

An Interview with Augusto Pestana, Counsellor at the Embassy of Brazil in Tokyo

The 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro Can Be a Good Model for Japan in Hosting a Major Sports Event

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Rio in 2016: an Exciting Sports Event for Brazil?

Q: People in Brazil must be excited about the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in 2016. What can they expect in general from these Olympics?

Pestana: This is a very important subject for Brazil, and for us in the embassy here in Tokyo. We're very happy and very excited, because we will have the Olympics in Rio in 2016, then here in Tokyo in 2020. Usually the Olympic Games have very high visibility in Japan, but obviously 2016 will be of particular interest since you will be holding the following Games. So it's a series of years in which Japan will be particularly interested in Brazil, and for us who work here it is of course a great time of opportunities to build new bridges between the two countries.

In Brazil, there are three levels of government, all essential to the success of the games: the federal government, the state government of Rio de Janeiro, and the city government of Rio de Janeiro. Obviously the federal government is particularly important: it was the one that signed that letter with all the commitments. But then the state government is also very important, especially for infrastructure projects, and the city government is closest to the organization and the details. After all, the Games will be held in Rio, so Rio will see most of the transformation — the economic impact, for obvious reasons, will be strongest in Rio. But that said, these Olympic Games will be the first in South America. The positive impact is not only for the city of Rio or for the state, but for the whole of Brazil. And I'm very comfortable in saying that, because we all know that the Olympic Games have this symbolism, this power to convey messages.

Q: Brazil also organized the World Cup this year.



Augusto Pestana (left), Counsellor, & Ivan Carlo Padre Seixas (right), Third Secretary, at the Embassy of Brazil in Tokyo

Staging the two largest mega-events in the world consecutively is very unusual.

Pestana: Very unusual indeed. And of course this puts a kind of extra responsibility on our shoulders, but we have very strong shoulders so we're very confident. And 2014 was excellent: the World Cup was above our all expectations, and helped Brazil project this image of a modern vibrant country. I'm quite sure that in 2016 we'll have the same. But of course for us Brazilians talking about soccer is almost like talking about religion. Unfortunately, the performance of the national team... At least we showed sportsmanship in that defeat to Germany and even some very peculiar Brazilian sort of humor. The fact is that soccer is really important in Brazil, and the World Cup is huge.

But I think the Olympic Games may have even more symbolism. Perhaps because they started in 1896 and have more tradition. And the World Cup has thirty-two national teams, but in the Olympic Games we have almost two hundred national delegations, so the whole world is there. And in the World Cup, there is just one sport, although it's our favorite, soccer — but in the Olympic Games you have all those different sports, including two new ones, which will be golf and rugby. And it's interesting because Brazil has almost no tradition whatsoever in many of those sports, for example rugby and badminton. So it will be a chance for Brazilians to know a little bit more about those sports, and maybe even develop some talent.

Q: And what is the significance of these Olympics for Brazil?

Pestana: Going back to that idea of symbolism: if you look at the list of cities that have hosted the Olympic Games, it was very common that when a country's profile in the world was increasing, that

country would also host the Olympics Games. This was even the case of Japan: the 1964 Olympic Games were very important for Japan in becoming a new economic powerhouse. It also happened in South Korea in 1988, and Spain in 1992; and 2008 in Beijing was very, very important for China. And now, in 2016, it will be in Brazil.

As I said, this is the first time the Games will be hosted by a South American country. This was very important in the Brazilian bid in 2009, because then you could see all the continents which had hosted the Games. You actually had two huge voids: one was South America, the other is Africa. So Africa is still a void, and hopefully it will soon be in a position to host the Games too. But at least in 2016 South America won't be a void anymore: the Games will symbolize the importance of Brazil, and South America as well.

It's very difficult to quantify, but it's clear that all those countries I mentioned have benefited somehow: the Games were like a huge window for the world to see their realities and what they had to offer in terms of culture, their values, and also their economies: a kind of rite of passage. Of course this was also the case with the World Cup, but I think in 2016 the effect will be much greater.

Q: During the World Cup, there seemed to be some discrepancy between people's views and the government's views, and some strong opposition movements. It seemed as though Brazilian people might have preferred economic policies to reduce the income difference between the rich and the poor, and thought the World Cup was generally in the interest of rich people. Could the same thing happen with the Olympic Games?

Pestana: Brazil is a developing country. Our progress has been huge, extraordinary in areas such as social inclusion, but we still face many challenges. We know that, and those challenges are being addressed democratically. That perception of some sort of malaise in Brazil was especially strong during those June 2013 protests, at the time of the Confederations Cup. But those protests were in a sense linked to our achievements and to some of our remaining challenges, especially transportation: they began as protests against the quality and cost of transportation, and were especially strong in big Brazilian cities such as São Paulo. So infrastructure is clearly an area in which Brazil still needs huge investments.

But if you really look at the facts, you can understand that it's not a question of "either" transportation and health "or" hosting the mega-events. You actually have very small amounts of public money going into these events. But then sometimes there was this perception, that Brazil was hosting these very expensive events, and you would take money from other areas to put it in stadiums or sports venues — that's false, that's not happening. It did not happen during the World Cup, and it won't happen in Rio. Quite on the contrary, if you look at the legacy for Rio 2016, infrastructure will be very high on the agenda: in transportation, social infrastructure, and environmental infrastructure as well.



One good thing about 2013 is that the government realized it had some issues in communication, so as to avoid new misunderstandings. This was a lesson we learned, and the World Cup itself was a good example because nothing happened: there were no significant protests. Rather, people were very happy to host the event, and Brazil was a huge party in June and July 2014. I think we have managed to communicate properly.

So I'm quite confident that you'll have that same sort of very positive atmosphere in Rio; and we are communicating, telling the population who exactly is paying what, and how the Games will have a positive legacy, including in terms of infrastructure. If you take transportation, the city of Rio de Janeiro is going to change completely. In the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, one of the huge attractions was public transportation, not only in Tokyo with the Metro, but especially between Japanese cities with the *shinkansen* which began that same year. And this will happen in Rio, because it will finally get a denser public transportation network which will connect the main areas. And those venues are very crowded places, so those new links — the new subway line, the bus, the rapid transportation system — are going to be very useful to the local population.

On top of that, some sports, especially soccer, will be played in other cities as well. This is part of the legacy of the World Cup, not only because of the beautiful new stadiums in host cities like São Paulo, Brasília, or Salvador, but because the infrastructure is there, the new airport terminals for instance.

Q: Will people in Brazil be convinced about this?

Pestana: They already are: some polls assessing the support in Rio have shown it as very high. More than 70% are in favor, and very optimistic about the Olympic Games. And this was before the World Cup, so my guess is that now it's probably closer to 80%. We all

know that in Rio: because of all these investments in infrastructure, there are public works going on everywhere, so actually the city's a huge construction site. Sometimes people are not really happy when they have to face some traffic jams, but they know that in one year, say, they will have a new highway built or a new subway connection. And Rio is used to hosting mega-events, because we organize huge parties every year, such as Carnival and New Year's Eve. We also had the World Cup final in July, and in 1992 and 2012 Rio hosted huge United Nations sustainable development conferences. So *cariocas* are used to international mega-events.

Impact of the Olympics on Tourism

Q: Are you expecting lots of tourists in Brazil after the Olympics? And following the tourists, perhaps investment?

Pestana: Sure. When you hold a mega-event, you have this huge influx of tourists. At the World Cup we had one million tourists. So these are people directly witnessing the country, and the cities, but then you also have the TV audience, which is also very important. And something very interesting about the Olympics is that many of the sports actually happen outdoors, like the marathon, sailing, triathlon, running, cycling, and swimming as well. So people will see the beauty of Rio, of the nature, the mountains, the forests, the sea: it's really quite a sight. I don't know if you have been to Brazil already, but after watching the Olympic Games in Rio, probably you will want to. Can you imagine a golf match with that view, with those mountains? They are now building a new golf course in Brazil, the first public golf course in the country, and it will have all those mountains, those forests: so you generate the interest. And on top of that, people will know that you have the essential infrastructure.

So tourism is important for Brazil, and I would say that we have huge unexplored potential. Our numbers are actually very low, and

those mega-events will help us increase our projection, our visibility, and at the same time show, as I said, that we have the necessary infrastructure for tourism. Of course, for Asia we still face a big challenge, which is the distance, especially for Japanese tourism. Brazil is the third-largest aircraft producer in the world, but unfortunately we haven't developed an airplane capable of flying directly from Tokyo to Rio. But regardless, when you have an event, people will go. There were many Japanese tourists for the World Cup, and we know that many Japanese will visit Rio in 2016.

Impact on Sports & Sports Business

Q: Do you expect Rio 2016 to have a positive impact on diversification of sports and sports business in your country?

Pestana: This is interesting, because I was telling you about the many sports that are new, where Brazil has no tradition and we'll be there just to learn. Rugby is a good example. Also golf, and badminton. But in many other sports, we are very competitive. One example by the way is judo, thanks to the Japanese; I myself as a child had my judo *sensei* in São Paulo.

Brazil is a huge country. We are talking about twenty-six different states, the Federal District and hundreds of cities, and all of them now have their own Olympic centers that are integrated in a network. We are investing in sports for the youth, for Brazilian schools, and we know that many talents will come from this system. So we hope that we'll break all the records in 2016, and though Rio will be our main Olympic training center, it will also be a kind of a hub for a network of other Olympic sports centers throughout the country. This is very important for the Brazilian government, this understanding that the Games are taking place in one of the most beautiful cities in Brazil but that they are for the whole country. All regions will be beneficiaries somehow of the impact of the Olympic Games.

Q: You will probably need many volunteers to achieve success in such a big sporting event. Looking at the legacy assessment report issued in London, it seems they were successful in stimulating NGO activities for their sports events. Do you think that kind of impact can be expected in your case as well?

Pestana: Of course. They have just launched the official program for volunteers for the Olympic and Paralympic Games and they are expecting something like 70,000 volunteers for both. This is probably going to be the biggest ever volunteer program in Brazilian history. We also had one for the World Cup, but this for the Games is even more important because we are going to use those volunteers throughout the city for all those different sports and different venues.

I know this is difficult to compare, but in Japan you can feel this Japanese hospitality, *omotenashi*, which was very important in the Tokyo bid: this idea that you care for your guests and do everything



*Landscapes of Rio de Janeiro:
Sunset at a beach / Aerial view from
the top of Corcovado Mountain*

you can. And people going to Rio for the Olympic Games will feel that as well, this Brazilian version of *omotenashi*. And the volunteers are going to be key, because they are the ones directly in touch with the athletes and especially the tourists. But not only the volunteers: I think the whole city will in a sense be part of this core of volunteers. Because people in Rio are famous in Brazil for being very open-minded and nice to visitors, especially to foreigners, so I think it's going to be a fantastic chance to experience this Brazilian *omotenashi* of ours.

Will Brazil's Political Influence Grow?

Q: Many host countries in the past seemed to gain an increase in political influence in global governance right after hosting the Olympics. Brazil, of course, is one of the BRICs and a very important economy. Do you think Brazil is going to take any initiative or leadership in global governance after the Olympics?

Pestana: It is difficult to say that there is a direct relationship between a sports mega-event and global governance. It is true that the Olympic and Paralympic movements are beautiful examples of multilateralism, and Brazil believes in strong multilateral institutions. All sports have their own rules, and everybody abides by those rules, so it would be wonderful to live in a world with the rule of international law, and so on — but we know these are not exactly the same thing.

Going back to your question, my personal view is that usually hosting the Games is more a consequence of the political and economical importance you already have, rather than a starting point. So Brazil is now going to host the next Olympic Games *because* of our realities, what has been done, what has been achieved. And hopefully it will help us go even further, and people will understand and know about these very positive changes that are happening in Brazilian society and the Brazilian economy. Especially in terms of social inclusion, because Brazil was a very unequal country with strong regional and social differences, and now finally it is becoming a middle-class country for the first time in its history. We see Japanese social equality as a sort of model: we want that for our country, and we are finally getting there. Again, that does not mean that all our problems have disappeared. The fact is we are always working towards a better society, and I'm sure that the 2016 Games will help us show the world our achievements.

Increasing Friendship Through the Olympics

Q: Because Japan is going to host the Olympics in 2020, do you think you will have a message for Tokyo as its predecessor?

Pestana: What I really like about these mega-events is that they are always different. So you cannot compare Beijing 2008 to London

2012, and Rio 2016 too will be different. I'm sure that Tokyo 2020 will be fantastic, but also different. And this is good, because it's what we should want for the world: diversity. Brazilians are of course well-known for being happy people, people who like to throw a good party and know how to do that, and I'm quite sure that Rio will be an extraordinary party and a successful event; people will feel the Brazilian soul. But it will not be necessarily better or worse than other Olympics: it will be different. And I'm sure that both Rio in 2016 and Tokyo in 2020 will host two of the most extraordinary Olympic Games ever, although they will be very different in character.

One thing that happened in 2012 was that in London the British were very nice in keeping with the Olympic tradition of observer programs. Many Brazilians that are now organizing the Games were invited to learn a little bit from their experience. Of course it's difficult even to say that you are going to learn: actually you are going to see what's happening, and then try to adapt, to develop a model that's appropriate to your own realities and needs. But this is something that I'm sure will be among the top priorities for Rio's local committee and the Brazilian government: to have the Japanese organizing committee and authorities there in Rio, to show everything we've been doing and offer our experience. Again, this is not to tell you how you should host a Games, but for you to at least know what we have been doing, our innovations, and then maybe adapt those for the local realities in Tokyo.

Q: To my knowledge we already have lots of interaction between Japanese soccer players and Brazilian soccer players. Will that kind of relationship be expanded to other sports after Rio 2016?

Pestana: Yes, and this is just one example. I think Brazil owes a lot to Japan already in some sports, such as judo. Also in volleyball: Brazil is now one of the top volleyball nations in the world, and this began with Japan, especially in the 1960s when many Japanese coaches went to Brazil and created a lot of interest in that sport, and now we've won many gold medals and world championships in it. Also golf: Japanese love golf and Japanese golfers are, on average, much better than Brazilian golfers, so I'm sure that we could learn a thing or two. But in many other sports, we are very competitive. And who knows, maybe even in soccer: our performance is somewhat low right now, and I know Japan was not that good either in the World Cup, but you have a new generation of players coming, so maybe in the future we'll also have something to learn from you. And the Games in 2016 will be a huge opportunity for Brazil to win for the first time the gold medal in soccer, which we have never won. If that is not possible in Rio, then I am sure our time will come in Japan, where we won our fifth World Cup and where many Brazilian clubs have been world champions.

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