

Perspectives on the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games

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Introduction

Without question the Tokyo Paralympic Games were unique. They were held a year following the original date, without fans and with a variety of health measures. The fact that the Games were held at all is quite remarkable and this is perhaps a result of the host organizing committee being, what International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach repeatedly claimed as, “the best prepared ever” (Dheensaw, 2021).

The Tokyo Games also were unique in that they provided an opportunity to compare the host city and country with itself decades after hosting their first Paralympic Games in 1964 (Japan also hosted the Winter Paralympic Games in 1998 in Nagano). At the 1964 Summer Games in Tokyo, there were 375 athletes with spinal cord injuries, from 20 countries competing in 9 sports while in 2021, Tokyo welcomed over 4000 athletes from 162 countries in 22 sports, with athletes classified into a variety of disability types. (It is perhaps interesting to note that there are differences in the numbers used for the 1964 Games with the International Paralympic Committee having two different totals on their official websites, and the Japanese Paralympic Committee has a third, although all three totals are only slightly different).

The 2021 Games saw athletes demonstrating outstanding performances. In addition, concerns of the event being a super-spreader did not materialize and controversial stories about doping, cheating or other scandals found in previous Games were for

the most part avoided. The Paralympic Games were also viewed by some as a sign of “good times to come” and an example of how to overcome, or at least adjust to, challenging circumstances. “Our long journey is now coming to an end,” said Seiko Hashimoto, president of Tokyo 2020, during the closing ceremony in a stadium devoid of fans. “I believe it was the indomitable spirit of all those who have overcome difficulty that shone so brilliantly on this stage. We will use this brilliance to illuminate our road to further recovery” (Dheensaw, 2021). As I write this, meanwhile, the Omicron Variant is now spreading and shutting down international travel and sport in North America.

From a Canadian perspective, of which I am the Past President of the Canadian Paralympic Committee, the Games appeared to be a resounding success. The current President, Marc-André Fabien also noted that “The Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games have been phenomenal, including incredible performances from athletes, beautiful venues, and a safe environment for our team. Beyond exciting results on the field of play, Tokyo 2020 has been a huge success for the growth of the Paralympic Movement, showcasing sport at the highest level, sharing so many stories of excellence and humanity, and how sport can positively impact the entire world.”

From a global perspective the Games also appeared to be a success, if nothing else showcasing the growth of the Games and movement, with more countries than ever before winning medals and with 86 countries claiming at least one medal (Perisse, 2021). The host country Japan also finished with its highest medal count, with 51 medals with highlights including being the first Asian nation to reach a gold-medal game in men’s wheelchair basketball (Perisse, 2021). These results were strong but not as good as hoped for by the Japanese Paralympic Committee, and I will reflect on this later.

As a result of the varied perspectives following the Games, the optimist in me would conclude that they were a great success. But lurking behind this façade is perhaps doubt that the Games did not achieve the legacy or impact that it had hoped for, and particularly as it relates to the lived experience of Japanese persons with disabilities.

Now, with a few months removed from the closing ceremonies, we can begin to analyze what took place at the Games and better articulate lessons learned. The purpose of this paper then, is to focus on how the Tokyo Olympic Games impacted the delivery of the Tokyo Paralympic Games and second, to evaluate the Tokyo Games' operation under the pandemic and more specifically how the Games were presented. Finally, all of these examinations will connect back to the impact on persons with disability.

The Effect of the Tokyo Olympic Games on the Tokyo Paralympic Games

The Paralympic Games began in Rome 1960, with Tokyo hosting the second edition of the Games. In both cases the same cities also hosted the Olympic Games. From 1968 to 1984, the Summer Paralympic Games were held in cities different than the Olympic Games but often in the same country. Examples included the 1976 Games, where both games were held in Canada with Montreal hosting the 1976 Summer Olympic Games and Toronto hosting the Torontolympiad for the Physically Disabled. In 1968, meanwhile, the Olympic Games were held in Mexico City while the Paralympic Games took place in Israel. The Winter Games started in 1976, and were also held in unique locales from where the Olympic Games took place until 1992. It is also worth noting that the use of the title "Paralympic Games" varied prior to 1988. The Tokyo Games in 1964, for instance, were the first to be referred to by the hosts as the Paralympic Games (Ogoura, 2015) but were still officially named the International Stoke Mandeville Games for the Paralysed.

The 1988 Summer Games held in Seoul changed the haphazard pattern of location, and from this point forward, the Paralympic Games were held in the same city as the Olympic Games and is thus referred to by some as the start of the modern Paralympic era (Legg & Steadward, 2011). The hosting of both Games continued, although without official agreement, until 2000 when the International Paralympic Committee and the International Olympic Committee solidified this process whereby any future bidding city would agree to host both Games. The 2008 Summer Games in Beijing were thus the first to fall under this agreement.

The relationship between the IOC and IPC has thus evolved, and there are certainly a lot of ways to examine the relationship between the two movements and organizations, but for the purposes of this paper I am going to focus on only a few where I saw the impact of the Tokyo Olympic Games having a direct and important connection to the Paralympic Games.

The first is the Olympic Games taking place before the Paralympic Games, which has been a process followed since the inception of the two Games being held in the same city. This was particularly impactful in 2021, however, because of the changing dynamics of the pandemic, the impact of the public's attitudes towards the Games and in particular, the tone of indifference or even adversity. There appeared, for instance, to be significant discrepancy between the negative public opinion in Japan and the attitude of the IOC and IPC with tacit support of the Japanese Government and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government. Such a discrepancy, it would seem, ran counter to the ideals of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. In one newspaper editorial the authors stated that "The organizers must understand that gambling is not an option. Many citizens share this awareness, and an Asahi Shimbun survey this month found only 14 percent of respondents in favor of going ahead with the Olympics this summer" (The Asahi Shimbun, 2021). The Tokyo Medical Practitioners Association, representing about 6,000 primary care doctors, also noted that prior to both Games, hospitals in Tokyo would "have their hands full and have almost no spare capacity amid a surge in infections" (Slodkowski, 2021). A Tokyo Games affiliated official also indicated a sense of danger, saying the Games are "an event that comes accompanied with a considerable infections risk" (Murakami & Taniguchi, 2021). The concerns were then even further accelerated during the Olympic Games themselves, and perhaps then cast the Paralympic Games in a shadow of gloom and doubt as to whether they might even take place. The Olympic Games were also hailed mid Games as a relative success perhaps because Japanese athletes were winning a record number of medals, but once the Games ended, and days before the start of the Paralympic Games, the Japanese public had to confront soaring infection numbers and a predicted US\$15 billion bill for staging the Games (Ryall, 2021). Organisers thus had to acknowledge that the Paralympics would be held under "very

difficult circumstances' as Japan's health situation has worsened...and hospitals in the host city were filled to capacity" (Reuters, 2021). This may have then resulted in lower interest in the Paralympic Games. Fewer than 24 percent of possible Japanese viewers watched the opening ceremony, as opposed to more than 54 percent who watched the opening ceremony for the Tokyo Olympic Games (Luk, 2021). This lack of interest also was not likely helped by the Japanese Paralympic team's relatively poor performance, and not meeting their goal of 20 gold medals and finishing 7th or higher in the medal tally (Kyodo News, 2021; Jiji Press, 2021). Instead, Japan's Paralympic team finished with 13 gold medals and an 11th place finish, which while not as high as they had hoped, was still up significantly from the 64th showing at the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro. The lack of exposure and profile may then have impacted the impact of the Games on persons with disability and thus the potential positive legacy from the Games themselves.

A second way that the Olympic Games impacted the Paralympic Games was through the influence of technology. The Paralympic Games have been viewed as one of the great "petri dishes for technology development" with Fast Company declaring that the "Paralympics Are the World's Best Showcase Of Sports Technology" (Nosowich, 2014). The largest global tech companies seem to agree and have invested heavily in ensuring disability accessibility is embedded in their platforms, with examples including Google, Microsoft, Apple, and Samsung.

This link and connection also have a connection to the 1964 Games where inspiration abounded for technological development (Ogoura, 2015). One example where Japan learned from others at the 1964 Games was with wheelchair technology, with the wheelchairs brought from Europe being far lighter and more agile than those built in Japan. The opposite relationship, meanwhile, occurred with other technologies, such as Japan having bullet trains which Canada has still yet to adopt. At the 2021 Games, the focus on technology continued with companies such as NEC showcasing unique ways "to manage biometrics, congestion visualization systems, and other cutting-edge technology solutions to increase efficiency and security" (Investing News Network, 2021). These advances in technology were not without their issues or challenges, however, with Thomson Reuters (2021) reporting that Toyota had to halt

the use of self-driving vehicles at the Paralympic village after one collided with an athlete with a visual impairment. “The e-Palette, a fully autonomous battery-electric vehicle, had been adapted specifically for use during the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games but was shelved following this accident.” How these interconnections continue to evolve is perhaps fodder for a later article. In particular, it will be important to understand how advances in technology impact the lived experience of those with disability.

A second focus for this paper is to assess the impact of the Games on persons with disability beyond just athletes.

Evaluations (both negative and positive) of the Tokyo Games’ operation under the pandemic

With the Games only having recently ended, it is still too soon to fully assess and fully understand their impact, but we can certainly start the conversation with preliminary reports and observations.

As was widely reported, Tokyo’s Paralympic Games took place with almost no spectators because of virus rules, which some feared could blunt its impact on Japanese society. “The Paralympics is a very good chance to change people’s thinking,” said Shigeo Toda, head of a Tokyo-based research institute studying the lifestyles of persons with disabilities. “But we can’t help but think that momentum could sag if people can’t watch them in person” (Associated Press, 2021; Triballeau, 2021).

Frost (2021) echoed this sentiment and suggested that “from the beginning, the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics were meant to be something more. In Tokyo’s bid to become the first in the world to host the Paralympics twice, its candidature file declared that Tokyo would deliver a Paralympic Games which will show how inclusion and non-discrimination, and full consideration of the needs and interests of people with a disability, can create a better world and provide a brighter future for the entire community.”

The idea of social change was also noted as being a key issue by Motoaki Fujita, a sports sociology professor at Nihon Fukushi University, and a parasports expert. Fujita pointed out that while Japan has become more inclusive, “the change is still marginal with 57 percent of people surveyed by Fujita’s team in 2020 saying they ‘certainly or somewhat’ believed people with disabilities are weak and have difficulty living with non-disabled people”. This was only slightly less than the 61 percent who felt the same in a 2014 poll (Associated Press, 2021; Triballeau, 2021).

Blair (2021) further suggested that these attitudes weren’t necessarily unique to Japan, but systemic abuses in Japan may have carried on longer there than in other countries with legal protections also introduced later. An example of this was a Eugenics Protection Law passed in 1948 to “prevent birth of inferior descendants from the eugenic point of view” permitting sterilisation of people with a range of disabilities that was not repealed until 1996. A second example was barrier-free enforcement laws that were revised twice to promote accessibility at public facilities, but what resulted in what some called “marginal” change. Japanese activists also reported that the workplace revealed several barriers that remained to persons with disability. Under government rules, workers with disabilities should make up at least 2.3 percent of staff at all companies and in 2018, the government was forced to apologise for routinely overstating the number of disabled people on its staff to meet quotas (Blair, 2021).

It is also important to note that positive change has also occurred (Triballeau, 2021). One example was the previously mentioned focus on barrier-free infrastructure, which while perhaps not going far enough, did at least result in officials calling accessibility important both for people with disabilities and also for the country’s large elderly population. Triballeau (2021) also noted that significant efforts were made in “Tokyo’s mammoth train system, with elevators operating at around 96 percent of stations as of 2019. By 2019, 82 percent of Tokyo subway stations also had platform gates to keep passengers with visual impairments safe, up from 56 percent in 2013. A final example was that new hotels with more than 50 rooms were also required to make at least one of every 100 rooms barrier-free” (Triballeau, 2021).

The hope then was that the Paralympic Games and the resulting changes to accessibility might enable or further accelerate social change for persons with disability. This importance was noted when the Games were postponed and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) President Andrew Parsons suggested that the Paralympics were needed more than ever before “to put disability back at the heart of the inclusion agenda” and if done properly, could then help “change attitudes, breakdown barriers of inequality and create more opportunities for persons with disabilities” (IPC, 2021). Because of COVID restrictions, however, and as already noted because fans were not allowed to attend the events in person, how the Games were portrayed by the media became even more important. The question was then whether the media would portray Paralympic athletes in a way that would enable this hoped for social change.

To address this, Misener and Pearson (2021), published an opinion editorial titled “‘Athlete-first’ should be focus of Paralympian coverage” noting that “with no international spectators and limited domestic crowds, (International Paralympic Committee, 2021) the importance placed on broadcasting the Paralympic Games was greater than ever before.”

The desire was that the media would portray persons with disability in the appropriate manner, with Paralympic organisers and advocates hoping that the media would avoid “inspiration porn” along with the fixation on reporting on Paralympians by focusing on the details of their impairment (especially when due to traumatic accidents or health issues) (Goggin & Hutchins, 2021). Portraying Paralympians as ‘supercrips, achieving success despite their impairment’ had in some scholars’ opinions, had a negative impact because “it reinforces society’s low expectations of what they can do and reinforces the idea that a hierarchy of impairments exists, with the supercrip image valued over complex and less understood impairments” (Crow, 2014; Purdue & Howe, 2012; Silva & Howe, 2012). Catchpole (2016) also wrote that “creating a view of disabled people as magical creatures who might look impaired but actually – ta dah! – are as capable as anyone else, if not more so (#superhumans), means that the public will find the vast majority of disabled people, with our pain, weakness and fatigue, even more frustrating and confounding than they already do”.

Anecdotally, it appears from my perspective that the coverage of the Games did not follow this impairment narrative and that the focus instead was on athletic performance, but it is important to note that I am able bodied and perhaps unconsciously biased from an able bodied person's perspective.

Whether the media did or did not portray Paralympic athletes appropriately, what preliminary reports have suggested is that media portrayal led to greater understanding of persons with disability. For instance, in one survey conducted by the Kyodo News agency, 70 per cent of Japanese respondents believed that the Games had a positive impact on society's understanding of persons with disability (Morgan, 2021). The Paralympic Games drew "social attention to people with disabilities through the athletes' performances" was the most common reason given for the answer. "An increase in exposures of people with disabilities through the media" was also cited as key by respondents. Fifty-five per cent then said the absence of spectators did not have a negative effect on promoting people with disabilities (Morgan, 2021). In an interview with the IPC following the Games, Takayuki Suzuki who won five medals in swimming, also noted that "people's perception of Para sports has improved after the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games" and that he had heard that "the number of people with impairments who want to do sports has increased" (International Paralympic Committee, 2021b).

Whether this portrayal and positive view of persons with disability in society leads to real change is of course yet to be seen.

One place where a change in perspective might help is with employment. Loepky (2021) noted in a North American context, Paralympians still face significant barriers finding jobs after Games, and those who do find work may end up in positions related to sport, their disability, and public speaking, which Karolina Wisniewska, a Canadian Paralympian and Assistant Chef De Mission for Canada's team competing in Beijing 2022, said is a form of "pigeonholing." "Athletes are making employment decisions not because they love an industry, but because they think the barriers may be less. Essentially, they're hedging their bets against discrimination" (Loepky, 2021).

Interestingly, at the 1964 Paralympic Games in Tokyo, employment was also seen as a hopeful positive legacy of hosting the Games. Hanako Watanabe, an expert in the field of labor, released a report titled “Section View of Labour Policies as Observed during the Paralympics” and argued that sport could facilitate the ability of persons with disability to participate in the workforce (Ogoura, 2015).

Another change resulting from the 2021 Games was through corporate interest in profiling persons with disability, and this then leading to a normalization of disability in the public narrative. Goldrich (2021), for instance, reflected on partnership between the Canadian Paralympic Committee and Lego and their “Para Expansion Packs.” This package featured “11 custom minifigure pieces representing individuals with disabilities, and nine custom pieces representing Paralympic sport, including a short arm, prosthetic legs, running blades, and a basketball wheelchair”. Each piece was then designed to integrate into existing Lego sets, and 3D model files were also made available so that anybody could print the pieces themselves. There were also a number of other global corporations that profiled persons with disability, but this is perhaps worthy of its own paper.

Awareness of intersectionality within disability may have also been enhanced because of increased profile at the Tokyo Games. According to Outsports (2021) at least 36 ‘out’ LGBTQ Paralympians competed in Tokyo, a record and almost triple what was recorded in Brazil at the 2016 Games. ANI (2021) also reported that the Tokyo Paralympic Games set records for the most women competing. IPC President Andrew Parsons noted that “1,853 female athletes will compete at Tokyo 2020 beating the previous record of 1,671 women that competed at Rio 2016 - this is a 10.9 per cent increase. Although we are still some ways short of gender parity, we are heading in the right direction with the number of women competing at the Paralympics almost doubling since the Sydney 2000 Paralympics.” Bruce (2021) then took this accolade further, stating that “The Paralympic Games are increasingly a good news story for women’s sport”. Childs (2021), meanwhile, noted that there were 5 nations who made their Paralympic debut, and that there was “a very poignant show of solidarity for the missing Paralympic team of two that couldn’t make it out of Afghanistan in time for the opening but were able to join”. A team also competed under the Agitos flag

representing Team Refugee, and Childs (2021) further reported that more people in Africa were given the chance to watch the Games than ever before thanks to an IPC initiative. This does not suggest of course that attendance was perfect nor that the Games were a panacea. As reported by Quinn and Misener (2021), “conspicuous by their absence are the 21 nations who did not attend these Games, who have previously attended Paralympic Games”. Quinn and Misener (2021) noted for instance that there was “insufficient government support cited by Brunei, East Timor, Turkmenistan, and North Korea for withdrawal from the Games. These nations were present at the Olympic Games, so we must question why government support was not as forthcoming for Paralympic athletes”.

A final example of where the Games could lead to positive social change is through the opportunities the Games provide for cooperation and collaboration amongst international groups. One example here that garnered a great deal of interest and debate was the global campaign #Wethe15. This was launched by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), along with 20 other international organisations including International Disability Alliance, United Nations, UNESCO, Special Olympics International, Invictus Games and Deaflympics (Included, 2021). When it was launched there was significant global media coverage, and according to organizers the campaign reached more than 6.2 billion people. The campaign also had widespread political support from world leaders including the UN Deputy Secretary General, UNESCO Director General, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Duke of Sussex Prince Harry (Included, 2021).

As with most things, the campaign was not without its critics.

Howe and Silva (2021) for instance, penned an opinion editorial during the Games suggesting that connecting the #wethe15 campaign to the Paralympic Games was ineffective “as the Games are an elite sporting event and thus by definition an exclusive domain” (Dutia & Tweedy, 2021), and not representative of “the everyday disabled person” (Howe & Silva, 2018). The concern was that the public could get the impression that all persons with disabilities are like Paralympians which can then lead to a “warped understanding of most disabled people’s lived experience” (Braye,

Gibbons & Dixon, 2013, 2016).

Another critic of the #wethe15 campaign was Amy Simmons who had concern that the campaign would simply be tokenism at best and patronizing paternalism at worst. She noted that “if a company edits their logo to include a patch of purple (from the campaign), but their actions do not indicate any commitment to change, their involvement in WeThe15 only serves to boost their moral capital and sales” (Charlton-Daily, 2021). It was further suggested that “while the goal is admirable, many disabled people do not expect the campaign to bring about meaningful change. Branded badges and social media hashtags make it easy for people and companies to make a show of supporting disabled people, but some experts predict that their support will be empty” (Charlton-Daily, 2021).

Deaf journalist Liam O'Dell also suggested that the #wethe15 campaign was misguided in its approach and specifically in the use of person-first terminology. This was an example, perhaps, of not being able to please all the people all the time, as person-first terminology is commonly used in North America – but not universally subscribed to. O'Dell noted that “I can't take a campaign seriously when it pledges to educate people yet uses person-first language in its launch; lights up buildings in purple as a meaningless gesture; has organizations posting promotional images without alt text and focusses more on awareness.” The IPC responded online to O'Dell's concerns and as to why the person first approach was used, but this resulted in further pushback on twitter from the Great Britain and Northern Ireland Paralympic teams pointing out that that they were proud to say “disabled” and “non-disabled” versus person with disability (Charlton-Daily, 2021).

Haslett and Smith (2021) also pointed out the potential conflict of messaging. Paralympic athletes, for instance, were banned from highlighting discrimination based on race in Paralympic venues (Section 2.2 of the IPC Handbook) but the #wethe15 campaign endorsed by the IPC encouraged them to highlight discrimination based on disability. A final concern of the #wethe15 initiative was its potential fleeting impact. In Canada, for instance, at the start of the Paralympic Games the CN Tower and Niagara Falls were bathed in purple light (Weese, 2021), but the media spotlight

quickly moved on to other issues and many have likely even forgotten the event or why the colour purple was used.

Returning to the article penned by Howe and Silva (2021) it is also worth pointing out that they were “not condemning the #WeThe15 movement but were arguing instead that a better step for disability activism, was what they referred to as the social empowerment of difference” (Silva & Howe, 2018). Instead of advocating that “everyone is human,” they believed that society “should move beyond that messaging and centre on the celebration of difference”. The social empowerment of difference they referred to was “designed to enhance not just the social emancipation of #WeThe15, but all marginalized groups. Quite simply, inclusion should not require marginalized people to wave a flag that proves their humanity. Instead, we should all take a step back and celebrate differences. #WeThe15 should be careful to not get caught up in grand gestures of political activism or the media spectacle of the Tokyo Paralympic Games, and instead demonstrate an openness towards difference, which in turn will extend beyond the boundaries of sport and permeate all dimensions of social life” (Howe & Silva, 2021).

Clearly more needs to be done but it would also appear to this author, anyway, that the advent of the Games was as good a time as any to launch the campaign. It also appears anecdotally that except during the Paralympic Games, disability has comparatively been forgotten from the EDI (Equity, Diversify and Inclusion) debate. I am not suggesting that a focus on greater inclusion and reconciliation for other “marginalized” groups related to gender, sexual orientation, race, First Nations, among others are not important, but I am suggesting that disability seems to sometimes be missing in these discussions and so a concentrated focus that #wethe15 provided was warranted. #Wethe15 also was the first time where many leaders came together to advocate on behalf of all persons with disability. The disability system has typically been siloed and thus, if nothing else, perhaps the launch of the #wethe15 campaign will lead to greater economies of scale and synergies amongst the various international advocacy groups.

There were also, of course, those who supported the #wethe15 campaign.

Bouchehioua (2021) suggested that the International Paralympic Committee got it right taking as proof the message that “there was no need to heroize persons with disability, but rather to honor them at the height of their exploits. The campaign allowed clarity that there was no need to differentiate persons with disability, but instead to distinguish them for their victories, and no need to pity them, but to celebrate their efforts and their performances.” In an editorial by the Winnipeg Free Press in Canada, the authors built upon Brown’s (2021) assessment stating that Paralympians aren’t looking to “inspire” (Winnipeg Free Press, 2021). They also noted that a growing number of Paralympic athletes and organizations are speaking out against so-called “inspiration porn,” wherein disabled athletes are hailed as inspirational purely because they compete despite a disability. The editors then reflected on a campaign created by a Canadian ad agency for World Wheelchair Rugby, which aired during the Tokyo Paralympics. “The ads show a young man watching Team Canada’s two-time Paralympian Zak Madell play, and then deciding to train to become a wheelchair rugby player himself. Later, as he races with the ball during a match, Mr. Madell hammers into him at full speed, knocking him down and stealing the ball. The closing message makes the point abundantly clear: We’re not here to inspire. We’re here to win. No one is suggesting viewers, able-bodied or otherwise, shouldn’t be inspired watching Paralympians in their quest for medals. But these athletes don’t want to be cheered simply because they are competing while disabled; they want to be celebrated for striving to be faster, higher, and stronger than anyone else on the planet” (Winnipeg Free Press, 2021).

Elizabeth Wright, an Australian swimmer who competed in the 1996 Atlanta and 2000 Sydney Paralympic Games, also thought that the Tokyo Paralympic Games were an appropriate place to launch the campaign. “With the rising profile of the Paralympics, I can say that it is about time and so important that we use this movement to tackle the wider disability injustices and inequalities, we need to shift the view of disability from that as inspiration porn or a tragedy trope. The Games are a good start, but they’re far from the endgame” (Charlton-Daily, 2021). Wright also said that the movement needs to “amplify the nuance of disability” beyond the lens of sport and “shift the narrative to be more inclusive of that wider lived experience.” (Charlton-Daily, 2021).

Thus the campaign had both its supporters and detractors and regardless, questions will remain as to how and if “the global, top-down strategies lead to local initiatives to empower people with disability and to facilitate their access to sport and recreation in their home communities? In part the answer will depend upon what #WeThe85 do to help co-create more accessible and inclusive societies, communities, workplaces, and sporting opportunities where #WeThe15 feel welcomed, equal, and at home” (Darcy & Dickson, 2021).

A second initiative besides #wethe15 that coincided with the Games and was led by the International Paralympic Committee with the hopes of changing society’s attitudes about disability was I’mPOSSIBLE. As reported by Hoshino (2021) this was a global education program developed by the IPC to spread Paralympic values and the vision of the Paralympic Movement. Matheson, who was responsible for developing the Japanese edition, reflected that it was created to teach students how to change feelings of “I can’t” into “I can.”. The program was distributed free of charge to approximately 36,000 schools throughout Japan (Hoshino, 2021).

The ambition was that by hosting the Games in Tokyo and including educational programs such as I’mPOSSIBLE, these would lead to significant and lasting change. Matheson did stress though that “the Paralympics can be a catalyst, but it is not a panacea for understanding disability and diversity.” Like the concerns expressed by Howe and Silva (2021), Matheson stressed that athletes who participate in the Paralympic Games only make up a small percentage of the population of those with disabilities, and so they should not be presented or understood as representing all persons with disability; although perhaps this can at least lead to a greater understanding by bringing disability into a public discourse. “When you watch the Paralympics,” Matheson says, “you enjoy the athletes’ amazing performances. But you can also use a little imagination and think about their daily lives outside of the competition.” Showcasing persons with disability whether it’s in art, politics, business, or sport also has the potential to create change simply by increasing awareness. For example, when Matheson’s son was in kindergarten in Canada, she reflected on how the teacher asked her to be involved as a volunteer, as there were few Asians and

people in wheelchairs who had volunteered. As she participated, she witnessed how the children became aware of her different needs, and began to act on their own, doing things like clearing things out of the way in aisles because “Miki is coming (in her wheelchair)” (Hoshino, 2021).

What is unfortunate with many of these campaigns and potential impacts is that young people may not be watching or paying attention. Global Sports Week (GSW) Factory suggested that the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games was highly successful with Generation Z (those born approximately from 1997 – 2012 and thus are between 9 – 24 years old) but the Paralympics was not (Lloyd, 2021). It was a perceived lack of coverage that was explained as to why the Paralympics went somewhat under the radar with this demographic. “It’s getting better, but I feel like the Paralympics are still underrepresented in the media,” a Gen Z respondent said (Lloyd, 2021). Other respondents noted “I will try to watch it, but it is difficult. “I don’t know any athletes, nor do I understand the rules.” For others, it was not the coverage but the type of media that was covering the Games that was not appropriate. “We don’t really see the Games in youth media or in the media we usually follow,” one Gen Z respondent said (Lloyd, 2021). What was unfortunate is that the Tokyo Paralympic Games were noted by others as ‘the most digitally accessible and ‘savvy’. Alongside live streaming on platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, “the IPC provided extra content on social media apps such as Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok in addition to launching their very own Paralympic mobile app which provided access to live streams with various interactive features” (Pullen, Mora & Silk, 2021).

The impact of the various social and education campaigns and media portrayal in general is still yet to be fully understood, but what is interesting is that the hoped-for legacy of social change being led by athletes has not changed since the Games were first held in Tokyo in 1964. Yutaka Nakamura stated then that “Our society in general tends to underestimate the capability of people with disabilities. An event like this (the 1964 Games) is significant in that it is a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate their capability to the rest of society” (Ogoura, 2015). This sentiment might then return in 8 years as Japan is considering a bid to host the 2030 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Sapporo.

Conclusion

The Tokyo Paralympic Games were perhaps held in one of the most unique circumstances since they were first held in 1960. This was due to the pandemic but also because of the evolving relationship between the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the potential influence that the Paralympic Games has on social change through various medias.

As noted by Pullen, Jackson, and Silk (2021), unlike other sporting mega-events, the Paralympic Games “maintains an important political and cultural role as a vehicle for the empowerment of disabled people through sporting success centered on a vision for a more inclusive and equal society” (Howe 2008). How the Games can then influence social change is both unique and important. That being said, and as noted by Frost (2021), creating a better world through accessibility, inclusivity, and non-discrimination takes years of commitment and hard work. The Paralympic Games can certainly help, but they do not deserve all the credit nor all the responsibility. That all being said, what other event or movement, can claim to potentially have the same power or influence as the Paralympic Games?

Three years from now in Paris during the 2024 Games, perhaps the legacy and impact of the Tokyo Games will be more easily understood. The 2024 Games have already been noted as having a greater opportunity to further shift the lines and create more momentum towards the sustainable and total inclusion of people with disabilities. Malika Bouchehioua, President of the Association for the management of the fund for the professional integration of disabled people (Agefiph), noted that the City of Paris already has the ambition to make the capital “a resolutely inclusive and accessible city and these next Games can be activators of progress and defend the conviction that real consideration of disability is a winning bet from all points of view: beyond the possible constraints, disability can be an asset, an opportunity to do better and to act for equal opportunities, a vector of innovation, a factor of progress for society” (Bouchehioua, 2021). The Tokyo Games can thus perhaps take pride and

solace that they created the model and template for this change to occur.

Both the 1964 and the 2021 Paralympics took place in extraordinary circumstances. The first Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games were seen as Japan's return to the world stage after it resurrected itself from post-war devastation. The 2021 Paralympic Games were then the first to be held during a global pandemic. In the intervening 57 years, tremendous strides were made in terms of attitudes to disability in Japan, but stigmas appear to remain in a culture "that still places considerable emphasis on conformity to societal norms and not standing out from the crowd" (Blair, 2021).

What needs to happen now is for a more fulsome assessment and evaluation of the impacts from the Tokyo Games. This can take place looking specifically at the impact and relationships between the Olympic and Paralympic Games and second, on the impact from media and education campaigns on social change. This second part could then include a continuation of the research conducted by Kolotouchkina, Llorente - Barroso, García - Guardia, and Pavón (2021). These authors attempted to (1) better understand the framework of the representation and visibility of disability in the context of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, (2) identify best communication practices in the pre-Games period, and (3) provide further insight into the research of the complexities of para - sports communication. A follow up to their pre-Games study would thus be valuable and necessary to ensure that lessons learned from the Tokyo Games are continued in future events.

Returning now to the connection between the two Tokyo Paralympic Games, at the 1964 Paralympic Games, a hymn with lyrics by Erio To and music by Nobuaki Tanaka was presented at the closing ceremonies, which was the first time such an event was hosted at the Paralympic Games.

The lyrics were:

Paralympics, Paralympics

Praise the spirit of the games.

Gather fellow athletes from around the world to present our spirit and skills.

Foster a healthy mind and train each day with dedication.

Our hopes are brought together, and our friendship come together to create massive force that covers the entire globe as we nurture peace in this world (Ogoura, 2015).

This sentiment was as relevant in 2021 as it was in 1964.

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東京2020パラリンピック競技大会に関する考察

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2021年に開催された東京2020パラリンピック競技大会の閉会式から4カ月、同大会が国際オリンピック委員会（IOC）をはじめとする他者からどのような影響を受けたのか、また同大会が日本国民など他者にどのような影響を及ぼしたのかを把握できる時期にきたと思われる。本稿では、東京2020オリンピック競技大会が東京2020パラリンピック競技大会の実施にどのような影響を及ぼしたのか、さらには、同パラリンピック競技大会がソーシャルメディアや教育的取り組みを通じて障がいのある人々のための社会変革にどのような影響を及ぼした可能性があるかについて重点的に考察する。また、1964年に東京でパラリンピック競技大会が開催された当時と比べて、これらの問題がどのようなかについても適宜言及する。