

INTRODUCTION

Since their inception over a hundred years ago, the modern Olympic Games have been surrounded by politics. They have been used to further national interests, showcase ideological world-views and draw attention to causes such as the fight against racism and gender discrimination. Since the 1980s the economic dimension of the Olympics has moved to the forefront following increased commercialisation via television deals and sponsorship. Host cities seek to outbid each other in search of prestige and urban remodelling. Citizens, on the other hand, are increasingly concerned about the costs that have to be borne by the public and agitate against the corruption scandals that have been associated with the organisation of Olympic events.

The summer games this year in Rio de Janeiro are a case in point. Awarded to the city in 2009 at a time of widespread optimism about the economic prospects of emerging markets like Brazil, the country now suffers from a commodity bust. Cost overruns, unfinished construction sites and bribery scandals are being scrutinised. While Olympic venues are mostly in the richer south of Rio, many of its poorer people have been left in the dust, as the evicted former inhabitants of central favelas have not received the promised alternative social housing. On the other hand there have been examples of the positive impacts of the Olympics, such as Barcelona's urban transformation process from an industrial city to a tourism and service hub following its summer games in 1992, which, in turn, inspired the organisers of the London games in 2012.

Against this backdrop, this collaborative volume written by CIDOB researchers explores the challenges and opportunities for cities hosting the Olympics. Eckart Woertz outlines the history of the politics around the games, ranging from their instrumentalisation by Nazi Germany in Berlin in 1936, when many aspects of their modern iconography were introduced, to the boycotts threatened and carried out since the 1950s, and the advent of a massive push towards commercialisation since the summer games in Los Angeles in 1984.

Jordi Bacaria analyses the economic effects of the Olympics on host cities such as Beijing, Rio and Sydney and their infrastructure planning.

He points to the procyclical character of many associated investments, which can compromise economic benefits, along with the occurrence of white elephant projects.

Paula de Castro takes a look at the four Olympic Games hosted by the USA. They have set new standards in terms of sponsorship deals (Los Angeles 1932 and 1984, Atlanta 1996), but were also overshadowed by a corruption scandal during the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City in 2002.

Oriol Farrés analyses the Beijing 2008 summer games with which China sought to reinforce its role model status among emerging market countries. The government succeeded with its top-down planning approach and was anxious to improve the abysmal air quality of the city, but it also aimed to nip any political protests in the bud. A political opening up did not occur in the wake of the games as many had hoped, although ethnic minorities were at least granted representation in accompanying ceremonies.

Nicolás de Pedro analyses the geopolitical drivers behind the Winter Olympics in Sochi in 2014, which were vigorously supported by Russian President Vladimir Putin in his quest to demonstrate Russia's regained power and pride after the demise of the Soviet Union.

Anna Ayuso shows how the bid and the organisation of the Rio Olympics 2016 have been rooted in Brazilian politics and what effect the recent economic downturn in the country has had on this year's summer games.

Josep Coll analyses the case of the summer Olympics in Barcelona in 1992, which have been widely hailed as a role model for sustainable Olympics with a beneficial impact on the host city. Yet Coll also points out negative examples, such as idle infrastructure after the end of the games, and the cases of social marginalisation as a result of real estate speculation.

Like Barcelona, the games in London in 2012 are widely regarded as a success. Francis Ghilès outlines aspects of the urban renewal and infrastructure overhaul and points to the growth in self-esteem that can be observed in the wake of great sporting events: an effect that was welcomed in a city that was still reeling in the tails of the global financial crisis.

Pol Morillas and Héctor Sánchez turn our attention to a less successful example. The summer games of 2004 in Athens is in many ways a cautionary tale as spiralling costs weighed on an economy that would plunge into deep crisis after 2009 and the ensuing debates about the negative role of corruption and extractive elites extended to the organisation of the Olympics.

Finally, Eduard Soler provides an overview of Istanbul's "eternal candidacy" and its unsuccessful bids for the Olympics of 2000, 2008 and 2020, which would have made it the first Muslim majority country to host the event. Recent doubts about the economic strengths of emerging markets, a renewed flare-up of the Kurdish conflict within Turkey, its vicinity

to the quagmire of the Syrian civil war and its deteriorating international relations with Europe, Russia and Israel make a successful bid by the city in the near future less likely.

Overall, a picture emerges of how the Olympic Games can have a positive impact on cities in some cases, but are increasingly clouded by concerns about financial and social sustainability.

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