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Exploring the intangible impacts of cultural events on the creative sector: Experiences from the Cultural Olympiad programmes of Torino 2006 and London 2012

Abstract

This paper engages with the debates around the Olympic legacy by exploring the qualitative, intangible impacts of the Cultural Olympiad programme on local small creative firms in Torino, Italy and London, UK. The research objectives are achieved through a qualitative study of local small creative firms' perceptions of the impacts of the Olympic Games' cultural programme on their activities. To achieve this, Torino 2006 and London 2012 are used as case studies. The findings of this exploratory study show that cultural events can impact the creative sector. They do this by providing opportunities for mutual learning and access to initiatives which may generate ideas and new skills, as well as contributing to the development of a creative field. The study also explores the weaknesses and missed opportunities linked to the Cultural Olympiad programme, as perceived by creative practitioners. These include the lack of information and failure to engage smaller businesses. Based on qualitative analysis and discussion, recommendations for future organisers and further research are provided.

Keywords: Cultural Olympiad, Creative Industries, Cultural Sector, Event Legacy, Creative Field.

1. Introduction

As the *Financial Times* newspaper pointed out (Engel, 2007), the greatest cost of the 2012 Olympic Games to the British people has probably been the loss of arts and sporting projects that were set aside to fund the Games. Precisely because of the significant cost of staging mega-events, there is increasing pressure on governments and organizing bodies to communicate the predicted and effective legacies of such projects (Faulkner, 2003; Lamberti et al., 2011). Academic research has discussed extensively the increasingly important role such events have played in cities' and regions' development policies (see, for instance, García, 2007; Gold and Gold, 2005; Gospodini, 2009; Smith, 2012; Richards and Palmer, 2010). Advocates of their beneficial role highlight the ability to attract additional government funding and to provide a reason for making physical interventions (Smith, 2012). They also point to the potential to deliver wider economic and socio-cultural positive effects on cities (e.g. Rohe, 2002; Arcodia and Whitford, 2002; Misener and Mason, 2006).

On the other hand, competition amongst cities to host increasingly large and more spectacular events has also meant greater dependency among event organisers on public funding, political support and sponsorships. This has resulted in a much stronger influence being exercised by dominant cultural élites and private companies on the actual nature of the event (Smith, 2012). Furthermore, critics have pointed out the ever increasing cost of hosting events and the danger of neglecting local communities in the attempt to attract tourists (e.g. Eisinger, 2000). Event-led regeneration policies have been described by some as carnival masks (Harvey, 1989) or cosmetic exercises (García, 2004) utilised by policy makers to divert attention and resources from social problems. Other

disadvantages to relying on events to achieve development objectives include short-lived effects (Smith, 2009), negative environmental consequences (Gursoy et al., 2002) and the displacement of local residents and small businesses as a result of gentrification (see Kontokosta, 2011; Kavetsos, 2012).

One of the expected outcomes of large-scale cultural events is the development of entrepreneurship and local talent in the host region (Sacco and Tavano Blessi, 2007). Yet organisers too often choose to involve internationally recognised artists rather than local ones in order to extend the scope of the event, attract international visitors and enhance media attention. In addition, a record of the benefits for local cultural firms is rarely kept (Richards and Palmer, 2010). When collected, data generally only comprise quantitative measurements of increased audiences, funding and production. These are indeed useful indicators but may fail to capture other, more subtle impacts, such as effects on creative inspiration and informal learning processes. The present research aims to fill these gaps by exploring the intangible impacts of a large programme of cultural events on local small and micro creative firms (as defined by DCMS, 1998 and European Commission, 2005). Such firms are often the greatest contributors to creative innovation and cultural diversity (Jacobs, 1969). The study's aim is achieved through a qualitative study of local creative industry practitioners' perceptions of the effects of the Olympic Games' cultural programme on their activities. The Italian city of Torino, where the Olympic Winter Games were staged in 2006, and East London, host of the 2012 Summer Games, are used as case studies.

Two main streams of literature are reviewed in order to identify an appropriate framework to systematise different forms of impact and frame the key question of this research, 'what are the potential impacts of large public cultural events on local creative industries?'. Firstly, the paper reviews key models that conceptualise mega-event legacies and research on event impacts with a focus on local businesses and creative organisations. Secondly, drawing from organisational theory and cultural geography literature, the paper looks at impacts of events on the creative field. As part

of this it explores whether the concepts of field-configuring events (Meyer et al., 2005) and creative field (Scott, 2006) may represent appropriate conceptualisations for framing this study.

2. Impacts on local creative organisations

A useful framework for the present study is Preuss' model (2007), which describes five 'dimensions' of legacy: planned vs. unplanned; positive vs. negative; tangible vs. intangible; duration (short term vs. long term); and the space affected (e.g. city centre, whole region, etc.). The key advantage of this model is that frequently neglected - yet important - impact types, such as negative, unplanned and intangible impacts, obtain their deserved prominence. Preuss' model also highlights the importance of assessing the geographical scope of legacy, and of taking into account both short and long-term impacts. A similar attempt to provide a theoretical impact model taking into account both planned/unplanned, and positive/negative impacts is the 'linkage model' by Hiller (2006). In this model, parallel linkages (as opposed to forward and backward linkages) specifically refer to side-effects which were not necessarily anticipated or positive, such as displacement of local residents and businesses.

The temporal dimension of impacts (short term vs. long term) is a critical category discussed by several authors. For example, Chalip and Leyns (2002) criticise the traditional short-term focus on event impacts. They call instead for greater emphasis on leveraging impacts on local businesses through the institutionalization of linkages among stakeholders (for instance, through the formation of business networks and other leveraging programmes). The tangible vs. intangible dimension of impacts is addressed by Dwyer et al. (2000), who present and evaluate a framework to assess tangible and intangible (mainly economic) impacts of events and conventions. Among the range of categories identified, two in particular refer to impacts on local businesses. These are additional trade and business development (e.g. increased business confidence, enhanced business contacts and exchange of ideas) and the interruption of normal business. Hiller (2006) notes that mega-events

such as the Olympic Games intensify leisure consumption (among both residents and visitors), thus providing additional trade opportunities for the leisure and hospitality sectors. Similarly, Chalip (2002) notes that certain business sectors (i.e. hospitality) are able to capitalise on events more than others. However, his study of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games (Chalip and Leyns, 2002) found that most small businesses lack the skills or resources to leverage effectively. Further, leveraging may only benefit those businesses that apply leveraging techniques (e.g. putting up a poster in the shop window), rather than the overall local economy.

Research on the impacts of major events specifically focussed on local creative firms is remarkably scarce. Event-led tourism development is potentially a positive outcome of events for creative firms. Reasons for this include that it generates demand for cultural products, encourages cultural contamination (Arcodia and Whitford, 2002; Lamberti et al., 2011) and provides enhanced access to a pool of consumers. Cultural organisations, in particular, may also benefit from major sporting or cultural events when venues specifically created for the event are later turned into cultural and leisure spaces, as with Calgary's Olympic Plaza, described by Hiller (2006). Gospodini (2006; 2009) specifically associates mega-events with the development of planned creative clusters. In Athens, Greece, the plans for the 2004 Olympic Games included the development of a number of clusters of athletic, cultural and leisure facilities. Her research, however, shows that, whereas Athens' spontaneous clusters have thrived over the years, those created specifically for the 2004 Olympics became 'deserted islands' after the Games (Gospodini, 2009).

In addition, creative practitioners do not always consider the development of leisure facilities and tourism a positive prospect. Molotch and Treskon (2009), for instance, describe the negative attitudes of local art galleries towards the development of tourism in SoHo, New York. Moreover, many small and micro creative businesses associate tourism development with gentrification. In Barcelona, property prices increased by 250-300% between 1986 and 1993; growth that can largely be explained by the rapid gentrification of certain areas following the successful bid to host the Olympic Games in

1992 (McKay and Plumb, 2001; Kavetsos, 2012). In London, where the Olympic Village was built in a deprived area with a high concentration of creative firms, local property values rose by up to 21% in the first two years following the successful bid announcement (Hill, 2007). In the same area, a Compulsory Purchase Order also displaced more than 200 local small and medium sized businesses to allow the construction of the Olympic Park. A survey of 200 displaced small businesses, conducted by Raco and Tunney (2010), found that 12 per cent of them expected to cease their business as a direct consequence of the Compulsory Purchase Order.

A rare but effective attempt to bridge the existing gap in empirical research around the impacts of major cultural events on creative firms was made by the two host cities of the 2008 European Capital of Culture (ECoC) Programme: Liverpool (UK) and Stavanger (Norway). *Impacts 08* (2009) aimed to explore the views of the creative sector on Liverpool's year as ECoC (*Impacts 08*, 2009). The findings suggest that creative practitioners had generally positive perceptions of the cultural programme. According to the research respondents, Liverpool 2008 was successful in raising the sub-region's creative industries' profile, improving 'local morale' and increasing the credibility of the creative industry (*Impacts 08*, 2009). Bergsgard et al. (2010) conducted a similar study for Stavanger. Here it was found that most subjects, all from local cultural institutions directly involved with the ECoC event, gained a positive legacy from participation in the event. The ECoC projects allowed them to develop new ideas, improve production organisation and increase collaboration, both internally and externally. It should be noted, however, that Bergsgard et al. (2010) only give voice to art organisations who had received funding from the Stavanger 2008 organisation; as the authors themselves recognise, non-funded institutions were less satisfied with the 2008 ECoC (Bergsgard et al., 2010; Bergsgard and Vassenden, 2011). In addition, the study is based on research conducted for the local authorities who organised the event programmes, thus suggesting a possible bias. The present research, in contrast, attempts to explore the impacts – both positive and negative –

of a programme of cultural events on the creative sector by exploring the perceptions and feelings of participating *and* non-participating small creative firms.

3. Impacts on the Creative Field

A small but growing body of organisational sociology and management research has focused, in recent years, on the role played by events in the development of an organisational field. A field, in organisational terms, is defined as ‘those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products’ (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983: 148)¹. Particular attention has been paid by organisational and social theorists to the analysis of how fields are formed and to the social dynamics determining their development. Most of these studies build upon the seminal works of DiMaggio and Powell (1983), Bourdieu (1993) and Scott (1995).

Commercial events such as conferences, trade shows and award ceremonies have received much attention from organisational field theorists. Meyer et al. (2005: 467) term such gatherings ‘field-configuring events’, defined as ‘settings where people from diverse social organizations assemble temporarily, with the conscious, collective intent to construct an organizational field’. Such ‘quasi-agglomerations’ (Scott, 2006) provide an opportunity for intensive, highly personalized inter-communication between organisations normally located in geographically stretched fields. These can have significant impacts on entrepreneurship and innovation (Scott, 2006). Research on field-configuring events has often focused on the creative sector (for a complete review, see Schüßler and Sydow, 2013). Anand and Watson (2004), for example, illustrate how award rituals such as the Grammy awards influence organizational field evolution by distributing prestige, attracting collective attention, serving as a medium to resolve conflict and strengthening linkages within the field. Csaba and Larsen (2011) analyse the field-configuring role of trade fairs in the children’s

¹ The concept of ‘field’, by including the totality of relevant actors (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), implies wider connotations than ‘industry’, term which generally indicates organisations producing the same goods or services (Anand and Jones, 2008).

fashion sector. Moeran (2011), Delacour and Leca (2011) and Lena (2011), in the same edited volume, look at book fairs, fine art exhibitions, and country music festivals, respectively. Most of these studies stress the role of field-configuring events in strengthening ties and developing interaction between participants (Schüßler and Sydow, 2013), thus creating a buzz and facilitating the development of communication pipelines (Bathelt and Schuldt, 2008).

Although interesting and relevant to the present research, the concepts of quasi-agglomerations and field-configuring events do not provide an ideal framework for understanding the impacts of a large public cultural festival on small local creative organisations. Two reasons lie behind this. Firstly, field-configuring events are organised with a conscious, collective intention of constructing a platform for networking, publicity and trade. This is not the case for the Cultural Olympiads. Secondly, such events are, by definition, aimed at drawing together actors from a geographically dispersed field, providing a platform for interaction and the development of global pipelines. Conceptualizing the Cultural Olympiads as quasi-agglomerations or field-configuring events would therefore imply looking at their role in the global cultural industry.

A more appropriate conceptualisation for the present research is, instead, Scott's idea of the 'creative field', defined as 'a set of interrelationships that stimulate and channel individual expressions of creativity' (Scott, 2006: 8). These interrelationships are formed by networks of firms, workers and infrastructural facilities (research establishments, design centres etc.), as well as local cultures, conventions and institutions (Scott, 2006). A creative field differs from a creative cluster in that a field does not necessarily involve physical proximity, whereas industrial clusters are traditionally defined as 'geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field' (Porter, 1998: 78). Nonetheless, as noted by Scott (2006) and widely discussed in cultural geography literature (e.g. Hutton, 2004; Zukin, 1982), the urban scale is of special significance for the creative field. This is consistent with the approach chosen for the present research, which focuses

on creative fields from an urban scale perspective by looking at the two cases of Torino and East London.

An emphasis on industrial atmosphere (Marshall, 1920) and on the importance of relational systems (Scott, 1995) characterises Scott's theory of the creative field (1999; 2006). Therefore, using Scott's theory of the creative field to frame the potential impacts of a cultural event programme on small local creative firms means looking at two types of impact. These are impacts on relational systems (e.g. the development of networks and interrelationships among actors, including institutional actors, consumers and producers) and the development of an industrial (creative) atmosphere. The second objective of this research is therefore to explore whether a series of coordinated cultural events, such as those provided by the Cultural Olympiad programme, may have a role in fostering relational systems and creative industrial atmospheres, thus contributing to the development of a creative field.

4. Methodology

To investigate these issues and compensate for the lack of previous research, a qualitative methodology was adopted. The research was essentially exploratory due to the lack of empirical research in this field. Given the special character of this study, involving cultural innovation, creative inspiration and informal learning processes, the parameters cannot be quantified. The research methods therefore consisted of a qualitative e-mail survey with small and micro creative firms in the two case study locations, complemented by face-to-face interviews with 12 creative practitioners and two Cultural Olympiad organisers.

One of the crucial factors that led to choosing East London and Torino as case studies was that they were both post-industrial urban localities and regeneration was a key objective in their successful Olympic bids. This seems especially interesting for the present research given the well-documented tendency of new economy clusters to locate in post-Fordist, ex-industrial infrastructures (for instance, Hamnett, 2003; Drake, 2003). In addition, both Olympic bids placed strong emphases on

their cultural programmes and on the inclusion of local communities, making the objectives of the present research all the more relevant. The two different timeframes appeared to be an opportunity to study the effects of the cultural programmes at different stages. In the case of Torino, the 4-year distance between the Cultural Olympiad and the data collection seemed an ideal period for evaluating its effects. In East London, by contrast, the Cultural Olympiad was happening during the study, thus allowing the timely collection of creative practitioners' perceptions and emotions¹. The differences in the two cities' socio-economic and political roles, as well as the different times when the events took place (pre/after recession), make it impossible to frame this research as a comparative study. In fact, a comparison is beyond the scope of this exploratory study. The aim, instead, is to capture creative practitioners' experiences of a cultural event and its effects on their work, and to provide recommendations for future organisers and further research. The use of two case studies (rather than one) is aimed at providing deeper analysis by addressing different temporal (post-event and during the event) and spatial (small city/area within a large city) dimensions.

Only micro and small creative firms - those employing 50 people or fewer, and with a turnover of €10 million or less (European Commission, 2005) – were included in the study. A total of 460 creative industries in East London and 250 in Torino were identified and invited to take part in the research. Sixty-four from East London and fifty-eight from Torino were eligible and agreed to fill in a qualitative questionnaire (response rates of 13.9% and 23.2% respectively). The questionnaire was composed of Likert scale and open questions and covered four main topics. The first topic covered information about the organisation and its awareness of/participation in the cultural programme. Secondly, the impacts of the cultural programme on outputs (e.g. the development of new products, creative inspiration, sales, business development) were discussed. Thirdly, the impacts of the cultural programme on knowledge sharing, collaborations, networking and atmosphere were covered.

Based on a preliminary analysis of the questionnaires received, 20 respondents per case study were contacted again and asked to take part in a face-to-face interview. The respondents selected at this

stage were those who were (or had been) directly involved with the Cultural Olympiad and those who showed a particular willingness to express their views on the topic. The themes explored during the interview revolved around the perceived impacts of the cultural programme (and more generally of cultural events) on their activities. These impacts included creative inspiration, expertise development, networking and knowledge sharing. Respondents were also asked to talk about their sources of creative inspiration and ideas, and to provide recommendations for future organisers of the Olympic Games or Cultural Olympiads on how to improve legacies for creative organisations. A total of four face-to-face in-depth interviews were conducted with creative practitioners in Torino and seven (with eight creative practitioners) in East London. In addition to this, an interview was carried out with the artistic director of the Torino Cultural Olympiad and another with a coordinator of the London Cultural Olympiad.

Qualitative data collected through the questionnaire and face-to-face interviews were analysed using an established qualitative analysis technique (adapted from Yin, 2009). A-priori themes were identified following a review of relevant literature and analysis of research questions. These themes were used to code the text obtained from interview transcripts and questionnaires, allowing for new themes to emerge. Both a-priori and emerged themes were then reorganized into a more manageable number of macro-themes and used to identify links between narrative variables and develop initial propositions (Yin, 2009). The coding process was repeated several times until a sufficient depth of analysis was achieved. A list of macro-themes and themes used for the analysis (a-priori and as emerged from data) is provided in Table 1.

Table 1 – Themes and macro-themes, identified prior to and throughout qualitative analysis

A-PRIORI	
Effects of Cultural Olympiad (CO) on creative outputs	Effects of the CO on production /innovative practices
	Effects of CO on creativity
	Effects relating to the Olympic Games (OG)
	Effects linked to increased visitation (e.g. additional trade, interruption of normal business)
Factors affecting creativity	Atmosphere, creative ‘scene’
	Creative inspiration
	Characteristics of the urban environment
Collective learning and networks	Role of CO in fostering networking
	Role of CO in fostering collaborations
	Knowledge sharing / collective learning
	Development of a creative field
Types of impact	Negative vs. Positive impacts
	Spatial dimension
	Temporal dimension (Long term vs. Short term)
Role of institutions / public organisations / organisers	Role of institutions in leveraging
	Recommendations for future Games
EMERGED	
Global vs. Local issue / Commercialisation	Commodification;
	Priority given to sports rather than culture / media attention;
	Lack of true artistic value in the CO events / lack of authenticity;
	Lack of funding for art projects / Impoverished funds for the Arts due to high costs of staging OG;
Missed opportunities	Lack of opportunities for small organisations;
	Lack of information about opportunities
Effects of OG on city image and local pride	Consequences of increased tourism
	Local Pride

5. Cultural Olympiads: London 2012 and Torino 2006

Cultural Olympiads, in their original format, started in 1906, when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) agreed to include arts competitions in the Games and to encourage artistic performance at sporting events more generally (Gold and Reville, 2007). After the 1948 London Olympic Games, however, the IOC decided to end the Art Competitions and recommended that exhibitions showcasing the country's art should be organised instead (Masterson, 1986). Cultural programmes have been included in the Olympic Games since 1952, and today the IOC Charter states that 'the host city shall organize a programme of cultural events' (IOC, 2007a: 80). Nonetheless, the Cultural Olympiad is still considered a minor part of the sports programme (Shipway and Brown, 2007).

In the case of London 2012, however, the cultural programme represented a crucial aspect of the Olympic bid. As for all Olympic Summer Games since Barcelona 1992, the London cultural programme lasted for four years, starting in 2008 and culminating with the 'London 2012 Festival' (June-September 2012). The twelve-week-long London Festival, which alone had a budget of £50 million, aimed to be 'the largest cultural celebration in the history of the modern Olympic and Paralympic Movements' and to leave a lasting legacy for the arts in the UK (London 2012, 2011: online). In response to the government's key aim of dispersing the benefits of London 2012 to the whole of the UK, events took place on a national level.

In comparison with the Olympic Summer Games, Winter Games have generally been relatively smaller, with no expectations around a cultural programme. However, unlike most other Winter Olympic cities (with a few notable exceptions, such as Grenoble 1968 and Salt Lake City 2002), Torino fully embraced the concept of the Cultural Olympiad. Torino, with a population of around 900,000 in 2011 (ISTAT, 2011), is the fourth largest Italian city and the capital of the mountain region of Piedmont. Its economy revolves strongly around the declining metallurgic and mechanic

industries, notably the automobile industry. In the year of the Olympic Games the latter accounted for 41% of the province's exports (Camera di Commercio, 2007). The 2006 Olympic Games were part of a strategy put in place by the city region of Torino to accelerate its transition from the post-industrial era to a service economy and to rejuvenate its tourism industry (IOC, 2007b). Consistently with these objectives, Torino was also the first Olympic Winter City to organise an extensive Cultural Programme in parallel with the sports programme.

6. Results

The present study aims to answer two key research questions. 1) What are the potential impacts of large public cultural events on local creative industries? 2) May such events have a role in the development of a creative field by fostering relational systems and the development of a creative industrial atmosphere?

In order to provide a systematic answer to these questions, the discussion of results is organised into two sections. First, intangible impacts on local creative businesses are discussed. These include local pride, increased visibility, the spatial dimension and public funding/sponsorship. Secondly, the impacts on the creative field are illustrated, including networking opportunities, the development of new contacts and a creative atmosphere.

6.1 Impacts on local creative organisations

Both East London and Torino are former industrial centres which have suffered heavily following the decline of manufacturing and were, until very recently, seen as unappealing places to visit. Respondents from both locations revealed great emotional attachment to their places of work, which were described as very creative environments and conducive to artistic inspiration. Therefore, creative practitioners in both locations saw enhanced local pride and increased visitation as very important outcomes of the Olympic Games, regardless of their personal returns as businesses. This

aspect was felt very strongly in both places but particularly in Torino, a city previously known as cold and unwelcoming:

‘The excitement got everyone. Everyone participated, and you must take into account that Torino is a difficult city (...) because people from Torino are quite closed, quite wary. Instead, day after day, this thing involved everyone (...) and this had a huge return, a big win, in which residents found their self-motivation. The gratification of seeing their city being able to do what it did, and doing it well’ (artist, Torino, face-to-face interview).

Similarly, in East London, respondents placed importance on the sense of pride the Games would inspire:

‘With all the different people that are going to come to London and the fact that Londoners are going to feel extra proud that they live here, I think it’s a really unique opportunity to widen the access to the arts that isn’t there necessarily today’ (Co-director of an gallery space and arts organisation, London, face-to-face interview).

A designer from East London pointed out how cultural events *‘create a local pride in what’s created in the arts and the design field’*. This seems especially interesting in relation to what an artist noted about Hackney Wick, a deprived area adjacent to the Olympic Park in East London:

‘I mean you’ve seen the outside of this place, it looks shambolic, but it’s got all of this kind of creative stuff going on inside. And that’s what Hackney Wick is. Everything is going on indoors and it’s all behind closed doors’ (face-to-face interview).

Research previously conducted by the author (Pappalepore, 2010) similarly found that creative areas often fail to succeed as cultural quarters precisely because they lack platforms to showcase the area’s creative production and its artistic buzz. The findings of the present study suggest that the cultural events linked to the Olympic Games (whether included in the official Cultural Olympiad or not) could serve as a platform to promote the cultural activities happening ‘behind closed doors’. Thus, they may be able to contribute to the area or city’s promotion as a creative hub. Research by Vanolo

(2007), for example, has pointed out how, during the Winter Games, two creative areas of Torino (Murazzi and Quadrilatero) particularly attracted the interest of the media, contributing to the portrayal of an image of dynamism and buzz for the whole city.

In London, however, several participants expressed fears that opportunities for increased visibility and new product development might pass them by because most of the available funding would be directed to other regions of the UK or to large organisations. This must be linked to the key bid objective of spreading the benefits of the Olympic Games across the UK, meaning that the Cultural Olympiad events could take place anywhere in the country. This national reach may seem a sensible idea for a country where the capital already features 40% of the national arts infrastructure despite hosting only 12% of its population (Landry, 2005). However, by organising the Cultural Olympiad on a national scale, London incurred the risk of diluting resources and benefits, producing a fragmented image for the event and creating confusion about the meaning of the Cultural Olympiad. Several respondents (in Torino and London) also pointed out the under-funding of the cultural programme, which is treated as a secondary event in comparison with the main sports programme. An artist who worked on the artistic illumination of Torino during the Games, for example, referred to the Cultural Olympiad as '*a series of secondary events*'. The artistic director of the Torino Cultural Olympiad similarly noted that '*during the Games all the attention is focused on the medals, the sports events, the champions*'. These results are consistent with existing research on the Cultural Olympiads. García (2004) argues that the cultural programmes' marginal role is related to the subordinate position occupied by the arts in relation to sport within the sphere of leisure. Shipway and Brown (2007) link the lack of funding for the Cultural Olympiad to two main factors: the increasing costs of the Games to the host cities and the fact that the cultural programme rarely appears in the media. Hence, one could recommend that future Olympic Cities find more strategic ways to encourage media coverage of the cultural programme – at least at a local and national level. This could slowly increase awareness and benefit future Cultural Olympiad editions in terms of

funding and creative organisations' participation. Furthermore, strict regulations under which only one product per category can be associated with the Olympic Games (e.g. McDonalds for food) make the attracting of cultural sponsors even more difficult (García and Miah, 2007). In London, the organisers tried to overcome the problem through the creation of the 'Inspire Mark' brand, which adopted the London 2012 logo without the Olympic rings. This allowed the promotion of smaller projects (Lander and Crowe, 2010). Similarly, an on-line 'Culture Diary' was created, where organisations could register any events they were organising for 2012, allowing them to promote their events without necessarily being part of the Cultural Olympiad's official programme. However, the empirical data show very low awareness of leveraging initiatives addressed at creative and cultural firms in east London. Lack of information and the need to feel more involved were the most common problems flagged by London respondents in relation to the Cultural Olympiad.

6.2 Impacts on the creative field

In both cities creative practitioners regarded networking as a very important component of their work:

'It is always important to exchange ideas. To exchange opinions, to see what others are doing and perhaps collaborate. I do not believe in individual work, I rather believe in group work' (designer, Torino).

East London participants revealed that they had created new contacts and collaborations thanks to the cultural programme, or expressed their hope of achieving this through future participation. Being based near the Olympic Park was seen by some London respondents as an advantage in terms of opportunities. One participant in particular described how this proximity allowed the development of new projects and contacts despite not being officially involved with the Cultural Olympiad:

'We have been part of projects that have the 'inspired by' mark and initiatives such as open weekend but primarily our creative output and increased projects, ideas and networks have been

self-initiated outside of the cultural Olympiad (...) we have been inspired by the Olympics, increased collaborations etc. but are not directly supported by the cultural Olympiad' (Film producer, east London, face-to-face interview).

Conversely, proximity to the Olympic Park was irrelevant to Turin's participants because both cultural and sport events were scattered throughout the metropolitan region and surrounding mountains. In this sense, the differences between the two cities in terms of the space affected by the changed structure (Preuss, 2007) may help explain the different perceptions of the impacts. Similarly, the difference between Turin and London in terms of the temporal dimension (post-event and during the event) may have affected perceptions of 'atmosphere'.

Atmosphere was perceived as the most important aspect in terms of 'effects on creativity' by Torino respondents:

'The positive aspect is the wonderful, fun, sunny and even creative atmosphere of that time. Torino changed day by day and I had the impression I was looking at it with different glasses, 3D glasses. Everything was valorised and enhanced: monuments, buildings, venues, squares ... the whole city and especially the people. I'd say it has definitely been a very positive event' (architect, Torino, qualitative questionnaire).

A designer, who described the Olympics atmosphere as, '*marvellous, wonderful, because everyone you met on the street smiled at you*', explicitly linked creative inspiration with happiness and working in a cheerful environment:

'[a creative environment is ...] an environment that should mainly be cheerful (...) because working in serenity, in harmony, in happiness, allows you to have a free mind, free to do things that are maybe very strange and that later have to be translated into real, feasible products (designer, Torino, face-to-face interview).

The development of such an inspiring atmosphere in Torino may reasonably be seen as having been facilitated by the cultural programme. This programme included many open-air events (such as

concerts and performances on stage), an urban decoration programme, and three ‘Olympic nights’ (Notti Bianche) of street and indoor events throughout the night. The idea that a cheerful environment is conducive to creativity seems consistent with economics studies which have found a positive correlation between happiness and work productivity (Oswald et al., 2009). As Smith (2008) suggests, creativity needs multiplicity, a flux of unexpected events (Scott, 2000) and spontaneity (Richards and Wilson, 2007). The evidence from this research shows that the festive atmosphere during the Games was seen by Torino participants as the most positive outcome of the Olympics. It was also seen as a long-lasting one: ‘all that is left’, according to one interviewee. In London, the legacy aspect could not be explored due to the research’s timeframe. However, the findings from the Torino respondents may suggest that organisers of future Games and related cultural programmes should try to facilitate a festive and shared cheerful atmosphere through the organisation of open air, visible and free events. Although this is often at the heart of the hosting process, the extent to which this is achieved may vary significantly. This observation may provide a key recommendation to Olympic Games organisers as to the type of events to produce within a cultural programme.

7. Conclusion

Evidently, the experiences discussed in this paper – London and Torino – are not fully comparable. This is due to the very different urban, economic and political scales of the two cases, as well as to the different points in time when the research was conducted (during and post-event, respectively). Nonetheless, the study reveals a number of important findings that enrich existing discussions. These relate to the impact of cultural events and to the social dynamics that underpin the development of creative fields in an urban setting.

This research contributes to bridging the gap in knowledge that exists on the impact of large cultural events on local creative firms. Positive impacts that are identified include increased exposure to a pool of consumers, enhanced visibility for the creative sector, and increased local pride. However, the most important contribution made by this study relates to the under-researched area of intangible

impacts, and more specifically to the role played by a series of coordinated cultural events in fostering relational systems and a creative atmosphere. Findings suggest that major cultural events have the potential to positively affect relational systems and atmosphere, thus contributing to the development of a creative field. They do so by providing opportunities for collaborations and networking, allowing access to initiatives which may generate ideas and new skills and increase the sense of community. The atmosphere during an event plays a particularly important role in channelling individual creativity.

Nonetheless, not all the research participants had positive feelings toward the Cultural Olympiad, with some of the London respondents being particularly critical. The two main concerns of East London respondents were the lack of funding available to develop creative projects for the festival and the lack of information about opportunities linked to the Cultural Olympiad. The present research, in this regard, confirms research by O'Brien (2006) and Chalip and Leyns (2002). Their research found that small local businesses were unable to fully benefit from major events unless appropriate leveraging programmes were developed and implemented by public organisations.

Although most London interviewees saw tourism development and the regeneration of the Olympic Park area as opportunities, they also feared that the emphasis on image could negatively impact the selection of Cultural Olympiad projects. This would involve giving priority to large established cultural institutions and more commercial forms of culture, at the expense of smaller, independent and more innovative creative productions. This links to the debate in events literature on the commodification of cultural events (e.g. Chackoa and Schaffer 1993; Waterman, 1998; Crespi-Vallbona and Richards, 2007). In Torino, for instance, certain Cultural Olympiad events were 'easy to consume' cultural products aimed at promoting local industries and traditions (e.g. chocolate making) rather than at providing a real cultural experience (Vanolo, 2007). On the other hand, other projects were more innovative and sophisticated, enabling the programme to cater for a wide range of audiences and contributing to the promotion of local creative talent on different levels. As two

London interviewees noted, the role of such large cultural programmes should not be limited to the development of elite forms of art. They should aim to promote local skills and make them accessible to a wider public, as well as giving residents and visitors a chance to take part and be involved in cultural activities.

The experience of the case of Torino, where a large number of small unrelated events were staged, suggests, however, that diluting the programme excessively may lead to the weakening of the Cultural Olympiad brand. When asked what she would suggest to future cultural programme organisers, the artistic director of the Torino Cultural Olympiad suggested organising of a programme with fewer coordinated events rather than *'too many micro-events that we organised to please everyone'*. A majority of coordinated small events, clearly branded as part of one festival but representing the variety of local cultures, combined with fewer well-chosen large scale events, would probably constitute an effective approach balancing local and global scopes. While local involvement contributes to the development of local talent and the promotion of local cultures, media attention derived from an international scope would facilitate image enhancement. This could potentially attract much-needed sponsorships for future editions of the Cultural Olympiad.

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ⁱ In Torino, the cultural programme took place in February 2006 during the Games, while in the case of London 2012 it started in 2008, leading-up to the final festival in summer 2012. The data collection for the present study was conducted between April and July 2010.

