

OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES AND IMAGE CHANGE OF PARIS AND SEINE-SAINT-DENIS TOWARDS A PLACE-BASED APPROACH

Delaplace Marie¹

Dimitrijeva Jekaterina²

Université Gustave Eiffel

1 Lab'urba

2 Erudite

Corresponding author

marie.delaplace@univ-eiffel.fr

Regions and cities are characterized by growing competition to attract investors, residents and tourists. At the heart of this competition lie their comparative advantages in terms of skills, innovation capacity, quality of life, infrastructure quality, etc. But image effects also play a role in this attraction. The image of territories is a complex and evolving construct. It can be defined as a representation by individuals or groups of individuals, whether they live there or not. But like any representation, the image corresponds to a partial view, taken from a certain angle, or even distorted from reality due to either a lack of knowledge of the area's attributes, insufficient promotion of them, or myths perpetuated by the stakeholders themselves. But the image that some people have of it is not the same as that of others. The population does not have the same image of the territory in which they live as the actors responsible for promoting it. Similarly, the image held by external stakeholders may differ (domestic tourists, foreign tourists, investors, journalists, etc.). Furthermore, the image is evolving.

Territories seek to build an image synonymous with dynamism, and mega-events, particularly sporting mega-events such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games, are one way of doing this. One of the legacies of the Olympic Games is therefore associated with this image effect. Olympic Games and more generally mega-events are aiming for transforming the host city and in particular its image.

In the bid stage, Olympic Games highlight the fact that the city is a city which can compete to attract investment (Müller and Steyaert 2013, Ismayilov, 2012, cited by Arnegger and Herz, 2016, regarding the European Football Championships in Azerbaijan). Linked to a global urban project aiming to transform the city, as in Barcelone (Gravari-Barbas et Jacquot, 2007) in London (Beucher, 2009, Poynter, 2012) or in Beijing (Augustin, 2009, Kaplanidou, 2009), the Olympic Games can change this image.

During the event, due to an extensive media coverage (Essex and Chalkley, 1998, Kenyon & Bodet, 2018), they convey to the world the image that the local actors want to give to the territory and its possible future (Marais et Arnaud, 2013, Thanh, Kirova & Dareous, 2014, Pappas, 2004). They are thus an opportunity to grasp what Bourdieu (1984) called "symbolic capital". But they can also have a negative image effect: delays in delivery, budget overruns, strikes, and sometimes

even suspicions of corruption (as in Montréal, Khomsi, 2015). Being in the international spotlight can be problematic for the city if there are security problems, congestion as it was the case in Atlanta (Essex & Brian, 1998), London (Thanh, Kirova & Dareous, 2014), if the hotel employees are not welcoming, if there are conflicts with the inhabitants, etc.

Lastly, after the Games, they can be a tool for future events, to attract new investors, or even new inhabitants contributing to make the territory a dynamic territory (Rose, Spiegel, 2011).

However, a review of the literature on this issue show that the interactions between the Olympic Games and the image of regions are heterogeneous. A review of scientific articles published between 1992 and 2017 on the Summer Games (Fereira et al., 2018) shows that there are both positive and negative image effects. The preparation and implementation in each country are so different that the results cannot be the same.

The 2024 Paris Olympic Games took place in Paris but also in other host territories in mainland France and overseas. In particular, the department of Seine Saint-Denis hosted most of the new Olympic venues (Olympic Village, Media Village, Olympic Aquatic Centre) and was home to major existing venues (Stade de France, etc.). It also benefited from improved accessibility by public transport with the extension of line 14 (from Orly to Pleyel), as well as a significant improvement in soft transport routes enabling more sustainable mobility (new footbridges, cycle paths, etc.). But Seine Saint-Denis department is the poorest department of metropolitan France and its image had been severely damaged before the Games. Conversely, Paris, where many competitions and the opening ceremony took place in temporary venues, is the richest department in France and enjoys a very strong image.

Can the Olympic Games have an impact on the image of these two territories? Are these effects the same, even though their initial images are very different? How can these image effects be assessed?

While the literature shows that image effects vary greatly between Olympic Games, in this paper we aim to show that image effects vary also between host territories within the same Olympiad.

In this communication, we will present the results of two surveys in terms of declared preference among 1124 visitors present in Paris (Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe/Champs Elysées, Notre-Dame de Paris and the Sacré Coeur) and 976 in Seine Saint-Denis (Puces de Saint-Ouen, Stade de France, Basilique Saint-Denis) during the Paris 2024 Games.

The visitors were interviewed randomly for around 15 minutes. Consisting of 35 questions, these surveys made it possible to create a database with personal information on the visitors as their gender, age, country of residence, income, as well as information on their stay (reasons, dates, location in Paris and/or in Seine-Saint-Denis, travelling alone or in a group), on the places they know visited, mode of travel, expenditure), on their image of the Olympic Games and of Paris and/or Seine-Saint-Denis before the Games. We also asked them if their image of Paris and/or Seine-Saint-Denis had changed and what the role of the Games was in this image change. Finally, we asked them to give three words or expressions that described Paris and/or Seine-Saint-Denis before the Games and, if their image had changed, to give new words and expressions. These words were then recoded, enabling us to identify images of the two areas and if these images have changed with the Games. The data have then been analyzed. First of all, we developed descriptive statistics to characterize our sample, identify the image of the both departments and investigate whether the Games contributed to the image change. Second, to identify which types of visitors

are most likely to report a change in their perception of the territories and the factors driving it, we estimate the probability of such a change as a function of visitor characteristics, including socio-demographics, interest in sports, previous participation in sports mega-events, and pre-existing perceptions. We further examine whether the image change depends solely on visitors' characteristics or also on the territory visited. These analyses allow us to show that the image effects are in the same time very similar and very different across the two territories we study. Seine-Saint-Denis, which had a negative image, has benefited from a significant improvement in image, particularly at the Stade de France, and particularly for the domestic tourists (outside the Ile-de-France region) while Paris's image, which was already very good, has also improved, albeit to a smaller extent and particularly for international tourists. We further explore the drivers of the image change by examining the patterns in the words used to characterize the host territories.

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