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An Intercultural Sporting Event as Part of Soft Power Strategy: Macao's 1st Lusophony Games

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ABSTRACT

The instrumental impact of sport has experienced an increasing complexity, especially in its relations between society and culture, economy, and politics. The study focused on the Macao Lusophony Games, an intercultural sports event that aims to strengthen ties with Portuguese-speaking countries, or Lusophony. Based on a literature review in interrelated fields such as cultural heritage, language, legacy effects, and soft power, a qualitative approach was undertaken, informed by empirical material from various textual sources. The evidence shows that the Games created ties based on linguistic and cultural reciprocity, expressed as a soft power resource as well as Macao's realignment within the Lusophone world, as an international political strategy that benefits China's economic development.

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Introduction

Sport is a social and cultural actor, economically and politically, in practice, this means that sports are social *per se* (Yu and Lei 2016). Such is the flexibility, that in recent decades there has been an unprecedented politicisation of sport through increasing government intervention, especially in the hosting of sporting events (Grix and Houlihan 2013). These events are massive commercial and cultural undertakings with effects on multiple scales, from the global to the local (Roche 2017), cities and nations have seen promising benefits following hosting Games (Bason and Grix 2018) as a means of promoting social cohesion and inclusion (Moustakas 2021) leaving a legacy (Leopkey and Parent 2012).

Hosting sporting events contributes to the wider promotion of social practices at the community level (Coakley 2015), sense of belonging and identity (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999). History has shown that when sport performs a function 'beyond the game', it is often exploited by ruling elites (Murray 2018) used as a political tool (Grix 2013, Houlihan 2016, Yu and Lei 2016). As well as so often moving from a supposed symbol of peace to a stage of rivalries at local, regional, national, and international levels (Grix *et al.* 2019) supporting the political leaderships of various governments (Houlihan and Green 2008).

This ambiguity carries with it the broad belief that sport has a positive utility in both the diplomatic arena and in cultural relations and can be used as a catalyst for cooperation (Giwoong 2013) provide arenas for the development of soft power (Grix 2013). The juxtaposition of demand for sporting events and soft power provided a lens on possible reasons for hosting events, as well as the impact of political motivations (Chadwick 2022).

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The study focused on the first Lusophone Games (1st LG) held in Macao. Like other venues hosting sporting events, classified in their size as regional (Roche 2002) or 'second order' international (Horne 2007, Coates 2012), Macao also expressed a desire to use the spotlight generated by the sporting event to inform a target audience. Regardless of the categorisation of event size, the 1st LG can be described with the purpose of engaging in heritage and hospitality (Brannagan and Giulianotti 2018), to catalyse intercultural relations (Bergsgard and Vassenden 2011), to assume a 'platform' status, to be used as an 'open door' tool between the Lusophone circle and China (Mendes 2014).

This event was also known as the 'Games of the Lusophone World'. The Lusophone World is understood as a connection, at an institutional level, of the countries that have constitutionally assumed the Portuguese language (Martins 2013). The Portuguese language assumes the linguistic variety that, at the geo-socio-political level, includes the countries that adopt Portuguese as their mother tongue and official language – Portugal and Brazil, and official language Angola, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Saint Thomas and Prince, Guinea Bissau, East Timor and Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) – after the handover of Macao to the motherland China, in addition to Chinese, Portuguese is also used in the executive, legislative and judicial organs of the territory. Equatorial Guinea must also be added to the list of countries within the officialdom of Portuguese, although without cultural ties.

However, Lusophony is not restricted to the limits of what the borders of this set of countries delimit. The concept of Lusophony considers the many communities scattered

around the world that constitute the so-called 'Luso-Diaspora' and the places that, although naming Portuguese as their language of use, in fact, use it minimally: Goa, Ceylon, Diu, Damão and Malacca (Brito 2018).

Under the auspices of the Association of Portuguese Language Olympic Committees (in Portuguese: *Associação dos Comitês Olímpicos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa* – ACOLOP) Macau hosted the 1st LG, from 7 to 15 October 2006. In the context of an intercultural sporting event, Portuguese-speaking athletes were celebrated under the slogan '*Four Continents, One Language, United by Sport*'.

Historically, Macao was a Portuguese former colony with a long cultural history of Western heritage, but also an inalienable part of People's Republic of China (PRC), thus, reinforcing its historical importance as a cross-cultural meeting point. In the years preceding the handover, the Portuguese authorities strengthened cultural ties and commercial interaction between Macao and the Lusophone circle. After the handover (on 20 December 1999), the Macao government continued this practice (Edmonds and Yee 1999), to reinforce the MSAR as a Lusophone spatial area with a strategic position in southern China, capable of developing and promoting East-West dialogue (Yu and Lei 2016).

The idea of the MSAR as a transcultural society considering the inherited colonial legacy and the image of sport as an instrument of integration are the guiding lines of this study. In this context, the research aims to examine the role of the MSAR in hosting of the 1st Lusophone Games; and the role promoted by the PRC, both in strengthening ties and in projecting them through soft power within the Lusophone circle, using Macao as a cooperation platform. The theoretical consideration was developed around interrelated contributions such: as culture, identity, language, legacies, and soft power. First, we aim to discuss the construction and decision-making of the ACOLOP project; second, describe the political dynamics of the MSAR in the context of the Games: Games slogan and the role of legacy added as two subsections; third, hosting as a soft power resource. The study relies on qualitative content analysis informed by empirical material from textual sources. Assessed through historical contextualisation, social and political concepts.

Literature review

ACOLOP – A Dream Come True

The common interest in holding an intercultural sporting event by the National Olympic Committees of the Portuguese-speaking countries was born during the preliminary meetings for the Games of the XXVIII Olympiad in Athens. As a result, four months later, in June 2004, ACOLOP was founded.

The development of ACOLOP involved building relationships based on flexibility and a spirit of compromise. June 8 was symbolically established as the official day of the Lusophone Games (Imprensa Oficial 2007). Martins (2013) points out that the symbolism of the date gave to this supranational entity the responsibility of gathering and consolidating through sport a transnational and transcontinental nucleus of Lusophone geopolitical and geo-cultural communities.

The founding members were the National Olympic Committees of Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Macao, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe, East Timor and Equatorial Guinea (this one as an associated member). Two years later, in April 2006, India was also admitted as an associated member (representing the Goa Olympic Association), as well as in Sri Lanka, based on the prevalence of ethnic communities with Portuguese cultural roots, linked by the colonial past. In a sense, culture and individuals are interrelated because of beliefs, norms and social structures that can be identified as culture (Bond 1988),

As a non-governmental association, ACOLOP is regulated by the Fundamental Principle, and consequently approved by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The breadth, inclusiveness and tolerance highlighted in the document were intended to give the games a global reach and to welcome future delegations representing countries where Lusophone communities live.

In the ACOLOP purpose, the Lusophone Games should be to the Lusophone world what the Commonwealth Games and the Francophone Games used to be for the Anglophone and Francophone communities. According to Silverio (2006a) these institutions had in common the regional scenario, the cultural and linguistic history and, above all, the diplomatic and political connections aimed at the future. The Lusophony organisation considered the principle of the common language, as a premise of transnational identity, therefore, an enormous capacity to unify this cultural multiplicity of peoples, even if they sometimes clashed (Garcia and Cunha 2016). However, as a concept, Lusophony can include projects of geostrategic positioning, even if these projects can be transcended in the linguistic issue to assume the mobilisation of governments and civil society (Franco 2013), as an ideal of social attachment and recognition that is generally associated with ideational and cultural attraction (Lee and Melissen 2011).

The Commonwealth and Francophone Games were a reference, however, the Lusophony Games stand out because each of the former Portuguese colonial possessions has a paradoxically unique national identity created through the apprehension of its own culture, where the colonial past is considered just one of the pillars of shared identity (Klimt and Leal 2005). For the cohesion of the ACOLOP, the political non-interference of the colonial predecessor was a fundamental pillar; special attention was given to the heterogeneity of the members; and each edition of the Games will be adapted, the socio-economic conditions of the hosts will be considered (Olympics 2006).

Although the Lusophone Games are not classified by size on the scale of the Commonwealth Games and even francophone (Müller 2015). However, the Lusophony Games can be considered as cultural and sporting festivals that reach sufficient size and scope to affect the cohesion of the group and classified as a so-called 'mega-project' of solidarity (Gold and Gold 2008), as there are members among them with the status of countries, territories, or regions, some even with ambiguous sovereignty status.

Confronted with this complexity, ACOLOP members were faced with the challenge of making political sense of creating networks of interactions that recognise that a member's demographic, cultural and economic imbalances are not an impediment to regenerating and promoting social inclusion (Houlihan and Groeneveld 2010).

Pigman (2014) points out that some countries, territories, or regions, with ambiguous sovereignty situations, have challenges more significant than those faced by states fully recognised as sovereign. However, such ambiguity may result in the possibility of drawing lines with the past and creating new narratives by adopting the rhetoric of cultural heritage to increase the possibility of promoting the place as a brand in the region, it may result in the improvement of the economic climate and a better political negotiation in the resolution of a pending conflict, if there is one (Giblin 2015).

MSAR's political commitments and the role in the 1st LG

After the handover of Macao to China under the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle, a political system based on historical factors of Macao's reality, and the understanding of the international situation and conditions in mainland China, the territory has been experiencing a robust economy with the liberalisation of the gaming industry (Lo 2017), in continuation of several Western-style formal democratic institutions left over from Portuguese colonial history (Sheng 2016).

In fact, Macao has entered an entirely new phase of development as rising incomes have transformed the territory into a place of fun and leisure, a destination for holidays, shopping, and high-class gambling (Fitzgerald and Johnson 2022). However, to project its image beyond the mainland China, Macao planned to hold international sporting events, following the trend of Hong Kong, the former British colony that had returned to mainland China two years earlier, or other Chinese municipalities and sub-provincial cities that had had the experience of hosting sports events in the 1990s (Chu 2019). This strategy can be understood as part of its 'attraction policy', based on the reproduction of shared international sports values (Grix and Lee 2013).

From 2005 to 2007 MSAR hosted three major sporting events. First, the 4th East Asian Games, one of the largest and most prestigious multi-sport events in the Asian continent (Hong 2007). In 2006, the 1st Lusophone Games, and in 2007, the 2nd Asian Indoor Games, an international multi-sports event celebrated every two years and governed by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), a sports organisation representing 45 national Olympic committees in the continent, including Macao since 1989 (Chu 2016).

The right to host the 2006 Lusophone Games gave Macau the opportunity to truly consolidate its position in the Portuguese-speaking world. Chief Executive Edmund Ho was committed to ensuring the success of the Games, as it was an opportunity to show that the territory could compete positively with its peers. Since 2002, the MSAR Executive had already renovated and built nine sports facilities (LUSA 2004). The Executive spent MOP4.4 billion (USD\$550 million) on the Asian Games compared to the 1st LG, where its budget was only MOP167 million (USD\$20.9 million), mainly covering accommodation, food, and transport for the athletes, as well as the staging of the opening and closing ceremonies and competitions (Chu 2016).

As a result, the organisation of the event focused on the promotion and creation of employment, some Macanese were invited to manage the executive affairs of international Portuguese-speaking organisations (Chu 2016). In addition, the event was able to use the city as a resource (Hagemann 2010), this means that urban areas can often accommodate more visitors than sports arenas. Smith and McGillivray (2020) argue that the public spaces are also used by sponsors, hospitality, retail, and logistics installations that accompany contemporary events.

To ensure the effectiveness of the positive reimagining of public space as a place for socialising, the territory has benefited from the network of infrastructures already leveraged, mostly visible European heritage places. This practice helped the territory to avoid accusations of wasteful spending on the event, while serving the Macao public in close connection with the context of the event (Hagemann 2010).

In an interview to the *'People's Daily'*, Manuel Silverio (2006b), expressed a strong confidence that 'hosting the event would strengthen friendship ties between peoples who share the same historical and cultural heritage'. He added optimistically that 'the people of Macao would create an atmosphere of unparalleled hospitality'. As Houlihan and Groeneveld (2010) and Tomlinson (2014) point

out, the positive atmosphere experienced around sporting events usually results in loyalty and trust towards the governing bodies, which translates into social capital and community engagement; accordingly, the socialisation reinforces the social and political dimensions of their agency and hence the strengthening of soft power.

One of the most effective platforms for displaying cultural diplomacy is through opening ceremonies (Abdi *et al.* 2019). These ceremonies are an important element in the transmission of perceptions, images, and identities. As a ritual, it represents messages that combine the local and the global, the spectacle and the festival, usually through a complex production that aims to challenge, educate, and entertain audiences (Lee and Yoon 2017). Therefore, resulting in an effective platform of cultural attraction to contribute as an important vehicle for the development of soft power (Lemus 2016).

Thus, the 1st LG Opening Ceremony, framed the cultural heritage and spirit of fraternity, to engaged in cultural diplomacy. The cultural diplomacy rests on the assumption that art, language, and education are among the most significant entry points into a culture (Goff 2013). Considered a holistic project, the cultural programme showed different elements of the traditional performing arts, attributes linked to cultural heritage (Io 2019), encompassed rituals and thematic cultural segments, including light shows, fireworks, Chinese dance, sounds of Brazilian samba, Portuguese fado, colourful displays of dragon dances and folklore by the Macao Song and Dance Group were mixed with African drums (Record 2006).

The Ceremony had an estimated audience of 17 million and took place at Fisherman's Wharf on the Macao Peninsula, a symbolic place that integrated entertainment complex that mixes oriental traditions and features of western design (China Dayle 2006). The other main points of the ceremony were held at the Macao Stadium on Taipa Island, in the presence of the Chief Executive and many personalities from the world of sport and political heads of participating countries (OLIMPO 2006). The construction and communication of these images was, in turn, a means by which the territory can exert a soft power as they constitute themselves as an aspirational axis for other circle members (Lee and Yoon 2017).

Broadcast to a potential 420 million households through CCTV (Chinese state television) and RTP Internacional (Portuguese state television) (IOL 2006), around 760 athletes came to Macao to give their best, including world champions, record holders and Olympic medallists. Thus, the virtuous cycle of sport holds that elite success on the international stage leads to prestige and elite sport contributes to a collective sense of identity (Grix and Carmichael 2012).

Athletes had the opportunity to compete in football, beach football, basketball, table tennis, taekwondo, athletics, volleyball, and beach volley. Medals were awarded for each event, and 'diplomas of merit' for those who did not win but 'whose performance had merit'. However, the medal table rankings continue to act as a barometer of a state's sporting prowess (Grix and Carmichael 2012). The Brazilian delegation dominated the medal count, winning 57 medals followed by the Portuguese delegation with 51 medals (Folha de S. Paulo 2006). The third most awarded was Macao delegation with a total of 14 bronze medal (IIM 2007). Sri Lanka, Mozambique, and Cape Verde also won 1 gold medal.

The Closing Ceremony was held at the East Asian Games Dome – an indoor sports arena located in the Cotai area. The Ceremony began in a protocol way with the awarding of prizes and ended with the exhibition of fragments of rituals common to Coubertin's modern Olympic Games, placing the Lusophone Games in the iconographic context of international sport.

The Games slogan 'Four Continents, one Language, United by Sport'

The cultural recognition of the ties between countries, regions or territories, based on a common colonial past and the Portuguese language as an ethnic identity, were the pillars of the Games' slogan '*Four continents, one language, united by sport*'.

Pennycook (2020) pointed out that identity markers such as language continue to provide people with a strong sense of belonging. Language is, as a vehicle of culture, an unparalleled of affection, as it allows the creation of the conditions for the establishment of a transcontinental community (Garcia and Cunha 2016). The protection and sustainable development of cultural heritage as a source of identity have a key role in keeping the link between past and future (Ashrafiab *et al.* 2021), that may lead to the acceptance of Macao's identity as a product of the 'foundation' of the enclave.

Since Portugal established the first trading post in Macao in 1557, anchored its territorial influence. The Portuguese norms, culture, and policy were a point of convergence (Lianzhen and Pan 2021), factors that leveraged the various aspects of individual and collective identity, enabling the projection of feelings and emotions through the sports practice (Boyle 2012).

According to Cunha (2012), identity construction can be understood at different levels: the identity of natural groups (such as the family or the local community), national identity (such as the imagined community), and supranational identities (that emerge as a new format of loyalty). These arguments support the legitimization of the choice of the motto, as an existential expression of the cultural archetype of the Portuguese language, heritage identity and an integral part of the collective 'Lusophone myth' (Martins 2018).

According to Roche (2002) sporting events provide host cities with exceptional opportunities to construct and reconstruct their identity in the eyes of their citizens. They are often, more important for what they tell us about a specific social space, rather than specifically by nature of the sporting competition (Boyle 2012). Kobierecki (2017) adds that the positive effects of sporting events targeting pluralistic linguistic ties expressed directly or indirectly affect the political strengthening of these ties.

Despite the dominance of the colonisers for a prolonged period, the Chinese ethnic origin has always been dominant, currently representing about 96% of the community, (Chan and Lo 2010); originating from the southern provinces of China such as Guangdong, Guizhou, Jiangxi, and Fujian. Therefore, Macao's culture and politics are to a large extent covered by a microcosm of the socio-cultural fusion of these regions' Chinese guidelines and their cultural traditions, which influence younger people, even those born in the territory (Yee 2001). Paradoxically the differences were overcome, despite the cultural distance and limitations with the Portuguese language, the creative process of the 1st LG mascot, became inclusive one. In this respect Hall (1997) point out that although local ethnicities do not share a common language and origin, seemingly inclusive perspectives have hegemonic characteristics.

The Games mascot, since it launched became, endearing dog portrayal, named *Leo*. The mascots are the 'live' symbols of each Games, the ambassadors for the host cities, used as a great branding opportunity to project the Games and the city that hosts the event. *Leo* symbolises the eleventh of the animal cycle of the Chinese zodiac, and 2006 was the year of the Dog. Curiously, *Leo* is similarly pronounced in Portuguese and Cantonese and sounds 'Welcome to Macao' (IDGR 2006). Although the Chinese population use the Cantonese dialect in leisure and commercial activities, Macao is member of the Lusophone grouping due to its status as an official language of both Chinese and Portuguese (Spooner 2016).

Hall and Du Gay (1996) consider that identities are mainly connected to the way people use historical, discursive, and cultural resources. Therefore, the social representations of host cities and their success are determined by their collective symbolic meaning (Freeman *et al.* 2007). According to this interpretation, *Leo* was a facilitator of cross-cultural communication, especially, between countries that are linked by multiple transnational relationships and therefore a substantial degree of 'interconnectedness' between their civil societies (Melissen 2005).

The role of legacies

According to the philosophy expressed by the IOC, the idea of legacy has been shaping the bidding process to host sporting events (Tomlinson 2014). The term legacy is a polysemous notion (Leopkey and Parent 2012, Gilbert and Schantz 2015); the so-called 'legacies' of sporting events can be conceptualised in different ways (Gratton and Preuss 2008, Horne 2014). Preuss (2007, 2019) presents the definition of legacy through the analysis of five dimensions (space, time, tangible/intangible, positive/negative and planned/unplanned). For Chappelet (2012) the definition of legacy is also accepted as (territorial or personal, intentional, or unintentional, global or local, short or long term, sporting or non-sporting), and can be seen from the perspective of stakeholders

Legacy can be regarded as an outcome and/or as a process (Preuss 2015). If legacy is defined as outcome, it must refer to a certain time span. Already defining a legacy as a process, means that the period for measurement is infinite (Koenigstorfer *et al.* 2019), although the legacy itself is not a structural change, but a consequence that includes everything to do with the process of the Games and its consequences (Leopkey and Parent 2012, Gilbert and Schantz 2015). Preuss (2019) points out that in terms of structural change, these can be tangible (infrastructure) or intangible (more skilled people, knowledge and sports governance).

Horne (2007) argues that the legacies are the 'known unknowns' of sporting events; composed of cultural, economic, political, and social elements, there is no routine formula for shaping and implementing the legacy (MacAloon 2008). Among the various 'legacy' dimensions mentioned in the literature, intangible legacies are less recognised (Gratton and Preuss 2008). Intangible legacy encapsulates the essence of societal legacy as a way of establishing links between the past and the present (Girginov and Preuss 2022). First, based on different social roles that allow learning certain social skills (such as tolerance and respect), and adjusting to collective goals (such as cooperation and cohesion) (Svoboda 1994). Second, mobilising people and communities is one of the most unstable and unpredictable legacies of hosting sporting events (Horne 2017); it is also considered intangible due to the focus on popular memories and evocations associated with the event.

According to MacAloon (2008), the terms legacy or heritage consciousness have been present since the beginning of the modern Olympics. The etymological clarity given to the term heritage places its semantic emphasis on the accumulated historical, cultural, and moral capital that comes from the past to the present. Accumulated inherited cultural capital could measure benefits (Gilbert and Schantz 2015), although it varies enormously from city to city (Cashman 2011), it can generate economic value and give rise to new opportunities (Bloyce and Smith 2005).

The process of creating sustainable legacies provides benefits for building social capital (Putnam 2000) while giving politicians common visibility to gain international prestige. According to Throsby (2001) the recognition of cultural capital as an economic value can produce a whole new set of reasons for the public funding of culture. The ideological legacy leveraged the narrative around the 1st LG to create a space of potential and active forces and advance the host's strategic objectives.

The Games as a soft power resource

Hosting a sporting event offers the possibility for public diplomacy practice, to project and strengthen the concept of soft power in the international system (Grix and Houlihan 2013), and place branding significance for the host (Anholt 2010).

Public diplomacy is an instrument to highly relevant in increasingly diverse international networks (Melissen and Wang 2019). In this respect, public diplomacy is closely tied with the concept of soft power conceptualised by Nye (2008, p. 94) 'as the ability to get what you want through attraction rather and co-option than coercion or rewards'.

The soft power strategy leveraged by the 1st LG sought to achieve advantages through the referred to as – cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy, as a component of public diplomacy (Cull 2009), is an instrument of influence that allows governments to mobilise resources through the

cultural dimension as part of the 'politics of attraction' (Manzenreiter 2006b) and is essential for the projection of soft power in the global arena (Grix and Lee 2013).

Soft power has been identified as the nearest thing to a theory of public diplomacy (Hayden 2012). As a soft power resource, cultural diplomacy can include culture and heritage; hospitality, socialisation, cultural excellence; hosting sports mega-events (Grix and Brannagan 2016). As Nye (2008, p. 95) points out 'the resources that produce soft power arise . . . from the values . . . a country expresses in its culture, in the examples it sets by its internal practices and policies, and in the way it handles its relations with others'.

There is an interconnection between inherited resources and soft power in that they can be used by the community as investment, prosperity, and promotion (Grix and Brannagan 2016). On the one hand, due to sport promote equality and networks, that is, the interpersonal relationships that sustain its success (Rowe 2012). On the other hand, by the growing willingness of governments and policymakers to take advantage of the malleability of sport to help leverage an amalgamation of goals.

Indeed, Hoberman (1984, p. 87) points out that 'sport is a latently political issue in any society, since the cultural themes which inhere in a sport culture are potentially ideological in a political sense'. In such a view, Houlihan and White (2012) add that sport development is at best a series of overlapping policy objectives with associated processes.

Soft power and public diplomacy are about building attractiveness (Louw 2017). Nye and Jisi (2009) add that soft power also includes the ability to seduce and attract. In this sense, there was an intention to increase awareness of the place – its location, history, and culture; show the territory as a multicultural tourist destination vis-à-vis an expanded stakeholder model of public diplomacy and place branding. The nations, and increasingly cities, have sought to develop their place in the modern world and establish what has been referred to as 'brand identity' (Anholt 2008, Zhang and Zhao 2009). Anholt (2010) illustrates that place marketing has a long tradition, and that a case for looking at places as brands can be made using historical examples. This has resulted in provide cultural resources based on ideological actions on historical heritage (Lee and Melissen 2011). Cultural dynamism, as a soft power resource, acts as a means of engaging people, mobilising nations through an ideological ballast, or a way of demonstrating the collegiality of a relationship (Alegi 2008, Grix 2013, Grix and Brannagan 2016).

However, a new important actor emerged strongly in the social and political sphere, the PRC. The PRC government provided political and logistical support to the MSAR by hosting the 1LG in order to promote political and economic cooperation between the Lusophone circle (Godinho 2013). As a result, the enclave increased relevance in Chinese foreign policy, and statute as a 'platform' to strengthen Sino-Lusophone cooperation in the short and medium term (Mendes 2014). Although two years earlier, in early 2002, the Macao Executive had put forward a proposal to host a 'Forum' style event that would bring together political and business elites from the Portuguese-speaking countries to discuss trade, cultural links and shared socio-political values (Li 2016).

In 2003, in accordance with the Beijing guidelines in view of the global context, the 'Forum for Economic and Trade Cooperation' was created, commonly known as the 'Macao Forum' (Godinho 2013). The legacy process was strengthened when MSAR took over the Permanent Secretariat of 'Forum Macao' mandated by mainland China (Matias 2014). China has accelerated the embracement of multilateralism since 2002, with the integration of 'multilateralism as a platform' into China's foreign policy strategies (Yuan 2019). By the geopolitics Beijing's spread of influence, Macao became a soft power instrument to access regions and foreign countries considered to be China's priority in terms of energy, mineral riches and other natural resources, as long well as for its trade and businesses expansion. Africa and Latin America have been under the Chinese radar, to perform China's growth and development under the 'one country, two systems' principle (Duarte 2019).

This decentralised mode of domination is associated with both the innovative and adaptive nature of Chinese soft power (Repnikova 2022). The symbolism surrounding the 'Macao Forum' recognises MSAR as a meeting place of Lusophone culture (Mendes 2014). A system of multilateral

diplomacy was established, in which the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP) and their agents interact with each other and access to cooperation programmes. Created in 1986, collectively the CPLP has a strategic position in the international arena, being a privileged scenario for the competition of the world powers. In these terms, this Community represents nine important entrance doors in four different continents and nine sea bastions, where rich natural resources can be caught and easily moved (Leandro and Simões 2020). According to Kurlantzick (2007), this strategy is recognised as 'Pacific Development' and known as the 'Charm offensive' is part of the Chinese visions and practices of soft power.

Materials and method

A qualitative approach methodology was conducted. The qualitative research is suitable for addressing research questions under less structured and more flexible designs (Roller and Lavrakas 2015), effectively addresses sensitive or nebulous issues providing a framework with which to identify and understand contexts, experiences, and personal interpretations, without the presumption that the findings have universal or generalisable applications (Sieber and Tolich 2013).

In defining the sample the issues of access, representativeness and evidence contained in the document were applied. Through a systematic narrative review of relevant materials derived from theoretical contributions that are in textual form (e.g. newspaper and magazine articles, reports, and event calendar catalogues; official documents and public domain documents; autobiographies and memoirs; academic reference publications) were included as data. The written data and their messages were subjected to a content analysis to provide replicable and valid inferences for the context of the study (Krippendorff 2018).

Articles and/or headlines related to the Macao's 1st Lusophone Games (journalistic pieces, commentary pieces, news and reports from the Games) were searched for in editions published in the East China area (*People's Daily* or *China Daily*) in English; regional Macao press in Portuguese (magazine and newspaper) – after the handover, Macao's Portuguese-language press remained influential and representative of cultural legacy, sponsored by the MSAR government; Portuguese News Agency; sport newspapers from Portugal and Brazil. On the one hand, the Games were an expectant event, above all because they were the first edition and brought together people from four continents, and so a considerable amount of media coverage at this time was inevitable. On the other hand, it was an exceptional decade for the city as entertainment and sporting events, and a substantial increase in the coverage of sports and laser sessions could be observed in most media.

Significant coverage of the event by different media, and especially in the written press a was mainly addressed to the President of the Organising Committee of the Lusophone Games (COJOL), Manuel Silverio (2009). This former senior official and charismatic sports leader experienced the ACOLOP formation that culminated in hosting the games. He gave interviews before and during the event, pursued a cultural diplomacy strategy within which sport diplomacy took centre stage as the official narrative. These are useful data for the study by the factual issues in detail told by the interviewee. The discourse analysis of the interviews text included the most enlightened sentences that contribute to the elaboration of theoretical conclusions.

Official documents and public domain document sources offer research potential on a wide range of topics. Here, archived official documents and in the two official languages of the MSAR (Portuguese and Mandarin) were an advantage. In addition, the use of other source texts- memoirs and autobiographies, allowed direct testimony to the events and times described in the narrative.

Discussion

The discussion is divided into three main parts. First, the ACOLOP incorporated an ideal of compromise. On the one hand, due to the heterogeneity of its members, the organisation demonstrated that the lack of formal instruments was not an obstacle to effectively promoting a brand or identity

through sport. On the other hand, it reflects a structure based on networks of sociability and interchange as a representation of a supranational space, naturally plural and polyphonic, encompassing each community's linguistic and cultural specificities since the Portuguese Discoveries.

Second, understanding the concept of legacy has gained more and more importance in recent years. Preuss (2019) points out that to validate a legacy, causality needs to be considered (causality is present if the structural change was initiated by the Games). In this regard, this is sometimes difficult to manifest because an interpretation is needed if a particular change would not have also occurred without the Games. Although Macao's long-standing relations with Portugal helped create strong ties with Lusophone countries, was due to a deliberate political strategy that the territory came to occupy a privileged geopolitical position within China as an area of Sino-Western cultural exchange, determined by its historical context. However, MARS reinforced this role after the 1LG by a legacy that is both territorial and intangible. This was emphasised by the President of COJOL 'the Games confirmed Macao's role as a platform for multiple cooperation between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries and regions and demonstrated the successful implementation of the "One Country, Two Systems" in the city', he said in a 2006 interview with 'China Dayle'.

Although many authors have acknowledged that legacy is complex and multidimensional (Horne 2007), the interrelationships between the procedural dimensions of legacy allowed the results to be assessed in the light of space and time. The economic benefits provide a lens to (re)evaluate findings considering space and time, the MSAR are today a pivot of the Lusophone circle. The implementation of the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy was implicative, so one of the reasons why the MSAR received the 1st LG was the assurance that heritage consciousness (colonial past and Portuguese language) would be used as a 'charm offensive' in the Lusophone circle and that there would be cooperation at various levels between the MSAR and the Chinese government authorities, which illustrates the basis of the 'One Country, Two Systems' relationship between special administrative region and mainland China.

Identified as an intangible factor resulting from an event created in a team environment and well organised, the social legacies are more and more important because communities which host sporting events are searching for a greater sense of belonging and well-being, as well as for the 'feel good' factor (Chappelet 2012). In this sense, to ensure continued prosperity and stability with the values of the homeland, to accomplish this, the Executive has taken on a complex network of processes, at the level of sociocultural impacts – social cohesion and inclusion, which should be considered a prerequisite that stands out with characteristics of a positive legacy at a local and personal level. Endorsing this argument, in a newspaper 'Macao Tribune' article published in January 2021, the former President of COJOL, said recalling: 'a close-knit team environment was created in the sense that we all worked hard to make history through the Games success'. Social cohesion and inclusion were a prerequisite that stands out with characteristics of the positive legacy at the territorial and personal level.

From this perspective, political, diplomatic and trade relations between Lusophone countries and mainland China have followed a variety of multilateral interests, which is why the heritage consciousness has not been contested in the past or present. Indeed, from this insight, the production of legacy provided multi-stakeholder benefits in the event (Chappelet 2012). In a Portuguese newspaper 'Record' interview, the Organising Committee of the Games' own president, emphasised that 'the capacities of the Chinese and Portuguese speaking communities complement each other and together they can achieve unprecedented goals' (Record 2006aa).

The concept of legacies of the 1st LG was mobilised by the rhetoric around cultural, historical, political, and symbolic capital as a key element contained in the idea of Lusophony, an element in which passion and interests are invested. Lusophone countries were as language and culture of the past, but also, as present and as the destination of the 'immaterial continent' of dreams and future horizons that these nations constitute (Martins 2018). Although Chappelet (2012) points out that legacy is essentially a dream to be pursued rather than a certainty to be achieved. An awareness of legacy or heritage was an element of compromise that translated into soft power.

Third, sport has been crucial in building cooperatives that strengthen ties with countries, territories, or regions with ambiguous sovereignty status, so it occupies a non-trivial place in the economic, social, and cultural fabric of almost every part of the globe (Smith and McGillivray 2020). Grix and Brannagan (2016) argue that although selling a positive image of oneself is a significant part of public diplomacy, for soft power to work, leaders need first-and-foremost to build long-term relationships based on trust and credibility, eventually leading to an enabling environment for effective government policies.

Public diplomacy based on trust and credibility (Melissen 2005) is a key component of the pragmatic approach to policy by the Central Government of China. A model which has been able to draw on the legacy of the Portuguese administration of Macao, a system that has evolved through an ongoing Sino-Portuguese relationship of some 450 years (Edmonds and Yee 1999). As a feature of the decision-making process, it is plausible to say that the flexibility of the territory behind the bidding and sports event hosting act as a practice of public diplomacy to demonstrate soft power capability (Grix and Lee 2013).

In the sphere of public diplomacy and anchored in the rhetoric of the idea of Lusophony, Macao has capitalised on the role of intermediary as a service platform for commercial cooperation between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries (Matias 2014). Based on exchange and cooperation, the motto to promote the coexistence of different cultures (Marques 2020), as an integral part of globalisation processes, where the construction of heritage and traditions have become part of the political agenda of globalisation (Harrison 2015).

For Mendes (2014) the symbolism that involves the 'Macao Forum' is only understandable when acknowledging the MSAR as a point of encounter of the Lusophone culture. Matias (2020) adds that Macao as a non-central government is a case study in the so-called multi-layered diplomacy since it has been used both as a national brand and as a soft power tool for China's foreign policy in its relations with the CPLP.

In this sense, the blessing of a sporting event with cultural heritage as a backdrop was an opportunity for Beijing to practice public diplomacy based on flexible resources to leverage soft power in the Lusophone circle (Li 2016). The symbolic power of history has become an important pillar within China's strategy, as a tangible result of using the 'charm offensive' (Kurlantzick 2007) to secure international influence, particularly in the context of the 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR) strategy, an initiative of influence both in the geopolitical and geoeconomic environment of the world (Xing 2019). Developing soft power has been a pillar of Chinese foreign policy and remains a stated goal of China's long-term policy orientation to 2035 (Dams, Martin and Kranenburg 2021). This demonstrates the swirling eddies of power that help to shape each international sport event in relation to the localised national circumstances.

The China's strategy is based on a historical narrative that connectivity – both cultural and economic – reduces suspicion and promotes common prosperity, an idea that is in line with the multilateral cooperation structures proposed under Forum Macao (Mendes 2014). Furthermore, if there is a soft power action of Chinese politics in the relationship with Lusophony, the historical ties seem to be at its core.

Conclusion

Hosting a multicultural sports event can mean different things to different countries, territories, or regions. The rationale behind Macao's involvement in the case study presented can be explained from three different but interrelated angles: First, the 1st Lusophone Games showed how the East came to meet the Western and Lusophone communities under the powerful binomial concepts of Lusophony and soft power.

Second, by hosting the 1st LG, the MSAR took advantage of the potential historical legacy to achieve positive effects – promoting a multifaceted image, which oscillates between tradition and modernity; diplomatic goodwill – multilateral communication between communities with

a common historical past; 'feel-good factor'- means a place where eastern and western cultures have coexisted; development of cultural industries and increased trade (Grix *et al.* 2019), and reinforcement of multilingualism and multiculturalism.

Third, Macao was seen as a strategic value to cooperate and invest, within the Lusophone circle that are linked by a set of values inherited from the same colonial past, such as language and culture. For historical reasons, Macao has used the power of attraction to China's benefit in both the short- and long-term. Despite its singularities and territorial limitations, the Lusophony sports event acted as an 'offensive charm' taking a small, but significant step, towards imposing itself in cooperation policies and acting as business platform within Lusophone circle. Due to the China particularly interesse by the collective potential in the international trade and geopolitical networks – Lusophone Africa, to Europe via Portugal, to Latin America via Brazil (Zimbalist 2016) winning at sport and winning through sport are also linked (Chadwick 2022).

To sum up, by hosting the transformative impact was resulted in a legacy of continued dependency relations (neocolonialism) between the developed and developing world; the legacy of the strengthening of relations within the Lusophone circle was achieved with a long horizon; at macro level, the concept of soft power warranted China's blessing in hosting the 1st LG.

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