes only (45 to 43).⁷⁶ Although China could already guarantee for strong financial resources to be destined to the Games, it is commonly understood among scholars and Olympic experts that in 1993 the swinging luck of the Beijing bid had been determined by the memory of the shocking events that had taken place

⁷⁵ F. Hong and L. Zhouxiang, “Beijing's two bids for the Olympics: the political games”, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 29, 1 (Jan. 2012), p. 145.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

in Tiananmen Square less than four years earlier: there was not a qualified majority of IOC members that would feel comfortable with such an introverted regime hosting the Games. Moreover, environmental issues were already considered of outmost importance.⁷⁷

In any case, neither the Government nor Beijingers had any intention to give up hosting the Games: they needed to show the world they were not the Asian Cinderella they were considered before the advent of Mao Zedong, but were ready to be a “world class city”. As we framed before, the Olympic Games are one of the greatest occasions to expose a city to prolonged global attention. It also means that if any of the city’s peculiarities collide with the predominant political thought worldwide, exposure may cost an underestimated backlash.⁷⁸

Therefore China had to understand what they wanted to gain from bidding and winning the right to host, highlight what issues may arise against them, and lay out a strategy to address them.

China aimed at changing its image status on the international arena in order to maximize its economic growth as one of the largest developing countries in the world, but to do so it had to open to the idea of being part of a capitalist-oriented and globalized environment. The interconnectedness of globalization comes with the interesting burden of political change towards Western-based models.

Beijing Municipal authorities decided to submit a new proposal for bidding to the Chinese Olympic Committee (COC) on 25 November 1998. It was green-lighted on 6 January 1999 and nine months later, on 6 September 1999, the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bidding Committee (BOBICO) was officially established.⁷⁹ The words pronounced that day by Mayor Liu Qi confirm and elaborate the Chinese strategic approach to the Olympics:

⁷⁷ Cf. Ian G. Cook and Steven Miles, “Beijing 2008”, in John R. Gold and Margaret R. Gold (edited by), *Olympic cities. City Agendas, Planning, and the World’s Games, 1896-2016*, New York, Routledge, 2011, p. 340-343.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Cf. Grant Jarvie, Dong-Jhy Hwang and Mel Brennan, *Sport, Revolutions and the Beijing Olympics*, Oxford (UK), Berg, 2008, p. 126.

Hosting the Olympics will inspire the spirit of the nation, consolidate national unity and show the world the achievements of China's modernization campaign. It will strengthen China's international influence, boost mutual understanding and friendship between Chinese and the peoples of the world, facilitate the 'opening-up', and achieve a peaceful international environment for socialist modernization.⁸⁰

BOBICO officials knew that, in order to be friendly and "open-up" towards the rest of the world, they had to address and fix their city's previous image. Therefore, with the new bid, they started the process that Christopher A. Shaw describes as "Imagineering": it is a communicative strategy, first formalized with the 1989 Atlanta bid for the 1996 Olympic Games, that "invented a positive image of Atlanta as a caring, inclusive, responsible 'world-class' city".⁸¹ Since then, many if not all bidding cities – to different extents – made use of this marketing concept.⁸² It is pivotal to underline how Shaw stresses the fact that this image is invented, created through enhancing the city's positive characteristics, bending others to positivity while hiding negativity, or using it to prove how the city is evolving and therefore moving towards world-class status. In reality, if the city is actually becoming one is a whole different matter.

It was chosen to follow a different approach compared to the 1993 bid: a whole new 5-point strategy was developed. First of all, the BOBICO understood the importance to have experts on board and working actively: they invited talents from several fields, even Chinese citizens living abroad, to add their knowledge as consultants for the bid file. Together with them, Olympic experts were summoned too, in order to have a realistic idea on what bidding and hosting actually meant.⁸³

The second key point was to advertise and seek support for the bid both nationally and internationally. First of all, BOBICO proved their bid had the domestic popular support so rightly dear to the IOC:

⁸⁰ Qi Liu, Speech at the opening ceremony of the BOBICO, Sept. 6, 1999.

⁸¹ Christopher A. Shaw, *Five Rings Circus. Myths and Realities of the Olympic Games*, Gabriola Island (BC, Canada), New Society Publishers, 2008, p. 172.

⁸² Cf. *Ibidem*.

⁸³ Cf. F. Hong and L. Zhouxiang, *op. cit.*, p. 150-151.

according to an official poll conducted on account of the BOBICO, 95% of Beijingers were in favour of hosting the Games. This incredible result was further enhanced by the official IOC poll to a 96% support in both Beijing and other urban areas around China, with a shocking 0% opposing the Games in Beijing and a negligible 1% China-wise. At this point, BOBICO needed opinion leaders to be on board, in order to strengthen the bid in front of international media and, therefore, in front of the world and of the voting IOC members. Famous Chinese stars like Jackie Chan and Gong Li were actively promoting the bid. International stars were also convinced to express positive feelings towards the bid. One for all, Luciano Pavarotti who, after singing together with Domingo and Carreras (i.e. “The Three Tenors”, who were not new at vehiculating significant messages in international sport events side shows), went as far as declaring that they⁸⁴ “went there to make Beijing more visible to people...I think Beijing should be chosen for the Olympics because it is an incredible city with a lot of present and a lot of future”.⁸⁵ It might be interesting to keep in mind that Pavarotti was a international messenger of peace for the United Nations at that time.⁸⁶

Thirdly, it was fundamental to attract foreign IOC members to support the bid: since visits to bidding cities had been forbidden by new IOC regulations, Chinese IOC members He Zhenliang, Yu Zaiqing and Lu Shengrong travelled all over the world to gain the broader possible support for the bid and to ensure to have enough votes to be awarded at the IOC Session in Moscow.⁸⁷ As reported by Close, Askew and Xin, Mr Zhenliang recalled how:

During the bidding process, [...] the main difficulty [was] that the outside world didn't understand how fast both economic and social progress [was] being achieved in China. They always look at China from an old angle, an old view. But according to new IOC rules, we couldn't invite IOC members to China. So the only way was to send them VCDs and magazines. And how were we to make the western [sic] press

⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

⁸⁵ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/1408455.stm>

⁸⁶ <http://www.un.org/sg/mop/formermops.shtml>

⁸⁷ Cf. F. Hong and L. Zhouxiang, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

aware of the progress we had made? We invited the sports press, which is more objective, to come to China. This strategy was very successful. Besides, I'm allowed to visit our colleagues in the IOC, so I use every opportunity to exchange views with them, telling them how fast we are developing; this convinced them that China really was capable of staging a wonderful Olympic Games.(Xinhua News Agency 9 October 2003)⁸⁸

The fourth and fifth strategic points were strictly related and, once again, focused on communicating the right message: BOBICO had to face criticism for the more than alleged poor human rights records, and for poor environmental conditions. In order contrast criticism on human rights records, BOBICO new strategy did not revolve on deception anymore (i.e. during the previous bid), but on interpreting international law treaties like the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, or the Olympic spirit, according to China's development path, somehow acknowledging the need for stronger enforcement of human rights and democracy, which could only be achieved through the development of society, which in turn relied on the development of the city itself.⁸⁹

During the bidding stage, criticism was mainly focused on the domestic lack of freedom of speech and of religion, and on the repressive approach towards Tibet and the tensed relationship with Taiwan, the China's foreign policy silent support towards totalitarian regimes like the Burmese and the Sudanese. In November 2000, a British Parliamentary Committee criticized Beijing for allegedly violating the spirit of the Games, while in March 2001, only four months before the IOC Session in Moscow, forty-one members of the US House of Representatives urged the IOC to drop Beijing candidacy. At the same time, both the Dalai Lama, representing the Tibetan exiled community, and Annette Lu, Taiwan's Vice-President, softly endorsed the possibility for China to host the Olympics.⁹⁰ Though critical with the Chinese Government, it is possible to speculate that both wanted Beijing to be

⁸⁸ Paul Close, David Askew and Xu Xin, *The Beijing Olympiad. The Political Economy of a Sporting Mega-Event*, New York, Routledge, 2007, p. 112.

⁸⁹ Cf. Ibid.

⁹⁰ Cf. Grant Jarvie, Dong-Jhy Hwang and Mel Brennan, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 126-127.

under the spotlight thanks to the Olympic Games, so that their voice would be heard loudly and clearer than ever across the world.

As for the environment instead, an interesting strategy was developed, based on actual facts: the government planned and enforced long-term plan for the protection of the environment targeting 2010 was adjusted to be completed in 2007, with an estimate investment of \$12.2 billion up to 2007 and with an additional \$3 billion towards 2008 to boost the anti-pollution effort.⁹¹ Among the plan's features we may recall:

- fourteen new wastewater treatment plans to be built to improve the sewage treatment rates to 90 per cent from 42 per cent;
- 240 square kilometres of trees and grass to be planted around Beijing to create 'green coverage' area of more than 50 per cent;
- 200 industrial enterprises to change production or be shifted out of the downtown area altogether to reduce pollution levels;
- completion of the fourth and fifth ring roads, five new subway lines, 90 per cent of buses and 70 per cent taxis to use natural gas.⁹²

Even though these bullet points are very expensive in terms of money, time and human resources, not all of them would have been useful environmentally: moving industrial plants in the outskirts of the city does not assure a decrease of pollution, and therefore one may wonder what was the balance between good faith and propagandistic use of state money.

It seemed the right thing to do: the Chinese government, aware of the fact that with poor environmental records, the only way to convince the voting members of the IOC was to actually act. Accordingly, an interesting move was made from a communicative point of view: Liu Jinmin, Deputy Mayor of Beijing and Vice-President of BOBICO, announced that those efforts to improve the condition of Beijing environment would have carried on regardless of Beijing being awarded of the honour to host the Games.⁹³ Through this expedient, authorities

⁹¹ Cf. Ian G. Cook and Steven Miles, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 346-347.

⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 347.

⁹³ Cf. F. Hong and L. Zhouxiang, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-152.

and officials can show a commitment towards pressing issues that transcend the contingency of the bidding race: they show true concern for the future of their city, making their bid more valuable. As a matter of fact, the IOC recently developed the expression “bid legacy” to emphasize the importance of these projects.⁹⁴ A easy and simple yet quite effective strategy.

In the weeks preceding the official voting, there was an increased debate and the Chinese capital was by many addressed as a forerunner for the awarding of the Games, particularly because of “the advanced state of its preparations and because of its strategic importance”,⁹⁵ from an economic and financial point of view. Therefore, Beijing had to face an increased media coverage underlining the sharp contrast between those willing to give Beijing a chance to prove China could grow socially too, and the more orthodox supporters of “boycott” as the one and only strategy against lack of democracy. For example, British newspaper The Guardian published a series of articles reporting dissenting views on the topic in the days preceding the ballot. In an article published on July 1, 2001, ironically titled “China’s tarnished prize”, Crag Reddie, one of the British IOC members at that time, stated that inside the IOC “the debate we’re having is: do you enhance China’s chances of improving their society by awarding them the Games or denying them 2008”.⁹⁶ While reporting both positive and negative opinions, The Guardian doesn’t avoid to clearly state how the lack of human rights records is self-evident, and considering it or not as a parameter for awarding the Games becomes a different matter: “although many outsiders thought China would clean up its act in the run-up to the IOC vote, almost the opposite has been happening.”⁹⁷ The Guardian also reminded its readers of the commercial potential that many in the business were willing to explore, even at the cost of setting aside concerns: “commercial lobbyists who have backed the ‘opening up’ of

⁹⁴ Cf. <http://www.olympic.org/content/olympism-in-action/olympic-legacy/bid-heritage/>

⁹⁵ Ryan Ong, “New Beijing, Great Olympics. Beijing and its Unfolding Olympic Legacy”, *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 4 (N. 2), 21 May 2004, p. 38.

⁹⁶ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/jul/01/china.olympicgames2008>

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*.

China for trade using the 2008 Olympics as a vehicle have also found sympathetic support in the 122-member IOC.”⁹⁸ The very same day, The Observer (a journal belonging to same holding owning The Guardian, the Guardian Media Group, GMG) issued a special report stating the mixed opinion of political leaders across the UK and the world: it emerges that in general the strategy was for the governments to stay neutral on the topic, in order to avoid any open contrast both with Beijing on a diplomatic point of view, and with the pressure groups that were urging to express concern about the Chinese bid. If the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, Denis MacShane, stated that it would be “entirely a decision of the International Olympic Committee”,⁹⁹ the British Minister of Sport, Richard Caborn, reiterated that “this is entirely a matter for the IOC”.¹⁰⁰

On the contrary, political minorities and oppositions seized the day to raise their consents among the general public by criticizing China and joining forces with NGOs and INGOs sceptical of the outcome of a Chinese Olympic Games, especially if international awareness about China’s human rights records would not be recognized in the process. Menzies Campbell, the then LibDem spokesman for Foreign Affairs but also a former Olympic athlete: “there are obviously strong reasons to hold the Games to China but the IOC would need to have copper-bottomed guarantees about human rights.”¹⁰¹ For Cheryl Gillan, who at the time was the Conservative Party Shadow Foreign Minister,

the most important thing is to promote greater openness and contact with China which will help to open China to the rest of the world [...] Any country which hosts the Olympic Games [...] will benefit from that [...] That does not mean that we should not express our concerns about human rights issues to the Chinese government.

The Guardian also reported the official comments of the Chinese Embassy in the UK, in their attempt to quench this contrasting yet

⁹⁸ Ibidem.

⁹⁹ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/jul/01/china.sunderkatwala>

¹⁰⁰ Ibidem.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

provoking and possibly disrupting media campaign around the Beijing 2008 Olympic bid. According to the Embassy,

any action that discriminates or obstructs Beijing's bid for the Olympic Games is not compatible with the Olympic spirit. But some people in the West now are suffering from anti-China paranoia. They would try to oppose whatever China wishes to do indiscriminately.

A resolute comment that stood in previously explained strategy laid out by the BOBICO and the government through their experts' team of PR: instead of being quiet about criticism, they replied harshly counterattacking the attackers on the same grounds, turning tables to make China look like the victim of an abuse of the Olympic spirit and, therefore, if that spirit is an extent of human rights, China's detractors were themselves showing poor human rights records to a certain extent.

It would need a broader perspective on international media coverage to track a path, but even from this brief account it is possible to have a hint of the strong contrasting coverage the Beijing bid received, especially in the so called Western world.

Considering the ever increasing criticism of international media coverage, one last effort had to be made, to secure the Games would go to Beijing: send "a strong and carefully selected team to present Beijing's plan for hosting the 2008 Games at the 112th session of the IOC in Moscow on 13 to 16 July 2001." Among its representatives, Beijing lined up IOC member He Zhenliang and the two leaders of the BOBICO, Wang Wei and Tu Mingde. As reported by the New York Times, the brazen face of Wei and the liveliness of Mingde worked "perfectly" in a preview press conference held in Moscow on July 12, where selected questions only came from journalists working for state-controlled print and broadcasts, like People's Daily or CCTV. They had the chance to address sensitive topics, like human rights and environment, through what looked very much like a pre-organized part of the press conference.¹⁰² The following day, Zhenliang stepped in, and during the final presentation, said: "If you honor Beijing with the right to

¹⁰² Cf. <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/07/13/sports/olympics-notebook-chinese-officials-avoid-tough-questions.html?ref=olympicgames2008>

host the 2008 Olympic Games, I can assure you, my dear colleagues, that, in seven years from now, Beijing will make you proud of the decision you make here today.”¹⁰³

BOBICO strategy finally proved successful: Beijing was awarded with the right to host the 2008 Olympic Games. Victory happened after only two ballots, when four out of five candidates were still in the race: Beijing pulled out an absolute majority of 56 votes and took the highest and only prize. Definitively, it remains a secret why the vast majority of IOC members chose to trust Beijing’s bid: arguably, economic reasons and the perspective of new commercial horizons prevailed over the concerns for human rights. Or, as many believe, another important factor may have been the unwritten rule of the turnover of continents: empirically, the IOC does not seem to be keen on awarding two consecutive Summer Olympic Games to cities belonging to the same continent – it has never since the end of World War II –, and therefore the fact that Athens (Europe) was going to host in 2004 may have also been taken into account.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the vast majority of IOC members are European, and awarding Paris for 2008 would have meant killing a European bid for 2012: therefore, China may have lobbied to create a “European majority” to wipe out Paris from the competition.

2. Lead-up

The bid had relied on the main slogan “New Beijing: Great Olympics”, subsidised by three additional mottos: “high-tech Olympics”, “green Olympics” and “people’s Olympics”.¹⁰⁵ It was now time to brand the recently awarded Olympic City accordingly, in order to shape the world- class city image whose quest lured Chinese institutions towards the Games.

¹⁰³ <http://en.beijing2008.cn/spirit/beijing2008/candidacy/presentation/n214051424.shtml>

¹⁰⁴ Paul D. Poast, “Winning the Bid: Analyzing the International Olympic Committee’s Host City Selections”, in *International Interactions: Empirical and Theoretical Research in International Relations*, Vol. 33, 1 (2007), pp. 82-83.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Ian G. Cook and Steven Miles, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 346.

According to several INGOs and international media and politicians, the contrast between the Imagineering of the BOBICO for Beijing and the factual reality was sharp. As previously said, criticism was mainly addressing environment and human rights record both on domestic and foreign policy. And it did not stop. From the moment the Games were awarded to the Opening Ceremony seven years later, it was a *crescendo* of media pressure for the newly born BOCOG, the Beijing Organizing Committee for the 2008 Olympic Games.

Soon after the announcement, several political actors from across the world expressed their opinion on the IOC decision. While the United States presidency was pretty neutral, saying that “the Olympics are a sport event, not a political event. But [...] this is now an opportunity for China to showcase itself as a modern nation”,¹⁰⁶ yet at the same time critical reactions sparked from the Dalai Lama’s Tibetan government in exile, to the head of the French President’s foreign affairs committee that said this decision was similar to hosting the 1936 in Nazi Germany. Taiwanese authorities, instead, felt it was a possible win-lose situation for them: it would help them not be invaded by China during those seven years at least, but mainland China’s national pride could grow and pose a more serious threat to their identity and independence.¹⁰⁷

Therefore, the newly born BOCOG understood the importance of developing a damage control strategy to deal with its image vulnerabilities: in May 2006 the strategic communications planning firm Hill and Knowlton (H&K) was hired. This company was founded in Cleveland, United States, in 1927:¹⁰⁸ the BOCOG felt it was important to hire a “Western world” firm to have the right strategic approach to damage control and image building, or Imagineering has previously stated.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/14/beijing.olympics/>

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Grant Jarvie, Dong-Jhy Hwang and Mel Brennan, *op. cit.*, 2008, pp. 127-128.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. <http://www.hkstrategies.com/company/legacy>

¹⁰⁹ Sharon K. Hom, “The promise of a People’s Olympics”, in Minky Worden (edited by), *China’s Great Leap. The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, New York, Seven Stories Press, 2008, pp. 64-65.

Mainly, BOCOG had to face the issues of Tibet, pollution and censorship, domestically, and Sudan and Burma as foreign policy issues.

In early 2002, the Free Tibet and the Norwegian Tibet Committee had asked IOC President Rogge (who was elected President right after the awarding of the 2008 Olympics to Beijing) to have a look at the details of the Host City Contract signed between the IOC and BOCOG, in order to see if there were any provision about the implementation of human rights, but they were denied on commercial confidentiality grounds. Since the bribing scandal of Salk Like City, all organizing committee to that date had disclosed details of their Host City contract, so it proved as a setback for the credibility of the IOC, and certainly it did not help Beijing in terms of quality of visibility either. As a result, many new campaigns started against China and pro-Tibet, most of them mocking the Olympics: the “Beijing 2008: race for Tibet” and the “One World, One Dream, Free Tibet” campaign slogans were launched.¹¹⁰

As for pollution, this was most likely the greatest concern for Beijingers and for foreigners, as well as for the IOC and the athletes, since poor air quality would affect the health of the athletes during their performances, theoretically disrupting the actual Games, resulting in a walk of shame and a destroyed public image for Beijing. Even though spokespeople of the BOCOG were continually feeding the media, especially the domestic state-controlled, with encouraging data about the quality of air and the number of blue sky days, ironic criticism was raised every time foreign press had the chance to step into the country.¹¹¹ As recalled by professor Cha,

a reporter sarcastically stated that China’s fast-track environmental cleanup effort was like an athlete trying to get in shape by walking on a treadmill and eating double cheeseburgers at the same time.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 64-67.

¹¹¹ Victor D. Cha, *Beyond the Final Score. The Politics of Sport in Asia*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2009, p. 117.

Moreover, the Chinese legislative process paving the way to Beijing 2008 didn't seem to respect what Mr. Wei - who after the bidding process had been appointed Secretary General of the BOCOG -, had prospected in 2001: 'we will give the media complete freedom to report when they come to China'.¹¹² Or at least it did respect what Wei had said, but to the letter: a new set of temporary regulations had been enforced between 1 January 2007 and 17 October 2008 to allow foreign journalists to cover 'the Beijing Olympic Games and the preparation, as well as political, economic, social and cultural matters of China by foreign journalists in conformity with Chinese laws and regulations'. This *de facto* meant that Chinese journalists, or any other national who would be a source to journalistic activity (even to foreigners, here is the legal trick), would be subject to normal regulations instead. The Olympic truce for a more transparent freedom of speech was by any means a farce: only in 2007, the Foreign Correspondents of Club of China registered at least "180 incidents of intimidation of sources, detentions, surveillance, official reprimands, and even violence against staff and sources."¹¹³ In other words, the Chinese government tried to control media aligning all domestic state-controlled media through an official script that would always be reproduced very similarly by them;¹¹⁴ scaring off through harsh intimidating legislation all other domestic media; cutting off all sources for foreign media while attempting to pretend to be respecting the promise of more freedom when it came to informing the world about the Olympics.¹¹⁵

Probably, BOCOG and Hu Jintao's government greatest headaches were caused by China's foreign policy criticism, and to a certain extent paradoxically, because that was the field they better addressed over the seven year lead-up. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to imagine that they

¹¹² Phelim Kine, "A Global Medal in Media Censorship", in Minky Worden (edited by), *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 115.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

¹¹⁴ A proof of this is, for example, when "five newspapers, the *People's Daily*, *Guangming Daily*, *Economic Daily*, *People's Liberation Army Daily* and the *Beijing Daily* [were] all running near-identical front pages on August 19, 2007." *Ibid.*, p. 120.

¹¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 118-120.

were advised to make some loosening moves after the greatest communication outbreak of the Beijing Olympics lead-up. Steven Spielberg, the famous US film director and producer, was appointed in April 2006 as artistic consultant to Chinese director Zhang Yimou, in charge of Opening and Closing ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics. On March 28, 2007, the Wall Street Journal published an editorial written by actress Mia Farrow and her son, activist and law student at Yale, Ronan Farrow, who directly addressed the dramatic situation of Darfur and called on China for pressuring the Sudanese government, whose strong relationship with Beijing was widely known, to let United Nations into the country in order to avoid the worsening of an already under way genocide. The editorial warned Spielberg personally about supporting Beijing Olympics and be blamed for not pressuring China on Darfur. The editorial title was “Genocide Olympics”: a powerful and “easily digestible slogan”¹¹⁶ that effectively awakened public opinion across the world. Spielberg swiftly reacted sending a letter directly to President Hu Jintao on April 2, 2007, calling for action and implicitly threatening the government with his resignation. At that point, China’s response was incredibly fast: by April 13, 2007, news was spreading that China had sent a senior Chinese official to convince the Sudanese government to let UN peacekeeping forces into the country. Furthermore, China decided to vote in favour the UN resolution to deploy the peacekeeping force to Darfur, and to contribute with the highest number of soldiers among participating countries. Unfortunately, the Sudanese government stalled on various conditions: at that point Spielberg sent a second letter to Hu Jintao on November 15, 2007, before withdrawing from the Olympic ceremonies preparations on February 12, 2008, only months before the beginning of the Games.¹¹⁷

In this particular occasion, China might have failed its image building strategy, though it is important, for further considerations, to

¹¹⁶ R. Scott Greathead, “China and the Spielberg Effect”, in Minky Worden (edited by), *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 206.

¹¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 205-215.

highlight that “these actions by Beijing might appear small, but they were nonetheless evidence of a clear shift in policy away from its previous stand on the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs”.¹¹⁸ The same shift was evident in dealing with the repression of the Burmese regime in late 2007: from vetoing a UN resolution, in roughly a month only the situation escalated, and this time China not only did not oppose a further UN resolution, but strongly reduced the number of arms sold to the regime.¹¹⁹ The real mistake, this time, was in communication: the general public worldwide had almost no idea about these shifts in the Chinese foreign policy. For whatever reason, China did not consider a strong indirect advertising strategy when it came to foreign policy: it seems as almost if the country’s leadership was pervaded by a dualistic tension between the new concept of “peaceful rise” introduced even publicly by President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, and a latent fear that playing it peaceful would give the impression to other powerful countries that the leadership had softened up, and in turn these countries could try to subtly “attack China from the inside”, e.g., triggering an ethnic revolution.

We believe the fear of an inner uprising was also highlighted by the fact that both BOCOG and the government were pushing for enhancing national pride in order to unify and strengthen the people of China. In reality, many believe this strategy could have turned out as backfire, involuntarily fuelling ethnic resentment of minorities.¹²⁰

The nationalistic theme was also used to pervade and boost another important program, one of “social engineering”: the Olympic civilization program. As for many other Olympic cities, this program included guidelines on the appropriate behaviour to pursue during the event in order to keep up with global attitudes and perceptions. But BOCOG, through the Capital Ethics Development Committee, subsidized with

¹¹⁸ Victor D. Cha, “A Theory of Sport and Politics”, in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 26, 11(2009), pp. 160-1603.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 1603.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1604.

\$2.5 million, put through a real internal indoctrination program, which rested on three main approaches:¹²¹

the first was ideological, based on the orchestration of a ubiquitous official discourse promoting self-reform. The second promoted social change through embodied practices and active participation. The third approach was coercive, and focused on the tightening of security, by limiting freedom of movement and restricting public accessibility.

In the wake of this program, migrant workers paid the higher price: notwithstanding the fact that their invaluable help contributed to the building process all over Beijing, this estimate of four million individuals group was in reality the main addressee of the program. They were either hidden away during official occasions or from official promotional materials (e.g. videos and brochures), or used as the bad example that requested the implementing of the program in the first place.¹²²

Supposedly created to improve the quality of Chinese society, it might have actually worsened the divide between the well off and the majority of the addressee of the program, the lower classes people.

With its burden of controversies,¹²³ Beijing headed towards the inauguration of its well-awaited Olympic Games.

3. Hosting and aftermath

On August 8, 2008, Beijing officially inaugurated its Olympic Games, with one of the most fascinating and theatrical Opening Ceremonies of the history of modern Games. It was divided “into two parts: one to highlight China's age-old civilization and the other to highlight China's splendid modern era.”¹²⁴ This \$100 million and 15,000 performer show was directed by Zhang Yimou, a high profile film

¹²¹ Anne-Marie Broudehoux, “The Social and Spatial Impacts of Olympic Image Construction: The Case of Beijing 2008”, in Helen Jefferson Lenskyj and Stephen Wagg (edited by), *The Palgrave Handbook of Olympic Studies*, Basingstoke (UK), Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 201.

¹²² Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 203-205.

¹²³ For conciseness reasons, only major episodes, that would serve as general yet comprehensive basis for the quest of this dissertation, have been analysed here: protests all over the world tried to hit China's attempt to refurbish its international face, varying from calls for boycott during several stages of the Olympic Torch Relay, usually an stage event that embraces the pacifism of the Olympic spirit, and whose disruption is generally used to raise local support, to different forms of protest over the Internet.

¹²⁴ <http://en.beijing2008.cn/ceremonies/n214508163.shtml>

director who managed to physically represent the main slogan of the Games: “One World, One Dream”.¹²⁵

The Games themselves are widely recognized to have been a success: the images of Usain Bolt’s 100m Olympic record performance, achieved with such class and apparent simplicity, to cross the finish line in slacking mode, are forever to be in the history of world sport. The previous record, belonging to Canadian sprinter Donovan Bailey, had endured for 12 years.¹²⁶

But as Olympic Games are not only about the Games themselves, it is important to consider what legacy survived the Beijing edition, for Beijingers, for China, for the world and for the Olympic movement.

In terms of infrastructures and show, after witnessing the Olympic Park of Beijing and the Ceremonies, many thought it was the ultimate Olympics, and those hosts who followed would have had to confront a gigantic and tough to forget memory. Nonetheless, one thing to learn unequivocally from the Chinese Olympic experience is that legacy must be assessed through different periods of time in the future. Soon after the end of the Games, pollution levels rose back again to pre-Games standards. Moreover, the very expensive and majestic venues like the so called “Bird’s Nest” (i.e. the Olympic Stadium) or the Aquatics “Water Cube” have soon been identified as White Elephants: Beijing hadn’t exactly thought how to reuse these venues after the Games, and their maintenance costs are very high.¹²⁷

Mainly, Beijing seems to have epitomized about what happens when a developing country wants to establish itself as a developed country through the legitimate message of the Olympic Games. There is a clash of time and space, of social and economic principles that must be addressed: the interesting tension between inclusivity and exclusivity before the Games generated an interesting aftermath curiosity for analysing the legacy from a social (quality of life so environment, social

¹²⁵ Cf. Ian G. Cook, “Beijing 2008”, in John R. Gold and Margaret R. Gold (edited by), *Olympic cities. City Agendas, Planning, and the World’s Games, 1896-2016*, New York, Routledge, 2011, pp. 352-353.

¹²⁶ Cf. <http://www.olympic.org/olympic-results/london-2012/athletics/100m-m>

¹²⁷ Cf. Ian G. Cook, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 355.

gap, exclusion, human rights in general, program of civilization), economic (sustainable growth, white elephants) and cultural point of view (the internationally unnecessary, if not for China itself, show off). Probably, the primary scope of the bid was to redefine Beijing (and China) as a member of the global community: open to global consumer capitalism while preserving some very peculiar Chinese socialism principles,¹²⁸ to enjoy the long awaited economic and financial wealth without selling the philosophical history of modern China to the Westerners. As said, the clash of ideologies had been so evident not even the greatest communication strategies could hide it definitively, but only time will tell if these Games were the first milestone to Chinese integration in the world community, or sad evidence of incompatibility.

Clearly, the most important tool for *ex-post* assessments like these is time: as we will see through the next chapter's analysis of London 2012, many parameters of judgement of the Games may change swiftly, as soon as the following edition is hosted.

¹²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 355-358.

Chapter 3 - The London experience: pure legacy all the way

If Beijing 2008 was the result of a reiterated strategy to affirm China as a developed and global country, a clear example of authorities and institutions teaming up from embryo idea to delivery in typical socialist style, London 2012 is, quite frankly, the opposite. Nonetheless, the majesty and greatness of the Chinese Olympics may indeed have been surpassed by those who clearly were not even trying to. This chapter will explore the main features of London 2012 Olympic Games, the most recent Summer Olympics.

1. The bid

The bidding campaign for London 2012 is undoubtedly one of the most interesting pieces of international politics of sport of the last 30 years at least. The fascinating way to handle political communication in Anglo-Saxon countries makes the “tale to Singapore”¹²⁹ the perfect script for a Hollywood movie. Before deepening into the details of the bid and race to awarding, it is interesting to call for a background check on the political situation in the UK at the time of bidding, to understand the consideration of sport policies and clarify where the embryo idea of the bid originated.

After the May 1997 general elections, Labour leader Tony Blair installed in 10 Downing Street as newly elected Prime Minister.¹³⁰ Since its first term in office, Blair and his Cabinet would stride towards a reformed way to intend sport in the UK: in July 1997 he established the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) which went on to replace the Department of National Heritage (DNH). The Government then recognized specialist sports colleges in the state system and worked out a system to indirectly boost athletes’ performances at upcoming Olympic Games (Sydney 2000): it was established that out of

¹²⁹ Singapore hosted the 117th IOC Session during which the right to host the 2012 Olympic Games was awarded. Cf. <http://www.olympic.org/content/the-ioc/bidding-for-the-games/past-bid-processes/2012-host-city-election/>

¹³⁰ Cf. Ilaria Favretto, *Storia d’Europa nel XX secolo. Gran Bretagna*, Milano, Editori Unicopli, 2004, pp. 294-296.

every sterling pound people spent in the Lottery, thirty pence would go to a group of good causes, one of which being sport. Through this new way of financing, it was possible to increase by four times the grants given to Olympic sports. A slight change in financing that provoked a landslide change in the quality of professional sport: Great Britain went from thirty-sixth¹³¹ to tenth place in the medal count ranking from Atlanta 1996 to Sydney 2000, “the nation’s strongest performance at the Olympics since before the Second World War”.¹³² This result pushed Labour to put more effort into sport policies, producing the “A Sporting Future for All” and the “A Sporting Future for All: The Government’s Plan for Sport” documents in 2000 and 2001, structuring a detailed program of implementation and progress tracking for development of sport from grassroots to professionalism, and giving local authorities a renewed power to directly control sport strategy. Even though the money spent by the Government was not growing exponentially because Chancellor Gordon Brown wanted to prove Labour could work into the financial budgeting set by the previous administration, John Major’s Conservative majority – it was pivotal for Labour propaganda to prove they were not willing to spend more than their counterparty, Blair’s government approach to sport definitely proved a sharp change, both in considering sport important for societal growth (in terms of health, education and national pride) and recognizing the key role that must be played by local institutions.¹³³

Unfortunately, the sport policy vision emerging from governmental action was not sustained in credibility by the organs entrusted with coordination and enforcement of these policies. Both the Secretary of State of the DCMS and its junior, the Minister of State for Sport¹³⁴, had to cope from the beginning of the first term with harsh

¹³¹ Cf. <http://www.espn.co.uk/espn/sport/story/142366.html>

¹³² Kevin Jeffersys, *Sport and Politics in Modern Britain. The Road to 2012*, Basingstoke (UK), Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 235.

¹³³ Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 233-236.

¹³⁴ It’s worth clarifying that according to the institutional framework of the UK, the Secretaries of State of the Departments form the Cabinet of the Prime Minister who choose them among Members of the House

criticism around more generally known controversial bills (e.g., Fox Hunting ban), than getting credit for enforcing less known policies. Tony Banks was in charge as Minister of Sport between 1997 and 1999, when replaced by Kate Hoey, who was the first female Sports Minister in the history of the UK, who served up until the end of Blair's first term, in 2001. The Secretary of State during the whole first term had been Chris Smith. In his second term, Blair wanted the Department to have a fresh start with people he knew better and could trust more, so in 2001 he appointed Tessa Jowell as Secretary of State at the DCMS, and Richard Caborn as Sports Minister. Even though Jowell had to deal with the humiliating debacle of the 2005 World Athletics Championships which hardly had been her fault to begin with,¹³⁵ resulting in major media criticism driven by the Conservatives on the possibility for the UK to ever stage any major international event in the future,¹³⁶ she is one of the key personalities who pricelessly contributed to bringing the Games to London.¹³⁷ Let's see why.

While Labour were getting their sports policy together, the British Olympic Association (BOA) had been exploring the feasibility of bidding for the Olympic Games: in 1997 David Luckes, a logistics expert who had previously been a hockey goalkeeper for Great Britain's Olympic Team, was asked to generate a report about the feasibility of the Games. It took Luckes roughly forty months to provide the BOA with the 400-page document that positively persuaded the Association.¹³⁸ At the

of Common and of Lords. Below the Secretaries there are Under-Secretaries, and the every Department may have a few Ministers (and below them Under-Ministers) responding to the Secretary. Therefore, the "chain of command" in the DCMS would see the Secretary of State of the DCMS in charge, followed by the Under-Secretary of the DCMS and, then, in the field of sport, the Minister of Sport and his Under-Minister. Ministers and Under-Secretaries are also known as Parliamentary Ministers or Ministers at Parliamentary level. Cf. <https://www.gov.uk/>

¹³⁵ The 2005 World Athletics Championships were originally scheduled to be hosted in London, but in 2001 the newly appointed DCMS Secretary, Tessa Jowell, decided, after an investigation, that costs would be prohibitive, and offered the IAAF to move the event to Sheffield, where proper infrastructures were already available. IAAF refused and the UK finally withdrew its offer to host, and the event was moved to Helsinki, Finland. Cf. Kevin Jeffersys, *op. cit.*, 2012, p. 242.

¹³⁶ Cf. Gerald Kaufman, House of Commons Debates, vol. 376, 11 December 2001, "Oral Answers to Questions. World Athletics Championships", column 744.

¹³⁷ Cf. Kevin Jeffersys, *op. cit.*, 2012, pp. 236-242.

¹³⁸ Cf., Pete Fussey, Jon Coaffee, Gary Armstrong and Dick Hobbs, *Securing and Sustaining the Olympic City. Reconfiguring London for 2012 and Beyond*, Farnham (Surrey, UK), Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011, pp. 104-105.

same time, the BOA was inclined to believe only London could be seriously considered as a perspective host for the 2012 Olympic Games: it had the finance, the credibility as a world class city and the possibility to bear Olympic infrastructure in its development plans with no major alterations. Any other city in the UK would be shocked by the Olympic needs and would not make good use of such infrastructures, resulting in a weak candidacy. Therefore, in 2000 the BOA, at that time chaired by Craig Reddie, brought the idea of an Olympic London to the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, a left-wing independently elected politician who, though doubtful on the real chances of the project gaining momentum anytime in the near future, decided to support it when he managed to have reassurances from the BOA that the project was to locate the Olympics in East London, an area that Livingstone himself had been aiming for regenerating. Moreover, it is fair to believe Mr Livingstone understood the true potential of his decision to back it up in the landscape of the evolving governance of London: indeed, he was the first in fulfilling the newly-born position of Mayor of London, in the re-established Greater London Authority (GLA).¹³⁹ The GLA was the first piece of legislation dedicated to Labour's attempt to revive local governance and powers through direct elections, something that had been abolished by Thatcher in awareness that elected local governments were vastly Labour-controlled, a tedious fact in a time of crisis and conflict between the central government and the trade unions, which would have found essential backing through Labour local governance. In the case of London, the institution previously in place was called Greater London Council: Labour decided not to revive it, but to create a new one, to avoid any criticism about clashing Thatcherism and bringing back an institution that many saw as lefty.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, there was widespread belief that the GLA Assembly and the Mayor powers were quite weak to begin with, in particular considering the fact that the Government had retained a (Parliamentary) Minister for

¹³⁹ Cf. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/29/introduction>

¹⁴⁰ cf. http://www.citymayors.com/mayors/london_mayor.html

London. Livingstone was aware that an Olympic candidacy file must acquire the mayor's signature, automatically making the mayor at least partially in charge of organizing the Games if awarded, and most likely he sensed that, though a long shot, if London had won the bid, the mayoralty of London would have truly grown into a proper local governance. Moreover, he knew an accomplished mayoralty governance was exactly what Labour were aiming at, therefore it could have been an extra argument towards having the national government back the bid officially.¹⁴¹

At the same time, the BOA brought the idea forward to the DCMS Secretary and to the Minister of Sport, in a first attempt to gain national government support too. Jowell and Caborn were on board, but they had to convince the rest of the Cabinet. Moreover, Jowell had been advised by her own staff at the DCMS not to pursue the idea.¹⁴² John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister at the time, was more inclined to favour regeneration investments in the north of England for two reasons: he wanted to represent the North's interests as MP of the Hull East constituency¹⁴³ and, moreover, he was sceptical about bidding for international sports events after the hard-hitting failures of the 2005 World Athletics Championships and the 2006 FIFA World Cup.¹⁴⁴ Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, i.e. Minister of Finance or Treasury Secretary, was sceptical from an opportunistic point of view: he did not want to run the risk of being associated with another costly project – again, thus jeopardizing his promised legacy as future Prime Minister. Therefore, at the beginning of 2003 Jowell tried to build out consensus from outside the Cabinet first: she raised bipartisan support from the Parliament, then met again with Livingstone to sketch a budget for the Olympics, trying to prove that the vast majority of the financing would have derived from the National Lottery and from an increase of the London council tax (not a country-wide raise of

¹⁴¹ Cf. Peter Newman, "'Back the bid': The 2012 Summer Olympics and the Governance of London", in *Journal of Urban Affairs*, Volume 29, 3, 2007, p. 258-259.

¹⁴² Cf. Kevin Jeffersys, *op. cit.*, 2012, pp. 247-248.

¹⁴³ Cf. <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/person/4254/john-prescott>

¹⁴⁴ Cf., Pete Fussey, Jon Coaffee, Gary Armstrong and Dick Hobbs, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 105.

taxation). Moreover, private research polls were showing that almost three out of four in the UK favoured London as host of the Games. With these proves, she then flew to Lausanne to obtain official reassurances from IOC President Jacques Rogge that Paris bid had not been already secretly promised a win. She then brought all proves to the Cabinet, where the majority was still doubtful. Over and above, Blair was not convinced.¹⁴⁵ Apparently, one day Jowell found the right way to put it: according to Blair's memoirs, he had been pointing out that there was no pride in trying to be beaten by the French, resulting in great counter media coverage about money and time spent only to end up being "humiliated" by long time philosophical enemies, a great deal in the UK. That is when she stated the following: "I really didn't think that was your attitude to leadership. I thought you were prepared to take a risk. And it is a big risk. Of course we may not win but at least we will have had the courage to try."¹⁴⁶ She provoked a proud reaction from Blair. As confirmed by Craig Reddie: "Tessa did a magnificent job and deserves great credit for getting it through the Cabinet."¹⁴⁷

Once Blair was on board, he and Prescott convinced the rest of the Cabinet it was better to be with the flow (them) rather than against.¹⁴⁸

The BOA then set up the London 2012 Bid Team, appointing Keith Mills as Chief Executive and Barbara Cassani as Chairman. In May 2003 the BOA made it official they were going to bid for the 2012 Olympic Games. Straight after the Government announced its full support. In July the Bid Team submitted the letter with the intention to bid to the IOC. In January 2004 the applicant file was delivered and when, in May, the IOC confirmed that London had been selected as Bid City officially, together with Paris, New York, Madrid, Moscow, Barbara Cassani stepped down, probably due to her being a US citizen and because the Bid Team wanted to have a public face more recognizable

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Kevin Jeffersys, *op. cit.*, 2012, pp. 248-250.

¹⁴⁶ Tony Blair, *A Journey*, Hutchinson, London, 2010, p. 545.

¹⁴⁷ Mike Lee, *The Race for the 2012 Olympics. The Inside Story on How London Won the Bid*, Virgin Books, London, 2006, p. 18.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Tony Blair, *op. cit.*, 2010, p. 545.

with sport and in front of the IOC. They chose Lord Sebastian Coe, a former Olympian who had also been a Conservative Party MP. Not a widely known fact, but one that could interestingly mark the bid as bipartisan between lines.¹⁴⁹ One of the best thing Cassani did was to convince Mike Lee to join the Bid Team in autumn 2003 as Head of Communication: he “has a formidable reputation among the British sports press. He is known as the ‘spinmeister’, one of the first communications executives to merge the world of politics and sport”.¹⁵⁰

2005 was the key year: after proceeding with the submission of the Candidacy file to IOC, receiving the IOC Evaluation Commission visit, having attended any interesting meetings worldwide to cope with lobbying the press and, most prominently, the voting IOC members, the time came to fly to Singapore for the IOC Session. Quite significantly, in April the BOA had managed to gain official support by Nelson Mandela, one of the most respected individuals in sport and politics worldwide;¹⁵¹ this is quite a rare event, but international support can be vital for gaining momentum and prestige, two important factors in IOC voters’ minds. At the end of May, Tony Blair had given an exclusive interview to what we have defined in chapter one of this dissertation as the guru of the Olympic news, Ed Hula from Around the Rings. Tony Blair was trying to lobby into the Olympic community that London’s bid was more credible and committed than Paris’. Together with Blair, both Mills and Coe were playing a strong lobbying effort: the former covered the more business related interests at stake, playing its game like a high-class salesman rather than a cold-blooded corporate individual (which, most likely, would have been the case if Cassani had retained her role), while Coe was perfect for talking to IOC members, he was an insider. One example for all: he was regularly dining with former IOC President and very influential honorary member, Mr Samaranch.¹⁵² Many years back,

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Pete Fussey, Jon Coaffee, Gary Armstrong and Dick Hobbs, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 105-107.

¹⁵⁰ Mike Lee, *op. cit.*, 2006, p. 20.

¹⁵¹ Cf. <http://www.uk sport.gov.uk/news/2042/>

¹⁵² Cf. Alan Tomlinson, *op. cit.*, 2012, pp. 6-12.

the Spaniard had been Spain's ambassador to Moscow, and he had retained an influential say with his Soviet connections in the IOC.¹⁵³

Only a few days before flying to Singapore, Blair invited three journalists and asked them general questions during which he stated he feared Madrid more than Paris. This strategy worked both on showing UK political commitment and in playing it dumb, putting back the final decisional power in IOC members hands, making them feel important.

Moreover, in his lobbying efforts, the Prime Minister decided to try and see if he could convince Italian IOC members to support London in the ballot. That is why he took on the then Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi's invitation to his summer home in Sardinia: he had been invited many times, but only in August 2004 he decided to accept, opportunistically. According to Blair's wife Cherie, this was a tough journey to bear, due to the eccentricity of the Italian tycoon,¹⁵⁴ but both agree that it might have as well been the key to London success. Though no one will ever know, according to Blair, Berlusconi said: 'You are my friend. I promise nothing but I see if I can help'.¹⁵⁵ This is a clear example, according to Tony Blair himself, of how much personal relationships count in politics:

Personal relationships matter – this is obvious, of course, but is also completely ignored by people who think it's florid stratagems and mathematical calculations that drive negotiations and compromise. At all levels, but especially at the top, politics is about people. If you like a leader, you try to help them, even if it stretches your own interests.¹⁵⁶

Therefore, if you are politically lobbying for the bid, you may want to enhance your relational skills, even in international politics.

In Singapore, Communication strategist Mike Lee planned it very carefully: David Beckham was on stage for the final presentation, while Tony Blair could only appear in video. He had a G8 Summit to host

¹⁵³ Cf. Pete Fussey, Jon Coaffee, Gary Armstrong and Dick Hobbs, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 108.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Cherie Blair, *Speaking for Myself*, Sphere, London, 2008, pp. 373-376.

¹⁵⁵ Tony Blair, *op. cit.*, 2010, p. 552.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

starting in the following hours in Gleneagles, Scotland,¹⁵⁷ but he stayed as long as he could and addressed many IOC members, apparently unbalancing the voting momentum favourably towards London which, to many accounts, at that point was almost tie with Paris. Blair recalls being Cherie the one force to push him to stay as long as they could:

Jacques Chirac arrived, swinging into the party like he owned the Olympics and everything in it. I noticed in a rather jaundiced way – but it may have been my mood – that everyone fluttered around him. Maybe I had stayed too long, become too familiar, been too modest, not grand enough. I started to exhibit signs of whining, signs my staff recognise.

This is when it is important to have people around you who don't respect or revere you too much. Jo Gibbons from Number 10, in charge of events, was sympathetic to my exhaustion but utterly unsympathetic to my leaving. There were many people to see. Seb was very kind, but completely firm: stay. Cherie seemed inexhaustible. I was going to miss the big presentation the next day because I had to get back to prepare for the G8. Jacques could do it in person, I could only be in a video. So stay it was.¹⁵⁸

The British Prime Minister stayed longer that night because he knew he could not be there for the following day presentation. To be fair, many also believe it was not so much London winning it, rather France's President Chirac losing it:

Paris thought victory was theirs and stopped listening. Chirac just gave a reception, late on, and it was hard for anyone to talk with him. Blair had a 20-minute session with individual IOC members up in his room.¹⁵⁹

The following day Chirac addressed the Session during the presentation, but at that point it was not enough: Blair appeared as the engaged leader who is willing to care for the bid and for the IOC, but without making it all about him, i.e. no stage appearance (even though he would have stayed, had not been a G8 Summit to host). The exact opposite by the French President: he did not care to get to Singapore well in advance to talk personally to IOC members, he only wanted them to listen to him.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/press/g8overview.htm>

¹⁵⁸ Tony Blair, *op. cit.*, 2010, p. 550.

¹⁵⁹ Alan Tomlinson, *op. cit.*, 2012, p. 11.

And there it was: on July 6, 2005, at 12:49 BST,¹⁶⁰ President Rogge announced London as the 2012 Olympic Games host. The British city had beaten Paris at the fourth round, 54-50 votes.¹⁶¹ And hundreds of thousands who had gathered to Trafalgar Square broke their anxious wait into heavy celebrations.

2. Lead-up

Celebrations for the awarding of the Games got cut short: as many recall, the very following day the city was struck by multiple terrorist explosions that left over fifty casualties and a wave of terror among Londoners, British and European citizens.

As for the Games, they were seven years away, but security was surely brought forward on the finance agenda. As a matter of fact, the budget of the Games was the first and foremost topic to kill the honeymoon of the newly born London Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG), that had been created from the Bid Team in the usual transformation process. When Jowell was obliged to admit that costs were raising more than expected, it became clear that the budget they had brought forward had not been conceived perfectly. As it is common practice with Olympic financing, the Committees try to separate and exclude as much expenses as possible, in order to have a slim budget. Many criticize this practice branding it as mere lying. Nonetheless, to a certain extent it is justifiable, but we will go into more details in the last chapter of this dissertation.

As for London, in 2006 Jowell was forced to announce the first substantial increase, including £900 million for security. The major problem was that the government and the LOCOG had not yet come up with the final version of the budget. After months of uncertainty and postponing, in January 2007 the National Audit Office, upon request of the House of Commons, issued the first of a series of report, “Preparations for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games – Risk assessment and management”, where it was stated that

¹⁶⁰ Cf. http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/front_page/4655555.stm

¹⁶¹ Cf. http://www.gamesbids.com/eng/bid_archives.html

a major risk is the lack of final agreed cost estimates and an accompanying funding package, and this will inevitably have a detrimental impact on the programme if it is allowed to continue.¹⁶²

In March, Jowell finally revealed what would be the definitive budget (though its detailed version was not released until October 2007): the Olympic Delivery Authority¹⁶³ budget rose from £3,650 to £5,254 million which, adding up to other non ODA provisions (which rose from £386 to £388 million) and to a whole core of provisions (like security) - that had not been considered at all in the candidacy budget – for £3,683 million, rose to a total of £9,325 million. This was more the double the initial budget (£4,036 rose of £5,289 to reach over £9 billion). Without furthering it more, let us just say it meant that, though more money would be taken through the National Lottery and an increased GLA council tax, the Exchequer still had to provide for a total of £5,975 million: the previous budget imagined no spending for the Exchequer, a clear indication that the actual budget for hosting, in terms of infrastructure, had not been put together in details, but most likely left to future assessment, in case London had really been awarded the Games.¹⁶⁴

Media coverage in the UK started to be more negative towards the authorities in charge: newspapers with a historically investigative vein, like The Observer or The Guardian¹⁶⁵ started to criticize the exponential growth of the budget, more and more they went into the details of the project pressing to understand if it really was to believe it would be good for London. The basics of the Olympic project for London were based on the idea of “regeneration” which, according to Graeme Evans, is “associated more with the extremes of social decline, multiple deprivation and disadvantage and, in economic terms, below-average

¹⁶² National Audit Office of the UK, *Preparations for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games – Risk assessment and management*, summarised version, London, House of Commons, 2 February 2007, p. 3.

¹⁶³ This is the body in charge of building and refurbishing the necessary infrastructure for the Games to happen. Cf. Pete Fussey, Jon Coaffee, Gary Armstrong and Dick Hobbs, *op. cit.*, 2011, p. 112.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Pete Fussey, Jon Coaffee, Gary Armstrong and Dick Hobbs, *op. cit.*, 2011, pp. 111-115.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, *Olympic Industry Resistance. Challenging Olympic Power and Propaganda*, Albany, State of New York Press, 2008, p. 45.

performance [configuring as] both a process and an outcome”:¹⁶⁶ while many bids are focused on the “impact”, only two over more than 1500 bids were explicitly targeting urban regeneration.¹⁶⁷ The main aspects of this process were: “two more million physically active by 2012”,¹⁶⁸ increased participation, reduced health problems and reduced crime rates primarily due to social inclusion caused by sport participation, increased employment rates and increased number of affordable houses available in East End of London after the Games. Moreover, since many of the sport venues would be reduced in size after the Games, they would belong to the communities and management costs will not make them some Chinese white elephants.¹⁶⁹

What many studies and researches had been saying is that actual outcome data was not going to be as encouraging as the Bid Team had let us believe during the candidacy era: since part of the new housing replaced old demolished houses, the actual number of house increase would be around half of what was advertised in the first place.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, according to Brown and Szymanski research study, the “direct employment effects of the [London] Olympics are small.”¹⁷¹

Despite most of the protests were raised by local NGOs¹⁷² and therefore did not reach mainstream media, one big worry spawned in the summer of 2011, just a year ahead of the Games, when fierce riots erupted around the streets of London and other major UK cities, causing widespread worry about the social seal of the UK in terms of security too.¹⁷³ As a matter of fact, it was not the Labour that had to deal with such a situation: in 2010 a new majority had formed after the general elections, with a Conservative-led government backed by

¹⁶⁶ Graeme Evans, “London 2012”, in John R. Gold and Margaret R. Gold (edited by), *Olympic cities. City Agendas, Planning, and the World’s Games, 1896-2016*, New York, Routledge, 2011, p. 360.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 359-360.

¹⁶⁸ Graeme Evans, *cit.*, 2011, p. 378.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 361-379.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 381-382.

¹⁷¹ Dan Brown and Stefan Szymanski, “The employment effect of London 2012: an assessment in mid-2011”, in Wolfgang Maennig and Andrew Zimbalist, *International Handbook on the Economics of Mega Sporting Events*, Cheltenham (UK), Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2012, p. 563.

¹⁷² GamesMonitor, for example, was very active, issuing a complete report about the upcoming Olympic Games. Cf. <http://www.gamesmonitor.org.uk/>

¹⁷³ Cf. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-14436499>

Conservatives and LibDem MPs. David Cameron, Conservative leader, had been appointed Prime Minister while Nick Clegg, the leader of LibDem, was chosen as his Deputy, forming the first coalition government in the UK after over seventy years.¹⁷⁴ This exceptional circumstance, together with the Olympics being primarily a Labour expensive project and with the prickliest of the economic crisis hitting hard, may have suggested a shift in Olympic budgeting or support. But this did not happen. Instead, the coalition government tried to make some cuts in other sport policy related areas, which, together with a gigantic series of cuts throughout many public sectors such as health and education, led to widespread criticism of the coalition government. It is fair to say that the August 2011 riots took advantage of this generalised atmosphere of protest throughout Europe to create chaos and disruption and, even though in the aftermath of the clashes, Blair and Cameron¹⁷⁵ dissented on the real meaning of the protesting, the idea that these were primarily caused by the concerns over the legacy of the Games had rapidly and efficiently been swept away. As a matter of fact, if searching any word related to the Olympic Games in the main page of The Guardian rich section that had been dedicated to the riots¹⁷⁶, you will find no result. Not even the investigative Guardian decided that looking into the riots from the Olympic perspective would have been wise.

The very last days before the Olympics took place were shuffled by two more relatively major scandals: the security company in charge of taking care of the Games, G4S, realized only a few days before the opening ceremony that they had underestimated by far the amount of contractors they needed to fulfil their contractual duty,¹⁷⁷ and a bribing scandal concerning tickets. Both were swiftly addressed by the Communication team, and blame was furthered away from any UK

¹⁷⁴ http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/election_2010/8675265.stm

¹⁷⁵ Cf. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/aug/21/david-cameron-tony-blair-riots>

¹⁷⁶ Cf. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/series/reading-the-riots> : this research had been carried out in partnership with the authoritative London School of Economics.

¹⁷⁷ <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2012/sep/11/g4s-failed-olympic-security-lord-coe>

Olympic related institution.¹⁷⁸ The ticket scandal, though, was only about to get worse with the beginning of the Games.

3. Hosting and aftermath

It was eventually time to witness the first Olympic Games after the magnificent Beijing self-celebration. London Opening Ceremony, held on July 27, 2012, was more messy and joyful than the Chinese, and therefore there was widespread belief that in many ways it had succeeded in overcoming Beijing, at least on the human side.¹⁷⁹ It was a communicative success worldwide, a tough and unexpected outcome.

At the beginning of the Games, though, the ticket scandal gained wider media coverage, evolving into the unfortunate situation of any Olympic Games, and of many other international sport events: following realization that many seats were empty during the first competitions of the Games, media started reporting that thousands of tickets had remained unsold. As a matter of fact, this is the usual issue with big sport events: many tickets are allocated for sponsors and sport institutions (like the IOC, the NOCs and International Federations at the Olympic Games), and it is up to them to use them wisely. In London 2012, in order to avoid the unease feeling of “waste of live show”, public officers of different kind (e.g., soldiers of the Territorial Army, or teachers and schoolchildren) were asked to fill in the empty seats:¹⁸⁰ this is usual practice in the UK, for example at Wimbledon, where stewards are instructed to let people in if there are empty seats, and to kindly ask them out if the owner of the ticket shows up. A similar strategy was adopted at the Olympics: it allowed public officers to enjoy some of the show after the efforts put through to make the event possible, and at the same time avoid the disappointment of people watching on TV, who would have gone assist live if there had been a possibility.

¹⁷⁸ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/9336742/London-2012-Olympics-new-Games-ticket-resale-scandal-is-old-problem.html>

¹⁷⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-19025686>

¹⁸⁰ Cf. <http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2012/jul/29/london-2012-empty-seats-trap>

A report from the following November confirmed that roughly 264,000 tickets had remained unsold. In particular, “unsold Olympics tickets included 2,407 seats for athletics in the stadium, 1,047 for swimming, 2,327 for diving and thousands of day passes for the Olympic Park.”¹⁸¹ Considering the vast majority of the unsold was of day passes for the Olympic Park - a ticket that only gave you the chance to walk around the Olympic Park without entering the venues, therefore overlapping those tickets that also allowed you into the venues - and considering that the total amount of sold tickets added up to 10.99 million,¹⁸² the criticism about unsold tickets was, as for any Games, more speculation than reality.

Another worry for London just before the Olympics was the street traffic that would severely affect the city’s mobility.¹⁸³ As a matter of fact, LOCOG was able to neutralize it: IOC members, NOCs officials and athletes were instructed to use the public transportation system, and they were given free daily passes to access it. It all worked smoothly, with officials that generally proved more than happy to participate in the “sustainable revolution” of London, and general public amazed in running into athletes in the Tube carriages!¹⁸⁴ It completed ODA and LOCOG transparency strategy about the sustainability of the Games: they had been aiming for “low carbon games”,¹⁸⁵ “promoting environmental awareness and partnerships”, and during the lead-up they had been issuing monthly reports about the environmental impacts of the Olympic construction sites.

In terms of overall quality of the Olympic package, London will be remembered for being the first host who managed to equal Olympic and Paralympic Games. The International Olympic Committee and the International Paralympic Committee have agreed that

the Paralympic Games from 2008 would always take place shortly after the Olympic Games, using the same sports

¹⁸¹ Cf. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20318938>

¹⁸² Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁸³ Cf. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-16789038>

¹⁸⁴ Cf. <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/team-usa-train-underground-olympic-athletes-spotted-371691>

¹⁸⁵ “Theme 5: Environment”, London Candidacy File for the 2012 Olympic Games, 2005, p. 15.

venues and facilities. From the 2012 bid process onwards, the host city chosen to host the Olympic Games was also be obliged to host the Paralympics as well.¹⁸⁶

London welcomed the Paralympics as a great chance for equality and social inclusion. The commitment to host the Paralympics as equally as possible is exemplified by the great advertising campaign launched by UK's Channel 4, the right-holder broadcaster: the campaign, supported by the catchy slogan "Meet the Superhumans", was based on a 90-second TV ad that run simultaneously across 78 channels, marking the biggest ad campaign for Channel 4 in the last thirty years. Marketing strategy also included outdoor posters, press ads and digital activity:¹⁸⁷ during the Olympic Games, anyone walking around London would "meet the Superhumans". And Paralympics were classified as an absolute success. *Ex-post* surveys even showed that more than half of children aged eight to twelve years old found Paralympics more inspiring than Olympics, and seven individuals out of ten admitted they changed their view of disable people thanks to Paralympics.¹⁸⁸

Soon after the end of the Paralympic Games, media started switching their attention to legacy. Reconversion works began straight away and according to a July 2013 UK government and Mayor of London joined report,

- 1.4 million more people are playing sport once a week since we won the bid in 2005;
- The future of eight out of eight retained Olympic Park venues has been secured within one year of the Games;
- Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is re-opening to the public between summer 2013 and spring 2014;
- 11,000 homes are planned and more than 10,000 jobs will be created on the Park – conversion of the Athletes' Village into homes is well advanced and developers are preparing to start building on Chobham Manor;
- Big Lottery Fund 'Spirit of 2012' Trust established to allocate money returned from the sale of the Athletes' Village;
- 1% increase in international visitor numbers to the UK and 4% increase in visitor spend – in 2013, tourist

¹⁸⁶ Cf. <http://www.paralympic.org/news/ioc-and-ipc-extend-co-operation-agreement-until-2020>

¹⁸⁷ Cf. <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2012/jul/17/paralympic-games-channel-4>

¹⁸⁸ Cf. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/23442512>

spend is expected to exceed £19 billion for the first time.¹⁸⁹

These are only a few examples and may obviously be marked as biased because it is commonly believed it is in the institutions political interest to register a successful achievement regardless of reality. Nonetheless, the Government has been able to prove reliable since it recognized, even if between lines, where specific objectives were missed inside a wider program: for example, “62% of waste [has] being reused, recycled or composted, which was near to LOCOG’s ambitious target of 70%”.¹⁹⁰

But they also said their plan was conceived over a ten year timeframe, so more results will have to be assessed more appropriately over longer timeframes.¹⁹¹ This point brings back again what was already evident with Beijing: some tools must be developed for assessing more scientifically the quality of the legacy in order to elaborate strategic criteria for Olympic planning in the future. As a matter of fact, the most interesting aspect about London legacy comes from institutional awareness: many reports from different levels of the government, the GLA and of the Parliament have been issued in order to call for a heightened focus on the aftermath of the Olympics. The House of Lords even called for institutionalising a Minister of the Olympics in the Cabinet, due to the important and substantial work that must be done to oversee Olympic legacy in many directions.

One final major result was achieved by the 2012 Olympic Games, and certified: the overall cost of the Games was eventually £8.921 billion, at least £377 million¹⁹² less than finalised pre-Games budget (£9.298 billion).¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ *Inspired by 2012: The legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games*, A joint UK Government and Mayor of London report, London, July 2013, pp. 14-15.

¹⁹⁰ *Report 5: Post-Games Evaluation Meta-Evaluation of the Impacts and Legacy of the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games*, Summary Report, prepared by: Grant Thornton, Ecorys, Loughborough University, Oxford Economics, Future Inclusion for the DCMS, London, July 2013, p. 21.

¹⁹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁹² Another £103 million are being held to cover any remaining risk. Therefore, the save on the budget could reach almost half billion pounds. Cf. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/london-2012-forecast-to-come-in-almost-400m-under-budget>

¹⁹³ Cf. *ibid.*

In any case, London is considered to have hosted one of the best Olympic Games in modern history,¹⁹⁴ and in a few years we should be able to know if we can finalize our judgement and also mark it as the very first 21st century success in leaving a tangible and intangible Olympic legacy, in terms of urban regeneration, social inclusion, economic boost and environmental awareness.¹⁹⁵ Will Rio de Janeiro be able to pick up where London left?

¹⁹⁴ Cf. <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/jul/26/one-year-on-olympic-legacy>

¹⁹⁵ Cf. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/nov/23/london-2012-olympics-best-ever>

Chapter 4 - The Rio projection: on their way to...

Among the so called BRIC countries, Brazil is by far the closest to the Western idea of democracy. After a contrasted period of *Ditadura militar*, the country promulgated a democratic Federal Constitution on 1988, mainly reducing presidential powers.¹⁹⁶ The most important phenomenon in Brazil's recent political history has been the rise to power of the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT*), when its leader, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, was elected President. While trying to eradicate poverty, his left-wing government – the first in over 40 years, was rocked by a wave of corruption allegations, leading to widespread resignation and to televised apology by the President. However, Lula was able to retain power in 2006 Presidential election and to launch his protégée, Dilma Rousseff, to Presidency in 2010. She is also likely to retain power in 2014 Presidential elections,¹⁹⁷ making it a 16-year timeframe governance for PT.¹⁹⁸

Nonetheless, a bullish economic growth, violent crime and social divide still mark the biggest of South America as a country in the making. Therefore, just like China, the Brazilian government saw hosting a mega-event as a great chance of show-casting a blossoming country; and, just like London, it was imagined the mega-event would catalyse urban development. As a matter of fact, the men in Brasilia went for the full loot: they bade for the greatest global sport events, i.e. the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup, and managed to get them both. The sport spotlight will be on Brazil and Rio de Janeiro at least until 2016. Let's see how this happened and what are the broader implications for such a peculiar country, with a special focus on the Olympic side of the bidding coin.

1. The bid

As for Beijing, Rio de Janeiro's path to hosting an Olympics was hurdled over time: it took three official attempts before even making it

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Boris Fausto, *Historia do Brasil*, São Paulo, Edusp, 1994, pp. 517-528.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/infograficos/2013/12/78807-cenarios-para-2014.shtml>

¹⁹⁸ Cf. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1231075.stm>

to the actual candidacy phase. In 1995 and 2003 Rio tried to make a bid, respectively, for the 2004 and the 2012 Olympic Games: both ended up in early disappointment. Mainly, the city was being dropped out of consideration because of its lack of international festivals organization history: apart from the massive yearly Carnival, Rio had only hosted one big sport event, and it had been half a century earlier, the 1950 FIFA World Cup Final at the Maracanã Stadium.¹⁹⁹

Things started to change in 2002 when Rio was awarded the right to host the 2007 Pan-American Games (usually shorted as PanAm Games) by the Pan-American Sports Association (PASO).²⁰⁰ Though a reduced Pan-American version of the Olympic Games, these events foresee remarkable budget (e.g., \$1.9billion for the Rio edition), and could test the cities' ambitions towards larger events. In particular, the days of the actual hosting of the event proved important for the former Brazilian capital for three main reasons:

- it proved Rio was able to host a major multiday and multisport event in terms of infrastructures, budget and coordination among the several levels of the institutions involved;
- a basic set of facilities had been laid out;
- the success of the PanAm Games renewed self-confidence in the possibility to aim at bigger events.

Therefore, it is not accidental that Carlos Arthur Nuzman, the President of the Comitê Olímpico Brasileiro (COB), decided to state the following just a day after the closing ceremony of the PanAm Games: 'after talks to Olympic authorities and following the statement of IOC President, we feel Rio should be a candidate city [for the Olympic Games]'.²⁰¹ As a matter of fact, on March 13, 2007, Rio had submitted its applicant city letter and was hoping not to be dropped before the

¹⁹⁹ Cf. John R. Gold, "Rio de Janeiro 2016", in in John R. Gold and Margaret R. Gold (edited by), *op. cit.*, New York, Routledge, 2011, pp. 390-392.

²⁰⁰ Cf. <http://www.paso-odepa.org/en/pan-american-games.html>

²⁰¹ "Diante das conversas com autoridades olímpicas e declarações do presidente do COI [o belga Jacques Rogge], sentimos que o Rio deve ser candidato", <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/esporte/ult92u316224.shtml>

bidding race would start, as it had happened in the two previous occasions.²⁰²

A declaration that was further strengthened by the success in securing the host of the 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup and the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, officially awarded to the South American country on October 30, 2007:²⁰³ *another major international sport authority (FIFA) was believing in Brazil, so why shouldn't the IOC?* was the main rhetoric accompanying the discussions on the media towards formalizing the Olympic bid. As a matter of fact, this was a pretty interesting way to bias media and general audience, especially considering that Brazil was the only candidate to host the 2014 FIFA World Cup, and in light of the strong and often blurred relationship between the head of FIFA and some of the historical protagonists (for better or worse still has to be vetted) of Brazilian sport authorities, like João de Havelange, the Rio-de-Janeiro-born former President of FIFA, from 1974 to 1998, and former honorary President of FIFA, a position he renounced to in 2013 before being expelled following strong and diffused bribery accusations.²⁰⁴ Havelange was also an IOC member, until he resigned in 2011 days before being expelled on more bribery accusations.²⁰⁵

Nonetheless, all Brazilian authorities involved in the perspective bid, i.e. the government led by PT²⁰⁶ leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the Mayor of Rio de Janeiro, the State governor, the head of COB and even the President of the Central Bank of Brazil, professed their assent: on January 14, 2008, Rio submitted its applicant city questionnaire, together with Chicago, Madrid, Tokyo, Doha, Baku and Prague. Each and every city had many strengths and few weaknesses in light of the parameters the IOC uses to select, apart from Baku, which lacked mega-event experience at all, and Prague, which could only prove

²⁰² Cf. John R. Gold, *op. cit.*, New York, Routledge, 2011, pp. 391-395.

²⁰³ Cf. <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/esporte/ult92u341044.shtml>

²⁰⁴ Cf. <http://www.theguardian.com/football/interactive/2012/jul/12/full-legal-document-joao-havelange>

²⁰⁵ Cf. <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/esporte/1016405-havelange-renuncia-ao-coi-dias-antes-de-possivel-expulsao.shtml>

²⁰⁶ “Partido dos Trabalhadores Brasileiro”, Brazilian Workes’ Party.

political and people's support half-heartedly. The evaluation of the questionnaire led to their dismissal, together with Doha's: the Arab city had totalled a weighted score higher than Rio, but officially it was dropped because of their proposal of hosting in Autumn instead of the usual Summer window. Rio had barely made it: a score of 6.4 where the minimum is 6.0. The Bid Team then knew they had to raise their game if they wanted to move ahead of the table,²⁰⁷ even though Bill Scherr, one of Chicago's Bid Team board member, recently stated in an interview: "at that point, we knew we were in for a little bit of a tussle. Because once they got passed forward technically, then the IOC got behind their bid".²⁰⁸

After the candidature files were handed in on February 12, 2009, the IOC Evaluation Commission visited Rio between April 29 and May 2, 2009. While some of Tokyo's "on-site presentations and venue plans lacked detail and clarity", ²⁰⁹ and Madrid's "documentation and presentations provided [...] varied in quality",²¹⁰ Chicago and Rio's "were detailed and of a high quality".²¹¹ Therefore, the Evaluation Commission report issued on September 2, 2009 made it clear that Rio had reached Chicago at the top of the imaginary classification of bidders: ²¹² technically, it was, once again, all about lobbying and communication towards and in Copenhagen, where the 121th IOC Session would be selecting the 2016 Host City on October 2, 2009.²¹³

Rio had relied from the very beginning on several slogans, one of which being on environment: "Green Games for a Blue Planet".²¹⁴ The rhetoric of the environment is becoming more and more important for the IOC and that is why all cities had developed an *ad-hoc* slogan for it,

²⁰⁷ Cf. John R. Gold, *op. cit.*, New York, Routledge, 2011, p. 397.

²⁰⁸ Molly C. Tolzmann, "Global localities: Olympic bidding as a case study in globalization", in *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics*, Routledge, published online 17 Sept. 2013, p. 10.

²⁰⁹ International Olympic Committee, *Report of the IOC 2016 Evaluation Commission. Games of the XXXI Olympiad*, Lausanne, IOC, released on 2 September 2009, p. 83.

²¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 86.

²¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 82 and p. 85.

²¹² Cf. John R. Gold, *op. cit.*, New York, Routledge, 2011, p. 397.

²¹³ Cf. Olympic Studies Centre, *Bid Procedure for the Games of the Olympiad of 2016. Reference document. Key bid procedure dates, the list of Applicant Cities and brief Candidate Cities*, Lausanne, IOC, released on 1 April 2010, p. 3.

²¹⁴ Cf. John R. Gold, *op. cit.*, New York, Routledge, 2011, p. 397.

except for Tokyo which subsequently tried to recover some field inciting friendly media to underline this particular feature of the bid.²¹⁵ The communication team of the Rio bidding team, led by Leonardo Gryner,²¹⁶ knew they had to highlight something special about Rio, something peculiar they could offer compared to others, and Chicago in particular: emotion.²¹⁷ The emotion of a city, of a nation, of a continent. During the 45-minute presentation, President Lula, speaking in Portuguese, stated that

for others, it will be just another Olympics, for us it will be a unique opportunity, it will enhance Brazilians' self-esteem, strengthen recent achievements, stimulate new advancements...this bid is not ours only, it belongs to the whole South America, [...] a continent that never hosted an Olympic Games: it is time to correct such unbalance. For the Olympic Movement [...] the challenge ahead [...] is to expand the Olympics through new continents [...] For the Olympic Movement the opportunity to share a clear message to the world: the Olympics belong to the whole mankind.²¹⁸

Lula said Brazilians and Cariocas embody one of the most diverse people of the world: therefore, the whole world is enshrined in Rio's population. It would be an Olympics that helps a whole continent shine, while representing the diversity of the whole world, and giving Rio the boost it needed to fulfil the urban and social "upgrade" already planned. Human, diverse, global: Rio told the IOC they were the perfect choice. COB President Nuzman speech reiterated the idea, while Fernando Meirelles, one of the most famous Brazilian film directors, produced a

²¹⁵ Cf. Meaghan Carey, Daniel Mason and Laura Misener, Social Responsibility and the Competitive Bid Process for Major Sporting Events, in *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, Vol. 35, 246 (2011), p. 255.

²¹⁶ He would then become the CEO of the Organizing Committee: an implicit highlighting of how important it is to communicate as a general manager of such an event. Cf. <http://www.sportsfeatures.com/olympicsnews/story/46901/rio-2016-wastes-no-time-naming-leonardo-gryner-new-general-director>

²¹⁷ Cf. <http://www.espbr.com/noticias/emocao-tonica-discurso-rio-copenhague>

²¹⁸ "Para os outros, será apenas mais uma Olimpíadas, para nós, será uma oportunidade sem igual, aumentará a autoestima dos Brasileiros, consolidará conquistas recentes, estimulará novos avanços... essa candidatura não é só nossa, é também da América do Sul, [...] um continente que nunca sediou os Jogos Olímpicos: está na hora de corrigir esse desequilíbrio. Pelo Movimento Olímpico [...] o desafio agora é [...] expandir as Olimpíadas para novos continentes. [...] Para o Movimento Olímpico uma oportunidade de [...] passar uma mensagem clara pelo mundo: as Olimpíadas pertencem [...] as humanidade inteira". Selected extract of President Lula's speech at the Rio 2016 presentation at the IOC 121th Session, Copenhagen, October 2, 2009. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pmZ1rJFsIE

video all centred on the emotion of a diverse Rio micro-world united by the love for sport.²¹⁹

Chicago hitherto on top of the polls of bookmakers, was shockingly eliminated after the first round of vote, and Rio won at the third round with 66 votes to 32 against runner-up Madrid.²²⁰ Quite impressively, many believe that President Obama and First Lady Michelle did not help Chicago's bid: they actually made it worse. Obama, himself a Chicagoan, could not pick up any momentum, because there was none: the two US IOC members hadn't created any curiosity for Chicago to be the 2016 Olympic host, Mayor Daley had nothing to offer in particular and, on top of that, the logistics of the President of the United States arriving to the hotel where the Session was being held, possibly killed any hope for the US city. IOC members were locked into the presentation room an hour before his arrival, so they had to wake up very early and give up breakfast that day. Insiders are pretty sure his speech did not make up for it, and Chicago was doomed.²²¹

In any case, when awarding the Games to Rio, the assembly posed a gigantic leap of faith on the *Cidade Maravilhosa*: if one had to rest on previous voting strategies and logics, probably Rio would have been evicted at the first round.²²²

Awaiting for the announcement, a very diverse and multinational crowd of roughly 30,000 people in Copacabana - a stage had been set in front of the Copacabana Palace, Rio's iconic liberty style hotel, with the customary great music show going on - only slightly changed the party noise they were already making when the announcement came: at that time, Rogge's words were just an intrusion in the Cariocas' naïve beach party lifestyle. In the seven years to follow, the very attitude of Cariocas may be at test altogether.

²¹⁹ Cf. John R. Gold, *op. cit.*, New York, Routledge, 2011, p. 160.

²²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 401.

²²¹ Cf. Alan Tomlinson, *op. cit.*, 2012, pp. 11-12.

²²² Cf. John R. Gold, *op. cit.*, New York, Routledge, 2011, p. 401.

2. Lead-up

London had to put aside its Olympic euphoria just a few hours after the announcement, abruptly. Instead, Rio had more time to adjust, but the time came when international media were attracted by some succulent news: in June 2013, just days before hosting the FIFA Confederations Cup, Brazil was rattled by an intense, multi-location wave of protests that escalated into harsh violence and quite vicious reaction from the many levels of police deployed around Brazilian streets. How come the country of everlasting happiness and joy was suddenly in such unrest? International media hurried in stating it was all about the upcoming costly mega-events that were seen as state-budget consuming in time of need for millions of people. A more cold-blooded analysis carried out by magazine like *The Economist*, underlined how the protest had been originated by the “*Movimento do Passe Livre*”, a long standing and mainly pacific movement advocating free public transport. Many people in different cities felt to join the parades to show their broader discontent: finally even Brazil had been struck by the economic and financial crisis between 2011 and 2012, when GDP growth slowed to 2.7% in 2011 and to a negligible growth of 0.9% in the following year.²²³ The “*Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento*” (PAC)²²⁴ introduced in 2007 by President Lula helped roughly 40 million people out of poverty, but these are still at risk of falling back into poverty.²²⁵

Even though these protests were more directly connected with the feel that the huge amount of money being spent on new stadiums for the World Cup all over the country is unfair, and though they were perfectly timed to attract international media attention since they were looking at Brazil for the Confederations Cup, there was an indirect effect of focusing on the situation of Rio de Janeiro for the Olympics: even though the main questions about delays and over-budgeting regard the 2014 World Cup, media are now vetting Rio’s transformation

²²³ Cf. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/brazil/overview>

²²⁴ Cf. <http://www.pac.gov.br/sobre-o-pac>

²²⁵ Cf. *Taking to the streets*, *The Economist*, issue of June 22, 2013.

towards the Olympics. According to recently elected IOC President Thomas Bach, the Olympic project is on track, but no time must be wasted in the upcoming two years. He also stated that publishing the updated budget of the Rio Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (ROCOG) will help people understand, and such transparency may inspire a sense of trust in citizens and sensibly reduce protesting.²²⁶ An updated budget was effectively published on the official website of the Committee²²⁷ on January 27, 2014, after the *Tribunal de Contas da União* (TCU) asked the *Autoridade Pública Olímpica* (APO) to provide for the amount of state funds that are being spent for Rio 2016.²²⁸ Bach's words confirm the impressions registered by the IOC Coordination Commission at the margin of its fifth trip to Rio in September 2013: "a lot of work has been done, but a large amount still remains across the entire project and some timelines remain very, very tight".²²⁹ The Commission also appraised the commitment to legacy shown by the ROCOG, although many scholars contest the validity of what has become now the Olympic project, especially for the transport section: a few updates have been introduced by the ROCOG – and approved by the IOC – in 2009 and 2010, but according to scholar Eva Kassens-Noor these only aim at a more globalized Rio de Janeiro in terms of tourism and real estate.²³⁰

Luiz Martins de Melo points out other criticalities that are not being addressed properly: air pollution will not sensibly improve since the candidacy file is based on the use of normal buses,²³¹ and water pollution does not seem to be improving either, with great concern of athletes that will need to swim and race into the infamously polluted

²²⁶ Cf. <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/es/deportes/2014/01/1401699-divulgar-el-legado-de-las-olimpiadas-puede-evitar-protestas-en-rio-dijo-thomas-bach.shtml>

²²⁷ Cf. <http://www.rio2016.org/transparencia/orcamento>

²²⁸ Cf. <http://globoesporte.globo.com/olimpiadas/noticia/2014/01/com-atraso-gastos-publicos-das-olimpiadas-sao-divulgados-nesta-terca.html>

²²⁹ Cf. <http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-sports/2016olympics/ioc-tentatively-approve-rio-2016-preparations/>

²³⁰ Cf. Eva Kassens-Noor, *Planning Olympic legacies. Transport dreams and urban realities*, New York, Routledge, 2012, p. 97.

²³¹ Cf. *Dossiê de Candidatura do Rio de Janeiro a Sede Dos Jogos Olímpicos e Paralímpicos de 2016*, Vol. 3, published February 2009, p. 122.

Baía de Guanabara.²³² Martins de Melo also argues that some of the legacy plans were faulty to begin with, and the IOC should have never approved them: in particular, the urbanization of the *Barra da Tijuca* neighbourhood in Southwest of the city cannot be used as a model for the rest of the city. Most of the people in Rio live in the historic city centre and spread towards the North End of the borders of the urban area: these areas are filled with *favelas* and differ strongly in need, income and social and infrastructural issues from the more rich, recently populated Barra. According to Martins de Melo, “there is a diagnostic error in the urban planning of Rio de Janeiro”,²³³ and the Olympics are perpetrating it somehow.²³⁴

As for the public transport system, among the main issues of current Rio and supposedly drastically improving through the Games, one of the costly projects included is the Rio-São Paulo bullet train which, according to Martins de Melo, is a typical example of bad investment.

The logo, for one thing, seems to be widely appreciated instead: it was pompously presented on December 31, 2010, on the eve of one of the most important nights of the year for Rio de Janeiro, *Reveillon*. The design, that raised early plagiarism controversies due to its resemblance to the Telluride Foundation logo and to Matisse’s “The dance”, features three dancing figures that represent the city of Rio and the Olympic movement, in a sort of Olympic hug.²³⁵

3. Criticalities and perspectives

This was just a brief overview and many sparks were left out to begin with, others were just hinted at, but it seems enough to prove Rio’s Olympics are not univocally heading towards a point of generalized appreciation, nor it will be easy to the change many people’s minds.

²³² Cf. http://www.adnkronos.com/IGN/News/Sport/Olimpiadi-Rio-2016-preoccupazione-per-inquinamento-delle-acque_321104032592.html

²³³ Luiz Martins de Melo, “The case of Brazil 2014/2016”, in Wolfgang Maennig and Andrew Zimbalist, *International Handbook on the Economics of Mega Sporting Events*, Cheltenham (UK), Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2012, p. 541.

²³⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 531-541.

²³⁵ Cf. <http://www.adweek.com/adfreak/hated-london-2012-logo-you-might-rio-2016-better-142723>

Considering the political, economic and social situation, Rio can be inscribed as halfway between London and Beijing: philosophically, it means ROCOG, the city and the government can choose to go either way, or go their own way. Eduardo Paes, Rio's rampant and recently re-elected Mayor,²³⁶ embodies this continued anxiety: a young and ambitious man who worked hard to bring the Olympics to South America - even putting aside its political rivalry with ally PT – who says

a city of the future, I really do believe that it's a city that cares about its citizens, integrates socially its citizens. A city of the future is a city that can never let anyone out of this great party, which are cities.²³⁷

but in reality puts forward a project completely centred on the richest areas of Rio de Janeiro, like Barra da Tijuca, and seems to forget the millions living in slums that will surely enjoy football matches in 2014 and an amazing show in 2016, but may end up more alienated than ever. A very strong communicator, Paes, who is incautiously willing to export his urban development model already, with no more than theory and philosophy in his hands, no concrete proof.

Heavy protesting may resume in mid-2014 throughout the World Cup, if anger manages to overcome the spirited *torcidas da seleção de futebol brasileiro*. A result may have been reached already through early protesting: during the uprising, the Mayor of São Paulo and the Governor of the State of São Paulo were in Paris lobbying for the city be chosen as host of the 2020 World Expo, which they did not get.²³⁸

Paradoxically, security, a chief worry at inception, may prove not to be a real problem, as not only PanAm Games were free of infamous street violence, but even the 2013 Confederations Cup was able to calmly go on amidst an atmosphere of recent protesting. It means most certainly the show of the first South American Olympics in 2016 will be amazing, and the world will remember them for the greatness of the

²³⁶ Paes, of the *Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* (Brazilian Democratic Movement Party), a centrist party allied with Rousseff's PT, was re-elected Mayor of Rio in October 2012, with 64.6%. Cf. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-19866081>

²³⁷ http://www.ted.com/talks/eduardo_paes_the_4_commandments_of_cities.html?quote=1566

²³⁸ Cf. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/14/world/americas/bus-fare-protests-hit-brazils-two-biggest-cities.html?_r=0

show, while Cariocas and Brazilians will rest with a bittersweet taste in their mouths. As Martins de Melo put it: “we can be sure that the party will be great; however, the hangover could be even greater”.²³⁹ To see what the future holds for Brazil and its internationally “media-mediated” image, let’s tune in on August 5, 2016, when a practical definition of the “*Viva sua Paixão*”²⁴⁰ slogan will be presented to us in the Opening Ceremony of the Games of the XXXI Olympiad.

²³⁹ Cf. Luiz Martins de Melo, *cit.*, 2012, p. 544.

²⁴⁰ “Live you passion”, Rio 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games official pay-off introduced at the time of the bid. Cf. <http://esporte.uol.com.br/ultimas/2008/12/30/ult58u1329.jhtm>

Chapter 5 - The Rome 2020 surrender: the failure of a (missed) chance

The 2020 Olympic Games will be hosted in Tokyo, Japan. It was decided on September 7, 2013 in Buenos Aires, at the 125th IOC Session. There's a city that initiated its bidding process for those Games, before abruptly dropping out, somehow unexpectedly: this city is Rome, Italy. The chapter will analyse the early stages of Rome application, all the way through its abandon: it will be a "from-the-inside" analysis, aiming at reasoning on what went wrong, what could be learnt in terms of communication and planning, in a sort of articulated introduction to the closing chapter of this dissertation.

1. The embryo

Early in 2010, the cities of Rome and Venice started to investigate the possibility to bid for the 2020 Olympic Games. It was a simultaneous coordination with the national institutions, such as the Presidency of the Republic and the Council of Ministers, and the national institutions of sport, i.e. the *Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano* (the Italian National Olympic Committee, CONI). When both cities expressed their interest in the Games, CONI set up an Evaluating Commission and asked both cities to present an Olympic dossier that would be analysed by the commission. Commission members included: Giovanni Petrucci, the then President of CONI, Riccardo Agabio e Luca Pancalli, the then Vice-presidents of CONI, Raffaele Pagnozzi, the then Secretary General of CONI, Mario Pescante, Franco Carraro, Ottavio Cinquanta, Francesco Ricci Bitti e Manuela Di Centa, the then IOC members, and Anna Maria Marasi, the CONI's Athletes Commission Representative.²⁴¹ The commission issued a comparative report that was then voted by CONI's National Council, which chose Rome on May 19, 2010.

²⁴¹ Cf. http://www.2020roma.it/sala-stampa-e-news/news/63-17_marzo_-_si_insedia_la_commissione_di_valutazione_del_coni_per_i_dossier_2020.html

The then Mayor of Rome had first officially illustrated the main general features of Rome's bid idea in a press conference on March 5, 2010, when his administration presented the file to CONI to be evaluated.²⁴² Therefore, this date can be marked as the official birth of the embryo idea: it was more than ten years ahead of the Games, over a year before the first IOC deadlines for Phase 1 of the Candidacy. As a matter of fact, Rome had been the first city to show interest in bidding for the 2020 Games: many considered it a comparative advantage to be ahead of other future contenders.

It seemed there was a consistent hiatus between these declarations of intent and some formal and concrete action: the first "draft" of the Honorary Committee for Rome 2020 was introduced almost a year later, during the *Etats généraux* of Rome. It was a two-day event gathering all major actors involved in the city of Rome (from institutions to entrepreneurs to civic society) to call for a new development plan for the city. Day two was mainly focused on Rome's bid for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Panellists included Gianni Petrucci, Emma Marcegaglia, the then President of Confindustria, Gianni Letta, the then Under-Secretary of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Giulio Tremonti, the then Treasury and Economy Minister, and Silvio Berlusconi, the then Prime Minister of Italy. The Government and Italy's foremost industrialists were showing early support for the bid.²⁴³ At that point there was no Bid Team, no bid file, but strategic communication was already self-developing.

2. The Promoting Committee

At the end of the *Etats généraux*, the Government, the City Council and CONI agreed on setting up an Economic Feasibility Commission for the Candidacy of Rome at the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It was not until June 30, 2011 that a study of economic feasibility was officially committed to the ad-hoc Commission

²⁴² Cf. http://www.2020roma.it/sala-stampa-e-news/news/60-roma_ha_presentato_al_coni_la_candidatura_della_citt%C3%A0_alle_olimpiadi_del_2020.html

²⁴³ Cf. http://www.2020roma.it/sala-stampa-e-news/news/77-olimpiadi_roma-_in_piazza_del_popolo_a_sostegno_della_candidatura.html

chaired by Professor Marco Fortis (the so called Fortis Commission). Commission members included: Prof Pierpaolo Benigno, Prof Giulio Napolitano, Prof Fabio Pammolli, Prof Giuseppe Pisauro, Prof Lanfranco Senn, while Mr Franco Carraro served as Coordinator. In small steps, on the institutional side the City Council approved the motion to authorize Rome's bid: at that point, CONI was allowed to comply with the first deadline of the IOC, on July 29th, submitting the letter with WADA and CAS compliances and confirming the city's availability for the normal Olympic period.

Timeline of the Rome 2020 bid		
2010	March 5	Rome City Council officially presents its bidding idea to CONI
	March 17	First meeting of CONI's Evaluation Commission on Rome and Venice proposals
	May 19	CONI picks Rome over Venice for candidacy for 2020 OG
2011	February 22-23	<i>Etats généraux</i> of the City of Rome (event titled "Let's build together the new Capital city"). Presentation of the first "draft" of the Honorary Committee for Rome 2020
	February 23	Italian government, City Council and CONI agree on setting up an Economic Feasibility Commission for the Candidacy of Rome at the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games
	June 30	A study of economic feasibility is officially committed to the ad-hoc Commission chaired by Professor Marco Fortis (the so called Fortis Commission)
	July 4	GiovaniRoma 2020 is officially registered as Non-Profit Organization
	July 14	Rome City Council deliberates the document authorizing the candidacy to the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games: 51 in favour, 2 contrary, 2 abstained
	July 21 st	CONI submits to IOC the letters regarding WADA compliance and CAS jurisdiction, also confirming the availability for normal OG period (July 15 th – August 31 st)
	July 26 th	Rome 2020 Committee officially takes office
	September 12	1st official meeting of Board of Directors of Rome 2020 Committee
	October 4	Rome 2020 Committee announces Helios Partners as bid dossier consultant
	October 11	CONI Servizi technical partnership announced

	November 3-4	IOC's 2020 Applicant City Seminar in Lausanne: delegates from the cities of Baku (Azerbaijan), Doha (Qatar), Istanbul (Turkey), Madrid (Spain), Rome (Italy) and Tokyo (Japan) take part
	November 4	IOC officially announce Rome among six Applicant Cities for 2020 Olympic Games
	November 21	GiovaniRoma 2020 officially endorsed by the Rome 2020 Committee
2012	January 12	Press Conference to present the Feasibility report laid out by the ad-hoc Commission and the local support
	February 10	Appeal from representatives of culture is issued in favour of Rome 2020 to convince Mario Monti, Italy's Prime Minister, to support Rome 2020
	February 14	Mario Monti officially denies signature on letter of guarantee: Rome withdraws from the 2020 Olympic bid race

It was now becoming more and more real, therefore institutions had to set up the Promoting Committee. On July 26th, 2011 the Committee was officially sworn in, while it took almost two months for the first meeting of its Board of Directors. Members to the Executive branch of the Committee went from the expected institutional personalities – Minister of Foreign Affairs, President of Lazio Region; President of the Province of Rome, Under-Secretary of State to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers with mandate for Sport, effective and honorary Italian IOC Members, President of Italian Paralympic Committee, Secretary General of CONI, Roma Capitale Representative, Honorary Committee Representative – to the nominated President Mario Pescante, chosen because of its IOC membership – he was also serving as Vice-President of the IOC at that time –, and Vice Presidents Gianni Alemanno as Mayor of Rome, Gianni Petrucci as President of CONI, and Andrea Mondello as President of Unioncamere, a corporation that takes care of “the general interests of the region's five associated Chambers of Commerce and the corporations, companies, consortia and bodies which constitute them”.²⁴⁴ Mr Pescante, at that time a MP for *Popolo*

²⁴⁴ Cf. http://www.unioncamerelazio.it/who_we_are

delle Libertà (The People of Freedom party, PdL), Berlusconi's centre-right party, was considered by the opposition too much of a political actor, in light of the fact that Alemanno himself was supported by a PdL majority in the City Council. Therefore, Alemanno offered the opposition to shortlist a few names among which an additional Vice-President for the Committee would be chosen: an attempt to balance and preserve bipartisan support, confirming how valuable this is for the IOC. Offering a shared Vice-presidency was considered of political balancing because the only politician that had been included in the Committee due to his political role was Alemanno himself, while officially Pescante had been appointed because of his high profile in Italy's sport institutions and towards the IOC: since Alemanno was Vice-president, the Committee could only offer the minority a seat in a shared Vice-presidency setup.²⁴⁵ Evidently, politics played a strong role from the embryo of the bid: as we will see shortly, it is pivotal to understand the situation of Italian politics as a necessary background to draw the frame of the bid and its failure.

On November 4th, 2011, the IOC officially announced that six cities had been granted the Applicant City status: Baku (Azerbaijan), Doha (Qatar), Istanbul (Turkey), Madrid (Spain), Rome (Italy) and Tokyo (Japan).²⁴⁶ At this point the bid procedure was gaining momentum, therefore CONI and the Mayoralty decided to give the Promoting Committee a permanent headquarter: it was decided that the house of the Committee would be the so called *Aula Bunker*, one of the two historical white marble buildings at the southern edge of the Parco del Foro Italico, the core of Italian sport in Rome. The *Aula Bunker*, formerly known as "Casa delle Armi" or "Accademia della Scherma" (House of Arms, Fencing Academy), together with the *Ostello della Gioventù* (Youth Hostel), were built between the two World Wars, under the input of Mussolini, who undertook a intense reclaim of that area, nestled

²⁴⁵ Cf. http://www.2020roma.it/sala-stampa-e-news/news/119-roma_2020_-_alemanno-opposizione_indichi_i_vice_del_comitato.html

²⁴⁶ Cf. <http://www.olympic.org/news/six-applicant-cities-for-the-2020-olympic-games/138220>

between the creeks descending from Monte Mario hill and River Tiber. The idea, whose project had been developed by Italian architect Luigi Moretti, was to create a set of sport facilities for the *Opera Balilla*, the Youth Fascist organization. After the wars, one of the building had survived as youth hostel, while the other was adapted in the 1980s to become a courthouse for high-profile *Mafia* trial. The lower ground floor had even been adapted to host high security cells, causing major damages to the original structure of the building. In the last twenty years, both buildings had been abandoned almost completely. In 2005, CONI was entrusted of both buildings, and was looking for a reason to refurbish and revamp those magnificent pieces of architecture, avoiding to spend money just for the sake of it, but focusing on a legacy project.²⁴⁷ First, the hostel was refurbished and is now handled by the Italian Federation of Tennis during the Rome Masters event, and by the two football teams of Rome during the rest of the year, while the shorter part of the L-shaped Aula Bunker building was refurbished with the primary hope to host there a Museum of Sport. When Rome 2020 came up, CONI decided it was going to be the headquarter of the Bid Committee for Rome 2020, before turning it into a Museum.

At the same time, though, Italy was spiralling into the harshest consequences of prolonged economic and institutional stagnation, worsened by the effects of the on-going economic and financial crisis. Mr Berlusconi was forced to resign as Prime Minister, and President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano sought the hypothesis of a Parliamentary *große Koalitionen* supporting a new government run by a technocrat. He decided to appoint Mario Monti, a well-known economist, President of Bocconi University and former EU Commissioner, as life senator and then, as he had become a member of the Parliament, asked him to form a government and seek a

²⁴⁷ Cf. <http://www.archidiap.com/works/casa-delle-armi/>

confirmation vote in the Parliament.²⁴⁸ He swore in on November 16th, 2011, with a cabinet of technocrats.²⁴⁹

Meanwhile, CONI and the mayoralty were haggling to define the executive team. Ernesto Albanese, former CEO of Gialloviaggi.it, Atahotels and Eurofly, Managing Director of CONI Servizi and President of Coninet, had been appointed Managing Director of the Promoting Committee. He has vast marketing and managerial experience and is known as the man of the budget rebalancing, given that he had consolidated both Atahotels ²⁵⁰ and CONI Servizi ²⁵¹ accounts, transforming them in profit-making companies. Communication and Social Media Team was entrusted in Piero Mei's hands: one of the most experienced Olympic sport journalists of the country, he had collaborated with President Pescante on the Rome 2004 Bid Committee. Roberto Pagliuca, who had been Head of the Torch Relay program for Turin 2006, was appointed Marketing Director. Robert "Bob" Fasulo, former Chief of International Relations of the United States Olympic Committee, was entrusted with the Committee's International Relations, one of the key positions from the earliest stage of the beginning of the bid. Two former athletes completed the senior team: Jury Chechi as Sport Director, and Novella Calligaris as Head of Culture, Education (Youth and Women) and Olympism.

3. The element of discontinuity: GiovaniRoma 2020

While institutions were gradually setting up, an element of surprise spontaneously generated from civic society: *GiovaniRoma 2020* (YouthRome 2020, GR2020), a youth association aiming at raising awareness around Rome's Olympic idea among the younger generations, while connecting institutions and civic society. The main peculiarity of GR2020 was to be born autonomously: there had been

²⁴⁸ Cf. <http://www.economist.com/node/21538180>

²⁴⁹ Cf. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/17/world/europe/monti-forms-new-italian-government.html?_r=0

²⁵⁰ Cf. Andrea Ducci, "Albanese riordina Atahotels e poi lascia per Roma 2020", *Il Mondo*, Milano, 11 April 2010, p. 20.

²⁵¹ Cf. http://www.coni.it/notizie/primo-piano/18-primo-piano-2009/8182-coni_servizi-il_direttore_generale_ernesto_albanese_lascia_la_societ%C3%A0.html

youth movements of different kinds in previous Olympic Games, but they were always an emission of the Bidding or Organizing Committee, while GR2020 is to date the only youth movement spontaneously constituted for supporting an Olympic bid.

Founder and President of GR2020, juridically a no-profit youth organization, was Benito Malaspina, at the time a twenty-three year old construction engineer and project management student who decided to “infiltrate” himself into the *Etats généraux* of Rome in February 2011 – the meeting’s accreditation was sold out: he made a call to the accreditation office of the event and begged to get in on the grounds of a (fake) university research in future Rome development plans. He was shocked that, despite the centrality of the topics being discussed, youth was totally absent. When he heard about the Olympic bid, he connected the two: youth need to be involved, and sport could be the key. He talked to a few of his closest friends who, he knew, would find his idea sound, and together with Aldo Ballarini, at the time a Corporate Finance Master’s student at LUISS University, put together a group of fourteen under-thirty individuals that could represent various skills and knowledge. As some sort of no-profit start-up, the group decided they needed to approach the Committee with a well explained idea: they started working on a promotional video to play the emotional introduction, and at the same it was decided that the easiest channel to get closer to the Committee could be the President of the Province of Rome. Mr Nicola Zingaretti, a Partito Democratico (Democratic Party, PD) elect, had been grounding his political rhetoric on the importance of valuing youth. Moreover, according to IOC regulations, only the Mayor and the NOC officially have decisional power in organizing a Games. GR2020 strategically thought Zingaretti would understand that sponsoring them would have meant gaining leverage in the Committee, and at the same time look good politically for the trust in youth: therefore, GR2020 thought they would put Zingaretti in the awkward position of being able to only say “yes” to their project. Zingaretti staff was quite responsive: GR2020 sent a simple email through the Province

website, and they answered quite soon with the possibility to arrange a meeting with Mr Zingaretti. At that point, the association formally structured its primary project: a set of lectures about Olympic themes and a competition addressing high school students in the Province of Rome. When shown the promotional video,²⁵² President Zingaretti was impressed: understanding the potential of the project, he decided to fund the high schools projects with €15,000 and, through institutional relations, he managed to arrange a meeting with President Pescante after the summer. GR2020 was invited to the XIV Commission (UE policies, chaired by Pescante in his MP role)²⁵³ meeting room in the Italian House of Representatives at the end of October 2011: Pescante was co-chaired by Novella Calligaris, and they both valued GR2020 philosophy highly. It was decided to hold a joined press conference where Presidency of Province, CONI and Promoting Committee would introduce GR2020 to the media. It was also decided that the association should not be absorbed by the Committee: they would work together, but no formal affiliation would be established, in order to capitalize on the autonomy of GR2020 in light of IOC regulations regarding the bidding. The press conference, thanks to CONI and Province press offices, managed to gain national media attention, in particular with an entire page dedicated to the GR2020 propositions by *Gazzetta dello Sport*,²⁵⁴ the best selling sports newspaper of Italy, and the third bestselling overall.²⁵⁵

While the first lecture of the project was registered as a comforting success among students, December also saw the Committee keen on sponsoring both economically and logistically the first of what had been conceived as a series of thematic workshops that would analyse the bid more technically, and act as working tables for improving collegially the overall quality of the bid. The first (and only) workshop that actually took place was dedicated to Energy and

²⁵² Cf. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmAI_IIRYRA

²⁵³ Cf. http://leg16.camera.it/99?shadow_organo_parlamentare=1507&tipoVis=&elenco=

²⁵⁴ Cf. *Gazzetta dello Sport*, 21 November 2011, p. 47.

²⁵⁵ Cf. <http://www.adsnotizie.it/certif/index.php>

Environment. Among other panellists, Mario Kaiser, at the time Principal Design Advisor for the Olympic Delivery Authority for the London 2012 Games.²⁵⁶ Almost five hundred students attended the event: GiovaniRoma 2020 strategy to raise awareness and support among various levels of society while developing contents, was gaining momentum. It was a promising communicative strategy: in times of crisis, people tend not to trust institutions, while youth is seen as a purer voice, and therefore more genuinely convincing.

Furthermore, among GR2020 future strategies to raise consent, there was a multi-action project, called “world ambassadors”. Three different programs were implemented through this channel: first, people from abroad were asked to drop by the association’s website a short report of their latest journey in Rome, creating a platform for commenting and improving the city’s touristic face. Second, Italians living abroad and their foreign friends were asked to voice support for Rome as Olympic city. Third, interviews of youth around the world who have witnessed an edition of the Games in their home countries were collected, to grab suggestions, possible worries and impressions: it would help create awareness among sceptical citizens in Rome. Overall, the project would have raised international support for Rome 2020: somehow a similar approach, theoretically, to London’s Mandela support, but on a wider and more mass-oriented way.

Through the intense collaboration and help of Novella Calligaris, the association had been gaining strength and credibility among senior staff of the Committee, who had decided to value GR2020 as an asset, including it in the Applicant City file that should have been submitted to the IOC:

through the rise of spontaneous youth-driven organizations such as YouthRome2020 (www.giovanirioma2020.it), the bid also is serving to integrate and unite Italy’s diverse youth populations around Olympic sport and values.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Cf. <http://www.mkplus.eu/about-mario-kaiser.php>

²⁵⁷ Comitato Roma 2020, *A Time for History*, Application file for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, issued on 23 february 2012, Rome, p. 19.

4. The questionnaire and the communication strategy

As recalled by Mr Ernesto Albanese in an exclusive interview given to the author for the purpose of this paper, at first the Committee had judged the Prime Minister turn-over as positive news, especially from an international point of view, considering the calibre of Mr Monti in Europe and worldwide: “you now have a very ‘cool’ Prime Minister, we are almost envious!”,²⁵⁸ joked Mr Albanese in reporting the main comments he had received from several foreign sport and political officials.

Confident of the institutional support, in January 2012, only weeks away from the important deadline of the Applicant City file, the Committee had started reinforcing its PR and internal actions. On January 12th, a formal and well publicised event – live broadcasted on Raiuno, the leading channel of state-controlled broadcaster Rai, and attended by all major institutional actors, from the Mayor to President Pescante - officially produced the findings of the Economic Feasibility report of the Fortis Commission, and an official survey carried out by ISPO.²⁵⁹ Professor Fortis certified that the total budget of the Rome Olympics would be €9,8 billion, of which €8,2 billion to be guaranteed by the State. Nonetheless, the actual state spending would be €4,7 billion. Against this cash outflow, Fortis’ report found that in 2020 Italy’s GDP would gain €17,7 billion, an accumulated growth of around 1.4% between 2012-2025, with a peak of 3.9% in the Centre of Italy.²⁶⁰ Moreover, according to Mannheimer’s ISPO, 86% of the surveyed individuals from Lazio would agree in hosting the Games in Rome in 2020, with a 77% for Romans and 74% for Italians.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Cf. Ernesto Albanese, exclusive interview, annex 1.

²⁵⁹ “ISPO Ricerche is an Institute of social, economic and opinion research, headquartered in Milan. It was established in the 80s by Professor Renato Mannheimer together with a group of professors from several Italian universities”. Cf. <http://www.ispo.it/>

²⁶⁰ Cf. Commissione Fortis, *Roma 2020: valori e opinioni. I valori economici dei Giochi Olimpici e Paralimpici di Roma 2020*, 12 January 2012, pp. 1-10.

²⁶¹ Cf. ISPO, *La candidatura della Città di Roma ai Giochi Olimpici e Paralimpici del 2020. Cosa ne pensano la popolazione italiana, laziale e romana*, Rome, 12 January 2012, p. 2.

While the media were being made aware of the quite positive economic and statistical analyses results, Helios Partners, the company chosen as bid dossier consultant due to their main figures – Terence Burns and George Hirthler’s winning pedigree in previous biddings such as Vancouver 2010 and Sochi 2014, illustrated its strategic communication plan for the branding of Rome 2020, on January 25th. From internal access to their undisclosed confidential material, we have the valuable opportunity to draw a few comments on their strategic approach.

According to Helios, the latest editions of both Summer and Winter Olympic Games had been successful bids that answered the question “what is the value proposition for the Olympic Movement?”²⁶² Moreover, these most recent editions have been answering similarly with the idea of “new markets”, i.e. the expansion of the Olympic Movement to new hearts and minds enhancing sport practice in developing areas. Rome could not play the card of the developing country, so it was pivotal for the branding strategy to “define a new narrative for Rome 2020 that is based on a very real set of challenges being faced by the Olympic Movement”.²⁶³ the two main problems identified as key narrative where the fact that the Games have become too big and too expensive, and only countries with undemocratic regimes are able to drive these gigantic budgets regardless of their peoples’ will. Moreover, the recent and on-going economic and financial crisis hit harder on developed countries. The result is that only few Western countries would still be able to afford to host the Games at this cost, even though their media environment will never support “the exorbitant costs of preparing for and hosting an Olympic Games [...] and the media drive public opinion...”²⁶⁴ All these premises should drive the IOC to consider the idea of “sustainability” in a new way: Rome 2020 strategy shall make them. Specifically, it is important to consider

²⁶² Helios Partners, *Rome 2020 Brand Assessment & Positioning Platform*, Confidential Information, 2011, p. 2.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

that the highest costs of the Olympic Games are not for bidding, but for building white elephants that go as far as draining host country's state accounts, only to rest as useless "cathedrals in the desert" after the Games. According to Helios,

The Olympic Movement says it doesn't want waste, but they vote for it every time – why? Because no bid city has ever been bold enough to address the issue in a way that is logical and persuasive.²⁶⁵

By proving that Rome Olympic plans are coordinated with the city's other development plans, the bid will be depicted as responsible, low cost and founded on fiscal responsibility. Moreover:

We MUST make it **impossible for the Olympic Movement to vote against responsibility and sustainability** and show them they are on a precipice, where their own success is a threat to future cities' capacities to host the Games. (Capital and bold in the original)²⁶⁶

Helios then proceeds to analyse both Rome stereotypical image abroad, and some factual realities about the Eternal City. In the former category, for example, they included that Italy and Rome are "rich in history, beauty, art, fashion, architecture and culture",²⁶⁷ but have a "chaotic society with corruption at all levels, not efficient",²⁶⁸ and their people's "passionate personalities are both good and bad".²⁶⁹ For the latter, instead, they considered "organizational skills, proven record commitment to sport, responsible, efficient and convenient Games plan, modern Tourism infrastructure,"²⁷⁰ among others.

Therefore, Rome's bid main challenge was that they wanted to be identified as "thought leaders",²⁷¹ while many stereotypically perceived them as people from a "nice place to visit, but not to work."²⁷² Helios drew four main brand positioning platforms, distinct and yet complementary, including the main facts about Rome:²⁷³

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 11.

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 13.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Cf. *ibid.*, pp.15-16.

- Turning point: a new hosting model for Olympic hosting, inauguration of a new era²⁷⁴
- True sustainability: a new solution for new economic realities²⁷⁵
- Sport “naturale”: return to a more simpler and natural Games²⁷⁶
- La Dolce Vita: a friendly, youthful, engaging destination that the whole world loves²⁷⁷

To sum it up, according to Helios the Committee should draw on these peculiarities:²⁷⁸

- Roma Capitale as a new idea of city governance to support the bid²⁷⁹
- The creation of the new Tiber River Park as a spectacular and Green, yet regenerating legacy²⁸⁰
- The new hosting model: true sustainability in global sport as a turning point for the Olympic Movement²⁸¹
- The return to more “natural, human-sized Games²⁸²
- Expansion of the perspectives for future bid cities²⁸³
- The quality of Rome as a dramatic world class stage for global sport excellence²⁸⁴
- Rome can give back to the Olympic Movement its original fun and joy, swiping away the artificialities of “regime” Olympics²⁸⁵

The theme to synthesize and put these messages into practice suggested by Helios was: “A Time for History”. Many in the Committee, as Ms

²⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁷⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁷⁶ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁷⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁷⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

²⁸⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁸¹ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁸² Cf. *ibid.*

²⁸³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁸⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

Calligaris for example, welcomed this payoff tepidly: according to her the message to send in order to reinvent Rome's image and swipe away old stereotypes should have been one of projection towards the future, history at the service of a Rome of the future. As a matter of fact, Helios message was exactly that, but it seemed not so clear to begin with. In other words, the payoff was convoluted, it needed to be explained, which, probably, makes a payoff weak. Helios explained it as follows:

The Rome 2020 tagline, A Time for History, illustrates that Rome 2020 is creating a new blueprint for the future, thereby using this moment in time to make history again, with the Olympic Movement. This also elegantly positions against Istanbul/Doha/Baku who will most certainly try to use "historic choice" etc. for their positioning.²⁸⁶

They advised to go public with the communication strategy as fast as possible, underlining the utmost importance of pre-empting other cities.

Through preliminary vetting, it was also asked former Olympic athlete - twice silver medal in long jump²⁸⁷ - and actress, Fiona May, to be the athlete's official promoting face of the Committee, first and foremost in upcoming IOC meetings where bidding cities would be given some presentation space to address the IOC members. She was briefed in January 2012, during a Bid Committee senior staff meeting, on the reasons why she had been chosen: as a black woman athlete who was a British citizen naturalised Italian, she represents integration, tolerance and gender equality. Moreover, she is a mother, and widely known as such through her participation in several advertisements and TV fictions. Furthermore, she was a widely respected internationally known athlete who speaks English fluently. The perfect PR product: she could be a symbol, and her message would be heard because she was established.

5. Dropping out of heaven

The Promoting Committee was then up and running: economically and statistically comforted, strategically ready in terms of communication and PR. Nonetheless, the Committee had been

²⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 20.

²⁸⁷ Cf. <http://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/athletes/ma/fiona-may-1.html>

underestimating something that would soon prove lethal: governmental support. Looking backward, it is possible to see all the worrying signs of a government getting cold-feet: since its swearing in, there had been no official comments of Prime Minister Monti on the topic. The only two Ministers of his Cabinet that publicly commented were Corrado Clini, Minister for the Environment, who spent positive words about the idea of a sustainable bid during a meeting about the policies of environmental sustainability at LUISS University in Rome on December 16, 2011,²⁸⁸ and Piero Gnudi, Minister for Sport, who, on January 12, 2012 had officially stated that

it is better to keep the feet on the ground, since it is a very difficult time for the country e with just one point of spread, that is worth twenty billion euros, it is possible to host three Olympics. The decision is up to the government, not me.²⁸⁹

Gnudi's words came just after the government had been presented with the results of the Fortis report. This means the institutional branch of the Committee had talked face to face with PM Monti. It is of pivotal importance to certify that probably there was very poor communication among the parties, since the Committee representatives had left the meeting comforted of an upcoming support of the government. Or, Monti was purposely playing his best poker face in order to keep his options open.

Whatever the solution of that diplomatic mystery, there was a turning point in the media attitude towards the bid. According to Mr Albanese, media have a twisted mind in Italy: "once a negativity of any kind is set in motion, media want to ride it tabloid-style like if there is no tomorrow. [...] The problem is their fury, irrespective of anything."²⁹⁰ The turning point was an interview, given to Italian bestselling newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, on January 26, 2012, by Pietro Mennea, a former Olympic gold medallist, and a widely known persona in Italy

²⁸⁸ Cf. http://www.corriere.it/notizie-ultima-ora/Sport/Roma-2020-Alemanno-contiamo-Clini/16-12-2011/1-A_000737678.shtml

²⁸⁹ <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2012/01/13/roma-2020-costo-zero-il-ministro-gnudi.html>

²⁹⁰ Ernesto Albanese, *op. cit.*, 2014.

and abroad.²⁹¹ Mennea fiercely attacked the bid saying “there are no ‘costless’ Games [...] The country has other priorities, we all know it. We have to consolidate our accounts, set the economy in motion again [...] Everything but the Olympics”. He also stated he was to be trusted, because he could never be against the Games as an Olympian: he was against what the Games have become, gigantic monetary operations for private capitals to the detriment of state accounts.

This interview, released only a couple of weeks before the awaited deadline for receiving Monti’s signature on the applicant city letter, completely changed the approach of national media towards the bid: if media had generally been between mild to supportive, the attitude went for the worse. The Committee tried to damage control Mennea’s interview with an interesting strategy. To demur the former Olympic medallist, adored by Italian fans country-wide, the Committee deployed another athlete, as beloved as Mennea, and even more successful: former gymnast Jury Chechi. He stated he deeply respected Mr Mennea and, as a matter of fact, the project at stake would match Mennea’s idea of a need for reformed Olympics:

Rome, through a project I know in every detail, can finally give life to a sustainable Olympics, without cathedrals in the desert and more ‘human’. [...] These would be exactly what Mennea wishes for. [...] **Rome has the chance to start** a new era [...]: this is exactly the right time to look forward. [...] For the 2020 Olympic Games we have only few contenders and none of them is unbeatable, moreover we can count on a strong political representation inside the IOC.²⁹²

Through these words, Chechi was already putting into practice Helios’ narrative, and most likely the stratagem adopted by the Committee to demur a credible athlete with another athlete was the best possible approach. Nonetheless, it was too late. The avalanche effect had been triggered. An example for all, the investigative report carried out by weekly magazine *l’Espresso*, issued on February 10, 2012, only days before the IOC deadline. The six page report, titled

²⁹¹ Cf. <http://www.pietromennea.it/vittorie.asp>

²⁹² http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/12_gennaio_27/giochi-mennea-juri-chechi-1903032466729.shtml

“Olympic squandering”,²⁹³ focused on the squandering connected to the 2009 World Aquatics Championships hosted in Rome, according to many an example of what would happen if Rome were to host the Games in 2020. Normally, this magazine features, in the first pages of its issues, and also as a detached piece of paper on the back of issue, its weekly “alternative cover”. The alternative cover of that week had been dedicated to the “Olympic squandering”, with a subtitle stating “from the Winter Games in Turin to the World Aquatics Championships in Rome: a river of money spent in vain”.²⁹⁴

When asked if the media, and especially the press, had been lobbied to support the bid, Albanese said that they “had talked to a few of them, but that was not the problem. The problem is their fury, irrespective of anything.”²⁹⁵ As a matter of fact, few newspapers tried to mildly show support, provoking a positive news cycle around the bid. In particular, the free-press *Leggo*, and Rome-based newspaper *Il Messaggero*. It is not by chance: both belong to the Caltagirone family, involved first hand in the Honorary Committee with Azzurra Caltagirone.²⁹⁶

And there is was. After a trip to the United States, during which the Committee even tried to get in touch with the Associations of Italians in the US that would meet PM Monti, to ask them to lobby the PM to favour the bid, on February 14, 2012, Mario Monti officially announced, during a press conference:

We examined the project thoroughly, both generally and the very in-depth economic analysis [...]and we want to express great sympathy with the frames of this project [...] and we rejoiced with the members of the Promoting Committee that we met few minutes ago. As you can imagine our government has meditated inside out [...] and after a very in-depth and somehow suffered thinking, [...] the government do not feel, do **not** believe it would be wise, considering Italy’s present

²⁹³ Fabrizio Gatti, “Sprechi Olimpici”, *l’Espresso*, No. 7, Anno LVIII (10 February 2010), p. 28.

²⁹⁴ Alternative cover of *l’Espresso*, No. 7, Anno LVIII (10 February 2010). Reproduced on p. 23 of the issue.

²⁹⁵ Albanese, *op. cit.*

²⁹⁶ Cf. <http://www.2020roma.it/il-comitato-promotore/il-comitato-promotore/azzurra-caltagirone.html>

conditions, to take on this commitment of guarantee.²⁹⁷ (bold added)

While a strong wave of disillusion and disappointment shook the Promoting Committee, whose existence would be truncated in the following weeks, media vexed. Any media agent, even the smallest ones, even those who had not been interested in the bid before, gathered their attentions on the topic, some strongly vexing on the now defunct project, others more “neutrally”. Here’s a brief overview of just a few headlines of those days:

- Roma 2020, il governo dice no Monti: «Non possiamo correre rischi». Rinuncia «dolorosa» ma costi non chiari. (Corriere della Sera)²⁹⁸
- Monti non firma garanzia. Addio Olimpiadi Roma 2020 (La Repubblica)²⁹⁹
- Monti boccia Roma 2020: "Impegno troppo gravoso" (Gazzetta dello Sport)³⁰⁰
- Il governo dice no a Roma 2020: "L'Italia non può permetterselo" (La Stampa)³⁰¹
- Roma 2020, niente Olimpiadi. Monti: scelta di responsabilità (Il Sole 24 Ore)³⁰²
- Olimpiadi, Monti dice no a Roma 2020: «Non rischiamo i soldi degli italiani» (Il Messaggero)³⁰³
- Roma 2020: Dieci e lode a "Super Mario" (Panorama)³⁰⁴
- Olimpiadi, un 'no' sacrosanto (l'Espresso)³⁰⁵

²⁹⁷ http://tg24.sky.it/tg24/politica/2012/02/14/no_olimpiadi_roma_2020_reazioni_politica_pd_pdl_idv_udc_lega_nord.html

²⁹⁸ http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/12_febbraio_14/monti-cdm-roma-alemanno-olimpiadi-2020-1903276387660.shtml

²⁹⁹ http://www.repubblica.it/sport/vari/2012/02/14/news/monti_olimpiadi_incontro-29856086/

³⁰⁰ http://www.gazzetta.it/Sport_Vari/Altri_Sport/Olimpiadi/14-02-2012/roma-2020-giorno-verita-decisivo-incontro-monti--81335597762.shtml

³⁰¹ <http://www.lastampa.it/2012/02/14/sport/il-governo-dice-no-a-roma-l-italia-non-puo-permetterselo-li8iuFqBZQ3pbkYmBHlgK/pagina.html>

³⁰² <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2012-02-14/olimpiadi-2020-decisive-candidatura-101347.shtml?uuid=AaoE5arE>

³⁰³ http://www.ilmessaggero.it/roma/cronaca/olimpiadi_monti_dice_no_a_roma_2020_non_rischiamo_i_soldi_degli_italiani/notizie/181318.shtml

³⁰⁴ <http://news.panorama.it/marco-ventura-profeta-di-ventura/Roma-2020-Dieci-e-lode-a-Super-Mario>

³⁰⁵ <http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/cronaca/2012/02/14/news/olimpiadi-un-no-sacrosanto-1.40491>

- Monti spegne le Olimpiadi "Roma 2020? Troppi rischi" E Bossi: "Lì solo casini..." (Il Giornale)³⁰⁶

Piazza Pulita, a Monday night political talk show on La7, one of the three main broadcasters in Italy, took on the previous week's investigative report of *l'Espresso*, putting on an exaggerated criticism, even going as far as reporting incorrect information about the bid, and about the 2006 Winter Olympic Games in Turin.³⁰⁷

Clearly, it would be quite an overstatement to say Mario Monti, a world known economist and former EU Commissioner, was being influenced by the media. The attitude of the media, instead, seem to confirm what Mr Albanese told about the "sick media" of Italy. More widely speaking, it may represent Italy's attitude. When asked if Italy had regulatory problems, for example considering the blurry relationships of pressure groups, private interests and institutions that may have jeopardized the bid itself, Albanese said that

In Italy everything is more difficult, but it's not necessarily a matter of regulations. The issue is our history: we have been unite for not long now (only 150 years or so), and our divisions clearly show in many areas of society, especially when confronted with places like France or the UK.³⁰⁸

Having now analysed several Olympic Games, and even a failed bid, we will use the following, concluding chapter to draw some generalizing remarks on the importance of communication for the various phases of the Olympic Games, and its interlaced relationship with marketing and lobbying. As for wrapping up Rome 2020 failed experience from a more Italian point of view, one last consideration must be laid out.

Even though Monti cautiously decided to renounce because of the dramatic situation of Italy's accounts, there is a different underlying message that was sent, especially to younger generations. The government was telling them they should not have hope. No hope on the economy, no hope for ameliorating the country both from an

³⁰⁶ <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/monti-spegne-olimpiadiroma-2020-troppi-rischie-bossi-l-solo.html>

³⁰⁷ Cf. <http://www.la7.it/piazzapulita/video/sprechi-olimpici-16-02-2012-113808>

³⁰⁸ Albanese, op. cit.

infrastructural and political and institutional leadership points of view,
no hope for dreams: how is that for a communication strategy?

Chapter 6 - Connecting the rings: towards a generalized hosting model?

Throughout chapter two, three, four and five we have tried to point out the main features of the latest Olympic Games (Beijing London), of one city towards hosting the Games (Rio de Janeiro) and one that failed during the bidding process (Rome). These gave us a great deal of information. It is now time to articulate our findings and try to define the idea of qualitative Games, in order to understand if there is room for a generalized hosting model that would favour quality.

1. Findings

Each chapter analysing the most recent bids and Games brought to our attention a few peculiar characteristics. In particular:

- Beijing 2008
 - Olympics enhance national pride
 - To win a bid, develop a narrative to which the IOC can only say “yes”
 - Games are oriented by capitalism
 - “Imagineering” may work as a communication strategy, but has many backlash effects: a different final image may end up being generated
 - You must have many expertise on board
 - Do not underestimate voices of dissent
 - Environment has become by now a key factor for the Olympic Games
 - IOC almost always vote for inclusivity
 - Uncertain legacy, even in light of good Games, marks negatively a city’s image in history
- London 2012
 - Politics has a key role: lobbying as important as communication
 - Qualitative project pays out
 - Budget issues even before recent economic crisis
 - International support of different kind is important

- Transparency plays a key role in the credibility of the project
- Games can boost a city only if Olympic developments match previous idea of the city's development
- Security still a major problem as it affects the budget substantially
- Even minor bribery and "blurry lines" will not be accepted by public opinion
- Enhancing inclusivity (successful Paralympics)
- A proof that legacy needs long-term assessment and ad-hoc authorities
- Budget can be realistic to begin with
- Rio 2016
 - Importance of environment and humanity, and of new narrative for the IOC
 - To win a bid, develop a narrative to which the IOC can only say "yes"
 - Transparency plays a key role in the credibility of the project
 - Trying to over-do can have risky consequences (i.e. World Cup and Olympic Games)
 - The IOC awarded more the communication itself rather than a qualitative project
 - Politicians may seek fame through major events (Mayor Paes)
 - Unpredictable outcome of Olympic project not a good sign: must be avoided at all costs
- Rome 2020
 - Political support is fundamental
 - A too entrenched present (or past) reputation can kill even good communication strategies
 - The failure of the IOC: economic unpredictability considered an established feature of the Games

These findings do confirm and reinforce the theoretical ground expressed in chapter one. They also help us underline many flows affecting different areas and stakeholders of the Olympic process. Let's see what this means.

2. Successful Games

As expressed in chapter one, the primary goal of hosting a mega-event like the Olympics is to generate a profit, which could be tangible or intangible. To do so, first the right to host the Games must be won. Subsequently, your Olympic Games must be organized well enough to be a success, both in the narrative that will endure in history, and in practice. Why in practice too? Because, in spite of communication strategies being a strong tool of what has been defined as "Imagineering", in such a globalized and interconnected world it is impossible to control any message or information. The best way to host successful Games is to actually plan and provide for good Games, and at the same time be sure, through the best communication strategies, to make the world aware your Games are qualitative.

Indeed, among the four phases, the bidding arises as the most interesting due to its criticalities. Indeed, for the bid to be successful, the communication team must be able to create a sellable image of a city that, as a matter of fact, does not (fully) exist. An image that should be as close as possible to what the city would become in seven to ten years from the moment the narrative is developed. If the image does not match, the Games will be perceived as a failure. Even assuming the branding process ignited by the communication strategy is of utmost quality, the image may still not match because the actual Olympic project was not good enough. The image that was sold was better than what the outcome of the Olympic plans had laid out in practice. That is why it is fair to say that past experience clearly shows there are no Games without an extraordinary communication team and a superb communication strategy – because the bid will lose – but there are no successful Games without a qualitative Olympic project.

Moreover, there is a stakeholder that shall be particularly interested the Games are of qualitative value. This stakeholder is IOC. Every time a city has failed to live up to the promises it had made towards the Games, providing for low or not remarkable quality Games, other cities drift away from the idea of competing for hosting. Usually, the rhetoric is about the financial uncertainties. Furthermore, the recent economic crisis has dramatically contributed in deteriorating cities' trust in mega-events. The IOC shall be interested in addressing the issue in order to invert this tendency towards the absence of cities available for hosting. Such a perspective may be lethal for the IOC on the long run. The withdrawal of Rome from the 2020 Olympic run stands as a clear example of this tendency, as much as the reducing number of acceptable candidates in the 2020 race.

At this point, two main questions arise: how do we define an Olympic project to be of good value? And, how can the IOC make sure to have qualitative projects to become reality in order to preserve the Olympic Movement integrity?

3. Future directions

The first question as an easy answer: a good project is one that aims at legacy. But what is legacy? In chapter one we tried to highlight the fact that this word works as a cauldron: many different sectors of a city's life may be subject to generating legacy if triggered somehow. In general, legacy is good if there was a problem in the city, and after a specific action, the problem is considered to be solved. If we apply this basic syllogism to the Olympic Games, it becomes evident that legacy is not only a multi-dimension construct,³⁰⁹ but a particularly customizable one too. Therefore, any project shall be personalised according to the city's needs. Many cities have long-term development or regeneration plans, other may not. An Olympic project shall follow these plans, not dictate or modify them. Therefore, those cities that have one in place already, shall develop the Olympic project starting

³⁰⁹ Cf. Nola Agha, Sheranne Fairley and Heather Gibson, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

from there and using the Olympics to serve the city's development plan, not the other way around. Urban realities that are lacking a development plan, shall foster one before even considering to bid.³¹⁰

Moreover, when development plans are modified or revolutionized to make space for the Olympic Games, this is when the Games become economically unsustainable. At this point what has commonly happened is that stakeholders interested in promoting the bid try to underestimate the costs on purpose, either leaving out some of the costs, or categorizing some of the needed infrastructure as non-Olympic, therefore not accountable in the Olympic Games budget. This is especially true when private interests are driving the bid: their interest is to convince the political actors through distorted lower estimates.³¹¹ Furthermore, as we have seen for Beijing, development may be of a different kind. Social and civil rights are the first and foremost kind of intangible legacy. If a city is missing some of them – think of the freedom of press in Beijing, or LGBT rights in Russia for the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic Games – it shall include evolve these principles towards more rights. Nonetheless, civil and political rights are more peculiar than infrastructural needs. Strong historical and cultural reasons may be behind the lack of these rights. Unfortunately, it is unlikely to imagine a city or a country to reverse its own ideas on rights in a day. But the Olympics have indirect long-term power if used in a certain way. Beijing, for example, underestimated the consequences of wanting to expose themselves to the globe as a world-city class: they were not fully considering that the parameters for globalized cities are still established by a “Westernized” way of thinking, and paid a price in terms of reputation, somehow failing to reach the main objective in their quest to host the Olympics: level China at the same standards of the most powerful countries in the world.

³¹⁰ Cf. Wolfgang Maennig and Andrew Zimbalist, “Future challenge: maximizing the benefits and minimizing the costs”, in Wolfgang Maennig and Andrew Zimbalist, *op. cit.*, Cheltenham (UK), Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2012, pp. 571-572.

³¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*

Therefore, we reach the second question. The IOC shall focus on renovating the bidding, the leading-up and the legacy assessment processes.

In spite of the fascinating backstage stories emerging from lobbying and strategic communication, the bidding process is still loosely regulated, allowing a stagnant bribery practice at large. Providing for clearer and transparent rules would give back dignity to lobbying practices that could lead to better decision making.³¹²

According to professors Maennig and Zimbalist,

it would make straight-forward sense to render the bidding/selection process more transparent by placing greater emphasis on sport-related criteria and less on non-sport-related ones, such as geopolitical factors. The incentive for corruption-free behaviours on the part of the applicant cities and the IOC members should be increased via enhanced controls and greater potential punishments.³¹³

Evidently, these controls shall be entrusted in third-party authorities. As a matter of fact, today the IOC is still an elitist and therefore quite an undemocratic body. Its members may not exceed 115, and their composition is clearly stated in Rule 16 of the Olympic Charter, as follows:

- A maximum of 70 members, representing a majority of members, free from any specific function or office, no more than one per country;³¹⁴
- A maximum of 15 active athletes;³¹⁵
- A maximum of 15 Presidents or persons holding an executive or senior leadership position within IFs, associations of IFs or other organisations recognised by the IOC;³¹⁶
- A maximum of 15 Presidents or persons holding an executive or senior leadership position within NOCs, or world or continental

³¹² Cf. Giuseppe Mazzei, *lobby della trasparenza. Manuale di relazioni istituzionali*, Roma, Centro di documentazione giornalistica, 2009, pp. 34-38.

³¹³ Wolfgang Maennig and Andrew Zimbalist, *op. cit.*, 2012, p. 583.

³¹⁴ Cf. IOC, *The Olympic Charter*, rule 16, article 1, section 1. Published by the International Olympic Committee, September 2013.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

associations of NOCs, no more than one per a given country within the IOC.³¹⁷

If membership was refurbished towards a more democratic model, for example converting the 70 members, who are usually members of world's aristocracy, into honorary members, and allowing the formation of a more democratic assembly, such as including members of NOCs from every country that are affiliated and recognized by the IOC, a Parliamentary IOC would originate. At that point, all IOC actions concerning the bidding, the leading up and the legacy assessment processes would be more credible. The voting for awarding the city may be transformed into a non-anonymous, recorded voting session, to stimulate for accountable voting bias, a self-provoking reducer of bribery and blurry practices. More competent and less gullible evaluation commissions could be formed for checking, advising and sanctioning appropriately during the leading up, and assessing and studying the quality of the legacy, in order to provide for future indications towards a standardized set of principles and practices for reaching qualitative legacy starting from the bidding process.

As an elitist committee, sitting IOC members will be reluctant to losing some of their power and influence. It is therefore unlikely they undergo this change autonomously. One solution could be for NOCs all over the world to push them into understanding this is a much needed evolution of the body that, by barring change, is spiralling in a risky path that could result in the most lethal consequences, for the IOC, for the Games, and for the Olympic Movement as a whole.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

Conclusion

While this dissertation comes to an end with many open sparks that shall deserve in-depth analysis that was not possible here for reasons of conciseness, it has yet been proven that to be awarded the right to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games it may only be necessary an innovative narrative and great communication and lobbying efforts.

Nonetheless, in order to host quality Games it is inescapable to develop a qualitative Olympic project. As seen, it means to be able to provide for a good show and, most importantly, for a long lasting qualitative legacy. Unfortunately, a good legacy cannot be described as a univocal concept. Legacy will vary from city to city, from country to country.

Since “bad” Games have been influencing public opinion more and more about the opportunity to host the Games, it seems cities and politicians are becoming lesser and lesser enthusiastic about bid. In order for the IOC to preserve the possibility to put on the Olympic show, therefore preserving its own existence, there is a need for more qualitative Games in terms of projects. To do so, the IOC should open up to reforming its bidding regulations in order to make lobbying more transparent, and provide for more check up systems during the leading up and the aftermath of the Games. Moreover, a more credible and long-term legacy assessment method shall be developed with a double aim. First, help cities go through with the original qualitative project they had set up during the bid. Second, by assessing the legacy in a more scientific way the IOC can compile a more general list of parameters that can be then personalized by cities wanting to bid, in order to benefit more and more from previous experiences.

This way, the IOC will push cities for real, credible and sustainable legacies. It may take time, because legacy assessment needs to be performed over an extended timeframe, to catch the whole impact of the legacy plans.

At that point, bids will be asymptotically perfect, while lobbying and communication will still play a key role in securing the right to host an Olympic Games, but this time in a renewed challenge among top level bid projects.

Bibliography

“Theme 5: Environment”, London Candidacy File for the 2012 Olympic Games, 2005.

AGHA, Nola, FAIRLEY, Sheranne and GIBSON, Heather, “Considering legacy as a multi-dimensional construct: The legacy of the Olympic Games”, in *Sport Management Review*, Vol. 15, 1, (Feb. 2012).

BLAIR, Cherie, *Speaking for Myself*, Sphere, London, 2008.

BLAIR, Tony, *A Journey*, Hutchinson, London, 2010.

BROUDHOUX, Anne-MariE, “The Social and Spatial Impacts of Olympic Image Construction: The Case of Beijing 2008”, in Helen Jefferson Lenskyj and Stephen Wagg (edited by), *The Palgrave Handbook of Olympic Studies*, Basingstoke (UK), Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

BROWN, Dan and SZYMANSKI, “The employment effect of London 2012: an assessment in mid-2011”, in Wolfgang Maennig and Andrew Zimbalist, *International Handbook on the Economics of Mega Sporting Events*, Cheltenham (UK), Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2012.

CAREY, Meaghan, MASON, Daniel and MISENER, Laura, “Social Responsibility and the Competitive Bid Process for Major Sporting Events”, in *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, Vol. 35, 246 (2011).

CASHMAN, Richard, *Impact of the Games on Olympic host cities: university lecture on the Olympics* [online article]. Barcelona, Centre d’Estudis Olímpics (UAB), 2002.

CHA, Victor D., “A Theory of Sport and Politics”, in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 26, 11(2009).

CHA, Victor D., *Beyond the Final Score. The Politics of Sport in Asia*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2009.

CHAPPELET, Jean-Loup (edited by), *From initial idea to success: a guide to bidding for sports events for politicians and administrators*, Lausanne, Sentedalps Consortium, 2005.

CLOSE, Paul, ASKEW, David and XIN, Xu, *The Beijing Olympiad. The Political Economy of a Sporting Mega-Event*, New York, Routledge, 2007.

COMITATO ROMA 2020, *A Time for History*, Application file for the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games, issued on 23 February 2012, Rome.

COMMISSIONE FORTIS, *Roma 2020: valori e opinioni. I valori economici dei Giochi Olimpici e Paralimpici di Roma 2020*, 12 January 2012.

COOK, Ian G. and MILENS, Steven, "Beijing 2008", in John R. Gold and Margaret R. Gold (edited by), *Olympic cities. City Agendas, Planning, and the World's Games, 1896-2016*, New York, Routledge, 2011.

DE MELO, Luiz Martins, "The case of Brazil 2014/2016", in Wolfgang Maennig and Andrew Zimbalist, *International Handbook on the Economics of Mega Sporting Events*, Cheltenham (UK), Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2012.

DENTON, Robert E. and WOODWARD, Gary C., *Political Communication in America*, New York, Praeger, 1990.

DI BLASIO, LUCIANO, *Intervista ad Direttore Generale di Roma 2020 Ernesto Albanese*, exclusive interview, annex 1.

Dossiê de Candidatura do Rio de Janeiro a Sede Dos Jogos Olímpicos e Paralímpicos de 2016, Vol. 3, published February 2009.

DUCCI, Andrea, "Albanese riordina Atahotels e poi lascia per Roma 2020", *Il Mondo*, Milano, 11 April 2010.

EVANS, Graeme, "London 2012", in John R. Gold and Margaret R. Gold (edited by), *Olympic cities. City Agendas, Planning, and the World's Games, 1896-2016*, New York, Routledge, 2011.

FAUSTO, Boris, *Historia do Brasil*, São Paulo, Edusp, 1994.

FAVRETTO, Ilaria, *Storia d'Europa nel XX secolo. Gran Bretagna*, Milano, Editori Unicopli, 2004.

FUSSEY, Pete et al., *Securing and Sustaining the Olympic City. Reconfiguring London for 2012 and Beyond*, Farnham (Surrey, UK), Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011.

GATTI, Fabrizio, "Sprechi Olimpici", *l'Espresso*, No. 7, Anno LVIII (10 February 2010).

George H. Sage, *Globalizing Sport. How Organizations, Corporations, Media, and Politics Are Changing Sports*, Boulder (CO, USA), Paradigm Publishers, 2010, pp. 141-143.

GRATTON, Chris Gratton and PREUSS, Holger, "Maximizing Olympic Impacts by Building Up Legacies", *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, London, Vol.25 (14), 2008.

GREATHEAD R. Scott, "China and the Spielberg Effect", in Minky Worden (edited by), *China's Great Leap. The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, New York, Seven Stories Press, 2008.

HARAHOSOU Yvonne et al., "The Olympic Games: a framework for international public relations", in Sandra M. Oliver (edited by), *Handbook of corporate communication and public relations. Pure and applied*, London, Routledge, 2004.

HELIOS PARTNERS, *Rome 2020 Brand Assessment & Positioning Platform*, Confidential Information, 2011.

HOM, Sharon K., "The promise of a People's Olympics", in Minky Worden (edited by), *China's Great Leap. The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, New York, Seven Stories Press, 2008.

HONG, F. and ZHOUXIANG, L., "Beijing's two bids for the Olympics: the political games", *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 29, 1 (Jan. 2012).

Inspired by 2012: The legacy from the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, A joint UK Government and Mayor of London report, London, July 2013.

INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, *Report of the IOC 2016 Evaluation Commission. Games of the XXXI Olympiad*, Lausanne, IOC, released on 2 September 2009.

IOC Executive Board, *Rules of Conduct Applicable to all Cities wishing to Organise the Olympic Games*, Lausanne, IOC, 2007.

IOC, *2020 Candidature Acceptance Procedure*, Lausanne, IOC, 2011.

IOC, *The Olympic Charter*, published by the International Olympic Committee, September 2013.

ISPO, *La candidatura della Città di Roma ai Giochi Olimpici e Paralimpici del 2020. Cosa ne pensano la popolazione italiana, laziale e romana*, Rome, 12 January 2012.

JARVIE, Grant, HWANG, Dong-Jhy and BRENNAN, Mel, *Sport, Revolutions and the Beijing Olympics*, Oxford (UK), Berg, 2008.

JEFFERSON LENSKEYJ, Helen, *Olympic Industry Resistance. Challenging Olympic Power and Propaganda*, Albany, State of New York Press, 2008, p. 45.

JEFFERSYS, Kevin, *Sport and Politics in Modern Britain. The Road to 2012*, Basingstoke (UK), Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

KASSENS-NOOR, Eva, *Planning Olympic legacies. Transport dreams and urban realities*, New York, Routledge, 2012.

KAUFMAN, Gerald, "Oral Answers to Questions. World Athletics Championships", *House of Commons Debates*, vol. 376, 11 December 2001, , column 744.

KITCHIN, Paul, "Financing the Games", in John R. Gold and Margaret R. Gold (edited by), *Olympic cities. City Agendas, Planning, and the World's Games, 1896-2016*, New York, Routledge, 2011.

l'Espresso, No. 7, Anno LVIII (10 February 2010), Alternative cover.

LEE, Mike, *The Race for the 2012 Olympics. The Inside Story on How London Won the Bid*, Virgin Books, London, 2006.

LIU, Qi, *Speech at the opening ceremony of the BOBICO*, Sept. 6, 1999.

MAENNIG, Wolfgang and ZIMBALIST, Andrew, “Future challenge: maximizing the benefits and minimizing the costs”, in Wolfgang Maennig and Andrew Zimbalist, *International Handbook on the Economics of Mega Sporting Events*, Cheltenham (UK), Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2012.

MATTINA, Liborio, *I gruppi di interesse*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2010.

MAZZEI, Giuseppe, *lobby della trasparenza. Manuale di relazioni istituzionali*, Roma, Centro di documentazione giornalistica, 2009.

MCNAIR, Brian, *An introduction to political communication*, New York, Routledge, 2011.

MORAGAS SPÀ, Miquel de and KENNETT, Chris, Olympic cities and communication (online article), Barcelona, Centre d’Estudis Olímpics UAB, 2005.

NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE OF THE UK, *Preparations for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games – Risk assessment and management*, summarised version, London, House of Commons, 2 February 2007.

NEWMAN, Peter, “‘Back the bid’: The 2012 Summer Olympics and the Governance of London”, in *Journal of Urban Affairs*, Volume 29, 3, 2007.

OLYMPIC STUDIES CENTRE, *Bid Procedure for the Games of the Olympiad of 2016. Reference document. Key bid procedure dates, the list of Applicant Cities and brief Candidate Cities*, Lausanne, IOC, released on 1 April 2010.

Phelim Kine, “A Global Medal in Media Censorship”, WORDEN, Minky (edited by), *China’s Great Leap. The Beijing Games and Olympian Human Rights Challenges*, New York, Seven Stories Press, 2008.

PICCIONI, Valerio, *Gazzetta dello Sport*, 21 November 2011.

POAST, Paul D., "Winning the Bid: Analyzing the International Olympic Committee's Host City Selections", in *International Interactions: Empirical and Theoretical Research in International Relations*, Vol. 33, 1 (2007).

REAL, Michael, "Reflections on Communication and Sport. On Spectacle and Mega-Events", published online by SAGE on behalf of the International Association For Communication and Sport, 2013.

Report 5: Post-Games Evaluation Meta-Evaluation of the Impacts and Legacy of the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, Summary Report, prepared by: Grant Thornton, Ecorys, Loughborough University, Oxford Economics, Future Inclusion for the DCMS, London, July 2013.

ROCHE, Maurice, *Mega-events and modernity: Olympics and expos in the growth of global culture*, London, Routledge , 2000.

ROWE, David, "The bid, the lead-up, the event and the legacy: global cultural politics and hosting the Olympics", in *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 63, 2 (2012).

Ryan Ong, "New Beijing, Great Olympics. Beijing and its Unfolding Olympic Legacy", *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs*, Vol. 4 (N. 2), 21 May 2004, p. 38.

SHAW, Christopher A., "The Economics and Marketing of the Olympic Games from Bid Phase to Aftermath", in Helen Jefferson Lenskyj and Stephen Wagg (edited by), *The Palgrave Handbook of Olympic Studies*, Basingstoke (UK), Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

SHAW, Christopher A., *Five Rings Circus. Myths and Realities of the Olympic Games*, Gabriola Island (BC, Canada), New Society Publishers, 2008.

Taking to the streets, *The Economist*, issue of June 22, 2013.

TOLZMANN, Molly C., "Global localities: Olympic bidding as a case study in globalization", *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics*, Routledge, published online 17 Sept. 2013.

TOMLINSON, Alan, "Lording it. London and the getting of the Games", in John Surgen and Alan Tomlinson (edited by), *Watching the Olympics. Politics, power and representation*, London, Routledge, 2012.

VAN DER BERG, Marcel and DE NOOIJ, Michiel, "The bidding paradox: why rational politicians still want to bid for mega sports events", in *Discussion Paper Series*, Tjalling C. Koopmans Research Institute, Utrecht University, N.13, 09 (2013).

WARD, Stephen V., "Promoting the Olympic City", in John R. Gold and Margaret R. Gold (edited by), *Olympic cities. City Agendas, Planning, and the World's Games, 1896-2016*, New York, Routledge, 2011.

Webography

http://ceo.uab.cat/ceo_uab.asp

<http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/east/07/14/beijing.olympics/>

<http://en.beijing2008.cn/ceremonies/n214508163.shtml>

<http://en.beijing2008.cn/spirit/beijing2008/candidacy/presentation/n214051424.shtml>

<http://esporte.uol.com.br/ultimas/2008/12/30/ult58u1329.jhtm>

<http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/cronaca/2012/02/14/news/olimpiadi-un-no-sacro-santo-1.40491>

<http://globoesporte.globo.com/olimpiadas/noticia/2014/01/com-atraso-gastos-publicos-das-olimpiadas-sao-divulgados-nesta-terca.html>

http://leg16.camera.it/99?shadow_organo_parlamentare=1507&tipoVis=&elenco=

<http://lexicon.ft.com/Term?term=marketing>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1231075.stm>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/1408455.stm>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/election_2010/8675265.stm

http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/front_page/4655555.stm

<http://news.panorama.it/marco-ventura-profeta-di-ventura/Roma-2020-Dieci-e-lode-a-Super-Mario>

<http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2012/01/13/roma-2020-cost-zero-il-ministro-gnudi.html>

<http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-sports/2016olympics/ioc-tentatively-approve-rio-2016-preparations/>

http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/12_febbraio_14/monti-cdm-roma-alemanno-olimpiadi-2020-1903276387660.shtml

http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/cronaca/12_gennaio_27/giochi-mennea-juri-chechi-1903032466729.shtml

http://tg24.sky.it/tg24/politica/2012/02/14/no_olimpiadi_roma_2020_reazioni_politica_pd_pdl_idv_udc_lega_nord.html

<http://www.2020roma.it/il-comitato-promotore/il-comitato-promotore/azzurra-caltagirone.html>

http://www.2020roma.it/sala-stampa-e-news/news/119-roma_2020_-_alemanno_-_opposizione_indichi_i_vice_del_comitato.html

http://www.2020roma.it/sala-stampa-e-news/news/60-roma_ha_presentato_al_coni_la_candidatura_della_citt%C3%A0_alle_olimpiadi_del_2020.html

http://www.2020roma.it/sala-stampa-e-news/news/63-17_marzo_-_si_insedia_la_commissione_di_valutazione_del_coni_per_i_dossier_2020.html

http://www.2020roma.it/sala-stampa-e-news/news/77-olimpiadi_roma_-_in_piazza_del_popolo_a_sostegno_della_candidatura.html

http://www.adnkronos.com/IGN/News/Sport/Olimpiadi-Rio-2016-preoccupazione-per-inquinamento-delle-acque_321104032592.html

<http://www.adsnotizie.it/certif/index.php>

<http://www.adweek.com/adfreak/hated-london-2012-logo-you-might-rio-2016-better-142723>

<http://www.archidiap.com/works/casa-delle-armi/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-14436499>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-16789038>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-19025686>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20318938>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-19866081>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/23442512>

http://www.citymayors.com/mayors/london_mayor.html

http://www.coni.it/notizie/primo-piano/18-primo-piano-2009/8182-coni_servizi-_il_direttore_generale_ernesto_albanese_lascia_la_societ%C3%A0.html

http://www.corriere.it/notizie-ultima-ora/Sport/Roma-2020-Alemanno-contiamo-Clini/16-12-2011/1-A_000737678.shtml

<http://www.economist.com/node/21538180>

<http://www.espbr.com/noticias/emocao-tonica-discurso-rio-copenhague>

<http://www.espn.co.uk/espn/sport/story/142366.html>

http://www.gamesbids.com/eng/bid_archives.html

<http://www.gamesmonitor.org.uk/>

http://www.gazzetta.it/Sport_Vari/Altri_Sport/Olimpiadi/14-02-2012/roma-2020-giorno-verita-decisivo-incontro-monti--81335597762.shtml

<http://www.hkstrategies.com/company/legacy>

<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/team-usa-train-underground-olympic-athletes-spotted-371691>

<http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/monti-spegne-olimpiadiroma-2020-troppi-rischie-bossi-l-solo.html>

http://www.ilmessaggero.it/roma/cronaca/olimpiadi_monti_dice_no_a_roma_2020_non_rischiamo_i_soldi_degli_italiani/notizie/181318.shtml

<http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2012-02-14/olimpiadi-2020-decisive-candidatura-101347.shtml?uuid=AaoE5arE>

<http://www.ispo.it/>

<http://www.la7.it/piazzapulita/video/sprechi-olimpici-16-02-2012-113808>

<http://www.lastampa.it/2012/02/14/sport/il-governo-dice-no-a-roma-l-italia-non-puo-permetterse-lo-li8iuFqBZQ3pbkYmBHbIgK/pagina.html>

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/29/introduction>

<http://www.mkplus.eu/about-mario-kaiser.php>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/07/13/sports/olympics-notebook-chinese-officials-avoid-tough-questions.html?ref=olympicgames2008>

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/17/world/europe/monti-forms-new-italian-government.html?_r=0

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/14/world/americas/bus-fare-protests-hit-brazils-two-biggest-cities.html?_r=0

<http://www.olympic.org/2020-host-city-election>

<http://www.olympic.org/2020-host-city-election>

<http://www.olympic.org/2020-host-city-election>

<http://www.olympic.org/content/olympic-games/bidding-for-the-games/>

<http://www.olympic.org/content/olympism-in-action/olympic-legacy/bid-heritage/>

<http://www.olympic.org/content/the-ioc/bidding-for-the-games/past-bid-processes/2012-host-city-election/>

<http://www.olympic.org/news/six-applicant-cities-for-the-2020-olympic-games/138220>

<http://www.olympic.org/olympic-broadcasting>

<http://www.olympic.org/olympic-results/london-2012/athletics/100m-m>

<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/communication?q=communication>

<http://www.pac.gov.br/sobre-o-pac>

<http://www.paralympic.org/news/ioc-and-ipc-extend-co-operation-agreement-until-2020>

<http://www.paso-odepa.org/en/pan-american-games.html>

<http://www.pietromennea.it/vittorie.asp>

http://www.repubblica.it/sport/vari/2012/02/14/news/monti_olimpia_di_incontro-29856086/

<http://www.rio2016.org/transparencia/orcamento>

<http://www.sports-reference.com/olympics/athletes/ma/fiona-may-1.html>

<http://www.sportsfeatures.com/olympicsnews/story/46901/rio-2016-wastes-no-time-naming-leonardo-gryner-new-general-director>

http://www.ted.com/talks/eduardo_paes_the_4_commandments_of_cities.html?quote=1566

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/olympics/9336742/London-2012-Olympics-new-Games-ticket-resale-scandal-is-old-problem.html>

<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2012/sep/11/g4s-failed-olympic-security-lord-coe>

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/nov/23/london-2012-olympics-best-ever>

<http://www.theguardian.com/football/interactive/2012/jul/12/full-legal-document-joao-havelange>

<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2012/jul/17/paralympic-games-channel-4>

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/person/4254/john-prescott>

<http://www.theguardian.com/sport/2012/jul/29/london-2012-empty-seats-trap>

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/jul/26/one-year-on-olympic-legacy>

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/aug/21/david-cameron-tony-blair-riots>

<http://www.theguardian.com/uk/series/reading-the-riots> : this research had been carried out in partnership with the authoritative London School of Economics.

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/jul/01/china.olympicgames2008>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/jul/01/china.sunderkatwala>

<http://www.uksport.gov.uk/news/2042/>

<http://www.un.org/sg/mop/formermops.shtml>

http://www.unioncamerelazio.it/who_we_are

<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/press/g8overview.htm>

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/brazil/overview>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_pmZ1rJFslE

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NmAI_IIRYRA

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/esporte/1016405-havelange-renuncia-ao-coi-dias-antes-de-possivel-expulsao.shtml>

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/esporte/ult92u316224.shtml>

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/esporte/ult92u341044.shtml>

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/infograficos/2013/12/78807-cenarios-para-2014.shtml>

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/es/deportes/2014/01/1401699-divulgar-el-legado-de-las-olimpiadas-puede-evitar-protestas-en-rio-dijo-thomas-bach.shtml>

<https://www.gov.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/london-2012-forecast-to-come-in-almost-400m-under-budget>

Appendix

Intervista esclusiva ad Ernesto Albanese, Direttore Generale del Comitato Roma 2020