

From Tokyo 1964 to Tokyo 2021, the Paralympic Games Seen through the Lens of Paris 2024: From the Celebration of Differences to Achievement Through Technical Progress

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It was during a meeting of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which took place in Oslo in 1935, that the city hosting the Olympic Games of 1940 was designated. At the time, Tokyo hoped to organise the first Games of the Far East, while Scandinavian countries supported the candidacy of Helsinki. The Japanese capital won the bid, with the support of its future allies, Germany and Italy (with the latter cancelling their own bid at the last minute). In 1937 and following the Japanese occupation of China, America which was close to the Chinese regime, threatened to boycott the Games of 1940. The president of the IOC considered changing the location of the Olympics. In July 1938, they were relocated to Helsinki. The Second World War would later be the cause of their cancellation¹.

In 1964, the Tokyo Games marked the return of Japan within the circle of peaceful nations. At the time, only Rome had proposed Games for paraplegic individuals on the same site as the Olympics, four years previously, in 1960 (by relocating the event which had taken place every summer at Stoke Mandeville since 1948). During the opening ceremony of the Paralympic Games of 2021, Seiko Hashimoto, president of Tokyo 2020, thus reminded us that it was during these 1964 Games that the name “Paralympic Games” was used for the first time. Tokyo therefore became the first city to host these Games twice².

This work sets out to study the distance that has been travelled between 1964 and 2021, by adopting a French perspective. The first part will cover the 1964 Games and the debates surrounding the extension of competitions, aimed only at paraplegic individuals at the time, to every kind of disability. The second part will take an interest in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the 2020-2021 Games. Lastly, the third part

will shed light on the evolutions that have taken place in order to conceive the Paralympics as a lever for inclusion policies (associated, amongst other things, with technological development) and the celebration of differences. On 6th September 2021, as the Tokyo Games were barely over, the daily sports journal *L'Équipe* commented: "It's over. Or actually, it's beginning. The closing ceremony of the Tokyo Paralympic Games turned the final page of the Japanese adventure. Make way for Paris!"³

1- Tokyo 1964: a bid for the opening to "every disability" carried by war veterans

Three years after the creation of the *Amicale sportive des mutilés de France* (ASMF) [sports association for the wounded of France], their official bulletin spoke of Japan for the first time in the column dedicated to "the Wounded and Sport throughout the World", in November 1957⁴. In referencing a note by Yasusada Takase, the Director of the National Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities in Japan, the article reminded us that, in this country, sport was introduced into Army and Navy hospitals during the war in order to "allow war amputees to rehabilitate their stumps". Equipped with "metal legs", the amputees took part in military exercises (marching, cycling, fencing, and climbing) : "Some men even managed to scale Mount Fuji (3,778 meters) which is the highest in Japan". For the professional National Rehabilitation Center for the wounded in action, the aim was both rehabilitation and health improvement, but also a desire to "give confidence" and "provide professional training"⁵.

The note also indicated that, since 1951 and the "Social Law in favour of the disabled", policies which were instigated by the central government and local authorities allowed for important progress in the fields of scientific techniques and rehabilitation institutes for civilian disabled people. Although only a small number of "sports for the disabled" were proposed in certain regions, meetings for civilian disabled individuals were regularly organised: "a combined sporting event, under the patronage of all the institutes for the Deaf and the Blind of Tokyo, is organised every autumn, under the auspices of the metropolitan government of Tokyo". At the National Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities, sports hold a central position, both for acquiring physical strength and in order to "develop a spirit of competition". In the case of swimming, "some who suffered from the effects of polio

can hold themselves above water without any assistance if they are able to overcome their fear and regain sufficient confidence"⁶. Those who are visually impaired often practice different types of wrestling, such as « sumo » or « judo », but also « running in a straight line alongside a rope » or « in circles whilst holding the end of a rope fixed to a central stake », as well as table-tennis, baseball, badminton, and basketball, with special rules and equipment.

1-1- The stakes of making sports for the disabled international

In February 1961, Okino Matao, director of the Japanese branch of the World Veterans Federation (WVF), came to Paris in order to request material assistance from the head office of the WVF⁷. He used this trip as an opportunity for meeting with Ludwig Guttmann, the neurosurgeon at the origin of the Stoke Mandeville games and founder of the first "World Paralympic Games" in Rome (1960). Following the success of the latter, which united 400 paraplegic individuals from 21 countries, the prospect of a second edition taking place in Tokyo was under study⁸. The WVF most definitely wanted a part in this. In 1961, the International Stoke Mandeville Games Committee (ISMGC) confirmed the organisation of the 1964 Games in Tokyo⁹. Japan prepared for this by instigating, for the first time, national sporting events for paraplegic athletes.

In summer 1961, the General Secretary of the ASMF presented the position of France within the "world movement of sports for the disabled", of which it had recently become a part: the country defended "a grouping, with no distinction between disabilities, nor between their origin"¹⁰. Thus, the ASMF put a motion to the vote for the opening of events "to all types of disability". They hoped that "disabled athletes, whoever they are, could claim to participate in the selection phases of international events, including those of Stoke Mandeville and the next Games (Tokyo, 1964)"¹¹. In summer 1962, the impulse for opening the Paralympics of 1964 to "every type of disability" was reiterated to the ISMGC. Guttmann, however, believed that this was premature. In July 1963, when the 29 French paraplegic athletes participating in the Stoke Mandeville games brought home 48 medals (20 gold, 15 silver, and 13 bronze), the sights were already set on Tokyo¹².

When the time came to set out for Tokyo, it was therefore a vision in favour of the integration of all types of deficiency (rather than events for paraplegic people only),

founded on the idea of sporting competition (rather than rehabilitation), which took on a primary position in France. Simultaneously, an international workgroup focusing on disabled sports, initiated by the ASMF and the WVF at the end of the 1950s, led to the creation of the International Sport Organisation for the Disabled: "The ISOD, created in 1964 on the impulse of France and the World Veteran Federation, is an international sporting organisation that aims to assemble all the countries which provide sporting practices for the disabled"¹³. It included representatives from 12 countries. The first two presidents, Curtis Champaign and Norman Acton, came from the WVF. While grouping together amputees with those classified within the "Others" category in Stoke Mandeville, notably visually-impaired people, the ISOD took an active part in organising the Tokyo Games, alongside the International Stoke Mandeville Wheelchair Sports Federation (ISMWSF), which had recently taken over from the ISMGC.

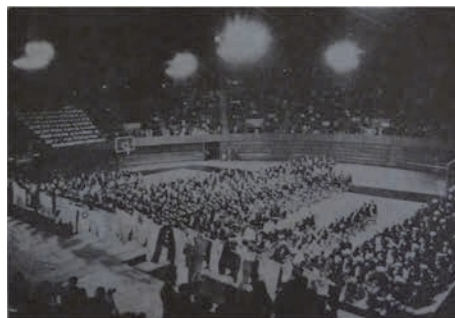
In 1960, in Rome, the opening of the first para-Olympic Games had taken place in the presence of the English Minister of Health: "by presenting these athletes as patients first and foremost, organisers, perhaps unintentionally, promoted a view similar to earlier paternalistic attitudes that treated those with disabilities as a group outside 'normal' society who needed special assistance from medical experts"¹⁴. In 1964, in Tokyo, a new balance was found between structures that had been founded by doctors (including the ISMWSF) and organisations that were linked to veterans. The latter held much power in Japan and, similarly to France and Germany, those who were wounded in action (amputees and visually impaired especially) were numerous. This is why a big event including all types of impairment was organised alongside the Paralympic Games of 1964, which were once more open only to paraplegic athletes, as per the recommendations of the ISMWSF and Guttmann.

1-2- French perspective on the 1964 Tokyo Games

In September 1964, shortly before leaving for the PG, the cover page of the very new bulletin for the Sports Federation for the Physically Disabled of France (FSHPF) highlighted Tokyo. The president of the Federation addressed his many thanks "to all those who worked hard for the FSHPF to be able to send a French team to participate in the 2nd International Paralympic Games"¹⁵. In December 1964, five articles within this bulletin concerned the event, which was already over by then.

The first one detailed the rankings of the twenty French individuals who participated in athletics, basketball, fencing, weight-lifting, swimming, Ping-Pong, and archery competitions, and who obtained 4 gold, 2 silver, and 7 bronze medals, as well as 12 runner-up prizes and the gold sabre¹⁶. In the second article, the president of the FSHPF stated: “The 18th Olympic Games are now over, and for us, disabled athletes, our 2nd Paralympics (the word “Paralympics” not being used here as “Games for Paraplegics”, but in a wider sense as “in parallel to the Olympics”)", before adding the following: “Considering all the different international events to which France has participated, I have to admit that I have never yet seen any Games take place in such splendour, all the while maintaining the level of simplicity that such an event requires throughout its organic occurrence (...). Thank you, organising members of the Japanese Committee, we will remember these Tokyo Games of the year 1964!”¹⁷.

A third article was accompanied by photographs¹⁸. On the latter, the French delegation could be observed as it paraded during the opening ceremony, as well as a Japanese athlete in front of Doctor Nakamura (director of the Orthopaedic Service in the National Hospital of Beppu and of the Oita sporting association for disabled people) and a picture of the closing ceremony within the basketball court.



Images 1, 2, 3: Second souffle, 4, 1964, p. 6, p. 9.

A fourth article covered a reception which had been organised by the French Ambassador in Japan, François Missoffe¹⁹. The associated photographs also came with commentaries.



Image 4: « Three of our athletes nicely surrounded by charming Japanese ladies », *Second souffle*, 4, 1964, p. 14.

Lastly, “From the difficulties to adapt to the rites of the Far-East...to the pleasure of watching gracious Japanese ladies go by”, the final article provided two series of photographs with commentaries. The first captured four members of the French delegation, including its president Philippe Berthe, “struggling with chopsticks in a Chinese restaurant” (image 5)²⁰. The second exposed four pictures of a show, with the following explanation: “Several typical dances” (image 6)²¹.



Image 5



Image 6

This outlook, stamped by a feeling of exoticism and orientalism, could also be found in the first bulletin of 1965, which covered the “Memories and particularities of a stay in Tokyo, Olympic city”²² and published many anecdotes relating experiences of cultural gaps (linked to the rules of interactions and of hygiene, such as the necessity of removing shoes, or the use of toilets, etc.) that the Western traveller had been faced with. Additionally, the bulletin also went back over the “Press conference/ cocktail of 17th December 1964” organised in the *Salons de Rhin-et-Danube*²³ under the presidency of Maurice Herzog, State Secretary for Youth and Sports, and in the presence of “His Excellency Kitaha, Plenipotentiary Minister of Japan”²⁴.



Image 7: « M. Maurice Herzog, State Secretary for Youth and Sports, awarding M. Philippe Berthe, President of the FSHPF, a cheque from the Prime Minister with a commendation from the Government »²⁵.

All in all, the 1964 Paralympics were an opportunity for France to strengthen its voice among international instances, which would lead, in the 1970s, to the integration of the different categories of disability²⁶ and to increasingly leave behind rehabilitation practices, so as to value competitive sports on the same model as the Olympics²⁷.

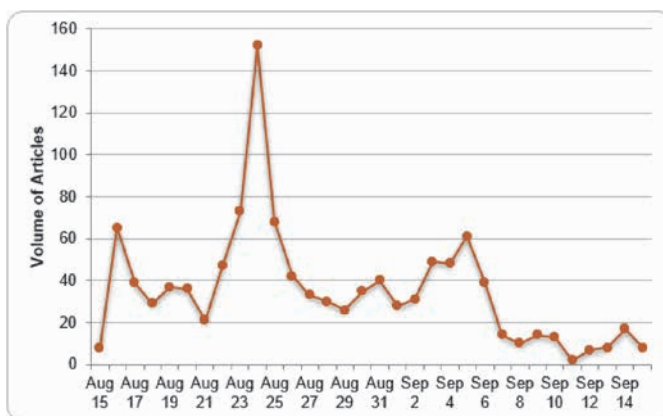
2- From Tokyo 2020 to Tokyo 2021: composing with the pandemic

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the question of cancelling or rescheduling the 2020 Tokyo Games came up several times. The choice of postponing

them until the summer of 2021 was controversial. From 23rd July to 8th August, the Games took place with no spectators. Following this, the epidemiologic indicators deteriorated. In this context, the organisation of the Paralympics, scheduled to begin on 25th August, remained a matter of debate right up to the end. Indeed, the preparation and the unfolding of these Games were strongly affected by the political stakes linked to the manner in which the health crisis was being managed by the organising committee and the public authorities.

2-1- An event that was jeopardized until the last moment

Filtering and analysing every French-language publication on the Internet mentioning both “Paralympic” and “COVID”, between 15th August and 15th September 2021 provided insight into these political stakes. In total, 1 131 publications were identified over that period, with three spikes around 16th August, 24th August, and 6th September (graph 1). The second one, which is also the strongest one (152 publications), took place just at the opening of the Paralympics. The third spike (61 publications) happened the day after the closing ceremony.



Graph 1: Publications mentioning « Paralympic » and « COVID » (15th August-15th September 2021)

Before this, on 15th August, the website of the weekly journal *Le Point* read: “Covid: between Olympic and Paralympic Games, epidemic upsurge in Japan”. On the same day, *Directinfo* titled: “Paralympics-2020: the now ineluctable spectre of closed-door events”²⁸. The next day, the number of publications soared (65 in total) when Japan announced the ban on spectators attending the Paralympic sites in Tokyo and its

surrounding areas, aside from certain schoolchildren²⁹. The deterioration of the epidemic situation was confirmed over the course of the next few days. On 20th August, while the Paralympic Torch had arrived in Tokyo, and the city's hospitals became saturated, the organisers communicated the fact that the Games would take place in circumstances that were "very difficult"³⁰. The *FranceInfo* website reported the uncertainty that was casting a shadow over the Paralympics due to the record number of COVID-19 cases in Japan³¹. In this context, the site of *Radio Télévision Luxembourg (RTL)* read: "the Japanese authorities are still not certain about the proper unfolding of the Tokyo 2021 Paralympics as the Covid-19 pandemic reaches record levels in the Country of the Rising Sun."³²

On 21st August, the reaction of the organisers was relayed through the media, with the announcement of stricter health measures, including an increase in the number of tests and movement limitations³³. The next day, the *French Press Agency* (AFP) confirmed these strengthened measures, as well as the strong concern stemming from the evolution of the number of contaminations in Japan³⁴. On 22nd August, three days before the opening of the Games, the number of positive cases amongst the people involved in the organisation had increased to 131 (since 12th August), with 30 new cases in 24 hours, including two athletes³⁵. The daily newspaper, *Libération*, wrote "at the dawn of the Paralympics, a devastating fifth wave", before adding that, in Tokyo, "between the 2nd and 15th August, out of 3 927 requests for emergency transport to the hospital for COVID-19 victims, 2 373 were turned away due to the lack of space, representing 60% of requests"³⁶. On 23rd August, the French media were thus the reflection of a questioning which was arising in Japan: to what extent did the Olympics, finished 15 days previously, contribute to the increase in number of cases? Whatever the answer, one observation seemed clear: "the organisers in Japan are under pressure to cancel the Paralympics as a new wave of COVID-19 is tearing the population apart"³⁷.

The day before the Paralympics opened, Japan thus found itself faced with a fifth wave of COVID-19. As the event was, once again, subjected to reconsideration, the organisers exhorted each and every person to closely follow the health measures that had recently been strengthened³⁸. Tokyo did its best to "play the game": attempting to give the Paralympics a new visibility in spite of a highly tense situation (with a strong level of defiance towards elites) and the necessity of organising the events

behind closed doors³⁹. Did the organisers hope that, with the start of competitions, the medal-count would allow the number of contaminations to be forgotten?⁴⁰

2-2- A sports approach to the pandemic

The sports journal *L'Équipe*, the biggest-selling national daily paper in France, began covering the Paralympics on 23rd August, with an interview of Sophie Cluzel, State Secretary to the Prime Minister, in charge of disabled people. The latter asserted: "Of course, we are sad that there are no spectators", before adding: "It's a shame, but this is the price of having the Games⁴¹". The next day, the paper related the media controversy sparked in Japan by the arrival of Thomas Bach, the president of the IOC. While the epidemic curve was at its highest⁴² and the city mayor, Yuriko Koike, was imploring citizens to limit their outings until 12th September, his request to be exempt from quarantine caused an "outcry". It must be said that, as early on as the month of July, with the Olympics, Thomas Bach appeared as "a man whose entourage is disconnected from reality"⁴³, following a series of photographs that triggered controversy: he could be seen strolling through the luxury district of Ginza, with his hands in his pockets or taking selfies with passers-by. His attempt to forgo quarantine in order to attend the opening of the Paralympics was found to be offending, while simultaneously, a majority of parents and school heads were criticizing the prospect of schoolchildren being able to attend the competitions within the different stadiums⁴⁴. *L'Équipe* concluded:

"This noxious atmosphere should not affect the bubble within which the athletes evolve. The Japanese people see the difference between the leaders – which they denounce – and the athletes – whom they respect. In the bookstores, many are the guides that are dedicated to the Paralympics. Presentations of local heroes, explanations of rare disciplines, such as goalball or boccia"⁴⁵.

Aside from this, the pandemic and its management were very rarely mentioned in *L'Équipe*. On 24th August, they were associated to a string of problems and difficulties, all mixed together in a jumble, "heavily exceeding the budget, the pandemic, the one-year delay, the strong defiance of the Japanese"⁴⁶. The article was complemented by a photograph of "two representatives of Japanese healthcare workers handing the Olympic Torch to Wakako Tsuchida, a Paralympic athlete, during the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympic Games on 23rd July"⁴⁷. When the

time came to open the Paralympics, the author added:

“An impression of déjà vu, always the same announcements as days go by. Cancelling the Olympic Torch relay, events held behind closed doors, health restrictions linked to the state of emergency, the increase in Covid-19 cases throughout the territory... And this diffuse feeling that the Paralympics, the opening ceremony of which is planned for today in Tokyo, could very well lack soul. Unless the magic still manages to happen, as it did for their older sister, the Olympics. Through the grace of sport, of its members, of the emotions that they were able to provoke and transmit in spite of the lack of live spectators, the 2021 edition which ended just two weeks ago, had finally revealed itself as being breath-taking”⁴⁸.

On 24th August, *Le Monde* newspaper wrote that the Paralympics were beginning on “a background of an out of control health crisis”⁴⁹. *Les Échos*, for its part, highlighted the fact that, in the midst of a fifth wave, “the stands of the Tokyo national stadium remained empty for the kick-off of the Paralympics”⁵⁰. A delegation, from New Zealand, even opted to not participate in the opening ceremony in fear of the virus, as reported by *Le Parisien*⁵¹. On 25th August, while the Paralympic competition had begun, French media related a dispatch from the AFP, announcing that Japan was going to extend to the larger part of its territory certain health measures already in place in certain parts of the country⁵². Three days later, on 28th August, 22 new cases of COVID-19 were announced by the organising committee, passing the mark of 200 cumulative cases reported in relation to the Paralympics over the span of two weeks⁵³. On 30th August, the Forbes website published the information that a person involved in the Games – not an athlete – had been taken to hospital because of their infection: 15 new cases were also reported, including two athletes who were staying in the Paralympic village⁵⁴.

On 3rd September, the total number of contaminations amongst people who held Paralympic accreditations was close to 275⁵⁵. On 4th September, the players of the Australian team of wheelchair basketball were submitted to a stronger protocol after having been in close contact with a confirmed coronavirus case⁵⁶. On 6th September, the day after the closing ceremony and following the discovery of six new cases in 24 hours, the number of cumulative cases was re-evaluated to 316⁵⁷. On 9th September, the assessment made by the organising committee counted a total of 863 confirmed cases, 547 for the Olympics and 316 for the Paralympics – including 41 athletes, 50

media professionals and 29 leading figures of the organising committee⁵⁸.

2-3- Sports news and political news

During the 13 days of the Paralympic competitions (24th August – 5th September), the intensity with which the sporting information relating to the event was treated overshadowed reports relating to the pandemic. The latter nevertheless remained at the heart of the political news in Japan. Thus, on 27th August, the removal by the Japanese Minister of Health of more than 1.6 million doses of unused Moderna anti-Covid vaccine led to the beginnings of a crisis, on a background of “Paralympic anxiety”⁵⁹. In France, the left-wing daily paper *Libération* wrote of the start of a “health scandal” the very next day⁶⁰. On 2nd September, the *Courrier International* noted: “impurities were detected within several tubes of vaccine against Covid-19, leading the Japanese authorities to recall all the batches from which they originated”⁶¹. In the same stride, on 3rd September, the AFP communicated that the Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga had surprisingly announced that he would not run to be the leader of his political party on 29th September, and that he renounced prolonging his position as head of the government. “Weighed by low levels of popularity due to his contested management of the Covid-19 pandemic”⁶², the latter declared: “Impossible to lead an electoral campaign at the same time as the fight against Covid-19, this would exact an enormous amount of energy, and I have decided to not run for office again”⁶³.

On 5th September, during the last moments of the closing ceremony of the Paralympics, a spot was dedicated to the hard work of the volunteers who had been filmed cleaning the equipment and facilities with respect to the health measures. When this ceremony was broadcast on France Television, the commentator took the opportunity to add that the organising committee had managed the crisis “to the millimetre”, thus “guaranteeing the safety” of athletes through strict procedures and numerous tests. The political journalists’ perspective, however, was not quite as positive as the one of the sports consultants. Indeed, the French national press established a contrasted final assessment of the Paralympics for Japan, “between performance and health crisis”. On 5th September, while *Le Monde* made use of irony concerning the title chosen for the finale “Harmonious cacophony”⁶⁴, in Belgium, *Le Soir* reported “an adequate tally, nothing more”⁶⁵. Of course, a sanitary catastrophe was able to be avoided, but it was often necessary to compose with “the

disorganisation, even the amateurism”, as was noted by the Belgian regional daily newspaper, *La Meuse*, on 6th September⁶⁶.

3- From Tokyo 2021 to Paris 2024: technological imaginary and inclusion

Someity, the pink mascot of the Tokyo 2021 Paralympics – a twin to the blue one of the Olympics – offered the image of a harmonious mix between tradition and modernity. This “cute extra-terrestrial with its ears made out of Japanese cherry trees (the ancestral variety of somei yoshino)”⁶⁷ allied a futuristic technological imaginary and the reference to an identity that was incarnated by a mythological vegetal symbol. In addition, it constructed the image of a “rather introvert child that only realises the extent of its superpowers when it is on the playing field”⁶⁸.

3-1- Celebrating differences by scripting the alliance between desire, technology and collective work

The daily sports journal *L'Équipe* briefly mentioned the opening ceremony of 24th August 2021. It emphasized a certain sobriety, citing a “show on the theme of taking off and aviation, with a girl in a wheelchair as central hero, barely troubled by a rock band revisiting the theme to the movie *Kill Bill*, composed by Tomoyasu Hotei...”⁶⁹. The demonstration of hostility toward the organisation of the Games which took place close to the stadium was only briefly reported.

During the retransmission on the channels of France Television, the commentators noted that this opening ceremony was certainly within the “theme of wind and wings”. The first scene of the show was most clearly based on circus techniques. Indeed, it put into play a “wind triggering” machine, the idea of which originated in 17th century Japan. On top of it could be seen a “large automaton” and its numerous cogwheels going in motion through the coordinated action of a crowd of people, some of whom were disabled. The aim, explained the commentators, was “to create wind for the planes to fly”. In the background, there was the suggestion of a technical progress imaginary, associated with the project of producing air through a mechanical game.

But there was more. The scene was also the symbol of the birth or rebirth of desire. Indeed, the technological project that involved a collective organisation aimed,

above all, to animate or reanimate those with no breath: in short, to give back life and movement. In this manner, that which is vital and that which is social can be rejoined, through their materialistic and technologised expressions. A young girl then came on the scene. She was in a wheelchair-plane with only one wing. The "Para" airport and its wind machine needed to help her take a step towards take-off. The show ended when, carried by the forces produced by technical means, organisation and collective genius, the girl managed to rise into the air. The slogan of the opening ceremony then appeared in large letters "*We have wings!*" The French commentators summarized this with three key words: inclusion, performance, change of outlook.

On 5th September, the closing ceremony of the Paralympics used as a theme "the city where differences shine". The first set of the show employed images to show the impact of the event on the transformation of Tokyo. Colourful buildings and edifices, made from recycled materials, entered the stadium, carried by volunteers. They were the symbol of a living and liveable city: a durable city, where differences could be expressed. Next, the volunteers united their efforts in order to erect a great tower, as if to complete the advent of a new city. Colourful and festive, this show once again highlighted technological innovation. In contrast to the urban flurry, another scene of the show however, took on a more naturalistic approach. This was based on the metaphor of the water drop, a symbol of every type of birth, but also of the state of nature. Finally, the drop of water merged with the organised diversity of the city. It was a time to celebrate all the differences, in an ensemble that appeared both colourful and harmonious.

This ceremony was also the opportunity to recognise the initiatives of three schools, in the context of the "*I'm possible*" operation, for projects supporting inclusion and led hand-in-hand with the Paralympic movement. More generally, the opening and closing ceremonies of the Tokyo Paralympics worked hard to represent all the ages of life and all the situations of disability, with active roles given to children and to older people (along with their carers), to women and to men, to people with physical, intellectual or sensory impairments, in a manual or an electric wheelchair. Beyond the narrative produced on the themes of social and vital elements, on modernity (notably with technological expressions) and on tradition, it was the prospect of leaving a legacy of the Games that appeared.

3-2- Constructing the legacy of Paris 2024 and using the experience of Tokyo 2021

The trip to Japan made by Sophie Cluzel, State Secretary to the French Prime Minister, in charge of disabled people, clearly had one aim: to benefit from Japanese experience in order to prepare the legacy of Paris 2024 on the topic of disabled people inclusion. On 23rd August, one day after her arrival and on the eve of the opening ceremony, she spoke to *L'Équipe*. She explained that she had come to support the French delegation -138 athletes and 15 guides taking part in 19 of the 22 sports on the Tokyo program -⁷⁰ but also because of “meetings with her international counterparts and visiting the Japanese transports – “*They [the Japanese] are rather exemplary on the topic of accessibility*” – in view of organising Paris 2024”⁷¹. On the one hand, the goal of 35 French medals was clearly advertised⁷². On the other hand, S. Cluzel was preparing Paris 2024, in order to make it “an accelerator” for accessibility to transport and sports facilities. In this context, the Olympic village of 2024 is conceived as “a real laboratory for universal accessibility”: “We are making it the focus of all our attention for its legacy to be a truly inclusive city, which will allow us to take great leaps forward in the construction of the cities of tomorrow”⁷³.

This question disappeared from the columns of *L'Équipe* during the Paralympic fortnight, when the paper focused on medalled French athletes or on the promise of medals in 2024⁷⁴. It remained, however, on the agenda of S. Cluzel. On 29th August, on her Twitter account, the latter relayed two messages of the French Embassy in Japan (@ambafrancejp). The first one concerned the visit of a company developing Cybersports, founded by Mr. Yoshiaki Sawabe. Three photographs (10, 11, 12) showed her getting ready to play CyberBoccia⁷⁵ and with a virtual simulation helmet (for a wheelchair race). The tweet explained: “When technology reduces differences for a more inclusive practice of sports”.

On the same day, the French Embassy posted a second tweet: “The State Secretary Sophie Cluzel has met with certain Japanese agents of technological innovation at the service of a more inclusive society: robotics, virtual reality, new materials, Fablab and 3D printing, in order to make sports accessible to the greater number”. In the same stride, S. Cluzel posted another message, alongside some photographs (11, 12, 13), which was swiftly re-tweeted by Frédérique Vidal, the



Images 8, 9, 10

French Minister for Higher Education, Research and Innovation: “#TechForGood | Between two medals, meeting with engineers, scientists and artists who set innovation at the service of a more inclusive society, and demonstration of « cyber parasports »”.



Images 11, 12, 13

On 6th September, the international press related the positive experience of the Indian table-tennis player Bhavinaben Patel⁷⁶ with a training robot: “When the COVID-19 pandemic derailed her training program for the Paralympic Games, [she] found the perfect training partner in a robot provided by the Sports Authority of

India, a help which, according to her, made all the difference in her historical silver medal⁷⁷. The day after the closing of the Paralympics, *L'Équipe* re-centered the question of inclusive legacy at the heart of discussions by making projections for 2024. The president of Paris 2024, Tony Estanguet, then insisted on the fact that “*The Paralympics are not small Games*”, before adding, “*We are trying to make it so that, in every direction of the Organising Committee, there is a Paralympic dimension. It's the same team who is working on both events*”⁷⁸. Paris 2024 intends to multiply the unifying symbols of the Olympics and the Paralympics. For the first time, they will have one same and single logo⁷⁹.

Beyond this quest for unification, Tokyo's organisation was closely scrutinized. The staff for Paris 2024, travelled in mass in order to “take the measure of the task” to be undertaken before 2024⁸⁰. T. Estanguet claimed to be impressed by the importance of the transports logistics that would need to be deployed in order to ensure the proper unfolding of the Paralympic competitions. This is emphasized by the fact that the French authorities wish to take advantage of these Games to improve the access to Parisian public transports for everyone. The main issue will be to render universally accessible certain key metro stations.

Another major work for the Paris 2024 legacy, on the topic of inclusion, will concern the production and broadcasting of inspiring tales. Notably, the goal will be to “use the champions of today as vectors of influence for youths who are living in situations of disability” in view of “democratizing para-sport”⁸¹. On this point, T. Estanguet has noted the progress already accomplished in order to promote the sporting dimension of the competitions and increase the understanding of the Paralympics' specificities: “*This has to go through clearer presentations during the Games in order for the Paralympic athletes' performance to be better understood. I found that it was better in Tokyo than in Rio, but there is still room for improvement. And also, in the earlier stages, we will need to acculturate the French public*”⁸².

However, this wish to bring closer together the Olympics and Paralympics in view of the cardinal value of sporting performance does not preclude consideration for differences. The President of Paris 2024 thus assumes a hope of producing a narrative that will highlight the “*different values*” associated to the Paralympics: “*The Paralympic Games go beyond sport. It is the third time that I see them as a spectator: it is sport as well as life lessons. It's incredible. It's good for the soul. There is a*

*potential that needs to be optimized, we must manage to do it...*⁸³

Conclusion

As seen from Paris, the 1964 Tokyo Paralympics can seem, on the face of it, quite distant and marked by oriental exoticism, leading to a perspective that is not devoid of clichés. A certain proximity can however be found in the vision of sport for the physically disabled. Strongly affected by the Second World War, Japan and France were both close to international veteran associations and were in favour of the integration of all disabilities into Games which had been, up until then, reserved for those with spinal cord injuries and placed under the tutoring of medical science, incarnated by the neurosurgeon Ludwig Guttmann, founder of the Stoke Mandeville Games.

Half a century later, the 2021 Paralympics attest to the success of the project aiming to open the Games to every disability and of the vision founded on competitive sport (rather than rehabilitation). In this way, a three-part thought process imposes itself in order to grasp the outlook that was constructed for these Games from France. Firstly, there is the truly sporting premise of monitoring performances and counting medals obtained by national athletes, as attested by their treatment by *L'Équipe*. Next, the attention given to the event's unfolding, as well as to its organisational aspects, is linked to the fact that the next edition will take place in Paris in 2024. Thirdly, the goal is to use Tokyo's experience in order to find answers to the constraints which are now imposed to all the hosting cities, notably in terms of budgetary sobriety, sustainable development and reconversion of installations⁸⁴.

These constraints come from a vision of the material and social legacy of the Games which progressively took hold in the years 2000⁸⁵: organising the event must involve the citizens, offer a lever for "political and social" changes⁸⁶, and promote "technological mutations"⁸⁷. In this context, inclusion has become an indisputable value which the Paralympics seek to incarnate. The time is no longer one for including every disability, but for celebrating differences. In spite of the practical difficulties and certain unthought matters, the hosting cities endeavour to be exemplary on this point⁸⁸, on which the associated States wish to demonstrate their leadership.

On 5th September 2021, following the closing ceremony, Sami El Gueddari, former

Paralympic swimmer become consultant for France Television for the duration of the Paralympics, resumed what made the success of this latest edition, using his own words: the lack of interference from the Japanese government, the absence of clichés concerning Japan, the production of signs of opening from a country that is otherwise known for its strict adherence to norms. For him, the Japanese had been “vectors of serenity in a difficult context”. A hypothesis was drawn up just before going back to the studio: are the Paralympics not the future of the Olympics?

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東京1964から東京2020へ、パリ2024の視点から 見たパラリンピック競技大会： 違いの尊重から技術進歩による達成へ

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本稿では、1964年と2021年に開催されたそれぞれの東京パラリンピック競技大会に対するフランスの見方を検討することによって、パラリンピック競技大会および日本に対する考え方の変化を検証する。パラリンピックの名称が初めて登場した1964年の大会は、パリから見れば、遠く離れたエキゾチックなものであった。とはいえ、フランスと日本における身体障がい者のためのスポーツという見方では、類似点も見えてくる。両国ともに、ストーク・マンデビル競技大会の創始者である神経外科医ルートヴィヒ・グットマン博士により実現した医療機関の管理下に置かれている脊髄損傷患者を対象としていたそれまでのスポーツ競技会の変革に取り組んでいた。また、フランスも日本も、第二次世界大戦の影響を大きく受けていたことから、すべての障がい者が等しく参加できる競技大会にしたいという退役軍人会に近い考えを持っていたのである。

2021年に開催された東京2020パラリンピック競技大会は、すべての障がい者に開かれたものにするという取り組みとして、そしてリハビリテーションではなく競技性の高い大会にするというビジョンとしての両面において、成功を遂げた。この大会がフランスからの視点ではどのように捉えられたか、二つの捉え方が指摘できる。ひとつは、厳密にスポーツとしての観点で、国の代表選手の成績とメダルの数に関するものである。もうひとつは、東京2020パラリンピック競技大会の開催に関連した問題と課題に対する反応であり、これはパリ2024大会の準備に関係してくるものである。本稿の目的は、予算の抑制、施設の改築、持続可能な開発の点において開催都市が直面せざるを得ない数々の制約に対応する上で、東京の経験を参考にあることにある。

現在、舞台裏では、パラリンピックの物質的レガシーと社会的レガシーの構想の構築が進められている。これまで20年余りにおいて、パラリンピックの開催は社会的および技術的なイノベーションにレバレッジ効果をもたらすことが求められると理解されてきた。社会的イノベーションの点では、インクルージョン（包摂）が極めて重要な価値となった。パラリンピックは、その先頭に立つことを目指すものである。課題は、1964年

当時とは異なり、あらゆる種類の障がいを組み込むことではもはやない。今やパラリンピックは、違いを称える機会として捉えられており、開催都市そして国にとって、模範的コミットメントを実証する機会となるものである。