

Title: **Olympic Games as tool and weakness of the global capitalism**

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1. Introduction

Citius, Altius, Fortius. The Latin motto “Faster, Higher, Stronger” was proposed by founder of the modern Olympic Games Baron de Coubertin in 1894.¹ After 100 hundred years we could hear something similar in the speech of Forrest Gump in the eponymous movie: “For no particular reason I just kept on going. I ran clear to the ocean. And when I got there, I figured, since I’d gone this far, I might as well turn around, just keep on going. When I got to another ocean, I figured, since I’d gone this far, I might as well just turn back, keep right on going“.² Both of these mottos are the same in two ways. At first, they are imperative adorations of the continuously physical performance without any limits. This view is generally accepted as substance of the sport itself. Human body looks like to be infinite source of performances to beat the previous record by the new one. It sounds familiar for people living in current societies. Not only because modern sport is inseparable part of their lives, but especially because the process of maximization of performance is the basic imperative of work in capitalism.

When Karl Marx defined capitalism as system based on capital accumulation, he could not forecast how sport will reflect this dynamic process. Reinvestment of profits in economy because of gain of next profits is absolutely the same logic of athlete who trains harder and harder to profit more and more wins. Also the main sport values like beating pain of own body, breaking the records or winning over sports rival remind the main motivation of workers and companiest on the battleground of capitalist markets. In this perspective it is not so surprising that the Olympic Games are embodiment of capitalism on global scale. Every new Games always bring new records which beat the previous because of new expansion (quantitative and qualitative) of productive forces of sportsmen. Every new Games increase interest of television spectators, as last Olympics in Pyeongchang reached incredible 3.5 billions of viewers. That makes this mega sport-event to be the most popular cultural artifact

¹ Pierre de Coubertin exposed this motto before the International Olympic Committee two years before the first Games in Athens.

² Forrest Gump played by Tom Hanks said this monologue in the movie *Forrest Gump* (1994).

in history of humankind. And every new Games means increasing of the profit of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) from sale of TV contracts, marketing and sponsoring. By the way the running Forrest Gump had Nike on his feet. The iconic character wears iconic company. The same relationship between legendary subject of culture (in this cause sport) and legendary multinational corporations exists also between Olympic Games and corporations included Coca-Cola, Alibaba or Visa. From economic point of view the IOC functions like a multinational global corporation.

All of it looks like to be successful business fairy tail. But wave of creative destruction impacts hosting cities of the Games with astronomic debts, land speculations, militarization and uncertain profit share. Role of hosting cities is much more closed to another de Coubertin's citation: "The most important thing is not to win, but to take part!"³. First time, he used this Olympic motto on the Olympic Games in 1908 in London and presented it as spirit of Olympism. And historic background of Olympics reveals that "the owls are not what they seem"⁴. The experience with hosting of the Olympic Games shows at first, it is not certain economic and social success. At second, the host cities have to prepared to challenge really huge hyperbolization of global capital on very little and limited space with longtime consequences.

Next Games will take place at Tokyo, Japan. What does it mean in the perspective of radical political economy? Is it possible to use the economic consequences of Games as a kind of ideological tool of global capitalism? And how it all on the other side unmasked capitalist character of modern sport and Olympic Games itself?

2. Capitalist history of the Olympic Games

The Summer Games in Tokyo next year will be the 23rd Olympics in their modern history. Expected numbers look like incredibly. Tokyo will host more than 300 events in fifty sport disciplines, the Japanese Government anticipates its target of attracting 40 millions foreign tourists because of the Olympics and Paralympics in the year 2020 and finally it is very likely the Games will reach attention of more than 3.5 billions spectators, which means every second living man on the planet now. Without doubt this event will be the biggest event in the history of mankind. That is why the Games are interpreted not only as festival of sport but as contributor of to human progress, the peak of process of modernization and example of possibility of peaceful coexistence between all countries, nations and people of the world.

³ Quoted from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olympic_symbols.

⁴ This is motto from the iconic American TV show *Twin Peaks* (1990).

This ambitious complexity stands on two pillars: values of Olympism and inner substance of modern sport.

The Olympic philosophy was created by the founder of modern Olympics Pierre de Coubertin, is outlined in Olympic Charter and held by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Here is also necessary to emphasize the difference between Ancient Games of Olympia and its modern “descendant”. The idea of the athletic event in the Ancient Greece took shape as “Pentathlon of the Muses”. The Games were devoted to honor to the gods and physical performance had profane function as religious appendix, but this relationship was turned over by modern reincarnation of Olympics. New Games adored the body movement at the expense of mind.⁵ All philosophy of Olympism is based on cosmopolitanism from fin-de-siècle era, noble aristocracy, discipline of youth and transforming muscle to the role of moral educator. This idealistic content could be seen as ideological cover of upper class tendency to hold power in society.

That is why social and historical development of modern sport is closely linked to the global development of capitalist industrial society and its beginning started with the age of imperialism in the capitalist England of eighteen-century.⁶ The modern Olympic Games were not excluded from this tiny economic, social and political connection, but were exactly in the centre of the interest of international capital and now are integral part of the globalization of today’s capitalism. That is why the history of the new Olympic Games could be understand as “a source of profits and be integrated into the framework of a strategy for economic expansion”.⁷

Its central problem was money from the beginning. Baron de Coubertin tried to gain finance to renovate Games into the Athens in 1896 by crowdfunding campaign between European aristocrats but he was unsuccessful. At last moment the Games were rescued by sponsoring of the local business man George Averoff. Next Games in Paris (1900), St. Louis (1904) and London (1908) were organized in symbiosis with World’s Fairs. More independent development of the Games in the 10’s and 20’s years had unexpected competitor in the form of the Games only for women and International Workers Olympiads. That was reaction to bourgeois, authoritarian and chauvinistic character of the official Olympics. While women were early accepted to be part of the official Olympics, the Workers Games existed

⁵ The exception was awarding by gold medal for literature in era of the first Games. In Stockholm in 1912 was awarded the founder of the modern Olympics Baron de Coubertin. He wrote his poem *Ode to Sport* under collective pseudonym Georges Hohrod and M. Eschbach. In Boykoff, Jules. *Power Game: A Political History of the Olympics*. London: Verso 2016, p. 15.

⁶ Collins, Tony. *Sport in Capitalist Society*. London and New York: Routledge 2013.

⁷ Brohm, Jean-Marie. *Sport: A Prison of Measured Time*. London: Ink 1978, p. 104.

from 1925 until 1937. They changed from kind of counterweight to massively popular alternative to the official Games but against capitalism too. The Workers Games were not based on rivalry between nations but they stressed values of solidarity, internationalism and friendship. That is why there were no national flags, no recording of best times of athletes, no medals for winners and the sportsmen did not try to win by beating their rivals. For example they tried to be slower in running disciplines than the others. This specific kind of sport festival culminated on Olympics in Vienna in 1931 with more than 250 spectators. It was more than on traditional version of Games in Los Angeles next year.⁸

This alternative was symptomatically destroyed by the Nazis when they banned all Workers organizations in Germany after 1933. Traditional Olympic Games without this sport rivalry experienced in Germany its top event in Berlin Olympics in 1936. These Games served as propaganda not only for Nazi ideology but also for Olympism itself. Transformation of man to his new invincible form of *Übermensch* correlates with main sport aim in the form – to build the sporting body. It helps to cover the core of both ideologies (Nazi and Olympics) that human performances serve to maximize the output. But this strong connection was not only about ideas and propaganda but it had economic rational kernel. The Olympics always choose the most powerful, rich and developed industrial states to host the Games. Supply of Nazi Germany to be part of imperialist elite met demand of the IOC to exploit strong national state with strong will to spend a lot of money.

That is why the Games rapidly changed after the World War II. Very important moment was the decision of Soviet leaders in Moscow to join the Olympic despite its bourgeois character and values. That was breakpoint in sport history in 1951 because the global sport standardized into one hegemonic institution around the world. From this point all athletes reproduced bourgeois hegemony through the sphere of sport. When bloc of all socialist countries definitively entered to one sport family, they accepted the rules, values and beliefs in all sport disciplines and resigned to challenge dominant idea of Olympic sport in counter-hegemonic struggle.⁹ It does not mean that all Olympic Games were identical. Sport reflects different socio-economic structures of hosting countries. The best proof is presented by trio of the Summer Olympics hosting cities from 1976 to 1984. The Canadian Montreal Games represented powerful symbiosis of private business, federal government and city

⁸ Riordan, James. *Sport, Politics, and Communism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press 1991, pp. 38-40.

⁹ It is perspective of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci who defined power in society in terms of “hegemony”, “counter-hegemonic struggle” and “manufacture of consent”. See Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. New York: International Publishers 1971.

council that made these Games to be the most expensive Olympics to that point. The outturn cost achieved at USD 6.1 billion in 2015-dollars and overrun at 720% previous planned budget.¹⁰ Despite of enormous profits of banks, developers, constructions companies it ended up with huge debt which the federal government refused to cover.¹¹ Privatization of profits and socialization of fiscal deficit caused that debt take city Montreal and Canadians three decades to pay. This combination of private profits and public lost warned next two hosting cities. Four years later Moscow prevented any problems with its state monopolization without any private entrepreneurs and free market subjects. Los Angeles in 1984 chose opposite way without any public money when private sector took responsibility and for the first time in Olympic history it organized the Games. It fulfilled the spirit of neo-liberal economic supported by Reagan's government which prefer privatization, free enterprise system lead by corporations and cutting of public service. "Disneyfication" by the corralling of big corporate sponsors and end of amateurism in the Olympics brought recording profit about 215 million dollars. This pivotal moment opened world of sport to massive sponsoring, dependency on TV broadcasting and definitely confirmed connection with business. All next Games combined these three models: interesting of locals and city, state and government and finally private sphere. That is why Summer Games in Barcelona in 1992 absolutely transformed city into new era of mass tourism which caused radical increase of accommodation prices. Other story happened in Athens in 2004 when final budget increased from planned 1.6 billion dollars to tenfold. The Greek government supplied around 85 percent of this sum and it significantly contributed to dangerously increasing national debt.¹² And in 2014 Russia set a record with budget for Winter Olympic Games in Sochi over 50 billion dollars. Now are the Olympic Games dominating by neo-liberal policy, create growing profit for IOC and are hosting by Asian countries.

3. Marxist analysis of modern sport

Why is historical development of the Olympics characterized by increasing commercialization and marketization of something so unimportant like sport? Maybe it would be better change the question and repeat Karl Marx's method of analysis of the secret of the commodity-form. Point of his interpretative procedure was not asking about the content

¹⁰ Flyvbjerg, Bent, Stewart, Allison and Budzier, Alexander. *The Oxford Olympics Study 2016: Cost and Cost Overrun at the Games*. Oxford: Saïd Business School Working Papers (Oxford: University of Oxford) 2016, pp. 9–13.

¹¹ Wright, George. "The Political Economy of the Montreal Olympic Games" in *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 2, 1978, p. 17.

¹² Boykoff, 2016, p. 99.

hidden behind but on the contrary to unveil the secret of this form itself.¹³ Firstly he defined the hidden meaning behind the commodity-form which is expressed by this form. Secondly he was not satisfied by discovering that labour is the true source of wealth. This knowledge was sufficient for classical bourgeois political economists but not for Marx. He wanted to explain also this form itself.¹⁴ Impact of his approach to the topic the Olympics means to answer the question: Why do the Olympic Games – the biggest sport event on the world - have their current form?

First, it is unnecessary to find the “hidden” kernel of the Olympic Games. Paradoxically this “secret” is nothing more than the most visible item for 3.5 billion spectators – competition between athletes from around the world in different sport disciplines. But more discoverable is overturning of primary question into new one. Why the main substance of sport (physical leisure activity) assumes the form of the commercialized Olympic Games? In other words, why the content of this kind of body movement assumes the form of the global competition? Sport without idealistic and phenomenal essence of the play is going to be only the activity of the body. From materialistic perspective this body movement takes specific social, logical and historical forms that are determined by the development of the division of labour. Modern sport belongs only to one certain mode of production and exchange – to capitalist mode of production. French sociologist and critic of sport Jean-Marie Brohm defined this periodization by pointing out the link between sport and industrial capitalism. “In sport (worker) finds the same mentality, the same criteria, the same morality, the same movements and the same objectives – all the laws and habits required by the technical work organization – which he has only just left behind him at the factory or the office.”¹⁵ The replication of work in sport means transformation of popular entertaining to mass enterprise. And it causes radical consequences.

The substance of sport is maximization of physical performance and the tool for do this is exploitation. The aim of sporting leisure activities “is to strive for the record, representing maximum output.”¹⁶ This relationship of sportsman to his body is imposed by (industrial) labour. The intensive training for the final competition has the same character as work pace on assembly line. The body is degraded to the form of biological apparatus because of the need of frenetic muscular effort and perfect equilibrium for crafted body movements.

¹³ Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek finds the same thinking procedure in the work of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud in his analysis of the form of dreams. See Žižek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London: Verso 1989.

¹⁴ Karl, Marx. *Capital, Volume 1*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976, p. 168.

¹⁵ Brohm, p. 40.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 105.

The result is the dehumanization of the sportsman body into the machine like it is perceived by the worker. Worker and sportsman are internalized to achieve maximum productivity by instrumentalization their own bodies. This physical externalization exceeds their subject and experiences them as object of double exploitation. At first, it exploits their biological nature, second they are exploited themselves. Sport champion produces performance but his labour does not belong to him anymore. Paradoxically his absolute domination over his body to make best sport performance is the reversal of his serving to possibilities of his body which is directed by sport techniques. His metabolic functions are organized and subordinated by his trainer or manager in direction of needs of the specific sport discipline. The technocratic rationalization remains process of Taylorism which created a perfect used of human productivity labour. This is closed what Marx called “cretinism of work” when a worker “dulled by the hellish work pace and harassed by his foreman”.¹⁷

In cause of professional athletes this process leads to commodification of their performance. Their product in the form sporting activity (run, javelin throw, or scoring the goal) is not only used as part of a sport game which means generating of use-value. This type of a product is transform into commodity form assigned as exchange value. The product is determined and transformed to commodity form not by sportsman, nor by spectator, but by the capitalist class. The capitalists own means of production which is precisely the role of the IOC in this case. Owner of the Olympic Games accommodates the sport labour of the athletes, then sells it to consumer and makes a profit. On the other side of this process are sportsmen who have no control over their performance product. Marx called it as alienation of the worker from their product. It sounds pretty strange if this critique is applied into sport field. Sport is obviously connected with pleasure and enjoyment of the sportsmen. But Olympic Games show that competitive sport mutilates the body into form of muscular performance which is independent on the will of athlete. The unfreedom of athletes is at more general level evident in design of the specific sport disciplines whose are not designed by its sport subjects. But it appears to them as objective praxis independent on their own wills. The rules and standards of every sport disciplines have form of seemingly natural and unhistorical institution. But historical genesis of commodification of the Olympics athletes shows it as product of class struggle. From the beginning of renovation of the Olympics in new modern form, there was the most important rule that sport participants must be amateurs. It means the ban for all athletes who anytime get reward for their sport performance and it was result of the

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 111.

aristocratic root of the Games. That is why the middle and upper classes arrogantly snubbed the profesionalization of the game, for the working classes is sport opportunity to earn some extra money.¹⁸ The end of amateurism rule in the Olympic Games paradoxically looked like win for the working class. But in reality it caused that working class agreed with definitive replication of capitalist work into the sphere of sport. How are today's professional athletes exploited and commodificated like workers in factory? Perfect example is iconic sprinter Usain Bolt. He was the most shining Olympic superstar for last 15 years. This holder of the three world records won eight gold medals on the Olympics Games. But his performance did not belong to him anymore. His running was owned by the IOC, commodificated and sold to TV stations as part of their Olympics broadcasting. Also his contract with Puma does not mean he controls his body, activities or public image because Puma owned it all and changed it into the form of spectacle which sell to consumers. Despite the fact Bolt was real existing man from flesh and blood and earned millions of dollars, the products of his sporting labour were took from him and sold on the market. Finally also his running records still belong to the Olympic Games, because it does not have any meaning out of this space. Athlete who is calling Usain Bolt is nothing more than product of the Olympics Games.

4. Political economy of the Olympic Games in the 21st century

The process of commodification, alienation and exploitation of athletes in and through the Olympic Games is not enough sufficient response to the question why does the biggest sport event on the world have its current form? In other words we are still looking for the more specific way, how the Olympic Games accumulate capital. It is necessary to define logic and historical genesis of the expansion capital and sports competition.

Best starting point lies in concrete praxis of the Olympic Games. This international sport event always used one basic model. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) chooses hosting city which organizes the Games. Despite of the fact that hosting city is concrete place, it is also the abstract entity included local authorities (from regional council to state government) and capitalist enterprises (local, national and transnational). All together fulfill the main aim of the Olympic Games – mobilize capital for organizing this kind of huge sport meeting. It means to support huge financial investments to change urban structure and local infrastructure, to create the new sport venues and background for the athletes, their teams and also tourist fans, to provide security by repressive militarization and *last but not*

¹⁸ Kuhn, Gabriel. *Soccer vs. The State*. Oakland: PM Press 2011, p. 15.

least to boost economic activities to make a profit. For understanding how all these components relate to capital accumulation by the Olympics is necessarily to look at each of them in detail. In the perspective of the political economy, the organizing of the Olympic Games is not *deus ex machina* (as legacy of gods from Ancient Greeks in capitalist world) anymore. It is not abstract and independent on the rest of society, but it is shaped by power arrangements of the large political and social order.¹⁹

The basic principle of the Olympic Games is hosting them by some city which is always different. The IOC chooses the candidate least seven years before. Despite of general opinion that is not existing sports infrastructure what decides the final choice but it reflects the measure of adaptability. No Games in history was hosted by the city (or state) which did not invest into building of the completely new sporting venues, rebuild existing transport infrastructure and start with urban (and regional) gentrification. But the IOC is not interesting how rich is hosting city. The basic question is only if there is state guarantee by government. Because the required huge investments for rebuilding of the city mean in other words massive financial loans and opening of the local economy to foreign capital. The globalization needs the form of national state. It remains Marx's notion "all common institutions are set up with help of the state and are given a political form."²⁰ Because "sport is dependent on the development of the productive forces of bourgeois society"²¹ and is tied to national state.

The historical materialism of the Olympics deconstructs the myth of commercialization of the Games from its previous pure form. The modern Olympic Games served from its first event in 1896 until these days as business tool for accumulation of surplus value. It does not mean the Games were established as a business company to earn the money by sport, but it was inevitable to organize the international sport event without the logic of capitalism. And because the kernel of capitalist production is the tendency of the rate to profit, it is also the core of the IOC, so the hosting cities and their state guarantees take all economic risks with all possible negative and unexpected consequences on themselves because of hoping to make a profit too. But it is possible under imperative of neo-liberalism: privatizing profits and socializing losses.²²

Typical examples of the useless gains after hosting the Olympic juggernaut are so called white elephants. Together with reconstruction of city's infrastructure, transportation

¹⁹ Derber, Charles and Magrass, Yale R. *Capitalism: should you buy it? An invitation to political economy*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers 2014, p. 8.

²⁰ Marx, Karl and Engels, Friedrich. "The German Ideology" in *K. Marx/F. Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 5, London: Lawrence & Wishart 1975, p. 90.

²¹ Brohm, p. 47.

²² See Harvey, David. *The Enigma of the Capital*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011.

networks and telecommunications are the new sport venues only materialist legacy of the Olympics. But after using for sixteen days long event they can't be longer used without next financial upkeep. Twenty one from twenty two of the new Athens sport stadiums, arenas, swimming pools and sport halls changed into the ruins since the Olympics in 2004.²³ This legacy paid from public funds ended up as inefficient investment because of its unable to find the buyer or user for it. It seemed to be inescapable economic disaster when the circus tent is always in new place build from bricks. "The best use for the stadiums may well have been when the government used them to shelter homeless people during bouts of cold weather or when, in October 2015, they were used to house migrants and refugees from Afghanistan and Syria," wrote Adam Taylor in *Washington Post*.²⁴ Also the same ghost town was build four years later in Beijing for 784 million dollars. The Olympic Games worked as catalyst for modernization of the city's center. The thirty-seven stadiums, fourteen of them whole new, with officially estimated ten thousand building sites were reason for demolition of the historical city's kernel and accelerate urbane regeneration which was covered by time pressure because of start of the Olympic Games. The gigantic sports projects were only the most visible part of radical spatial transformation which is necessary reaction on massive comings of new city-dwellers from countryside.²⁵ These irreversible changes are independent on traditional historical context (Vancouver built sport venues for the Winter Games in 2010 on sacred ground of the Native Americans) or local conditions (Russia hosted the Winter Games in 2014 in summer seaside resort Sochi). Various kinds of impacts are not centered only on cities but also on landscapes with deep environmental intervention. The organizers of the last Winter Games in South Korea's Pyeongchang recently-completed removal of tens of thousands of trees from the slopes of Mount Gariwang, including ancient and rare species.²⁶

In effect, the hosting cities use preparation for the Olympics as discursive adjustment for deep institutional reforms according to neo-liberalism, which affects not just urban landscape but also socio-economic structure is result of state intervention in coordination with private property and competitive free market.²⁷ The investment in fixed assets of buildings, infrastructures or grandiose engineering and architectural achievements of sport venues serves

²³ Perryman, Mark. *Why the Olympics Aren't Good for Us and How They Can Be*. London: OR Books 2012, p. 46.

²⁴ Taylor, Adam. "Greece's Abandoned Olympic Stadiums Get a Second Life: Housing Refugees" in *The Washington Post*, October 1, 2015.

²⁵ Perelman, Marc. *Barbaric Sport: a Global Plague*. London: Verso 2012, p. 10.

²⁶ McRurry, Justin and Howard, Emma. "Olympic organisers destroy 'sacred' South Korean forest to create ski run" in *The Guardian*, September 16, 2015.

²⁷ Harvey, David. "Neo-liberalism as Creative Destruction", *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, Vol. 88, No. 2, 2006, pp. 145-158.

as “spatial fix”. By this term social geographer David Harvey described reaction of capitalism in periodic crises of overaccumulation. “The built environment that constitutes a vast field of collective means of production and consumption absorbs huge amounts of capital in both its construction and its maintenance. Urbanization is one way to absorb the capital surplus.”²⁸ And the Olympic Games make huge opportunity, in his view, to remove population because of huge projects for developers. He remains that also the IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch personally used this opportunity to garner monopoly rents in Barcelona where he had large real estate interests.

But there is another production of the Olympic Games besides the sport spectacle. The state-financial nexus protects the restructuring of public space by the massive repressive power. Big part of astronomical cost of the Athens Olympics in 2004 was an immense amount of money used to guarantee security measures (1.5 billion dollars). That was an increase of more than 700 percent over the previous Summer Games in Sydney.²⁹ The Greek security apparatus included hundreds of CCTV cameras, the US-based government contractor SAIC with security system originally designed for military and CIA use, the police helicopters, zeppelin and dozens of Patriot missiles in position near athletes’ Olympic Village and more than 70 thousands military and security staff on patrol. This monstrous arsenal criticized as “Olympic super-panopticon” was materialized consequence of terrorist fear after the attacks of 9/11.³⁰ Four years later, the Beijing Olympics continued in huge militarization of the Games with more than 100 thousands of police officers in the streets. But new one was supervisory campaign to control this police troops by the possibility to report the breaking of the rules of “good image” by the policemen on telephone number 110 through the Games.³¹ The ideological part of preventive police operations through militarization of the Olympic area is labeling of trouble-makers as terrorists. All that is not new one but it is inherent part of the Olympic history. For example in the Innsbruck Winter Games in 1976 five policemen served per one athlete, also around the Olympic village were installed high fence fitted with alarm systems protected by searchlights and watchtowers, police-dogs and policemen wearing steel helmets carrying light machine guns. French sociologist Jean-Marie Brohm described it as embodied philosophy of the concentration camp.³²

²⁸ [Harvey](#), 2010, p. 85.

²⁹ Samatas, Minas. “Security and Surveillance in the Athens 2004 Olympics: Some Lessons From a Troubled Story,” *International Criminal Justice Review*, vol. 17, 2007, p. 225.

³⁰ Byokoff, 2016, p. 100.

³¹ Perelman, pp. 6-7.

³² Brohm, pp. 32-33.

All these operations through total militarization and urban transformation are nothing more than fulfilled imperative from the IOC for hosting country. In perspective of global economy the Olympic Committee plays role of transnational corporations with direct impact on the country which hosts the Games. It sounds paradoxically, because the main character of the IOC is international non-governmental organization with non-profit status (under the laws of Swiss Federal Council). “The main principle of Olympic Movement management is its independence on political influence of individual states and political units“.³³ This kind of independency has the other part (is embodied) in the form of income-gathering assets from the hosting country which has to take all costs, risks and responsibility.

The candidate countries for hosting of the Games compete against each other to be chosen by the IOC. It is based on the same principle like competition between international countries to gain foreign investments for their local markets. They offer tax holidays, land to use, exception to the law, cheap labour and security. The IOC also uses the international competition to demand specific advantages included funding of the Games, creating the necessary sport and urban infrastructure, constructing and protecting special zone of Olympics arenas, protecting official sponsors and commercial partners of the IOC before the local market’s competition, watching over the intellectual property rights of all Olympics symbols, providing housing and transporting for all athletes, their sports teams, journalists, tourists and last but not least the IOC’s leaders. Also the hosting countries invest millions of dollars in candidate projects to submitting a bid to the IOC, which cost from 50 to 100 millions of dollars. For example “Tokyo spent as much as \$150 million on its failed 2016 bid, and about half that much for its successful 2020 bid.”³⁴ Unbalance between hosting country and IOC is also manifested in incomes. The IOC exclusively sells TV broadcast rights, tickets and Olympic advertising. On the other side host country counts with short-term income from tourism and taxes, but some subjects (official Olympic partners and sponsors) have a tax exemptions. Long-term income is expected from tourism legacy after the Games. Japan targeted 40 millions foreign tourists in their Olympic year 2020. But the forecast on previous Olympic Games in Barcelona (1992), Athens (2004)³⁵ or London (2012) fell in these predictions and missed presumed profit.

³³ Nureev, Rustem and Markin, Evgeny. “Political Economy of Olympic Games,” *Review of Business and Economics Studies*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2015, p. 6.

³⁴ Quoted from <https://www.cfr.org/background/economics-hosting-olympic-games>.

³⁵ “Athens organizers aspired to bring in 105,000 foreign tourists per night during the Olympic period, but merely achieved 14,000. The Games were an economic flop.“ in Zimbalist, Andrew. *Circus Maximus: The Economic Humble behind Hosting the Olympics and the World Cup*. Washington: Brookings Institutions Press, 2016, p. 50.

The transnational corporations existed historically already in the 19th century but their main expansion accelerated into global scale by technological innovations in communication and transportation in 1960's. Also the modern Olympic Games exist more than one hundred years but the telecommunication revolution in the sixties made the priority for the IOC to sell TV broadcast of the Games because of rapidly increasing amount for national and international broadcast rights.³⁶ The IOC is not only business enterprise because in contrast to transnational corporations it is not decentralized to many bases in various countries in one moment and, the Olympic Games could not be hosted by more cities at the same time. Also the IOC could not leave the hosting country and take the Games before their realization. This is usual strategy of corporations when they lost the advantages from production in these countries. The Olympic Games were never cancelled, except the World War II.

5. An ideological sport apparatus

The Olympic Games look like to be perfect tool to use the productive forces for increase of surplus value and accumulation of capital. But there is also another function of the Olympics which help to cover its business character.

Sport is everywhere. Every second person on the planet saw TV broadcast of the Olympic Games despite of continent, country, race, ethnicity, political orientation, sexuality, gender or social status of this person. The magic of the sport means that everybody understands to it and everybody ever tried some sport discipline. This is could be possible only because the sport is for everybody, in other words it is neutral and apolitical institution in modern globalizing society. The best proof of it was participation of countries from two different political systems like West capitalist bloc and Eastern soviet bloc in one sport event. But this traditional explanation is not true. "In reality the Olympics are political through and through. The marching, the flags, the national anthems, the alliances with corporate sponsors, the labor exploitation behind the athletic-apparel labels, the treatment of indigenous peoples, the marginalization of the poor and working class, the selection of Olympic host cities—all political. To say the Olympics transcend politics is to conjure fantasy," wrote on the Olympics Jules Boykoff.³⁷

The concrete praxis of the Olympics Games is political on different levels. The final decision who will be the next host of the Games is purely political act. Also the nationalist propaganda is not invention of Nazi Germany from 1936 but praxis of the previous host cities.

³⁶ Nureev and Markin, p. 6.

³⁷ Boykoff, 2016, p. 11.

The London Games in 1908 began with the Parade of nations, when the athletes of each nation entered the Olympic Stadium behind their national flags. And the national anthem for winner was first played at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris. Just using of categorization of the athletes to their home's countries on the Olympic Games helped firstly take root of nationalism in peoples mind, secondly reproduce this ideology of identification through nation until these days. On the other hand IOC expressively declares that the Olympics and sport itself are basically apolitical and that is why it punishes all political acts on the Games. But while ban on attendance of Jewish athletes in Nazi Berlin was generally accepted by the IOC, the protest of American sprinters during their medal ceremony in the Olympic Stadium in Mexico City in 1968 ended up by their expulsion from the Games. History of the Olympics shows that the decision what is political act and what is not is itself very political. "An apoliticism that is in fact deeply political," once remarked German philosopher Theodor W. Adorno.³⁸

What is behind this "apolitical mystification" in the Olympic Games? It is the other function of the Olympic Games besides its economic role because it is also Ideological State Apparatus. French Marxists philosopher Louis Althusser used this term for the reproduction of the relations of production. Ideological State Apparatus means dominant ideology of ruling class in which relations are capitalist relations of exploitation. The "State" does not mean only state institutions in the sense of public but it included also the apparatuses of private sector. Althusser points out it does not matter who owned that institutions because all serve to state politics, which is politics of dominant class.³⁹

Each of Ideological State Apparatus has its own specific way, exactly sport in Althusser view serves to fostering chauvinism.⁴⁰ Ideology in the form of sport masks the real structure of production relations but through this illusion it helps to naturalize them. How is possible that sports ideology can on the one side veil something and at the same time to reproduce it? The answer is hidden and manifested in the Olympic Games. The fundamental principles set out in the Olympic Charter consider as the main goals the service of the harmonious development of humankind, promoting a peaceful society without discrimination of any kind, educate to friendship, solidarity and fair play based on the joy of effort by sport.⁴¹

³⁸ Adorno, Theodor W. "Commitment," in Bloch, Ernst, Lukács, György, Brecht, Bertolt, Benjamin, Walter and Adorno, Theodor. *Aesthetics and Politics*. London: Verso 1980, p. 177.

³⁹ Althusser, Louis. *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*. London: Verso 2014, p. 81.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 144-145.

⁴¹ See

<https://www.icsspe.org/system/files/The%20Fundamentals%20of%20Olympic%20Values%20Education.pdf>.

Despite of idealist character of Olympism, which is in contrast to political economy kernel and praxis of the Olympic Games, there is another point in sport itself.

The joy of play is generally regarded as substance of sport, but in reality there is no play in sport. Play means absolute freedom of acting subject, but sport offers only limitations by the rules of game. But neither the game is essence of standardized sport disciplines of the Olympic Games. The “game” should invoke kind of not serious, unimportant or unnecessary praxis which is primarily a fun. The Olympics athletes are professional sport workers, to organize this event costs billions of dollars and finally it interest more than 3.5 billions people. The Olympic Games are absolutely more competition than game. Its ideological function is direct reflection of the competition in capitalist relations that transformed everything to commodity. Sport performances of the athletes are compared in the commodity-form on the market of their rivalry or achievement of the new record. The sportsmen exploited their own bodies to maximizing output. And masked class relations between individuals remain turned into mystified relations between things like the physical performances compare as number of the time, power, score, record and so on. The human part of athletes is treated in discursive construction of self-made man who succeeded only by his own effort which overcome all obstacles and his own limits. It is ideological interpelation to naturalize individualization in the way of supporting of capitalistic status quo. And other values “of the capitalist jungle are played out in sport: virility, sexual athleticism, physical dominance, the superman, muscle worship, fascistic male chauvinism, racism, sexism, etc.”⁴² Sport is not any more opposite to work, but it plays role of very sophisticated continuation of work in free-time. Worker finds in sport “the same mentality, the same criteria, the same morality, the same movements and the same objectives – all the laws and habits required by the technical work organization – which he has only just left behind him at the factory or the office.”⁴³

The sports ideology helps to cover business character of the Olympic Games also because of disciplinization of spectators. Firstly, it serves to better sell the Olympic commodity which is going well when it does not look like a commodity. These spectators do not think about themselves as about consumers of TV broadcast product but they consider themselves as sports fans. Althusser interpreted this moment as ideological recognition (*reconnaissance*) - subject can't recognize itself as constitution because subject considers itself as autonomous. It is consequence of ideological practices which constitutes this subject

⁴² Brohm, p. 15.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 40.

and they used mechanism which prevents to subject recognize this process.⁴⁴ This is exactly the basic ideological moment of the Olympic Games and modern sport because everybody thinks about itself “automatically” as about sportsman or spectator of them. Secondly, sport spreads attitude of submission to the established order. Not only by transformation of human beings to the passive mass before the TV screen who can’t in any way to change the content of watching acts. But there is constructed fascination by submission of sport celebrities under the order of rules and the IOC watch dogs because only respecting rules guarantees the possibility of success. It is exemplary for all people to do not revolt against existing hierarchy, authorities and order of things and commodities above their lives if they want to be successful in general.

6. Critique and Resistance to the Olympic Games

Is it possible to criticize or moreover to resist against the Olympic Games despite of its economic and ideological power? Althusser highlighted that Ideological State Apparatuses produce together with ideology of dominant order also the “secondary” ideology, which is subversive to this order.⁴⁵ Exactly this is materialized in the so called Olympic dissent. This term is used to signify all critics, activists, movements or protesters who disagreed with the Olympic event. This Althusserian kind of revolution ideology appears in different historic and cultural forms.

The most powerful form of resistance against the Olympics is final rejection of the hosting of them by public. Historically first chosen host city which did it was Denver in 1972 because voters refused additional public spending for the Games in referendum. That was reaction on the fact that every Olympics since 1960 has seen major cost overruns. Only the Summer Games in Los Angeles in 1984 made it the only city which turned a profit hosting the Olympics.⁴⁶ And the public antipathy increased to these days. Budapest withdrew its bid to host the 2024 Summer Olympics in 2017 after nine years of preparations and plans. The Hungarian Olympic Committee reacted to weak public support when more than 250 thousands of Budapest’s residents signed a petition to have a referendum if this city would organize the Summer Olympics. The decision to withdraw the candidacy was very surprising because of full financial and political support from Hungarian government and Prime Minister

⁴⁴ Althusser, pp. 189-190.

⁴⁵ Kužel, Petr. *Filosofie Louise Althussera*. Praha: Filosofia 2014, p. 242.

⁴⁶ See <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/economics-hosting-olympic-games>.

Viktor Orbán.⁴⁷ It shows that national Olympic Committees could not organize the Games without the State and local government but it is also not possible to be host without strong support of its citizens. The last voting of hosting country of the Winter Olympics in 2026 reflected this tendency. The Italian candidate (Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo) beat Swedish rival (Stockholm–Åre) because of bigger public support (83 percent in an IOC poll versus 55 percent in Sweden) and certainty of financial guarantees when Stockholm officials refused to sign the IOC's host-city contract.⁴⁸ All other cities withdraw their bids before the final decision by the IOC because of the negative results of referendums in Innsbruck (Austria), Sion (Switzerland) or Calgary (Canada).

This kind of public resistance seems to be in contradiction to the Olympic Games as a powerful ideological apparatus. But the history of the Olympics is also history of the Olympic dissent.⁴⁹ This sport-induced political subversion combines very different predominant forms of athlete activism, political movements that springboard off the Games and intellectual criticism. Some kinds of it took advantage of the media spotlight, but a lot of them remained unknown to public because of media disinterest. Also their targets and methods took different forms.

One of them are nationalist intentions like political stand of Irish athlete competed for Britain Peter O'Connor in Athens in 1906 when during medal ceremony he waved a large green flag with words "Ireland Forever". The feminist discourse embodied successful suffrage guerilla actions before the Games in London in 1908 when organizers let participate woman athletes because they were afraid of next disrupting of the Olympics. The famous action of the Afro-American sprinters in Mexico City in 1968 with "Black Panther" salute and next symbols like shoe in the hand or opened jacket protested against social and racist injustice in the USA. The ecological initiative led one of the most impressive fighting during Sydney games in 2000 when organizers proclaimed environmental sustainability. But activist criticized them because of paying the environmental remediation from public tax money not by "polluters pays". And also they warned that the building stage for beach volleyball at Bondi Beach along the Pacific Ocean liquidized this ecological sensitive location. The intellectual activism attacked the Games from different positions. The group named the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) successfully expelled the South Africa from Olympic participation because of its Apartheid regime from 1964 to 1992. In 1975

⁴⁷ See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/olympics/39059452>.

⁴⁸ See <https://olympics.nbcsports.com/tag/2026-olympics/>.

⁴⁹ Boykoff, Jules. *Activism and the Olympics: Dissent at the Games in Vancouver and London*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 2014.

French Comité anti-olympique demanded cancellation of the Olympics because it repressed the citizens and enriched the political and economic elite. Or there existed global appeal to boycott the Summer Olympics in Beijing in 2008 because of disrupting of human rights in the China. Very special kind of action symbolized public demonstrations in the countries hosting the Games. Like crowds of the Californians in the streets of Sacramento protested in the early days of the Great Depression in 1932 against public financial support of the Games in Los Angeles. Or massive movement of activists, non-governmental organizations, professors, artists and in the front with the First Nations activists demonstrated against point the Vancouver Winter Games in 2010 on unceded Coast Salish land.

But the most explicit protest against the capitalist core of the Olympics happened in London in 2012. Jules Boykoff summed up this critique to the six main points included the high cost of the largely taxpayer-funded Olympics, the role of corporate sponsorship, the seizure of public space for games activities, negative impacts on the environment, the lack of follow-through related to promises about employment and a business boost, and Olympic security measures.⁵⁰ The anti-capitalist character of it helps to understand why the Olympic Games despite of their ideological power are linked to so many protest and activism. The answer is the same like for the basic question of this paper asking how is possible that the Olympic Games serve as a tool of capitalism. The both of this phenomenon create its radical subversive reaction.

The logic of accumulation of capital helped to globalize the Games, caused unprecedented wealth and changed the hosting cities, but on the other side it is based on funding from public money, privatization of local places and last but not least on exploitation of athletes. The popular spectacle helps to sell TV broadcast and spread the ideas of Olympism hand in hand with the brands of corporate sponsorships, but on the other side it created worldwide range for every political action. The actual form of the Olympics is so openly commercial and capitalistic that everything negative it caused is used against capitalist system itself.

But today's general critique of the Olympics is still under cover of ideology. The most obvious critique focuses on the tendency of the IOC to prefer hosts with authoritarian regime before the democratic liberal countries. It is almost linked with the Games in Beijing 2008, Russia 2014 and again China but in 2022. And this tendency is also visible in the logic of bid of host cities for football World Cup or the Athletic Championship. It is explained that the

⁵⁰ Boykoff, Jules. "Protest, Activism, and the Olympic Games: An Overview of Key Issues and Iconic Moments", *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 2017, p. 11.

authoritative countries do not need public support and used the Games as propaganda tool for global legitimization and doctrination of its citizens. Despite of this argument is contradictory because the Games without public support could not be used for the propaganda of the same people, very problematic remain lack of explanation why the Games are also still host by so called liberal countries. The true answer is that the main condition to be chosen as the Olympic cities (and country) is nothing more than to be winner of global capitalism. Nureev discovered the relationship between decision making and level of economic development of member countries and their political influence in statistical data. And history of the modern Olympic Games shows that developed countries which now form the so-called G8 or G20 are most likely to host the Games. „The final choice is made among the developed countries’ representatives. These cities can spend on the Games the necessary funds, which allow to get a profit from the Games in future.“⁵¹

And that is why the protests against the Games and absence of public support are the reflection of the real needs of local people, in other words with their economic situation of living conditions. The extrapolation of global capitalism creates more and more wealth for few people on the one side and more and more alienated, exploited and angrier people on the other side. The Olympic Games are hosted by the countries with the weakest regulations of the economic regime. People reflect that this sport spectacle is not productive for them but presents only speculative investments to spectacular consumption which is in conflict with their own possible consumption. Resistance against the Olympic Games is nothing more than resistance against their powerless position in the capitalist system which is characterized by imbalance between global economic forces and local offer of cheap labour.

7. Conclusion

On 24 July, the Japanese Olympic organizers (TOCOG) announced that Tokyo is already prepared for the Summer Olympic Games next year. Mainstream media covered celebration of local organizers and did not ask what it really means to be prepared to host the biggest spectacle on the world. From view of sport it means to build the most modern sport venues, arenas, swimming pool, sport halls and last but not least Olympic Village to accommodate all athletes. From economic view it means to pay millions of dollars for construction of these buildings, to improve infrastructure, to provides service for millions of tourist and last but not least for massive security. From political view it means propagation of

⁵¹ Nureev and Markin, p. 8.

the city and Japan in the world, strengthening of national identity and last but not least support of peaceful pace of all countries from the world.

From view of critical political economy it means specific kind of accumulation of capital in different forms. It included state cover of massive loans for the operating budget. The Olympic budget of Tokyo is now around 30 billions of dollars. The host state must enact special law to exclude from taxes revenue generated by activities related to the organization of the Games including multinational corporate sponsors. The next year's Games will be the most heavily sponsored events in history with 3.1 billions of dollars raised just from 63 domestic companies. On top is trio of Japanese groups Toyota, Panasonic and Bridgestone which have struck multiyear deals with the IOC. The capital circulations are absorbed by the constructions and renovation of the city which fulfill mode of gentrification and create massive opportunity to local developers. The 2020 Olympic projects have sucked up construction labour in Japan and increasing prices of raw material slowing reconstruction of the land damaged by 2011 tsunami. All of it serves to fulfill the main aim of the Olympic Games – mobilize capital for organizing this kind of huge sport meeting.

Tokyo experienced subversive reaction against the Olympics too. At least one hundred fifty people protest the hosting the Games in the Japanese capital. That was historical moment despite of not very large number of protestors because of foreign participations there. Activists from the French anti-olympic organization NON aux JO 2024 à Paris and NOlympics from Los Angeles shifted the protests from local disagreement to the next level of global problem. And because of massive popularity of the Olympics this “little but global” protest is dangerous for the IOC in the future. The bid of the Winter Games in 2026 showed that no Games could be hosted without public support. That is unintended consequence of global spreading and popularity of the Games which do not cover anymore their capitalist core to make a profit. The people's resistance against enrichment of big corporations through sport is also another product of global capitalism but finally without possibility to be commodified.