

Rebuilding Turin's Image Identity and Social Capital Looking Forward To 2006 Winter Olympics Games

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Abstract

The international debate about "Mega Events" (Olympics, Soccer World Cup, World Expos...) shows a broader differentiation considering the concepts utilized and the classifications proposed. Mega Events, Big Events, Hallmark Events, Special Events, and so on, are used to define such phenomena, with some risks of overlapping meanings. The paper begins discussing how some variables deal with Mega Events, as high political and international significance, media coverage, uniqueness and popular appeal. And a Mega Event can be considered a catalyst of urban change and an occasion of creation of a new identity for the hosting city.

These considerations can be proposed and applied to the case of Turin, the Piedmont capital, that will host next Winter Olympic Games in 2006.

In the research of a new redevelopment model, overpassing the "Fiat Company Town" stereotype, a central role is covered by the attitude of population towards the Games (expectancies, fears, loyalty...): a new identity can also be improved considering the possible links between the city and the Alps mountains. A survey confirms it.

Avoiding a generic and mechanic utilization of the Alpine area as a "winter sky dominion" (the mountain as a green escape area for the city) a recent investigation is finding for a new kind of reciprocal growth for the city and the Mountains at the same time, trying to promote the Mountains not only for winter sports, but also for the local economy and communities, and for the recovery of old military forts, abbeys, churches, museums. The participation of associations, groups and single citizens can legitimate the local authorities in the reconstruction of the Turin identity. The process can involve and promote the Piedmont image at a national and international level.

1. A new destiny of Turin

This paper deepens some aspects of a previous research, presented at the 38th ISOCaRP Congress held in Athens, 2002, concerning how the city of Turin (Piedmont, Italy) is monitoring the preparation of the 2006 Winter Olympic Games and is facing a new kind of development, devoted to tourism and culture. In this attempt, the city has the necessity to rebuild its image, avoiding the stereotype of the Fiat Company Town and finding for new issues: one of these is the link with Alps and Mountains.

This opportunity depends on a concrete occasion: next Winter Olympic Games (2006) will be held in Piedmont, Italy (in Turin and three Alpine Valleys: Susa, Pellice and Chisone).

Many institutions, such as «Torino Incontra», a brand of the Chamber of Commerce of Torino, and some Departments of the University and Polytechnics are sponsoring the research. The attention is concentrated on the long-term effects of Big Events, or Mega Events, as the scientific literature has been outlining in these last years (Getz, 1997, Hall, 1992)

In the recent meeting ISOCaRP held in Athens (The Pulsar Effects, September 21-26 2002) urban planners and architects, with the contribution of economists, sociologists and geographers, have

been analyzing the effects that a big event as Olympics creates on environment and cities, considering not only the implications of the Games (Athens will host the summer games in 2004), but also other kinds of phenomena, as International Fairs and Expos, other top sports events, international art exhibitions (Guala, 2002); in Athens conference a particular attention has been dedicated to big public works (e.g. the bridge between Denmark and Sweden, the Messina bridge project, the Vasco De Gama Bridge in Lisboa, Alexander Platz in Berlin, the recovery of the old ports of Barcelona and Genoa, the controversial case of Millenium Dome in London, etc.) (Isocarp, 2002).

The aim of this paper deals non only with the general implications of the Games, looking forward to Torino 2006, but with some results of investigations that institutions, local authorities, University and Polytechnics are carrying out, in order to monitor perspectives and implications of next Winter Games, and to build a new image of Turin.

An international congress (Torino, May 21, 2001), opened a discussion about the particular situation of the 2006 venues in Piedmont: a certain number of sport facilities and competitions (e.g. ice skating, or hockey) - and some Media and Olympic Villages - will be located in the urban context. Other competitions will be held in the Alpine Valleys, 80 kms far. The main results of the Turin 2001 congress have been published, deepening a discussion already opened in the bidding period (Bobbio, Guala, 2002).

Considering this situation, Turin is facing problems similar to those experienced by cities that have been hosting mayor summer Olympics in the past (Preuss, 2000). Turin is compelled to define a new urban transformation, depending on tertiarization of economy, industry delocalization and dismantling (Pichierra, 1989; Essex, Chalkley, 1998): it is a well known process that affects specially the old industrialized cities (as Bilbao, or Glasgow, or Detroit) and the old ports (as Genoa, Barcelona, or Baltimore).

Turin is betting on turisme, culture, leisure, sport and recreational facilities, in order to improve the quality of life for inhabitants, city users and visitors. This goal is now much more strategic considering the crisis of the Fiat Company: we are looking at the end of the "fordist town" and/or "fordist economy". From this point of view we know that Mega Events are formidable catalysts of urban change (Essex, Chalkley, 1998). Although the original definition of Mega Events recalls "short time events, but of high profile" (Hall, 1992; Hiller, 2000), or "Hallmark Events" (Richtie, 1984), there is a sort of differentiation among these events. For example, we may consider top sport events, as Olympics, or other sports events as the World Soccer Championship, or America's Cup, or Formula 1 network (with a differentiation of people involved), or international summits, or top music and art Exhibits (at a different economic impact scale). We can add to these events also International Fairs or Expositions, and special religious meetings or recurrences (e.g. Rome 2000 Jubilee).

2 Olympics: a local Event with broader global effects and implications that need to be planned

Organizing Olympic Games involves 7/8 years of social planning before the event; it's well known the quantity and quality of buildings, public works and facilities that have to be planned: Olympic Villages, Communication Center, public transportation system, pedestrian and bike routes, sport facilities (new, or recovered, or adapted to sport and security standards), restaurants, bar, hotel accommodation, tourist and visitors information system, environmental problems and security. Urban planning involves old districts and out-of-use areas to be recovered, new malls and shopping centers to be built. A special argument regards the possible "uses" of the "fame" associated to the mega event. An output is the citymarketing strategy that can be promoted and managed. The city has to promote its image, considering that the Event marked the territory, some time for ever.

In fact the experience of the cities hosting Olympic Games presents a broad variety of situations, with success and failure: logistics and public transportation difficulties (Atlanta summer 1996), environmental problems (Calgary winter 1988, partially winter Lillehammer 1994 and summer Sydney 2000), dismantled facilities (Sapporo winter 1972), facilities too expensive to be maintained (Rome summer 1960, Calgary winter 1988, Grenoble winter 1968), economic failure (Montreal summer 1976, Grenoble winter 1968).

A situation to be monitored, linked to the “pulsar effect” investigated in Athens IsoCaRP meeting, is the “intermezzo syndrome”, that means a sudden economic success, that usually lasts only a short time (months, or weeks): when the decline begins, after the Event, for the community it’s difficult to come back to the previous condition: too high expectancies were diffused before the Event. This syndrome has been investigated considering Lillehammer winter Olympics 1994 (Spilling, 1996; Lesio, 1992).

As described in cases of “explosion-implosion”, the economic literature on Mega Events (see Lillehammer: 26.000 people), shows that a Mega Event has negative effects on a too small community: better, a small community cannot face a too big event; on the other side, a big event can have positive effects only if the local economy is strong and efficient; cases of success probably are Barcelona summer 1992, and Albertville winter 1992. This means that a strong system becomes stronger, a weak system cannot survive to the “intermezzo” syndrome; a similar expression is “the party is over” (Kariel, 1991; Cochrane et al., 1996).

Past Olympics show a very strong differentiation in the concrete practices and uses of the Games: some time we see contradictions, failures and success: for example, summer Atlanta Games 1996 were successful from an economic point of view (budget, sponsorships, merchandizing...) but unsuccessful considering logistics and public transportation system (Unione Industriali Torino, 2000). Some time Olympics have been utilized as an occasion of political legitimization (Seoul 1988), or as a catalyst of urban transformation (best case: Barcelona 1992); some problems have been underlined in Atlanta (as before mentioned), in Calgary winter 1988 (Purchase, 2000; Kariel, 1991) or in Sapporo winter 1972 (Kagaya, 1991; IOC, 1998).

Some time Olympic Games have contributed to develop tourism, as happened in Barcelona 1992, and in Albertville winter 1992 (a case of promoting and reinforcing the Savoy French ski district). We have remembered the different “pulsar effects” in a weak area (Lillehammer) compared to the broader effects in an already strong area (Albertville-Savoy) (Dailly et al., 1992; Andreff, 1989; Kukawka, 1998; Ronningen, 1995). Another differentiation concerns the possible “uses” of Olympics: for example, in 1994 Norway took advantage of symbols and values diffused among visitors, that were impressed by “respecting environment” and “green Games” (Klausen, 1999; Ronningen, 1995); Sydney 2000, an occasion of reconciliation between cultures, with the legitimization of the aboriginal culture (Cashman, Hughes, 1999; Purchase, 2000). The concrete experience of the Games shows a wider differentiation between Winter and Summer Olympics, considering many variables, such as the number of athletes, sports and nations involved, the typologies of sport facilities and structures, the dimension of accommodation system for media and “Olympic Family” Villages, the budget, investments and consumption, the number of visitors arrivals, tickets, spectators, the problems related to radio, newspapers, Internet and TV, or logistics, communication and public/private transportation system, the geomorphology, climate and meteorological conditions, and so on.

Other variables, correlated to the success or failure of the Plays, are the dimension of the hosting city, the structure of the local economy, the role of the local actors and the (dis)homogeneity of the local political system; the local decision makers can be united or divided (for political or economic interests...). In fact a differentiation between administrative levels (local administration, region or state) reduces the possibility of success; the bidding process can be weakened by these contrasts (a conflict between Swiss central administration and some Cantons explains the failure of past nominations for winter games in Switzerland); the role of intellectuals and professional groups, as well as associations and social networks, is very important to legitimate and support local decisions; a strategic variable is the recognition of population towards the local identity, that can implement the communication and citymarketing process. All these considerations can be assimilated to the concept of “social capital”, as mentioned in the conclusions of this paper.

3. Rebuilding a new image of Turin and creating new links with the mountains

We know that planning Olympics means also planning the heritage, that can be material (sport facilities, recovery of old districts, new buildings...) or immaterial (values, notoriety, symbols...). The bidding iter itself lasts several years, and this period is full with many situations to be monitored, step by step.

The city hosting the Games has to face many problems, as the fears of population about public works, the transformations of the local identity, managing the "Olympic legacy" (planning the legacy is much more important than building the structures), checking the economic long term effects, when the Games end (Spilling, 1996; Preuss, 2000), utilizing the "2fame" within a strategy of citymarketing: Mega Events such as Olympics are always Media Events (De Moragas, 1996).

An output of the recent studies about the implications of the Games is that we have to pay much more attention to the post-Games period rather than to the precedent stage: each step of the Event must be planned very carefully. Planning for the Olympic legacy is the real issue to be checked and programmed in advance. That's why local administrations (Comune of Torino), Chamber of Commerce, University and Polytechnics of Torino, are realizing a sort of joint venture to pursue the following goals:

- **six longitudinal surveys on population** are planned, from October 2002 till Spring 2006; the instruments are Computer Aided Telephone Interviews, conducted both in Torino (900) and the Valleys (500, with the collaboration of the Provincia): the main purpose is to check attitudes towards the Games and their heritage; the main questions deal with the degree of knowledge about the bidding process, the location of the venues, pride or fear about the Games (specially about public works, tube and transportation system, sport facilities...), positive or negative expectancies after the Games, specially about the labor market and the long lasting jobs; other items are the interests of population about sport practices, watching sport on TV, leisure time, cultural interests; the aim is to define the main clusters of population in order to understand the degree of an active participation; this knowledge will facilitate and implement a reliable information and communication process to be realized by Toroc (Organizing Committee) and local and regional authorities; the first survey on Torino has been completed, and the data are now available; the second survey is planned for novembre 2003
- creation of a **Social Indicators Observatory**, to monitor some variables during the years; a large set of data, from private and public sources, will be collected, with attention to demography, social mobility, economy, cultural consumption, tourism and visitor, new entrepreneurships, labor market, and so on; a longitudinal file will be built, and a comparison between Torino and the Valleys will be available, with attention also to small areas and villages not directly involved by the Games
- creation of a "**risk map**", id est locating on the territory the effective or potential situations of crisis to be controlled and prevented: this research is actually working, a number of meetings and discussions between local authorities and population have already been organized, and other are planned; through this map local authorities can monitor the fears and mediate the oppositions, specially in the districts heavily affected by public works (new underground, railway station to be moved, main sport facilities to be built or recovered).
- definition of a **communication strategy**, in the perspective of giving population, groups and associations a correct information about issues of public interest
- improvement of **monitoring environmental effects** (specially in the Alpine Valleys), opening a second step of the **VAS** (Valutazione Ambientale Strategica: the translation is **strategic environmental evaluation**), carried on by some Departments of Polytechnics; it is the very first time that this "preventive research" is made in Italy; the VAS will be followed by **VIA** (Valutazione di Impatto Ambientale: evaluation of environmental impact) after the most important and heavy works in the Alp Valleys.

A new initiative, directly organized by the University of Torino, has began to work at the end of 2001: a special committee, the "**University Cultural Committee for Torino 2006**" has been appointed, in order to coordinate a high number of researches, more specialized, belonging to different Departments: we can consider the main areas where different researches can be located (approximately 20); the areas are the following:

1. Improvement of the **Alpine Environment**, with attention to tourism resources
2. Specialized **Chirurgical Surgery** for sport traumas
3. **Pediatrics, Sports and Youth**
3. **Events Simulation System**, with attention to monitoring territory and logistics variables
4. **Fashion and Sport** in the XX Century
5. **Sport and Collective Identities Education**

6. **Sport Management and Events Management**, with attention to Olympic Games
7. **Literature, Sports and Sociolinguistics**

In the Spring 2003 an agreement was signed by University of Torino and Toroc, with the aim to coordinate the different fields of the research about the implications and effects of the Games; a special committee was appointed and it is working.

4. Conclusions: rebuilding the Turin image with a strong link with Alps Mountains

As underlined by Sergio Scamuzzi (Guala, Scamuzzi, 2002), Olympic Games may be the right moment for a complex work of designing and distributing a place's image at an international level. In the research for a new development model, rebuilding the city's image is an important tool.

One of the possible opportunities is a stronger link between Turin and the the Alps system. A research was carried out (2000 interviews –a “sensitive” and qualified sample - among people visiting an International Book Fair in Turin: La Fiera del Libro); the first results are now available, as shown in next tables. The data explain how the “local” identity of a city (Turin) can “overlap” a larger territory, and become a more general attribute for the Piedmont region itself.

The research is an attempt: the main goal is to understand how Turin people consider themselves, something similar to the “inner place image”: that's the image of a place to the eyes and minds of its resident population, as Scamuzzi says, considering the “image building” as a factor of local development. The local identity can work as a factor of legitimation for local authorities. Wich questions have been investigated ? We can summarize some of them:

- stereotypes about “mountain” (ski dominion, green area where to “escape”, area specially dedicated to winter sports...)
- relationships (real and potential) between the city and Alps, with attention to the perspectives of maintaining people in the mountain areas, restoring old villages, improving communications...
- respect of the Alpine culture (food and wine, handcraft initiatives, local traditions, fairs and folklore)
- environmental issues, tourism and local economy.
- restoring of old military forts, abbeys, churches, museums, architectural venues

And now we can give a look to some results, considering the following tables. A syntetic conclusion will follow.

Table 1 (cases: 2000)

Where do you prefer to spend your holidays ?	
Beaches, sea	52.5%
Country	7.7%
Mountains	18.0%
Trips, visiting art cities	17.7%
Other answers	3.6%

Table 2 (cases: 1526)

If you go always or some times in the Mountains, wich of the following activities do you practice ?	
Winter sports	29.6%
Summer sports	9.9%
Tourism (in a general sense)	22.2%
Walks, trekking	53.0%
Food and wine	9.7%
Other answers	3.4%

Table 3 (cases: 2000 for each item)

On your opinion, is the image of the Alps specially linked to :	Strongly	Slightly
Winter sports practices	46.5%	46.7%
Summer sports practices	8.6%	38.4%
Tourism	44.7%	43.3%
Food, wine, local fairs	16.2%	51.8%
Handcraft traditions	15.4%	46.3%
.Abbeys, forts, historical and architectural venues	12.7%	34.6%

Table 4 (cases: 2000)

Do you think next Winter Games will be for Turin a real occasion of promotion ?	
Specially for Turin	29.4%
Specially for the Alps, and for the "mountains", in general	14.2%
Both	48.8%
Neither for Turin, nor for the Alps	6.6%

Table 5 (cases: 2000)

Which of the following areas can ameliorate and improve its position, due to a stronger link between Alps and Turin ?	
Specially Turin	28.0%
Specially the Alps	15.0%
Both	51.3%
Neither Turin, nor the Alps	4.0%
No answers	1.7%

Table 6 (cases: 2000, three answers available)

If you should define a rank of possible facilities or policies, in order to improve and promote the Mountains, which of the following items would you choose ?	
Improving logistics and communication system	44.3%
Touristic and cultural facilities	41.6%
Environmental protection	57.8%
Restoring and promoting old abbeys, forts, museums, churches	44.8%
Restoring old villages	24.2%
Improving local agricultural economy	21.0%
Protection of the local culture, folklore, handcraft traditions	27.0%
No answers	2.3%

Summarizing some findings of the survey about attitude of population investigated towards Alps and Mountains, it's possible to define some conclusions, also considering data not presented in the paper.

- the "Mountain" is considered from a general point of view as a "generic" resource, versus a more specialized and strong pattern linked to the Mountain as "ski dominion" reserved to winter sports
- a certain attention is dedicated to agricultural resources, as wine, food, local tradition and fairs, but these items are less important in the collective mind
- a general agreement concerns the project for a stronger link between Turin and Alps, but the majority of respondents think that specially the city can take advantage from this opportunity
- a similar answer regards the links between next Winter Olympics and Turin: in this case again for the majority of our sample it's the city that will take much more advantage from the Games
- in the strategy of a stronger link with Alps and mountains, the public offer is fundamental: a new image for Turin has to be built through coordinated policies:
 - recovery of old villages, restoring abbeys and forts, opening handcraft laboratories
 - protecting environment, helping agricultural local resources, promoting local fairs
 - respecting "patois: dialect", folklore and cultural traditions
 - improving logistics, railway and route system, to facilitate communications

If these are some of the possible interventions to ameliorate the links between Turin and Mountains, it's very important that this aim could be implemented by local authorities: rebuilding the image of Turin, overcoming the Fiat crisis, is a long period effort, to be maintained and planned very carefully. This goal has also some political implications, considering that new projects in the Alpine area will implicate institutional agreements between France and Italy, and some decisions of the European Community.

This attempt needs the legitimation of the population, that can work as a social capital network; the new image of Turin as "Alps capital" overcomes the boundaries of the city and has effects on the Piedmont region itself.

Note

The research group from University and Polytechnics of Torino created a special interdepartmental center, called OMERO (Olympics and Mega Events Research Observatory); the group is composed by Luigi Bobbio, Pier Vincenzo Bondonio, Egidio Dansero, Chito Guala, Alfredo Mela, Carlo Olmo, Sergio Scamuzzi, Anna Segre.

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