

# An Olympic Mosaic

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

## Editors

Emilio Fernández Peña  
Berta Cerezuela  
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**Publishers**

Ajuntament de Barcelona  
and Centre d'Estudis Olímpics  
de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

**Barcelona City Council Publications Board**

Ignasi Cardelús, Enric Casas, Eduard Vicente, Jordi Martí, Màrius Rubert, Jordi Campillo, Glòria Figuerola, Víctor Gimeno, Joan A. Dalmau, Carme Gibert, José Pérez Freijo.

**Translation and Language Correction**

Steve Norris, UAB Servei d'Idiomes Moderns, Anna Baldirà

**Design and Layout**

Mireia Rocher, Ramon G. Sedó,

**Publishing and Printing**

Direcció d'Imatge i Serveis Editorials  
[www.bcn.cat/publicacions](http://www.bcn.cat/publicacions)

© Of the publication: Ajuntament de Barcelona and Centre d'Estudis Olímpics de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona  
© Of the texts: The authors

ISBN Ajuntament de Barcelona: 978-84-9850-317-3  
ISBN Centre d'Estudis Olímpics 978-84-938759-2-3

Legal Deposit: B: 23138-2011

April 2011

Printed on paper from sustainable sources

**Acknowledgments**

This book has been published within the framework of celebrations marking the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Olympic Studies Centre at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (CEO-UAB), which was founded in June 1989.

We would like to express our thanks to all the people and institutions that, in one way or another, have helped to make this project a reality.

And, in particular, to CEO-UAB co-founder Barcelona City Council, which has made the printing of this publication possible.

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Ajuntament de Barcelona

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# Barcelona'92 and the Study of the Olympic Legacy

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## Introduction

Measuring the impacts of an Olympic Games is a notoriously difficult research undertaking. A preoccupation with economic impact studies is understandable due to the considerable sums invested directly and indirectly in the organisation of the Games in the modern era. Putting a number on the costs and revenues generated by staging the Games is important, but it only tells us part of the story. In order to gain a fuller understanding of what it means for a city to host the biggest event in our global society, we need to undertake an in-depth, multidisciplinary analysis of the interrelated processes behind the organisation of the Games before, during and after they have been staged. Some of the impacts are tangible facts, but many are intangible and changing phenomena.

As discussed in our chapter that evaluates the legacies of the Barcelona'92 Games (Kennett and Moragas 2006), the Olympic Games provide us with an almost unique window through which it is possible to observe and reflect upon globalising processes in our high speed societies. The world comes together and looks towards one city for a two week period of sporting and cultural celebration. The global flow of capital is evident as international professional athletes compete for glory and riches in multimillion dollar wonder arenas, while multinational sponsors and advertisers struggle for the attention of audiences. Global media processes are in full motion, as television broadcasters convert the arenas into enormous television studios, covering all possible angles and capturing every moment, which are digitally broadcast to millions of viewers around the globe. Nation states take to the Olympic stage as flags are flown and anthems sung, whilst universal values are promoted of friendship, solidarity and fair play under the symbols of the Olympic Movement.

This global moment happens in a local context. An elected city is responsible for creating this context, for enabling this global moment to happen, and is held up to international scrutiny as a result. Since 1984, when the Los Angeles Games demonstrated the economic potential of the Olympics, hosting the Olympic Games has become an increasingly competitive sport in itself. Bid cities now have to pass through pre-selection phases, rigorous evaluations by the IOC and two rounds of voting before laying their hands on what is often perceived as the goose that lays the golden egg. As many cities have discovered to their cost, there is no such golden goose, rather an opportunity to achieve economic, political, social and cultural goals that requires highly complex strategic and operational management of myriad actors and with no guarantees of success.

The host has the opportunity to use the Olympic Games as a catalyst for change, to move large scale urban projects in a relatively short period of time, to attract investment, to bring about social change and to communicate messages to an attentive international audience. How and why the actors involved in staging an Olympic Games establish their goals, the extent to which these are achieved, and the long term impacts that the Games leave in their wake are of interest to researchers of the Olympic Games. This chapter will discuss the research undertaken through the Olympic Studies Centre at the Autonomous

University of Barcelona (CEO-UAB) in relation to the organisation, impacts and long-term legacies, with a focus on the Barcelona'92 Olympic Games (Moragas and Botella 1995 and 2002; Moragas, Kennett and Puig 2003; Kennett and Moragas 2006).

Before beginning with the impact and legacy analysis, some limited background is needed. At the beginning of the 1980s, Barcelona was an underdeveloped city struggling to overcome de-industrialising processes and the transition towards democracy after the end of the Franco dictatorship in 1975. As the capital city of the Regional Autonomous Community of Catalonia, it was at the heart of a revival of Catalan national identity and rising claims for independence from the Spanish nation state. Above all it was a city that needed to make up for lost time and underinvestment: "What mattered..was to determine the dominating idea that would allow us to do in five or six years what had not been done in fifty, with the risk of taking another fifty if the opportunity was not taken." (Abad 1995, 12).

It was during this period that Juan Antonio Samaranch became elected to the IOC presidency, and he recommended that the Mayor of Barcelona prepare a bid. Barcelona was elected as host city in 1986 and began the process of preparing the 1992 Olympic Summer Games. The ambitious bid and associated development projects were aimed at bringing about major urban transformations in the city, whilst simultaneously promoting it to an international audience. What would now be identified as city marketing processes were set in motion.

## ***The Keys to Success***

The publication, *The Keys to Success*, brought together local and international researchers and experts involved in the organization of the Games themselves to take an in-depth look at what made the Barcelona'92 a success story (Moragas and Botella 1995). These multidimensional and multidisciplinary perspectives on the Games involved consideration of the impacts that the event had at the local and international levels. Some of the key findings from this research are summarised below.

The Games were a political opportunity for several actors to achieve certain aims, including Barcelona City Council and Barcelona Provincial Council (urban transformation and economic investment), the Government of Catalonia (promotion of Catalan national identity), the Government of Spain (promotion of a changed Spanish national identity that broke with tourist-based stereotypes), and the European Community (promotion of European identity and unity) (Botella 1995). These different aims resulted in struggle and conflict between certain actors, particularly in the representation of national identities. As the then CEO of COOB'92 (the Organising Committee for the Barcelona'92 Olympic Games), Josep Miquel Abad, stated, while the Olympics were clearly a sporting event, more importantly they were a pretext, a tool for achieving wider political, economic, social and cultural aims.

The political key to success was the negotiation and establishment of pacts between political actors that ensured the Games' financial backing as well as a balance between competing aims that was acceptable among the diverse actors. For example, the representation of Catalan national identity was hotly contested among actors from across the political spectrum, but was successfully negotiated, avoiding a potential boycott by Catalan nationalist parties. This involved the inclusion of Catalan as an official language of the Games and extensive representation of Catalan cultural identity, particularly in the opening ceremony.

Economically, the key to success of the Games was the establishment and management of a mixed economy model to finance the direct and indirect organisational and infrastructural dimensions of the Games. While the Government of Catalonia (13%) and the Government of Spain (10%) were the main sources of public funds, the involvement of private sector funding was crucial from the very beginning of the bid process. The resulting economic impacts of the Games were determinant in producing the shift to the 'post-1992' era in the city of Barcelona, involving investment of \$9.4 billion (Brunet 1995, 227). The securing of this massive economic injection into the city over a six-year period enabled the city to start a rapid recovery from

what was perceived by certain public and private sector actors as 50 years of underdevelopment under the Franco regime. To highlight the extent to which the Games were a pretext to achieve wider changes, of the total budget, only 16% was spent directly on Olympic projects (sporting infrastructure and the organisation of the sports events), while 84% was spent on indirect, associated developments, much of which was urban infrastructure.

Indeed, the urban infrastructural changes that occurred in and around the city of Barcelona between 1986 and 1992 can be regarded as one of the most ambitious urban transformations of a city in the post-war period. These included the construction of extensive new communication infrastructures (road systems, metro, rail, extension of airport), redevelopment of the waterfront area that opened the city to the Mediterranean Sea, the regeneration of part of the Poble Nou district and construction of new residential accommodation through the Olympic Village, the new world class sporting facilities built in four clusters around the city connected by a new 100km ring road, and the numerous ‘beautification’ projects around the city that capitalised on its rich architectural and artistic heritage. The dramatically transformed urban context in which the Games were held became the real success story of the Games both locally and internationally, perhaps most eloquently captured in a quote from the New York Times on the day after the closing ceremony: “The athletes never had a chance. No matter how well they jumped and ran and rowed, they could never dominate these Summer Games. The city won the Games. The people of Catalonia won the Games.” (Vecsey 1992).

The quote highlights the importance of the human dimension of the Games, which can also be identified as central to their success. The festival atmosphere in the city for the 16 days of sporting competition, fuelled by the success of the Spanish Olympic team, left a lasting impact on visitors and viewers around the world. Local ‘ownership’ of the Games was achieved and the people welcomed the world with open arms and pride. Indeed, the generation of civic pride around the Games was identified as an important social impact for the city. Having organised what were widely heralded as the most successful Olympic Games at that point in history enabled Barcelona, and Catalonia in particular, to step up to the international stage once again.

Generating local support for the Games in combination with maximising international exposure through media coverage the event was to receive were the keys to the successful communication of the Barcelona’92 project. Convincing the local population that the upheaval of living through urban transformation and the risk of failure on an unprecedented scales for the actors involved was going to be worth it was essential. This was combined with an external communication strategy that involved maximising the cultural significance of the Games’ ceremonies, using the cityscape as a backdrop for the sporting events, locating ‘beauty’ cameras at iconic locations in the city (e.g. at the Sagrada Familia church) to capture the atmosphere and physical beauty of the city, and working closely with the media in general to ensure the communication of the desired image. The findings of the “Television in the Olympics” research project highlighted the general success in communicating messages about Catalan cultural identity among international television broadcasts of the opening and closing ceremonies (Moragas, Rivenburgh and Larson 1995). As previously mentioned, the positive coverage of the world’s media was central in the recognition of the Games’ success.

The final success factor that must be identified is logical but should not be understated: the success of the Games in organisational terms. The organisation of the Games went without any major technical hitch, or political or security incident that had cast shadows over previous Olympic Games. Technically, the Games were meticulously planned and efficiently and effectively executed by a highly professional team of experts and the efforts of 35,000 volunteers without whom the Games could not have been organised. As the previous paragraphs explain, these Games were high risk in political and economic terms; more risk existed perhaps than for any other Games in Olympic history to that point. The organisation of a successful 16 days of Olympic competition was essential to generate public support and civic pride and to ensure positive coverage by the international media, something Atlanta’96 would discover to its cost four years later. The Organising Committee delivered on time and on budget, with no major problems worth reporting.

The multidisciplinary studies undertaken on the Barcelona’92 Games revealed the interconnected, multidimensional nature

of the impacts. An in-depth understanding of the meaning of these impacts, locally and globally, required an integrated approach and a macro-level vision. The impacts of mega-events must be understood in their specific context, but not in a static or isolated way, rather as part of the complex fabric of societies.

Of particular interest in the Barcelona'92 case was the establishment of what has come to be known as the 'Barcelona model'. The transformations that the city underwent in preparation for the Games were central to the construction of this model, or the strategic approach to managing large-scale change in cities. The use of major events as a catalyst, or vehicle for change, has been replicated in cities such as Sydney, Athens, Torino and London.

## Evaluating the legacies

As part of Barcelona's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, CEO-UAB published the book *L'herència dels Jocs* with the aim of returning to the research undertaken in *The Keys to Success* but with a longer term vision of the Games' impacts. This book revealed several important long-term shifts in the city and its surrounding areas that had occurred as a result of the Games and that these constituted transformations or legacies.

Political tensions and struggle between political parties and the different levels of public administration continued to characterise Catalan and Spanish politics in general. These relations were tested to the limits as the Partido Popular PP (centre-right, Spanish 'centrist' party) took power in the central government in 1996, while moderate Catalan Nationalist party (CiU) remained in power in Catalonia and the Catalan Socialist Party (PSC) in the city and province of Barcelona. Despite clear ideological divisions, the parties reached consensus on the organisation of another major event in Barcelona: the Universal Forum of Cultures (2004).

This event, which was invented by political actors in the city of Barcelona, was very similar in concept to the Expo. The organisation of the Forum emulated the model used for the Barcelona'92 Olympic Games in using an international event as a catalyst for urban, social and economic change based on public-private partnership. This time the urban regeneration focused on the northern part of the waterfront, extending the transformations undertaken in the Old Port, the Olympic Village and Olympic Port.

Research by Carbonell (2002), revealed that 10 years after the Games, the sale of Olympic Village properties as high quality real estate had created an upper-middle class neighbourhood. The same was to happen as part of the Forum developments, with the creation of the Diagonal Mar neighbourhood, with its top-end high-rise apartment blocks overlooking the Mediterranean, surrounded by new hotel, conference and retail developments. The adjacent Forum area included striking post-modern architecture, sprawling concrete plazas and marina developments that were used to host the three-month-long event.

While the urban development involved the regeneration of de-industrialised land and the cleaning up the Besòs river and the coastal area that it ran into, the Forum was heavily criticised by local community groups for speculative practices, gentrification and the lack of investment in the surrounding neighbourhoods, which were among the most impoverished in the city.

In terms of urban infrastructure investment in the period between 1992 and the celebration of the Forum in 2004, a total of €11.8 billion had been pumped into the city, €2 billion more than the six years before the Olympic Games (Brunet 2002). The commitment to the continued development of the city was clear and the Games had just been the start of major transformations that would include the extension of Avinguda Diagonal to the sea, the continued expansion of the airport, a new tram system, the construction of high-speed rail link with Madrid. A new district called 22@ had also been developed behind the Olympic Village, which has successfully attracted high-tech companies to a former industrial wasteland. Barcelona as a city was on the rise and had been put back on the international map.

In the mid to late 1990s, tourism began to boom in the city. The number of tourists increased from 1.7 million in 1990 to over 6.7 million in 2008, consolidating Barcelona as a European short break destination and a key port of call for major cruise liners (Turisme de Barcelona 2009). Supply responded to increased demand, with the number of hotels increasing from 118 in 1990 to 310 in 2002, many of which were four or five star properties, along with new and improved conference and trade fair facilities, restaurants and other tourist-oriented services. Duran (2002) estimated that tourism directly contributed over € 1 billion annually to city revenues (14% of GDP) in 2001, and that it had doubled in economic significance since 1995.

Perhaps the key economic legacy of the post-Barcelona'92 period was the consolidated shift to a service-based economy. However, the dependence on the tourism industry and construction, which had driven economic and social development in the city was criticised. The positive economic benefits in revenue terms of tourism were weighed against accusations of Barcelona catering more for tourists than its citizens, of the negative impacts of rowdy tourists on low-cost weekend breaks, of insecurity and environmental degradation, of the low-quality, insecure jobs created in many sectors of the service industries. The economic crisis that began in 2008 exposed the city's dependence on both the tourism and construction industries and the need for diversification through initiatives such as the 22@ project.

The city has also capitalised on its sports management know-how and the post-Olympic use of its facilities. Barcelona has become established as one of Europe's sporting capitals and boasts facilities capable of hosting international competitions in multiple sports. Apart from being home to the legendary FC Barcelona and the largest football stadium in Europe, as well as RCD Espanyol and its new 40,000 all-seater stadium, the Olympic Stadium is set to host the 2010 European Athletics Championships and regularly hosts major concerts, the Palau St Jordi indoor arena has hosted the World Swimming Championships, Davis Cup finals, the Final Four Euroleague finals and numerous concerts and cultural events, the Olympic swimming pools and associated facilities (including two Olympic-size pools indoor and outdoor) have been opened as public sports facilities, as have several other of the former Olympic venues. The city has therefore benefited from a rich sporting legacy, inspiring and facilitating sport participation in combination with a boom in the private sector gym industry. Sport facility membership grew from 20,000 in the early 1990s to 149,000 in 2001 (Segura, Serra and Pallejà 2002).

Although difficult to measure, one of the main legacies of the Games has been socio-cultural. Apart from the successful communication of changing national identities in Catalonia in particular, but also in the Spanish context, the city of Barcelona and the people of Catalonia benefited from a collective sense of recognition from the international community after having organised what were regarded at the time as the 'best Games ever'. The renewed self-confidence in the city played a key role in its development.

## Olympic legacy in international sports discourse

The *Keys to Success* and the continued research in *L'herència dels Jocs* provided the opportunity for local and international reflection on why exactly the Barcelona'92 Games had been such a success, but it took more time and the bringing together of researchers from around the world to understand that what were first identified as impacts had become legacies (Moragas and Botella 2002). The opportunity to develop the idea that modern Olympic Games had reached a scale that could bring about tangible and intangible transformations in society was provided through the organisation and celebration of the Legacy Symposium with the International Olympic Committee. The theme of the Symposium was inspired by the research and vision of Professor Richard Cashman as the holder of the International Chair in Olympism at CEO-UAB for 2002.

The Symposium brought together academics, IOC representatives and members of Organising Committees for the Olympic Games to discuss the concept of Olympic legacy and its significance in the organisation of the Olympic Games. Research studies related to different themes connected to legacy (politics, economics, cultural, social, urban, sporting, communication, and environment) combined with within-case and cross-case analyses of Olympic Games from 1984 onwards. The main

conclusions of the Symposium were:

- The Olympic legacy was multidisciplinary and dynamic and was affected by a combination of local and global factors.
- Olympic legacy depended on the expertise and visionary capacity of Organising Committees and host cities, regions and countries.
- The concept of legacy begins with the design of the bid and stretches, seemingly without clear limits, into the post-event period.
- Olympic legacies contributed to the continuity of the Olympic Movement, and recommendations were made that planning for legacy creation through the hosting of an Olympic Games should be considered as a key aspect of bid evaluation processes.
- Long-term legacy planning was identified as central to the sustainable development of the Games and host cities (Mora-gas, Kennett and Puig 2003).

Intangible legacies, such as the production of ideas and cultural values, intercultural and non-exclusionary experiences, popular memory, education, and so on, acted as driving forces for the creation of tangible legacies (infrastructure, economic). Culture, according to the Symposium's conclusions, could be considered as the ultimate source of all other legacies.

The Symposium also raised some important issues related to researching legacies. For example, the measurement of economic impacts was identified as a highly complex undertaking involving multiple variables that changed over time, thus making comparisons between Games difficult. In terms of social impacts, the need to analyse Olympic legacies in the context of globalising and governance building processes was emphasized. Politically, the international role of the Games in the promotion of peace and educational values was highlighted as a key challenge for the new realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Perhaps most importantly, the Symposium identified a key role of the IOC in the establishment of legacy planning, implementation and evaluation as fundamental parts of the Olympic bidding and Games management processes. The concept of sustainable development was central to this proposal, identifying the need to invest for the long-term benefit of citizens of the host community, rather than focusing on the short-term implications of hosting a successful sports event. A recommendation requiring bid cities to include legacy in their planning has subsequently been adopted, and support for Organising Committees in legacy issues is provided by the IOC. The concept of Olympic legacy has become part of IOC policy and planning, and is now a required part of the candidature process.

## Concluding remarks

Research into the Barcelona'92 Olympic Games and its impacts transcended the local dimension and contributed directly to the construction of an international discourse on the role of mega-events in globalising processes and their potential to leave lasting legacies in host cities and beyond. The multidimensional nature of legacy analysis reveals the need for collaborative, multidisciplinary research teams and longitudinal studies than enable a full understanding of the interdependent nature of long-term impacts. The existence of specialised research centres such as CEO-UAB is fundamental to the organisation, coordination and promotion of these kinds of research initiatives. Without them, we would know significantly less about the far-reaching impacts of the Olympic Games.

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