

The Paris 2024 official symbols and their roles in hosting “Revolutionary Games”

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Abstract

This article focuses on the Paris 2024 official symbols: the logo, the slogan and the mascots. The symbols will be presented in the order of appearance they were unveiled to the public, focusing each time on their significations and roles in the Paris 2024 Games’ wishes to host Revolutionary Games. The article covers the process of revealing these symbols to the world, along with their reception and the criticisms they faced, in particular the logo and the mascots. The work will be completed by remarks of the Paris 2024 brand director, Julie Matikhine.

Keywords

Symbols, Onomastics, Discourse analysis, Linguistics

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Introduction

The International Olympic and Paralympic Committees attach great importance to symbols. Among the symbols most representative of their institutions and their respective movements are the five rings (Olympic symbol) and the agitos (Paralympic symbol). The Olympic rings were introduced in 1913. This symbol “expresses the activity of the Olympic Movement and represents the union of the five continents and the meeting of athletes from throughout the world at the Olympic Games.” (Olympic Charter, 2023). Regarding the Paralympic symbol, “the three elements of the Agitos [...] symbolize motion and emphasize the role of the Paralympic Movement in bringing athletes together from all corners of the world to compete and achieve sporting excellence.” (International Paralympic Committee, n.d).

In addition to the emblematic elements of these two institutions, each Olympiad and Paralympic Games possess its own symbols that are used only for the period of the Olympiad, and whose purpose is, amongst other things, to promote the events. For the first time in Olympic history, the Paris 2024 organizing committee decided that the Olympic and Paralympic Games should share the same symbols, a first step in their desire to host unprecedented Games. We wish to give particular importance to the Paris 2024 symbols, focusing on their significance and seeking how the latter are representative of the organizing committee’s objectives to host Revolutionary Games. By symbols, we mean the logo, representing Marianne and the Olympic flame, the slogan “Games wide open” and the pair of mascots named the Phryges.

Method

Our work intends to be exploratory and this research is in its preliminary stage: our goal is to gain insight and understanding of our subject. To this end, we opted for a qualitative research and will be focusing on the symbols’ creation and meaning, the process of revealing them to the public and we will evoke their reception. The three symbols will be presented in the chronological order they were unveiled to the public: logo, slogan and mascots.

For our qualitative research, we conducted a semi-structured interview (Karatsareas, 2022) with Julie Matikhine, Paris 2024’s brand director. After defining our subject, we created interview guidelines including a list of open-ended questions sorted by importance, allowing us to have a structured foundation while keeping some flexibility. We’re well aware that this research method can be contested, the interviewee’s answers being potentially influenced by our questions or answering with what she believes is appropriate to say in this given situation (Blanchet, 2000). However, in this case, we believe that this method’s pros outweigh the cons: organizing this interview gave us the opportunity to collect the words of a Paris 2024 stakeholder who was responsible for the creation of the symbols at the heart of our research.

The conversation was conducted via phone call, recorded with Julie Matikhine’s consent and later transcribed. For the sake of this article, a selection of extracts from the interview will be integrated and analyzed in the following pages, along our case study of the three symbols. Our exploratory approach aims to introduce these symbols and to recognize patterns, as well as discourse and communication strategies surrounding their

creation and introduction to the public.

The Paris 2024 logo

“When creating the logo, we’re dealing with a very public dimension, since it’s the Olympic brand, the one that will be recognized and seen by all visitors to the Games, but we’re also involved in an institutional approach. This means that, in a way, these Games play a political role, whether we like it or not, and so the emblem delivers a message that has a stake, one that goes beyond the subject of general public communication and becomes a social issue. It’s a subject that ultimately involves France’s vision of sport and the Games, and so it’s very important in the creative process to have a clear goal in mind.”¹ (Julie Matikhine)

When asked what the most challenging thing was about creating a logo for Paris 2024, Julie Matikhine presented fundamental aspects that constitute an Olympic and Paralympic logo. On the one hand, she evoked the logo’s function from a marketing and communication point of view: “we’re dealing with a very public dimension”, “recognized and seen by all visitors to the Games”. On the other hand, she acknowledged the logo’s impact from an institutional perspective, saying that it goes “beyond the subject of general public communication”. It should be noted that in this answer, Julie Matikhine sees the Games as a lever to impact society. She states that “these Games play a political role”, and the logo carries this idea. The logo proudly displays the ambitions of Paris 2024 and it needs to be aligned with the latter’s values and goals. Julie Matikhine states that in her eyes, the logo’s most meaningful layer of significance is directly linked to the Paris 2024 organizing

committee’s goal of transforming the French’s perception of sport and the Games (“It’s a subject that ultimately involves France’s vision of sport and the Games”). The logo is more than a visual representation, it has social and political implications. Its creation is intentional, and the question of cultural identity is at stake: it needs to represent the Games to the French citizens, creating a sense of adhesion, but it also needs to represent France to the world.

The Paris 2024 Games logo was designed by Royalties, a French agency in accordance to the concept of ecobranding, which aims to renew the meaning of brands by making them more responsible:

“The specifications, in line with the ecological values defended by the communications agency in charge of the project, called for the design of a logo that could be adapted to different media. Thus, a clear version is intended for printing on paper, to limit ink consumption. Each of the colors composing the graphic charter does not exceed 100% ink consumption. A second, darker version is reserved for screens, to conserve smartphone batteries. The font has also been designed to minimize the resources required in terms of paper (-6%), ink (-17.23%) and data volume (-82% compared with standard font files).” (Graphiline, 2021).

Moreover, this font was inspired by the Art deco style, which was very popular during the 1924 Paris Games, a nod to the past and a reminder that 100 years later, the Games are returning to Paris. It should also be noted that the font is similar to the one used on the Parisian metro signs, linking the font with an existing element of the Parisian culture, another indicator that everything is perfectly

¹ The interview was conveyed in French.

calculated, and every element of the logo is perfectly thought out.

Before going further, it should be noted that the Paris 2024 bid logo and the final Games logo are different. The first represented both the Eiffel Tower and the number 24, whereas the final logo is a combination of three elements: a gold medal, the Olympic flame and Marianne. This change of logo should be taken into account, the first representing an emblematic Parisian and French monument and the second one embodying an ideal and carrying in its visual aspects the OCOG's main aspirations for the Games.

Combining symbols

The logo's design incorporates three important visual elements, both from the Olympic and Paralympic history and the French culture: "The logo for Paris 2024 combines three separate symbols – the gold medal, the flame and Marianne, the personification of the French Republic. Each of these symbols reflects a part of our identity and values" (Paris 2024, n.d).

First, its golden color and its round shape is reminiscent of a Gold medal, echoing the idea of sport performance and surpassing oneself as an athlete, a recurring message shared by the Olympic and Paralympic institutions. The second visual element of the logo is the Olympic and Paralympic flames, an emblematic symbol within the Olympic and Paralympic field, spreading "a message of peace and friendship between peoples" (International Olympic Committee, n.d). The third element of this logo is the human face representing Marianne. "The first allegory of the French Republic in the form of a

woman wearing a Phrygian cap dates back to the French Revolution: this cap, worn by emancipated slaves in Greece and Rome and popular among sailors and galley slaves in the Mediterranean region, was proudly used by revolutionaries from the south of France as a symbol of freedom. As Marianne was one of the most common first names in the XVIII century, it was used to personify the people, and sometimes the Republic" (Elysée, n.d).

The Paris 2024 logo strategically contains three meaningful elements that can easily be recognized by the general public. Using these elements that are familiar to a large audience leads to the notion of shared cultural knowledge and semantic memory within the audience. Integrating well-known symbols in one logo ensures that its different layers can be recognized by a majority of individuals while also showcasing a pre-existing symbol of the French culture.

Unveiling the logo

The logo was introduced to the public on October 21st, 2019 (International Olympic Committee, 2019). It was revealed following an innovative launch ceremony, which saw over 700 runners – led by Olympic and Paralympic medallists including Renaud Lavillenie, Nantenin Keita and Sarah Ourahmoune – run different routes around the centre of Paris and Saint-Seine-Denis, forming the outline of the new Paris 2024 emblem. The emblem was then revealed in full on a giant screen at the Grand Rex cinema in Paris at precisely 20.24." (International Olympic Committee, 2019).

A great importance is attached to a symbol's revelation process as evidenced by the presence

of athletes, which represents authority figures and offer more visibility to the event. Involving sports personalities in the revelation process constitutes a rhetoric strategy: their notoriety was put to a greater use, and these athletes became an appeal to authority.

In a YouTube video titled “Here is the new face of the Olympic and Paralympic Games of #Paris2024.”², the logo is presented and described in detail, echoing the educational aspect of the Olympic Movement. Indeed, anyone interested can learn more about the process of creating this symbol. What is striking is the first sentence of the video: “I am the emblem of Paris 2024”, an assertive sentence personifying the logo. It should be noted that while the logo represents Marianne and exudes a feminine appearance, the voice pronouncing the sentence has a masculine tone, which is quite paradoxical.

The Paris 2024 motto – Claiming openness

Omnipresent in our everyday life, slogans and mottos are language productions that express a great deal using few words. These elements of language are short phrases used for promotional purposes, such as the promotion of an event for example. The “proliferation of slogans” (Alice Krieg-Planque, 2017) is also one of the characteristics of the institutional discourse, which is prominent in the Olympic and Paralympic field. Slogans can be verbal or a verbal and they are characterized by their brevity, pragmatic purpose and memorability: “The slogan, whether advertising or political, condenses the discourse into a thematic core, a condensed, rhythmic formula, for mnemonic and pragmatic purposes, designed to mobilize

and spur to action.” (Reboul, 1975). In the Olympic and Paralympic field, we distinguish mottos from slogans: mottos are used to represent the main principles and values of the Olympic and Paralympic movements (institutional), while slogans are used to promote editions of the Games (promotional).

Since the beginning of its promotional campaign, Paris 2024 made it a point to offer a show to the whole world, as evidenced by its slogan “Games wide open” unveiled to the public on July 25th, 2022, two years before the start of the Games. This slogan is an a verbal slogan modeled on the common expression “eyes wide open”, which refers to a reaction one might have to a surprise and/or a show. This slogan is based on the “deconstruction and playfulness of a fixed formula” (Richard, 2009), a common way to create these brief but meaningful sentences. Here, the transformation of the fixed expression is achieved by swapping the word “eyes” for the word “games”. By changing just one word, the original expression is transformed into a slogan promoting the edition of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. This permutation doesn’t affect the rhythm of the original expression, “eyes” and “games” being both one-syllable words. It should be noted that the French version of the slogan - “Ouvrons grand les jeux” – undergoes the same process. Substituting the word “eyes” for the word “games” can be accomplished simply by swapping the letter “y” – “yeux” to “jeux” - resulting on a clever transformation. Contrary to the English version, the French slogan is verbal, with the use of the verb “to open” in its imperative mode (“ouvrons”).

We assume that by choosing this slogan, the Paris 2024 OCOG wants its audience

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccrHmiad6XA>

to recognize the original expression transparently, thus playing on the notion of shared knowledge. This shared knowledge between the enunciator and his addressees underpins a certain relationship of complicity between the latter; a relationship that can only be established on condition that the addressees recognize the pre-existing fixed expression. It's worth noting the creativity of the approach used to create this slogan, since a new layer of meaning is superimposed on the meaning of the original expression. With this short formula, the Paris 2024 organizing committee promises to offer a show to the public and it's claiming its openness to the world. The message is clear: Paris 2024 aims to host an immense sporting spectacle to be shared with the whole world.

The opening of this edition of the Games is multi-faceted and takes place on several levels. The Paris Games will be the first edition of the Olympic Games after the global pandemic, synonymous with the reopening of the world after an unprecedented period of confinement and isolation. The Paris 2024 Games will be the first Games to return to normal since Tokyo 2020 and Beijing 2022.

“Our slogan, “Games wide open”, showcases the possibility of somehow opening the doors to something that wasn't accessible and making it accessible. In fact, we have this desire to open up perspectives and to be able to bring something fundamentally new to the games.” – Julie Matikhine

Here, Julie Matikhine emphasizes the significance of openness at the heart of the slogan. She claims this openness with the metaphorical expressions “opening the

doors”, which implicates the importance of providing an accessibility that was potentially lacking in previous Games, and “the desire to open up perspectives”, which attests the OCOG's intentions to bring novelty to the Games. Once again, by using the possessive adjective “our” and the pronoun “we”, she talks on behalf of her team and the Paris 2024 organizing committee, presenting herself as a spokesperson of their ideas. In 2024, the city of Paris, as well as France, will be at the forefront of the world stage, an opening to the whole world that is conveyed by the event's slogan. Organizing the Games is an opportunity for France to share its cultural heritage with the world and to attempt to change mentalities through sport. It should also be noted that “we have this desire to open up perspectives” acts as a commissive sentence, an implied promise (Searle, 1969). On behalf of the Paris committee, Julie Matikhine commits to this change, promises to accomplish an action in the near future. Indeed, Paris 2024 intends to organize unprecedented and Revolutionary Games, and many projects have been built with this goal in mind. However, the games have not yet taken place, and whether the Paris 2024 goals have been accomplished will have to wait until after the event. In this sense, the post-games period will raise other questions, and elements for discussion, notably in terms of legacy and societal impact of the Games.

Of this slogan, let's highlight the various ways the Paris Games promote openness: the 2024 edition of the Games promises different openings to the world. This openness is suggested by the complements added to the slogan on the Paris 2024 website. To highlight its various ambitions, the COJOP of Paris 2024, proposes three extensions of its slogan:

“Games wide open to emotion”

“Games wide open to the energy”

“Games wide open for the future”

“Games wide open to emotion”

For the Paris 2024 Games, the opening ceremony will be held in the city for the first time in modern Olympic history: “With 600,000 people invited to the world’s greatest celebration of sport, the Olympic Games Opening Ceremony will be an incredible occasion. Reinvented for central Paris, with the capital’s exceptional heritage and the Seine as a backdrop, this Olympic Games Opening Ceremony will go down in history” (Paris 2024, n.d).

Another factor of openness is the organization of several competitions outside the stadiums. For example, the Champ-de-Mars, one of the largest open spaces in Paris and located at the foot of the Eiffel Tower, will become a temporary open-air arena for beach volleyball and blind football.

The openness promoted by Paris 2024 is also synonymous with open-mindedness and welcoming new ideas. This is demonstrated by the addition of breaking to the Olympic program, a dance style at the “frontier between sport and art” (Paris 2024, n.d), breaking up with tradition and echoing the revolutionary dimension of the Games as claimed by the OCOG.

What’s more, the Paris 2024 Games will be the first Games in history with perfect gender parity. It’s worth noting that it was during the Paris 1900 Games that women made their first appearance in the Olympic history, with only twenty-two women present. In Tokyo, for the

2020 Games, 48.8% of the 11,090 athletes competing were women and in 2024, “In 2024, there will be 5,250 – 50% of the athletes – meaning full gender equality will have been achieved for the first time in Games history.” (Paris 2024, n.d). Finally, the Paris 2024 Games will be “open to all” and for the occasion, the OCOG will organize the biggest Paralympic Games in history with “549 events, 3.4 million tickets on sale and 300 hours of host-country broadcasting” (Paris 2024, n.d).

“Games wide open to the energy”

The openness of the Paris 2024 Games is also reflected in the OCOG’s determination to invite sports enthusiasts to get involved, with more than 40,000 volunteers: “In 2024, there will be 45,000 volunteers! Thanks to their enthusiasm, their energy and their unique features, they will play a key role in the success of the Paris 2024 Games and will help make this event truly unforgettable.” (Paris 2024, n.d). This commitment is reflected in the creation of the Paris 2024 Club, whose aim is to encourage the public to get involved and play an active role in promoting the Games. It also includes the organization of an unprecedented Marathon pour tous, a mass participation marathon which will enable amateur athletes to have a glimpse into the Olympic Experience.

Finally, on a national scale, one of Paris 2024’s goals is to involve several French local authorities, as demonstrated by the Terre de Jeux Label and the fact that some events will be held outside of Paris. This is for example the case of the surfing event organized in Teahupo’o, Tahiti in French Polynesia. However, it should be noted that organizing such events can cause strong objections,

particularly in terms of their environmental impact, and the surfing event is currently highly controversial.

“Games wide open for the future”

By promising to open up the Games for the future, the Paris 2024 organizing committee hopes to transform society and make it more active, as evidenced by its fight against sedentariness and the invitation to practice at least thirty minutes of physical activity a day, an initiative thought of by the OCOG and the French Minister of Education (Education Nationale, n.d). Furthermore, in the Paris 2024 campaign, openness rhymes with inclusion and accessibility, in an attempt to “change perceptions of disability” (Paris 2024, n.d).

Paris 2024’s final objective is to open the door to a new way of staging the Games, notably by reducing the event’s impact on the environment. To achieve this, the OCOG is basing itself on the Paris Agreement (United Nation Climate Change, n.d), and hopes to halve its carbon footprint compared to past editions of the Games, while at the same time implementing offsetting projects.

Unveiling the slogan

Paris 2024’s openness is achieved, first and foremost, through language. The slogan appears, in a way, as a performative formula (Austin, 1991). Declaring “Games Wide Open” is a first step towards this great openness and as we recall, the Paris Games are made to be shared, which was implied from the beginning of the campaign and the bid slogan “made for sharing”. The date on which the slogan was revealed is not insignificant as it was aired two years before

the Paris 2024 opening ceremony, launching the countdown. It is by unveiling the slogan to the world that openness is possible. To unveil the slogan, a press conference was held, with a lot of personalities in attendance. We can quote Michaël Aloisio, Director of the Office of the President of Paris 2024, who explained that the slogan reflected COJOP’s attempt to “open up the Games to the challenges of our time” and Tony Estanguet, President of Paris 2024:

“We continue to reinforce our ambition to open up the Games to as many people as possible. Since the beginning of this project, we’ve changed the way we organize the Games. [...] We want to open up the magic of the Games to all publics, and also to the challenges facing our society. [...] The slogan will be “Games wide open”, because that’s what has driven us since the beginning.” (translation – BFM, RMC Sport, 2022).

Alongside the press conference, the revelation of the Paris 2014 slogan was accompanied by the release of a promotional video aimed at the general public. The fast-paced video presents well-structured, coded and semiotically-charged elements. The strength of this video lies in the fact that it highlights French culture and Olympic culture, echoing the objectives of Paris 2024 to open up the Games to the world and showcase French culture and heritage. On social media, the video capsule unveiling the slogan was illustrated with the following caption on Twitter:

“An invitation to the whole world to come and experience new emotions together!

You’re just 1’30min away from discovering the slogan of our Olympic and Paralympic Games #RoadtoParis2024”³

It should be noted that this promotional video

³ <https://twitter.com/Paris2024/status/1551605445156012038>

features a representation of Marianne wearing a Phrygian bonnet, creating a link between all the Paris 2024 symbols. We can also observe several elements referring to the French culture and heritage. These include, for example, the use of shots taken at the Musée de l'Orangerie featuring Monet's painting "*Les Nénuphars*", and video clips showcasing French gastronomy, or historical events. Eventually, the slogan is revealed at the very end of the video, after a long enumeration of meaningful words, starting with the original Olympic motto "Faster, higher, stronger", a reference to the Olympic history and continuing with other comparatives, such as "more astonishing" for example.

The Paris 2024 mascots

The Olympic and Paralympic mascots were the last symbols of the Paris 2024 Games to be introduced to the public. They were unveiled in a press conference in Paris on November 14th by Paris 2024 President Tony Estanguet. In the same way the slogan's unveiling date was meaningful, the mascots' revelation date represents a new step in the countdown to the Paris Games since they were introduced to the public 600 days before the start of the opening ceremony. Respectively named "Olympic Phryge" and "Paralympic Phryge", the pair was introduced to the world on November 14th, 2022. As their name suggests, they are representing Phrygian caps, also called the "Liberty cap" (Press kit, Mascots Paris 2024).

The mascots' names and their meanings

Names are highly evocative (Siblot 1997) and carry values as well as cultural elements

(Lecolle, Paveau & Reboul-Touré, 2009). In the Olympic and Paralympic field, mascots' names are rooted in the culture of the host country. The process of naming mascots – their act of baptism - is not trivial. On the contrary, their names are extremely interesting, carrying values and often revealing the objectives of the host countries. The act of naming a mascot is very significant and says a lot on an organizing committee's ambitions for their edition of the Games. In our case, the Paris 2024 mascots' names are a direct reflection of Paris' ambition to host revolutionary games.

When it comes to creating mascots, the organizing committee can decide to involve the public in the process. It was for example the case for the Tokyo 2020 mascots, Miraitowa and Someity, whose physical appearances were chosen by children in Japanese schools but named by the Tokyo committee; or the Rio 2016 mascots, Tom and Vinicius, which were created by the Rio committee but named through a survey opened to Brazilian citizens. For the Paris 2024 Games, the OCOG decided not to involve the public in anyway: "We didn't hesitate at all. In other words, for the emblems, we had quite a few proposals, and there was only one that stood out and expressed something new, and that's the one we worked from. The idea for the mascots came from a concept. [...] When we saw the idea of a Phrygian bonnet coming up, we told ourselves it was obvious, of course having a mascot that isn't the umpteenth animal, but rather an ideal that really represents the power of mobilization for the French citizens and causes that are important to them." (Julie Matikhine).

The Paris 2024 pair of mascots is referred to as the "Olympic and Paralympic Phryges" and

from an onomastic point of view, the name “Phryge” is a neologism based on the existing adjective “phrygian” (“phrygien” in French). This shift, from adjective to proper noun, can be considered an antonomasia. Typically, an antonomasia occurs when a proper noun becomes a common noun; in this case, the contrary can be observed and an adjective becomes a proper noun. The originality of these mascots’ names also lies in the fact that they share the same name and the use of the adjective “Olympic” or “Paralympic” in front of the name refers to one mascot or the other. Referring to the pair of mascots as the “Phryges” can be likened to referring to the creatures by their surnames.

It’s by naming the mascots that they come to life and enter the Olympic sphere, since the act of naming is performative. The act of naming “links the signifier to a referent” (Lecolle, Paveau & Reboul-Touré, 2009). It’s only after they’ve been named and introduced to the public that mascots can take part in promoting the Olympic and Paralympic movements, as if before they received their name and a proper introduction to the public, they didn’t yet have an active role to play in promoting Olympic and Paralympic values or in promoting the Olympiad. Indeed, it is only after this introduction to the world that they can finally participate in events promoting the Games. Consequently, the act of nomination is also a rite of passage (Alford 1988). After their appointment, the mascots take on the role of ambassador, symbol and spokesperson for the Games.

When asked about the mascots’ nomination, and the possibility of naming them other than “Olympic Phryge” and “Paralympic Phryge”, Julie Matikhine confided that she

aimed for their names to mainly on what they represented:

“We thought about it, we wondered if we needed to name the mascots different names. A lot of names came up. And then, in reality, we realized that if we gave them each a first name, it would create a second level of meaning and it was something we didn’t want. What we wanted was very simple: our goal was to focus on the idea, on what the mascots symbolized. We wanted the public to recognize that they are Phrygian caps, a Phryge is a strong name, and there’s a whole logic behind that. The moment you give them another name, say you name them “Tom and Tim”, all of a sudden, they become the usual first names and the idea of a Phryge is forgotten. But what we wanted was for this strong symbol to remain in the spotlight, so that the first name didn’t distort the message.” (Julie Matikhine)

Julie Matikhine’s answer provides insights about the OCOG’s thought process and decision not to give individual names to the mascots. By using the pronoun “we” and the possessive adjective “our”, Julie Matikhine involves her team and the entire OCOG in the creation process. Indeed, she makes it clear that the process was very intentional and thought of, as suggests turns of phrase such as “we thought about it”, “we wondered”, “we wanted” (repeated three times). In a way, naming the mascots after their appearance signifies that the act of baptism remains partial. The creatures are defined by what they represent, which resonates with their symbolic purpose and underlines the fact that their anthropomorphisation - beyond making the creatures sympathetic and creating pathos - has a single goal: reminding the audience of Paris’s objectives to host Revolutionary Games.

Describing them as “The Phryges” gives a direct information about their physical appearance, emphasizing what they represent: a symbol of freedom, putting mascots at the heart of a revolution through sport. Julie Matikhine justifies the OCOG’s decision not to give proper names to the mascots with an example: “say you name them “Tom and Tim”, all of a sudden, they become the usual first names and the idea of a Phryge is forgotten.”. She believes that naming them could demean and weaken the conveyed message and distract the audience from the mascot’s primary function. In other words, by refusing to assign them individual first names, the OCOG made the decision to emphasize on the mascots’ collective representation as tools and symbols.

Anthropomorphized creatures

The mascots’ anthropomorphisation must also be studied. Indeed, “Anthropomorphizing mascots is rooted in the very purpose of mascots and manifests itself mainly through the human characteristics that we attribute to them, whether it is in terms of their physical appearances or their behaviors.” (Chiabaut, 2021). A representative element of their anthropomorphisation is the fact that they celebrated their first birthday on October 14th, 2022, a year after their introduction to the public: we can quote the announcement “Happy Birthday les Phryges! 1 year old today See you next year for the big party” posted on the Paris 2024 official account on the same day⁴.

Regarding the anthropomorphisation of the

Phryges, we must note that each mascot has its own personality and character traits. Indeed, The Press kit describes The Olympic Phryge as “a fine tactician, it is the smart one of the bunch. A true mathematician, it never launches into anything without thinking it all through. With its methodical mind and alluring charm, it will no doubt inspire everybody to do more sport every day!” while the Paralympic Phryge is presented as “a real party animal, spontaneous and a bit hotheaded, it’s not afraid of anything, it wants to have it all! Always up for new experiences, it will rally everyone around it with infectious energy and enthusiasm. The Paralympic Phryge will bring out the best supporter in you, spread the values of sport and encourage you to create a buzz and celebrate the athletes in all the stadiums and other venues.” (Press kit, Mascots Paris 2024). The discursive formulations used to present the mascots contain only words with meliorative characteristics, since the mascots are ambassadors for the Olympic and Paralympic movements and must embody their values. We should also note that the Phryges share a motto: “Alone we go faster, but together we go further”, a maxim or a rule of conduct, that echoes the Olympic motto “Faster, higher, stronger – together” and the message they share is that “Sport has the power to change everything” (Paris 2024, Press kit).

Despite their anthropomorphisation and the fact that they are attributed human characteristics, the mascots have a limited lifespan. This idea doesn’t only apply to mascots, but to every symbol in general:

“After the OCOG has been wound up, the NOC of the country of the host, may exploit such emblem and

⁴ https://www.instagram.com/p/Czn93zHNs2t/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

mascot, as well as other marks, designs, badges, posters, objects and documents connected with the Olympic Games during their preparation and celebration and terminating not later than the end of the calendar year during which such Olympic Games are held. Upon the expiry of this period, all rights in or relating to such emblem, mascot and other marks, designs, badges, posters, objects and documents shall thereafter belong entirely to the IOC.” (Olympic Charter; 2023)

Unlike the Olympic and Paralympic institutional symbols (such as the rings and the agitos for instance), the symbols associated with each Games have a limited lifespan and are only used for a specific and determined period. Every symbol has a limited time of existence that exists within the period of the Games they represent. Once the edition of the Games is finished, symbols don't have a purpose to serve anymore. In other words, by creating its symbols the OCOG gives life to them for a predetermined time with a main goal in mind: promoting the Games while carrying strong values. Their limited lifespan is particularly interesting, because it leads to a few interrogations, mainly in regards of legacy.

Organizing revolutionary games and the symbols legacy

The Paris 2024 OCOG claims its goal to organize Revolutionary Games, and both the logo and the mascots are strongly linked to the idea of Revolution. Indeed, both Marianne and the Phrygian cap are allegories of the French Revolution that are omnipresent in France. For example, Marianne is already one of the cultural elements anchored in French culture, appearing on stamps, in all town

halls and as the official logo of the French government while wearing a Phrygian cap. In addition to their Phrygian cap appearance, the mascots wear a tricolor cockade in the colors of France, another symbol of the French Republic, on the side of their eyes. The OCOG is revisiting, repurposing pre-existing symbols in the French culture and collective memory in order to associate revolutionary ideals with the symbols of Paris 2024.

However, and despite the OCOG's aspirations, it should be noted that the symbols of Paris 2024 have not been unanimously accepted and have faced a lot of criticisms. The symbols' reception and acceptation were not unanimous. Among the various ways in which the symbols have been criticized, we have particularly observed their mockery through comparison. The logo has been compared to a famous dating app logo, and a lot of users online thought it would be more appropriate for a hairdresser. Regarding the mascots, the Phrygian caps were harshly compared to clitorises or Smurfs' hats ... The Paris 2024 mascots are not the first pair of mascots whose reception was criticized, we can for example think of the London 2012 mascots, Wenlock and Mandeville, who were also quite contested.

The Paris 2024 Games having yet to take place, the post-Games period will be very interesting, as it will give rise to new questions, mainly in terms of the symbols' impact and effectiveness. It will also be valuable to see if the public's perception of the mascots will change after the events. For example, we can think of the fact that people attempting the Games will potentially see the mascots engaging with the audience, particularly children, resulting in a better reception and the spotlight put on their sympathetic and cute appearances. Overall,

we can't help but wonder if the Paris 2024 Games will accomplish all its goals, deliver on all its promises and host unprecedented Games, transforming the way Olympic and Paralympic events are meant to be organized in the future.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to draw attention to the importance of the creation of the Olympic and Paralympic symbols for the Paris 2024 Games. In an attempt to host unprecedented Games and to lead a Revolution through sport, Paris's OCOG made it a priority to create symbols that were representative of the French culture, the Olympic and Paralympic history and that could be used as ways to illustrate their goals and aspirations. It is particularly noticeable through the reutilization and repurpose of pre-existing allegories of Revolution (Marianne and the Phrygian cap). The meaning behind the slogan, the importance of visuals granted to each symbol and the mascots' figures are all significant and giving information to the public on what the 2024 Games will bring. All symbols undergo a similar unveiling process, each of their revelations being accompanied by a promotional video destined to be inspirational. However, and despite the intent between each symbol and their noble meaning, the reception of an emblem might not always have the desired effect, resulting in a lot of criticisms and mockery.

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