

FOCUS ON GLOBAL MEDIA: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON OLYMPIC BID BOOKS

*MÍDIA GLOBAL EM FOCO: UMA ANÁLISE A PARTIR DE DOSSIÊS DE
CANDIDATURAS OLÍMPICAS*

*MEDIA GLOBAL EN FOCO: UN ANÁLISIS A PARTIR DE LIBROS DE
CANDIDATURAS OLÍMPICAS*

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Keywords:

Olympic Games.
Communication.
Sports.

Abstract: The aim of this study is to identify and discuss discursive constructions surrounding media operations in three official Olympic Bid Books: London 2012, Rio 2016 and Madrid 2020. Discourse analysis was conducted based on a comprehension of discourse that is attentive to the role of sporting authorities (those responsible for the Bid Books); their intended target audience (executive members of the International Olympic Committee); and the circumstances under which the text is produced, circulated and communicated (a city's bid to the Olympic Games). In general, discourses analyzed reflect a trend towards homogenization in the global media sports complex and reproduce complex reciprocity relations between sport organizations and the media.

Palavras-chave

Jogos Olímpicos.
Comunicação.
Esportes.

Resumo: O objetivo deste estudo é identificar e discutir as construções discursivas que envolvem as operações midiáticas em três Dossiês de Candidaturas Olímpicas oficiais: Londres 2012, Rio 2016 e Madrid 2020. A análise do discurso foi conduzida baseada em uma compreensão de discurso que é atenta ao papel que desempenham as autoridades esportivas (aquelas responsáveis pela elaboração dos Dossiês de Candidatura); o seu público-alvo (membros executivos do Comitê Olímpico Internacional); e as circunstâncias em que o texto é produzido, circulado e comunicado (a candidatura de uma cidade para sediar os Jogos Olímpicos). Em geral, os discursos analisados refletem uma tendência para a homogeneidade no complexo global da mídia esportiva e reproduzem as complexas relações de reciprocidade entre a mídia e as organizações esportivas.

Palabras clave

Juegos Olímpicos.
Comunicación.
Deportes.

Resumen: El objetivo de este estudio es identificar y discutir las construcciones discursivas que involucran a las operaciones mediáticas en tres libros de candidaturas oficiales: Londres 2012, Rio 2016 y Madrid 2020. El análisis del discurso se llevó a cabo sobre la base de una comprensión del discurso atenta al papel de las autoridades deportivas (responsables por la elaboración de los libros de candidatura); el público al que estos libros están destinados (miembros ejecutivos del Comité Olímpico Internacional); y las circunstancias en las el texto es producido, distribuido y comunicado (la candidatura de una ciudad para albergar los Juegos Olímpicos). En general, los discursos analizados reflejan una tendencia a la homogeneidad en el complejo global de los medios de comunicación enfocados al deporte y reproducen las complejas relaciones de reciprocidad entre los medios de comunicación y las organizaciones deportivas.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Sport sociologists, historians and scholars who develop sport-related studies and/or media studies have examined extensively how media portrays numerous sports and sports events, including the Olympic Games¹. In general, such research has privileged the mediated message in its final product – media narratives – as a way to analyze the social, political and economic implications that result from the way the message is *encoded in* the communicative process² (HALL, 1999). In other words, much of the research related to media and sports is concentrated on the media discourse and its representations. In this paper, our general interest is to look at the other way around: how is media portrayed by sport organizations? Given the international stage that the Olympic Games represent, we are particularly interested in analyzing how media – in a global scale – is approached by Olympic Bid Committees?³

Both sports authorities and media agents are reasonably difficult to access for the purpose of academic research. However, international sport organizations, exactly as other modern institutions, usually communicate their missions, policies, rules, perspectives, philosophies, etc. through documents sanctioned as official. These organizations also use documents as a mean to promote a desired image, ideals and/or political perspectives toward a specific issue.

The objective of this study is to identify and discuss the discursive constructions surrounding media operations in official Olympic Bid Books⁴. Three Bid Books were selected for this analysis: London 2012⁵; Rio 2016⁶; and Madrid 2020⁷. The first two were selected because they won the last two respective candidatures. The reasons for choosing Madrid 2020 Bid Book include the accessibility to the material and the fact that it was, at the time, the only city running for the third time in a row to be an Olympic City in the 2013 election - this might reflect some experience in the content of Madrid's Bid Book.

As the Olympic Bid Committees need to meet certain criteria established by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in the city candidature files⁸, the Bid Books are organized in a very similar structure of topics, which facilitates to identify the sections dedicated to approach media. Thus, in this paper we analyze three main sections from the Bid Books: (1) Vision, Legacy and Communication; (2) Technology; and (3) Media Operations. However, information from other sections of the Bid documents was also included as they seemed relevant to the topic's discussion.

As many other documents and sources, the Olympic Bid Books have limitations in terms of their potential to inform about what *is* or *would* be actually put into practice from the written

1 For example: MESSNER; CHERYL, 2010. See also: SILVA; HOWE, 2012.

2 This concept will be explained later on this paper.

3 The Olympic Bid Committees are sanctioned by the National Olympic Committees (NOCs). A city's application is submitted first to the respective NOC and, if approved/sanctioned, it is submitted to the IOC. The process is governed by the Olympic Charter as stated in Chapter 5, Rule 34.

4 The term Bid Books refer to the candidature files of the cities attempting to obtain the right to host the Olympic Games.

5 London 2012 candidature files are available in an online repository: <<http://web.archive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070305103412/http://www.london2012.com/news/publications/candidate-file.php>> Accessed on: 5 jan. 2013.

6 Rio 2016 candidature files are available for downloading in the following website: <<http://www.rio2016.com/en/transparency/documents>> Accessed on: 4 dec. 2012.

7 Madrid 2020 candidature files are available in an online repository. See: <http://doc.rero.ch/record/31181/files/2020_OG_Madrid_Candidature_File> Accessed on: 10 feb. 2013.

8 A set of 11 technical criteria are assessed by the IOC Evaluation Commission: Government support, legal issues, public opinion, General infrastructure, Sports venues, Olympic Village(s), Environmental conditions and impact, Accommodation, Transport concept, Safety and security, Experience from past sports events, Finance, Overall concept (INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, 2011a).

materials. Thus, it seems important to acknowledge that this analysis is not aimed to examine the potential or practical application/implications of the Bid Books (not operationally neither ideologically). Instead, in this paper we analyze the Bid Books as discursive events and interpret the possible meanings attached to them.

First, we present the theoretical and methodological approaches that drive this analysis. Then, we examine the ‘global media sport complex’ by contextualizing the “discursive events” of this analysis – the Bid Books– within the broader relationship between media and sports and the contemporary dynamics in the world of globalization. After that, we discuss these dynamics as reflected in the Bid Books’ discourses. Then, the notion of modernity is examined within the discursive features of the Bid Books. Finally, we present the conclusion remarks by highlighting the main findings and limitations of our study as well as possible directions if further research is to be pursued.

2 CULTURAL STUDIES AND THE MEDIA SPORTS COMPLEX

A significant part of the literature about sport and media is based on the way that media represents, misrepresents and/or reinforces different aspects of social life such as those related to a gender order, the construction of sport heroes, commercialism, etc. There is a legacy of critical approaches on the study of the relationship between sports and media, which examine the issue through the lens of the capitalist logic and ideology.⁹ Many of these studies - epistemologically rooted in Marxist theories - have argued that sports have fulfilled the role of “the opiate of the masses” as they are framed as spectacular “shows” and “circuses” (JHALLY, 1989).

As an attempt to rework the functionalist mode of explanation that dominated the undertones of the analysis outlined above, the Cultural Studies (CS) perspective has shifted the focus of the debate surrounding sport and media from a concentration in the capitalist ideology to one that focuses on the cultural processes in which power relations, class formations, race and other factors are perceived according to more dialectic and complex notions. In other words, while the Critical perspective assumed that individuals of modern societies are mere passive receptors of the situations presented to them, the CS perspective include more complex and dynamic factors that involve a terrain of social struggles and contestations, which influence the way different cultures perceive, construct and deconstruct certain social order and its structures multiple structures (JHALLY, 1989).

Within the CS perspective, there are some theoretical models that deal specifically with the analysis of media. Hall’s *encoding/decoding* model, for example, is one that analyzes the complex structures surrounding media and criticizes traditional analysis of mass communication, which is based on a linear structure: sender/message/receiver. Thus, Hall suggested that the moments of encoding (production of a certain message) and decoding (interpretations of mediated messages) are “relatively autonomous,” each with their own set of cultural, historical and linguistic influences. The author pointed out that analyzing mass-communication implies the understanding of connotations, denotations and the preferred meanings involved in the communicative process (HALL, 1999).

We would argue that although Hall’s analysis is based on television, the concepts generated in his theory contribute to understand not only the communicative process in general

⁹ For example: KANE; MAXWELL, 2011. See also: CRAWFORD, 2004; ANDREWS, 2003.

but can be suitably applied to the analysis of the media sports complex. In this study, we adopt the Cultural Studies perspective to address the topic of this article, including Hall's concepts about the communicative process.

The processes of communication vary according to the context they are produced and consumed. However, there seems to be some consensus in the academic literature about the defining role that media has played in shaping contemporary societies. In fact, media is a determining factor in the process of globalization and how it relates to sports in multiple cultural settings (MAGUIRE *et al.*, 2003). In this study, we analyze the data within the theoretical framework about sport's relationship with media as bound up in a network marked by global flows, power relations and the notion of modernity (GIDDENS, 1991, ROCHE, 2003, MAGUIRE *et al.*, 2003).

Throughout the paper, we also discuss the specific literature about media and the Olympic Games based on sociological and anthropological accounts from Billings (2008), Roche (2002), Maguire (2011) and Rivenburgh (2004). These authors have examined the motivations, processes of production and practices related to media operations and the Olympics. In these works, the definition of the Olympic Games as "media events" is the basis for examining the 'media sports complex' and the interdependencies between sport, media and the global processes that surround modern societies.

The practices and politics involved in Olympic bidding are surrounded by these global processes. As one can notice, the increasing amount of money spent by cities bidding to host the Olympic Games has resulted in higher standard bids over time. In addition to communicating the 'benefits of the bid', bidders attempt to influence the media coverage because it has a strong influence on public opinion (MACKAY, 2010). In this context, the analysis of the relationship between Olympic Bid Committees and media can be valuable to better understand the implications of the discourses surrounding the Olympic Games and their potential to influence public perception.

The critical theorist Lenskyj is referred to be one of the few scholars studying the bidding process in its relation with media. Lenskyj analyzed print materials relating to Sydney's bid for the 2000 Olympics and Toronto's bid for the 2008 Games (LENSKYJ, 1996). The author suggests that, in general, the media coverage of the bidding process is largely "uncritical", and her major conclusion is that it is in the best interests of the media to present positive coverage of Olympic bids.

Other authors whose works have examined (directly or indirectly) the relationship between media and the bidding process include Girginov and Parry (2005) and Chen (1998). In general, the academic literature available to examine the policies, practices and politics involved in the Olympic Bidding is still scant, mainly when looking for Cultural Studies that use the Olympic Bid Books as source for analysis. In the following section, we introduce the methodological framework in which this analysis is constructed.

2 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND OLYMPIC BID BOOKS AS DISCURSIVE EVENTS

A discourse analysis, irrespective of its theoretical affiliations with linguistics, social science and/or literary and cultural theory, is a research method concerned with the meticulous analysis of written text or speech. The definition of discourse varies depending on the degree of

such theoretical affiliations. Thus, the types of analyses generated by these different frames of analysis differ likewise (MILLS, 1997).

This study leans on Foucault's theoretical terms and those of discourse analysts who built on his studies.¹⁰ Foucault (1972) defines a discourse as a group of statements for which conditions of existence are definable; a discourse is also a historical event or an archive of historical statements. Based on such definition, the form of analysis is usually less concerned with thematic analysis (content analysis), but with the possible meanings of different discourses in speech and in text.

Within this form of analysis a discursive event is understood as both a methodological tool and a theoretical construction. Methodologically, the understanding of a discursive event implies the identification of themes and functions of language as opposed to the use of highly structured methods to code individual words and utterances in detail. Thus, for performing a discourse analysis it is essential to connect a textual examination with processes occurring in the larger social context. By doing so, examining data should provide an account of how language is used to achieve complex social objectives in particular contexts.

The context that prompted this research is the highly competitive bidding process for hosting the Olympic Games. Aspiring cities seek support from local and national governments and media plays a major role in the process. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the Bid Books offer a different perspective on the relationship between media and the Olympic Games, one that is little explored in the academic literature, and that explains the choice for these sources.

Foremost, the Bid Books are made to be persuasive for the purpose of a city's candidature to host one of the biggest sports events in the world: the Olympic Games. Therefore, it is our assumption that the Bid Books' media sections *only* illustrate *ideal* representations of a global media's infrastructure, vision and operations according to each of the Bid Committees within the context of the election to host the Olympic Games.

This assumption reasonably leads to the proposition that Bid Books are representative discourses of specific sports institutions with political and non-political alliances, within particular historical and social contexts. In fact, according to Foucault (1972), social practices and institutions such as education, politics, law – and, in this case, sports – are constituted by and situated within forms of discourse. The institutional nature of discourse differs in relation to the context in which they take shape and with the positions of those who “speak” and those whom they address.

The knowledge produced within a discursive event can contribute to the construction of a social reality because, to a certain extent, the discourse has the potential to influence societal views on a specific issue (FOUCAULT, 1972). In effect, the institutionalized forms of discourses not only have the potential to influence societal views but they are intended to do so. As an example, in the context of a city's candidature to host the Olympic Games, it seems that sports authorities' discursive practices operate in different levels to achieve effectiveness in influencing different instances of societal views as they seek for popular, political, media and as many other types of support as possible to the city's candidature.

¹⁰ It is important to address that although contemporary discourse analysts - Fairclough (1989); Hodge and Kress (1988) - provide a substantial modification of the term “discourse”, their definition is indebted to Foucault's definition (MILLS, 1997).

As the amount of support plays an important role in a city's candidature, the discourses surrounding it usually highlight the potential social, urban and economic benefits of hosting the Olympic Games. In fact, it is not necessary to look very closely at the Bid Books to notice that in all of them there is a preoccupation of emphasizing the existence of public and diverse institutional support to the candidate city. For example, the London 2012 candidature file dedicated an entire section for "Political and public support" in which support from every sector of society was guaranteed (LONDON..., 2005a, p. 37). The following examples illustrate the levels in which the discursive practices of sports authorities operate and articulate with each other for the purposes of the bidding process.

Spaniards in general, and the people of Madrid in particular, support and approve of the Bid to host the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Madrid. The enthusiasm and passion which our citizens feel for sport and the Games are demonstrated daily through the unconditional support they give to all sporting events staged throughout Spain (MADRID..., 2013a, p. 43).

We can assure you that Rio 2016 has the full support of the three levels of our government and Brazilian society as a whole (RIO..., 2009a, p. 2)

It is important to address that institutional discourses are constructed in regulatory frameworks within which groups of statements are produced, circulated, and communicated (MILLS, 1997). As the power articulations are always constituting discourses and fomenting micro-struggles, Foucault (1977) suggests that discourse analysis involves describing statements, questioning their mode of existence and asking what they mean.

As the context of the Olympic bidding is marked by an increasing desirability to host the Games, the process of bidding has become as competitive as the sports events in the Olympic Games (MACKAY, 2010). In this paper, we conduct a discourse analysis based on a comprehension of discourse that is attentive to the positionality of the National Olympic sport authorities, their intended audience (the IOC Executive members), and the circumstances under which the text was produced, circulated and communicated (a city's candidature to the Olympic Games).

3 COMPELLING STORIES: GLOBAL MEDIA SPORT COMPLEX AND THE OLYMPIC BID BOOKS

Sport and its dramatic qualities have always been appealing to media (from the early years of print media to the recent phenomenon of social media). Noticeably, since the Olympic Games inaugurated the modern "mega-event" sport genre in the late 19th century, media has played a major role. In fact, while existing literature provides many definitions of mega-events, such concepts generally share some characteristics: these events are large-scale, international, and have the ability to capture global media attention (ROCHE, 2000).

Academic literature has explored a range of themes that surfaces sport mega-events, which includes discussions about values and education, performance enhancement drugs, eligibility criteria, tangible and intangible effects/benefits of hosting mega-events, athletes' participation, etc. Recognizably, as media played a definite role in the transformation of the Olympic Games (and other sport mega-events) in international cultural performances of mass appeal, discourses, representations and/or reception studies about media are topics of interest in such vast body of knowledge (CARROLL, 2012).

Although media coverage of the first series of Olympic Games were restricted to print media, a reciprocity relationship evolved between sport and media, accompanied by continuous technological developments, which would later constitute the global media sport complex (ROCHE, 2000).

The term 'global media sport complex' has been employed to explain how a range of sports have been forced to align themselves to a media model that emphasizes spectacle and how sports have been lucrative to the media industry as any other activity of contemporary societies (MAGUIRE *et al.*, 2003). Based on this perspective, the relationship between sport and media can be understood within an interdependent system located in wider "global flows", which include technology, ideologies, national symbols, transnational agencies, etc.

Global media sports practices are planned, coordinated and executed in constant dialectic with complex structures involved in the process of globalization. In seeking to understand the global media sport complex, we concur with the perspective that analyzes globalization as a set of multidirectional movements of people, practices, customs and ideas.

Historically, the development of sport and media is closely linked to globalization. We argue that media and sports institutions are both constitutive and constituents of the globalization process – including the Olympic Movement and its Games, as well as other sport mega events.

Media and sports institutions articulate with each other in a very specific manner in which they produce and reproduce concepts, representations, meanings, ideologies, etc. This relationship is subject to considerable changes over time due to the continuous and discontinuous global flows that impact diverse societies.

Within this context, bids and decisions about the location of sports mega events are often the result of sports organizations' aspirations, which are driven by different interests of governmental and non-governmental nature. Recently, sports and government authorities – representatives of countries from all around the world – increasingly desire to host the Olympic Games. Much of the existing literature on mega-events post-1984 Los Angeles successful Games focuses on the monetary benefits that hosting international sporting competitions can provide (CARROLL, 2012)¹¹.

In addition to the Games' potential to bring economic development to the host city (and its respective country) and also the presumed catalytic effect that hosting the Games have in terms of urban projects, the growing interest in hosting the Olympics is also related to an unparalleled standing on a global stage that the Games provide. There is no doubt that this last factor largely depends on the media operations in a global scale (consider the worldwide television audience for the Games)¹².

In other words, hosting the Olympic Games is one of several strategies envisioned by municipal and national governments as a means of image enhancement on a global stage. According to Rivenburgh (2004, p. 6), although several researchers have demonstrated that "[...] little new knowledge about a host city or country is remembered by international audiences as a result of an Olympic Games", there are significant impressions and associations that

¹¹ Los Angeles organizers created a financially successful model for hosting the Olympics. Such a model inspired other cities to bid on hosting future events.

¹² Estimates abound as to the total number of viewers in the world who watch each Olympics, but whether one employs the conservative estimates of between 700 million and one billion viewers (MORAGAS *et al.*, 1995) or the larger approximations that quintuple that number 3.5 billion in 1996 (GORDON; SIBSON, 1998), one witnesses that the Olympics saturate the globe over the course of 17 or so continuous days of athletic competition

audiences make with cities and nations that successfully host Olympic Games and the most prominent of these is a common image of modernity.

Nationalist sentiments, for example, play a very important role in regards to the desired global exposure of a city and its respective country. Nationalism is a variable that is interrelated to many other factors (more or less tangible) such as a certain social, political and cultural image to be promoted and/or a tentative to overcome certain stereotypes commonly associated with the host city or nation.¹³

Although there might be some resistance along the process, the general population of a potential hosting city/country tend to embrace the “cause” of promoting a national image and/or overcoming a stereotype. People do so, because they share the sentiment of a “special relationship”, as it is explicit in the concept of “imagined communities”, elaborated by Benedict Anderson.¹⁴ The author explains this concept as the process by which a nation or any social group comes into “being”. The sense of community, according to Anderson’s ideas, gives people shared interests on the basis of which they will commit themselves to common courses of actions. Sport is one of the social spheres in which the concept of “imagined communities” can be concretely identified (DELANTY; KUMAR, 2006).

Nationalism seems to be a common feature in the cities and countries’ global image-making strategy and in the media strategies to attract its audience attention. In fact, Rivenburgh (2004) points out that the host production of the Olympics is designed in a way that encourages international media to tailor the event to their interests and, among other factors, media reports usually whip up nationalist fervors to serve its purposes, which is mainly to sell itself. We use nationalism as one example of how media agents look for compelling stories to captivate their target audience and, most of the times, the sentiment of “communities” respond to such incentives.

Our findings suggest that the Bid Committee’s discourses surrounding a city’s candidature assure to meet this demand. When looking at the Bid Books (as well as other complimentary documents) one can easily notice that the candidate cities try to demonstrate that they are ready to provide to the international media the necessary environment for those compelling stories to emerge (whether or not they are of a nationalist character):

As a global media centre, London is ideally placed to convey the excitement and spectacle of the Games to the largest audience ever. (LONDON..., 2005c, p.24)

History’s first Games in a new continent, in a city with a unique global image, will open new horizons, building interest and enthusiasm over the full four years of the Olympiad. The media and sponsors will be excited by a new destination... A compelling new story is ready to be told (RIO..., 2009a, p.19)

[...] Provide exceptional backdrop appealing to the world-wide broadcast audience (MADRID..., 2013a, p. 29).

It is noticeable that these discourses are fairly homogenous as a reflection, to a certain extent, of the technical criteria established by the IOC. Two main documents are dedicated to assure these criteria are observed: the Olympic Charter and the IOC Media Guide. Several statements for regulating the way Organizing Committees must approach media are established in these documents, including all technical regulations and requirements regarding

¹³ Although the Olympic ideology – usually referred to as Olympism – makes the claim that the Games are supposed to be a competition between individuals and not between nations, the presence of nationalistic elements such as flags and national anthems offer a vast space for nationalist expressions.

¹⁴ See ANDERSON, 1991.

media coverage of the Olympic Games, which forms an integral part of the host city contract. The Charter states that “The IOC takes all necessary steps in order to ensure the fullest coverage by the different media and the widest possible audience in the world for the Olympic Games”(INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, 2011b).

The discourses from the Bid Books cited above also remind of some problematic issues in the context of globalization, such as the ones posed in these questions: do the IOC technical requirements – not only for media operations – represent a driving force to the homogenization of sport cultures in the so-called “world-class cities”? What are the implications of that to the existence of a plurality of sport cultures? In this study, these questions emerge only as rhetorical interrogations to the critical examination of these discursive events.

At the same time, it is important to remember that media can also represent a counterforce to such a homogenization process in the context of sports. In operational terms, the production of the media stories is situated within diverse agenda-setting processes. The agenda-setting process comes from an editorial team “whose critical job is not only determining which stories need to be conveyed, but also resolving a heuristic for grading the stories into different levels – stories that must be told, stories that should be told and stories that could be told if time and circumstances permit” (BILLINGS , 2008, p.38).

Different tensions are generated in the global media sport complex in regards to homogenization *versus* plurality. The example of the *encoding/decoding* model is applied here as a conceptual complement to the logistical idea about the agenda-setting process in the global media sport complex. This model adds to the tension between homogenization and plurality the idea that media messages – and so the Bid Books’ discourse, we argue – are constructed and embedded with “dominant” or “preferred readings” (HALL, 1999).

In Hall’s theory, the term ‘preferred readings’ refer to the audience expected response to a certain mediated content. More than that, it means that institutional, political and ideological orders are imprinted in the messages in a certain way that the audience’s readings are managed through making certain normatively or ideologically preferable readings easier or more readily accessible to the target public (HALL, 1999).

In the following section, we will explore how media operations and technology are approached by the Bid Books by comparing and discussing their narratives and interpreting the possible “meanings” attached to them.

4 PRAISING THE OLYMPIC FAMILY AND MEDIA

In his analysis of media, sport and society, Maguire posed the question: “does sport depend on the media?” According to Maguire *et al* (2003, p. 52) “the degree to which sport is dependent on the media and the extent to which media controls sport varies between sports, over time and according to particular contexts”. In the context of this analysis – essentially discussing elite sports - it seems clear that at least the rhetoric presented in the Bid Books legitimate the power of media to make elite sports events successful.

In the three Bid Books analyzed in this study, media operations are approached with only slight variation. While Madrid and London follow the same strategy of reaffirming their respective places in an already existing international media environment, the discourses

presented in Rio 2016 candidature file uses as its experience's remark the lessons learned from hosting the 2007 Pan American Games:

Madrid is a benchmark in the global communications network thanks to its historic, political, cultural and sporting ties to all five continents... Madrid 2020 is aware of the needs of the global media, and the key role they play in the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Madrid 2020 will therefore offer all media representatives an enriching communication experience (MADRID... 2013c, p.116)

London is the hub of a unique global communications network, thanks to the city's historical, economic, political, cultural and sporting links to Europe, Africa, the Caribbean, Asia, the Middle East, Oceania and the Americas (LONDON..., 2005b, p. 161)

The first hand experience gained during the 2007 Pan American Games provided productive lessons in anticipation of the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games... This experience, along with more recent feedback received from the international media, has enriched and strengthened the media operations plan (RIO..., 2009c, p.165).

For the purpose of a successful discursive effect, the Bid Books ground their discourses on previous experience based both on a preexisting favorable setting and practical experiences gained from hosting other sports events. A successful discursive effect means – in this case - that the city wins the Olympic bidding. The persuasive undertones surrounding media are illustrative of the idea that hosting the Games is premised on politic and economic benefits.

There is no doubt that media operations involved in broadcasting the Olympic Games literarily translate the logistical scheme of a 'global media sport **complex**'. In his research, Billings indicated that media agents usually engage themselves in a seven year pre-production to create a broadcast skeleton framework, which is an "extrapolation of possibilities of what could happen in the hope of properly anticipating the changes that must be expediently enacted over the course of the actual 17-day broadcast" (BILLINGS, 2008, p. 29).

When presenting the information required by the IOC about media facilities for transportation, accommodation and technologies, the discourses from the three Bid Books reinforced the awareness that the so-called "success" of the Olympic Games largely rely on media, as demonstrated in the example below:

Acknowledging the key role the media play in the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and the critical role played by media in judging the success of the Games, Rio 2016 will offer efficient, modern and reliable facilities and services for the media covering the Games. Rio will create an ideal work environment, concentrating on the key elements required for the delivery of efficient media operations - accommodation, transport and technology (RIO..., 2009c, p. 165).

It is not by chance that a mega-event is, by definition, a "media event" (ROCHE, 2002). From this discussion, we argue that the Bid Books' discourses praise media in a parallel degree to the way they praise the "Olympic Family". The Bid Books' discourses reproduce the deep power relations between sports organizations and media, specifically located in an interdependent system, which was earlier discussed based on Maguire *et al.* (2003).

On one hand, the IOC maintains its "supreme" authority over the Olympic Movement and counts on media companies' eagerness to compete for the rights of broadcasting the Olympics. On the other hand, the IOC largely depends on media to survive over the years as the biggest sports event of the world. Such dynamic in the power relations between the IOC and media agencies relegate the NOCs – through its Bid Committees – the role of endorsing

the power of both the IOC and media if hosting the Games is seriously considered. Thus, when analyzing these institutions, it is important to remember that they all operate as allied powers with common, but at the same time, particular interests.

As the National Olympic Sport authorities praise the media and the Olympic “family” through the Bid Books’ discourse, it seems that the Paralympic Games are integrated in this process, at least *a priori*, as one can notice in the statements below:

The dates for the Paralympic Games have been chosen on the basis of the experience of previous Games. The selected period will reduce to a minimum the time required for the “transition” operations after the Olympic Games, without compromising at all the quality of the Paralympic Games as an event. This will serve to maintain spectator interest, maximise opportunities for marketing and media coverage, and make efficient use of volunteers and COM personnel (MADRID..., 2013b, p. 69)

The Paralympic Games will be held from Wednesday 29 August until Sunday 9 September 2012 – a period offering ideal, temperate conditions for athletes to compete and spectators to enjoy their efforts (LONDON..., 2005a, v. 1. p. 17).

By looking at the broader context, one can notice that the academic literature about sport and disability has pointed out that disabled athletes have been under-represented in the media and/or depicted with negative stereotypes (SILVA; HOWE, 2012). Discourses surrounding the Paralympics and media operations in the Bid Books seem to be concerned with the period of time that would guarantee an effective media coverage and spectatorship to the Games. On the other hand, there is no detailed statements about possible strategies that could guarantee not only the quantity but also the quality of media operations and spectatorship experience at the Paralympic Games.

As the standards for elaborating the Bid Books are established, one can assume that discourses’ marks of distinctiveness in bidding for the Olympics might play an important role in the elections, but they were rare in the analyzed cases. One example of this attempt of distinctiveness is in Rio 2016 Bid Book in a statement about media “freedom”:

The Federal Government has guaranteed that all Olympic and Paralympic Games media coverage, including host broadcasting material, is accommodated within the existing legislative framework... Freedom of expression, including freedom of the press, is highly valued in Brazilian society and is protected by a range of laws and treaties... A free and independent media is assured in Brazil, and the basic principles of democracy, morality and ethics are objectives embedded in Brazilian society and reflected in the relevant laws (RIO..., 2009a, p. 81-83).

When it comes to media freedom, the IOC has, at least publicly, limited its involvement to those journalists who are specifically accredited to report on the Games. The emergence of social media and its impact on the way the Games are represented might bring some implications in regards to the idea of “freedom”.

Although the discourses from Bid Books suggest that media operations are powerful and free, there are possible circumventions difficult to unravel. As an example, during the Beijing 2008 Games there were reports about journalists who could not retrieve some news, information, or opinions, including from some international outlets, because certain websites were blocked – as they are for the Chinese population. Although NOCs are supposedly independent of the governments of their countries, there are notable examples of governmental intervention in

the Olympic affairs in history, including boycotts and as demonstrated, accusations of media “censorship”¹⁵.

5 MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL: WHO’S THE MOST MODERN OF ALL?

The modern image attributed to the use of high technology in media operations is, as expected, highly incorporated to the discourses of a candidate city, as demonstrated in the narratives below:

Rio 2016 will introduce Live sites in 15 global cities including at least two on every continent. Using a combination of the latest broadcast technology and interactive activities, the site will offer a new level of live global games experience” (RIO..., 2009a, p. 21)

The UK is a world leader in interactive tv and has the regulatory framework needed to take a global lead in digital tv services. London Olympic coverage will meet the highest production and technical standards, including high definition (HDTV) digital international tv signals (LONDON..., 2005b, p.161)

Unrivalled working conditions for the Media – Madrid 2020 offers all media representatives optimum conditions to do their job, while also providing them with cutting-edge installations and infrastructure technology (MADRID..., 2013c, p. 7).

The meanings associated to the discursive constructions identified in this analysis are tangible when looking at the association of technological advances with the idea of progress and the notion of modernity. Noticeably, the way modernity is experienced in sports is represented on the analyzed discourses about media operations. This section is aimed to explain the modern undertones surrounding the Bid Books’ discourses.

The “conditions of modernity” and its impact on diverse societies have been discussed in several areas of study including history, anthropology, philosophy, etc. Roche (2003) pointed out that sport mega-events have established an enduring popularity and memorability in modern societies over time. According to the author, this endurance has to do with the sport events capability of adjusting to modernity in its different stages of development. The author describes the current stage – late modernity – as a sociocultural condition in which the dominating role of the electronic media is a crucial differentiating factor in the way we experience diverse cultural phenomenon, including sports.

In a broader context, Giddens’ considerations about modernity as a complex and discontinuous process help to understand the link between a modern image and technology as denoted in the analyzed discourses. The author states that “in conditions of modernity” technologies change social life and its impact on human activity increases the transformative scope of human action “attributing a dynamic character to modern social institutions” (GIDDENS, 1991, p.34). In the context of this analysis, it is a challenge to identify how these discontinuities affects the conceptual and practical effect of tradition and ideology within the Olympic Movement.

In other words, for institutions as the IOC - one that significantly relies on tradition and ideology to justify some of its policies and to claim its uniqueness nature in the world of sports competitions - the modern dynamics might represent some tensions if such institution wants to align itself to the “modern” world while preserving its traditional values. As an example of those

15 MEDIA face Web Censorship at Beijing Olympics. *The Guardian*, London, 30 Jul. 2008. Available from: <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jul/30/china.olympicgames2008>>

tensions, one can think of the ideal of amateurism *versus* professionalism in the emergence of the modern industrial societies.

In the context of media operations, it is possible to notice that every host city's attempt to outgrow its predecessors in the spectacular frame of the Olympics involves the effectiveness of media operations and high technology not only to showcase the sport competitions, but also the ceremonies and facilities. The technological advances involved in the media coverage of the modern Olympics and how satellites now relay powerful images across the globe in an instant reflect and sustain the emergence of a global culture and the tensions between modernity and tradition. The long term effect of these media standards cannot be underestimated because "dominant media models" tend to compress the diversity of sport cultural practices as more sports are forced to align themselves to this model, thus reinforcing power positions (MAGUIRE, 2011, p. 967).

6 FINAL REMARKS

By mapping out the discursive features about media in three Olympic Bid Books, this study aimed to capture the discursive constructions surrounding media operations. In general, the discourses from the Bid Books reproduce the complexities of power relations and reflect a trend towards homogenization in the global media sports complex. However, despite the homogenization discourse surrounding the global media sports complex in the Bid Books, media-agendas can represent a reaction to that.

In fact, globalization processes make 'the local' newly important in contemporary social formations (ROCHE, 2003). Based on this discussion, we argued that media can paradoxically produce a homogenization trend and, at the same time, it works as a counterforce to homogenization. Thus, further comparative investigations are necessary to gain extra insight on the way these global processes are reflected on the global media sports complex.

Differently from other sections of the Bid Books where the bid cities "promise" changes and enhancement in their structures and operations - as for urban developments and public transportation - the media sections analyzed in this study highlight the cities' already existing settings of modern technology and favorable environment to perform outstanding media operations. Thus, the discourses about media in the Bid Books seem to reproduce the context of cities competing in a global world based on the status of modernity. In this paper, we point to this modern status as a problematic issue because such competitiveness in the Olympic bidding might have exclusionary implications if the absence of the most modern technology represents a serious limitation to a city to be candidate to host the Games.

As existing research suggests that the mainstream media reflects the interests of political and corporate elites, it would be worthwhile exploring the more democratic constructions of social media related to the Olympic Bidding and comparing this analysis with that of the mainstream media (MACKAY, 2010). Thus, further research is also necessary to analyze the occurrence of tensions and trends between tradition *versus* modernity and/or homogeneity *versus* plurality in the spectrum of globalization, as well as the long term impacts of these tensions on the broader physical culture.

Finally, we would argue that, as much as the need for reception studies in the area of sports media, there is also a need to map and discuss complementary perspectives and/or

different discursive roles played by sports authorities through sources other than the Bid Books. These studies might contribute to understand the implications of the relationship between mega sports events and media in different sport cultures.

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