'Team GB' and London 2012: the Paradox of National and Global Identities

Iain MacRury and Gavin Poynter

London East Research Institute, University of East London

Abstract

This article explores the problems associated with 'national identity' in the UK and examines the tensions arising between the international and local dimensions of the Games through examples of domestic (UK) and international (Brazil, Chicago) media coverage of the key debates relating to London's period of preparation.

The chapter proposes a conception of London 2012 as exemplar of an event poised to generate insights and experiences connected to a new politics of 'cosmopolitan' identity; insights central to grasping the cultural politics of contemporary urban development – and the paradoxes of national identity in current discourses of Olympism.

.

'Team GB' and London 2012: the Paradox of National and Global Identities

Iain Macrury and Gavin Poynter

'Properly speaking, cosmopolitanism suits those people who have no country, while internationalism should be the state of mind of those who love their country above all, who seek to draw to it the friendship of foreigners by professing for the countries of those foreigners an intelligent and enlightened sympathy' (1).

Introduction

According to Tessa Jowell, the UK's Olympics minister, the inclusive character of Britain's cultural identity was an essential ingredient of London's bid to host the 2012 Olympics:

'..our success as a nation has in no small part been based on the fact that we have been willing to embrace new people, new ideas and new influences. Individual differences have never diminished the concept of Britishness; in fact, I'd go as far to say that our differences have always enhanced us, as a nation, and helped to make us who we are. ..we define ourselves increasingly in terms of our common values – fairness, openness and tolerance. .. And it was this spirit of inclusive British cultural identity that won us the right to host the Olympics '. (2)

The bid stressed the nurturing of 'grass roots' involvement in sport and the value of hosting the event in multicultural East London, a relatively deprived area of the city. The young people, from the London borough of Newham, who accompanied the bid team to their presentation of London's pitch in Singapore, symbolized the bid's aspirations and its projected legacy. London's bid captured the imagination of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) members, providing, perhaps, a timely contrast to China's confident re-assertion of its international standing and national identity as host of the 2008 Games.

London's success occurred in the wake of Britain's participation in a war in Iraq that had attracted considerable international condemnation. There was also rising domestic concerns about citizenship and what is meant by being 'British', concerns prompted in part by responses to the perceived threats arising in the wake of terrorist attacks in London and recent patterns of immigration within the enlarged European Union. The hosting of the 2012 Games provided an opportunity for the UK government and the organizers of London 2012 to appropriate the event, and sport more generally, to engage in the re-defining of Britain's national identity both domestically and in relation to the perceptions of the rest of the world. The claim to social inclusiveness rested easily with the bid's ambition to utilize the 2012 Games as a catalyst of urban renewal in a multi-ethnic and socially deprived area of East London; one where recent successes for the far right British National Party in European Elections point to a resurgence, expressed at the fringe of the political sphere, of a deep-seated set of tensions around, identity, belonging, and ethnicity.

This contribution provides a preliminary assessment of the attempt to use the London 2012 Olympics, and sport more generally, as a vehicle for re-defining Britain's national identity, in the domestic sphere and within the international community, during a period of significant turmoil in the global economy and in the relationships between the 'advanced' and 'emerging' nations in the world. The first section identifies the problems of national identity facing 'Team GB'; how these have surfaced in the preparations for 2012 and in the domestic social and political debates concerning devolution, citizenship and 'Britishness'. The second section examines how two other cities and nations, each located in different continents, have perceived and reported London's preparations for 2012, comparing and contrasting their aspirations to host the summer Olympics in 2016 with those of the UK. The final section provides some initial conclusions concerning the utilization of the world's leading sporting event to assist Britain's political and social leaders in achieving a 'new' politics of identity in the UK and in presenting a new image to the rest of the world.

'Team GB' and the National Identity problem

"I am determined to work with the football associations and the Olympic Committee to ensure that when we come to 2012 we have a men's football team and we have a women's football team playing," Mr Brown said. The SNP's sport spokesman in Westminster Pete Wishart said: "This is a spectacular own goal for Brown. "He is out of touch with the overwhelming views of football supporters throughout the UK. "All the national supporters groups oppose this move and see it as a threat to the status of their nations to field independent football squads. (3)

Scottish opposition to Prime Minister Brown's wish to see a 'Team GB' playing football in the 2012 Olympics reflects the paradox of identity that contemporary Britain faces when it comes to participation in international sporting events. Britain consists of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Each of these have national teams who compete in a wide range of sports, but for the Olympics these 'nations' come together, as in the 2008 games, as the brand 'Team GB'.

Since the inception of the modern Olympics in 1896, Britain has consisted of one team drawn from the nations that created the Union of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801 (modified to the Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland following the formation of the Irish Free State in 1921). Whilst England has historically been the dominant nation in this alliance, English and British national identities have been typically considered as synonymous. In the nineteenth century, at the peak of the British Empire, the English/British bourgeoisie created a 'model' for several sports and their organization, exporting this to many other parts of the world, and used sporting activities to enhance social integration and the class order that underpinned the power relations of the empire. The British 'model' contained several complex dimensions that constituted the 'foundation for modern sports', not least of which was the conception that it was through participation in sporting activities that a person could learn how to be a gentleman (4). As Kidd (5) makes clear in his attempt to historicise and demystify imputed continuities between ancient Olympic traditions and de Coubertin's modern Olympic Games, there were numerous cross-overs tying the development of precepts central to early modern Olympism directly to debates around culture, sport, national character and the English gentleman in the middle and later decades of the Victorian 19th Century. Smith and Porter argue convincingly that: "It is

impossible to overlook the role of British teams, associations, and models in the formal development of the Olympic Games" (6).

In the long process of the British Empire's unraveling, some nations, including the United States and Ireland, sought to escape historic ties and this form of cultural imperialism by developing their own sporting activities and associations (7). Echoes of this historical resistance may be found in the Scottish response to Prime Minister Gordon Brown's aspiration to field British football teams in the 2012 Olympic Games. The model of inclusivity that rested with an imperial past, was clearly outdated by the end of the twentieth century; the Scottish Football Association's opposition to a 'Team GB' being only one of many challenges to the integrity and inclusivity of British national identity.

Inclusivity is an elusive concept. Its role and meaning has changed over time for Britain's political and social elites. At the height of the British Empire, British imperial consciousness overcame the parochial interests of the specific nations of the British Isles (8). The British industrial revolution and the expansion of the Empire across the world helped to forge a British ruling class and an Imperial Service that was staffed by Scots, Welsh, Irish and English. As Kumar has argued, empire builders are reticent in promoting their specific national identity, but this is not born of modesty 'indeed the opposite. This missionary, or imperial, nationalism engaged with a civilizational project of world-historic-importance' (9); identity with Britain and 'Britishness' was less important to the creators of the Empire than it was to those whom it conquered. Inclusiveness rested with the acceptance by the conquered of being part of a much greater civilizational project and knowing their social position within it.

In the wake of the demise of the empire in the second half of the twentieth century, the question of national identity within the British Isles has surfaced in various ways. In the political sphere, for example, with the re-emergence of nationalist movements in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, a Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly have been established to address demands for greater independence, while the 'peace process' in Northern Ireland has witnessed the restoration of its Assembly. In their response to demands for devolution and the modernisation of the constitution and growing social concerns, especially about the younger generation's attachment to Britain, government spokespersons have replaced the 'old' paternal inclusivity of empire with a new' egalitarian vision of 'social inclusivity' as a defining characteristic of Britishness. . As Smith and Porter (10) underline, the Commonwealth Games – previously called The British Empire and Commonwealth Games – has permitted, in the twentieth century, an ongoing and active articulation of national sporting identities and differences within the UK, under the (formal and latent) umbrella of "Empire", while also articulating increasingly attenuated (post-)colonial links.

Inclusivity, in this social context, acknowledges that citizens may hold dual identities as, for example, Welsh/British or Asian/British though this duality may also reflect different degrees of the feeling of belonging to Britain, especially for the younger generation of ethnic minority citizens (11). This vision of inclusivity was reflected in the values that informed the government's support for hosting the 2012 Games:

'We want to harness the power of sport to help address some of the key issues our nation faces – health, social inclusion, educational motivation and fighting crime'. (12)

Inclusion has been re-defined with the emergence of multiculturalism as a central characteristic of a new British identity. This new approach seeks to integrate different cultures and traditions into a 'creative' society that has distanced itself from its imperial past and the rigid social hierarchies that were intimately associated with it.

Successive Labour governments, since their return to political power in 1997, have been concerned to foster this sense of belonging or attachment to Britain, especially amongst young people and in particular those from lower social class and income backgrounds (13). The preparations for London 2012, have reflected this concern in several ways, including, in the commitment to achieve a lasting social legacy in East London, in the promotion of sports participation and volunteering across the UK and even in the choice of design of the 2012 logo, a dynamic brand aimed specifically to be attractive to young people:

'The new emblem is dynamic, modern and flexible reflecting a brand savvy world where people, especially young people, no longer relate to static logos but respond to a dynamic brand that works with new technology and across traditional and new media networks'. (14)

Noticeably the 2012 Olympic logo, unlike the imagery surrounding the pre-2005 city candidacy and the 'back-the-bid' marketing campaigns, has largely eschewed the patriotic, flag-waving colour palette (red, white and blue), in favour of vivid, jarring greens and pinks. One marketing

expert interprets this refusal of the 'obvious' colour choices in terms of London as a diverse metropolis.

"The colours reflect the diversity of the city which is absolutely right. It would have been an obvious move if we had seen a variation on the nationalistic red, white and blue, or simply adopted the Olympic colours." (15)

This re-presentation of British national identity around London 2012 attempts to achieve a difficult balance between a domestic agenda informed by sport serving the needs of a wider social policy and the international promotion of London as a 'global city' and Britain as a leading nation in the world with a heritage that is reflected in some of the iconic venues chosen to host specific events in London for the Games. The dual, and, perhaps, conflicting themes of heritage and an inclusive, youthful modernity were reflected in London's handover ceremony conducted at the end of the Beijing Games. A classic London red bus delivered a multicultural troop of young dancers whose 'hip hop' routines were designed to reflect the modern face of a 'creative' capital city – although the perhaps inadvertent cultural reference to Cliff Richard in *Summer Holiday* (1962) may have undermined the success of this gesture towards urban-contemporary cultures.

The international promotion of London is equally complex and potentially contentious when considered from the perspective of the relations between city, state and nation. London may be seen as a cosmopolitan zone, an important hub in a new international social order that is focused upon the role of great 'city states' (16). The networks or relationships between these cities are

the dominant feature of the social organization of this new order. The nation state is in decline. Such a perspective complements the principles of Olympism in so far as the latter seeks to rise above the narrow interests and outlook of nationalism and promote universal humanistic values. London's cosmopolitan character and its identity as an international hub or metropole may sit well with the aspirations of Olympism and the interests of an IOC familiar with the hazards of the host city using the games to aggressively promote nationhood but it may also serve, domestically, to (further) distance London from the rest of the UK. The value of London 2012 as a vehicle for establishing a new 'British' identity is at once diminished, hence, the concern of its organizers to stress the value of the games to all parts of Britain. The institution of a regions-based structure for delivering the Cultural Olympiad, and the emphasis given to the geographic distribution of events (notably soccer, in stadia nationwide), has not so far, or convincingly, offset the institutionally metropolitan character of 2012, as the *London* Games.

In summary, the Olympic Games provide the host nation with an opportunity to re-present itself to its own population and to the wider world. For the Labour government and the organizers of 2012, the key themes of the Games and its legacy are associated with achieving an ambitious domestic agenda that stresses the regeneration of a multi-ethnic and relatively poor part of London and the achievement of a wider social and cultural renewal founded upon a new politics of identity, the egalitarian inclusivity of multiculturalism. (17)This new form of British identity has been promoted in a variety of ways, including via the branding of 'Cool Britannia' in the late 1990s, but perhaps its clearest exposition has been in the sporting context, and in particular, in the public discussions concerning the preparations for London 2012. As has been noted, this process is fraught with duality and perhaps contradiction. The extent to which this re-defining of

British national identity has been successful may be examined by looking at how other cities and nations who are also engaged in bidding for the summer games have reported and been influenced by London's preparations for 2012.

Chicago 2016

An IOC evaluation team, visiting Chicago in March 2009, considered the city's bid for the 2016 Games to be strong. The bid was supported by President Obama (a long time resident of the city) and other sporting and media celebrities, including Oprah Winfrey, who hosted a dinner for the IOC team. In a reference to the London 2012 bid team's deployment of the Queen to host a similar event in the lead up to the decision concerning the 2012 bids, one city daily reported that Oprah was the nearest we have to a Queen (18) The Chicago bid contains other features comparable to London's, in particular, with its emphasis on Chicago being a dynamic and multicultural city, 'a city of immigrants'(19) and one in which there is a strong commitment to involving urban youth in sport participation. Like a number of candidate cites in recent rounds, and like London and Barcelona perhaps in particular, Chicago faces some of the challenges peculiar to post-industrial reconstruction, with the Games heralded as part of an address to a nexus of social policy problems that links employment, education, patterns of leisure and consumption, social cohesion, land use and environmental concerns.

The Chicago bid aspires to delivering a 'blue/green' games; blue representing the fresh water lakeside location of the city and the green its extensive parklands; and together these themes are designed to reflect the city's commitment to the environment and the achievement of a

sustainable games. The Olympic event sites are mainly focused upon the city's lakeside area creating a compact games location that does not, unlike London, require significant investment in infrastructure, except in transportation, an area of concern noted by the IOC when it announced that Chicago was one of the four international finalists in June 2008. This is reflected in the bid's projected overall cost of $4.8 billion, approximately a third of the projected total cost of the London games. The bid also stresses the opportunity to redevelop Chicago's south and west sides, leaving a lasting urban renewal legacy (20)

The Chicago plan envisages four venue clusters located within a 15 km radius of the Olympic village with the main Olympic stadium constructed in the South Side Washington Park. The funding for the games is primarily focused upon securing private sector support with the city providing a guarantee of $500 million to meet contingencies and a further $125 million from the sale of public assets (owned by the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority – McPier) that would go directly toward meeting Olympic construction costs. Chicago's design for the Olympics draws upon Barcelona's experience of keeping the games venues in close proximity and integral to the city's centre while also opening up the waterfront for development and after-games leisure use.

In the year following the announcement of Chicago achieving the status of a finalist in the race to be awarded the games by the IOC, the city's plans have evolved in several ways, particularly in response to IOC evaluations. The IOC, in addition to expressing concerns about transportation, also expressed doubts about the low level of the construction budgets for the four main Olympic venues and that the wording of Chicago's financial guarantees did not comply

fully with the Olympic Charter (21) In response to these concerns, the Chicago organizers have refined construction plans, focusing upon costs and sustainability, and have developed more specific proposals for the post-games use of games facilities. The main stadium, an 80,000 seat facility, is projected to be reduced to a smaller athletics facility post-games while other plans, which increasingly emphasise a community legacy, include the possibility of providing a new pool for a local High School and the conversion of an Armory, to be used during the games as a staging area for athletes and performers, to become an indoor recreation centre for community use.

There is some evidence that Chicago's increased commitment to 'legacy' has arisen, in part, from a dialogue with the organisers of London 2012, this alongside the heightened signaling around 'legacy' from the IOC over recent years. (22) In May 2008 it was announced that Chicago was considering reusing parts of London's Olympic stadium by importing 55,000 seats at the end of the 2012 games. This proposal, designed to address concerns about Olympic cities being left with white elephants post-games, was complemented by the adjustment of legacy plans which emphasise the positive benefits of urban renewal and a post games legacy designed to benefit young people and encourage them to engage in sports activities. In the autumn 2008, leading figures in Chicago's bid, acknowledged that they had held several meetings with Lord Coe, the chair of London's Olympic Organising Committee, and that these meetings had focused on sharing experiences and identifying 'things to do and not to do'. Through these exchanges, it was recognized that the Chicago strategy had similarities to that of London 2012:

'Ryan said that Chicago's bid contained a similar strategy to London by planning to leave a regenerated urban area once the games are over. "London also did a great job selling the legacy as a benefit to the youth of the world..We are not copying them but it is a natural thing to do"' (23)

At first sight, therefore, it seems that the Chicago bid has been influenced by London's experience in perhaps three main ways. First, the bid has taken heed of the negative debates concerning the escalating costs of the London games. The Chicago budget includes a $500 million (dollar) city guarantee and a separate tranche of public funds arising from the sale of public assets by the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority, a government agency, which would contribute about $125 million to the Chicago games. The balance of funding, however, is clearly 'tilted toward' wealthy individuals and corporations (24) in contrast to the London games which rely heavily upon public funding, especially in the wake of the credit crunch and subsequent economic recession. Second, the Chicago bid has been informed by the favorable response that the IOC gave to the aspirations of London 2012 which stressed the multicultural nature of East London and the significance of increasing young people's participation in sport. This is reflected in the Chicago team's development of legacy plans, including the specific commitments given to providing community facilities on the Olympic Park site after the Games. Finally, the proposed legacy arising from the 2016 games includes a programme of urban renewal, though the scope of the Chicago 2016 Committee's commitment has been criticized as rather narrow (25). In this sense, as the Chicago bid has been refined and developed so a legacy discourse has emerged that has drawn upon London's experience. The language and approach shares a common concern of many major cosmopolitan cities in the west, to sustain social integration in circumstances where there are significant disparities in income, wealth and social

status, particularly for ethnic minority groups and their younger generations. While the patterns of inequality arise from the specific histories of cities such as London and Chicago, the social and political elites within these cosmopolitan centres have recognized the value of sport and the hosting of major sporting events as a means of enhancing social integration and legitimizing schemes for urban development and renewal.

Underpinning Chicago's bid, however, is the recognition that the city is seeking international status, a designation that London already enjoys. Patrick Ryan, the founder and Chief Executive of Aon Corporation, a leading international insurance broker company based in Chicago and, alongside Chicago's Mayor, Richard Daley, a major figure in the Chicago bid, stressed this point on hearing of Chicago's success in beating Los Angeles and San Francisco to become the US Olympic Committee's candidate for the 2016 games:

'I think what's at stake is an opportunity for Chicago to really be exposed broadly to the world for all its beauty, charm, its attributes, its culture, its welcoming people..Big international acceptance – that's at stake here'.(26)

Rio de Janeiro 2016 (27)

At a meeting of IOC members in March 2009, Carlos Nuzman, President of Brazil's Olympic bid committee, outlined the strengths of the Rio bid to his audience:

"We can offer a new country and a new continent experiencing the Games. A nation with 65 million people under the age of 18 and a continent of 180 million young people. We can offer a very favorable time zone for broadcasters, new markets for

sponsors and a stage like no other to host the Games. We can build a bridge from London 2012 to Rio 2016, passing the baton to pursue the mission of inspiring young people all around the world." (28)

Rio's candidature for the 2016 games followed the country's hosting of the Pan American Games in 2007 and its success in securing the FIFA World Cup soccer finals taking place in 2014. The city was considered to be an early frontrunner in the competition to host the 2016 Olympics, though the IOC's Candidature Acceptance Working Group report, published in March 2008, placed the city fourth (behind Tokyo, Madrid and Chicago) in its comparative evaluation of the seven cities that sought to host the Games (29)

Rio's bid, titled 'Show your Passion', focuses upon the unique qualities of the festive city of Rio de Janeiro and emphasizes that a successful bid would ensure that the games would took place on the South American continent for the first time. The candidature file has several key themes. First, and most importantly, reflecting its demographic profile, the bid is oriented to an engagement with Brazil's young. It expresses clearly how sport may be 'a transformation tool for social inclusion and education' (30) Second, the catalytic effect of hosting the games on the city's infrastructure and, in particular, improving its deprived areas is stressed. Third, the bid highlights the growing importance of Brazil as the seventh largest economy in the world and how hosting the games would affirm the country's rising global status. Fourth, Brazil's regional role in sports development is underlined by a commitment to further develop training and support facilities for the continent's athletes. The facilities that were first established for the 2007 Pan American Games would be upgraded to provide a regional 'sports hub' incorporating a

National Olympic Training Centre for around twenty sports post-Games and an 'X-Park' for high performance training and community involvement. (31) Finally, the bid underlines the environmental improvements that hosting the games would bring, including improvements to waterways, air quality, waste management and land encroachment (32)

In the IOC Working Party report, Rio scored highly in the governance category, reflecting that the application was presented jointly by the National Olympic Committee and all three levels of government – federal, state and city. Financial guarantees for the games were underwritten by the national government, with games related costs being estimated at $2.8 billion and infrastructure developments estimated at $14.4 billion. The proposed games venues divide into four zones – the Barra (the Rio Olympic Park precinct), Deodoro, Maracana and Copacabana Beach - with 12 new sports venues being built in the period up to 2015. The IOC Working Party's assessment of the Rio bid identified relative weaknesses in security, a concern arising from high levels of crime in the city, and accommodation - the shortage of 3,4,5 star hotel rooms and the proposed use of cruise ships to meet demand. Rio's bid achieved a similar score to Chicago's whilst the technical quality of Madrid and, in particular, Tokyo, placed these two cities in the leading positions.

Necessarily, the candidate files address a pre-defined IOC template and, therefore, focus upon common themes. In the period since its short listing, however, the Rio bid team and its government partners at city, regional and national levels, have focused in particular upon legacy and the role of mega events in catalyzing improvements in the socio-economic and cultural life of a city (33) This discourse reflects the emergence of Rio de Janeiro as a global city in the last

decade for whom the process of urbanization, population growth and economic expansion, including the expansion of a significant informal economy, has exacerbated the long-standing problems of social segregation, street crime and violence and the trend toward a middle class that establishes itself in relatively secure and gated enclaves within the city and its suburbs. There is, however, strong evidence of the city's political, intellectual and business leadership's commitment to strategic planning to address these issues.

 The first strategic plan was implemented between 1993 and 1996 and this was followed by a second version in 2001-2004,'As cidades da Cidade', that involved the specification of twelve regional strategic plans for different parts of the city which recognize their specific historic patterns of socio-economic development and engages with local communities in creating public/private partnerships for local development projects. The innovative nature of this plan includes the monitoring of its implementation by independent university research teams and community-based institutions, the promotion of the cultural industries and scientific and technological research facilities to support the development of new industries and sectors of employment and the engagement of local communities in the financial and budgetary processes required for the delivery of local projects (34) Complementing these local projects, other projects, reflective of the city's ambitions for enhancing its international status, were devised for constructing a Guggenheim Museum in Rio and developing the waterfront, with the latter project drawing inspiration from the successful developments undertaken in Barcelona in preparation for its hosting of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 1992. The Guggenheim proposal, in particular, met with significant criticism from within Brazil, with critics arguing that the financial support that such an iconic project would demand, would divert much needed

investment away from more pressing social needs such as housing, infrastructure and education and would threaten the future of existing, smaller cultural institutions already located in the city.(35)

Perhaps Rio's bid to host the 2016 games reflects the city, regional and national governments intentions to address such concerns, to reconcile the desire to utilize iconic events to promote the city's global status with the urgent need to address its underlying social, economic and environmental problems. In this context, London 2012 is a useful exemplar. The Brazilian authorities have over recent years drawn upon the experiences of major international cities when developing strategic plans for urban development. The hosting of the 2007 Pan American Games reflected the city and nation's recognition of the value of sport, and sports mega events, as a potential catalyst for urban renewal and the promotion of social integration. The bid to host the Olympics in 2016 was consistent with this outlook and London's success in securing the 2012 games based upon its emphasis on the 'soft' legacies of youth participation in sport, social inclusivity and the celebration of multiculturalism has influenced public discussion and clearly informed the 'legacy debate' within Brazil (36)

Part 3: London 2012 and its 'cosmopolitan' legacy

> London's not just about crime, you don't just look at London and see crime... it's a good city... It's about people from different countries, you know; being one, and you know, being united...yeah, being united. (37)

The mood and cityscape of the early twenty-first century that …we see as we move through London's public and private spaces, could not have been imagined by the social scientists fifty years ago…one thing this domestic visceral cosmopolitanism may offer is a new image in the world, a new way of being modern, a supranational national identity, a means by which to counter Britain's old and new imperial projects (38) (

In conclusion, there is evidence that London 2012 has generated a new dimension to the discussion of 'legacy' through its expression of a reformulated national identity that is based upon programmes designed to enhance social inclusivity and cohesion in the cosmopolitan city. In their specific historic contexts, a brief review of the Chicago and Rio de Janeiro proposals for 2016 suggests that London's 'cosmopolitan' legacy discourse has found some resonance in cities seeking to host future summer games and achieve recognition of a global status in the twenty first century. Such cities are currently confronted by multiple challenges, multiethnic urban conflicts, an attenuation of national state government authority and a fracturing of confidence in national identity as a substantial resource for attachment and orientation; London 2012 seeks to address these issues (39). This concluding section develops this perspective through returning to a brief consideration of the promises made in contemporary bid presentations and to the foundational principles and debates concerning the 'international mission' of de Coubertin's Olympic movement.

One argument is that the Olympics merely provide governments, and adjacent power-brokers, with a proxy vehicle for governance and urban renewal, serving as a mask to legitimate 'big' government interventions in city planning; a means of bypassing enfeebled and moribund public

systems of local and municipal governance and accountability (40) In this reading the Olympics serve not to bolster living, complex communities, but to resuscitate the categorical clichés of modern state government in the face of crisis and exhaustion. The Olympics perform a propping up job, on behalf of a failing modernity.

In such a conception it is easy to dismissively identify London's leaders' Olympic appeals to grass roots multiculturalism as a cynical indulgence in classic liberal rhetoric, empty justifications broadcast to legitimate grandiose policy decisions and massive expenditures – likewise in Rio and Chicago. There may be some substance in such critiques. However, to accept too readily that city-wide and national expressions of optimistic enthusiasm for hosting the Olympics are simply derived from the manipulation of public sentiment is to succumb to an all too familiar dismissal of popular sensibility. The 'national' love of sport –and of Olympic sport in particular - is neither simple nor simplistic; we would argue that it points to a contemporary recognition of the unique power of sport to adumbrate and articulate everyday complexities and intensities attaching to contemporary local, national and personal identities.

A hint that a cynical dismissal of Olympic boosterism may not provide an exhaustive address to a complex topic lies, for instance, in a growing sense of a genuine popular engagement with the London Olympics (41)). There is evidence of popular support, in anticipation at least, for an optimistic sense of the Games as a credible vehicle for positive change in the city. It should be noted however, that when asked about a key cultural benefit of

the Games, 'bringing people together through sport', only 3% of Londoners felt this was the most important outcome of 2012 (42)

A further recent small and exploratory study (43) has examined the extent to which the 'grass roots' populations invoked by politicians engage with and are engaged by the promises made about change and London's 'multi-cultural' Olympic legacy. The evidence base is small, but there is, in respondents' testimonies, a sense of a detailed, reflexive engagement with some of the issues raised by politicians regarding community building, explored in this chapter. Notably such issues link to questions of identity and belonging in the (changing) city.

It is clear from a preliminary review of these focus group discussions that populations in East London are highly alert to the significance of the Games in relation to a deep-seated local experience – living in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic city. Their reflections provide insights into the ways local people anticipate the impact of the Olympics in articulating the paradoxes of identity: reframing and reconstructing identities; at a personal level, across the city and its various areas, and in terms of English, UK and the global conceptions of 'London' in 2012. In amongst some considered skepticism, the Olympic Games serve as an object of hope and aspiration, enabling respondents to project optimistic future scenarios for the city. In many instances there is an appeal to the idea that the Olympics will mobilize 'unity'; as that goodwill emergent around the excitement of the events will induce a broader effect, one that will reduce the sense of unease that contributes to an ongoing characterization of east London localities as

'dangerous', and where gang violence is a threatening reality. What might this have to do with Olympism, not to say any re-figuring of Olympic ideas?

The Olympics, cosmopolitanism and new urbanities

> Olympism emerged as a mixture of aristocratic, modern, cosmopolitan and nationalistic ideas" (44)

As Kidd points out, the de Coubertin Olympic games are "an important part of world culture" reaching media audiences across the globe and drawing attention to the 'knotty' problems of division and belonging:

> "The question of whether the Olympic Games unite men, as Coubertin thought, or divide them, as Maurras insisted, has been from the very first that they do both" (MacAloon 1981:269). Amongst other things, it is the emergent function of the Olympics (as London should witness in 2012) to help refigure, traverse and rehearse knotty paradoxes of identity and identification – an unfolding and refolding of the 'Modern' categories of inter- and intra- national identities". (45)

It is important to remember that while sport is political, sport is not directly politics.   There is a means, perhaps distinctive to sporting cultural events, which enables peculiar and widespread modes and means of engagement. Smith and Porter argue that:

> the physical, competitive, supra-linguistic, and populist nature of most sports have made them perfect media for the expression of group identities. Sports are places in which groups can find peaceful physical

fora for the beliefs they hold about themselves as entities, a feature that much sports historiography has linked to Benedict Anderson's model of the 'imagined community'.(46)

It may be that an extension of the valuable conception of 'imagined community' can be found in Nava's conception of a 'visceral' cosmopolitanism. While for Nava, sports seem not to feature as a resource for the affirmation of the affective connectedness she highlights within her conception of an embodied cosmopolitan, there is no reason not to see sport as a highly fertile site for affective engagement and informal, developmentally rich, cultural connectivity.

The 2012 Olympics offers a unique opportunity to refresh, restore and reframe 'London' in the national and global imagination. Likewise London can refigure Olympism, asserting the increasing presence and puissance of cosmopolitan urbanities/urbanites as a twenty-first century counter-part to de Coubertin's modernist ideal'; the English gentleman. Nava offers a personal account of her engagement with London:

> London, my city, is much more comfortable with its cultural and racial mixing, with merger, hybridity and conviviality, with its acknowledgement of difference...it s multiple connections to elsewhere, with its everyday ordinary visceral cosmopolitanism (despite the persistence and sometimes escalation of divisions) than is any other city in the Western world...cultural texts and rituals are required in order to sustain these social worlds...expressive work of acknowledging others and performing mutuality (47)

As Carrington has argued the Olympics offer a grand scale opportunity for the performative expressivity Nava has associated with 'visceral cosmopolitanism'. He argues that the Olympics offer "opportunities to realize a sense of global, post-national belonging that is grounded in the politics of the local, the city, the regional". These temporary moments of intensive reciprocal

engagement, mediated by sports allow for the expression and exploration of "wider solidarities" and for "new senses of self to be formed." Carrington concludes that "the fact that such a politics remains indeterminate is all the more reason to see Olympism as a possible site for progressive forms of intervention" (48) .

In London 2012's adoption, delivery and performance of this informal, Olympic-cultural function there is evidence of an experiential affirmation of cosmopolitan insight and affection: in a space which will necessarily, also, provide and provoke telling articulations of conflict and controversy. The 2012 Games' capacity to contain such conflicts, centered on and within 'global', cosmopolitan London, and east London in particular, and creatively nourish the national imagination depends upon an active alertness to the tensions and paradoxes which constitute the city in the twenty-first century. The explicit commitments made to grass-roots 'multi-cultural' London announced in the bid presentation in Singapore in 2005 may be fulfilled through the re-evaluation and practical acknowledgement of London as a resource of cosmopolitan cultural capital, a kind of developmental cross-roads for national and post-national life. Such an achievement would take its place as a major 'intangible' legacy; whose discourse has, we suggest, already influenced presentations by other candidate cities such as Rio and Chicago. This component of London's Olympic legacy is a necessary complement to the tangible culturally-developmental outcomes claimed for London's games. Positive urban development may be founded upon a cosmopolitan East-side that is emerging via a process of urban regeneration in one of the world's global cities. Such a development is an important aspect of any genuinely re-generative and lasting legacy for London that may arise from hosting the 2012 games.

Acknowledgements

Notes

(1) de Coubertin, 1898, pp. 429–34 cited Carrington..

(2) Olympics Minister Tessa Jowell 'Capturing the Value of Heritage', Speech to the Royal Geographical Society, January 2006, http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/minister_speeches/2063.aspx, accessed April 23, 2009.

(3) 'Brown wants British football team at 2012 Olympics' The Scotsman, 23 August 2008http://thescotsman.scotsman.com/latestnews/Brown-wants-British-football-team.4421659.jp, accessed April 17, 2009

(4) Scambler: 36-42; Kumar, 1-17).

(5) Kidd,:144-147)

(6) Smith and Porter,:13

(7) Bairner, 2005

(8) Kumar, 174 2005:

(9) Kumar *x*

(10) Smith and Porter, 13.

(11) Heath and Roberts

(12) Tessa Jowell, 'London 2012 Olympics Statement to the House of Commons', 15.05.2003, Source: http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/minister_speeches/2103.aspx, accessed May 1, 2009

(13) Heath and Roberts

(14) LOCOG, (2007) 'New Brand and Vision revealed for London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games', http://www.london2012.com/news/media-releases/2007/2007-06/new-brand-and-vision-revealed-for-london-2012-olympic-ga.php, accessed May 2nd 2009.

(15) Geoghegan 2007

(16) (Castells ;Roche 232-3

(17) Kumar: 234-5).

(18) Gamesbids.com 2009).

(19) [1] It is important to note, however, that the historical conditions and circumstances that created Chicago's attachment to multiculturalism are fundamentally different to that of London's. Historically, Chicago's immigrants included those seeking freedom from the British Empire, the turbulence of the European mainland and the exploitative plantations of America's southern states.

(20) Chicago 2016 Applicant City, 9

(21) Hersh.

(22) MacAloon.

(23) Booth (2008) 'Chicago turns to Coe in bid for 2016 Olympics', The Guardian, Friday 3rd October 2008, accessed June 7, 2009.

(24) Bennett et al, 18.

(25) Bennett L. et al. Along with the official documentation published by the Chicago 2016 Olympic Organising Committee and other reports (see bibliography), 58 articles from the Chicago Tribune were accessed for the period November 30 2008- May 31st 2009. Of these, 12 referred to London's bid and subsequent preparations. The main focus of the articles were as follows: the Chicago Bid 9; Chicago logo 1; Park Design/Architecture 7; Finance 9; Obama election impact upon bid 4; Creation of Chicago Olympic Committee 1; Chicago and Other Competing Cities 13; Corruption 1; IOC Visit to Chicago 6; Community Support 5; Environment 1; Security 1. See http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-chicago-olympic-bid, accessed June 2-5, 2009

(26) Source: Bergen K. '2016 or bust – Chicago's quest for the Games is an all-or-nothing bid to make the city a player on the world stage', Chicago Tribune April 14, 2007, chicagotribune.com, accessed June 6, 2009

(27) [1] [1] Along with the official documentation published by the Rio 2016 Olympic Organising Committee and reports (see bibliography), 40 articles from the O Globo were accessed for the period September 26th 2008 - June 28th 2009. Of these, 2 referred to London 2012. The main focus of the articles were: The Rio 2016 Bid and IOC's assessment 12; Support for the Bid 6; Rio 2016 and the hosting of other mega events 5; Finance and the Brazilian Economy 5; Transport 3; Environment 3; Security 2; Other 4. See http://oglobo.globo.com/, accessed June 27-29, 2009.

(28) Reuters (2009) Rio 2016 Bid Committee Presents Games Vision at Sport Accord 2009, Thu Mar 26, 2009 8:30pm EDT, http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS14715+27-Mar-2009+PRN20

(29) IOC; Rio de Janeiro came third behind Tokyo and Madrid; it was, in fact, placed behind Doha in the final evaluation but Doha, despite the technical quality of the bid, was considered too small as a nation to host such a major sporting event and was, therefore, dropped from the final shortlist of four competitor cities.

(30) Rio, 11).

(31) IOC, 43).

(32) IOC, 110).

(33) Ministerio do Esporte, O Globo,).

(34) Duarte:

(35) Duarte, 32.

(36) Ministerio do Esporte, 21.

(37) Focus Group Respondent, F 14 (Walthamstow)

(38) Nava,15

(39) Rivenburgh, 46

(40) Burbank et a,l .

(41) GLA 11-12

(42) GLA, 11-12. Respondents were asked:

Now looking at this list of potential benefits of London hosting the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. Could you tell me which two or

---

three of the following you think is most important for London.		
	The following % results are reported	
Improving/regenerating the east end	24	
Improving/regenerating Greater London	16	
Promoting England/The London area	15	
Bringing more people/tourists to London	21	
Benefits for businesses	23	
Improving the local economy	23	
Increasing job opportunities and Prospects	16	
Improving transport	13	
Improving sports facilities	12	
Encouraging sport participation	4	
Bringing people together through sport	*3*	
Encouraging young/New British athletes	3	
Promoting good health/Fitness	2	
Other	1	
None of these	15	
Don't know	10	

(43) 15 focus groups were recorded between January 2009 and August 2009. These groups, usually involving about six respondents, invariably reflecting the complex ethic, cultural and hybrid identities characteristic of their boroughs' population were sampled from various age groups, especially young people in local schools, representing each of the five Olympic boroughs. The groups lasted between 45 minutes and one hour, and were video recorded for inclusion in the East London Lives 2012 digital archive . The participants were invited to discuss and consider an array of topics, with an emphasis on 'legacy' – and to

explore thoughts and ideas about the 2012 Games – a mega event on their doorstep. Questions of identity and nation often emerged spontaneously. The cited excerpts refer to groups conducted in schools in Newham and in Waltham Forest.

(44) Damkjær:213

(45) Kidd

(46) (Smith and Porter:13

(47) Nava,164

(48) Carrington,:97

References

Bairner, A. (ed.) Sport and the Irish. Histories, Identities, Issues, Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2005.

Bale, J. and M. K. Christensen, Eds.Post-Olympism? Questioning Sport in the Twenty-First Century. Oxford, Berg, 2004 .

Beck, U. "'The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies'." *Theory, Culture and Society* 19 2002**:** 17-44.

Benhabib, S. Another Cosmopolitanism. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008.
.

Bennett L., M.Bennett, S. Alexander, 'Why Host the Games?' Chicago and the 2016 Olympics, Egan Urban Center, DePaul University, Chicago: De Paul University, November2008

http://www.chicago2016.com/2016/files/reports/BennettBennettAlexanderRev4.pdf, accessed May 20, 2009.

Burbank M.J., G. Andranovitch and C. H. Heying (2001) Olympic Dreams: The Impact of Mega events on Local Politics. Boulder, C.O: Lynne Reinner.

Carrington, B. 'Cosmopolitan Olympism, Humanism and the Spectacle of

'Race'. Post-Olympism?' in Bale J and M. Christensen (Ed) Questioning Sport in the Twenty-First Century Oxford, Berg, 2004.

Coubertin, P. de , 'Does Cosmopolitan Life Lead to International Friendliness?', Review of Reviews, 17: 429–34, 1898.

Castells M. The Network Society, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

Chicago 2016 Candidate File, http://www.chicago2016.org/our-plan/bid-book/bid-book.aspx, 2008, accessed May 21, 2009.

Damkjær S. 'Post-Olympism and the Aestheticisation of Sport' in Bale, J. and M. K. Christensen, Eds. (2004). Post-Olympism? Questioning Sport in the

Twenty-First Century. Oxford, Berg, 2004.

Duarte N. 'Large Scale Urban Projects and Dual City: The cases of Rio de Janeiro and Bogota', a dissertation report submitted in part fulfillment of the requirements for the MSc in Development and Planning, University College, London, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, London: UCL, September 3rd, 2007.

GamesBids.com (2009) Olympic Digest – Vancouver 2010, Chicago 2016, http://www.gamesbids.com/eng/other_news/1216134259.html, April 3 2009, accessed June 4 2009.

GLAAnnual London Survey 2009 Top line results February 2009 http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor/annual_survey/index.jsp, 2009, accessed June 10, 2009.

Geoghegan, T. . Oh no' logo. BBC News Magazine BBC, Tuesday, 5 June 2007, accessed, July 28, 2009.

Heath A. and J. Roberts British Identity: its sources and possible implications for civic attitudes and behavior, Research Report for Lord Goldsmith's Citizenship Review, www.justice.govuk/docs/british-identitypdf 2008, accessed April 12, 2009.

Hersch P 'Chicago third of four finalists for 2016 Olympics', Chicago Tribune, June 4, 2008. www.chicagotribune.com/sports/chi-chicago-2016-olympics-finalist,0,6779343.story, 2008, accessed, June 5, 2009

International Olympic Committee (IOC) Games of the XXX1 Olympiad, Working Group Report, IOC: Lausanne,, http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_1317.pdf, March 2008 accessed July 20, 2009.

Kidd, B. . 'Recapturing Alternative Olympic Histories' in Global Olympics: Historical and Sociological Studies of the Modern Games. K. Young and K. Walmsley. London, Elsevier, 2005.

Kumar K. The Making of English National Identity, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

MacAloon, J. This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympic Games. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1981.

MacAloon, J. . "'Legacy' as Managerial/Magical Discourse in Contemporary Olympic Affairs." International Journal of the History of Sport December 2008(14): 2060 -2071, 2008.

Ministerio do Esporto DaCosta L., D.Correa, E.Rizzuti, B.Villano and A.Miragaya (Eds), Legados De Megeventos Esportivos, Brasilia: Ministerio do Esporto, 2008.

Nava, M. . Visceral Cosmopolitanism: gender, culture and the normalisation

of difference. London, Sage, 2007.

O Globo   'Projeto do Dossie Rio 2016, revitalizacao do porto transforrma area historica da

citade', O Globo, 23rd June, 2009, accessed 10 July, 2009.

Rivenburgh, N. The Olympic Games: Twenty-First Century Challenges as a

Global Media Event. Sport, Media, Culture: Global and Local Dimensions. A.

Bernstein and N. Blain. London, Frank Cass, 2005.

Roche. M Mega-Events and Modernity, London: Routledge, 2000.

Scambler G. Sport and Society, history, power and culture, Maidenhead: Open University Press,

2005.

Smith, A. and D. Porter, Eds.Sport and National Identity in the Post-War World

London, Routledge, 2004 .