

Research finds out what London 2012 says about Britain

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When the London 2012 Opening Ceremony is broadcast around the globe, an estimated one billion people will be watching, and inevitably drawing their own conclusions on our nation and what it means to be British.

Dr Michael Silk is a Reader who has specialised in critical social science in relation to sport since the early 1990s. He draws on expertise from research on past Games and [major sporting events](#) around the world to analyse the way that Britain presents itself during the Games, and the global response to this image.

He is director of Bath's Sport, Physical Activity & Culture research group, based in the Department of Education.

This summer he will be looking at the official narratives of the nation, presented through the Games, particularly in relation to which specific images of Britain are chosen and why, how inclusive they are, how history is used, and which people become connected to such images.

A unique component of the research is that social media will be used to discuss interpretations with the general public.

"The easiest way to conceptualise this research," said Dr Silk, "is to juxtapose the Olympic image of London and Britain with the images of Britain that flowed around the world last summer of riots and disaffected youth."

"You have to ask questions over who is actually connected to the Games and who is not. Who fits with the narrative of 'Great Britain' rolled out through the performance segments of the opening ceremony and who is disconnected, by class, gender, race, religion, ethnicity etc. Who are the real 'winners' in terms of urban regeneration and financial success?"

Dr Silk sees the research as having a potential impact on LOCOG for its report to Rio in 2016; Visit Britain, with regards to its role in influencing the image of Britain; the BBC, with regards to its coverage of major events in Britain, and the Department for Culture, Media & Sport, affecting how Britain will be presented in major future events such as the Rugby World Cup, Athletic World Championships and bids for other [events](#).

Provided by University of Bath

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