

# An Olympic Mosaic

Multidisciplinary Research and Dissemination of Olympic Studies  
**CEO-UAB: 20 Years**

## **Editors**

Emilio Fernández Peña  
Berta Cerezuela  
Miquel Gómez Benosa  
Chris Kennett  
Miquel de Moragas Spà



Centre d'Estudis Olímpics  
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona



Ajuntament de Barcelona

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# The Olympic Movement and the Academic World

**Nuria Puig Brandes**

**Head of University Relations IOC**

## Preface

It is a great pleasure to write this paper on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Olympic Studies Centre at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (CEO-UAB). I am also grateful because it gives me the opportunity to thank the UAB on behalf of the IOC Olympic Studies Centre (OSC) for the excellent job it has done in the field of Olympic studies.

University-based OSCs play an important role in introducing Olympic-related matters to university students through courses, conferences and research projects. The centres provide a stable structure ensuring regular Olympic-related activity.

CEO-UAB has not only played this role within its university, but it has also been a centre of reference for the international academic community interested in Olympism. Its numerous collaborations with many other OSCs and scholars have largely contributed to promoting Olympic studies worldwide. On the other hand, its collaboration with the International Olympic Committee (IOC)<sup>4</sup> in several research projects, symposia, publications, etc. is an excellent example of the IOC and academics working together.

Finally, CEO-UAB has greatly contributed to the Olympic Games legacy. Created on the occasion of the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games, the centre continues working 17 years after the Games and collaborates with the Barcelona Olympic Foundation and the Olympic Museum located in Barcelona in order to continue disseminating the once-in-a-lifetime experience of the 1992 Olympic Games.

With my colleagues of the IOC OSC - Information Management Department, we thank CEO-UAB for the ideas it has provided and the role model it has played. All of us who are passionate about Olympic studies, let's congratulate CEO-UAB team on these productive last 20 years and wish them at least another 20 years full of successful Olympic-related academic activities.

## 1. Brief background of University-Olympic Movement relations

The relationship between the Olympic Games and the academic world has existed since Ancient Greek civilisation. In Ancient Greece, palestrae and gymnasia were places for young people to be prepared physically, mentally and spiritually, enabling them to give the best of themselves during the celebration of the Olympic Games. Sport was part of man's overall education, which cultivated in a balanced and harmonious way his intellectual, mental and physical faculties.

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4. In the framework of the International Chair in Olympism, set up in 1995 thanks to a collaboration agreement between the UAB and the IOC.



At that time, the Olympic Games brought together not only the best athletes, but also poets, philosophers and historians, whose recognition at the Games enabled them to spread their fame throughout the Greek empire.

Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the IOC, was deeply inspired by the Ancient Olympic Games, but also by the educational role of sport developed in English and Irish schools and universities during the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This influence led him to announce in 1892, on the occasion of a meeting at the Union of French Societies of Athletic Sports, that he wanted to revive the Games. This announcement was greeted with little enthusiasm. Coubertin, however, was not discouraged and, on 23 June 1894, he founded the IOC in a ceremony held at the Sorbonne in Paris. This university has symbolised since then the link between the Olympic Movement and the academic world.

## Evolution since Athens 1886

Universities and the Olympic Movement have been interacting since the first edition of the modern Olympic Games in different ways.

Academic institutions and their representatives have participated actively in the organisation and success of the Games. According to the Official Reports of the first Olympic Games editions, students from colleges and universities were remarkable athletes. Further to this participation, which mainly consisted of athletes taking part in the sports competitions, London 1908 marked the starting point of a broader involvement. Since then, university facilities have been used as logistical or competition sites, staff and students have been taking part as volunteers in many areas and, in recent decades, academics have regularly contributed to Organising Committees for the Olympic Games projects (human resources training, Olympic education programmes, legacy, studies, much more recently on logging the video feed, etc.).

In addition to this active participation, Olympism, the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Games have been integrated as a study subject into various university disciplines and programmes. This firstly consisted of the interest of a few scholars, mainly coming from the fields of sport history, art and culture, and education, who studied the Ancient Olympic Games, the history of the Games and the Olympic Movement, athletes' participation, and the educational values of sport promoted by the IOC. Today, the academic background of scholars focusing in the Olympics covers a large spectrum of disciplines.

Since its creation, the IOC itself has tried to promote the study of the Olympic Movement and its development. This was already shown by Pierre de Coubertin expressing his desire to create a *Centre d'Etudes Olympiques* in order to provide a repository for his educational efforts. In 1927, he agreed, with the head of the Department of Physical Education at Athens University, to set up a centre for Olympic studies. For several reasons, this project took 34 years to come to light. The International Olympic Academy (IOA) was finally created in 1961 thanks to the contribution of Jean Ketséas, the Secretary of the Hellenic Olympic Committee and Carl Diem. The activities of the IOA in Olympia have greatly evolved since then, and the Academy is nowadays an essential place for all those willing to understand the roots of the Olympic Movement. In the 1960s, the Carl und Liselott Diem Olympic Archives (originally Carl Diem Institute) was created at the German Sports Institute of Cologne, also becoming a centre of reference for all those interested in studying Olympism.

The former Pre-Olympic Congresses organised by the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE), since 2008 entitled ICSEMIS<sup>5</sup>, have been a regular meeting point for those scholars interested in sport and Olympic issues.

All these initiatives have greatly contributed to developing the interest of the academic community in the Olympic Movement. However, this interest got broader from the 1980s, when sport and the Games turned into a phenomenon with historical, cultural, political and social impacts affecting society as a whole. In the late 1980s, the most universal sports event became a subject of study for scholars and students coming from a wide range of disciplines such as sociology, international relations,

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5. The International Convention on Science, Education and Medicine in Sport (ICSEMIS) is the successor of the Pre-Olympic Congress and is organised thanks to the Cooperation of the ICSSPE, the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and the International Federation of Sport Medicine (IFSM) with the support of the IOC.

anthropology, economics, law, urban planning, communications, sports management, etc.

The origins of most Olympic Studies Centres in universities also goes back to this period. OSCs or research groups, such as those from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain), the University of Western Ontario (Canada), Inje University (Korea), New South Wales (Australia), Johannes Gutenberg - Universität Mainz (Germany) or the Sports University of Beijing (China), played a key role in the development of Olympic studies, offering a stable structure within the academic world. Courses included in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, conferences, research, publications and the creation of documentary collections have been the main activities of these centres, thus representing a permanent link between the Olympic Movement, students and researchers. Today, the number of OSCs continues to grow, and is therefore enriching Olympic studies with wider disciplines and cultural contributions.

## **2. The IOC Olympic Studies Centre: from providing information to active collaboration with the academic community**

### **2.1 Missions and activities of the IOC Olympic Studies Centre**

The OSC has its *raison d'être* within the fundamental principles of Olympism and the IOC's roles stated in the Olympic Charter, in particular those highlighting the link between sport, culture and education.

The centre, structured in five complementary sections<sup>6</sup>, bases its activities around the following objectives:

- To ensure the ongoing acquisition, preservation, description and dissemination of Olympic patrimony.
- To promote and facilitate access to Olympic-related written and audiovisual collections.
- To provide research and analysis services and create content responding to the needs of the IOC administration.
- To encourage and promote academic activities on Olympism and stimulate synergies and collaboration among OSCs and scholars.
- To encourage and promote collaboration with the Olympic Movement to ensure that global Olympic patrimony is preserved and made available.

The centre's area of activities, under the responsibility of the Information Management Department, complements at IOC level the work done by other departments in the field of education and culture, such as the Commission for Culture and Olympic Education, the Department for International Cooperation and Development, and the Educational Service of the Olympic Museum.

### **2.2 The IOC OSC: building a bridge with academics**

Since its origins in the 1980s, the IOC OSC has regularly worked with university researchers and students, providing them with access to the unique collections of the IOC.

A key milestone in the development of this collaboration was in 1994, when the OSC moved to the then recently created Olympic Museum in Lausanne. At that time, the Centre started to develop its organisation in different sections in order to better preserve and disseminate the written and audiovisual patrimony of the IOC (thanks notably to the "Rules of Access to the Historical Archives" and to the creation of a welcome structure for researchers).

Five years later, the OSC launched, with the support of a Research Council composed of academics, the first edition of the Postgraduate Research Grant Programme. Collaboration with the Research Council (today known as the Selection Committee) and the grant

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6. The five sections of the OSC are the Historical Archives, the Library, the Research and Reference Service, the Images Section and the University Relations Section.

programme were the starting point of more proactive activity in order not only to preserve and disseminate its collections, but also to encourage and support, among the academic community, research, teaching and publications connected with Olympic matters.

In the last four years, the OSC, through its University Relations Section, has become the official interface between the academic community and the IOC in order to respond to requests from universities and to meet the needs of the IOC administration, which may be met by academics.

Every year, the OSC responds to more than 1,000 requests for in-depth research and around 8,000 requests concerning the loan of monographs or sending of articles. The distribution of the audiovisual collections (more than 27,000 photos and 450 hours of films annually) is also worth mentioning at this point. Furthermore, each year the centre welcomes over 300 researchers wanting to consult the IOC collections; receives more than 40 application files for the Postgraduate Research Grant programme; coordinates around 10 applied research projects; and regularly responds to academics submitting projects and requests<sup>7</sup>.

### **3. Olympic Studies: a new field becoming reality?**

One of the main outcomes of the collaboration between the academic community, the IOC and the Olympic Movement is the development of what we call ‘Olympic Studies’, which includes any Olympic-related academic activity. The evolution of Olympic studies in the last decade can be illustrated by two projects created by the OSC and described below: the first one, the Postgraduate Research Grant programme, is already consolidated and illustrates profiles and disciplines involved in Olympic studies; the second one, the Olympic Studies Observatory, is in its infancy but we hope it will be much more developed in the future for the benefit of both the IOC and the academic community.

#### **3.1 The Postgraduate Research Grant programme**

One of the important contributions of the IOC OSC to the field of OS is the Postgraduate Research Grant programme<sup>8</sup>. Launched in 1998 (the first grant recipients visited the centre in 1999), the programme seeks to encourage young researchers to undertake high quality research related to Olympism, the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Games from a human and social sciences angle.

As highlighted by Susan Brownell (University of Missouri), one of our former Selection Committee members, the grant programme serves as a link between the IOC and the universities of the world by reaching out to the next generation of top intellectuals, who are now graduate students or young professors in humanities and social sciences. We hope that, as teachers, these young scholars will be the future messengers of the Olympic ideals, and as researchers, they will be an important source of the future creativity and vitality of the Olympic Movement.

The application files submitted for the grant programme provide an interesting picture of the origin of the applicants and their Olympic-related research topics.

This picture might also be of interest in the analysis of the multicultural and multidisciplinary aspects of Olympic studies. In these first 10 editions, the application files of 337 candidates from 60 countries (29.2% of all the National Olympic Committees) have been received and analysed. An analysis by continent shows the following:

- Europe is the best represented continent, with 148 applicants (43.9% of the total) from 30 countries. The countries which feature the most often are France (31 files), Greece (18), Germany (13), Great Britain (14) and Romania (12).

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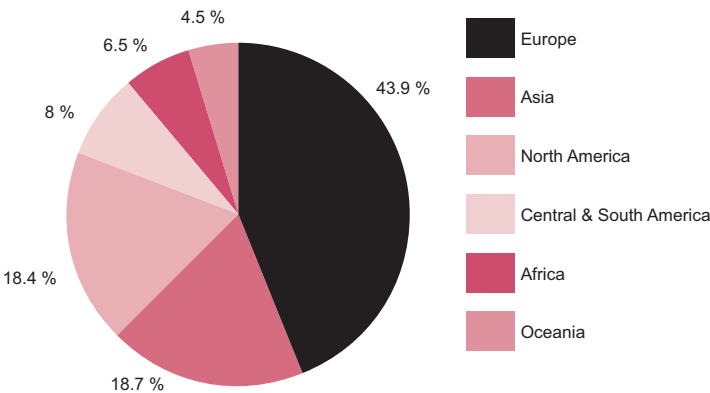
7. Further information about the OSC's services and collections can be found on the OSC web site (<http://www.olympic.org/studies>).

8. A full description of the grant programme can be found on the OSC's web site (<http://www.olympic.org/studies>).

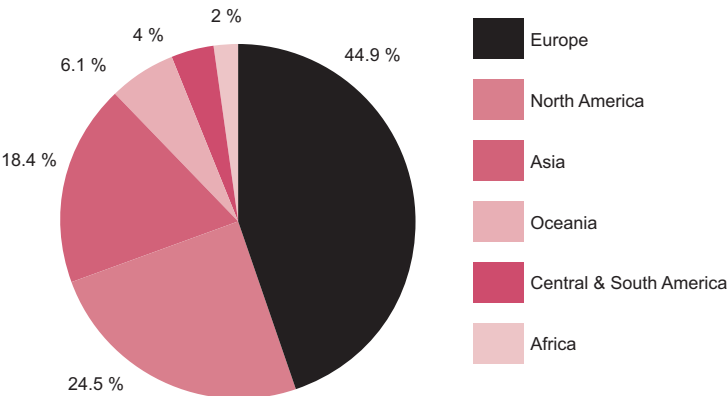
- America is represented by 89 candidates (26.4% of the total) from eight countries. The majority of these young researchers are from the USA (39), Canada (23) and Brazil (15). Asia follows with 63 candidates (18.7% of the total) from 11 countries. In that region of the world, China is the best represented, with 38 application files.
- Africa has had 22 candidates (6.5% of the total) from nine countries. Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya and Nigeria are the countries with the highest representation.
- Oceania is represented by 15 candidates (4.5% of the total) from Australia (12 files) and New Zealand (3 files).

An analysis of the grant holders' origins reveals similar figures. Since 1999, we have awarded grants to 49 candidates: 22 from Europe (44.9%), 12 from North America (24.5%), nine from Asia (18.4%), three from Oceania (6.1%), two from Central & South America (4%) and one from Africa (2%). Charts 1 and 2 illustrate the geographical distribution of applicants and grant holders.

**Chart 1: Geographical Distribution of Candidates**



**Chart 2: Geographical Distribution of Grant Holders**



These data show that, despite the regular efforts made in the dissemination of the grant programme, we still have a long way to go for the programme to reach and encourage young researchers around the world to get involved in Olympic studies. The applications we have received from the academic community in Africa can be considered as anecdotal, and the situation is similar in the case of Central & South America, with the only exception being Brazil. We also have few candidates from regions of Asia other than the North East, which until now has been mainly represented by China thanks to the boost of the Games of the XXIX<sup>th</sup> Olympiad in Beijing.

Concerning the disciplines of the human and social sciences present in the application files, analysis of the grant holders' research topics shows us the following:

The sports sciences discipline is the main source of the programme (51.3% of candidates in 2008-2009 and 34% of grants awarded since the creation of the programme). However, it is important to highlight the diversity of research projects submitted by sports sciences candidates. For example, three out of the five 2008 grant holders follow sports studies, but their projects are related to history, sociology and management.

Students following a degree on history come second in the number of candidates and grant holders (18.3% of grants since 1999).

These are followed by candidates submitting research projects dealing with architecture and urban planning (9.2%) and then by researchers dealing with communications (7.8%).

Finally, we can highlight the increasing number of disciplines being represented in the applications (13 in total), which contributes to the enrichment of the programme (candidate profiles and subjects) and of Olympic studies in general.

### **3.2. Olympic Studies Observatory**

The University Relations Section has regular contact with OSCs, university professors and researchers active in the area of Olympic studies and university students interested in Olympism. This network (made up of almost 1,000 contacts from five continents) allows not only for exchanges, but also for the setting up of working relations to carry out academic activities and develop an Olympic Studies Observatory. This Observatory, although still in its early stages, operates on three levels of information: contacts, activities, analyses/reports.

Below is a summary of the two first-level contents included in the Observatory in 2008.

#### **Contacts**

The OSC has contact with 33 OSCs or research groups, 115 academic experts and more than 750 professors and students interested in Olympism.

The OSCs are located in universities of Europe (58%), Asia (21%), America (12%) and Oceania (9%). Unfortunately, we have no knowledge of OSCs in Africa.

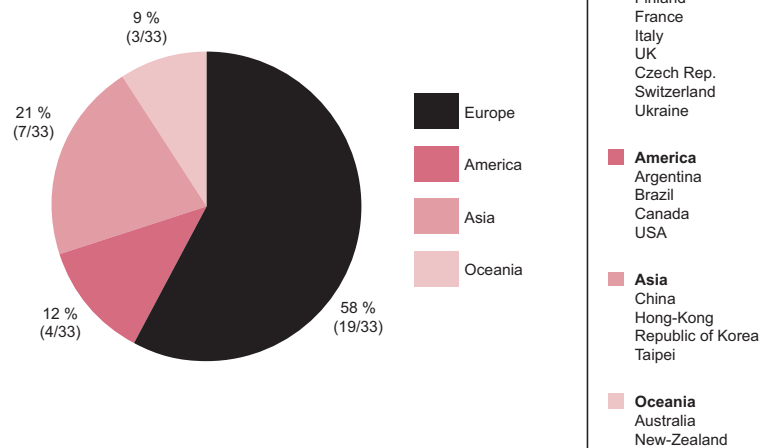
The most common areas of Olympic-related expertise within the various OSCs are: Olympic Values, Olympic Movement, History, Sociology and Arts & Culture.

Concerning academic experts, 51 come from Europe (45%) and 36 (31%) from North America. Central & South America, Asia and Oceania share the rest, while we can list only a few contacts in Africa.

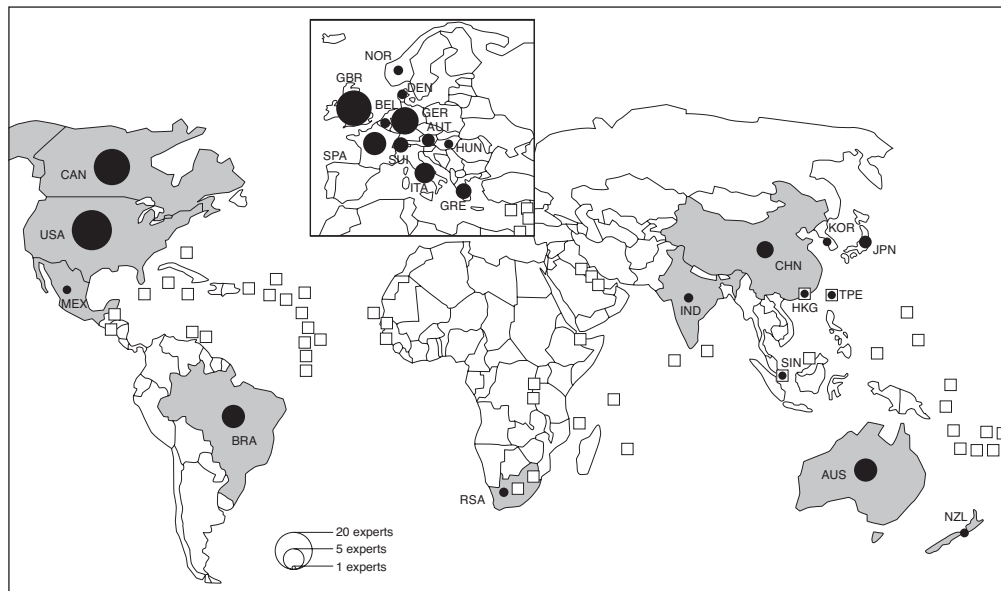
In parallel with the OSCs' areas of expertise, those most frequently studied by the experts are History and the Olympic Movement, followed by Olympic Values, Sociology, Gender, International Relations/Politics and Arts & Culture.

Finally, similar geographical distribution figures come from the analysis of the 754 academics interested in the Olympic phenomenon included in our database.

### Olympic Studies Centres by continent



### Academic experts by continent



## **Activities**

In the activities chapter of the Observatory, the University Relations Section has listed and analysed research projects and articles, postgraduate courses including Olympic-related content and academic conferences dealing with Olympic aspects.

## **Research**

In the framework of collaboration between the IOC and the academic world, 11 applied research projects were asked to be studied and five research projects were granted in 2008. In addition, the OSC received several research papers from scholars worldwide.

The above-mentioned research projects covered a wide range of subjects, but legacy and sustainable development were the two topics the most analysed. In addition to these topics, it is interesting to highlight new contributions concerning the Olympic Movement and its social responsibility.

## **Education**

During the 2008/2009 academic year, nine courses have been listed. The main topic of the majority of these courses is sports management. This area is, however, complemented by a range of other areas such as Olympism, humanities of sport, law, medicine & health, sociology and technology.

In addition to the existing courses, it is important to highlight that new academic initiatives focusing entirely on Olympic studies are being developed and will hopefully become reality soon. One of them, the Postgraduate Specialisation Degree in Olympic Studies, Olympic Education, Organisation and Management of Olympic Events, coordinated by the Department of Sports Organisation and Management of the Faculty of Human Movement and Quality of Life Sciences of the University of Peloponnese in collaboration with the IOA, started in October 2009.

## **Dissemination**

The OSC listed 44 Olympic related congresses and seminars in 2008. From a geographical point of view, 27 out of the 44 events were situated in Europe, 10 in Asia (mainly in China), three in North America, two in South America and two in Oceania. The Olympic studies topics presented the most in these events were legacy and sustainable development, international relations, marketing, arts & culture and Olympic Games bid processes.

The dissemination activity was also analysed through publications written by academics and acquired by our library (around 226 works in 2008).

Further information about the Olympic Studies Observatory contents can be found on the OSC's web site (<http://www.olympic.org/studies>).

## **4. Conclusion**

Education and research are two important priorities in societies and organisations. Education is essential for facilitating the autonomy of individuals and ensuring their integration into society and the professional world. Research allows us to question the present and prepare for the future by bringing new knowledge.

The educational role of the IOC is clearly defined by the Olympic Charter in the chapter concerning the Mission and the Role of the IOC. The first role is: "to encourage and support the promotion of ethics in sport as well as education of youth through sport and to dedicate its efforts to ensuring that, in sport, the spirit of fair play prevails and violence is banned" (IOC 2010).

Support for research is also present at the IOC, mainly through the OSC activities described above. The centre seeks not only to promote interest in Olympism through universities, but also to obtain, from the academic community, high-level analyses on key topics related to the Olympic Movement and its evolution.

Collaboration, however, is not always easy to set up, as academics and practitioners do not always move forward together. According to TSE Consulting (Curchod and Troelsen 2007) there are three main reasons for this: the incompatibility of speed, the lack of mutual understanding, and the absence of platforms.

The IOC OSC team has faced these difficulties on some occasions, but has also found many opportunities to bridge the two worlds. We are convinced of the benefits of collaborating for both the Olympic Movement and the academic community, and will continue working in this direction with the help of all those scholars interested in the Olympic phenomenon and of the Olympic family. From these pages, we invite the academic community to be active in the field of Olympic studies and to continue providing the IOC with interesting and valuable analyses on Olympic-related matters aiming to place sport at the service of humankind and society.

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