Moving towards Tokyo 2020: sport as a vehicle of social inclusion

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Abstract
The article aims to outline the universal design model in sport extending its effect to inclusivity in the broader society. The analysis departs from data on the vulnerable population that is often at the border of society to take into account Japanese context. Then, considering that Japan will host the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020, the study will look at the experiences of the previous hosting cities and at the challenges that those cities had to meet. In this regard, the study individuates in the concept of Universal Design that promotes social inclusion of others, of the environment, and of diversity – a model that encourages dialogues and relationships among the diverse populations, private organizations, and government. This model of Universal Design in Sport not only would help Japan avoid having the same issues that other countries had in organizing their Games, but would also, on the basis the cultural values such as Omotenashi, promote inclusivity beyond sports. The amelioration of relationships among diverse populations that will derive from the social integration obtained through the adoption of the Universal Design model would also foster the transmission of the necessary knowledge for building a lasting legacy for future generations.

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1. Introduction
In the last few decades, we have seen a changing attitude in society towards the vulnerable population (WHO, 2001) which, for a long time, has been relegated to the borders of society and excluded from the opportunity to take an active part in society. The process of consideration towards those indicated as part of the vulnerable population started slowly, thanks to the civil rights movements that pointed out the problems that these people were suffering on a daily basis.

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Nonetheless, the process of integration is still ongoing and needs to be incremented. The aim of this study is to increase participation in sport and, more broadly, in society through the introduction of the Universal Design (UD) concept, pivotal to developing activities in the environment within physical, communication, information, policy and attitudinal environments (WHO, 2001). The UD concept would solve the issues that the vulnerable population still has to contend with, making it finally possible to build an inclusive society where nobody is excluded and everybody is not only accepted but also integrated. Considering the history of sport and of sporting mega events such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games (hereinafter referred to as ‘Games’) and taking into account that Tokyo will host the Games in 2020, the present study will also look at the past experiences of the previous hosting cities, the challenges they met and the unsolved issues that the Games bring with them. In this regard, the adoption of Universal Design would not only help Japan to avoid the same issues as previous hosting cities but also would create the basis for people’s involvement in sport promoting social inclusion. The adoption of the UD model within society’s environments would contribute to tackling not only the exclusion in sport but also the problems of discrimination, the exclusion of the vulnerable population, and social pledges, such as suicides and video games addiction, for the purpose of reaching everybody and fulfilling the needs and desires of the population. In so doing, UD will create the circumstances for transmitting the knowledge gained to future generations. In this article, the vulnerable population will firstly be introduced, and its struggle and level of involvement in sport and in society worldwide and in Japan in particular, will be considered. Secondly, the article will present sport as a vehicle for social inclusion due to its characteristics, its impact on people and its beneficial effects on individuals as well as on society. With regard to the social relevance of sport and its forms and the history that sport has, the Olympic Games represent the first sporting event recognized globally. For the long history and prestige that characterize the Games, along with the interest that future hosting cities may have in understanding the issues that might face the countries that host the Games, the article will look at the lack of inclusivity at previous Games and propose the UD model as a framework to create an inclusive environment in sport, in all its related activities, and also in society.

2. Vulnerable population.

We live in a world where so far not everybody has the same welfare. Part of the population has for a long time struggled to achieve inclusion. Considering that the purpose of this study is to create the basis to promote an inclusive society, it seems to be pivotal to introduce who are the “vulnerable population” (WHO, 2011), what they have in common, and what is their role in society and ultimately why we should care. Vulnerability “is the degree to which a population, individual or organization is unable to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of disasters” (WHO, 2002). The vulnerable population includes children, women, elderly people, people with disabilities and racial minorities, as stated in the World Report on disability in 2002. The relevance that the phenomenon has worldwide is due to the struggle of the increasing number of people included in the vulnerable population and to the fact that the increased number along with the increased need to live decent lives, urged governments to take into consideration the existence of these people, whose needs have been neglected for so long. The unexpected increase in the number of people with disabilities, from the 10% estimated by the WHO in the 1970s to the 15% of the world population (WHO, 2011) and the projected rise of the number of people aged 60 and above from 600 million to 2
billion in 2050 (UN, 2002), has definitely influenced governments to take actions. Based on the classification of functioning, disability and Health (ICF), personal factors (e.g. self-esteem) and functional limitations (impairments) affect the way in which people interact and participate in society. Moreover, aging influences disability, because, as reported on the world report on disability, there is a higher risk of disabilities when getting older (WHO, 2011) and this could constitute a burden for government and relatives because dependants will rely on them (Edelson, 1991). Therefore, strategies should be put in place to facilitate their autonomy (Demirbilek & Demirkan, 2004) reconsidering the disability definition as a functional limitation inherent to the human experience and identifying its causes in environmental, attitudinal and social barriers (WHO, 2001). The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) pointed out that disability emerges from “the interaction between the health conditions with contextual factors” (WHO, 2011), moving the attribution of disability from the person to the environment, namely environmental and personal factors. The environmental factors refer to the environments that surround people and in which people live in. So, functional limitations become disabling when intersecting with the following environments:

- Physical
- Communication
- Information
- Policy
- Attitudinal or social

The physical environment is the natural or built environment in which people live (house, city, office, parks and so on). The communication environment includes technology and products that enhance the communication. The information environment includes all the ways in which people can orientate themselves in environments such as print material, signage, directions. The policy environment is the complex of policies that impact on the experience and its quality. Attitudinal environments are the attitudes of people, their ways of interacting with others, their degree of acceptance and inclusion of diverse people. The shift of focus from the person recognized for his disability (medical model) to the environments (as the sum of the five environments indicated by the ICF) that might be disabling, highlights the role of the environment and the relevance of its characteristics. Although the vulnerable population includes very diverse people, nonetheless they share some peculiarities that make them considered as belonging to this group: low income, low educational qualifications, low economic participation, low social participation and, as aforesaid, reliance on institution and relatives. One purpose of this article is to include the vulnerable population within the mainstream population, satisfying their needs and desires in society rather than as a group of people. With the increasing number of aging people around the world, and the elders surviving longer than before (Crews and Zavotka, 2006), there is a greater need for long-term healthcare that may cause the rise of the healthcare costs due to the current lack of opportunity for elders to play an active role in society after retirement. Healthcare costs vary depending on the elders’ lifestyle and wellness. Indeed, the environment has an important role in empowering or disempowering people, depending on its features. In particular, Japan has the world’s largest proportion of population over the age of 65 (World Health Day Aging and Health, 2012). Following these data, the number of people aged 60 and over has doubled since the 1980s and maintaining this trend, the number of people aged 80 years and over will quadruple to 395 million by 2050. The adoption of design solutions may facilitate the daily lives for the changing population, including the elders that could maintain their
independence and the self-reliance (Lawton, 1980). Women have struggled to participate in society. In fact, for a long time women have been relegated to the home in the predominantly male-oriented society, where women have to care of the family. Women’s participation in sport rose after male participation as did as her right to vote. Nowadays, we still see very diverse situations in different countries. In some countries women are recognized as being part of the workforce, thus contributing to the economy of the country. Nonetheless there is still no effective women’s inclusion as testified by the increasing number of feminicides, victims of men, and from the practice of the female mutilation at certain age (Dorkenoo et al, 2006). The number of abuses perpetrated on women is still high: physical violence is one in three with the lowest rate in the highest income countries (WHO, 2013). However, there are places where women are still preferred to stay at home and take care of the family. Traditionally in Japan, women, after getting married and giving birth, leave the job to dedicate themselves entirely to the family. As stated in an article, only 70% of women work before getting married, and 62% leave after the first child (Otake, 2013). For this reason Japanese businesses prefer to employ women with part-time contracts instead of full-time. In this way the cost of wages is lower for the employers. Therefore, the tradition of leaving work after getting married, along with the developed use of businesses to employ women part-time, do not benefit either women, in terms of gender equality, nor the country’s economy, since women are not contributing to the Japanese economy. The fact that the tradition is still a common practice causes not a few issues for the country’s economy. Women’s participation rate in the labor force is estimated at 49.9% as opposed to the 71.7% of men (UNDP, 2011). With regard to children, they need to grow up in a safe and healthy environment, but this is not always the surrounding in which children have the chance to live. Indeed, as revealed by the WHO in 2003, “more than five million children die each year from environment-related disease”, as well as many millions affected by diseases related to the environment. This issue testifies the urgent need to take actions on the environments and the great impact of environments in disabling people, especially children who are the world’s future. With regard to racial minorities, these still face discrimination in every aspect of social participation everywhere in the world, as affirmed by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Pillay, who said: “Minorities … are excluded from taking full part in the economical, political, social, and cultural life available to the minorities in the countries or societies where they live” (Human Rights Day, 2009). Although, developed countries have largely issued regulations trying to eradicate the discrimination towards racial minorities and minorities groups, the UN Secretary General released a guidance note on racial discrimination and protection addressing the need of minorities’ protection mainly through dialogue (UN, 2013). In Japan, the recognized minorities are organized into ethnic minorities and non-ethnic minorities. Both categories have experienced stigmatization and discrimination based on the purity/pollution and racial frameworks that restrict them from access to housing, education, and employment opportunities (Roth, 2005; US. Depart.Of State, 2008). As arising from the article so far the standards adopted by the countries do not seem to have had success, probably because it is not only a matter of standards and legislation, but it is a matter of attitude and participation in the decision that standards, at least by themselves, are not able to solve.

3. Role of sport in society.

Sport comes from the Greek language and from the French word desporte that means pastime. This suggests how sport is ancient,
and although practiced in diverse forms and with interruptions (as in the case of wars), sport survived changing times and catastrophic events, continuing to attract people. Its longevity makes sport a common element in people’s lives no matter the way of involvement. Most of the people are involved in different ways: as athletes, supporters or simply as sport lovers. Its capacity to involve people, along with its beneficial effects, leads to identifying sport as a potential vehicle for social inclusion. Sport has its roots in the prehistoric period although it is commonly accepted that the origin of modern sports were those performed in Greece, when Pierre de Courbertin in 1896 founded the modern Olympic Games. The Olympic Games were soon considered as “exalting and combining in a balanced whole the quantity of body, mind and will” (IOC, 2013).

3.1 The positive effect of sport.
“Sport has the power to unite people in a way little else can. Sport can create hope where there was despair. It laughs in the face of discrimination.” Nelson Mandela

Looking at the increased participation in sport in recent years and at the social aspects of sport’s practice in diverse forms, whether professional or for leisure, as a form of human expression, sport makes people gather together and accept the rules of the game, interacting with each other and playing together, thus fostering the creation of relationships and identities (Vermeulen & Verweel, 2009). In fact, sport has even broken down racial barriers that for decades afflicted the lives of an entire population in South Africa, eventually overcoming the diversity of the skin colour, viewed until then as characterizing inferiority. The sport boycott at international sporting events impacted on apartheid, contributing to its cessation (Brittain, 2011). While the role of sport is largely acknowledged in developing motor skills and emotional control (De Pauw, 1986), in recent decades, academic research has investigated the effect of sport and physical activity on physical health, recognizing the positive effect on cardiovascular diseases, on reducing the risk of cancer (Samad, A.K.A. et al., 2005), of obesity (Blair & Church, 2004), preventing osteoporosis (Warburton et al., 2006) and as trauma relief, following wars or disasters (Kunz, 2009). Moreover, the health risk associated with low level of participation in physical education has been identified (US DHHS, 1996), as well as the increased risk of dying due to inactivity (Martinson, BC et al., 2001). Equally, the decremented risk of dying prematurely has been associated with the increased practice of physical activity. Furthermore, sport fosters psychological development on the people practicing it, increases mental health (Bailey, 2005), self-esteem, confidence and peer acceptance (Bailey, 2006) that may enhance social inclusion, cohesion, and reduces differences and disparities amongst participants (Parnes et al. 2007). Sport is considered as promoting human rights (Giulianotti, 2005) and as boosting democracy (Donnelly, 1993) whose qualities reinforce its role in the local communities as well as in international context. The United Nations in 2005 created the International Year of Sport and Physical Education highlighting the importance of sport as a tool to overcome challenges, conflicts and looking forward to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Academic research confirms the UN consideration that sport promotes interaction and friendship (Lyras, 2007) eradicating prejudice and discrimination while promoting gender equality as indicated by Lyras & Hums that promoted “the intergroup contact-theory before, during and after implementing sport programs” as a way to overcome discrimination (p.7, 2009). Although sports events do impact diverse people, this seems to be limited to the sport event unless integrated in a broader plan (Schulenkorf, 2010a; Schulenkorf, 2010b).
3.2 The struggle of vulnerable population to take part in sport.
The positive effects of sport are supported by academic literature. This has been seen in recent years augmented by interest of researchers especially in the 2000s, with the increased sensitization of society towards the vulnerable population, struggling to have their rights recognized and to participate in sport. The history of inclusion of the vulnerable population in sport is recent and actually their level of participation as part of the population is still not accomplished. Improvements should be made in the environments that are the places where lives are staged, because environments are the places where discrimination occurs, as the Chairman of the Paraplegic Games Association claimed that discrimination lies in the surrounding environment and not inside the association (Brittain, 2011).

4. Previous Games experiences.
Japan will host the Games in 2020 and it seems useful to analyze the previous experiences in terms of the Games’ accessibility as a way to evaluate their inclusivity. The Games analyzed are those from Sydney 2000 to London 2012. In Sydney, access policies were structured and the evaluation process successful, but the underestimation of the attendees and the insufficient means of transportation for people with disabilities along with the lack of information regarding access and ticketing made it difficult if not impossible for participation at the Games (Darcy, 2003). Athens 2004 was defined in the official Games report as “unfriendly” to the disabled community (Gold & Gold, 2007), while Beijing 2008 was noted for a lack of transparency in the ticketing process. Although London 2012 was at the forefront in accessibility over the other candidate cities in the bidding process, nonetheless the number of tickets available did not meet demand and in addition the tickets for attending the events were expensive, characteristics that previous games have already shown. What arises from the analysis is that issues reported after the Games are often not sorted out but rather repeated in the following Games (ticketing, information, transportation). In so doing, the lack of learning is confirmed in the Games, which should instead see the hosting cities improving on the previous ones. The lack of learning process does not allow evaluation of the inclusivity level of the Games so far because there are no data regarding those people that have been excluded, and there is a lack of information on people involved in the planning process (Lo Presti, 2014). What also arose from the analysis of the Games is that there is a distinction among the stakeholders: official stakeholders (clients, builders and designers) and users/stakeholders (spectators and vulnerable population). Although the accessibility advisory council was created, there was no information on what people had been involved nor on the diversity represented nor even on how the users’ participation through the accessibility advisory council impacted on the planning process. This lack of regulation does not clarify what role the users/stakeholders have, showing instead the different status that users/stakeholders have compared to designers, builders and clients. Indeed, it was in the client’s power to decide whether to involve users in the planning phase or not at the expense of inclusivity. It seems to be evident that if the users’ involvement in the planning phases of the events is not considered, inclusivity in sport and in society cannot be guaranteed.

5. UD in sporting environments.
Considering the relevance that environments have on human lives (Imrie, 1997), human beings need to take care of them, otherwise, as Kurosawa in Yume affirmed “they are going to perish” (Kurosawa, 1990). Moreover, taking into account the lack of inclusivity in society, there is a need for increasing participation by filling the gap
created between people, especially those among the vulnerable population, and their environments. Only through an enlarged participation of diverse populations is it possible to create an inclusive society. In this context, UD, with its concept of making design usable by everybody without any specialization, as defined by Mace (Preiser & Smith, 2010), seems to be the right tool to fill the existing gap. In fact, UD has been implemented in the built environment (Gray at al. 2012), health (Tokada & Nakaoka, 2009), products (Sangelkar et al. 2011; Kostovic, 2009; Ellis & Talbot, 2006), learning (Izzo, M.V., 2012; Rose & Meyers, 2006), teaching (McGuire & Scott, 2007), and the economy (Odeck et al. 2010). Furthermore, UD which is also promoted by the Council of Europe as fostering social inclusion, focuses on human beings. Indeed, it is the pivotal role of people in the UD concept that makes it a valuable tool to foster inclusion, taking into account the diverse exigencies of people in various environments. Sport is recognized as fostering social participation, as the spirit of sport and its rules highlight the differences of an original playing expression, thus exalting diversity. Therefore, applying UD to the sport environments (physical, information, communication, policy and attitudinal) would increase people’s representation in the sport context, thus fostering inclusion. While in previous Games, there has been a lack of information regarding users’ involvement which was likely reflected in the lack of representation for users’ needs in the decisions made concerning the Games’ environments, in the context of Tokyo 2020, users should participate from the beginning of the project with designers, builders and clients. Only through their participation is it possible for users to be represented in the choices made, and in so doing it will make the Games effectively inclusive. For instance, so far the Games accessibility guide (IPC, 2013) does not consider people with sensorial disabilities as the beneficiaries of the guide and, therefore, of the Games. So it would be interesting to know if the Tokyo 2020 organizers are planning to consider them and if so, how they are planning to involve them, since apparently there do not seem to be any people experienced in sensory disability among counsellors, officials and advisory committees (Tokyo 2020). In order to avoid the maintenance of the gap between people and the environments (in this case sport environments), so perpetrating the discrimination of those excluded from the possibility of enjoying the Games, the users’ stakeholders should take part in the development of the Games project as do designers, builders and clients. Only through their involvement in the planning and decision processes would it be possible to consider all of those people who are usually relegated to the borders of society. Following the broad approach given by UD, which takes into account the different exigencies of people, cooperation is essential to aim at an inclusive Games. In the same way, cooperation between governments, private organizations and the population should be established in society, as a fundamental way to exchange ideas and make decisions that reflect the exigencies of the widest population in developing an inclusive society. In this context, the experience of the users/experts as those “who have developed natural experience in dealing with the challenges of the built environment” (Ostroff, 1997) is pivotal, not only to make the designers aware of their needs, but also to actively represent their needs to governments and private organizations in order to enhance their social participation. The development of an inclusive society would be beneficial for everybody, since enabling people to participate would ameliorate human relationships and wellbeing and also would empower people earlier disabled by society, increasing their economic independence and reducing their reliance on society. Tokyo has
the opportunity, through the implementation of UD in sport environments and then broadly in society, to reduce social issues such as suicide rates, depression, gender differences, and to increase the economy through the development of sports-related activities that gather diverse people on the same playing field, producing an engaging alternative to too much work; it also has the chance to create the basis for transnational change in the way in which people build relationships and relate to their environments, in so doing improving the human condition. This system is made by humans for humans, and for this reason is flexible, because there is no perfection in humans nor immutable conditions. For this reason, regulations as well as design guidelines are often not tailored to humans but to a fixed idea of humans, which is contrary to human lives. The UD concept and the involvement of users/experts among others would inform various environments of human needs and exigencies, as such favoring the creation of environments suitable for everybody. This probably would not be a smooth path, since there might be high interest in terms of power by people who usually manage and run the operations, who are not willing to delegate either power or decisions. Specifically, in the Games context, clients, designers and builders may not want to blindly enlarge the decision basis nor try to empathize with it. However Japan seems to be the right place to begin the integration process, considering the Japanese values that would support the process of inclusion. Among the values that make Japan a unique place are hospitality and empathetic behavior through the altruistic participation in understanding others’ needs in advance, engaging guests and making them feeling special. Empathy as aforementioned is fundamental in human relationships, especially among designers as those who plan for society’s future. As such it could be, together with the spirit of harmony, the natural location for the diffusion of UD in society. The lack of implementation of this system would renew the lack of representation and involvement of the population within the organization of the Games and in a broader context, the exclusion of part of the population, which is fundamental to the development of an inclusive society that could enhance the differences to ameliorate society encouraging human relationships, the exchange of ideas and the production of knowledge.

6. Conclusions.
The current situation sees an increasing population worldwide, with ageing and changing lifestyle trends, thus the article proposed the introduction of Universal Design as a framework, and of sport as the vehicle for social inclusion. In fact sport, for its intrinsic characteristics of a natural platform created by human beings and for human beings through the UD framework, can increase the participation among diverse people, in respecting the rules of the game, towards the achievement of common goals. Through sport people can understand that we are all humans and we need to empathize with others (SDPWG, 2008). Working towards a common goal develops a common sense of identity and would foster inclusion. UD, with its characteristics, is the framework for designers and for those planning for an inclusive society, government at different levels, as well as for private organizations. Based upon the lack of inclusion in the previous Games, which are considered among the most important sporting events in the world, as showcasing cultures, nationalities and talents, the investigation moves to find an underpinning framework and a vehicle that would foster social inclusion. The staging of Tokyo 2020 could be the occasion for Japan to drive the change, developing an integrated system where people are at the heart of the project and choices are made in the function of people’s exigencies. Beginning with the recruitment of users representing the diversity.
of society, who have gained experience over the years, and training them to become users/experts, would increase the representation among the stakeholders. The development of an integrated system where designers, builders, clients and users/experts have the same status and the consulting groups are involved from the early stages to the evaluation should be provided. The users are ultimately the recipients of the event and broadly of the entire world. It is indeed through the equal participation in the early stages that users/experts can favour the creation of inclusive environments where everybody can fulfil his needs and enjoy the event in an inclusive atmosphere. The switch in perspective towards people would make them protagonists of their lives with a progressively increasing involvement in society. Being involved in society through an integrated system of organizations, public and private, and activities that promote cohesion, would reduce depression, suicide rates, addiction to video games and would enhance people’s participation that consequently enriches society.

Moving from the assumption that people are dependent on others and for their interaction with the environments, the exigency of adopting a human centered approach with human beings as designers of society and environments arises, while not neglecting the strong connection with the natural environment, that reflects its wellness as its malaise lastly to humans. The relationships that arise highlight the role of human beings in leading the relationships with the physical environment and therefore on the responsibility that humans have to take in planning for its future. The implementation of the integrated system (UD-human beings-environments) would show its positive effects on society and so foster the transmission of the knowledge to future generations. It is time to implement this change with actions. Will Japan drive the change?
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