

# Communication, cultural identities and the Olympic Games: the Barcelona'92 experience

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## 1. Olympic Games, modern communication systems and the cultural diffusion stemming

Our aim is to analyse the Olympic Games from a point of view that we consider pertinent: the modern Olympic Games constitute a great worldwide and mass communication phenomenon which defines their value and cultural nature.

Very few events can be considered as “global events”. We could say that no other peaceful event achieves the diffusion dimension reached by the modern Olympic Games (Dayan & Katz 1985; Real 1986; Real 1989), especially when the event is held during the summer. It therefore constitutes a paradigmatic case of complexity of today’s cultural phenomena which are “media-ised” by new means of communication.

For example, we could say that the mass media no longer “broadcast” the Games – as happened in Rome in 1960. Now, they produce the Games and have actually become the hub of their structure.

Indeed, before and during the Barcelona Games all types and levels of modern communication means are involved.

The organisation requires the use of the most advanced computer technology and programmes; their worldwide nature brings all the most modern telecommunication possibilities into play (satellites and fibre-optic networks). The need to create a spectacle demands the use of all the mass media and the best of what they can offer (immediateness of production and broadcasting, special cameras, wireless communication, high-definition TV, etc.). Security systems use the most advance signal transmission technology (security circuits). The commercial repercussion of these elements encourages sponsorship, marketing and symbol recognition. Finally, the whole spectacle adapts itself around the logic of its own audiovisual potential.

It could be said that the mass media actually define the modern Olympic Movement. However, it should be said that the Olympic Games offer the mass media a great opportunity to experiment and try out every last part of their processing potential.

## 2. The Olympic Games and the production of cultural values

The spectacle and the information production that we have just mentioned constitutes a great value production phenomenon for the semantics of the whole event. The Olympic Games clearly have to be understood as a great cultural phenomenon and, as such, are subject to the dialect of contradictions and possibilities. The semantic aspect is a dual one: the Olympic ideal and sport.

The Olympic Games are an outstanding case of a phenomenon which has become more and more important to our society: sport and spectacle. Sport provides our society with diverse value systems: social initiation processes and group identification, the boundaries of geopolitical differences and international relations, nationalism, body and body activity values, effort and training, leisure as both an activity and a spectacle, youth and maturity, success and failure, rivalry and companionship, etc.

However, some cultural values are attributed to the Olympic Games that transcend day-to-day sport. There refer to the exceptional historical values having sport as the reference point but international social relations as the objective. When analysing the ABC network's coverage of the Montreal Games, we find that 15.6% of the time was dedicated to advertising, 61.4% to other items and just 23% to the broadcast of sport events (McCollum & McCollum 1980).

The Olympic ideal, as a cultural phenomenon, is subject to manipulation and contradictions (Hoberman, 1986; MacAloon, 1984; Segrave & Chu 1988). From a cultural point of view, radical postures on their intrinsic goodness or badness are indefensible. The Games have positive and negative aspects which depend on the circumstances surrounding their context and organisation. Thus, the contribution that Seoul made to the Olympic Movement is in stark opposition to the negative manipulation of the 1936 Berlin Games.

Construction of values around the Olympic Games happens within a semantic field of alternatives (positive and negative). Selection of these values is the Games' first and most important cultural activity. The Olympic ideal provides the opportunity to promote very positive values for humanity although in itself it is not a guarantee that such values will be promoted. The Olympic ideal is a historical one, created by the Olympic hosts. The international Olympic Movement – and now Barcelona in particular bears a great responsibility to ensure it produces positive values and eliminates negative ones from the semantic field.

The organisation of the Games will determine whether positive values (fraternity, cooperation, equality, peaceful goals, etc.) or negative ones (marketing, inappropriate investment, patriotism, promotion of "superman" image, etc.) have more weight. Throughout the world, the organising cities acquire the responsibility to sway these semantic fields one way or another. Promotion and selection of values is done through a complex communication production – signs, rituals, images, staging, advertising, information – which is obviously the responsibility of the host city. Communication production is, in itself, the main cultural – and political – responsibility the organiser of the Olympic Games have.

## 2.1. The cultural programme of the "Cultural Olympiad"

Having already said the Olympic Games are a cultural phenomenon in their own right, we must now add a further element: the cultural programme audiences are all the local and international participants taking part directly or indirectly through the media in the programme's communication products.

Here, we consider that it is absolutely essential to establish a clear distinction between the content and coverage of the "Cultural Olympiad" and the "Cultural programme". Assuming the "Cultural Olympiad" consists of a programme to promote cultural events over the Olympiad's four year period aimed particularly at the inhabitants of the host and sub-host cities, or people who purposely travel to Barcelona, then it has to be said that we are in fact faced with part of the Games' cultural programme, albeit a very limited one. By "Cultural programme" we understand, in a much wider sense, all the value production done by the mass media which is of interest to the general public the world over.

## 2.2. Local cultural events and the international cultural programme

The distinction between the “Cultural Olympiad” and the “Cultural Programme” can also help us to situate what the real effect of the Games on their real stage – the international stage – will be.

The complexity and speed inherent to the organisation of the Games can determine some internal dynamics of the organising cities that tend to use the cultural demands of international audiences in an instrumental and inward-looking way. In more straightforward terms, this means that they are only concerned about the “what the world can see” instead of asking themselves “what cultural values can we offer the world audience”, ignoring the fact that the organisation of the Games turns Barcelona into a worldwide meeting point for dialogue between our culture and the cultures of the world.

The cultural programme, rather than being a restricted “Cultural Olympiad” concept, should exert (should have exerted) an influence at the basic levels of the organisation of the Games, that is to say, in the production of symbols and communication, in the mass media construction of the event itself and not just the cultural events that could be put on over the Olympic period.

The Games’ cultural programme should ideally consider the internal cultural problems that arise as a specific consequence of holding the Olympic Games in the city itself. The tendency towards feelings of victory or pride, the single-theme nature and the Olympic ideal hype are but some of the main problems that cause rejection among different social sectors and that require constant critical thought by the intellectuals and the mass media in the host city.

## 3. Two communication steps: Barcelona to the world: international mass media to Barcelona

A very special phenomenon arises in organising cities which does not happen outside: the Games are seen before they begin event though they are still not a “spectacle” and nobody talks about the athletes or athletic competitions, when the news only refers to the infrastructures, the control meetings or management conflicts.

During that period, amongst many other information activities, there is one activity that is very decisive: the preparation of information for international diffusion.

To interpret the information processes inherent to the Olympic event we can use, reasonably freely, Lazarsfeld’s old image of the two “communications steps”. From the very moment that Barcelona was nominated the host city for the Games, preparation and conditioning work (“packing”) began on the external initiative communication processes: a large scale public relations job intended to build the “first communication step” which would lead to the “second step”, produced and diffused by international mass media.

This information preparation process (or conditioning) is done in several different areas and is the result of the initiative of very diverse actors: from the most official, including COOB’92 itself or public administrations, businesses or commercial institutions (the Chamber of Commerce or the Tourist Board,

for example), to initiatives taken by political groups inspired by civil or nationalistic motives. It is a large semantic process of selecting and excluding meanings, of representing the local society, the aim of which is to condition the international image of Barcelona, its Games and its cultural and political personality. The semantic process is, without doubt, a key aspect of the cultural dimension of today's Olympic Games.

As far as the different types of promotional acts that direct international information production are concerned, the following can be singled out:

1. The publication of books and brochures about the Olympic Games' host country and city.
2. Deciding on the briefing for promotional campaigns, both official ones in support of the Games and those against them: "Friends for life"
3. The selection of symbols (logos and mascots) that represent the Games.
4. Deciding on the most representative cultural references (Gaudí for architecture, Carreras for music, Tàpies for painting, etc.).
5. Deciding on the key geopolitical references to interpret the socio-political reality of the host city: Catalonia, Spain, Europe, autonomy, self-rule, the right to be different, etc.

The selection of these meanings so they can be used in the diverse communication activities is, finally, the result of consensus at the heart of the organisation responsible for the management of the Games (COOB'92) or the result of the opposing forces of opinion at the heart of Catalan society.

Both civil spontaneous activities and the organisation's initiatives respond to the same needs: a culture that is known and left, seen by a large international audience through the mass media that have come to cover the spectacularity of an unrepeatable event.

The Games' identification symbols (the logo and the mascot) were one of the first examples of this synthetic representation and semantic process. But they are still only limited complexity examples of this semantic process.

Mariscal's Cobi and Josep Maria Trias' symbol are, because of their rejection of conformism and inspiration along Catalan artists' "avant-garde" tradition lines, the first and very valuable contribution to the design of the Barcelona'92 Olympic programme. Their production was the direct result of the weight of the Catalan civil design culture. The idea, very widespread in Catalonia, that design constituted one of our main contributions to industry and modern culture, meant that the organisers put their trust in a jury which was sensitive to "avant-garde" movement artists and proposals".

The process of producing the meanings for the opening and closing ceremonies is much complex because they constitute the most genuine and elaborated Barcelona'92 cultural programme products.

### 3.1. Culture and the image of the host city

What must be considered now is that the whole set of local culture values, within the complex communicative framework of the Olympic Games, will only manage to express itself in a suitable way to its international audience if it is done in a schematic way through the corresponding processes of semantic synthesis.

We find ourselves, therefore, faced with the need – which we are aware of through other modern culture experiences – to synthesise a complex reality through an image comprising of a few pertinent traits. The choice of these traits is yet another of the fundamental jobs for the political culture of the Olympic hosts.

It is true to say that each nation or city has its own “brand” images which are the fruit of history, previous tourist promotion strategies or the universal success of its most representative signs. However, holding the Olympic Games always brings the historic opportunity to reconstruct these pertinent traits with it and allows old – but still present – stereotypes caused by political and cultural domination situations to be rejected.

Thus, for example, the Barcelona'92 image has followed a process of identity sign selection that includes the following semantic categories and processes:

- a) Giving priority to visual identity signs which are suitable for photographic and audiovisual use;
- b) Selecting the cultural values that already enjoy international renown;
- c) Selecting a representative sample of all the different arts: painting, sculpture, architecture, music, audiovisual. The job of representing literary figures is more difficult simply because their work is not visual;
- d) Selecting buildings and monuments as the emblematic symbols of sports and Olympic architecture (Montjuïc stadium and Palau Sant Jordi), and civil and religious architecture (Sagrada Família, Pedrera, monument to Columbus, etc.)
- e) Selecting images of popular and folkloric culture, as well as the images for the economy, technology and the city's cosmopolitan character;
- f) Selecting actors (individuals) to represent the identity signs of the culture itself, especially young people.

There is nothing more representative of this process of thematic selection and advertising semantics than one of the advertisements<sup>1</sup> – a Barcelona City Council one – aimed at promoting the Olympic city. The advertisement was constructed around “key” words only. These words appear below, in the same order:

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<sup>1</sup> Advertisement published in a special issue about the Olympic Games at the magazine “Vivir en Barcelona” (July 1991).

## Barcelona

Mediterrània. Olímpica.  
 Catalana. Internacional. Gaudí.  
 Avantguarda. Congressos. Romànica.  
 Picasso. Moda. Rambles.  
 Cosmopolita. Bimil·lenària. Disseny.  
 La Sagrada Família. Pau Casals.  
 Platge. Dalí. Liceu. Flotats. Miró.  
 Catedral. Bohigas. Costa Brava.  
 Nit. Gòtica. Cultural.  
 Industrial. Llibres. Bofill. Concerts.  
 Oberta. Teatre. Exposicions.  
 Tàpies. Esports. Port. Festivals.  
 Fonts. Montjuïc.  
 Montserrat Caballé. Fires.  
 Tibidabo. Museus. Modernisme.  
 Parc Güell. Futbol.

## Tot, a Barcelona

The items in this list which, in some cases, are very difficult to classify because of their obvious polysemy demonstrate the existence of a semantic process, which is indispensable when constructing an image, constructed with the hypercoding – or appreciation – of some items whilst forgetting about others:

<b>Painters</b> Picasso, Dalí, Miró, Tàpies	<b>Cultural facilities and events</b> Conferences (congressos), Liceu, Concerts, Trade Fairs (Fires), Museums, Theatre, Exhibitions, Festivals, Books (llibres), Sports, Football
<b>Geopolitical references</b> Mediterranean, Catalan, International	<b>Musicians and actors</b> Pau Casals, Montserrat Caballé, Flotats
<b>Architects</b> Gaudí, Bohigas, Bofill	<b>Monuments and buildings</b> The Cathedral, the Sagrada Família, Parc Guëll, Fountains (Fonts)
<b>Tourism references</b> Costa Brava, Beaches (platges), Night (nit)	<b>Generic references and adjectives</b> Olympic, Romanic, Bimillennium, Gothic, Cultural, Industrial, Cosmopolitan, Open (oberta), Avant-garde
<b>City references</b> Rambles, Port, Tibidabo, Montjuïc	<b>Cultural features</b> Fashion, Design (disseny), Modernism

To understand this “image” creation mechanism it is also necessary to refer to the semantic universe of the items that are missing. Directly excluded from this selection and the semantics – as usual in all advertising strategies – are the city’s negative elements (pollution, exclusion of some social groups, rubbish, shortcomings, traffic, noise, transport, humidity, roads, etc.). In addition, there are other items like bullfights, Flamenco dancing, wine, women, pigeons, folklore, things-Spanish, happiness and hard-work that tourist promotion campaigns used to attach to the city of Barcelona that have been now been excluded.

The selection of items and brief reference to the short-comings is not, of course, complete although it is indicative of the way the semantic fields for the international promotion of the host city, in this instance Barcelona, have been constructed in accordance with the selection criteria and advertising simplification

mentioned above.

Apart from the selection of these items, the promotion strategies also include more complex semantic value orders that act as axes values for global interpretation; these semantic axes are constructed in accordance with the standard values which are perfectly recognised in the advertising strategy common to each period and circumstance.

Thus, for example, “modernity” is now present as a common basic value – an unquestionable value in the case of Barcelona – and with this in mind, all the available symbols are used: from executive look to the design of the logo and mascot as the most representative symbols of the Olympic Games.

The final efficacy of these strategies on an international level can only be measured by analysing the detailed contents of its influence on the international production of messages about Barcelona and, in greater depth, by a study about the changes in public opinion that these strategies manage to bring about.

At the University of Washington, Professor Nancy Rivenburgh has begun a study of this type. An initial analysis shows that, even one year before the Games, the Olympic ideal concept began to dominate the images associated with Barcelona alongside the survival of concepts like “old, run-down narrow houses and streets”, “tourism”, “bulls and bullfighters”, “Hispanic”, “romantic”, “heat”, “good fun”, “bright”, “welcoming”, and some interestingly confused ideas about the Hispanic or Latin environment<sup>2</sup>. Once the Games are over, and after the important communicative processes that the Games shape, it is more likely that these images or stereotypes will have changes or been replaced by others that will be associated to the city of Barcelona for many decades to come.

### **3.2. The international mass media's coverage of Barcelona'92**

The great deployment of the international mass media in Barcelona will mainly be centred around the news coverage of the Summer Olympic Games, being held from 25<sup>th</sup> July to 9<sup>th</sup> August. Special attention will be paid to the opening ceremony.

To understand the informative mechanism that is generated around the Games, the economic importance of sending special envoys should be considered. However, and maybe more importantly, the need to capitalise on the acquisitions of television rights and the commercial expectations of advertising relating to the event should also be considered. This means that one week before the Games, an enormous informative apparatus will be deployed by all the media which will make reference to the host city and the atmosphere prior to the commencement of the sports events themselves. Only this week should represent a great deal of promotion for Barcelona, at least in terms of being on the international communication agenda.

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<sup>2</sup> I refer to the first stage of an unfinished study undertaken by Nancy Rivenburgh and a group of student at the University of Chicago, Seattle.

The “stardom” of the host city – Barcelona – on the international agenda means there will be a great amount of sensitivity to anything that could affect daily normality. For that reason, terrorism is an extraordinary danger for Barcelona and the Games, and not just for the lives and property it puts at risk, but also for the image it generates, too. The extraordinary effort that was made in Munich’72 on the design, culture and organisation fronts was reduced to a minimum in people’s memories by the terrorist action at the Olympic Village.

However, the resulting information about this great international deployment does not exclusively depend on the informative proposals prepared by the host city that we have called the “first communication step”. The points of view and semantic filters that are brought into play by the various special envoys – radio, television and press – also play a decisive role.

#### The international quality press

Both before and during the Games, the international quality press will be particularly interested in covering news items about the conditions of the Games’ stage: Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain. Although not wishing to negate the influence that the documentation the host city has provided press professionals with, we should consider that during the first “communication step” the special envoy journalists will try to establish direct contact, without mediation, with the actors of Catalan society. This will obviously include any first-hand reports about the controversial and negative aspects, contradictions and tensions that affect the organisation of the Games and today’s Catalan society.

An attempt to neutralise this direct contact between journalists and reality, as has been made in previous Games, would be absolutely undesirable in the context of our democratic society.

### **4. Barcelona’92: a great information producing event**

The final aim of our analysis must be that of discovering the value system and cultural practices. However, before coming to this point, we believe it is absolutely essential to discover and analyse the communicative mechanism (press, radio and television, sponsoring, design, etc.) that establish this mediation and the subsequent production of meaning and cultural practices. As an intermediate step, in the sections that follow we shall analyse the mechanisms of communication.

#### **4.1. Press operations**

The large number of journalists requesting accreditation for the Games has undergone a tremendous increase (Perelman 1985; Park 1991; Perarnau 1991)

Rome'60	Munich'72		Barcelona'92	
Press	943	Press	3.300	Press 4.400
Radio	153	Radio/TV	4.700	Radio/TV 6.600
Television	143			Information assistants 8.000
Total accredited	1.442	Total accredited	8.000	Total accredited 11.000
				Total of people involved in information 19.000

This obviously means a great organisational deployment will have to take place in order to satisfy the various needs: accommodation, travelling, equipment to do the work, information broadcasting systems, etc.

One whole division of COOB'92, the "Divisió d'Operacions de Premsa", run by the journalist Martí Perarnau, has been operating for four years so far to prepare the availability of everything to satisfy these needs.

Giving accreditation is the result of a complex negotiation process involving the Olympic Organising Committee (OCOG), COOB'92, the respective National Olympic Committees, the mass media and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). A special guide called *Guide des Media* contains the conditions necessary for getting accreditation and the services offered to the journalists.

Referring to the Barcelona'92 experience, the international press' work will be done basically in the copy services installed in the 38 sports sites – seeing the press boxes full of desks, computers and transmission cables is becoming more and more common – and the three Olympic Villages. There will also be a large central copy department called the Centre Principal de Premsa (CCP) – or the Main Press Centre (MPC) in English -.

Another similar centre with suitable requirements welcomes the journalists and audiovisual media producers: the Centre Internacional de Ràdio i Televisió (CIRTV) – or the International Broadcasting Centre (IBC) in English –.

The Centre de Serveis Comuns will be installed between both the above centres to look after the needs of the professionals working in either centre.

The press will have sophisticated computerised information systems available to them. At Barcelona'92, and now during the preparation period, a videotext information service (Alcatel Project) has been made available to the international press. This system, via new personal computers (Toshiba) is capable of connecting around 3.500 international journalists to a central computer run by COOB'92.

During the Games themselves, the press will have an important computerised system available with the support of IBM. For the first time ever, integrated management of all the data will be done, from the registers controlled by the Judges to the databases for journalists. The enormous information programme,

called SCIFO (Olympic Family Communication and Information System) will also cover information like the times and results of competitions, athletes' biographies, sports statistics, press summaries with medal winners' results, various pieces of news, information about the services, etc. All this information will be available 24 hours a day to the journalists via terminals installed at the MPC, at the sports sites and at the Press Village.

The journalists' working conditions at the stadiums will change in Barcelona'92 because they will have new electronic desks available, designed specifically for the Games. At Barcelona'92, these desks, for use by two journalists, will be equipped with a computer connected to the results channels, a television monitor for 16 Olympic channels, a telephone, etc.

In Barcelona, the Main Press Centre (MPC) and the International Broadcasting Centre (IBC) have had to be located in one of the biggest closed public spaces that the city of Barcelona has: its Trade Fair buildings at the entrance to the Olympic site of Montjuïc.

The Main Press Centre (MPC) will cover some 51.158m<sup>2</sup>, and there will be 38 more installations at the different sites and Olympic Villages. The MPC's budget is 1.189,8 millions pesetas (*Barcelona'92 Database Alcatel*, 20<sup>th</sup> September 1991), with the possibility of income in the sum of 410,9 million pesetas from renting and from the TOP-2 programme, particularly from Kodak (photography) and Brother (typewriters).

That means an increase of around 248% on Los Angeles'84 and a 64% increase on Seoul'88 where the Main Press Centres had 19.850m<sup>2</sup> and 39.949m<sup>2</sup> floor space respectively.

Together, the services available for the informative work at the Barcelona'92 Main Press Centre (*Barcelona'92 Database Alcatel*, 20<sup>th</sup> October 1991) will represent a record in the history of news coverage of a worldwide event. It will be working 24 hours a day, will have a work room available for about 600 journalist/reporters, numerous offices for the media that want to acquire their own individual space, a telecommunications centre, a *videothèque* with television production of the Games, television monitors connected to all the sports sites, direct connection to the Direct Line Results Service for immediate information about the results registers put together by the competition judges, two press rooms for interviews with simultaneous translation services and a capacity for 1,200 people – 667 press conferences have been forecasted -, various information services like telephone lines set up to send photographs, etc.

The rapid photographic developing service, a laboratory run by Kodak – an official sponsor – should also be mentioned. The service will be able to deal with a really admirable quantity: 1,410 films per hour. And Kodak is prepared to develop 111.000 films that they receive from journalists for professional use free of charge.

All the above mentioned apparatus will be used by 4,500 journalists belonging to 130 press bodies. Added to the 6,500 audiovisual media professionals, the total will be 11,000 information professionals present in

Barcelona<sup>3</sup>.

Without shadow of doubt, we have described the most spectacular communication complex in the history of mass media coverage. However, we have only described the information production conditions.

#### **4.2. Barcelona'92: an enormous television studio**

When referring to the multiple communicative dimensions of the Olympic Games we should emphasise the essentially central role that television plays.

There are two main reasons for saying this: firstly, the global dimension of the Games' audience and, secondly, the weight of television in the financing of the Games.

Although we are yet to be in the era of high-definition television which should no doubt increase the attractiveness of sports "television", sport has already become a key part of audiovisual marketing strategies. The arrival of American football in Barcelona and the competition between the Spanish autonomous regions' television companies to acquire the rights for the football league are just a few examples of the new and important role that sport plays in television companies' strategies. They are strategies that could already be found in the United States and, to some extent, explains NBC's interest – competing against ABC, CBS, ESPN and CNN – in being in Barcelona in July 1992.

The cinema industry logic – Hollywood – and that of the modern audiovisual industry (production, costs, audience, target quality) runs over into sport and dominates the evolution of the Olympic Games.

Two commercial circumstances favour this influence: the particular nature of the targets that sport broadcasting manages to get on television, and the evolution of television advertising that demands – more so each day – instant perception of the sponsors' brands.

It can be said that the financing of the Games through the acquisition of broadcasting rights and through sponsoring is an interlinked and dependent phenomenon. Sponsoring is, in the end, also a variable of television.

After the Berlin'36, London'48 and Melbourne'56 Games, and initial experimentation at the Rome'60 Games, the Tokyo'64 Olympic Games were the first to employ satellite broadcasting technology via Syncom III and also marked the beginning of television Olympic ideal.

Since then, the progress in the history of television can be associated with the Olympic Games: Mexico'68 in colour; Munich'72 with the consolidation of video technology; Montreal'76 and Moscow'80 with the new deployment of international coverage television.

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<sup>3</sup> 16.6% for Spain, 41% for the rest of Europe, 26% for both North and South America (information about individual

Los Angeles'84 Games benefited from the long television history and the great new technological opportunities to build worldwide television Games (Perelman 1984).

The Seoul Games set records in the expansion of schemes known of at that time: the largest number of production hours; the largest number of connected countries; increase in audience figures; new production techniques, etc.

The Barcelona'92 experience confirms the “stardom” of the Games in evolution, not only regarding the audiovisual techniques but, more generally, the new information technologies, too. Barcelona will beat the record for income from broadcasting rights (610 million US dollars), the number of hours of television produced (about 2,500), the use of new technology in the audiovisual production techniques and the integration of the telecommunication networks.

#### **4.2.1. Olympic radio and television organisation**

The television signals that reach the final audience are the result of a negotiation process that involves various actors. As far as Olympic institutions are concerned, the main actors in this process are the International Olympic Committee and the Olympic Organising Committee. As far as radio and television institutions are concerned, there is one main star which is the body acting as host broadcaster: Radio Televisió Olímpica (RTO'92) in Barcelona'92<sup>4</sup>.

The second group of actors is made up of television companies which have bought broadcasting rights, whether grouped together or not.

The television signals that reach the final audience have two main sources: the international signal produced by the host broadcaster and the likely unilateral signals produced by television companies – with their own cameras – which have bought Olympic broadcasting rights.

Thus, for example, the installation of some 110 cameras at the Montjuïc stadium is planned for the opening ceremony of Barcelona'92; 65 cameras will belong to RTO'92 and a total number of 45 will be used by other television companies. The main beneficiary of this distribution will be the American NCB network which will have 15 cameras for its own production, followed by TVE (Televisión Española) and the BBC. These companies will have 7 cameras each (*La Vanguardia*, 25<sup>th</sup> October 1991)

Co-organisation between the actors is done by OBAC, the operative coordination organisation, comprising of different broadcasting companies.

RTO'92 will be responsible for producing the international signal, and will also have to provide the technical connections and plan human and material resources to cover the needs of audiovisual information.

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percentages no available), 11% for Asia, 2.6% for Africa and 9% for Oceania.

<sup>4</sup> RTO'92 comprises: Televisión Española (RTVE), Corporació Catalana de Radio i Televisió (CCRTV), Retevisión and the Dirección General de Telecomunicaciones y Telefónica.

Furthermore, it will be responsible for setting up and coordinating the Centre Internacional de Radio i Televisió (CIRTV) – International Broadcasting Centre (IBC). The 1992 IBC will be located next to the Main Press Centre (MPC) and will have a floor space of 34,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The centre will contain all the equipment required by 6,500 accredited professionals (Romero 1991).

#### **4.2.2. The Games' audiovisual production**

The cost of producing one hour of a televised baseball league match (USA) was worked out at 1,480,000 dollars in 1989. One hour of drama series was worked out 900,000 dollars (Eastman 1989). Within this context, the Olympic Games are an extremely profitable audiovisual issue although it does not mean that the product is a cheap one. The cost of producing the planned 2,500 televised hours of Barcelona'92 is estimated at 12,000 million pesetas (*El País*, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1991), way below the 65,000 million pesetas of forecast income from the sale of broadcasting rights.

A very large and modern audiovisual production apparatus will be available for the enormous television production done at a total of 38 sports sites, 3 Olympic Villages and the IBC. The RTO'92 has planned a large technical and equipment deployment; the use of 415 fixed cameras, the installation of a total 1,500 commentator seats (each commentator will take up 3 spectators seats at the site), a wide variety of special cameras and resources, 50 mobile units, 13 RF cameras, 7 remote control cameras, 36 special cameras, 400 ½ " videotapes (DX), 820 monitors, 5 helicopters, 2 electric carts, 5 motorbikes, 6 boats, 1 balloon, etc (Romero 1991).

In order to manage this technical apparatus, 3,000 professionals – 800 from TVE, 100 from TV3, 600 from UER and others taken on by RTO'92 – will be needed.

#### **4.2.3. World television and Games' audience**

Data available on the audience of large worldwide events should be used very carefully. Despite that, however, we can say that every new celebration of the Olympic Games manages to get the largest simultaneous and cumulative audience in the history of television.

It has been said, for example, that the Barcelona Games will get an audience of approximately 3,500 million viewers all over the world. This figure has been worked out on the basis of multiplying the figures provided by previous Organising Committees. Los Angeles'84 got 2,500 million viewers, Seouls'88 got 3,000 million viewers so, Barcelona estimates 3,500 million viewers.

Before commenting on these forecasts, we should bear in mind that the total number of televisions available around the world is currently estimated at 1,000 million sets. Therefore, the 3,000 million figure will only be achieved if 3.5 viewers watch the Olympic broadcasts on each one of the televisions at the same time.

3,500 million viewers figure can be achieved if the number of people watch pictures broadcasts from Barcelona "at some time or other" during the Games.

As far as the likely simultaneous audience of the Barcelona Games is concerned, we should bear in mind that the last worldwide sports events (Italy'90 and Seoul'88) managed to achieve viewing figures of 1,000 million people, according to sources at the international marketing company ISL. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that this figure will be superseded by the audience of one or other of the big Barcelona'92 events such as athletic finals and the opening ceremony.

#### **4.2.4. Television and financing the Games**

##### **4.2.4.1. Infrastructures and organisation expenditure**

When analysing the Games' financing, a distinction should first be made between the three main areas of expenditure:

- Specific expenditure on services which cannot be re-used;
- Necessary expenditure on services which can be re-used;
- Appropriate expenditure, profitable in the long term and of an infrastructural nature.

Together, these infrastructure investments on sport and town planning made in Barcelona for the Olympic Games in summer 1992 account for 768,368,887,923 pesetas, whilst the COOB'92's budget accounts for 131,921,900,000 pesetas. Together, this gives a total figure of 900,291,787,923 pesetas, meaning that organisation expenditure only accounts for approximately 17% of all planned investment.

If we consider all the investments made, income from the communication and image area – broadcasting rights, advertising, sponsoring, sale of symbols – is limited. However, if we consider the organisation expenditure of the Games, then the role of communication stands out as being a fundamental one.

##### **4.2.4.2. The sale of broadcasting rights**

The main financial contribution of communication to the Olympic Games is made by television. Since Moscow'80, the income from the sale of broadcasting rights is the main Olympic income source.

In these times of change, before cable TV distribution becomes widespread, the income figure for Barcelona broadcasting rights (33.5%) is a stable one. It will also serve as the future reference point.

Overall income from broadcasting rights follows an upward and sometimes spectacular trend. In some cases, income is corrected, depending on whether or not there is income from lotteries or state contributions.

Evolution of overall expenditure on broadcasting rights			
Host	Total income US\$	Increase	% above budget
Tokyo'64	1,577,778	(-)	(-)
Mexico'68	7,516,000	376.3%	(-)
Munich'72	11,609,000	54.4%	(-)
Montreal'76	33,862,200	191.6%	7.7%
Moscow'80	101,182,182	198.8%	8.2%
Los Angeles'84	276,000,000	172.7%	44.3%
Seoul'88	407,000,000	47.4%	26%
Barcelona'92	650,000,000	49.6%	33.5%
Atlanta'96	875,000,000	43.6%	(-)

Sources: official reports. Estimates from Atlanta'96

The financial role of television is rapidly becoming more important than income from the sale of event tickets. In Tokyo'64, income from tickets' sale represented an 18.8%. In Barcelona'92, income (11,000 million pesetas) will only represent an 8%,

Income from American television companies has always been a decisive element in the financing of the Games (Gyungsook 1987); (Montreal 73.3%, Moscow 84%, Los Angeles 79.2%, Seoul 74.2%, Barcelona 64.4%), although these circumstances are likely to change in the future, probably as a result of the proliferation of private European television companies, breaking monopolies and the apparition of new cable and satellite television companies. Indeed, the UER has bought rights for the Atlanta'96 Games worth 275 million dollars, some 185 million dollars more than it paid for broadcasting the Barcelona Games.

In Barcelona'92, 20% of the total gross income from broadcasting rights will be channelled into financing television production.

After deducting this amount, and as far as the payments made by NBC for broadcasting rights are concerned which, as we have seen, constitute a substantial part of total income, 10% will be channelled into the United States Olympic Committee (USOC).

The rest will be divided into three: two thirds correspond to the Olympic Organising Committee and one third to the International Olympic Committee. The IOC will in turn channel 10% of its part to the payment of referees and judges, and 10% to certain athletes. The remaining amount is then divided into three. One third is channelled into the National Olympic Committees through Olympic Solidarity programme; one third to the International Federations; and the other third for the International Olympic Committee.

#### 4.3.4.3. The new challenge of pay-per-view television

The influence that cable TV exerts on Olympic Games' broadcasting will begin in the United States for Barcelona'92. CBS (Winter Games), NBC (Summer Games) have started their own recognition plans with cable TV distributors. NBC, for example, have already planned the promotion of several pay-per-view Olympic events: NCB Olympic PPV Triplecast (*USA Today*, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1991), offering three simultaneous channels so that the audience can choose from a wide number of different Olympic sports "live" (*The Wall*

*Street Journal*, 20<sup>th</sup> August 1991).

Apart from the “conventional” 161 hours of viewing that viewers can get through the conventional NBC network, the new pay-per-view Olympic television will offer three possibilities:

- One week of Olympic programmes for 95 dollars.
- 540 hours of reception for 125 dollars.
- Around 1,000 hours of reception, including prizes, for 175 dollars.

Pay-per-view television, according to different estimates, can only reach around 25 million homes. For their part, NBC marketing experts hope to get 3 million homes to subscribe to one of the options. Thus, with an average payment of 125 dollars per home, the total sum would be 375 million dollars (*Variety*, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1991). This amount would be equal to 93% if all the broadcasting rights paid for by NBC to get the exclusive broadcasting of the Barcelona'92 Games in the United States.

## **5. News coverage of the Games and the Olympic ideal**

The new coverage of modern Games is conditioned by several factors that make the cultural values suggested by the Olympic ideal and the host cities' cultural programmes difficult to broadcast. Three of such difficulties have been identified as follows:

### **5.1. First obstacle: misunderstanding about the cultural nature of the Olympic ceremonies**

Many mass media place their trust exclusively in specialist sport journalists for the coverage of the Olympic Games. Whilst recognising the splendid individualism of the best sport journalism, it would also appear to be appropriate to complete the teams of special envoys to the Olympic Games with professionals who are specialists in international relations and cultural politics, prepared to synthesise the cultural and historic values of the Olympic ideal, and the cultural elements of the Games great spectacles and rituals.

We have already found an example of this lack of awareness in the verbal comments made at the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Seoul by several international television companies and by TVE itself which do not take advantage of the great opportunity of using the cultural script of one of the best ceremonies in the history of the Olympic Games. We believe that the best-suited professionals for this type of broadcast would be specialists in international relations, in culture and spectacle.

### **5.2. Second obstacle: patriotism in the perception of the Games**

The second factor, which exerts enormous influence over the information coverage of the Games and which contradicts itself in terms of positive elements of the Olympic spirit is the information treatment given to the events by the journalist-reporter. He or she considers the athletes from his or her country from an exclusive – and excluding – point of view.

Some content analysis studies show that information coverage of the Olympic Games – although still somewhat less than general competition sports – focus their attention on the athletes from their own

countries. Thus, for example, the American press dedicated 79% of the space reserved for the Los Angeles Olympic Games in its newspapers to information about its own country (Real 1991).

This patriotic trend does not, however, just refer to athletics. It affects the broadcast of the ceremonies too. Moragas (1989) study show that many television companies throughout the world, notably NBC, construct their “own ceremonies” out of the opening and closing ceremonies by introducing verbal comments not contained in the ceremonies’ proposed scripts, as well as introducing breaks in the programme and own-produced videos.

**Interruptions during the broadcast of the opening ceremony  
NBC at Seoul 1988 Games**

Breaks in the ceremony introduced by NBC	Amount
For advertisements	17
For news	4
For own-produced Olympic references	5
Total	26

  

Length of breaks	Minutes
For advertisements	32
For news	9
For own-produced Olympic references	9
Total	50

Sources: Author's registers

### 5.3. Third obstacle: the Olympic ideal and sport's cultural values

The coverage of the Olympic Games totally follows the guidelines established by the mass media for the treatment of great modern sports events (not sport itself!). Spectacularity and competition are the key factors of such treatment.

Without being naive about this, we should ask ourselves about the particular contributions of the coverage of the Olympic Games to the rhetoric of modern sports information.

The information treatment of the Olympic Games should include the promotion of sport's positive value: participation, fraternity, cooperation, fair play, and the neutralisation of negative values like violence, commercialism, promotion of “superman” image, discrimination, fanaticism, etc.

These objectives, although only in part, are within the Games' organisers' bounds of achievements in the “first communication step”. One of the basic aspects of this is the production of television pictures for the whole world.

### 6. Opening and closing ceremonies. Television and the Games' cultural programmes

The unquestionable influence that television has over the diffusion of the Olympic Games means that television bears the greatest of cultural responsibilities.

The idea that television is simply a picture broadcasting network is indefensible. The host television company assumes maximum responsibility for the selection of pictures that identify the values and countervalues of sport and the Olympic ideal. Other television companies involved are responsible for showing their audiences pictures which respect the local culture and the international values of the Olympic ideal offered by the organising television company.

Without wishing to do down the cultural meaning of television when it comes to representing sports values, we believe that the most important cultural meaning behind the Olympic Games lies in the creation of the opening and closing ceremonies, the importance of which is a direct consequence of the Olympic ideal's international prestige and its international diffusion.

Through television, the ceremonies allow an extraordinary contact to be made between a local culture and international audiences. The ceremonies, therefore, should not be analysed as if they were spectacles made to satisfy local audiences but like products of local culture aimed at international audiences.

In the past, it has been that the opening ceremony should be like a major advertisement. Personally, I believe that the advertisement concept is not the best way of defining the ideal content and style of Olympic ceremonies, precisely because of their commercial and advertising connotations. The advertisement concept is not the most suitable one. The aim of the ceremonies should not be that of "selling the world something". It rather should offer that world – the entire world – a cultural project through a spectacle that should combine that historic ritual of the Olympic ideal and a cultural display of the host city and country.

Finally, the two facets, the two main problems of any Olympic cultural project can always be found in the choice of contents of the ceremonies:

- a) The space for the host cultural identity in relation to surrounding cultures and international ones, and
- b) The images of the culture itself, like a programme for reinterpretation and international consumption.

The first issue – defining local culture – is the main political challenge of the ceremonies' cultural programme. This is a complex operation, particularly as the identifying images of a culture and their international stereotypes have been constructed around constant supplantations of domination.

The cultural identifiers for Barcelona must be the Catalan culture and language. And such identification is fully compatible with an interesting message for the audiences and a message of identification for all other cultures. The idea that only a hegemonic, standardised language can be understood by an international audience should be rejected.

Barcelona faces now the challenge of creating and internationally understandable message on the basis of its own identity, although doing so it should not do away with its peculiarities. Contrarily, the Olympic Movement offers the opportunity to establish, in the eyes of other world cultures, our identity through our own particular culture.

We should also say that the imposition of some homogenising cultural guidelines that supplant the individuality of Catalan culture would constitute a deviation of the dialogue between the culture of the Olympic host and the different international audience cultures.

Obviously, this point of view should be completed by recognising the international point of view. Local cultural values should be interpreted within their wider geopolitical frameworks. The boundaries of these frameworks and the dialogue between Spanish cultures and Mediterranean ones are – apart from their spectacularity – the major cultural and political responsibility of the ceremonies' organisation. The Olympic ideal offers us the opportunity to set up, before the highest television audience in history, a dialogue between cultures, a dialogue between cultural identities.

The choice of Empuries, the ancient Greek colony on the Mediterranean, as the port to receive the Olympic torch for the 1992 Olympic Games could be the first meaningful message: the will of the Barcelona Games to promote an enriching dialogue between different cultures.

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