

An Olympic Mosaic

Multidisciplinary Research and Dissemination of Olympic Studies
CEO-UAB: 20 Years

Editors

Emilio Fernández Peña
Berta Cerezuela
Miquel Gómez Benosa
Chris Kennett
Miquel de Moragas Spà



Centre d'Estudis Olímpics
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona



Ajuntament de Barcelona

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The Cultural Dimension of Olympic Games: Ceremonies and Cultural Olympiads as Platforms for Sustainable Cultural Policy²⁷

Beatriz Garcia

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The Olympic Games are recognized worldwide as the largest sports mega-event certainly the event attracting the largest amount of media coverage globally. However, beyond a sports event, the Olympics is also a cultural phenomenon that can have considerable influence over local, national and international cultural policy. This cultural dimension tends to be represented by the media via popular ceremonial events, such as the Olympic torch relay that precedes the start of the Games, and the opening and closing ceremonies. Beyond these highly recognized aspects, the Games also incorporate a cultural and arts programme that is playing a growing role in defining or contributing to respective Olympic host cities' cultural policies, the production of local symbols and the reinforcement of cultural values. Since Barcelona 1992, this programme has become officially characterized as a four-year Cultural Olympiad. However, the Cultural Olympiad has failed to attract significant media attention to date and has remained one of the least visible and most misunderstood aspects of the Olympic experience.

This chapter reviews the functions and position of two opposite sides of the spectrum of Olympic cultural value production: a) opening and closing ceremonies and b) the Cultural Olympiad. The ceremonies are clearly the most globally symbolic moment for Olympic cultural representation, though they are produced and consumed mainly as a broadcast phenomenon. In contrast, the Cultural Olympiad caters almost exclusively to the local population (before the Games) and the live Olympic audience (during the Games), while remaining practically invisible to the global media and its remote audience. As I will describe, these circumstances are not inherent to the types of activities that they entail, but there are organizational limitations that restrict the presence of the Cultural Olympiad from an Olympic branding and media point of view. To this extent, a fundamental challenge for the diverse cultural dimensions of the Games to become more visible and central to the 'Olympic experience' involves coming to terms with the complex organizational structure of the Olympic programme at large and how that interfaces with the media agenda that exists around the 16 days of elite sports competition.

27. This paper is based on research funded by CEO-UAB (1999-2000), the International Olympic Committee, Lausanne (2001), the British Academy (2004-2008) and the Universities China Committee in London (2008).

Cultural values at the Olympic Games

Since their first edition in 1896, the modern Olympic Games have evolved as an international phenomenon that reflects the evolving cultural values of international society over time. Originally conceived as a platform to inspire youth through the pedagogic potential of sport and as a platform for peaceful international exchange in the wake of two world wars, they have also become a mechanism to profile national pride and, with the advent of television and live worldwide media coverage, as a catalyst for global branding. In this sense, the cultural dimension of the Olympic Games emerge at the interface between the collective memory of over 100 years of symbolic historical moments; the lived and localised experience of Games participants, spectators and host residents; and the global mediated experience of Games audiences worldwide. Olympic cultural values can thus be seen to emerge out of three interconnected dimensions of the Games: the Olympics as a constructed symbolic ritual, a lived festival and a global brand (Garcia 2011, in press).

- The symbolic or constructed ritual dimension of the Games relates to the historical value of a centenary ‘Movement’, as defined by its founder, Pierre de Coubertin, and embodied in concepts such as Olympism. The notion of a Movement and Olympism as a ‘philosophy of life’ (IOC 1997) that frame and give meaning to the four-yearly celebration of the Games are presented in documents such as the Olympic Charter, which claim that the purpose of the Games is to advance a series of ‘Olympic values’, such as fair play, and that this is to be done by following strict rules for ‘Olympic protocol’ and protecting as well as promoting a series of ‘Olympic symbols’.
- The lived festival dimension of the Games refers to its location within a specific place and time: an Olympic host city, 16 days of competition, and over seven years of preparations that must be managed by a locally appointed Organising Committee and require considerable investment not only in terms of finances, but also public support. This means that the Games, beyond their historical international roots, must achieve a high degree of local ownership and engagement to ensure a successful hosting process as well as result in sustainable and tangible local legacies. The latter are crucial in ensuring that the Games remain attractive to future hosts.
- Finally, the global brand dimension of the Games refers to its embodiment as a media event. The Olympics as a ‘brand’ is owned by a global network, the Olympic Family, led by the IOC, in over 205 nation states, and its commercial value is achieved via the sale of sponsorship as well as media rights worldwide. The strength of the brand is directly proportional to the strength of its symbolic and lived festival dimension, but it is mainly experienced through the media.

At present, the Olympic Games are understood first and foremost as a global media event, and it is through the sale of media rights (particularly, broadcasting rights) and worldwide sponsorship deals that it has become financially viable. This close relationship and dependence on media stakeholders has had important effects on the way the cultural dimension of the Games is managed and represented. Back in 1992, Moragas already argued that the promotion and selection of values developed through a complex communication production process – signs, rituals, images, *mise en scène*, advertising, information – were the principal cultural (and political) responsibility of the Olympic Games staging process (1992, 17). In a media-led cultural value production era, we can identify the following areas as the main sources of Olympic cultural production:

- The symbols of the Games and the Olympic Movement: These include the logo and emblem of each Games, the mascots, all merchandising materials and commercial applications of those symbols (eg. accessories, clothing, decoration...), Olympic posters, the corporate design or ‘look of the Games’ (including pictograms, Olympic buildings design, staff uniforms, stationery design, publications design and so on) and other symbols such as the traditional Olympic stamps and coins, Olympic slogans and Olympic songs.
- Olympic ceremonies and rituals: These include both the opening and closing ceremonies, which are considered the peak event of the Games in terms of public awareness and interest, and have become the most viewed events in the world due to global television coverage; the torch relay, which is one of the greatest Olympic experiences in terms of public

participation and community interest; and the medal ceremonies, which involve the podium, raising of winners national flags, and national hymns.

- The promotional strategy for the Games and ‘brand image’ of the host-city: These include the construction of city marketing strategies, as well as international Olympic marketing as exemplified by the ‘Celebrate Humanity’ IOC led advertising campaigns that tend to be highlighted in the context of each edition of the Games.
- The cultural activities programme: This refers to the organisation of special cultural and arts events prior to and during the Olympic period. This is the least regulated of all the areas listed here and, as discussed below, it is becoming an area of opportunity for the implementation of distinct cultural policies as well as facing major media challenges.

All the elements listed above can contribute to the creation of a particular image of the Games and the host-city culture. Furthermore, they are a powerful source for the transmission of values and identity signs that can assist in promoting the host city’s cultural policy choices among the international media. For example, the choice of mascot design, Olympic emblem and the look of the Games in Barcelona 1992 was aimed at reflecting the contemporary, stylised and design-loving character of the city. However, it could be argued that many of these elements can also flatten the host’s values and images. This is the case for logos, slogans and merchandising materials that are designed as marketing and advertising tools with a strong commercial focus but without a clear cultural and symbolic dimension. As noted by Garcia (2007), a common limitation in recent look-of-the-Games strategies has been the establishment of standardized design styles for flags and building wraps, leading to the paradoxical circumstance where cities as different as Sydney, Athens and Beijing have been dressed following almost identical formats, with only slight (often quite tokenistic) design variations.

Overall, as it has been noted from the start of this chapter, the cultural dimension and impact of the Games goes far beyond the realm of sport. However, Olympic structures have been slow in devising appropriate cultural policy mechanisms to acknowledge this situation, particularly in commercial and operational terms. This has traditionally led local host authorities to take the lead and develop Olympic cultural programmes that, while significant within their local context, have often failed to gain visibility within international Olympic circles or have failed to be perceived as a central dimension of the Olympic experience.

An additional challenge in the representation of cultural values in the context of the Olympics is the need to overcome the potential divide between meaningful local and national representation, and their translation into a global mediated arena (see Berkaak 1999; Garcia 2001 and 2011, in press; MacAloon 1996; Moragas 1988 and 1992; Puijk 1999). This dilemma has been at the heart of the production of the most visible and highly mediated cultural component of the Games hosting process: the opening and closing ceremonies. Interestingly, this dialectic has also had an impact on the visibility and appreciation of the other key component of the Games’ cultural dimension: its official cultural programme or Cultural Olympiad, which, in contrast with the ceremonies, has remained practically invisible from a global media point of view. The rest of this chapter explores the different role that each of these components has played to shape the cultural policy of the Games and their potential as well as limitations to bring long-lasting legacies for respective host cities as well as the Movement at large.

Opening and closing ceremonies

Opening and closing ceremonies are the the most visible aspect of the Olympic Games and the most widely recognised representation of its cultural dimension. They have become the key exemplar of the Games global outreach, attracting estimated simultaneous television audiences of two to three billion people in the two hundred plus nations that compete at the Games. Much has been written about their role offering a platform for symbolic re-enactments of national identity as well as a platform to showcase Olympic values (see MacAloon 1984; Moragas et al. 1996; Tomlinson 1996). The IOC is aware of the symbolic and cultural significance of the ceremonies, the opening event in particular, and has developed detailed guidelines to

ensure a continuum in the underlying Olympic narrative as well as provide space to showcase local and national discourses.

The narrative of the Games as an expression of a long-standing Movement (what I term the ‘constructed ritual’ dimension) is brought to the fore in the sections prescribed by the IOC as part of the Olympic protocol, and includes the parade of participants, speeches by Olympic authorities, the playing of the Olympic anthem, the entry and raising of the Olympic flag, the last stage of the Olympic torch relay and lighting of the Olympic cauldron, the symbolic release of pigeons, the taking of the Olympic oath by an athlete and an official, and playing the national anthem of the host country (IOC 2008a). All of these elements are strictly regulated by the IOC and documented in detailed manuals. In contrast, the artistic programme or cultural showcase section of an opening ceremony is open to interpretation and has led to a variation of formats over the years. MacAloon identifies three main presentation models. These range from the most spectacular show-oriented model – the case of Los Angeles in 1984, or ‘impresario model’ – to the more anthropologically oriented, with a focus on national folklore and cultural identity representation – Seoul in 1988, or ‘cultural experts model’ – (MacAloon 1984 and 1996). In the case of the cultural experts model, it is the ritual that prevails, not entertainment, where the focus is on sequences of gestures and events that “participants and congregants always know or think they know, in advance” (MacAloon 1996, 31). When the impresario model prevails, the focus is on spectacle and the ‘unexpected’.

While there is no doubt that such moments can have a dramatic impact in terms of viewing figures, and are an opportunity to present a strong message about the host city and nation, the cultural policy significance of such segments has been contested (Garcia and Miah 2000; Garcia 2011, in press). The main limitation is the result of the framework that makes such events so globally significant in the first place: their complete dependence on global broadcasting imperatives.

“Olympic opening and closing ceremonies, while offering great opportunities for the showcasing and representation of a host-city’s culture, have become such a restricted media-bound exercise that it often fails to achieve so. Their large scale, strict time concentration, and ever growing dependence on television demands tends to transform such ceremonies into gigantic spectacles where the surprise factor and the scale of components seem far more relevant than the meaning and consistency of the cultural discourse being presented.” (Garcia 2011, in press)

As noted by MacAloon, what is presented in an Olympic ceremony needs to reach a universal audience in a simultaneous framework and needs to be easily transmitted and interpreted through the media. As such, the event must be committed “to be internationally sensitive to very different cultures and to avoid offending highly diverse and highly politicised social and cultural groups” (MacAloon 1996, 39-40). Moreover, this tends to result in the “regular production of historically deracinated, abstract and culturally neutered representations [...] of Olympic rituals” which may lead to simplistic interpretations by the public.

The significance of the Olympic ritual sections as opposed to the host cultural representation sections is an interesting subject of discussion. For while the cultural section is one of the most zealously guarded aspects of the Olympic hosting process, and the one dimension where local hosts invest most heavily, the established protocol sections are the one chance for the Movement aspect of the Olympics to gain visibility and manifest its underlying historical and universal aspirations. In 2000, in the wake of a period of intense criticism against Olympic structures and accusations of corruption within the Olympic Family, particularly in terms of the Games’ host selection process, the IOC funded research to assess the international broadcast narrative of the Sydney Opening and Closing Ceremonies (CEO-UAB 2001). The core interest was to investigate how journalists portrayed the Movement and the IOC as an organisation. In line with the findings that had been published five years earlier on the experience of Barcelona 1992 (Moragas, Rivenburgh and Larson 1995), this research showed how, despite the ceremonies providing a single and simultaneous official discourse, interpretation varied widely across countries. Some of the most widely diverse interpretations concerned coverage of the parade of participants, which varied according to the level of closeness or ignorance of respective broadcasters in relation to participants’ nationalities, as well as interpretation of the artistic or cultural showcase segment.

The ultimate paradox is that, while opening ceremonies play a unique role in establishing a collective memory for whole nations and gathering the attention of the world on a single cultural discourse, they may fail both to be internationally inter-

preted and understood in the way the local hosts intend, and may fail to reflect the complexity of local culture. In contrast, among the ensemble of cultural value production sources, there is a component that could be a source for more complex, sophisticated and representative messages about the host cultural identity and policy choices. This component is the cultural programme of the Olympic Games, which, from Barcelona 1992 onwards, has been implemented as a four-year event or Cultural Olympiad. The latter has offered host cities greater chances to develop consistent cultural policy initiatives and build up longer term strategies to promote and expand awareness of the host-city and nation idiosyncrasies. However, they have failed to attract global attention and secure direct association with other Olympic messages. The following section provides and overview of its progression, challenges and potential over time.

Cultural Olympiads

The notion of a specific programme of cultural and artistic events taking place in parallel to the sporting competitions was part of the original vision for the Games as a blend of sport, culture and education. Baron Pierre de Coubertin established the principle of 'Olympic Art Competitions' at a special congress in Paris in 1906, and the first official programme was presented for the 1912 Games in Stockholm. These competitions were also named the 'Pentathlon of the Muses', as their purpose was to bring artists to present their work and compete for 'art' medals across five categories: architecture, music, literature, sculpture and painting (Stanton 2000). The main vision behind such a concept was to ensure that the Games acted as a platform to bring together the different dimensions of human excellence, and ensure that athletes and intellectuals could be mutually inspired, as was reported to be the case during the Ancient Games in Greece.

The Pentathlon of the Muses or Art Competitions developed in parallel to other dimensions of the Olympic pangeant and provided an avenue for artists to make a direct contribution to the Games. However, the decision to present the work in a competitive fashion was difficult to implement, particularly as there was growing disagreement about how to define categories and how to determine the purpose of eligible Olympic art. Ongoing discussions concerned the need or not to favour explicit or figurative representations of sport as opposed to allowing more abstract manifestations in tune with international arts trends. A parallel discussion was the adequacy of retaining the established five categories to account for the wealth and diversity of artistic expression, particularly given the growing international outreach of the Games and the subsequent challenge to Western artistic canons as the only possible point of reference. For instance, within the literature section, how to judge and compare a British theatre play with a Japanese piece of poetry?

The Berlin Games in 1936 offer one of the most ambitious examples of an Olympic art programme in this first period. The Games had been clearly identified by the local host as an opportunity to promote the ideals of Nazi Germany and cultural activity was also seen as a good vehicle to represent the supremacy of the Aryan race and Western civilisation. Cultural innovations brought in at the Berlin Games included the first Olympic torch relay, travelling from Olympia to the Berlin stadium, and the first artist-led Olympic film, Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*. These cultural manifestations became as central to the Olympic experience as the sport competitions, both during the Games and in their symbolic reconstruction for decades to come. From a cultural programming point of view, the most interesting aspect of this particular experience is the evidence that the Games were used as a mechanism to make Germany's national cultural policy discourse more visible internationally, and the use of artistic expression as a platform to contextualise the Games and use them for propaganda purposes, far beyond simple sports representation.

By the early 1950s, however, the IOC was strongly divided on the value and purpose of art competitions and, in 1952, it was finally decided to replace the notion of competitions by exhibitions and festivals. Beyond the ongoing discussion about actual content, the ultimate reason for the demise of arts competitions was the concern of the then IOC President, Avery Brundage, that artists were considered professionals in their undertaking, while the Games at the time were strictly for amateurs only, and refused entry to any competitor that sought commercial gain.

This new stage in the Olympic cultural programme tradition brought opportunities as well as challenges for the development of local, national and international cultural policy. On the one hand, Games organisers had greater freedoms to define the purpose of such programmes and determine who should be presenting what type of work. On the other, eliminating its competitive nature led to divorcing the programme from a strong national delegation following (and related patriotic sentiments), and this situation often led to fewer Olympic participants and less audience engagement and international focus. The programme was now mainly a platform for local cultural representation directed according to the specific interests of the host authorities, with much less of a direct involvement and fewer regulations from the top Olympic structures (Garcia 2008).

Some Olympic host countries saw the programme as an important opportunity to make a statement about a point in their history, and as an opportunity to profile the host nation, far and beyond what was possible within the sporting arenas and the highly regulated Olympic ceremonies and protocol. Mexico in 1968 provided one of the most ambitious festivals, spanning one year and acting as a showcase, not only of the best international art at the time, but also the best of Mexican contemporary art as well as folklore and heritage. For many, the ambition and quality of the programme served to prove Mexico as a country that may have been considered as part of the developing world from an economic point of view, but was certainly at the avantgarde of the first world in terms of art and culture. Interestingly, Mexico viewed the cultural programme in a more holistic fashion than other Games hosts and, beyond the arts, included in it discussions on education and science as well as advertising, design and communications. Montreal in 1976 also presented an innovative cultural programme, placing a clear emphasis on the connections between art and sport and exploring the presentation of arts activity within sporting venues, in particular the main Olympic Park avenue and the areas surrounding the stadium.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, other areas where artists and related creative practitioners made major contributions were the design of banners and logos, what is now termed ‘the look of the Games’. The imagery for Mexico 1968, Tokyo 1964 and Munich 1972 are all exemplars of avantgarde visual design rather than simple marketing and branding exercises, which can be viewed as a foremost example of powerful cultural policy innovation emerging out of the Games. These elements of the Games were however, often not treated as part of the official cultural programme (Mexico 1968 was a notable exception), and subsequent editions of the Games (except Barcelona 1992 and Torino 2006) have failed to use these environments as an expression of advanced place-sensitive creative practice, as noted in previous pages.

Another stage in Olympic cultural programming was initiated with the Barcelona 1992 Olympic bid, which proposed that the implementation of a Cultural Olympiad (a term already used in Mexico 1968 amongst others) should in fact take place during the four years of the Olympiad, from the end of one Games edition to the start of the next. Barcelona’s Cultural Olympiad thus started in 1988, at the end of the Seoul Games, and evolved up to 1992 with a different thematic emphasis for each year. The four-year format, although it is not an IOC requirement, has been maintained in subsequent Summer Games editions, while the Winter Games have also grown their ambitions for the Cultural Olympiad and have presented the first full four-year Olympiad programme in the lead-up to Vancouver 2010.

This last stage in Olympic cultural programme development has been characterised by two main phenomena. On the one hand, there has been a clearer alignment of the programme with local and national cultural policy ambitions than ever before, and set objectives have been in line with standard cultural event objectives (such as using the Games period not only to expand sport audiences but also cultural and arts audiences, and using the event to advance local creative development aspirations); social agendas (using the event to improve community inclusion, expand access to marginal or deprived communities and strengthen local or national identity); and economic agendas (repositioning cities, growing cultural tourism) (Garcia 2004). The kinds of political agendas that were common in previous periods have also been maintained, particularly for countries aspiring to overcome negative stereotypes related to their military past or human right issues, or for countries aspiring to present a more complex picture of their local identity, beyond fixed monocultural nation-state perceptions. On the other hand, the branding tension in relation to the main Olympic programme of sporting activity has become increasingly apparent, and there have been varied attempts at establishing separate ‘Cultural Olympiad’ or ‘Olympic Arts Festival’ brands, with various degrees of success (Garcia 2001).

Overall, though, a constant in the staging of Cultural Olympiads has been the lack of media attention and the extremely limited public recognition that such programmes generate (Garcia 2001, 2007 and 2008). While local authorities tend to see great value in highlighting the potential of a distinct cultural programme in their bid documents given that the cultural chapter within candidature questionnaires has traditionally been the area where applicants are allowed greater freedoms and thus greater opportunities to distinguish themselves from others, this is soon placed at a secondary level once the Games are awarded and the demands surrounding the staging of the main sports programme become apparent. Protecting the cultural programme becomes a lower priority for Organising Committees given the lack of clearly defined guidelines by the IOC (including few demands for accountability compared to other programmes), the lack of protected sources of funding (including apparent clashes with Olympic sponsor priorities and media rights agreements) and the lack of regulation to ensure minimum levels of media coverage in the context of other Olympic activity.

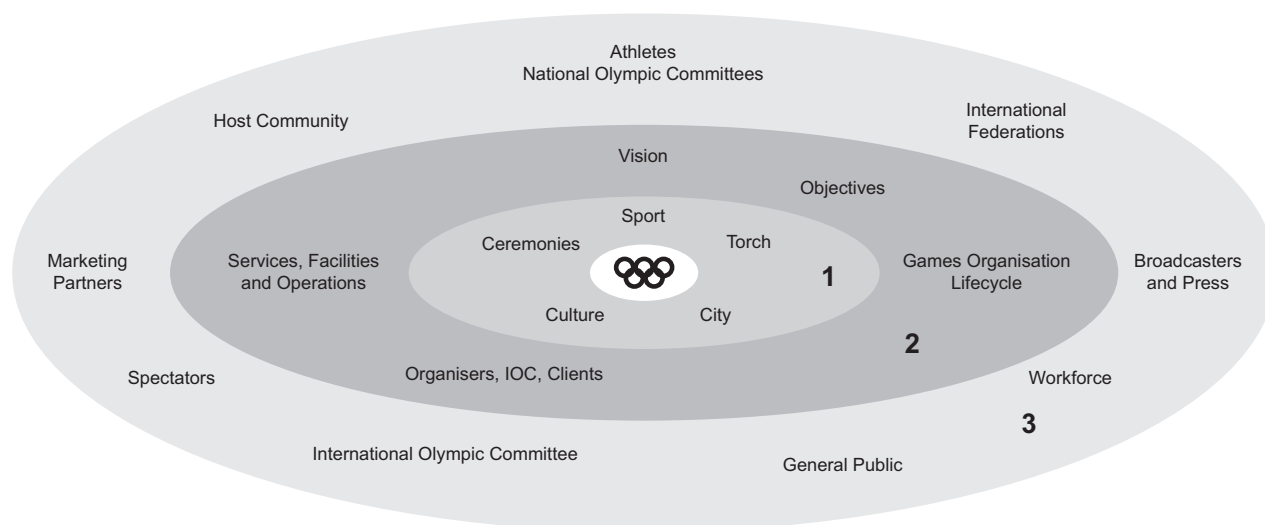
Some Olympic hosts, such as Barcelona 1992 and Athens 2004, viewed the Cultural Olympiad as a priority area as the Games were expected to help achieve a much wider cultural identity agenda for the city and/or nation. In such cases, the temptation has been to establish the Cultural Olympiad as a separate company, with links to the Organising Committee for the Olympic Games but not fully integrated within it. Such an approach has allowed some independence in decision making, but has also resulted in a marked disconnection between the core Olympic programme and the cultural activity programme, which often has been perceived as completely separate from the Games. Further, such an organisational division has not helped overcome the ongoing funding, branding and media attention tensions.

Sydney 2000 experimented with the notion of a distinct 'Olympic arts' brand by making the most of the established structure for delivery within the Organising Committee. The Olympic Arts Festival team (term used instead of Cultural Olympiad) was located within the marketing and special events division of the Organising Committee, and the general manager for the cultural programme was also general manager for the look-of-the-Games programme. This meant that certain synergies were found in the approach to city dressing, and banners were displayed to showcase Olympic arts activity as well as Olympic sports activity. However, during the 16 days of competition, the Olympic arts banners had to be removed, so the notion of an 'Olympic arts' brand was virtually nonexistent at the time of greatest media attention on the city. The Winter Games in Torino 2006 also tried to establish a visible identity for their cultural offering by establishing a look-of-the-city programme in parallel to their look-of-the-Games programme. This meant that, while in the areas surrounding the sport venues, generic look-of-the-Games banners prevailed (with strong diverse colouring and an emphasis on sports activity), in the city centre, particularly the grand 'piazzas', banners were all red (representing the notion of passion), and pictorial representations were all about iconic cultural attractions in the city (Garcia and Miah 2006). In the lead-up to London 2012, further branding discussions have emerged, this time trying to establish a 'Cultural Olympiad' brand that does not conflict with Olympic sponsor interests (such as protecting their exclusive access to the use of the rings), but allows cultural contributors to seek alternative sources of funding or acknowledge their own long-term sponsors. This has involved the establishment of an 'Inspired by 2012' mark, which is clearly associated with London 2012, but does not include the rings. Such a distinction offers a clear example of the different dimensions of cultural value associated with the Games: on the one hand, the local or national festival dimension (Inspire mark), mainly oriented towards those who will experience activities as live spectators in the lead-up to the Games; on the other, the global media event dimension (Olympic rings), which is mainly oriented towards broadcast audiences worldwide. In such a division, it becomes apparent that the Cultural Olympiad is clearly rooted within the local and national festival sphere, while only the ceremonies and 16 days of sports programme are central to the Games as a global media spectacle.

Ways forward : culture at the core of the Olympic experience

Almost a decade into the new millennium, the global media-event landscape has changed considerably and the Olympic Games can no longer claim to be completely ahead of any other form of large-scale event. The World Cup has grown into

another example of a sophisticated global festival, with important urban cultural policy dimensions, as demonstrated by the successful staging in Germany in 2006, where the excitement of competitions in the field were complemented by equally exciting celebrations outside the stadiums and throughout urban public spaces. In order to retain its point of distinction, the Olympic Movement must take on the challenge to expand opportunities for people to have a more holistic and live Olympic experience. This is currently being advocated by the executive Games production teams within the IOC in what is now termed the ‘360 Games Management Philosophy’ (IOC 2009). In the first instance, this largely relies on revisiting and expanding the interpretation and implementation of the Games’ cultural dimension. Such an ambition started becoming manifest in the guidelines for the 2016 Olympic Games candidate cities, and is even more clearly outlined for the 2018 candidate cities. In the lead-up to 2016, for the first time in a candidature questionnaire, references to the Games’ cultural component are not relegated to a minor chapter with little relation to other bid sections, but placed at the heart of what is defined as the ‘Olympic Experience’, in parallel to sport, torch, ceremony and other city activities.



Source: IOC 2008b – Author’s emphasis

This could mean that, after over a century, operating at the margins of Games’ delivery and media representation, the official Olympic cultural programme could become more integrated into other aspects of the Games and, as in the case of opening and closing ceremonies, have the opportunity to become a core source of symbolic and cultural value.

As noted within the first Olympic conference to be fully dedicated to the notion of legacy, “culture is not only one aspect of Olympic legacy, but the source of all others” (Moragas, Kennett and Puig 2003). The fact that cultural programming has traditionally played such a minor part in the symbolic media construction of the Games could in fact be seen as detrimental to the achievement of sustainable legacies. This ranges from the difficulty integrating new Olympic infrastructures into the post-Games host city (as has often been the case for Olympic Villages and Olympic Parks), to the difficulty ensuring that all sections of society perceive the value of the Games as more than a 16-day media spectacle, but rather an opportunity to be

directly involved and represented in ways that can lead to long-term change in life habits: from greater multicultural understanding to greater visibility for cultural minorities. In Sydney 2000, the achievements of Cathy Freeman as a gold medalist did much to improve the visibility and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the national and international media. But parallel cultural programming was equally important to provide chances for direct participation through a wealth of community arts activity and new links between diverse neighborhood associations (Garcia 2007 and 2011, in press). The official Olympic Arts Festival played a critical role bringing contemporary Aboriginal artists to mainstream venues such as the Sydney Opera House and demonstrating that Aboriginal culture was more than tokenistic representations of didgeridoo playing and dot painting. Indeed, it is as vibrant as any other aspect of Australian culture, with young and old artists experimenting with new forms and providing a fresh insight into ever changing local and national identity as well as international projections.

In an extremely competitive commercial branding environment, the Olympic Games cannot afford to limit their cultural dimension to a narrowly defined media asset within opening and closing ceremonies or advertising campaigns. The real wealth of Olympic cultural value lies in the important opportunities for lived intercultural exchange among participants, spectators and residents, and the global platform it provides for a particular city and nation to make a cultural statement that is meaningful and owned by its community. Protecting and maximizing the visibility of Olympic cultural programming as integral to the implementation of the 16 days of sports competition can ensure that the richness and complexity of host cultures comes to the fore and provide a distinct identity to each edition of the Games, beyond the limitations of standard global branding techniques. Further, by making the most of local cultural production in the context of such an international mega-event, the Games can shape and change local cultural policy and help in the process towards greater intercultural understanding and exchange. With the new emphasis on a '360 Olympic experience', this is an interesting time to observe new developments in Olympic cultural programming and symbolic production processes. The challenge and the opportunity for organizers and policy-makers is to ensure that the pressure to respond to global media needs does not flatten the complexity of localized and diverse cultural narratives.

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