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Engaging citizens in sports mega-events: the participatory strategic approach of Tokyo 2020 Olympics

Abstract

This paper examines some innovative practices of citizen engagement strategy implemented by Tokyo 2020 in the pre-game period. Hosting a sports mega-event such as the Olympic Games is a key milestone in urban history and reputation of any city. The challenge of celebrating an outstanding global event with a long-lasting positive impact on the place requires the commitment and engagement of all urban stake-holders as the hosting city needs to maximize the number of supporters who share the games' vision and embrace the Olympic experience. The role of citizens as creators and prescribers of urban reality is increasingly recognized in the field of place branding as it confronts the traditional top-down agenda-setting approach with a new collaborative paradigm and participatory culture.

The city of Tokyo has initiated the implementation of its comprehensive strategy for hosting its second Olympic Games in 2020. The foundation plan of the 2020 Games identifies the engagement strategy as one of the key strategic pillars of the event aimed at ensuring an inclusive and active participatory nature of the Games celebration. The research is guided by an exploratory case study approach to assess the citizen engagement strategy and participatory frameworks within the context of the Olympic mega-event to be held in Tokyo in 2020. The examination of some innovative initiatives in the pre-game period such as the national call for the creation of Olympic medals, the Olympic mascots selection process and the Volunteering program, reveals a series meaningful drivers of citizen engagement strategy of Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games ranging from the access to a specific Olympic knowledge and sports experience to a personal self-realization and community empowerment, among others.

The research aims at contributing to further academic discussion and effective practice of citizens' engagement in place making through sports mega-events in such a way as to ensure a truly inclusive, inspiring and meaningful nature of these global happenings.

Keywords
Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, citizen engagement, sports mega-events.

1. Introduction

1.1. *Sports mega-events: not all that glitters is gold*

Hosting a sports mega-event such as the Olympic Games is a key milestone in urban history and reputation of any city. Competition among cities around the world to win the Olympic bid is tough as the impact of these mega-events to address urban challenges of the 21st century is evidenced by relevant legacies to the host cities. The catalytic effects of the Olympic mega-event are usually reflected in a significant transformation and improvements in urban infrastructure, reinforcement of international visibility and relevance as well as in the implementation of desired urban policies (Essex & Chalkley, 1998; Andranovich & Burbank, 2011; Grix & Brannagan, 2016). Among the specific tangible and intangible impacts associated with hosting the Olympic Games, economic growth, tourist revenues, job creation, as well as national pride, world status and promotion of host destination are usually identified (Florek & Insch, 2011; De Groote, 2005). The raise of the host city global awareness and positive reputation are directly linked with the consecutive attraction of tourists, foreign direct investments and creative talent (Florida, 2002, 2008).

In addition to the assessed economic and tourist impact of sports mega-events, their specific role as unique scenarios of cultural policy implementation and symbolic production of the place is also acknowledged (García, 2008). The cultural nature of a sports mega-event enables the host city to generate meaningful contents and values for their branding and communication strategy. The role of culture as a significant influencer and facilitator of positive perceptions of the place is getting an increasing attention from scholars and practitioners (Anholt, 2011; Snow, 2009; Landry, 2011; Kolotouchkina & Seisdedos, 2016). In this regard, the impact of global events is also recognized as a relevant tool of soft power and public diplomacy. Generating influence on the international arena through intangible assets such as national culture, innovation or remarkable social achievements is the goal of a soft power approach (Nye, 2008). Snow (2009) argues that while traditional public diplomacy was focused on talking to global publics in order to inform them and get their engagement with national goals and foreign policy, the current approach involves governments, private individuals and groups influencing public opinions and attitudes. Grix and Brannagan (2016) highlight the particular relevance of sports mega-events as a new diplomatic tool increasingly used by national governments in their strategic shift from hard to soft power in order to strengthen international prestige and positive image of the place. The purpose of achieving international visibility, recognition and improving symbolic power of Brazil on the global arena through bidding and hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2016 was directly linked to the foreign policy strategy of the country (Schausteck de Almeida *et al.*, 2014).

In parallel to the focus on specific economic indicators of urban development and on building an external positive reputation of the place, the attention to a series of inward goals of the host city must be given as well. Olympic legacies are usually evidenced by major developments of transport systems, urban renewal initiatives, sports and cultural facilities, as well as urban beautification projects or specific projects addressing issues of pollution, water quality standards or a sustainable urban development (Essex & Chalkley, 1998).

Even though ensuring an Olympic legacy in the host city is a key challenge of the Olympic movement, the lack of a positive and tangible impact for many residents of host cities is often questioned in the Olympic history (Andranovich & Burbank, 2011; Kietlinski, 2011). Strong local concerns over hosting sports mega-events are usually related to a raise in

taxes and real estate costs (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002); traffic congestion (Fredline, 2004) or a loss of an affordable inner-city housing and homelessness (Edelson, 2011). On the other hand, relevant discussions are focused on some critical issues of citizen participation and engagement in the sports mega-events celebrations. Critical remarks concern the overlook of marginalised groups of citizens as part of host city community (Cashman, 2006), with a particular incidence in low-income, ethnic minority, homeless and previously unemployed young residents (Kennelly, 2017), questioning the official inclusivity of the Olympics and their direct employment effects.

Assessing the impact of the FIFA World Cup in South Africa, (Kolamo & Vuolteenaho, 2013, p. 511) identify communication strategies focused on persuasion and instruction of ordinary citizens to "turn into wildly celebrating ideal fans" for an ideal mediated representation of the place. These critical issues provide some evidence that a lack of seamless and truly authentic approach to citizen inclusivity and engagement practice should be also addressed when considering negative impacts of a mega-event celebration.

García (2008, 2012) argues that commitment and engagement of all urban stakeholders at the hosting city should be a key factor to maximizing the network of local supporters sharing the vision and experience of a global-event. On the other hand, Girginova (2017) notes that the Olympic Games have long performed as platforms for the test and display of communicative innovations and can be considered catalysts of creative action at the collective and individual level. Misener and Mason (2006) emphasize that sporting events offer a wide array of opportunities for citizen participation and involvement, empowering local communities and shaping their citizenship identity and narratives in the city.

1.2. *Citizen engagement and participatory approach frameworks*

Engaging citizens in place-making strategies is becoming a common practice in different cities around the world. Place-making is seen as "participation in both the production of meaning and in the means of production of a locale" (Lepofsky & Fraser, 2003, p. 128). Callahan (1999, p. 25) argues that democratic decision-making, involving citizen participation "is based on the assumption that all citizens affected by a given decision have the right to participate in the making of that decision." Citizens involved with their communities become active supporters of community events and initiatives. Empowerment of local communities, social stability, trust and approval of the governance process are among the key positive outcomes of the citizen engagement process (Callahan, 2007). Co-creation and participatory approach are considered the driving forces of democratization that create meanings of a networked and evolving social world (Ind & Coates, 2013). Among the different formats of participatory democracy, deliberative polls, study circles, citizen choicework, appreciative inquiry consensus conferences, planning assemblies, participatory budgeting and citizen juries have become common practices of a new paradigm of meaningful citizen engagement in the municipal life (Polletta, 2016). An effective co-creation of value through integration of citizens´ skills and knowledge enables governments to restructure public services, to implement new methods of service provision, to co-design solutions for specific problems and to foster social innovation (Alves, 2012).

In the context of a new digital media culture and interactive social environments theorists argue that younger generations adopt their citizenship style different from their elders (Wells, 2010). Bennett *et al.* (2009) identify two paradigms of citizenship in the digital age: the Actualizing citizens (AC) and the Dutiful citizens (DC). These profiles reflect meaningful differences in the citizenship experience, civic practices and styles of affiliation among these two specific groups of citizens. Senior citizens are more likely to be identified with a DC profile in terms of their attitude to civic engagement and social affiliation as a duty to participate in elections, parties and government. The AC profile, usually a younger generation segment, experiences citizenship as a more flexible and lifestyle option of self–

expression, with a weak sense of duty to support government and a strong focus on social activism through volunteering, political consumerism and social networking. The experience of media consumption and creation is another polarising feature of these profiles. While the DC profile is a passive traditional media consumer, the AC profile relies on peer-to-peer networked information sharing, digital media consumption and content creation (Bennett *et al.*, 2009).

Lepofsky and Fraser (2003) argue that the meaning of citizenship is no longer a given and primarily guaranteed status, but a more flexible format based on performative acts. The concept of flexible citizenship embraces three categories of citizens depending on the level of their attachment to the place: flexible citizens, durable citizens and non-citizens. While durable citizenship is mainly focused on a very local scale and fixed identity of residents, flexible and non-citizens are external non-residential stake-holders of the place, who contribute to place-making initiatives at multiple levels through social interaction and private / public community-building initiatives (Lepofsky & Fraser, 2003).

Reviewing different models of citizen participation, Callahan (2007) identifies a wide range of roles that can be assumed by citizens depending on the specific contexts, methods and dynamics of their interaction with public administration. These roles are not mutually exclusive and range from citizens as subjects to citizens as clients, customers, co-producers, investors or owners. The focus on a collaborative managerial approach with an active dynamic and partnership as a method of interaction is identified by Callahan (2007) as an ideal framework of co-production and collaboration between citizens and public administration.

On the other hand, the logic of a direct people engagement and co-creation dynamics is the key essence of participatory or cooperative design concept in commercial and service branding emerged in the seventies in Scandinavia. Nowadays, the core idea behind this process embraces the fact that the creation of usable services, products and places should involve people who are going to use them. Ind and Coates (2013, p. 92) argue that from a strongly rational approach considering the organization as a definer of value, the concept of co-creation is shifting to a more spontaneous, playful and a more participative process revealing "how individuals can collaborate with each other to meet their needs for socialization and meaning making and how organizations can influence and use the insights of co-creation from a position of equality rather than dominance." The collaborative economy models spreading around the world with innovative business concepts evidence the increasing relevance of this participative process among consumers and citizens on a global scale.

In the context of the participatory and cooperative design approach, the wide spread of ICT technologies significantly contributed to providing new opportunities for an active citizen engagement in participatory democracy, collaborative economy and social innovation initiatives. Meaningful formats of citizen collaboration have been enabled by new digital media such as reviews and ratings on Amazon, Uber, Tripadvisor, Airbnb and other innovative business models. Specific apps and social networks facilitating citizen polls, public juries, inputs on key urban issues, online dialogues and immediate access to all relevant contents and news, have been developed by City Governments on a global scale as an evidence of a significant shift from a traditional top-down communication approach to a new paradigm of citizen engagement and participation (Kolotouchkina & Moreno, 2017). The theories of place-making strategies increasingly highlight the relevance of ICT as a key factor enabling contents sharing and generation and making citizens committed ambassadors of their respective places. Social media and electronic word of mouth are acknowledged as effective tools in destination decision making by visitors (Tham *et al.*, 2013; Oliveira & Panyik, 2015). A viral tweet regarding personal visitor's experience to a place has

the potential to become a credible testimonial statement for all his/her contacts, more relevant than any official content (Snow, 2015).

2. Research methodology and specific goals

This paper seeks to better understand the framework of citizen engagement strategies in the context of the next Olympic Games to be held in Tokyo in 2020, identifying the role attributed to citizens in the event and assessing the level of inclusivity, engagement and participatory practices in the pre-game period.

As far as the external reputation of Tokyo is concerned, the city is usually in the top positions of the world best cities rankings. The most relevant features of the city are its economic profile, liveability, research and development achievement as well as its cultural experience (Future Brand, 2016; MMF, 2016; Reputation Institute, 2015). However, the public sphere is considered the weakest social institution in Japan, as a result of historical tradition and culture aiming to safeguard social cohesion and stability and viewing an excessive public participation as chaotic and unstable. Snow (2015) highlights the need to reconcile the international promise of the city experience with the actual experience of local residents and visitors.

In this regard, citizen engagement in the Tokyo 2020 Olympics is a particularly relevant issue as during the bidding process in 2009 the support rate among Tokyo citizens was the lowest among the four final candidates cites (Rio de Janeiro, Madrid, Chicago and Tokyo). Kietlinksi (2011) argues that historically, the decisions on Tokyo bidding process to host the Olympics were usually taken by small elite of public governors supported by some of Japan´s largest media sponsoring the bid. This top-down approach to promoting the Games led to a strong opposition towards the Olympics among general public and younger generations. Only 55% of Tokyo citizens supported the 2020 Olympics as compared to other candidate cities (Shimizu, 2014).

The paper is guided by an exploratory case study approach to examine the most innovative cases of citizen engagement strategy within the context of the Olympic mega-event to be held in Tokyo in 2020. The research is structured as an empirical inquiry focused on in-depth analysis of a specific contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context (Yin, 2009). The main research questions are aimed at identifying specific models, tools and best practices put in place by Tokyo managers and Tokyo 2020 Olympic Committee in order to create a truly inclusive event through an engagement of wide segments of Tokyo residents.

This paper aims to:

> Make an assessment of the key contents, drivers and specific targets of the citizen engagement strategy of Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.
> Illustrate the most innovative and relevant practices of the engagement strategy of Tokyo 2020 Olympics in the pre-game period.
> Identify specific models of citizen engagement within the context of 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

The research follows the line of cultural and Olympic mega-event studies (Florek & Insch, 2011; García, 2008, 2012; Andranovich & Burbank, 2011); place branding research (Go & Govers, 2011; Anholt, 2010; Dinnie, 2011; Kavaratzis *et al.*, 2015; Zenker & Erfgen, 2014) and citizen engagement studies (Callahan, 1999, 2007; Lepofsky & Fraser, 2003). Data and the most relevant evidences available on the citizen engagement strategy of Tokyo 2020 have been gathered from multiple sources such as literature review, content analysis of digital resources and monitoring of the main social media of the host city. In addition, relevant research contents were gathered at a special session of 2017 Global Conference of the American Academy of Advertising "Leveraging the Olympic and Paralympic Games: building brand equity for all" held in Tokyo in July 2017; as well as through a series of personal interviews with managers from Tokyo 2020 Olympic Committee and their main

communication partners, Weber Shandwick and Dentsu communication agencies. Two semi-structured, one hour and a half in length, interviews were conducted with Tristan Lavier, Manager of International Communications Section, Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games; and Masashi Nonaka, Vice President, Weber Shandwick Japan. On online interview was conducted with Kazutake Hiramatsu, Managing Director of Corporate Communications Division, Dentsu. The interviews were held in July and August 2017, gathering specific insights from the organizers´ perspective on the engagement strategy of Tokyo 2020 as well as with the purpose of identifying the best and most innovative practices of this strategy in the pre-game period.

3. Tokyo Olympic heritage and 2020 challenges

The first Olympic Games celebrated in Tokyo in 1964 became a milestone in the global perception and recognition of the Japanese technological achievements. Japan presented to the world its impressive credentials as an economic and cultural superpower, ranking in addition the second-largest world economy the same year (Snow, 2015). The 1964 Olympics embodied the emergence of Japan on the international scale as a scientific and technologically advanced country (Ogawa, 2009). Japanese Government introduced Tokyo as an example of a remarkable post-war recovery and a convincing evidence of the economic growth of Japan. Essex and Chalkley (1999) note that urban developments in Tokyo on account of the 1964 Olympics were focused heavily on the general infrastructural improvements, setting the standards of a new urban landscape. Challenges of an increasing population and issues of traffic congestion and urban metabolism were specifically addressed by those developments. Tokyo was transformed into a well-connected and clean city through improvements in its main trunk roads, water supply, waste disposal and drainage systems (Shimizu, 2014). The launch on October 1, 1964 of the first Tokaido Shinkansen high-speed train service between Tokyo and Osaka, only ten days before the 1964 Olympic Games inauguration, symbolized the Japanese technological prowess and leadership on a global scale.

More than fifty years after its first Olympic Games, Tokyo is getting ready to become the most innovative Olympic capital in 2020. The city has initiated an ambitious transformation of the Tokyo Bay as a location of the Olympic Village. A new Olympic stadium and seven other new permanent venues are under construction while more than twenty venues form the previous 1964 Games are being modernized and refurbished. Also, similar to the impact of the previous 1964 Olympic Games, the 2020 mega-event is expected to drive state of the art innovation, adoption and diffusion of Japanese technology (Kassens-Noor & Fukushige, 2016). The authors particularly highlight among key planned challenges of Japan for Tokyo 2020, spatial information systems, new generation robots, intelligent transportation system, ultra high definition television, long-term evolution technology or advanced video analytics.

Among the key three challenges of the 2020 Games, Japan Olympic Committee and Tokyo Government identify as their guiding visions: Achieving Personal Best, Unity in Diversity and Connecting to Tomorrow. The Games are aimed at engaging people from all over Japan and abroad to take part in the Olympic experience co-creation regardless of whether their participation is direct or indirect. The Olympic mega-event is considered a far-reaching momentum with impacts on culture, education, economy and technology of Tokyo, Japan and the rest of the world (Tokyo 2020, 2017). Furthermore, inclusivity is considered one of the key strategic values of Tokyo 2020. This principle is reflected in different aspects of the Games celebration. The expected 48.8% of female athletes to take part in the 28 traditional Olympic sports make Tokyo 2020 the most gender-balanced games in the Olympic history (Tokyo 2020, 2017). On the other hand, the Paralympic Games celebration is planned to achieve the same level of visibility, relevance and media coverage

as the Olympic Games through the creation of both a barrier-free environment and a barrier-free mindset (Lavier, 2017; Tokyo 2020, 2017). Another relevant dimension of an inclusive approach is evidenced by the new sports of Tokyo 2020 Games. With the aim to engage younger generations in the Olympic movement, five new youth-focused sports have been included in the official program of competitions. These new sports categories are baseball, skateboarding, sport climbing, surfing and karate.

Urban narratives of state-of the art technological innovation and traditional harmony, expressing the overall guiding principle for the 2020 Games vision, were unveiled during the preview show of Tokyo 2020 at the closing ceremony of Rio de Janeiro 2016 Games. The presentation was supported by the augmented reality blending famous Japanese manga, kawaii and anime characters of Doraemon, Hello Kitty and Captain Tsubasa with traditional costumes of the performers and their kabuki-inspired movements. The Prime Minister Shinzo Abe appeared as Super Mario Bros to welcome the world to Tokyo 2020 (Nippon, 2017). This approach is also reflected in the recent update of the Tokyo city brand. From a more broad and inclusive *&Tokyo* formula, allowing all possible combinations of Tokyo visions and experiences, the visual identity of the city evolved to a more focused *Tokyo Tokyo. When old meets new brand*. The evolution of the Tokyo visual identity coincided with the change of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, headed nowadays by Yuriko Koike, the leader of a recently established Tokyoites First political party. As observed by Snow (2017), both personal profile and political attitude of Koike make her a new face of brand Japan.

4. Best practices of Tokyo 2020 citizen engagement strategy

Citizen engagement strategy is one of the key pillars of Tokyo 2020 Olympics. The Action and Legacy Plan of the Games particularly highlights the core goal to involve as many people as possible in the celebration of the event and its wide range of initiatives and experiences under a global vision of Achieving Personal Best, Unity in Diversity and Connecting to Tomorrow (Tokyo 2020, 2017). Each and every citizen of Japan is expected to play a specific role in the Games celebration. A wide range of different initiatives encouraging people to contribute to and personally enjoy a unique Olympic experience have been developed by Tokyo 2020 Organizing Committee. The initiatives vary to a great extent, depending on the degree of the expected involvement, time and format of the required participation, as well as of associated emotional experience and personal rewards for each participant. After the closing ceremony of the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Games, Japanese Olympic and Paralympic teams started visiting the most damaged areas of Japan after the natural disasters of 2011. Those visits were aimed at sharing their Olympic spirit of resilience and commitment to effort and improvement with residents of the damaged areas. For a significant number of people those visits became their first Olympic experience and a first personal contact with Japanese athletes (Nonaka, 2017). Although Tokyo is the main host city of the event, Saitama, Chiba, Yokohama, Enoshima, Izu, Fukushima, Miyagi and Sapporo cities will become additional venues for 2020 specific events. Olympic experience is getting increasingly relevant in those peripheral locations, as some national Olympic teams start organizing their training camps around Japan in order to better adjust to particular climatic and geographical conditions of the country. International athletes start visiting those training camps, sharing with local communities their Olympic experience, life-style and daily routines. As observed by Lavier (2017), for some Japanese people getting to know international athletes is the first-life experience with foreigners.

Among different profiles of citizens targeted by the engagement strategy, schoolchildren of elementary schools in Japan as well as university students take on a more prominent and active role (Nonaka, 2017). A specific education program Yoi Don! was launched at the beginning of 2017 among Japanese schools aimed at fostering Olympic knowledge (Hiramatsu, 2017). All participating schools receive a series of textbooks on both

Olympic and Paralympic studies and get access to a web portal with additional resources on the Olympic movement. Olympic and Paralympic athletes visit regularly participating schools all over Japan in order to share their Olympic experience with young Japanese generation.

The following section highlights the most innovative initiatives identified in the pre-game period in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Engagement Strategy.

4.1. *Olympic and Paralympic mascots selection process*

For the first time in history, the selection of the iconic Olympic mascots of the Games will be done by schoolchildren of all elementary schools in Japan. The previous Tokyo 1964 Olympics didn´t have any official mascot as the first Olympic mascot was created for the following winter Olympic Games in Grenoble in 1968, becoming ever since a relevant element of the Olympic identity.

An open competition for mascot design was launched in August 2018 as a meaningful evidence of an inclusive and participatory approach of Tokyo 2020. 2,042 design ideas were submitted by national and foreign residents in Japan. After the initial review by a professional jury, three final top pairs of mascots for Olympic and Paralympic Games were unveiled in December 2017. For schoolchildren with some visual impairment, 3D models of each mascot were produced in order to facilitate their touch and feel assessment and their participation in the final decision process (Lavier, 2017). From December 2017 to February 2018, a class voting was conducted at all elementary schools in Japan wishing to participate in the selection process. Over 14.000 schools in Japan, including international schools and Japanese schools abroad were involved in the process (Tokyo 2020, 2017). The designs attracting the largest number of classroom votes were announced in March 2018 and will become the official icons of the Tokyo 2020 both Olympic and Paralympic Games.

It is worth mentioning some remarkable characteristics of this voting process from the perspective of citizen engagement and participatory approach frameworks in the context of Japan. Firstly, considering the fact that mascots are very popular characters in the Japanese visual culture, school children were assigned the most relevant role in the final decision on the mascots to become icons of the 2020 Olympics. On the other hand, as only one vote was allowed to be cast by each class, schoolchildren were encouraged to discuss their personal views and come to a collective final agreement with their classmates (Nonaka, 2017). Although this approach follows a traditional Japanese consensus culture in the decision-making process, the performative act of collective voting by schoolchildren and their ownership of the final decision, make the Olympic mascots selection process a truly unique experience of citizenship and citizen engagement.

We may assume also that due to the classroom debates and special events before the voting process, the level of personal attachment and interest towards the Tokyo 2020 Games among Japanese schoolchildren was greatly increased. On the other hand, their direct involvement in the voting process, make kids become active supporters and ambassadors of the Olympic mascots within their families and closest social networks, spreading their enthusiasm and Olympic knowledge through interpersonal communication to other segments of population. Some of those segments, such as elderly people, are usually more distant from the public sphere and more difficult to engage in participatory activities, therefore schoolchildren take on roles of influencers and dynamic agents for other groups of Japanese citizens.

4.2. *Olympic and Paralympic medals project*

Another innovative approach of Tokyo 2020 engagement strategy is identified in the Olympic medals project focused on sustainability and recycling. All Olympic and Paralympic medals, with estimated number of 5.000, will be manufactured using precious metals

extracted from discarded mobile phones and small electronic devices contributed by Japanese citizens and visitors. The project is supported by Tokyo Metropolitan Government, NTT DOCOMO, the Japan Environmental Sanitation Center and the Ministry of the Environment.

The project was launched in April 2017 and during its first five months until September 2017, the amount of small electronic devices and mobile phones collected by 1.136 municipal authorities participating in the project totalled more than 536 tons. In parallel, NTT DOCOMO shops collected 1,300,000 used mobile phones (Tokyo 2020, 2017). The collection is carried out through NTT DOCOMO shops and using yellow containers designed specifically for the project and installed by local municipalities throughout Japan. The innovative sustainable initiative of the Olympic medals manufacturing was widely promoted since April 2017 by the governor of Tokyo Yuriko Koike in different political and social events, as well as by athletes of all international sports events taking place in Japan in spring and summer of 2017 such as Japan Open Swimming Championship, Japan Wheelchair Rugby Championships and Japan Walk (Nonaka, 2017).

Tokyo 2020 project of Olympic medals manufacturing using discarded mobile phones and other electronic devices addresses a relevant issue of urban sustainability and ecological footprint of cities (Girardet, 1999). Enabling all Japanese citizens and visitors to contribute to the innovative manufacturing process, the Games offer a meaningful personal experience focused on social activism, networking and environmental protection. The results of the first five months evidence the support to the project across Japan, connecting the Olympic movement with global issues of sustainability and smart thinking. On the other hand, an extremely easy logistics of the project facilitates the participation of numerous citizens of all profiles and age groups, turning their small personal donation into a meaningful contribution to the Japanese Olympic legacy.

Considering the usual public criticism concerning the negative impact of the games both environmental and financial, the implementation of a sustainable initiative such as the Olympic medals manufacturing using discarded smartphones, emerge as a meaningful trigger of an innovative and smart Olympic thinking.

4.3. *Tokyo 2020 Volunteering Programme*

Similar to the previous Olympic Games, Tokyo 2020 has launched a volunteering programme open to national and foreign residents and temporary foreign visitors with a legal permission to stay in Japan. Eligible volunteers should be 18 year old or above as of April 1, 2020. The volunteering strategy is jointly developed by Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee and Tokyo Metropolitan Government in order to train two different profiles of volunteers: Games volunteers and City volunteers. An estimated number of 90.000 people are expected to become Tokyo 2020 volunteers, the largest number in the history of the Olympic movement (Lavier, 2017).

The group of Games volunteers is expected to provide support and information for athletes and visitors at competition venues and the Olympic Village. On the other hand, City volunteers will become city ambassadors, helping Tokyo visitors to move around the city and enjoy all Tokyo sightseeing spots and urban facilities. The spirit of Omotenashi (Japanese hospitality) is expected to inspire all the activities of City Volunteers before, during and after the Games.

London and Rio de Janeiro previous Olympic Games also had specific groups of London Ambassadors and City Hosts providing guidance and support to the Games visitors, although in the case of Rio, city hosts were hired and paid by the City Government.

It is worth mentioning the inclusive approach to the volunteering strategy developed by Tokyo 2020. Among specific targets to be included as volunteers, the strategy specifically identifies people with impairment or disability; elementary school children and students as

well as busy working or child rearing adults interested in volunteering activities. Schoolchildren will be allowed to participate in volunteering together with their parents. Additionally, they will be invited to make appearance at official ceremonies and other Olympic events. On the other hand, considering the long and intensive working schedules of a significant number of Japanese working adults, Tokyo 2020 intends to collaborate more closely with Japanese companies, official sponsors and central government on the development of specific measures facilitating employees to take time off to volunteer during the Games. For child rearing adults interested in volunteering, specific measures facilitating the use of childcare facilities will be provided.

5. Conclusions and further research

The review of three innovative initiatives undertaken by Tokyo 2020 Olympics in order to engage different profiles of Japanese citizens reveals some particular tools and drivers of the Olympic participatory approach in the pre-game period. Table 1 outlines the most relevant features of citizen engagement projects based on their specific target, participation format, key contents, expected outcomes, as well as the role of citizens in the global Olympic event of Tokyo 2020.

The prominent role of schoolchildren and young people stands out as a particularly relevant aspect of Tokyo 2020 engagement strategy. The ultimate responsibility given to Japanese young citizens to choose their favorite mascots to represent the Games evidences a focus on inclusivity, personal and community empowerment as well as capacity building and commitment of younger generations. Through the access to a specific Olympic knowledge and meetings with Olympic and Paralympic athletes in schools more than three years before the Games, schoolchildren enjoy the Olympic experience closely linked to their educational routines and challenges on a continuous basis.

Table 1: Citizen participatory approach of Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games

target	project	participation dynamic	engagement tools	engagement drivers	citizens role in the Olympic event
schoolchildren	*Olympic mascot selection project*	Collective	> access to the Olympic knowledge; > unique experience of the Olympics in-situ; > personal contact with Olympic and Paralympic athletes; > selection of Olympic icons; > involvement in key Olympic events.	> personal and community empowerment; > education and capacity-building; > sense of belonging; > national pride.	co-owners supporters influencers ambassadors
citizens	*Olympic and Paralympic Medals project* *Volunteering Programme*	individual	> co-creation of the Olympic symbols; > unique experience of the Olympics in-situ; > personal contact with Olympic guests; > involvement in key Olympic events.	> sustainability; > inclusivity; > civic activism; > social connections.	

On the other hand, the sustainable approach to the creation of Olympic and Paralympic medals from discarded mobile phones and electronic devices has become a meaningful opportunity for all Japanese citizens to contribute in a smart, easy and innovative way to the production of the most precious Olympic symbols. Considering the traditional context of Japanese top-down management approach and distance of power (Snow, 2016), this kind of initiatives evidence an innovative model of citizen engagement fostering inclusivity, commitment and sense of belonging.

Relevant drivers of social activism and personal empowerment were also identified in the Olympic Volunteering project, welcoming all adult Japanese citizens to become city hosts for the Olympic athletes and guests. The adaptation of special measures facilitating the conciliation between working and /or family responsibilities and the Olympic volunteering experience of Japanese citizens evidences the commitment to a truly inclusive and participatory approach of the Tokyo 2020.

Although the prevailing culture of power distance, social cohesion and stability in Japan still considers an excessive public participation as chaotic and unstable (Snow, 2015, 2016), the initiatives of Tokyo 2020 pre-game strategy evidences a shift from a traditional top-

down managerial approach to a more open and inclusive dynamics of citizen participation in a global sports mega-event. Tokyo 2020 is in the process of implementing a comprehensive, inclusive and ambitious citizen engagement strategy, building a solid base level support through a multi-targeted participatory approach. Japanese citizens are expected to become not just passive spectators, but co-owners, supporters, influencers and ambassadors of the Tokyo 2020 Games, triggering new dynamics in the Japanese public sphere. The Actualizing profile of citizens (Bennett et al, 2009), those who experience citizenship as a life-style option of self-expression, with a strong focus on social activism through volunteering and social networking, is a particularly relevant target for the kind of projects reviewed in this paper.

The outcomes of this initial assessment of the citizen engagement strategy of the Tokyo 2020 Games should be monitored in the following years in order to confirm the effective impact of these meaningful initiatives in the final citizens´ perceptions and attitudes towards the event and its legacies on the Japanese public sphere and place making strategies. The target of schoolchildren and young Japanese citizens will be the most relevant to follow before and after the Games due to their expected catalytic role in the Olympic Japanese experience.

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