

‘We Are The Media’¹: Non-Accredited Media & Citizen Journalists at the Olympic Games, by Andy Miah, Beatriz García & Tian Zhihui

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Introduction

Narratives about the Olympics arise largely from the stories filed by the mass of journalists—press and broadcasters—who attend the Games and spew forth accounts of what occurs on and off the competition ground. Who those journalists are, what they do, how they are channeled through the Olympics world—each of these factors has implications for what is represented and what the billions around the globe see and read. As such, the issue of defining who is a journalist, what rights they have, and how they are served and managed is crucial, since it will play an important role in determining control of the platform. Yet it is increasingly understood/assumed that the concept of “the journalist” has changed and, with it, the management tasks of the Olympics and its host cities. Our newly expanded concept of the journalist has nevertheless resulted in more than increased demand for media guidance, information and facilities. It will likely have important implications for what is covered and how. In this essay, we look at the processes of change in journalism, using the accreditation process at the Olympics as a lens. We also examine the challenges and opportunities this presents to the construction of narrative(s) about and the management of the Games.

Since the 1980s, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has established guidelines that determine who is accredited as an Olympic journalist. To be an accredited journalist in this context enables privileged access to Games venues and the

exclusive right to report the official competitions. However, new technologies and new sources of supply have highlighted the need for new institutions and new protocols. From the Sydney 2000 Games, *non-accredited* journalists have become a significant component of the Games' journalistic community. And increasingly elaborate arrangements have been developed for the management of this group at both summer and winter Games. These arrangements take the form of specially-constructed enterprises, which have come to be called Non-Accredited Media Centres. The term 'non-accredited' refers to journalists who *do* receive recognition—an accreditation of sorts from the established Centre, so they are not simply unaccredited or completely external to the Olympic organizational framework. However, such journalists do not have an official IOC accreditation and cannot access official venues as journalists nor cover the sport competitions. This term is most commonly used by the people who organize facilities for such journalists, so it also coheres with the self-characterization of this community. By studying the origins, functions and development of the Non-Accredited Media Centres, we can gain insight into the shifting world of journalism and how [it puts?] additional narratives into play.

The emergence of non-accredited journalists highlights the challenges arising from shifts in traditional journalism since, in the absence of IOC guidelines, the criteria for defining a journalist are more fluid. In the context of the Olympics, these shifts have given rise to at least three categories of journalist. The most obvious is the Olympic journalist who would be labeled "accredited," namely those to whom the relevant authorities have given certain rights to cover the Games. A second category would be journalists, traditionally professionalized, who cannot, because of limitations and

contractual rights, be included in the full complement of entitlements for those who are accredited but who will be present at the Games and influence mainstream narratives. A third category, closer to the technological and supply side exposition, are those who self-characterize as journalists; this group has a more tenuous relationship to mainstream media, but through blogs and similar devices, may have a greater impact on public understanding of what the Olympics means and why. At the Torino 2006 Olympic Winter Games, these web-based journalists were a strong presence at the Non-Accredited Media Center. This was the first occasion in Olympic history where low-budget journalistic operations could broadcast in an effective manner through the Internet (for instance, the audio-visual file-share website, YouTube, came online around the end of 2005). Torino demonstrated the challenge posed by such journalists, given the capacity to publish multimedia content through diverse online platforms. Together, the combination of an increased number of journalists who are not accredited to the main facilities and the emergence of new media suggests that the established mechanisms of media representation at the Olympic Games are being re-constituted.

This chapter is based on research that draws on ethnographic, documentation and interview data collected at the Non-Accredited Media Centers at four consecutive Olympic Games: Sydney 2000, Salt Lake 2002, Athens 2004 and Torino 2006. The research entailed participant observations, archiving of materials and interviews of key management personnel at all of these Centres. At each of the Games, except for Salt Lake City, we were present at least three days before the Opening Ceremony of the Olympics. Our analysis of Non-Accredited Media Centres is also based on documents and interviews with officials affiliated to and working within the Beijing Organizing

Committee for the Olympic Games, which we used to ascertain the extent of planning for non-accredited media two years before the 2008 Games.

In this context, the chapter will undertake three main tasks. First, we will discuss the emergence of much more varied and variously regulated media at the Olympics, offering evidence from the last four Olympic Games and contextualizing it with reference to the broader media framework of the Games. These details help to develop an understanding of the Non Accredited Media Centre's character, function and outcomes. Second, we consider the immediate context of the Beijing Olympic Games, particularly how its new media landscape might look, given its particular cultural and political circumstances. Finally, we discuss how the notion of non-accredited media fits within broader discussions about new media studies and the challenges posed by the re-professionalization of journalism via the rise of the citizen journalist.²

The Non-Accredited Media Centres (NAMC)

Media structures at the Olympics

The official media structures at the Olympic Games are the result of a combination of operational and financial need. Ever since the Games' financial crisis of the 1970s and the subsequent restructuring of the Olympic Movement in the 1980s as a commercially viable enterprise,³ the IOC has treated the media as a crucial Games stakeholder and a key member of what is termed the 'Olympic Family,'⁴ which includes international sport federations, the athletes, team officials, sponsors and IOC guests. To secure full coverage of the extremely diverse and concentrated range of Olympic activity

during the 16 days of competition, the host city is required to provide members of the media state-of-the-art working venues (the Main Press Centre and the International Broadcasting Centre—sometimes described together as the Main Media Centre—as well as Venue Media Centres within each of the sport competition venues); a fully equipped Media Village providing meals and accommodation; transport to all official Olympic venues coordinated with the times of competition and an extensive network of information points with the latest updates on all sports events and competitor backgrounds.

To control the number of media with access to such facilities, the IOC has set a strict accreditation process following similar patterns to that established for the rest of the Olympic Family (IOC 2004, Rule 55). For press writers and photographers, the IOC has set a maximum quota of 5,600 places per Games since Sydney 2000; numbers are allocated per country, with priority to the “main media organizations” (IOC 2006a) which are determined by respective National Olympic Committees. Broadcasting organizations, as the main funders of the Olympic Movement (providing up to 53% of all Olympic revenue sources, while sponsors provide up to 36%), are treated differently. Because ‘Television is the engine that has driven the growth of the Olympic Movement’ (IOC 2007),⁵ broadcasters are not only treated as accredited media, but also as ‘Olympic right-holders’ with access to the core Olympic properties, such as the rings. The IOC states that “rights are only sold to broadcasters who can guarantee the broadest coverage throughout their respective countries free of charge” (IOC 2007) and they are offered in exclusivity to one broadcaster per geographical area. This means that in any one country, there is only one approved Official broadcaster and no competing TV channels can offer images

of official Olympic events. Broadcast organizations are allocated a set number of accreditations according to the level of funding support. In the period 2004 to 2008, the total number is approximately 14,400 individual accreditations to include presenters, producers as well as technical staff.⁶

The Main Press Centre and the International Broadcasting Centre operate in different ways, the latter being one of the most inaccessible Olympic venues, as it holds the strictly protected “moving image” feed of all sport competitions, currently valued at \$1,707 million (1.7 billion) and available exclusively to right holders. Nevertheless, they share a series of characteristics as the main official accredited media venues: access to each requires full accreditation under strictly limited quotas (requests are made directly to the IOC); and they can only provide information related to official Olympic events which essentially comprise the Olympic Torch Relay, the Opening Ceremony, each of the official sporting competitions taking place during the 16 days of the Games, and the Closing Ceremony. Olympic broadcast right-holders have access to all Main Press Center facilities, while the press and photographic media cannot enter the International Broadcast Center. Non-rights holding broadcasters may be entitled to apply for accreditation at the Main Press Center to access and distribute text-based information about official events but, as in the case of the press, they cannot gain access to the International Broadcast Center or any moving images. This stipulation also encompasses the distribution of such images in an online environment (IOC 2006b).

The Olympic Charter specifies the IOC’s commitment to protecting the media coverage of the Games as well as the technical regulations imposed on journalists for this purpose (IOC 2004, Rule 51). In particular, it identifies the objective of the IOC as to

maximize media coverage and for such coverage to “promote the principles and values of Olympism” (IOC 2004, bye-law 1). In so doing, the IOC asserts its authority on the media’s governance at each Games. Moreover, the host city is bound by these requirements as an integral part of its contract with the IOC. By extension, the IOC also asserts its exclusive rights by stipulating that

Only those persons accredited as media may act as journalists, reporters or in any other media capacity....Under no circumstances, throughout the duration of the Olympic Games, may any athlete, coach, official, press attaché or any other accredited participant act as a journalist or in any other media capacity (IOC 2004, Article 51, Bye-Law 3)

It is worth mentioning other ways of regulating what images are transmitted to those in the host city and the world as well. Host governments, at the behest of the IOC, often institute legislation to govern the protection of the Olympic identity. For example, for the London 2012 Olympic Games, the British Government instituted an ‘Olympic Bill’ (House of Commons 2005). These stipulations reveal that the IOC considers the Games to be its core property, not that of the host city, which is borrowing the association. This indicates aspects of a division in directing the narrative—between the IOC, which is setting the conditions of the stage, and the host city, which is facilitating its orchestration. The Olympic Charter offers further details. Specifically, Rule 53 notes that,

[...]2 No form of advertising or other publicity shall be allowed in and above the stadia, venues and other competition areas which are considered as part of the Olympic sites. [...]

3 No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas (IOC 2004, Olympic Charter, p. 101)

The effects of such guidelines are clearly visible in the stadia, where spectators, athletes and officials are prohibited from doing or wearing anything that might act contrary to this Rule. Furthermore, areas of IOC regulation continue to expand. For instance, during recent Olympics, *all* billboard space within the city center and areas surrounding the Olympic venues was offered to Olympic sponsors or else left empty to avoid ambush marketing. In this sense, the entire city is construed as and becomes an “Olympic site.”

To understand the full implications of this situation, it is important to note the nature of delivery structures within the Olympic Games. The city authorities are in charge of establishing an Organizing Committee that will deliver the Games according to IOC regulations, but with funding and support from local, regional and national government agencies. The IOC delimits what is ‘owned’ by the Olympic Movement—thus granting privileged access to members of the Olympic Family—during the period of the Games. Yet, local authorities have also attempted to protect ownership of other spaces that may use the Games as a platform to promote activities other than the official Olympic program and parts of the Olympic program not set as priority by the IOC. The latter include the Cultural Olympiad⁷ and Education activities, which tend to focus on the representation of local and national identities. The establishment of Non-Accredited Media Centres could be described as one of the most paradigmatic examples of such attempts at protecting ownership by the local hosts of platforms outside the obligations of the Host City Contract and IOC regulations.

Dealing with the new journalistic masses: From Sydney 2000 to Torino 2006

Following the establishment of strict Olympic media regulations in the 1980s, the first organized attempt at coping with the large number of journalists outside the official accredited list is found at the Barcelona 1992 Games. The Barcelona City Council recognized the importance of using the Games as a platform for promoting the city and region. It realized that it was fundamental to nourish and attract the attention of media writers from non-Olympic rights holding organizations that would not have access to the sporting venues. As such, it supported the creation of a center within the Barcelona 'Welcome Operation,' called the *Barcelona Press Service*. This center was organized in collaboration with the Autonomous University of Barcelona and focused its services on the specialist press and scholars interested in the history of Barcelona and Catalonia, and in particular the Catalan cultural identity. This experience was highly regarded by local authorities and served as the basis for intervention by subsequent Olympic host cities. However, the Barcelona center lacked visibility and relied on very limited technical and financial resources. By the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, the commitment to such centers had been upgraded considerably. Local authorities raised the priority in terms of expenditure and care in catering for a far wider band of individuals engaged in journalistic activity. And these individuals were encouraged to promote non-sports related stories as a top priority.

In Sydney, the main facility to welcome the broad range of journalistic actors, accredited and non-accredited, the Sydney Media Centre, was situated in the fashionable city centre area of Darling Harbour. This Centre was the result of collaboration between

the Commonwealth Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Tourism Commission, Tourism New South Wales, the Department of State and Regional Development and the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority. These organizations aimed to enhance the city and regional economic development via the promotion of its leisure and business tourism offerings. Interestingly, the Sydney Media Centre was also formed out of concerns that the Atlanta 1996 Games suffered by *not* providing for non-accredited journalists. As was discussed in an Australian parliamentary debate on the subject:

As Atlanta found to its cost, if ... journalists are not looked after by being given good facilities from which to operate, if they are not provided with assistance in delivering interesting stories, the result is a deluge of media coverage critical of the city itself and critical of the Olympics preparations. We were absolutely determined that this would not happen in Sydney (Legislative Assembly 2000, 9070).

As such, the establishment of the Sydney Media Centre was both an attempt to promote local causes and a way to ensure that journalists with no access to the accredited venues had access to other facilities and stories. It was a facility-based way of encouraging a broader sense of what constituted the Olympics narrative and supplementing the work of the Main Press Centre and the International Broadcasting Centre which were run for the exclusive benefit of the “accredited journalists.” Located at the border of the harbor, the Centre provided shooting locations for broadcasters and a spacious bar-restaurant in addition to the common provision of working and communication facilities, information stands, press releases, daily keynotes, press briefings, promotional events and conferences. Some days prior to the start of the Games in September 2000, the center had

registered more than 3,000 media representatives.⁸ By the conclusion of the Games, 5,000 journalists had been accepted at the Media Centre (Legislative Council 2000, 9274). The venue hosted various high-profile events, including athletes' panels and press conferences with key figures from the Opening Ceremony.

In Salt Lake City, provision for the ever broader and technologically diverse non-accredited media was distributed between two different Centres, each of which had different purposes and was overseen by different organizations. The Utah Media Centre, the direct successor of the Barcelona innovation, was located in close proximity to the official Main Media Center in the heart of the city. It was an initiative of the Utah Travel Council with the support of the Chamber of Commerce and Visitors and Conventions Bureau in Salt Lake City. A second hub—The Park City Media Center—was created at the initiative of the Chamber of Commerce and was located in Park City, home of one of the most popular ski resorts in the area and a central point to access a wide range of Olympic competition venues. The Utah Media Centre was the largest of the two and, as in the case of Sydney, it hosted high profile events such as the only press conference by Rudolph Giuliani, the Mayor of New York City, who discussed the situation in the United States in the aftermath of 9/11.

In Athens, the main non-accredited center was located in the Zappeion Center, directly next to the city's main square, Syntagma. The Zappeion Press Center was established in a building that had historic value for both the city and the Olympic Movement, as it was the headquarters of the first Modern Olympic Games in 1896. As evidence of the growing relevance of this effort by host cities to go beyond the IOC-approved journalist corps, this Centre was far greater in size and political significance

than previous versions. The day after the Opening Ceremony, the Zappeion Press Centre hosted the formal signing of the Olympic Truce ‘wall,’⁹ which brought heads of state, royalty and IOC dignitaries to the same press venue. Notably, this took place outside of the normal, expected security requirements of Olympic venues and amongst the non-accredited journalists. The Zappeion Centre also hosted a number of other important events, such as a presentation for the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games and the presentation of the Cultural Olympiad, which tends to lack media visibility. Each day, there were press briefings by the Ministries of Public Order, Sports and Culture, and opportunities for journalists to meet athlete celebrities, including Cathy Freeman, the Australian Aboriginal athlete who lit the Olympic cauldron in the Sydney 2000 Games and the city mayor.

Winter and Summer Olympic hosts always look towards their respective predecessors and comparing Torino 2006 with Salt Lake City 2002 shows a further increase of provision for the non-accredited media. The Torino Piemonte Media Center offered unprecedented facilities for journalists, including a vast and richly endowed press room with large-screen projections of athletic events, wireless computing and gourmet regional cuisine. By 2006, the advance of technology and the social context of reporting had so altered that it is reasonable to suggest that Torino was the first post-Web2.0 media center. It had a strong representation from online authors and journalists, often, if loosely, described as bloggers. By this time, a number of bloggers had established enough publishing credibility for the organizers to look beyond traditional print and broadcast journalists in determining what efforts should be made to embrace them in official and quasi-official venues. The range of bloggers included local as well as overseas writers,

many from Vancouver, the next Winter Olympic Host city and one at the forefront of new media development.

The Emergence of the Non-Accredited Media Center

In the previous section, we traced a phenomenon that has had a formal name since the Sydney 2000 Olympics: that is, the Non-Accredited Media Center. Over the years, some common features have emerged to distinguish these Centers. First, they are physically and structurally separate from the major accredited media venues, the Main Press Centre and the International Broadcasting Centre. In addition, the arrangements for non-accredited journalists tend to be established by the local host city council and affiliated authorities, rather than the Olympic Organizing Committee. Because of this, the focus of these centers has generally been on the promotion of the local cultural milieu, with an emphasis on tourism and business opportunities, rather than sports (though frequently, screens displaying competitions are focal points for the journalists within the Non-Accredited Media Centers). Also, due to their greater flexibility in the acceptance of users, the non-accredited Centers attract a much wider range of journalists, many of whom are not associated with mainstream media groups. However, these venues are not specifically designed to serve as what has often been called “alternative” or independent media centers (Lenskyj 2002; Neilson 2002) which, as noted by Lenskyj, may facilitate “the organization of (publicly advertised) Olympic-related protest events’ (p.166) and which are ‘organized by a diverse collective of media activists’ (p.167). While the Non-Accredited Media Centers may include individuals with an overtly anti-Olympic information bent, they are far from being established for that purpose.

Following the success of Sydney, the term 'Non-Accredited Media Center' (NAMC) was adopted in Athens, Torino and Beijing. Despite having been developed outside the official Olympic regulations, the NAMC have structures and functions that reveal significant commonalities with the form---and thus suggest the potential for a conflict of roles to emerge between them. These commonalities become clear when examining their respective journalist demographics; the characteristics of location, facilities and stories; and the evolution of an ever-closer relationship with the host city Olympic Organizing Committee.

Journalist Demographics

In contrast to accredited journalists, most of whom represent mainstream media groups, individuals and companies registered at the NAMC represent a wide variety of organizations, including small outlets such as specialist culture and trade magazines, and community radio stations and independent activist groups, who may have a specific agenda to uncover the most controversial issues emerging during Games time. Furthermore, those at the non-accredited media center are neither regularly accredited in their own countries nor always professionally trained. Thus, they bring a variety of agendas, demands, experience and interests to these centers. Those who use these facilities include:

- Official IOC accredited journalists who find the location, facilities and environment more convenient or find the NAMC program of events to be newsworthy.

- Journalists from IOC-accredited media organizations who do not have their own accreditation to the Main Press Center or International Broadcast Center, due to the limited quotas.
- Journalists from mainstream media organizations who do not have official Olympic accreditations.
- Specialist and freelance writers.
- Non-professional journalists who have their own publishing outlet.
- Online publishers whose work in online platforms is inseparable from their personal online profile as creative practitioners.
- Non-professional 'citizen' journalists interested in exploring and portraying alternative impressions of the Games.

Typically, the first four types can be characterized as professional journalists; in the final three categories, far fewer have the marks of professionalism. The last two categories are growing in numbers quite significantly: In Torino, video bloggers (vloggers) were plentiful for the first time. Notably, an increasing number of journalists from Categories 1 and 2 are using the non-accredited facilities, working within the same environment as journalists from Categories 3-7, who were originally the targeted users.¹⁰ The wide variety of individual backgrounds, and the unique situation of all of these journalists sharing the same facilities and attending the same conferences over a concentrated period of time, offers unexpected opportunities for personal interaction which can lead to quite unusual proceedings. The agenda of a meeting may be radically transformed simply because the interests of the minor press are different; these interactions also raise the

possibility of the minor press' capability to influence and transform the agenda of established, mainstream journalists.

Location, facilities and stories

The NAMC tends to be located in a space that is conducive to the city's interest in promoting locally-rooted messages. The venue is typically a city center surrounded by relevant cultural attractions and political institutions. In contrast, the accredited centers are located at the main Olympic park area which is usually outside the city center in new purpose-built facilities. Further, the NAMC tends to emphasize hospitality as much as media information. It is a facility in which those who underwrite it—local and regional authorities as well as corporations—are cajoling as much as hosting, trying to extend the field of vision rather than simply provide access. As a result, the NAMC retains a strong local character, which contrasts sharply with the standardized framework of the Main Press Centre and the International Broadcasting Centre, where facilities present almost identical features from one Games edition to the next and where stories typically exclude any social, cultural and political aspects of the local host.

Relationship with 'official' Olympic structures

The NAMC has no official link to the accredited centers but is increasingly being used to ensure representation of the host city Organizing Committee in non-sporting related issues such as cultural, educational and environmental matters. For example, one feature that has been integral to the NAMC since Sydney 2000 is a Cultural Olympiad or

Olympic Arts Festival press office. This presence is a reflection of the fact? Impression? that cultural information is marginalized at the Main Media Centers.

The non-accredited centers have also become hosts of high profile Olympic-related events, such as the Olympic Truce in Athens, and are sites for information about popular Olympic features such as the Medals Plaza during the Winter Games and the LiveSites!—large screens in the open air broadcasting sport as well as concerts and providing free live entertainment. None of these would feature prominently at the accredited media venues. Furthermore, the NAMC has become a hub for official information about Olympic transportation and environmental guidelines.

The increasing level of partnerships between these semiofficial or unofficial centers and entire departments or programs within the local Olympic Organizing Committee reveals a trend towards the increasing centrality of the NAMC as a provider of information and media access to relevant dimensions of the Games that are, however, not yet considered a media priority for the IOC. While part of this division has to do with the differing interests of the media—the assumption that local culture and street celebrations are meaningful primarily to local media, whereas elite sport is of global interest—it is also explained through sponsorship structures, which presently do not fund the majority of cultural (non-sport) activities (Garcia 2001).

New Trends, New Media

As demonstrated by the experience in Torino, there are increasing numbers of online journalists present at the Olympics, which presents new opportunities for the NAMC. Some of the fundamental distinctions of Olympic journalism are disrupted by

new media; notably the distinction between broadcasters and print media. The collapsing of boundaries is also indicative of the mixed-role of new media publishers: they are producers, users and audiences. Moreover, the process of editorial control is diminished or, at least, replaced by a user-generated agenda, whereby the successful impact of stories is enabled by the syndication of material by the user community.

The IOC has sought to control who can report on the Olympics, but this is increasingly difficult given the emergence of a/the new community of ‘citizen journalists.’ So far, athletes and coaches have been forbidden from blogging—or undertaking any practice that could be construed as journalism—during the Olympic fortnight. Regardless of whether this ban on such activities is an unreasonable infringement on the players’ rights of self-expression, it is difficult to foresee how such rules can be enforced effectively given the breath of online publishing that currently exists. Additionally, on-site spectators with high specification telephone cameras are also likely to share first-hand and timely pictures and videos transmitted immediately to their personal blog and the like. In many cases, this could present a competitive challenge to the fee-paying broadcasters in the struggle for audiences, or at least offer some alternative insight. The impact of new technologies will have be a particularly prominent issue for China at the Beijing 2008 Games, as it is a country that is considerably advanced in the area of new media innovation, but also imposes specific restrictions on journalistic freedom that are now being contested within the context of the Olympic Games.

The New Media of/in Beijing 2008

Characterizing the subject of new media in the context of China is a multi-layered task. First, one can discuss the rise of digital media technologies, as instances of new media proper, in scholarly terms. This would encompass the development of online publishing platforms by established media companies or the emergence of new organizations that are increasingly occupying a stronghold in the dissemination of information and enabling new spaces of communication. A good example of this is the recent emergence of MySpace China (Barboza 2007). However, this category also encompasses discussions over censorship surrounding the presence of, say, You Tube or Google in China. Second, one could speak about the expectant discourse of greater Western media freedom in China, as an indication of its new media population. In this regard, the Beijing Olympic Games can be discussed as a mechanism through which this transformation will take place. Third, one must consider the emergence of new media as the disruption of traditional categories of media professions, as with the rise of citizen journalists and the syndication of information via Web 2.0 software. Among these three categories of new media, there is considerable overlap. Already, one can notice how the emergence of on-site amateur photographers is challenging the role of the photo journalist. Thus, the sourcing of images through photo sharing platforms such as flickr.com using Creative Commons licenses is evidence of this challenge, particularly when such non-professionals are on-site with unrivalled access to a story. Nevertheless, this separation of new media debates in China will enable some distinct points to be made in the context of China generally and the Beijing Olympics specifically.

Beijing's Non-Accredited Olympic Media

Realizing the role the NAMC will play in promoting the historical, cultural and social elements of Beijing to the world, Beijing's 'Service Guide for Foreign Media Coverage of the Beijing Olympic Games and the Preparatory Period' (Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games 2007) takes into account provision for the non-accredited media. In this document, as well as in personal interviews throughout July 2006, the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (BOCOG) expressed its intention to host a Non-Accredited Media Center that would accommodate more than 10,000 journalists, including representatives from the more than 2,000 newspapers that exist in China, along with other international media. While this is an interesting development, its implications are not clearly positive. Increased visibility and integration with official structures could lead the NAMC to implement tighter restrictions on access and narrowing the range of participants it hosts. In short, one might suppose that this integration within BOCOG is indicative of the attempt to control and restrain the non-accredited media. However, it might also enable greater and wider journalistic coverage. In support of the positive interpretation of this development, one might cite an interview with Wang Hui, vice-director of BOCOG's media and communications department. Wang emphasized the diversity of media coverage during the Olympics, 'as media are concerned not only about who won a gold medal and set a world record during the Olympics, but also about the Olympics hosting country's landscape, the hosting city's characteristics, local people's lives, how they participate in the Olympics' (China.com.cn 2006).

The Beijing Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games suggested that there was some expectation that the NAMC would host professional journalists, who did not

happen to have access to the Main Press Centre and the International Broadcasting Centre. In an interview at the Beijing Olympic Media Center, which currently operates as the main point of contact with the press, one journalist from the China Post newspaper indicated that the non-accredited journalists should be professional journalists and have qualifications that would authenticate an application to the NAMC. Yet, as we have suggested in reference to Torino, and given the rise of online usage in China (China Internet Network Information Center 2007), it is unlikely that many of these non-accredited journalists will be either “professional” in the widely-accepted sense or in possession of a national press card. Consequently, while the expectation of the NAMC in Beijing might seem to contradict our expectation, experience at previous Games suggests that these intentions are common when discussed in *advance* of the Games. In each of the cities we have investigated, there was considerably less rigor applied to applications from journalists during Games time itself, as local authorities were pressing to attract publicity about non-Olympic-related causes.

The Beijing Games illustrates a number of other challenges posed by the development of new media in China. For example, one might have concerns about China’s capacity to deliver international, online facilities to accommodate the Olympics’ new media needs, such as streaming on accredited broadcasters’ websites. In March 2007, the IOC launched a tender for the sale of the Internet and mobile platform exhibition rights (new media rights) to the Beijing Games, for China’s mainland territory. This is the first time that the IOC has separated the sale of television transmission rights from Internet and mobile broadcasting. However, while China endeavors to honor its commitment to the IOC by abiding by the rules of Olympic media coverage, some of its

own domestic media management laws and regulations have not been upgraded to meet these commitments. Effective February 2003, China's State Administration of Radio Film and Television ("SARFT") instituted the Administrative Measures regarding the Broadcasting of Audiovisual Programs through the Internet and other Information Networks in China, which stipulate that a broadcaster must first apply for a "License to Broadcast Audiovisual programs By Network" before they can broadcast audiovisual programs through information networks such as the Internet. However, many Internet content providers, such as Sina.com, Sohu.com - the appointed Internet content provider for BOCOG, China Unicom and QQ do not have such a 'license,' which means they may not be able to broadcast under this regulation. At the time of going to print, the IOC had not announced the results of the open tender for the rights to broadcast competitions over the Internet. However, in a transcript from Sohu.com in the first quarter of 2007 it indicates that it has no role in the delivery of such content:

Sohu is the exclusive Internet content provider sponsor for the Beijing 2008 official website, so we are the operator of Beijing2008.com or .cn, for that matter, and all content on that website is provided by Sohu....The new media rights is a separate matter and that is closely tied into with the TV broadcasting rights, so yes, there was a tender but that is separate and distinct from the official website that we operate. So it is almost like TV broadcasting rights in the eyes of the IOC. The outcome of the tender will be known probably -- it not during Q2, it will be early Q3. So it is separate and distinct. (Carol Yu, Sohu Co-President, Chief Financial Officer, cited in Seeking Alpha 2007)

For the non-accredited journalist, the implications of this are unclear. While it indicates the IOC's attempt to respond to the potential challenge of online publishing and a recognition that the national television broadcaster is not always best placed to deliver the largest online audience, domestic laws can inhibit this objective. For China, the SARFT regulations indicate that there will be considerable barriers to a non-China-based company delivering such content. Indeed, it is likely that a number of China-based companies will struggle with the regulations. In any case, China-based bloggers—including those who are approved to work from the NAMC—could face unknown penalties for broadcasting material via the Internet, though this is likely to be of concern only in the context of moving sports images. In sum, while it is still unclear what the Chinese Olympic 'citizen journalist' might entail, the active Chinese blogs, podcasts, vlogs and so forth are a clear indication of the relevance of such voices in the construction of alternative narratives about China. Moreover, in response to such participation, many mainstream Chinese media companies, such as China Central Television (CCTV), are already engaging in new media practices by adding blogs and podcasting elements to their websites.

Discussion: Neither alternative, marginal, nor minor

Non-accredited Media Centers constitute a mixed zone at the Olympics. They are regulated, but, crucially, they are not official Olympic venues, as the absence of the Olympic rings and the word 'Olympic' within the Center's branding indicates. As such, they are not subject to the much stricter level of regulation of the Olympic venues. This distinction is important when considering their role in the creation or definition of

additional narratives. Moreover, it informs our understanding of what character media coverage of the Games might exhibit. While independent or alternative media centers are sometimes explicitly anti-Olympic, we have been interested in the mixed zones within the Olympic city. In part, this is because there appear to be opportunities from within the system to challenge the dominant media structures. We are not convinced that this has happened through the NAMCs, but the potential is certainly present. Their more-relaxed accreditation process, the governmental involvement and capacity to gain access for media to important political and cultural events and the demographics of journalists present provides a rich set of circumstances through which the highly-regulated media structures at the Games can be circumvented.

Furthermore, the NAMC has become an integral part of a host city's programming, though its establishment is not a formal requirement within the IOC Host City contract. Indeed, its existence poses a potential compromise to a range of stakeholders who finance the Games, though it offers a major platform on which the host city can stage itself. To this extent, its position would appear to favor a degree of invisibility at IOC level. If it were to become too successful at influencing TV coverage or column space, Olympic media rights holders might question its legitimacy and even claim breach of contract. Yet, the local authorities benefit considerably from a high-profile NAMC. Indeed, the host city has no such commitment to the long-term relationship of media rights holders to the IOC. Rather, the host's preferred position is to utilize a NAMC as best it can to ensure an overall, positive long-term legacy for the city.

The information provided by NAMCs is essentially different from what is available in the Main Press Centre or International Broadcasting Centre, but it is not

irrelevant in the context of the Games. The sporting focus of the main Olympic media venues may have limited the ability of journalists to gather a detailed understanding of the host community and its potential legacy. Moreover, followers of sporting events seem increasingly interested in security issues, environmental policies and the social acceptance and sustainability of the event. This makes a case for the provision of information beyond sporting results, Olympic ritual and athletes' biographies, which are the only explicit media priority for the IOC.

The NAMC as the Institutionalization of New (Olympic) Media

There are an important number of distinctions that need unraveling in the context of the non-accredited media. First, we might arrive at a re-conceptualization of the Olympic media, which can be broken down into three general categories: accredited (those at the International Broadcast Center or Main Press Center), non-accredited (those at the NAMC) and unaccredited (those at the Independent or Alternative Media Centers, as well as those acting as 'citizen journalists').

Second, it is necessary to consider the range of ways in which each of these types of journalists contribute to or detract from the established Olympic narratives. While we might describe the accredited facilities as those that communicate the official IOC narratives, the non-accredited media centers offer an additional, city-oriented narrative, which has the potential to supplement or compete with the coverage of the former. As such, while one might expect that the local Organizing Committee and the host city should be working towards, mostly, the same goals as the IOC, in practice, each is competing for different kinds of (positive) narratives (and different kinds of media

attention). While for the IOC, the Olympic Games is an opportunity to showcase and reinforce the Olympic brand as a global entity, for the host city, the Games as a global brand is an opportunity to showcase its local characteristics

Third, one of the crucial clarifications that must be addressed throughout this unraveling is the dual process of institutionalization and destabilization associated with the NAMCs. The NAMCs are agents of institutionalization insofar as they are attempts to manage journalists who are external to the Olympic accreditation process and who might, as a result of being unmanaged, negatively portray the Olympics. However, as a result of this process, the NAMCs also risk their stability, since their greater visibility can become a conflict for the exclusive, rights-holding arrangements set up via the Main Media Centres. Presently, the NAMC exists because of the lack of concern from within the Olympic infrastructure to market the city.

Finally, there are two important points to think about in relation to the emergence of new media in general and the citizen journalist specifically. Since Torino, new questions have arisen from the growth of (video) blogging, as a means of reporting the Games. Admittedly, one cannot assume that bloggers are politically minded or even journalistic in their style of reporting. Indeed, in the context of the Olympics, it is not obvious that 'new media' denotes 'counter media,' although it is true that a range of new activists are visible due to this phenomenon. While there may be an increasing number of vloggers or bloggers at the Games, they will not all be concerned with criticizing them. Many will most likely want simply to celebrate them. Second, while we suggest that new media platforms have the potential to subvert established media channels, old media are increasingly recognizing the need to *become* new media. A good indication of this is the

purchase of You Tube channels by a number of established broadcasters around the world. As this trend develops, the distinction between old and new media —along with new media’s subversive potential —might similarly disappear, though we anticipate that the Internet will continue to give rise to resistant structures.

Regardless, we argue that the various complexities of the NAMC will challenge how media coverage of the Games takes place and thus also what the Games themselves mean to nations and people. To the extent that the Olympic Games aspires to be a publicly shared media event, our proposition has been that the NAMC provides a crucial mechanism through which a valuable democratization of the media is taking place, while maintaining the financial infrastructure upon which the Games rely. In some sense, we can describe journalism at the NAMC as a form of *ambush media*—a phenomenon which involves infiltrating the privileged position of traditional media organizations either within a fixed media event or through new media publishing spaces and, usually, a combination of the two. Ambush media implies three key processes: *piggybacking*¹¹ on the intellectual property of traditional media to generate competing publicity, turning the cameras on traditional media in action and then broadcasting the results, and infiltrating spaces that are reserved for traditional media. There are many ways in which this latter phenomenon, including the simple act of allowing accredited journalists to enter a non-IOC regulated media space where which they will learn about less visible Olympic activities, such as the Olympic Truce and non-Olympic but relevant local host-related activities. However, the NAMC is also a space where non-professional journalists can broadcast and write about the Games, thus providing opportunities for a wider range of questions to be asked during the actual event. In this sense, our title for this chapter, ‘We

Are the Media,' draws attention to the growing demand for citizen journalism to be given political recognition from institutions and governments and, importantly, the growing acceptance of this recognition. These changes have consequences for how society is (dis)ordered via the media and, indeed, raise questions about whether the notion of a 'media event' (Dayan and Katz 1992) is undermined by these new forms of interrogation.

Conclusion

We began this chapter by asking what stories the non-accredited media tell and what role they have in the construction of the Olympic media event. We have explored the processes through which new kinds of media have become part of the Olympic infrastructure and highlighted the tensions this provokes. In comparison to the accredited journalists, the non-accredited media are fed different stories, they have different expectations, and they work for different kinds of media organizations. Even without knowing much about what is actually published or broadcast by this community, it is clear that, for such media, the Olympics is not really a sporting event. Rather, it is a moment of intense formal and informal, cultural and political presentations and representations.

When examining the evolution of the NAMC, it is remarkable to see how the initiative has progressed from a very modest service in Barcelona whose major asset was the support of a university and whose focus was the press media, to the large venues of recent Games, which provide a wide variety of broadcast services under the auspices of generous tourism boards and other local bodies. The sheer magnitude of these facilities is also intriguing because of the unique political space that they occupy within the

organizational structure of the Olympic Games, which is framed by a powerful media mechanism.

We have made a number of claims in this chapter. Our initial premise was that the NAMC—more than the International Broadcast Center or the Main Press Center—is the best place to influence the local and national legacy of the Olympic Games, since it is the key venue that undertakes domestic political communications during Games time. To this extent, it provides an essential space for the host city to orchestrate its narrative, which is not offered through the other media venues. It is also a space where new media communities can access structures of governance directly. Yet, we also suggest that the emergence of online publishing and broadcasting, along with the growing prominence of the NAMC, threatens this position. Indeed, one might suggest that these centers might soon die out, before they have really begun to establish the value of their contribution to the presentation of an Olympic city. For now, the Non-Accredited Media Centres are non-Olympic Games time venues where culture, media and politics collide in ways that are often left unresolved.

As the Beijing Olympic Games approaches, some clear nuances to this discussion are evident. These concern the particular position of media organizations and professions within China during the Games. We note that the new legislation on greater media freedom is directed only towards *foreign* journalists (China Daily 2006). Moreover, Beijing's NAMC is being hosted by the Olympic Organizing Committee. Initial arrangements suggest that the registration process will be strict and only granted to professional journalists, though this might change during Games time. The effect of this might be greater limitations on new media journalists, many of whom could be dissuaded

from using the NAMC. Equally, China's burgeoning new media population indicates a willingness to engage such communities and one would expect this to shape the NAMC structures over the next year.

For the subsequent Olympic cities of Vancouver and London, there is even greater reason to emphasize the changing technological media culture and consider the prospects. During the Torino Games, new media journalists from Vancouver, looking toward the 2012 Games, considered the continued necessity of providing a centralized facility/information for citizen journalists, given that the increased accessibility of free, publicly available, wireless Internet access somewhat reduces the need for a physical facility. Our expectation is that its role for citizen journalists will be determined by the degree to which such individuals see themselves as either more *citizen* or more *journalist*. However, the notion of a Center—where press conferences, key officials and press officers are located—will continue to have value, since the simple presentation of information will not be sufficient to facilitate the sharing and access to relevant stories. To this extent, even the strongest claims about virtual societies should not be seen as a replacement for real space interactions. Indeed, one must look towards traditional practices within all forms of journalism to understand that the journalist's presence at the center of an event is a crucial element of its authenticity, originality and legacy.

The difficulty, we believe, is that these rich and complex social spaces are unlikely to remain outside of the IOC's scrutiny, though the challenge is to convince the IOC that this set of developments can be valuable. Based on the current model, there is no reason to suppose that further integration with IOC venues is likely, since sponsorship negotiations only ensure access to the sports news and venues, which are not the interest

of the NAMC. Indeed, integration could lead to undesirable consequences, as it would overburden already saturated Olympic media structures. Moreover, it would most likely be overly restrictive and, potentially, be a disincentive for prospective Olympic cities to bid for the Games, as they might find themselves without the desired platform to promote themselves. Yet the increasing prominence of the NAMC could be seen as detracting from the value media organizations purchase when requesting exclusivity on access to information. If this becomes the perception—which we emphasize, it should not—then one could envisage the end of the Non-Accredited Media Center, as it is currently known.

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Notes

¹ This title is from a sticker on the cover of an Apple Mac powerbook notebook belonging to a Non-Accredited Media Center journalist at the Torino 2006 Winter Games. It refers to the website by the same name.

² We do not claim that journalism is de-professionalised via new media, as this would neglect the advanced skills, ethics and integrity of so-called citizen journalists. Instead, our re-professionalisation refers to the expansion of journalistic expertise that is achieved by the democratization of technology and publishing channels.

³ The Montreal 1976 Games bankrupted the city and led to a void in the number of applications to host subsequent Games. To confront this crisis, the IOC was forced to revise its core structures and, under the leadership of its new president, Juan Antonio Samaranch, established a model to protect the economic viability of the Games. In the 1980s, the Olympic Games were established as a commercial enterprise with highly regulated protection of its main brand elements. The commercial model for the Olympics relied on two main factors: commercial sponsorship—the TOP programme—and, more importantly, broadcasting media rights. Broadcast right holders and sponsors would thus become the main source of funds for the Games and the Olympic Movement at large, and the protection of their interests one of the main tasks of the IOC under its Olympic Marketing programme.

⁴ The Olympic Family is defined as the group of organizations involved in promoting the Olympic Movement which is governed by the IOC. The main Olympic Family member organisations include: the IOC as top governing body; International Federations (IFs); National Olympic Committees (NOCs); respective Organizing Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs); national sport associations and sports clubs; national sport teams (comprising the athletes and officials invited to attend respective Games); the main Olympic sponsors (TOP); and Olympic-accredited media, including the press, photographers and broadcast right-holding organisations.

⁵ TV rights revenue for the Beijing Olympic Games is estimated at \$1,707 million, of which 51% is retained by the IOC and 49% is directly allocated to the OCOG for the hosting of the Games (IOC, 2007).

⁶ For more on this, see

http://www.fouryearstovancouver.com/pb/wp_7882380d/wp_7882380d.html

⁷ The IOC specifies that Olympic host cities must organize a program of cultural activities. Since the Barcelona 1992 Games, these programs have taken the form of Cultural Olympiads, covering the four years linking the end of one Winter or Summer Games edition with the next to present arts and cultural festivals (see García, 2001)

⁸ Figures about attendance at the NAMCs are presented in various forms, including overall visitors per day and total number of registered journalists. The former number is expectedly a much higher figure, which might account for why a report to the British Government as part of fact-finding for the London 2012 Games indicated that there were 20,000 journalists at the Sydney Media Centre. This might represent the total number of visits from journalists during the entire Games period to the SMC. However, the total number of registered journalists is closer to the 5,000 figure indicated at the Legislative Assembly.

⁹ Olympic Truce is the IOC's revival of the Ancient Olympic tradition of Ekexeiria, which involved an agreement between different regions of Greece to cease conflicts and allow athletes safe passage to Olympia to compete in the Games. The modern version, revived in 1992, aspires to achieve the cessation of global military actions during the time of the Games. It is perhaps the most fundamental link between the IOC and the United Nations, which, every two years, receives a declaration from the IOC President

requesting Heads of States to observe the Olympic Truce. The signing of the wall by dignitaries is supposed to indicate support for this Truce, though some would regard it as politically inconsequential.

¹⁰ By the end of the first week of the 2004 Games, the organisers of the NAMC in Athens claimed that 300 Main Press Center accredited journalists were regularly using their facilities (Zappeion Centre Director, personal interview, Athens 2004).

¹¹ This phrase is borrowed from Elihu Katz who proposed it in the context of a discussion at the Annenberg School of Communication. The term was meant to imply a combination of piggy-backing and hijacking and, while meant as a joke, it seems as good a term as any to describe the process. It satisfactorily characterises the process of capitalising on the work of official media (hijacking), without intending an obvious corruption of that official journalism or any specific harm to it, hence piggy-jacking.