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Public Diplomacy and the International Paralympic Committee: reconciling the roles of disability advocate and sports regulator.

While the link between international diplomacy and the Olympic movement has been the subject of extensive academic and journalistic inquiry, the experience of diplomatic discourse as it relates to the relatively youthful Paralympic movement, has received little attention. This is not just in the context of state diplomacy, where for example the Paralympic Games may provide a conduit for the pursuit of specific policy objectives, but also in relation to the engagement of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) as an evolving non-state actor, in the diplomatic process. The idea of the IPC as an advocacy body engaged through public diplomacy in promoting disability rights is explored as an element of the contemporary politics of disability. The paper considers the relationship between the activities of the IPC and wider lobbying by disabled people's organizations (DPOs) as a means of leveraging change in domestic and international policy toward disability. In relation to the global development agenda, the paper assesses IPC responses to the gulf in resourcing for parasport (as well as more fundamental health and education services) between high and low resource regions. It suggests that the asymmetry between national teams, evident in levels of representation and podium success at Parasports events presents a challenge to the legitimacy of the IPC as an international advocate for disability rights. It considers the response of the organization from the perspective of public diplomacy and locates that response within the wider diplomacy of development.

Introduction

The emergence of the Paralympic Games is a relatively recent (post war) phenomenon. Given its origins in efforts to engage with sport as a tool to facilitate the rehabilitation of disabled combatants (Stoke Mandeville Games), there are significant historical links between the Games and wider geo-political events. The relatively recent arrival of the Paralympic Games, its smaller scale and political sensitivity towards disability, has meant that they have not featured as prominently in international diplomacy as the Olympic Games. There are however, important caveats to that, namely, since they follow directly after the Olympic Games, the Paralympic Games have been affected by ‘overspill’ from diplomatic tensions relating to the Olympic Games. In addition, the rapid (though inconsistent) increase in the scale of the event (328 athletes from 21 countries competing across 9 sports in 1960, increasing to 4237 athletes from 164 countries competing across 20 sports in 2012)¹ and its links to the wider human rights agenda are, increasingly drawing the Paralympic Games into diplomatic discourse.

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) is primarily concerned with the development of elite international sport for people with disabilities. Nevertheless, in order to establish itself as an international actor and advocate for the rights of people with disabilities it is drawn toward patterns of interest representation that suggest its engagement in the diplomatic process is broadly defined. This is highlighted in the final part of the Paralympic Vision, which is:

‘to inspire and excite the world: the external result is our contribution to a better world for all people with a disability. To achieve this, relations with external organizations and the promotion of the Paralympic movement as a whole are of prime importance’².

Promoting the rights of people with disabilities in resource poor regions is critical to the longer term development of Paralympic sport by countries within these regions. This in turn is central to developing the Paralympics as a global brand. The current limited reach of Paralympic sport presents a continuing challenge for the movement. In 2012, twenty per-cent of countries represented in the Olympics did not field a single athlete at the Paralympics, while many fielded only one athlete. In this sense, the governance and development of Paralympic sport has become entwined with wider concerns of disability advocacy.

Evolving perspectives on sport in diplomacy

Contending arguments as to what constitutes diplomacy have long formed part of the wider body of literature on international relations³. Changing conceptualisations of diplomacy can help develop an appreciation of Olympic and Paralympic sport as increasingly prominent aspects of contemporary international relations. Yet there has, until recently, been limited scholarly work which engaged in a systematic analysis of international sport, from the perspective of studies in diplomacy. This scholarly vacancy prompted the formation in 2011, of the Diplomacy and International Sport Research group by Stuart Murray, Geoffrey Pigman and Simon Rofe⁴. Subsequent papers by Murray, Pigman and Rofe develop key themes in the debate, in particular the call for more effective engagement between theorists and practitioners in the fields of sport and diplomacy⁵, the implications of the exponential rise in person to person exchanges (virtual and personal) through the medium of international sports events on the global development of public diplomacy⁶ and the significance of football clubs with global reach on the public diplomacy domain⁷.

The body of literature focusing specifically on diplomacy as it relates to the Olympic Games can provide valuable material when seeking to understand the changing dynamics of the sport-diplomacy relationship. Pre-occupations with the state and bi-polar tensions of the Cold War found their echoes in the Olympic boycotts of the 1980s and were explored by social and

political historians concerned with the use of sport as a conduit for state diplomacy⁸. The commercialisation of Olympic sport and the development of global interests relating to the Games particularly in the post-Cold War period, have been articulated by writers from a range of disciplines adopting more pluralist interpretations of international relations and diplomacy that focus for example on developing relations between the IOC and the United Nations and the capacity of multi-national corporations with a stake in the Games, to influence events on the ground⁹.

Sport in diplomacy continues to evolve, as an aspect of wider international relations and more recent conceptualisations of diplomacy throw light on these changes, particularly in the context of increasing efforts by organizations constituting the Paralympic movement to influence wider policy processes. This includes for example, insights provided through engagement with Brian Hocking's concept of 'Multi-stakeholder diplomacy' which is predicated on the idea of the diplomatic process being increasingly concerned with the creation of networks embracing a range of state and non-state actors focusing on the 'management of issues demanding the application of recourses in which no single participant possesses a monopoly'¹⁰. Also more recently Hocking, Jan Melissen, Shaun Riordan and Paul Sharp's conceptualisation of 'integrative diplomacy' focused on the expansion of actors beyond traditional NGOs (and organizations constituting the state) to encapsulate different forms of civil society groups¹¹. In relation to the Paralympic Games, engagement of disability and welfare organizations, who increasingly use the platform of the Games to advocate for the promotion of disability rights nationally (for example in relation to London 2012) and globally (for example in relation to Beijing 2008) would appear to bear this out. Use of new media platforms by such groups, for example the charity Scope which provides detailed guidelines concerning their effective use as part of campaigning strategies¹², highlights the significance of such technological developments in promoting these novel forms of

diplomatic activity¹³. In discussing networks associated with public diplomacy, Hocking comments on the role of new media forms in the generation of ‘multi-directional flows’ of information that have replaced the hierarchical flows traditionally associated with diplomacy. Such information can be generated by a range of actors who (as ‘producers’ rather than ‘consumers’ of the diplomatic message), while not necessarily setting out primarily to change policy, will often have the wider aim of influencing ‘elite attitudes and policy choices’¹⁴. The IPC has itself focused increasingly on social media platforms to promote their own narratives of inclusion and empowerment through the Games. Social media it was felt, enabled the Paralympic Movement to engage new audiences and broaden the reach and appeal of “the Games and the Movement”¹⁵. Athlete engagement for example, provided the opportunity to provide an athlete’s perspective on a range of Paralympic experiences and to open up a new dimension of the Games to audiences. Conceptualizations of diplomacy in such fluid, integrative forms also help to articulate ideas of the blurring of boundaries between domestic and international policy, reflected in for example, how the promotion of the disability agenda by countries hosting the Olympic and Paralympic Games, becomes part of wider efforts to enhance their disability rights record as an aspect of their international profile in the run up to and during the Games¹⁶.

The idea of public diplomacy is articulated variously including attempts by organizations (primarily though not exclusively state sponsored) to directly influence opinions of ‘publics’ internationally¹⁷, identity creation and image projection¹⁸, as an instrument to ‘understand cultures, attitudes and behaviour; build and manage relationships; influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values’¹⁹. It is significant to this investigation since actors can be observed engaging with the Paralympic Games as a route to refining the broader narrative concerning the relationship between the Games and the characteristics of the host nation. In relation to London 2012 written evidence given by Prof. Nick Cull to the

Foreign Affairs Select Committee on Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Public Diplomacy made particular reference to the prominence given to the Paralympic Games within the FCO 2012 plan. Cull contends that;

There are many countries around the world in which differently-abled people do not have the opportunities they enjoy in Britain, and by increasing international exposure to the Paralympics emphasis on what people can do the FCO is performing a significant act of ethical leadership and associating the UK with some truly inspirational people²⁰.

The Foreign Affairs Select Committee concluded its inquiry into FCO Public Diplomacy relating to the Olympic and Paralympic Games and published its findings on 6 February 2011. Noteworthy, beyond Cull's commentary, was the limited reference to the Paralympic Games (as opposed to reference to the Olympic Games). Oral evidence given by Conrad Bird, Head of Public Diplomacy at the FCO in response to a question (question fifty two) by MP David Watts concerned the use of the Paralympic Games to promote the image of Britain as an open and inclusive society. In this he drew attention to the engagement of Tanni-Grey Thompson as an Olympic Ambassador and her visit to Palestine. Bird suggested 'We felt that the Paralympics was a good opportunity to demonstrate British attitudes toward disability. We felt that could be an example of promoting the British way of doing things and our values'. Beyond state interests in these processes, the idea of public diplomacy is helpful in understanding the behaviour of the IPC as it seeks, in its formative years, to develop its engagement as a disability rights advocate, globally.

Regarding the Paralympic movement more generally, its youthfulness (in comparison to the Olympic movement) is the most significant issue which characterizes its engagement with the diplomatic process. Initiated in 1896, the Olympic movement has evolved over one hundred

and nineteen years and has been shaped by fundamental shifts in international relations (and the technological developments that in part fuelled those shifts). In contrast, the cold-war had ended by the time the IPC was formed in 1989. As organizations characteristic of an emerging international order, and with their focus on issues relating to the wider human rights agenda alongside the promotion of new forms of elite adaptive sports, the constituent organizations of the Paralympic movement would be attempting to find their voice in a very different diplomatic environment. Table 1 places some historical perspective on this process;

Table 1 Olympic and Paralympic diplomacy: structure and agency

| | Diplomacy - conceptual debates and structural developments | Diplomacy and the Olympic movement | Diplomacy and the Paralympic movement |
|---------------|--|---|--|
| Pre-war | Closed diplomacy - Gentlemen, amateurs and imperialists | Early Games as inherently diplomatic (consensus building between elites on and off the field of play) | |
| Inter-war | Open diplomacy - democratisation as reaction to failure | IOC contact with League of Nations - new idealism | |
| Cold –war | ‘New’ diplomacy (the 1960 Vienna Convention on diplomacy – the apex of state diplomacy?) | Olympic Boycotts as instruments of state diplomacy | |
| Post-cold-war | Multi-stakeholder diplomacy - multi-layered engagement by diverse actors | State, sub-state and non-state engagement. IOC 2000 Commission - response to moral crisis Cultural Olympiad as Public Diplomacy | Embryonic - gradual engagement in discourse relating to human / disability rights as an aspect of international relations |
| Post 9/11 | Re-defining ‘soft power’ as diplomacy electronic media and multi-directional information flows re-interpreting public diplomacy Constructivism as practical response to conflicting world- | Mediation and new security realities Commercial diplomacy and the Games - blurring national and international boundaries Olympic movement as actor in development diplomacy | Formalised advocacy coalitions relating to human rights (national, transnational and global) Paralympic movement and public diplomacy - projecting images of a tolerant society. Paralympic movement |

| | | | |
|--|--------|--|---|
| | views. | Cosmopolitanism and image development - public diplomacy and the London 2012 bid | as actor in development diplomacy Paralympic movement as inherently diplomatic. Challenging the world view on disability? |
|--|--------|--|---|

The IPC was then, seeking to establish itself in a rapidly evolving diplomatic environment characterised by a more complex configuration of actors and issues.

As an expanding international sporting event closely linked to the Olympic Games and engaged directly in advocating disability rights, the Paralympic Games are increasingly drawn into international debate concerning the politics of disability. This process is complicated by the maturing of the Games which, according to Peter Horton and Kristine Toohey, has led to loss of their sporting innocence²¹. They cite A. Craft's comment that as Paralympic sport has matured, it has appropriated some of the most desirable aspects of mainstream Olympic sport²². At the same time however, 'there were the less desirable signs of maturation - evidence of banned drug use, increased security precautions, and the shake out of less glamorous sports in favour of the flashy ones that sell well'. As the Paralympic Games have worked to enhance their profile, they have increased their political currency. States, most notably China, have invested heavily in improving their performance in the medals tally. The perception that improved performance will promote international prestige and that states supporting disability in such a visible way, will be viewed in a more positive light regarding their social and cultural policies, is implicit in such increased investment²³. At the same time, the IPC and other disability sports actors (as well as international Disabled Persons Organizations - DPOs - generally) are availing themselves of the opportunity to promote their own interests in an environment in which states vie with one another to enhance their reputation regarding civil liberty and inclusion. The rapid increase in the scale

of the Paralympic Games over recent years and the increased media interest in the Games helps foster the view that the Paralympic Games have been ‘mainstreamed’. It follows that the Paralympic Games will attract the attention of those organizations seeking to use international sport as a conduit for diplomatic discourse. A combination of the politicization of disability and relationships between organizations representing non-disabled sport and sport for people with disabilities has however set a specific frame of reference for the development of the Paralympic movement and how such a movement is drawn into the wider political and diplomatic debate.

Diplomatic activity and the Paralympic Games: state and non-state perspectives

The idea that the Olympic Games can become a conduit for the pursuit of state foreign policy objectives is a consistent theme in literature on sport and international relations. The extent to which the Paralympics is drawn into this policy frame is less clear. The proximity of the Paralympic Games to the Olympic Games, particularly since 1988, has resulted in spill-over of diplomatic activity. In relation to British diplomatic support Olympic Attachés are for example, responsible for providing support for both the Olympic and Paralympic teams. As the scale of the Paralympic Games has increased, this has significantly increased the responsibility of diplomatic and consular services in the build-up to the Games, a point readily acknowledged by operatives working in the field.

The potential of the Paralympic Games to provide a conduit for traditional state diplomacy is noteworthy on a number of levels. At a most fundamental level, the capacity of the Paralympics to provide a platform for senior politicians and Heads of State to enhance their visibility against the backdrop of such an ostensibly positive activity likely to engender public empathy as sport and disability, should not be under-rated. It is noteworthy that at a

time of increasing tension between Western powers and Iran, the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took the opportunity of the opening ceremony of the 2008 Paralympics in Beijing, to travel to China and meet a number of senior diplomatic and government figures. The official press commented that the Iranian entourage included the Foreign Minister Manuchehr Mottaki, Vice President Esfandiar Rahim Mashaii, Physical Education Organization head Mohammad Aliabadi and senior advisor to the government Mojtaba Samareh Hashemi. The high profile visit contributed to attempts to develop a more progressive perspective of the regime regarding the rights of minority groups. Coinciding with the visit, the official Iranian news agency IRNA issued a press release noting that Iranian female athletes with physical disabilities would for the first time participate in the Paralympic Games, competing in track and field, shooting and table tennis. Prior to the visit, an Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hassan Qashqavi released a statement noting that Ahmadinejad's visit was 'aimed at highlighting the great ability of the [Paralympic] athletes'²⁴. In the statement he referred to Paralympians as 'suffering' from disability, reflecting a traditional medicalized interpretation of disability which contrasted with IPC attempts to re-focus away from problematizing disability and toward a greater emphasis on the ability of athletes. . At the same time he commented that the visit would provide the opportunity for senior officials of the two countries to hold talks on 'issues of mutual interest'²⁵.

Attempts to enhance international perceptions of a state through hosting Paralympic events are evident when reading accounts of journalists, spectators and participants who have travelled abroad for events. This certainly formed the backdrop for the Paralympics in Beijing in 2008. Prior to the Beijing Games of 2008, there was intense speculation concerning how the Chinese government would respond to the challenge of hosting an event for disabled athletes, given the negative publicity China had received in the past, regarding disability

rights. Prior to the Games the Chinese government engaged in a number of high profile initiatives that helped to enhance the perception of respect for disability rights within Chinese society. This included China as a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March 2007²⁶. Other national initiatives included the heightened profile given to the long-standing national Help-the-Disabled-Day, held in China on the third Sunday of every May, in the form of widely publicised free medical check-ups, job fairs and a series of consultations on inclusive building design²⁷.

Beyond the Paralympic Games, hosting of world Championships in a range of para-sports has provided the opportunity for Municipal Authorities and states to develop their human rights profile in the international arena. The Paralympic shooting world championships held in Zagreb, Croatia, in July 2010 is one example. This was a significant event for the host country, which is still engaged in developing its international profile in the wake of the Balkan conflict of the 1990s. Organized by the Croatian NPC, this was the first world championship in a sport for athletes with a disability, to be held in the country²⁸. It is noteworthy that the Prime Minister of Croatia attended the event and (along with the Mayor of Zagreb and the IPC President) was engaged in the ceremonies and welcoming speeches that accompanied the competition.

Beyond providing a forum for developing the profile of senior politicians domestically and internationally, the Paralympics (and their forerunner the International Stoke Mandeville Games) are from time to time drawn into wider foreign policy developments. Most notably, the Paralympic movement was caught up in the unfolding debate about how to respond to sporting links with South Africa²⁹. While some commentators argued that disability was a levelling experience and that disability sport should not be drawn into international politics

(hence the admittance of the South African team to the 1968 Paralympic Games), the government of the Netherlands succeeded in getting the South African team excluded from the 1980 Games³⁰.

In the context of public policy, interest groups (for example disability rights groups who may attract the support of sympathetic Paralympic athletes) have the capacity to use the Games to express their opposition to particular policy developments perceived to have a negative effect on the quality of life of people with disabilities. Of particular note here, was the concerted campaign to highlight the impact of proposed cuts by the British government, to the Disability Living Allowance in advance of the Paralympic Games of 2012³¹. In this case the opposition did not have the desired affect since the cuts were fully implemented in April 2013. Alan Roulstone, Professor of Applied Social Sciences (Disability Policy) in the UK wrote on the policy press blogsite:

The most difficult aspect of the Paralympics for many disabled people has been the bizarre juxtaposition of seeing great sporting achievements (rightly) being applauded and poster girl/boy images of photogenic disabled people alongside arguably the most aggressing and top-down reform of welfare since the Poor Law.³²

In this sense then, the cuts and the way they were portrayed in the British media had a detrimental effect upon the desired Paralympic legacy espoused by the British government in advance of the Games.

Significant in the context of Multi-Stakeholder Diplomacy, the convergence of state and non-state interests is evident at a number of levels. At a symbolic level, the ceremony to launch the new Paralympic logo for the Sochi 2014 Paralympic Games drew together the IPC president Philip Craven, the Russian Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Zhukoc and the UN

Special Advisor on Sport for Development and Peace, Wilfried Lemke, along with a range of senior sports officials and event organizers³³. Notwithstanding anxieties with the organization of the 2014 Games, as well as lingering concerns over the human rights record of the Russian regime, there was a shared interest among stakeholders to ensure that the event was successful. In that sense, engagement with the diplomatic process formed an increasingly important part of discourse relating to the Games.

Beyond the parameters of activities of state actors (including extensive logistical support for teams provided by diplomatic and consular services), organizations that constitute the Paralympic movement have engaged as international advocacy bodies in relation to wider concerns with equity, inclusion and the rights of people with disabilities. In this respect, links between the International Olympic Committee (IOC), International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the United Nations (UN) on international conventions for people with disabilities have a particular significance³⁴. The idea of the IPC as an advocacy body engaged diplomatically within international society to promote disability rights is considered within the wider context of debate concerning the capacity of international sports NGOs to influence international affairs. The work of the Agitos foundation as an attempt by part of the Paralympic movement to address systemic inequities in the distribution of resources required to support the development of Paralympic sport is part of that process since ultimately it promotes the interests of a growing movement in a crowded global space.

As outlined in the introduction, the politicization of disability rights and the perception that disability sports organizations, primarily the IPC, could effectively lobby to promote disability awareness, has drawn the IPC into international political discourse. This has not always worked in the interests of the sports organizations. For example, when China won the bid to host the 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Games, a number of influential stakeholders highlighted their concerns given China's poor track record concerning disability rights³⁵. This

initially included comments made by British Paralympian Baroness Tanni-Grey Thompson, indicating anxieties about disability rights in China and suggesting the danger of using the Paralympics to mask underlying issues with their human rights record.

The staging of the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing provided the opportunity for a number of DPOs to monitor disability rights in an unprecedented way. The campaigning journal *Disability Now* dispatched four individuals with disabilities to monitor the level and quality of provision for the disabled. This included Zara Todd, campaigns officer at the charity Scope and the BBC's disability affairs correspondent. Todd reported that although volunteers were enthusiastic, adaptive measures did not generally appear to have been developed in consultation with people with disabilities. Todd suggested that, while exposure to coverage of disability sport could help promote disability awareness, China was indeed only beginning to find its way when it came to disability rights. At the same time, the *Disability Now* journalist White reported his shock at the apparent lack of disability awareness within much of the population³⁶. Such a perspective is tempered by reports from other commentators that three years before the Games, a disabled person would be pointed out in the street. However, the Paralympics, despite widely reported limitations, had resulted in people with disabilities in China 'coming out of the shadows'.

Development diplomacy: Re-defining the engagement of the Paralympic movement

The engagement of the Paralympic movement generally and the IPC more specifically in the development process, is in part driven by the imperative to expand and to consolidate its role as a key actor in the arena of international relations. The IOC has, despite ongoing challenges with governance and corruption, been in existence for one hundred and nineteen years at the time of writing, establishing itself as a widely recognised actor in international relations. This

is reflected for example in its gaining Observer status within the United Nations General Assembly in 2010³⁷ and its work with the United Nations Office of Sport for Development and Peace (UNSDP). In contrast, the IPC as an organization in its formative years is still finding its place in the international arena. Diplomatic activity relating to the development process forms a particularly important part of this.

There are two interlinking aspects to the international sport for development agenda and activities in both these areas that are significant in relation to the efforts of the IPC. On the one hand, the organization has engaged in a number of disability sport and development initiatives in partnership with a range of stakeholders that are illustrative of efforts to enhance their profile as an international disability rights advocacy body. On the other it has committed, most recently through the work of the Agitos Foundation, to support the expansion and development of Para-sport internationally.

Promoting international development through disability sport.

Whilst the perception that disability rights are less respected in the Global South is not necessarily based on empirical evidence, issues concerning disability rights common to a number of states across the Global South can be identified. This relates to relatively low GDP, under-provision in basic health care, transport and communication problems and political instability (leading to increased risk of conflict with corresponding disabling injuries). It is against this background that disability sports organizations, in particular the IPC, have become increasingly involved with sports based interventions which attempt to ameliorate the problems flowing from poverty and social exclusion faced by people with a disability. While such challenges are evident in many regional contexts, the focus here is on regions within the African continent.

The Department for International Development (DFID) broadly define social exclusion as a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live³⁸. Discrimination occurs in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household. DFID identifies social exclusion as a priority because it both causes poverty and impedes poverty reduction. Moreover, poverty reduction policies rarely reach socially excluded groups unless they are specifically designed to include them. The impact of exclusion, particularly with respect to disability, is interpreted by Albrecht as:

A person's position in society affects the type and severity of physical disability one is likely to experience and more importantly the likelihood that he or she is likely to receive rehabilitation services. Indeed, the political economy of a community dictates what debilitating health conditions will be produced, how and under the circumstances they will be defined, and ultimately who will receive the services³⁹.

This is summed up by Cameron Crawford who states for most, the economics of disability determine what life at the side-lines is like⁴⁰.

Besides poverty and disease one of the major sources of disability in a number of African states is armed conflict brought about by political instability in parts of the continent. One of the main impacts of armed conflicts is that there is a high level of disabilities caused by small arms and light weapons (SALW), including anti-personnel landmines. Youth, both as

civilians and combatants, appear to be one of the most affected groups with this problem, and it is often the case that there are no adequate socio-economic services and opportunities in post-conflict environments to help deal with the many issues raised by these conflict-induced disabilities. However, it is equally important not to overlook the issues for those who received their disabilities as a result of accidents or birth defects otherwise there would be a risk of marginalising further an already marginalised group. People, and particularly children, with disabilities do not have equal opportunities and equal access regarding most parts of life. Handicap International claim this lack of access includes basic services (especially education and health), because of physical inaccessibility to the buildings, lack of information in adapted formats (e.g. Braille) and discriminatory behaviour within society⁴¹. In addition, people with disabilities tend to suffer disproportionately during and after conflict situations. They are often the most exposed to protection risks, including physical and sexual violence, exploitation, harassment and discrimination⁴². This is particularly true for females. Research by the United Nations indicates that violence against children with disabilities occurs at annual rates at least 1.7 times greater than for their non-disabled peers⁴³. Finally, they also lack options for making a living and, therefore, the opportunity to transcend out of poverty, which often means they either remain as a financial burden on their families or are forced to beg to make a living.

The international development community have struggled in their attempts to employ interventions that effectively responded to the challenges posed by combinations of poverty, social exclusion and disempowerment frequently associated with the lived experience of people with disabilities in resource poor regions. The emergence of sport based interventions (commonly referred to as sport for development and peace) formed part of attempts to adopt alternative approaches to the development process, the objective being to use sport as a

conduit through which issues such as health education, gender equality, empowerment, conflict resolution and community development could be addressed⁴⁴. Given the rapid expansion of sport for development and peace programmes as part of the international development agenda, it is not surprising to observe a growing number of related activities resourced by organizations which constitute the Paralympic movement. One example is the use of regional events such as the All African Games, as conduits for promoting their disability rights advocacy role. Rather ambitious statements made by the President of the African Paralympic Committee after the Joint Planning Meeting (October 2010) for the tenth All African Games in September 2011, reflect the heightened expectations that such events can make an impact on the priorities of policy makers and perceptions of wider society, toward disability⁴⁵.

The activities of the IPC as an advocacy organization engaged in the promotion of disability rights is then reflected in its engagement with a range of international development initiatives over the past decade. A small number of these are outlined in table 2. It should be noted that many of these have involved minimal investment of resources.

Table 2 IPC Development Partnerships (IPC archived Press Releases, IPC Website)

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>IPC / 15 NPCs from 4 regions 2008</p> | <p>Organizational Development Initiative (ODI)</p> | <p>‘Some results of the ODI to date are: the NPC of Tanzania has acquired a new office from the National Sports Commission, the NPC of Morocco intensified its relationship with Handicap International, an IPC Development Partner, by working together to develop their new strategic plan.’</p> |
| <p>IPC / UNESCO 2008</p> | <p>Partnership initiative</p> | <p>To promote the Convention Against Doping in Sport, increase awareness about persons with a disability in formal education systems through the IPC’s Paralympic School Day programme and</p> |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| | | promote girls and women as leaders within sport. |
| IPC / Southern Africa NPCs 2011 | Launch of IPC Regional Development Camp in Lusaka, Zambia | 'The camp, which is sponsored by the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF) and Charity and Sport, runs from 3-8 October. Its goals include creating a unique atmosphere to give NPCs the opportunity to share knowledge'. |
| IPC in partnership with Ivory Coast NPC (2011) | Element of IPC Organizational Development Initiative | Workshops and practical initiatives to strengthen Ivory Coast NPC – both in terms of its activity as disability rights advocate and in terms of talent identification and coach development. |
| IPC / UK Sport partnership in sport-for-development (2011) | Memorandum Understanding of | 'to enhance the capability and capacity of NPCs worldwide, with particular focus on region of East Africa and Portuguese speaking nations in preparation for Rio 2016, as well as to model best practice in the areas of grassroots sports development, talent pathways for children and young people with disabilities and educational resources to support coaching and teaching of disability sport'. |
| IPC / Agitos Foundation 2013 | Agitos Foundation Grant Support Programme | Funding to support capacity building of the NPC... 'since then, para-sport in Rwanda has been developed in new, and more remote, areas of the country and across a broader range of sports at a grassroots level. There are also more trained technical staff to bring athletes through the system, such as coaches, classifiers and referees, as well as partnerships with the Rwandan Athletics Federation and an increase in NPC Membership' |
| IPC Academy / Agitos Foundation | Cohort of representatives from 12 countries at first joint resourced Organizational Capacity Programme | '..delivered by the IPC Academy and the Agitos Foundation, the a four-day programme is designed to |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| 2014 | (delivered in Bonn, Germany). | strengthen NPCs in the areas of governance, management, leadership and sport promotion’. |
| IPC Academy / Agitos Foundation 2014 | Organizational Capacity Programme to support capacity building of Sierra Leone NPC | As above. Also, engagement with state representatives...‘the Sport Ministry [of Sierra Leone] have restated their commitment to para-sport in Sierra Leone, after the NPC were drafted in to a national programme to help the country recover from Ebola’ |
| IPC / Agitos Foundation 2014 | Launch of second edition of Grant Support Programme | ‘28 IPC member organizations from around the world will receive EUR 650,000 of funding through the second edition of its hugely successful Grant Support Programme’. |

The influence of the Paralympic movement as an advocacy organization engaged in the promotion of disability rights is not limited to the IPC but also relates to the activities of NPCs - often in partnership with other stakeholders - and regional Paralympic Committees. International Disability Day, co-ordinated by UNICEF provides one such opportunity for NPCs with limited resources, to engage in wider promotional work to enhance their profile. The Rwandan NPC for example, in partnership with UNICEF and Right to Play Rwanda, were able in 2011, to introduce Boccia, Goalball and Sitting Volleyball, through inter-school competitions as part of International Disability Day celebrations⁴⁶. Notwithstanding the very limited scale of the programme and the embryonic state of the NPC, this provided the opportunity to develop links with the Ministry of education, as well as wider social networking. Such examples highlight the relationship between the domestic and international political agenda in the context of disability sport. The shared interests of the Rwandan NPC and Right To Play (an international development organization) as advocates for disability rights and promoters of sport as a conduit for development creates a platform to engage with

political interests, particularly in a situation where the local infrastructure is resource limited and under severe pressure as a result of regional political instability.

The international development of Paralympic sport

The most visible challenge faced by the IPC, with direct significance in terms of its legitimacy as an international advocate for disability rights, is the gulf in resourcing for Paraspport, between high and low resource regions. This gulf creates an asymmetry between national teams, evident in levels of representation and podium success at Paraspport events, significant enough to challenge the very notion of the Paralympic movement as truly international in its reach. Appreciating the extent of this gulf is important, before consideration can be given to efforts by the IPC to address it and understanding why this can be seen as part of its engagement in the public diplomacy process. Tables 3, 4 and 5 highlight the extent of the challenge. Tables 3 and 4 clearly demonstrate the dominance of the European nations particularly in the early development process of the Paralympic Games and in the winter Paralympic Games, which is heavily dependent upon access to expensive equipment and the right geographical and climatic conditions, and where the dominance of European nations is even more evident than in the summer games.

Table 3 Nations participation at the summer Paralympic Games by Continental Association⁴⁷

| Summer Games | Europe | Americas | Africa | Asia | Oceania | Total |
|-----------------|--------|----------|--------|------|---------|-------|
| Rome 1960 | 16 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 21 |
| Tokyo 1964 | 12 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 21 |
| Tel Aviv 1968 | 16 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 28 |
| Heidelberg 1972 | 23 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 42 |
| Toronto 1976 | 19 | 10 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 40 |
| Arnhem 1980 | 22 | 8 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 42 |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|----|----|----|---|-----|
| New York 1984 | 25 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 45 |
| Stoke Mandeville 1984 | 19 | 10 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 41 |
| Seoul 1988 | 27 | 11 | 5 | 16 | 2 | 61 |
| Barcelona 1992 | 33 | 16 | 11 | 20 | 2 | 83 |
| Atlanta 1996 | 41 | 18 | 16 | 25 | 3 | 103 |
| Sydney 2000 | 41 | 20 | 20 | 34 | 7 | 122 |
| Athens 2004 | 42 | 24 | 29 | 36 | 5 | 136 |
| Beijing 2008 | 45 | 24 | 30 | 40 | 7 | 146 |
| London 2012 | 47 | 28 | 39 | 42 | 8 | 164 |

Table 4 Nations participation at the winter Paralympic Games by Continental Association⁴⁸

| Winter Games | Europe | Americas | Africa | Asia | Oceania | Total |
|-------------------|--------|----------|--------|------|---------|-------|
| Örnsköldsvik 1976 | 12 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 16 |
| Geilo 1980 | 12 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 18 |
| Innsbruck 1984 | 16 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 21 |
| Innsbruck 1988 | 17 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 22 |
| Tignes 1992 | 18 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 24 |
| Lillehammer 1994 | 24 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 31 |
| Nagano 1998 | 22 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 31 |
| Salt Lake 2002 | 25 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 36 |
| Torino 2006 | 25 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 38 |
| Vancouver 2010 | 30 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 44 |
| Sochi 2014 | 30 | 6 | 0 | 7 | 2 | 45 |

Table 5 Medal success at the London and Sochi Paralympic Games by Continental Association⁴⁹

| | | Africa | | | Americas | | | Asia | | | Europe | | | Oceania | | |
|----------------|-----------|------------------|--------|--------|-------------------|--------|--------|--------------------|---------|---------|--------------------|---------|---------|------------------|--------|--------|
| London 2012 | Medals | 3 8 | 3 6 | 3 8 | 7 6 | 7 0 | 7 5 | 12 7 | 10 6 | 10 3 | 22 3 | 26 1 | 26 6 | 3 9 | 3 0 | 3 4 |
| | Pts (%) | 224pts (7.4%) | | | 443pts (14.6%) | | | 696pts (23.0%)* | | | 1457pts (48.0%) | | | 212pts (7.0%) | | |
| | Countries | 10 | | | 10 | | | 16 | | | 36 | | | 3 | | |
| Sochi 2014 | Medals | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 9 | 1 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 60 | 61 | 52 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| | Pts (%) | 0pts (0%) | | | 61pts (14.1%) | | | 13pts (3.0%) | | | 354pts (82.0%) | | | 4pts (0.9%) | | |
| | Countries | 0 | | | 2 | | | 1 | | | 14 | | | 2 | | |

*China accounts for 16.2% of all medals won in London and 70.7% of all medals won by Asian nations.

The fact that 39 African nations were present at the London Paralympic Games would appear to show that the development of summer Paralympic sport in Africa has improved dramatically over the last fifteen or so years, up from 16 nations in Atlanta 1996. However, a closer examination of the figures shows that of the 39 African nations in London, 31 had team sizes of less than 5 athletes, with 15 only sending one athlete (usually a male athlete). Table 5 further demonstrates the domination of Europe at the Paralympic Games in terms of medal success. Using 3 points for gold, 2 points for silver, 1 point for bronze it can be seen that Europe's share of the medal success in London was 48% rising to 82% for the winter Games in Sochi 2014, whilst African success was 7.4% and 0% respectively.

This degree of asymmetry is damaging in the longer term, to a movement predicated on international representation. Supporting individual athletes and teams from resource poor regions can be seen as part of that process. So too however, is IPCs engagement in wider disability sport based interventions. It was in response to these needs that the IPC launched the Agitos Foundation.

The Agitos Foundation and the development of Paralympic sport

According to former IPC Development Manager, Amy Farkas, the IPC has been carrying out development work in Africa since at least 2003 (personal communication) and works closely with the African Sports Confederation of Disabled (ASCOD), which is described in the IPC newsletter 'The Paralympian' of 2003 as the IPC's African regional committee⁵⁰. The IPC has certainly been running workshops in Africa covering various topics such as classification seminars for doctors and physiotherapists since around the year 2000⁵¹. However, more recently, as the IPC has grown in stature and relative financial security this has allowed them to set up an embryonic version of the IOC's Olympic Solidarity in order to try and promote the development of sport for people with disabilities around the world. The Agitos Foundation, which takes its name from the Paralympic Symbol, the Agitos, was launched by the IPC on Tuesday September 4th, 2012 in order to fulfil its strategic goal in terms of development and education, with the aim of supporting the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and sustaining and delivering on the Paralympic movement's global objective of helping to create a more inclusive society. It aims to do this by increasing awareness, forming partnerships and securing the necessary resources to implement programmes covering four key areas:

1. Sports development: Increase the number of people with an impairment practicing physical activity and sport
2. Awareness and education: Raise awareness and educate people on the abilities and achievements of athletes helping to change's society's attitude towards people with an impairment.
3. Advocacy and inclusion: Contribute to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to achieve inclusion.

4. Knowledge and research: Share existing best practice and implement programmes that widen the knowledge base of the benefits of sport for people with an impairment⁵².

In 2014, in the second year of their grant support programme, the Agitos Foundation put out a call for proposals from IPC member organizations to access €650,000 of funding to instigate partnerships in order to implement development projects that support the IPC strategic priorities (examples of projects given in table 2). The figure available for 2015 applications has risen to €1,100,000. The priorities for 2014 were as follows:

For National Paralympic Committees and Regional Organizations

- Paralympic movement awareness
- Athlete education
- Athlete development
- Sport technical education (coaches, classifiers and technical officials)
- Capacity building and leadership
- National classification strategies

For International Federations and International Organizations of Sport for the Disabled

- Educational tools (technical officials, coaches and classifiers)
- Certification of International Technical Officials and international classifiers
- Organization of youth or development competitions
- Equipment
- Classification research

Of the 28 successful projects, from 76 applications, in 2014 five were awarded to projects specifically targeting African nations. Of these, the African Paralympic Committee were

given support for athlete development in advance of the 2015 All African Games; the Benin Paralympic Committee were resourced to help widen the reach of the Paralympic movement nationally; The Democratic Republic of Congo Paralympic Committee were assisted as part of efforts to strengthen the technical and administrative capacity in Central Africa; the Ghanaian Paralympic Committee were provided with help to stage a national Para-sports festival and the Rwanda Paralympic Committee were provided with support to enhance the athlete development pathway in view of the 2016 Paralympic games in Rio and 2020 Games in Tokyo⁵³.

In summary then, the Agitos Foundation has in a short time frame and with little resourcing emerged as a key actor in promoting the idea of disability sport contributing to enhanced quality of life through physical activity while crucially linking this to the objective of increasing access to elite disability sport. The systemic inequity in access to the technology and training necessary to produce Paralympians cannot be erased in the short term. The message however, is that the movement is committed to addressing these inequities. These are important statements of intent from a sports movement still in its formative years. It is also significant diplomatically, for a movement founded on deep held beliefs in its role as an international advocate for disability rights.

Conclusion

The IPC is an organization primarily concerned with promoting international elite sport for people with disabilities. Nevertheless, in order to enhance its profile internationally and fulfil its commitment as advocate for the rights of people with disabilities, it is drawn toward a wider agenda of interest representation that by definition leads to its involvement in the diplomatic process. These two roles are connected, as demonstrated for example, through the Agitos Foundation which as an emerging NGO, seeks to promote positive social and cultural

change relating to disability, alongside athlete development as aspects of its programmes. Promoting the rights of people with disabilities in resource poor regions is critical to longer term representation of countries within these regions, in the Paralympic Games. This in turn forms part of the development of the Paralympics as a global brand. Engagement with ideas relating to so-called public diplomacy provide valuable insights into the development of the IPC and other organizations across the Paralympic movement as actors in international society. Traditional interpretations of public diplomacy considered relationship building and image development from the perspective of the state and where NGOs were concerned, only insofar as their activities promoted wider state interests and representation, for example USAID perceptions on NGOs and their role in public diplomacy articulated through a number of reports on the topic⁵⁴. There is however, increasing recognition of the central role of non-state actors in the wider public diplomacy process, for example, Hocking's cooperative network model of public diplomacy that explores the significance of multi-stakeholder activity⁵⁵. Indeed in this special edition Pamment explores the evolution of multi stakeholder activity from the perspective of a more participatory model of diplomacy where the pursuit of the goals of a range of stakeholders become part of the diplomatic process. In these senses then, the activities of the IPC and related agencies, in particular, the Agitos Foundation constitute exercises in emerging forms of public diplomacy.

Exploring the linkage between disability rights and the mainstreaming of disability sport is an important part of this investigation. As disability rights (forming part of the wider human rights agenda) have been elevated within domestic and international political discourse, this has acted as a catalyst for the mainstreaming of disability sport. At the same time, disability sports organizations, in particular the IPC and NPCs have demonstrated that they have (varying degrees of) agency in promoting these wider political changes. While primarily

lobbying to promote their respective sporting agendas, they are also advocacy bodies, actively engaged with the disability rights agenda at domestic, regional and international level.

Finally the rapid development of the Paralympic Games, in scale and complexity, has created a number of challenges for the Paralympic movement and in some respects these have implications for related diplomatic discourse. For example, the right of people with intellectual disabilities to compete is likely to feature in debate concerning the future contours of the Games, since attempts by the IPC to develop its status as a disability advocacy organization is dependent upon its capacity to provide an inclusive competitive experience. By including intellectually disabled athletes, this enhances the capacity of the Paralympic movement to develop its advocacy role. The re-introduction of athletes with an intellectual disability in three sports in 2012, changing the dynamics of the Games, is significant in this respect. Nevertheless, the complexity of classifying intellectual disability remains a major challenge for Paralympic sports that ultimately have responsibility for the development of relevant classification systems. At the same time the Paralympic movement is working to develop their relationship with the separate global grass-roots organization, the Special Olympics, which is solely focused on developing sporting opportunities (recreational and competitive) for people with intellectual disabilities. Meanwhile the Special Olympics movement is developing its own profile and there are signs of increased recognition beyond the sports community of the capacity of the movement to contribute to public diplomacy discourse.

The expansion of Paralympic sport and the relationship between the Paralympic movement and broader concerns with the rights of people with disabilities is then, propelling the IPC

and associated organizations as advocates and administrators, toward an increasingly challenging position within the international arena. Developing the Paralympic brand internationally requires mediation between these two potentially conflicting preoccupations. Ultimately however they are not mutually exclusive. For the IPC to become in every sense an internationally representative sporting body, it will be required to influence international discourses concerning the rights of people with disabilities, on and off the sporting field. The language and techniques of public diplomacy can help promote an understanding of the dynamics of these processes.

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