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The Olympic Games

A platform for multiculturalism

Student: **Natalia Mella Youssef**

Director: Ariel James Trapero

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Abstract

Ever since their origins in Ancient Greece, the Olympic Games have served as a way to join people together via sport. Nowadays, they continue to bring nations together as a way for international cooperation in one of the most important events in the world. However, there are several aspects of the Olympics that carry more weight than expected in regard to how they affect states' international reputation. By analyzing the Games through a multicultural lens, it can be concluded that such a big platform has immense power to help minorities and acknowledge their recognition. From which delegations are allowed to participate to the key role of the host, the Olympics now are full of gestures that hold significant meaning. Specifically, the London 2012 Olympics introduced a bigger focus on multiculturalism and inclusivity in a strive for cooperation. While some challenges remain, the Olympic Games have proven to be crucial as a tool for soft power in the international arena.

Key words: Olympic Games, multiculturalism, soft power, sports, politics of recognition

Resumen

Desde sus orígenes en la antigua Grecia, los Juegos Olímpicos han servido para unir a la gente a través del deporte. Hoy en día, siguen reuniendo a las naciones como forma de cooperación internacional en uno de los eventos más importantes del mundo. Sin embargo, hay varios aspectos de los Juegos Olímpicos que tienen más peso del esperado en lo que respecta a cómo afectan a la reputación internacional de los estados. Al analizar los Juegos a través de una perspectiva multicultural, se puede llegar a la conclusión de que una plataforma tan grande tiene un inmenso poder para ayudar a las minorías y reconocerlas. Desde qué delegaciones pueden participar hasta el papel del anfitrión, las Olimpiadas actuales están llenas de gestos que encierran un significado. En concreto, los Juegos Olímpicos de Londres 2012 introdujeron un mayor enfoque en el multiculturalismo y la inclusión en un esfuerzo por la cooperación. Aunque siguen existiendo retos, los Juegos Olímpicos han demostrado ser cruciales como herramienta de poder blando.

Palabras clave: Juegos Olímpicos, multiculturalismo, poder blando, deporte, políticas de reconocimiento

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Table of acronyms:

Table 1 below portrays the different abbreviations and acronyms employed throughout the present dissertation:

BCE	Before the Common Era
CE	Common Era
IOC	International Olympic Committee
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
UN	United Nations

1. Introduction

The Olympic Games are an international multi-sport event that brings together athletes from around the world to compete in numerous sports. They are currently held every four years alternating between Summer and Winter Games each two years. While it is mainly a sports competition, it also includes cultural and social events, usually related to the country or city that hosts the Games. Everything related to the Olympic Games is governed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) (Roche, 2002, p. 17). Since their origin in Ancient Greece the Games have had the objective of bringing cultures closer, and still today, thousands of years later, they represent a momentum of coming together of nations from across the globe.

Beyond its sporting significance, the Olympic Games have also become a symbol of global unity and cultural diversity. The Games provide a platform for nations and individuals to showcase their unique identities and cultural heritage, while also promoting understanding and respect for other cultures. In recent years, the concept of multiculturalism has become increasingly important in the context of the Olympic Games, as it presents an opportunity to explore the role that sports and mega-events can play in fostering intercultural dialogue and promoting social cohesion.

The Ancient Olympic Games originated around 776 BCE and were estimated to be held at least until 393 CE but were exclusively held in Greece, for Greek men (International Olympic Committee, 2023). Yet when the concept of the games was brought back to life in the late 19th century, even if at first mostly European countries made up the participants, they intended to bring countries together via sport. A big part of the Games' symbolism has centered around bringing people from different backgrounds together and displaying unity. The IOC upholds values of excellence, respect, and friendship, while its working principles explicitly express a commitment to promoting multiculturalism through "Unity and Solidarity" and "Unity in Diversity". (International Olympic Committee, 2023). In the multicultural and globalized world of today, an event of such dimensions can have vast repercussions in addressing the world's most pressing social issues. The current Games are in no way the same from Ancient Greece, nor the Modern Games of a century ago; yet their essence remains untouched.

2. Research objectives and questions

The aim of this dissertations is to analyze the Olympic Games as a platform for multiculturalism. The main objective is to uncover the symbolism behind the event of the Games and how it is both a tool for states while also a reflection of society. Both the positive contributions, as well as the negative consequences of the Olympic institutions and actions will be examined. To do this, different aspects of the games shall be analyzed including the historical baggage and how it conditions the games, the influence of social issues, and the special role of the host. To reach this objective and provide a clear analysis, three main questions must be answered. Firstly, whether the Olympic Games have been used as a platform to recognize present social issues. Secondly, if Olympic hosts use the Games to portray a certain outwards image of their culture, and the consequences of this. Third and lastly, how the Olympic Games have evolved in recent decades to become a platform for the promotion of multiculturalism.

In order to provide and insightful answer to these questions, an initial historical context and overview will be presented, followed by the theoretical framework chosen for the investigation. After that, the analysis and discussion section of this dissertation will be analyzed as follows. In the first place, an analysis of the role of politics of recognition in the Games. This will include the several ways in which the Olympics have been entrepreneurs at recognizing minority collectives, as well as the consequences of the actions of more powerful states in the games. This will be followed by a specific look into the role of the host country and city, and the way the hosting of the games can be instrumental for a country's reputation. After this has been explained, a case study about the 2012 London Olympics will be presented to provide an accurate example of the Games in recent times. By looking carefully at one of the most relevant games of the past century, it will be possible to understand how the Olympics have kept evolving. Lastly, the future perspectives and challenges that the Olympics are facing in regards to multiculturalism and social issues will be explored to provide a thorough conclusion to this dissertation.

3. Historical overview and context

3.1 The evolution of the Olympic Games

To comprehend the fundamental nature of the Olympic Games in the present day, it is essential to examine how the Olympic institution has developed since its inception in ancient times until today. The origin of the Games is traced to Ancient Greece, where they held a captivating allure for the Greeks, offering a diverse range of competitions that ranged from weightless boxing matches to treacherous chariot races. These games, which lasted for approximately 12 centuries since the eighth century BCE, constituted a significant sporting, social, and cultural event in the ancient Greek calendar. Participation was open to all free Greek males, spanning from lowly farm laborers to royal heirs, although the majority of participants were soldiers. Conversely, women were strictly prohibited from competing or even attending the Games. However, there existed a loophole in this discriminatory rule: Olympic champions were declared as chariot owners rather than riders, and anyone had the opportunity to possess a chariot. (International Olympic Committee, 2023)

By the fifth century BCE, the Games spanned a comprehensive five days and encompassed various disciplines such as running, jumping, throwing, boxing, wrestling, pankration (a combination of boxing and wrestling), and chariot racing. At the peak of their popularity in the second century CE, an estimated 40,000 spectators filled the stadium daily, while numerous merchants peddled their wares outside (Swaddling, 1999). Paul Christesen, a Professor of Ancient Greek History at Dartmouth College, emphasizes the immense significance of the Olympics to the Greeks. He recounts a noteworthy instance in which the Greeks faced invasion by the Persians in 480 BCE. Despite the urgent need to assemble a united army for defense, many Greek city-states encountered difficulties in mobilizing soldiers because numerous individuals were resolute in attending the Olympics. Consequently, the formation of the army was postponed. (International Olympic Committee, 2023)

For over 250 years, the Games transpired exclusively in the sacred sanctuary of Olympia, nestled in the northwestern region of the Peloponnese which is where the “Olympic” name gets its origin. Essentially, the Games were an occasion for religious

festivities and a pretext for Greeks from various regions across the Mediterranean basin to congregate and celebrate the unity of Greece. The ceremonies included both a religious and a social or political occasion. On the one hand, there were sacrifices to Zeus, their supreme God, attributing them a sacred dimension and a strong religious fundament. On the other hand, the different states utilized the Games to display power and prestige. Those states with the strongest players were considered to be more powerful specially as they nurtured the toughest soldiers. Moreover, the Ancient Games evolved throughout time being a reflection of the changing values and priorities of the Greek society as the cultural norms adapted to the passing of time. (Instone, 2007)

Overall, the Ancient Games are some of the most prominent legacies that was left from Ancient Greece. Even though their origins are not clear due to lack of evidence, scholars agree that they emerged due to religious myths and legends combined with a desire for cooperation between Greek states. At a time of instability and inter-state conflicts, all of Greece came together calling for a truce for the duration of the Games. This attribute would inspire the comeback of the Games in the late nineteenth century.

The dawning of the Modern Olympic Games has been attributed to French educator and historian Pierre de Coubertin who wanted to highlight the importance of physical education in society. He was deeply inspired by the importance Ancient Greeks had given to education, going beyond intellect and morality, and recognizing the relevance of physical prowess. Athletics were seen as a means to the development of a full person in a strive for human excellence (Jaeger, 1945). De Coubertin wanted to bring back this notion and found inspiration in the Ancient Olympic Games as the way to do it.

Before diving into how the Modern Olympic Games came to be, it is of great relevance to acknowledge the political situation of the international community at the time. The end of the nineteenth century was a time of shifts in the international order, mostly due to colonialism, big geopolitical shifts due to several wars and rise of nationalism, and the emergence of peace movements. The Franco-Prussian War or the First Sino-Japanese War are just a few examples of ongoing conflicts at the time that shaped the way the world was working during the late 19th century (Sáenz Rotko, 2018). It was a moment for big structural changes in the way the international community was working with the rise of the influence of the United States, while Europe reorganized itself

and colonized other continents.

Yet Pierre de Coubertin wanted to look past ongoing conflicts and find in sports an opportunity for unity and cooperation between countries, in a way that had not been done before. He was deeply inspired by the principles of the French Revolution together with the way people in the United Kingdom (UK) used sports for education. With the idea of a sports an education project in mind, he summoned the first Congress on Physical Education in Paris in 1889. This was the first seed to the bigger Olympic project which he presented at the Sorbonne University five years later (Hirthler, 2019). He brought together a network of European athletes, educators and intellectuals who shared an interest in both physical education, but also internationalism.

With the drafts for a revival of the Olympic project, de Coubertin organized the International Congress of Paris for the Re-establishment of the Olympic Games on the 23 of June 1894 to promote international cooperation and the role of athletics in society. The congress approved the project and the first ever International Olympic Committee was created. Just two years later, the first Modern Olympic Games were taking place in Athens, Greece, the same country that had given birth to the Games centuries prior. Delegations of athletes from 14 different countries came together to compete. However, the games' Eurocentric nature, with the majority of countries and organizers being European, has frequently been criticized. This aspect, which will be further explored in this dissertation, raised concerns about the lack of representation and diversity.

Pierre de Coubertin was also a strong advocate for including arts in the Olympic program. He believed that incorporating artistic competitions alongside athletic events would promote a holistic celebration of human achievement and cultural expression. Coubertin envisioned the Olympics as a platform for showcasing excellence in all aspects of human endeavor, including literature, painting, sculpture, music, and architecture. To demonstrate his commitment to this idea, Coubertin even won a gold medal in the literature category of the Olympic art competitions under a pseudonym. However, over time, the Olympic movement shifted its focus primarily to athletic competitions. The decision to remove art competitions from the Games was made by the IOC after the 1948 London Olympics, as they sought to streamline the event and emphasize athletic performance. (International Olympic Committee, 2023)

In spite of focusing on sport and arts, it was clear to everyone that the nature of the Modern Olympic Games was to bring all nations together eventually; a mission that has been met over the years with the games currently hosting over two hundred delegations. De Coubertin was not alone in his mission for internationalism, other relevant actors in promotion cooperation through the Games were William Penny Brookes or Erns Ravenstein; British and German scholars who dreamt of a way of bringing nations together in an era of conflict via culture and shared values (Young, 2007). The main materialization of the desire for everyone to be included in the Games came when the symbol of the Olympic Rings was designed displaying five rings (blue, black, red, green, yellow) over a white background. According to Pierre, the number of five rings represented the five parts of the world that were participating in the games, while the colors, showed the desire for all countries to join as they are the colors used in every flag. (International Olympic Committee, 2023)

Since their comeback, the Olympic Games have kept evolving and adapting as society changed throughout time. Significant events of the 20th century such as the World Wars had a significant impact on the Olympic Games, disrupting their regular schedule and causing several cancellations. The outbreak of World War I in 1914 resulted in the cancellation of the 1916 Olympics, which were scheduled to take place in Berlin, Germany. The war created a tumultuous global environment, diverting resources and attention away from the Games. According to Coubertin's Olympic Manifesto, the interruption of the Olympics was a result of the "tragic circumstances of war" (Müller & Lenskyj, 2016, p. 23). The Games resumed in 1920, but the effects of World War I were still felt as several nations were unable to participate due to the aftermath of the conflict. The situation worsened with the onset of World War II, leading to the cancellation of the 1940 and 1944 Olympic Games. The Second World War had a devastating impact on the world, with political instability, economic hardships, and widespread destruction. The disruption caused by the wars highlights the vulnerability of the Olympics to global events and demonstrates the deep influence of geopolitics on the staging of the Games (Lenskyj, 2019, pp. 117-128). More recently, the global Covid-19 pandemic caused the 2020 Tokyo games to be delayed for one year and have to take place with no audience or international volunteers due to health restrictions.

3.2 Multiculturalism today

In today's interconnected and diverse world, multiculturalism has emerged as a central theme in understanding and embracing societal complexities. Previously, there was a dominance of a monocultural approach. This meant the dominance and promotion of a single culture within a given context. It often prioritizing the assimilation of individuals into a homogeneous cultural identity and discouraging the recognition and celebration of diversity (Kymlicka, 1995). In contrast, multiculturalism emerged as a response to the limitations of monoculturalism by recognizing and valuing the coexistence of multiple cultural identities within a society.

The evolution from monoculturalism to multiculturalism has been influenced by various factors, including globalization, migration, and changing societal values. The interconnectedness of the world has exposed individuals to diverse cultures and perspectives, challenging the notion of a single dominant culture (Vertovec, 2017). The increased movement of people across borders and the presence of multicultural societies have necessitated the development of inclusive policies and frameworks that recognize and accommodate cultural diversity (Modood, 2007). According to Kymlicka and Banting (2017, pp. 717-737), multiculturalism today recognizes the rights of individuals to maintain and express their cultural identities, while also affirming the shared values and principles of the larger society.

Multiculturalism encompasses the recognition, acceptance, and celebration of diverse cultures, identities, and perspectives within a society. It represents a fundamental shift from monocultural frameworks towards fostering inclusivity, respect, and equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds. Nowadays, the Olympic Games are considered to be a notable platform where multiculturalism is prominently showcased. They have a long-standing tradition of bringing together athletes from various nations, cultures, and ethnicities on a global stage. Through its celebration of diversity, the Games serve as a powerful platform to explore and understand the complexities of multiculturalism in contemporary society.

In recent decades, multiculturalism has undergone significant transformations. The conventional understanding of multiculturalism as simply respecting and accommodating

different cultures has evolved to embrace a more dynamic and inclusive approach. Vertovec (2017, p. 1518) argues that contemporary multiculturalism has shifted from a static, essentialist view of culture towards a recognition of cultural hybridity and fluidity. This perspective acknowledges the complex and ever-changing nature of cultural identities in today's globalized world. The evolving nature of multiculturalism reflects the recognition that cultures are not fixed entities but are constantly influenced by interactions, migrations, and global connections. All of this has been present in the evolution of the Olympic Games and will be explored in depth in the analysis section of this dissertation.

4. Theoretical framework

4.1 Postcolonial liberalism

Two main international relations theories can be of use when analyzing the role of multiculturalism in the Olympic Games: liberalism and postcolonialism. Liberalism provides a perspective of how peaceful resolution of conflicts and cooperation facilitates cultural exchange and international peace. While postcolonialism acknowledges how problematic dynamics that were set during the colonial era still shape global power dynamics. Each of them explains a different aspect of the Games and how their legacy has got both positive consequences, but also some weaknesses that should be acknowledged.

Liberalism in international relations theory encompasses a range of ideas and principles that include cooperation, individual rights, and the rule of law in the global arena. It places significant importance on the promotion of liberal values such as democracy, free trade, and respect for human rights, aiming to establish a more peaceful and prosperous world order (Doyle, 1986). According to liberal theorists, interactions between states should be characterized by diplomacy, negotiation, and the pursuit of mutual interests. In the context of the Olympic Games, liberalism's core principles can be seen in the promotion of multiculturalism and the celebration of diversity among participating nations. The Olympic Games provide a platform for different cultures to interact and compete on an equal footing, fostering understanding, tolerance, and cooperation (Sugden, 2000). This aligns with the liberal idea that diversity should be embraced and respected, as it enhances the collective well-being of societies. The multicultural environment of the Olympic Games embodies these liberal ideals, creating a space where diverse nations can come together in the spirit of friendly competition and cultural exchange.

Nonetheless, on a less positive note, the Olympic institution also embodies power dynamics where western or European countries and the United States (US) still hold a superior position. These dynamics have been inherited from the colonial era, and the theory of postcolonialism studies the consequences of these power-relations. Postcolonialism in international relations theory examines the legacies of colonialism and

the power dynamics that persist in the global order. It highlights the experiences of formerly colonized nations and seeks to challenge dominant narratives, structures, and practices that perpetuate inequality and marginalization (Quijano, 2000). Postcolonial scholars argue that the Olympic Games can be analyzed through a critical lens, acknowledging the historical context of colonization and its impact on cultural identities. On the one hand, multiculturalism exhibited in the Olympic Games is viewed by postcolonial theorists as an opportunity for marginalized nations to reclaim their cultural heritage, challenge Eurocentric norms, and assert their presence on the global stage. By participating in the Games, formerly colonized nations can demonstrate their agency, showcase their unique cultural practices, and challenge dominant narratives that have often marginalized their contributions. The Olympic Games, from a postcolonial perspective, become a platform for cultural resistance and a means to reclaim cultural identities (Rowe, 2003). As stated by Edward Said, “The role of the intellectual is to uncover lies, to fight myths, and to dismantle discourses that perpetuate injustice” (2019, p. 19). On the other hand, the Olympic Games, when viewed through a postcolonial lens, can also reflect the ongoing struggle for decolonization and the assertion of cultural diversity on a global scale. Former colonial powers tend to be the ones that host most of the Games, as well as the countries who succeed. The consequences of this will be analyzed further in the following sections.

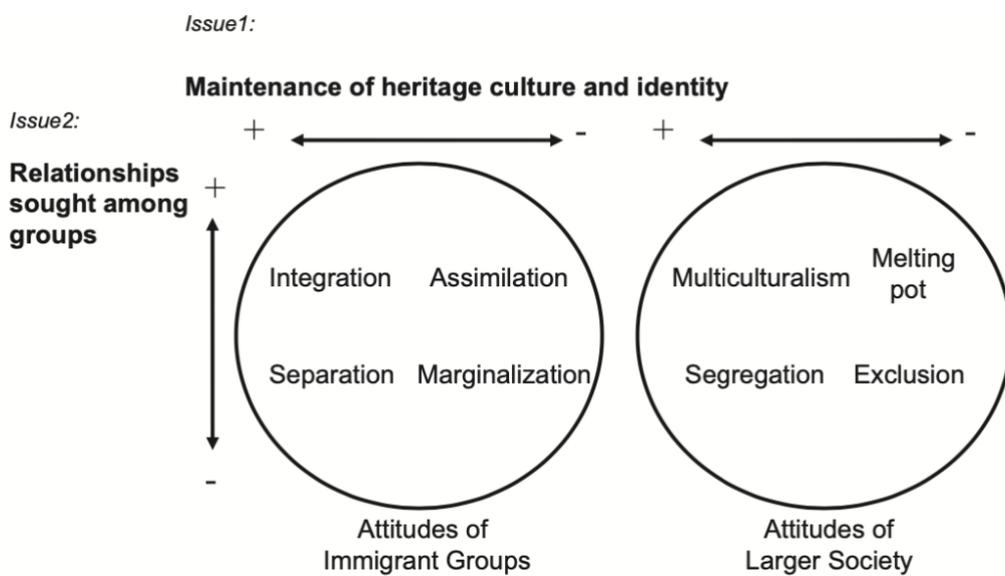
4.2 Multiculturalism theory

Multiculturalism is an intercultural theory that recognizes and supports the coexistence of diverse cultural groups within a society, affirming their right to maintain and express their distinct identities (Kymlicka, 1995). It aims to create an environment where individuals from different backgrounds can live harmoniously and participate fully in society without assimilating or surrendering their cultural heritage (Modood, 2007). This approach values cultural diversity as a source of enrichment and social cohesion, and seeks to promote understanding, respect, and dialogue among different cultural communities.

According to Kymlicka (1995), multiculturalism involves recognizing and accommodating minority cultural rights, which includes providing legal protections and institutional support for cultural practices and expressions. This framework acknowledges

that societal arrangements and policies should not favor any particular culture, but rather ensure equal opportunities and resources for all cultural groups. It calls for policies and practices that value and celebrate cultural diversity, challenging the notion of a dominant or mainstream culture that imposes its values and norms on others (Taylor et al., 1994). Multiculturalism also seeks to address power imbalances and social inequalities by addressing systemic discrimination and promoting social justice within a diverse society (Parekh, 2006, pp. 340-342).

Table 2: Acculturation strategies in ethnocultural groups and the larger society



Source: (Sam & Berry, 2010)

When looking at multiculturalism in the light of Sam & Berry’s approach of acculturation strategies on how migration takes part in society, multiculturalism means the integration of immigrant groups in society, while they are also able to maintain and express their own cultures (see table 2) (Sam & Berry, 2010). This creates a context of globalization where old monocultural structures are challenged by multicultural societies due to increase in migration. Multiculturalism finds expression in various domains, including education, language policies, and public spaces. It recognizes the importance of culturally inclusive curricula and educational practices that validate and integrate diverse perspectives (Kymlicka, 1995). Language policies may aim to protect and promote minority languages, recognizing their significance as integral components of cultural identity (Modood, 2007). Public spaces, such as festivals and celebrations, provide opportunities for cultural exchange, dialogue, and mutual understanding among different

communities (Hiller & Green, 2016). By embracing multiculturalism, societies can foster a more inclusive and cohesive environment where diverse cultures can flourish and contribute to the richness of collective social life.

In order to promote this inclusion, Charles Taylor examined the political theory implications of multiculturalism. He presented the concept of “politics of recognition” to argue that recognition is a fundamental aspect of human identity and self-worth. Individuals and cultural groups seek not only to be tolerated but also to be recognized and affirmed in their distinct identities via acknowledging and valuing the unique characteristics, beliefs, and practices. He emphasized the significance of cultural diversity within societies as multiculturalism should be embraced as a response to the reality of cultural pluralism, recognizing the coexistence of multiple cultural traditions and perspectives within a society. Yet he also understands how multiculturalism requires navigating the politics of difference, which involves managing conflicts arising from competing cultural values and ensuring fair treatment and equal opportunities for all individuals and cultural groups. This can be achieved by enabling individuals to authentically articulate and live their cultural identities without facing assimilation or marginalization. He promotes dialogue between cultures which coexist to ensure a safe environment when everyone can live peacefully while maintaining the freedom to express their culture (Taylor et al., 1994).

4.3 Sports as soft power

In the post-Cold War era, global superpowers have demonstrated that an effective use of soft power can be as important as a strong military when trying to exercise influence. Soft power refers to the use of a country's cultural and economic influence to persuade other countries, rather than the use of force. In the globalized society of today where countries are more connected than ever via digitalization, states focus their efforts on projecting an image of themselves that works in accordance with their objectives. Soft power refers to a state's ability to shape the preferences of others through attraction rather than coercion (Nye, 1990). It can take various forms, some of which are more obvious than others. Sports can serve as a powerful tool for states to exert soft power and enhance their international influence. Sporting events, such as the Olympic Games and international tournaments, provide a platform for states to showcase their values,

culture, and achievements to a global audience (Kidd & Booth, 2016).

The main benefit as well as disadvantage of the use of soft power is its long-lasting effect. Once a state has successfully portrayed themselves in the way they wanted, it becomes difficult to change that perception. Previously, countries such as France or Germany, leaders in the use of soft power, carefully displayed themselves to the other states to assert their dominance. However, after the Cold War, as the world order shifted, the US used soft power strategically beyond war. It was at this time, as technology evolved, that the US established its hegemony, especially over Western countries.

Yet, it is often overlooked how something as innocent as a sports competition can become a display of soft power. In these kinds of activities, a big importance is given to factors such as who hosts and who wins the competition. States utilize big events an important occasion to display their capabilities. Being able to succeed in a competition is an evident display power, yet it is rare for the general public to consider this a political act. It is in those undertones that are not commonly perceived that soft power comes into play. By excelling in sports and hosting major sporting events, states can create a positive image and generate goodwill, thereby enhancing their diplomatic relationships and exerting influence on the international stage (Wang, 2012). The success of sporting endeavors can generate national pride and unite citizens, fostering a sense of collective identity. Through sports, states can harness the emotional appeal and shared passion associated with athletic competition to project their values, strengthen relationships, and enhance their soft power capabilities.

Lastly, it is useful to highlight how the actions taken via soft power can lead to wider measures which can have a big impact in society. A good example of this is the Olympic Truce, a tradition inherited from the Ancient Games where the Olympics help to promote peace. Since 1992, the IOC joins forces with the United Nations (UN) to draft resolutions for states to reiterate their commitment to the Olympic ideal. They address ongoing conflicts such as the Yugoslavian conflict in 1993, or war between North and South Korea in 2000. Historically, all Olympic Truce resolutions have been adopted by consensus and with the explicit support of a big majority of UN member states, demonstrating the Olympics' compromise with the promotion of peace and cultural diplomacy (International Olympic Committee, 2023).

5. Methodology

After exploring the historical context, in addition to the theoretical framework, a qualitative methodology was implemented. The qualitative approach is suitable for gaining in-depth insights into the experiences, perceptions, and interactions of individuals within the context of multiculturalism and the Olympic Games. This methodology allows for a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics involved and provides an opportunity to explore perspectives, attitudes, and lived experiences.

The research design consists of analysis and recollection of academic articles as well as presentation of specific case studies, specifically regarding the Games of London 2012. These methods are chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. A thorough analysis of relevant documents, including scholarly articles, reports, and official documents from Olympic organizations, will be conducted. This analysis will help establish an understanding of multiculturalism and its connection to the Olympic Games. It will also serve as a foundation for identifying key themes and patterns and drawing well-founded conclusions.

By employing a qualitative methodology, this study aims to explore the multifaceted relationship between multiculturalism and the Olympic Games, providing valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of how the competition nowadays has a key role in promoting multiculturalism, while also uncovering the role of the games in countries' display of soft power. The research findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how multiculturalism manifests and influences the Olympic Games and inform discussions around fostering inclusivity, diversity, and cultural exchange in future Olympic events.

6. Analysis and discussion

6.1 Politics of recognition at the Olympic Games

Currently, both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games are some of the most watched events globally. While the Winter Games have an average viewership of two billion (The Premium Times, 2023), the Summer Games have consecutively reached audiences of over three billion in the 21st century (Stoll, 2022). Furthermore, as a result of the growing use of social media, their reach is now wider than ever. This makes the Games an extremely appealing occasion for anyone looking for a platform for display. They are an efficient way of reaching out to billions of people globally, which can easily turn into a strategic tool. Having understood the way politics of recognition have a big role in inclusion of minorities in society, it must be understood the several ways in which politics of recognition are present in the Olympic Games. From the creation of the revolutionary Paralympic Games to the recognition of non-defined states as Olympic delegations; there is a lot to see when looking and how the Games have changed the game.

The Paralympic Games have evolved over time, emerging as a significant international sporting event that showcases the athletic abilities of individuals with disabilities. The origins of the Paralympic Games can be traced back to the mid-20th century when there was a growing recognition of the potential and rights of people with disabilities to participate in sports and physical activities. The establishment of the Paralympics can be attributed to the efforts of Sir Ludwig Guttmann, a neurologist and advocate for rehabilitation who organized the first Stoke Mandeville Games in 1948, which took place alongside the Olympic Games in London. The Stoke Mandeville Games, initially focused on wheelchair athletes, provided a platform for individuals with disabilities to engage in competitive sports and demonstrated their physical capabilities (DePauw & Gavron, 2005, pp. 90-91).

The Stoke Mandeville Games gradually gained momentum and international recognition, leading to the inaugural Paralympic Games in Rome in 1960. The term "Paralympics" was coined by combining "paraplegic" and "Olympics," reflecting the Games' mission to provide opportunities for athletes with a range of disabilities to

compete at a global level (Brittain, 2016). Since then, the Paralympic Games have grown in scale and importance, serving as a platform to challenge societal perceptions about disability and promote inclusivity and equality in sports. They have had a profound impact on the lives of individuals with disabilities, both in terms of physical rehabilitation and social integration. The Games have not only provided athletes with disabilities a stage to showcase their athletic talents but have also played a crucial role in changing public perceptions and challenging stereotypes about disability (Cashman & Darcy, 2018). By emphasizing ability rather than disability, the Paralympic Games have contributed to fostering a more inclusive and accessible society.

Nevertheless, some have questioned whether the Paralympics have also failed to be fully translated into actual policies to help people with disabilities. While they have proven to challenge ableism and empower people with disabilities, they have also been criticized for reinforcing negative stereotypes. Some have considered the games to focus on narratives described as “inspiration porn” or “super crip” which only highlight the exceptional achievement of a reduced number of individuals. There is a call for a more explicit address to the systemic barriers faced by people with disabilities, instead of a glorification of those who have been able to overcome them. Moreover, critics of the Paralympics have brought light to the persistent undervaluation and underfunding of the Paralympic Games. This disregard has also meant less media coverage and public interest in comparison to the regular Olympics. There is a call for action for the Paralympics to address issues of social justice and diversity within the disability community itself, including issues of intersectionality and representation. (Gilbert & Schantz, 2008)

Yet even if the Paralympics are clear evidence of the role of the Olympic institution in recognition of minorities, it is not the only way they have done so. Key phenomena regarding recognition in the Olympics can be appreciated when analyzing the different delegations that take part in the Games. As of today, there are more Olympic delegations (207) than UN member states (193). This can be attributed to the politics of recognition and the inclusion of subnational entities within the Olympic movement. The Olympic Games have recognized certain subnational entities that are not recognized as sovereign states by the UN. This recognition is based on the IOC's principle of universality, which seeks to ensure broad participation and inclusivity in the Games. For instance, territories such as Puerto Rico, Hong Kong, and Greenland have separate Olympic delegations

despite being non-sovereign entities (Cashman & Darcy, 2008). The politics of recognition, in this context, involve acknowledging the distinct identities and aspirations of subnational entities, even if they do not possess formal political sovereignty. The inclusion of these entities in the Olympic Games allows for the representation and celebration of diverse cultural, historical, and political identities beyond the framework of recognized nation-states (Hiller & Green, 2012). Thus, the presence of more Olympic delegations than UN member states illustrates the Olympic movement's commitment to recognizing and giving voice to a broader range of political entities, contributing to the politics of recognition within the international sporting arena.

Further example of this is the inclusion of a delegation of refugees in the Olympic Games which holds political significance and aligns with the principles of the politics of recognition. The establishment of the Refugee Olympic Team, first introduced in the 2016 Rio Olympics, serves as a powerful symbol of solidarity and recognition for displaced individuals who have been forced to leave their home countries due to conflict or persecution. This initiative allows refugee athletes to participate in the Games under the Olympic flag when they cannot represent their countries of origin. It brings attention to the plight of refugees and highlights their resilience, courage, and determination to overcome adversity (Schulenkorf, Adair, & McDonald, 2018). By acknowledging the unique experiences and challenges faced by refugees, the Refugee Olympic Team challenges the notion of national boundaries and fosters inclusivity and empathy on a global scale. This recognizes the distinct identity and struggles of refugees while providing them with a platform to share their stories and talents with the world.

Nonetheless, the Eurocentric nature of the Games has proven to be the root problem for systemic inequality and discrimination. In the light of the postcolonial theory, since the colonial era when the modern Olympic Games originated, systemic inequalities and colonial dynamics still persist and cause harm. The Olympics have been found to be a site of white power and privilege. Richard King argues that the Olympics have historically been dominated by white, affluent, and western nations, and that this dominance reflects and reinforces a system of white power and privilege in global sports (2007). The institutions are inherently racist and exclusionary, with rules and regulations that favor white, western athletes and disadvantage athletes from non-white and non-western countries. The modern Games, as detailed above, originated from a European perspective

and regulations were drafted by European people. Even though they strive for an international union via sport, it cannot be ignored that their origin is primarily Eurocentric, and this has palpable consequences.

The Games are often used as a platform for nationalist and imperialist agendas, with nations using the games to assert their dominance and reinforce their political and economic interests. The greatest example of this is the repeated success of specific countries, namely the countries considered most powerful internationally such as the US or China. The recurring success of these countries in the Olympic Games can be attributed to a combination of factors that contribute to their consistent performance. One key aspect is the presence of robust sports systems and infrastructure, including well-funded national sports programs, specialized training facilities, and access to high-quality coaching and support services. These countries often prioritize sports development and invest significant resources in identifying and nurturing athletic talent from a young age (De Bosscher, Shibli, Westerbeek, van Bottenburg, & Alshuwaikhat, 2016). Additionally, the socioeconomic factors of a country, such as population size, GDP, and human development indicators, can also influence its success in the Olympic Games. Countries with larger populations and higher levels of economic development tend to have a larger talent pool and greater resources available for sports development (Preuss, 2004). It is for these reasons that powerful countries are also the ones with the most numerous delegations. Even if it makes sense for countries with more population to have a wider range of athletes who qualify for the Olympics, this also means overrepresentation of those more powerful, and therefore, underrepresentation of developing countries. Moreover, historical success and a strong sporting tradition can create a culture of excellence and high expectations, motivating athletes to strive for success (Müller & Lammert, 2020).

However, it cannot be ignored that there are geopolitical consequences for the same countries consistently dominating the Olympic Games which are multifaceted and can have both positive and negative implications. On one hand, the success of certain countries enhances their global prestige and soft power, bolstering their international reputation and influence. Olympic success can be seen as a reflection of a country's overall strength, organization, and commitment to excellence, which can contribute to shaping international perceptions and narratives (Grix & Lee, 2013). It may also attract

investments, tourism, and business opportunities to the successful countries (Szymanski, 2012, pp. 201-204). On the other hand, the dominance of a select few countries can lead to a concentration of power and resources in the hands of a privileged few, perpetuating global inequalities in sports and exacerbating existing geopolitical hierarchies (Henry & Lee, 2004). It may also reinforce stereotypes and reinforce perceptions of certain countries as superior or inferior in terms of athletic prowess, reinforcing existing power imbalances. This trend perpetuates existing dynamics which difficult empowerment of less influential states who deserve equal recognition.

However, despite the dominant white power structure of the Olympics, the Games can also provide opportunities for resistance and subversion by athletes and nations that challenge white dominance and assert their own cultural and political identities. The Olympic Games have often served as a stage for athletes and nations to engage in acts of resistance and subversion, challenging white dominance and asserting their own cultural and political identities. This is exemplified by the iconic moment during the 1968 Mexico City Olympics when African American sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised their fists in a Black Power salute during the medal ceremony for the 200-meter race. Their gesture was a powerful symbol of protest against racial injustice and discrimination (Cooper, 2007). By utilizing the global platform of the Olympic Games, Smith and Carlos utilized their athletic achievements to draw attention to the struggles of marginalized communities and advocate for social change. This act of resistance not only challenged the prevailing norms and expectations of the Olympic Games but also exposed the pervasive racial inequalities that persisted in society at that time. The incident sparked discussions and debates on racial politics and human rights, contributing to a broader global discourse on racial equality and social justice (Sage, 2011). The Olympic Games, therefore, provide a unique opportunity for athletes and nations to challenge dominant structures, defy social injustices, and assert their own cultural and political identities, leaving a lasting impact on both the sporting arena and wider society.

6.2 The role of the host

When analyzing who makes use of the Olympic Games as a platform, there is one key actor who utilizes the occasion more than the rest: the host. Since the comeback of the Olympics, the Games have been hosted by 23 different countries. The role of the

Olympic host is key in the well-development of the Games as well as a unique opportunity to showcase your country to the billions of viewers that tune in to watch the sporting spectacle. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, sports competitions are often times a vehicle for soft power. Therefore, the host country is given a chance to prove its worth to the international community from a special position. There are several factors that should be explored when analyzing the role of the host in the Olympics. Firstly, the way the process through which the host is chosen works. Secondly, the key opportunities for the hosts to display themselves throughout the games. And lastly, the economic consequences of hosting the Olympic Games through a phenomenon known as the “post-Olympic slump”.

The process of choosing an Olympic host is commonly known as the bidding process which involves a complex and competitive selection procedure. The IOC utilizes a multi-stage process that spans several years, incorporating various criteria and evaluation factors. The bidding process begins with the interested cities or countries submitting their formal bids to the IOC, outlining their vision, proposed infrastructure, legacy plans, and financial commitments (Hiller & Hobbs, 2016). The bids are then thoroughly assessed by the IOC Evaluation Commission, which conducts on-site visits, assesses technical capabilities, and evaluates the potential social, economic, and environmental impacts of hosting the Games (Grix & Lee, 2013). The Evaluation Commission's findings and recommendations are presented to the IOC members who cast their votes to select the host city or country. Transparency, accountability, and integrity are central to the bidding process, as the IOC strives to ensure fairness and prevent corruption (Girginov, 2019).

While the bidding process aims to be impartial and objective, it is not without criticism and controversy, with concerns raised about political influence, excessive cost requirements, and potential social and environmental impacts (Toohey & Veal, 2016). The bidding process for hosting the Olympics has been considered to reflect the principles of neoliberal competition, as cities and countries vie for the opportunity to host the Games in order to attain economic growth and enhance their global standing. It is a way for powerful states to fight for status and prove capabilities. Furthermore, narratives surrounding national pride are often times chosen as key themes during the bidding process. An example of this is the slogan “making Britain proud” presented during the London 2012 Olympics, which can inadvertently reinforce existing hegemonic power

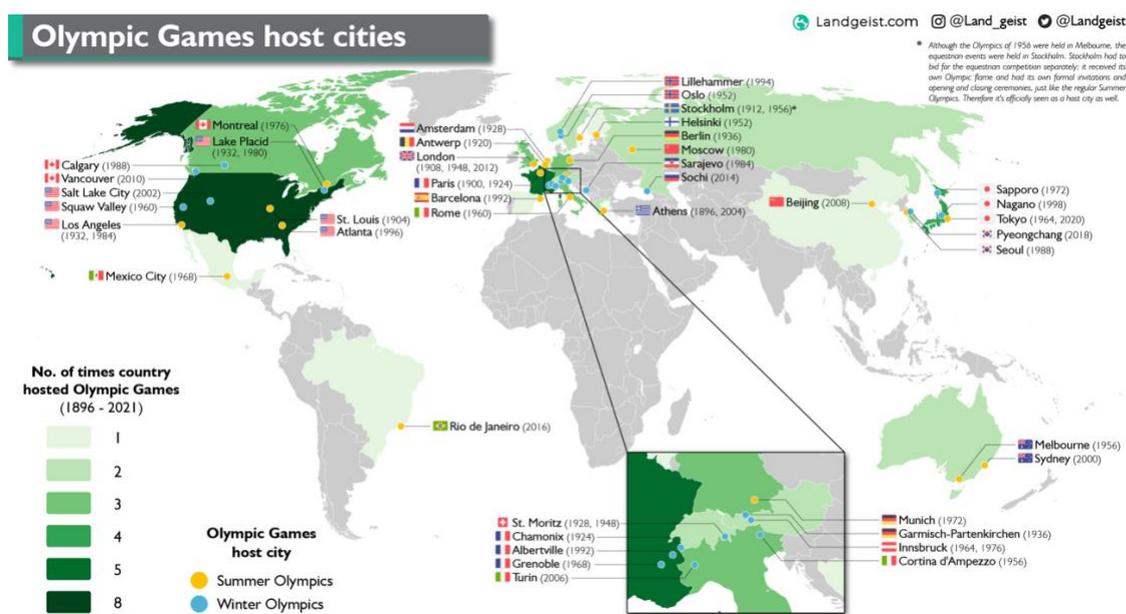
structures by obscuring underlying social and economic inequalities (Falcous & Silk, 2010, pp. 167-186).

Concurrently, Olympic host countries often employ a narrative of multicultural nationalism to project a positive image of diversity and inclusivity, appealing to global investment and bolstering their national identity (Falcous & Silk, 2010). This is achieved especially via the external portrayal displayed in key moments of the games such as opening and closing ceremony. These ceremonies provide an opportunity for the host country to showcase its culture, history, and values to a global audience. They serve as a platform for the host country to present a carefully crafted image and narrative, aiming to enhance its soft power and influence on the world stage. Through artistic performances, visual displays, and symbolic gestures, the host country can convey messages about its identity, aspirations, and achievements. This representation and symbolism embedded in the ceremonies contribute to the host country's soft power by influencing global perceptions and generating positive impressions (Kim, 2012). The opening ceremony, in particular, sets the tone for the entire Games, capturing the attention and curiosity of viewers worldwide. It becomes a stage for cultural diplomacy, allowing the host country to engage in nation branding and promote a positive image that can have long-lasting effects on tourism, trade, and international relations (Cantwell & Rutsaert, 2019). Furthermore, the closing ceremony provides an opportunity for the host country to leave a lasting impression, showcasing its hospitality, cultural diversity, and achievements during the Games. By effectively utilizing the opening and closing ceremonies, the host country can harness the soft power potential of the Olympic Games to shape global perceptions and strengthen its international standing.

Moreover, it is also of great importance to consider the historical baggage of Olympic hosts by analyzing which countries have been the ones to host the most games, and the consequences of this. The hosting of multiple Olympic Games is often associated with countries that possess significant international power and influence. Historically, a select few countries have repeatedly hosted the Games, reflecting their status as major global players (see Figure 1) (Landgeist, 2021). The United States stands out as the country that has hosted the most Olympic Games, having organized the event on four occasions (1904, 1932, 1984, and 1996) (Zarnowski, 2012), plus the fact they the 2028 Games will take place in Los Angeles. Similarly, France will have hosted the Games four

times (1900, 1924, 1968, and 2024), and the United Kingdom and Germany have each hosted three times (Toohey & Veal, 2016). The significance of these countries hosting multiple Games lies in their established political, economic, and cultural power, which allows them to successfully bid and organize such large-scale international events. It is no coincidence that these countries have historically been considered to be the strongest international users of soft power. The ability to host the Olympic Games repeatedly signals a country's capacity to provide the necessary infrastructure, resources, and organizational capabilities, demonstrating its influence and stature on the global stage. However, it is important to note that the distribution of hosting opportunities has become more geographically diverse in recent years, with emerging nations seeking to leverage the Games as a means of projecting their own influence and status (Grix & Lee, 2013).

Figure 1 Host cities for the Olympic Games.

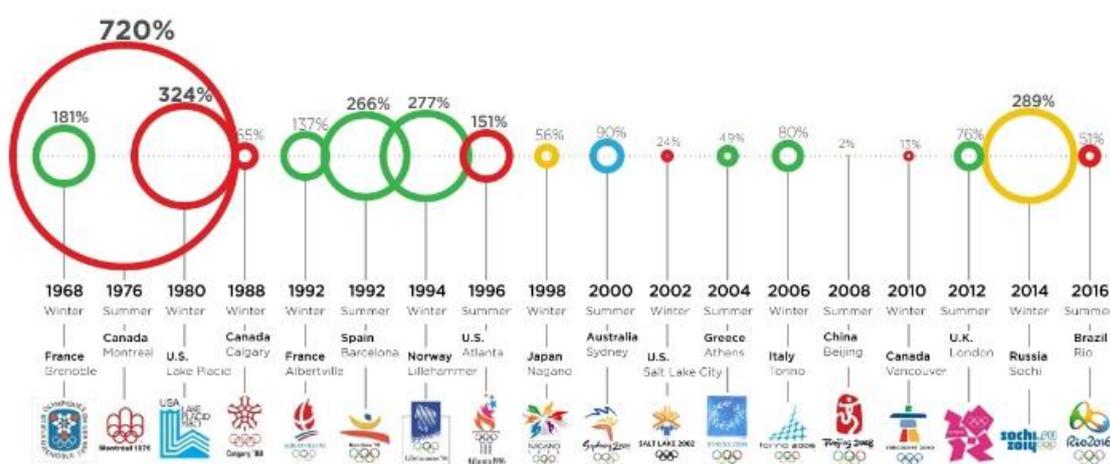


Source: (Landgeist, 2021)

Yet, what is often times overlooked are the side effects cities suffer after hosting the games. While it remains true that the Games provide an ideal platform to impact people from across the globe, the benefits of hosting the games are not always fairly distributed. Many analyses about the economic profit of hosting the games have found that there are both positive and negative consequences. For starters, the Olympic Games can bring in substantial revenue to host cities and countries through tourism, infrastructure investment, and job creation. For example, the 2012 London Olympics

generated an estimated 17 billion pounds in economic benefits, according to a report by the UK government. Hosting the Olympic Games can also provide a global platform for businesses and industries to showcase their products and services, and for host countries to enhance their international reputation. Additionally, hosting the Olympic Games can provide a boost to a city or country's international reputation and can act as a catalyst for urban development and infrastructure investment. (Miah & Garcia, 2012)

Figure 2 Cost overruns of the Olympic Games 1968-2016



Source: (Amoros, 2016)

Nevertheless, the costs of hosting the Olympic Games can be high, with infrastructure and venue construction often exceeding initial budgets. Olympic host cities have a consistent track record of exceeding their initial budgets, often leading to financial challenges and concerns. Although at different rates, every Olympics since 1968 has gone over budget (see Figure 2) (Amoros, 2016). While the Sochi 2014 Games were the most expensive Olympics in big part due to security cost which caused the event to require 59.7 billion dollars (Ang, 2022). One of the key reasons behind this trend is the inherent complexity and scale of hosting the Olympic Games. The hosting requirements involve significant infrastructure development, including the construction or renovation of stadiums, athlete villages, transportation systems, and other facilities (Baade & Matheson, 2016). These ambitious construction projects are subject to tight deadlines and demanding specifications, which can lead to cost overruns and delays. Additionally, the bidding process itself can contribute to budgetary pressures as host cities often underestimate the actual costs involved in hosting the Games, driven by the desire to secure the prestigious event (Preuss, 2015, p. 54). The pressure to create iconic venues

and provide top-notch facilities can also drive-up costs significantly (Maennig, 2017). Furthermore, external factors such as economic fluctuations, changes in political landscapes, and unforeseen events can further impact budgetary constraints (García-Unanue, Pueyo, García, Felipe, & Gallardo, 2012, p. 4436). The combination of these factors creates an environment where host cities frequently face financial challenges and struggle to stay within their allocated budgets.

As explained, hosting the Olympic Games often brings high expectations of economic benefits and development for the host city and country. However, researchers have found that the economic benefits of hosting the Olympic Games may be short-lived and may not translate into sustained economic growth in the years following the Games (Preuss, 2004). Andy Miah and Beatriz García found this to be a common phenomenon known as the “post-Olympic slump” which refers to the economic consequences experienced by host cities after the Games (2012). The post-Olympic slump typically involves a decline in economic activity, tourism, and employment levels following the conclusion of the event. Several factors contribute to this phenomenon. Firstly, the substantial investment in Olympic-related infrastructure and facilities can lead to an oversupply of venues and limited post-Games utilization plans, resulting in underutilized resources (Maennig, 2017). Additionally, the surge in tourism during the Games tends to be temporary, and the subsequent decrease in visitor numbers after the event can have a negative impact on the local economy (Preuss, 2015). Moreover, the focus on preparing for the Games often diverts resources away from other sectors, such as education, healthcare, and social services, leading to potential imbalances and neglect of long-term economic development (Baade & Matheson, 2016). These factors combined highlight the need for host cities to plan and implement effective strategies to mitigate its economic consequences.

Furthermore, beyond the economic benefits of hosting the Olympic Games not being evenly distributed across different sectors of the economy, they are also not evenly distributed between the different segments of society. For example, small businesses may struggle to compete with larger corporations for contracts related to the Olympic Games, and local residents may experience displacement or other negative impacts as a result of Olympic-related development (Miah & Garcia, 2012). Advantages primarily accrue to large corporations and wealthy individuals, while the burdens are

disproportionately borne by taxpayers and local residents. This phenomenon can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the bidding and organizing process often involves extensive public funding to finance the construction of Olympic-related infrastructure, which is predominantly funded by taxpayers. Large corporations and sponsors, on the other hand, benefit from the Games through advertising, sponsorship deals, and commercial partnerships (Baade & Matheson, 2016). Secondly, the economic benefits of hosting the Games, such as increased tourism and investment, tend to concentrate in specific areas, leaving surrounding communities with limited access to these advantages (Preuss, 2015). The costs, however, are often borne by local residents in the form of increased taxes, displacement, and disruption of daily life (García-Unanue, Pueyo, García, Felipe, & Gallardo, 2012). Moreover, the structure of Olympic Games governance, with international bodies and corporate entities having significant influence, can prioritize profit-driven interests over the well-being of local communities (Toohey & Veal, 2016). This unequal distribution of benefits and costs underscores the need for transparent and inclusive decision-making processes and policies that aim to mitigate the negative consequences and ensure a fair distribution of the benefits associated with hosting the Olympic Games.

Overall, the role of the host in the Olympic Games is crucial, providing a unique opportunity for the host country to showcase itself on the global stage. The journey starts with bidding process, which, although aiming for fairness and transparency, has faced criticism for potential political influence and social inequalities. Then, during the preparation and course of the Games, there is room for the host to carefully depict itself as it wishes in hopes of enhancing its international reputation. Yet, patterns show that countries with established power and influence have been the more frequent hosts, reinforcing their international standing. All in all, the economic consequences of hosting the Games can be complex, with both positive and negative impacts. While hosting can bring economic benefits, such as revenue, tourism, and infrastructure development, it often leads to budget overruns and a post-Olympic slump, characterized by declining economic activity. Moreover, the benefits are not evenly distributed, with large corporations and wealthy individuals often benefiting more than local communities and small businesses. Addressing these issues requires effective planning, inclusive decision-making, and strategies to mitigate negative consequences. Ensuring transparency,

fairness, and a fair distribution of benefits are key to maximizing the positive impact of hosting the Olympic Games.

6.3 London 2012: the social media Olympics

The summer Games of 2012 that took place in London, marked the start of a new era in the Olympic Games. This is in big part due to the way society as a whole had changed in the early 2010s due to the huge rise of the use of social media which led to mass digitalization and globalization. In order to get a holistic understanding of the relevance of the 2012 Olympics, three things must be taken into consideration. Firstly, the bidding process for the London Games and how it was affected by the social and political context of the UK at the time. Secondly, what specific actions were taken by the British organization to promote multiculturalism. And lastly, the crucial role of social media.

The context of the United Kingdom before the 2012 Olympics was marked by significant sociopolitical developments, including the ongoing discussions surrounding Brexit and the issues surrounding migration. The Brexit referendum, held in 2016, reflected a growing discontent among sections of the UK population with the European Union and its policies. The debates surrounding Brexit encompassed various concerns, including national sovereignty, economic stability, and immigration control (Vasilopoulou & Talani, 2018). In this context, migration emerged as a highly contentious issue, with differing perspectives on the impact of immigration on the economy, culture, and public services (Migration Observatory, 2012). The influx of migrants and the perceived challenges associated with multiculturalism became key themes in political discourse, shaping public opinion and policy debates leading up to the Olympics (Saggar & Drean, 2012).

The bidding process for the 2012 London Olympic Games was a highly competitive and intricate endeavor that involved various stages and criteria. The bid emphasized the city's multicultural character and diversity as one of its key strengths. The UK's commitment to multiculturalism and inclusivity was showcased as a central theme in the bid, highlighting the nation's ability to celebrate and embrace different cultures (Andrews, 2012). London, with its diverse population and cosmopolitan atmosphere,

positioned itself as an ideal host city that could provide a welcoming environment for athletes and visitors from around the world (Henry, 2011). The bid incorporated multiculturalism as a core element, reflecting the UK's desire to showcase its commitment to inclusivity and create an atmosphere of cultural exchange during the Games. This emphasis on multiculturalism resonated with the Olympic values of respect and understanding among different nations and cultures (International Olympic Committee, 2012). The successful bid of London for the 2012 Olympics demonstrated the recognition and appreciation of the UK's multiculturalism, enabling the city to become a platform for celebrating diversity and fostering international dialogue.

Once it was decided that the games would take place in London, the British organization was quick to start planning several measures to help ensure their promise towards promoting multiculturalism and diversity was met with effective actions. The 2012 London Olympics witnessed several specific actions and initiatives that aimed to promote multiculturalism and celebrate diversity throughout the Games. One notable effort was the emphasis on cultural exchange and representation. The Olympic Village, for instance, provided an opportunity for athletes from different nations to interact and learn about each other's cultures, fostering a spirit of inclusivity and understanding (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2012). The opening ceremony, directed by Danny Boyle, showcased the rich cultural heritage of the UK, including references to the nation's multicultural makeup and immigrant contributions (Andrews, 2012). The ceremony celebrated diversity and sought to challenge stereotypes, presenting a vision of a multicultural Britain (Iqbal, 2016). The volunteer program, known as the "Games Makers," consisted of a diverse group of individuals who contributed to the success of the Games and acted as ambassadors of multiculturalism, reflecting the inclusive spirit of London (Mataruna-Dos-Santos & Pasqualotti, 2018).

Moreover, the London Olympics placed a strong emphasis on the involvement of local communities. The Cultural Olympiad, a series of cultural events leading up to and during the Games, showcased artistic and cultural expressions from various communities across the UK, celebrating their unique identities and contributions (Henry, 2011). These initiatives aimed to break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and create opportunities for dialogue and interaction among diverse communities (Iqbal, 2016).

Yet, the real gamechanger of the 2012 London Olympics was the role of social media, as it emerged as a powerful tool that influenced various aspects of the Games. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube played a significant role in shaping the narrative, facilitating global conversations, and engaging a broader audience (Sanderson & Kavada, 2013). Athletes, spectators, and fans actively utilized social media to share their experiences, express support, and engage in real-time discussions about the events. This unprecedented level of online participation transformed the Olympics into a truly interactive and globally connected event (Boyle & Haynes, 2013). The 2012 Olympics saw record-breaking levels of social media engagement, with users posting updates, sharing photos and videos, and participating in discussions using official hashtags and dedicated Olympic accounts. Social media provided an inclusive platform for individuals worldwide to be a part of the Games, regardless of their physical location (Kane, Fichman, & Gallagher, 2015). It allowed fans to connect with their favorite athletes, access behind-the-scenes content, and contribute to the overall excitement and atmosphere of the event. The influence of social media during the 2012 London Olympics cannot be overstated, as it transformed the way people experienced and engaged with the Games, expanding the reach and impact of the event beyond traditional media channels.

7. Conclusions and future perspectives

Having seen the route that has led the Olympic Games to become the institution they are nowadays, it is also important to consider the future prospects of the Olympics regarding multiculturalism. As seen before, the Games have been able to adapt to the way society has changed and evolved throughout the years since their comeback. Recently, this was also seen in key global changes such as the rise of social media explored in the previous section, but also the global Covid-19 pandemic which struck months before the Tokyo 2020 Summer Games. Main concerns in today's society, which include gender issues, human rights or sustainability, are shaping the way future Olympics are planned. While social movements and the rise of certain ideologies can also pose a challenge to a smooth running of the Games.

The future perspectives of the Olympic Games with regards to multiculturalism are multifaceted and hold potential for both opportunities and challenges. One key aspect to consider is the continued exploration of the politics of recognition within the Olympic movement. The recognition of diverse cultural, ethnic, and national identities has become increasingly important in the pursuit of inclusivity and representation within the Games. Moving forward, there is a need to deepen the understanding and implementation of the politics of recognition, acknowledging and valuing the cultural and political identities of all participating nations and athletes (Taylor et al., 1994, pp. 25-74).

Furthermore, as the world becomes more interconnected and globalized, the Olympic Games have the potential to serve as a platform for fostering intercultural dialogue, understanding, and cooperation. The Games can provide opportunities for showcasing the richness of various cultures, challenging stereotypes, and promoting cultural exchange. However, it is essential to ensure that the celebration of diversity goes beyond superficial displays and embraces substantive recognition and respect for the histories, experiences, and aspirations of diverse communities. Moreover, the future perspectives of the Olympic Games regarding multiculturalism require a critical examination of power dynamics and inequalities. While efforts have been made to promote multiculturalism and inclusivity, it is crucial to address the systemic barriers that prevent equal participation and representation, particularly for marginalized groups. This includes addressing issues such as access to resources, support for underrepresented

athletes, and challenging dominant narratives and structures that perpetuate inequalities.

This research can therefore draw several conclusions. In the first place, it can be concluded that the Olympic Games have been used as a platform to recognize present social issues. Knowing the importance of recognition, there have been several ways in which the Olympics have been pioneers in recognizing underrepresented groups. The main examples presented in this dissertation include the recognition of people with disabilities via the Paralympics, or the incorporation of delegations which are not formally recognized as states, including a refugee delegation. Moreover, it has also provided a powerful platform for athletes to advocate for their social rights. Nonetheless, the research has also found an important critic towards the lack of effective action that translated into actual policies that acknowledge the day-to-day challenges of those affected.

Secondly, regarding the way Olympic hosts use the Games to portray a certain outwards image of their culture, and the consequences of this, it has been observed that the Games do indeed, provide a unique opportunity for showcasing. Given the importance of soft power, from the moment the bidding process starts, potential host works towards a specific image of themselves. The Games then offer several key occasions with a vast audience onto whom they can demonstrate their capabilities and achievements. This is the case specially in the opening and closing ceremony, but also via special programs to demonstrate a true commitment. The best example of this was seen in the case study of the London 2012 Olympics and the different programs the organization created to promote multiculturalism as it was one of the main themes for the Games. However, even if the distribution of hosts has become less Eurocentric, historically, western dominant countries have been the ones to host most Games; which demonstrates the inherently unequal nature of the Olympic institutions.

Third and lastly, it can be concluded that throughout time the Games have evolved to promote multiculturalism in different ways. While maintaining the original essence from their Ancient Greek origin of bringing people together via sport and facilitating the avoidance of war, they have also adapted to current times. Their comeback during a time of shift in global geopolitics favored a liberal approach of cultural diplomacy. Yet the real

noticeable shift came with the London 2012 games due to the rise of social media and the way this drastically augmented the reach of the Games allowing for an unprecedented size of the audience.

Overall, the Olympic Games have proven to be a great platform for the display of shared values to promote the coming together of the international community via sports and culture. Nonetheless, they are a tool that holds great power and with that can be used both for positive and negative objectives. While the Olympics have helped made great progress towards the recognition of certain collectives, they have also perpetuated unfair institutions and power dynamics. Looking forward, there is room for the Games to continue to improve and progress towards take affirmative action and help unite the international community ensuring recognition for everyone.

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