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From A to B: The Summer Olympics, 1896-2008

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## Chapter 2

# From A to B: The Summer Olympics, 1896–2008

*John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold*

Yet let us all together to our troops,  
And give them leave to fly that will not stay;  
And call them pillars that will stand to us;  
And, if we thrive, promise them such rewards  
As victors wear at the Olympian games

William Shakespeare<sup>1</sup>

Knowledge about the Olympic Games and its significance for ancient Greek society had never faded from the European consciousness, notwithstanding the centuries that had elapsed since the prohibition of the festival by the Christian Emperor Theodosius I in 393 AD. Shakespeare's matter-of-fact reference to the Games illustrates the point that the Olympic idea 'was a shared, not isolated reference' in the arts throughout Western Europe (Segrave, 2005, p. 22); indeed, as Littlewood (2000, p. 1179) observed, the Olympics were 'probably the one' among the 'incalculable influences of the Greeks in the modern world ... of which the general public [were] the most aware'. Much the same applied to Olympia, the place with which the Games were associated. As the English theologian Richard Chandler (1766, p. 308) remarked, its name would 'ever be respected as venerable for its precious era by the chronologer and historian', for whom:

[it] had been rendered excessively illustrious by the power and reputation of its ancient princes, among whom were CEnomaus and Pelops; by the Oracle and temple of the Olympian Jupiter; by the celebrity of the grand *Panegyris* or general assembly held at it; and by the renown of the *Agon* or Games, in which to be victorious was deemed the very summit of human felicity. (*Ibid.*, p. 303)

Yet despite its reputation, no one was certain as to Olympia's exact whereabouts. Despite being indicated on maps since 1516, when the Venetian cartographer

Battista Palnese referred to it as 'Andilalo',<sup>2</sup> the passage of time meant that 'Olympia has since been forgotten in its vicinity' (*Ibid.*, p. 308).

Matters changed in the 1770s when travellers ventured to the Peloponnesus on the west coast of Greece, then an obscure corner of the Ottoman Empire, in search of this important place. For example, towards the end of a trip in 1776 sponsored by the Society of Dilettanti, Richard Chandler and his companions took local advice as to where Olympia might have been. There was little immediately apparent on arriving at the spot that had been indicated. Two earthquakes had levelled the buildings, already in ruins, in the sixth century AD (Fellmann, 1973, p. 109). Periodic flooding by the two rivers (Cladeos and Alpheios) that meet there had subsequently deposited a layer of alluvium several metres thick. Yet despite the site appearing 'almost naked', closer inspection revealed some wall footings and a massive capital from a Doric column that had recently emerged from the river mud. The latter, Chandler correctly inferred, was a fragment of the Temple of Jupiter (Zeus). He made further deductions about a depression occupied by a pestilential pool: 'At a distance before it was a deep hollow, with stagnant water and brickwork, where, it is imagined, was the Stadium' (Chandler, 1766, p. 308). From these fragments, Chandler provided a mind's eye account of classical Olympia, drawing on ancient descriptions to outline the grandeur of buildings, temples and stadium that had made this 'no inconsiderable place'.

Chandler attached no special significance to these observations within his travelogue, but the rediscovery of the site brought new waves of visitors. Surveys carried out for Lord Spencer Stanhope in 1807 revealed an imposing complex replete with temples, gymnasia, stadium, hippodrome and accommodation (Stanhope, 1824). Noticeably, Stanhope's account extended to the ruined city of Elis, the prime settlement of the *polis* in which the festival site was situated, and recognized the links between the two. Adopting a similar approach to his subject matter, William Leake (1830, I, pp. 23–44) described Elis as the 'place of ordination and preparation for the *athletæ* of the Olympic Games' (*Ibid.*, II, p. 220) and the point from which participants set out in procession to traverse the distance (36 kilometres) to Olympia. The journey, complete with ceremonies of ritual purification *en route*, took place before the start of each Games (see also S.G. Miller, 2003, p. 9). The complex of permanent structures at Olympia also contained buildings that served the Elis-based civil government's need for political administration rather than having religious or sports functions (Crowther, 2003; see also Drees, 1968). These were early and intriguing recognitions of the close relationship between host city and Games.

Understandably, discovery of the ruins prompted campaigns for archaeological work since, as Leake (1830, I, p. 44) observed, 'there is every reason to believe that the most interesting discoveries in illustration of the arts, language, customs and history of Greece, may yet be made by excavations at Olympia'. The first fruits of those campaigns were small-scale digs by English and then French archaeologists in the early nineteenth century, but these encountered Greek

sensitivities about removal of artefacts. The third set of excavations, however, proved decisive. Licensed by the Greek Parliament after negotiations between the Greek and German governments to ensure that artefacts did not leave the country, the excavations between 1875 and 1881 by a team from the Imperial German Archaeological Institute provided systematic analysis of the core of the site and vital insights as to its usage (Kyrieleis, 2003). Progressively, a picture emerged of a site sufficiently intact to evoke not just the layout of a complex with a 210 yard (192 metre) running track and associated buildings but also to allow free rein to the imagination as to the activities associated with this place (Perrottet, 2004).

The reports coming from the excavations aroused excitement beyond archaeological circles. Historians and other scholars eagerly devoured news emerging from Olympia and reflected on the mystique of the Games and the place of sport in classical Greek society. Their interest was not simply antiquarian. Some saw the achievements of the past as offering parallels for the modern age. For example, in a public lecture Sidney Colvin, the Director of Cambridge University's Fitzwilliam Museum, enthused over the new archaeological findings, but wistfully remarked that:

It has been said that Englishmen and ancient Greeks are much like one another in two respects. One is their ignorance of all languages except their own, and the other is their love of physical sports. We have our Epsom and our Grand National, our games of cricket and football, our rowing and our running matches, and we despise Frenchmen and foreigners, generally, with the most impartial disdain; but somehow we don't make of our athletic sports so much as these ancient Greeks did. (Colvin, 1878, p. 7)

Colvin primarily had in mind the link between sport and art, seeing the Games as bridging the sacred and secular and creating a vital exemplar for contemporary cultural life. Others also felt that the ancient Games *per se* had an important ethos that might be revived and recaptured. Their model was that of a peaceful yet competitive sporting festival that brought nations together notwithstanding the pressures of a turbulent external environment.

This chapter provides a review of the principal phases in the development of that festival, as expressed in the evolution of the Summer Games. It opens by discussing the revival of the modern Olympics, before providing an overview of the intricate history of cities staging the Summer Games from Athens 1896 through to the most recent Games in Beijing in 2008 (see table 2.1). We then identify eight phases in the development of the relationship between the city and the Games. The first (1896–1906) traces the way that the nascent Olympics narrowly survived negative associations with the fairground, with two sets of Games held in Athens a decade apart offering a more positive path forward that intimately involved city and stadium. The next phase (1908–1936) saw local Organizing Committees devote mounting resources to preparing stadia and associated facilities. By the time of the 1936 Berlin Games, the Olympics had started to gain a consensual

content with ingredients broadly replicated by each succeeding festival, although remaining an event that gave the home nation scope to mould the associated spectacle according to its own needs. After the war and a brief series of lower-

**Table 2.1.** Cities bidding for the Summer Olympic Games, 1896–2016.

<i>Games</i>	<i>Year awarded</i>	<i>Host city</i>	<i>Other candidates</i>
1896	1894	Athens	London
1900	1894	Paris	
1904	1901	St Louis*	Chicago
1908	1904	London†	Berlin, Milan, Rome
1912	1909	Stockholm	
1916	1912		Berlin, Alexandria (Egypt), Budapest, Cleveland, Brussels
1920	1914	Antwerp	Amsterdam, Atlanta, Brussels, Budapest, Cleveland, Lyon, Havana, Philadelphia
1924	1921	Paris	Los Angeles, Atlantic City, Chicago, Pasadena, Rome, Barcelona, Amsterdam, Lyon
1928	1921	Amsterdam	Los Angeles
1932	1923	Los Angeles	
1936	1931	Berlin	Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Rome
1940	1936		Tokyo, Helsinki. Rome
1944	1939		London, Athens, Budapest, Lausanne, Helsinki, Rome, Detroit
1948	1946	London	Baltimore, Lausanne, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Philadelphia
1952	1947	Helsinki	Amsterdam, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Philadelphia
1956	1949	Melbourne	Buenos Aires, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Mexico City, Minneapolis, Montreal, Philadelphia
1960	1955	Rome	Budapest, Brussels, Detroit, Lausanne, Mexico City, Tokyo
1964	1959	Tokyo	Brussels, Detroit, Vienna
1968	1969	Mexico City	Buenos Aires, Lyon, Detroit
1972	1966	Munich	Detroit, Madrid, Montreal
1976	1970	Montreal	Los Angeles, Moscow
1980	1974	Moscow	Los Angeles
1984	1978	Los Angeles	Teheran
1988	1981	Seoul	Nagoya (Japan)
1992	1986	Barcelona	Amsterdam, Belgrade, Birmingham, Brisbane, Paris
1996	1990	Atlanta	Athens, Belgrade, Manchester, Melbourne, Toronto
2000	1993	Sydney	Berlin, Beijing, Manchester, Istanbul (Brasilia, Milan, Tashkent withdrew)
2004	1997	Athens	Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Istanbul, Lille, Rio de Janeiro, Rome, San Juan, St. Petersburg, Seville, Stockholm
2008	2001	Beijing	Bangkok, Cairo, Havana, Istanbul, Kuala Lumpur, Osaka, Paris, Seville, Toronto
2012	2005	London	Paris, Madrid, Moscow, New York
2016	2009	Rio de Janeiro	Baku, Chicago, Doha, Madrid, Prague, Tokyo

\* The nomination was originally to Chicago.

† The nomination was originally to Rome.

Source: Partly based on Buchanan and Mallon (2001).

key events framed by Austerity (1948–1956), the Olympics witnessed growing acceptance of the economic importance and general promotional significance of the event for the host cities. The years from 1960–1976 saw host cities view the Olympics as a catalyst for initiating major infrastructural and related works; a period that ended with the misfortunes of Montreal 1976. After an interlude when the Games became dominated by late-Cold War ideological issues with rather less attention to regeneration (1980–1984), the success of the strategies introduced at Los Angeles 1984 and Barcelona 1992 heralded a new phase of commercialism and regeneration programmes (1988–1996). The Games of 2000 and 2004 found cities actively competing to host a festival justified in terms of sustainable legacy, albeit with varying degrees of plausibility. Finally, we deal with Beijing 2008; a Games that rivalled any predecessor in terms of its elaborate spectacle and impact on the physical fabric of its host city.

## Revival

The idea of appropriating the title ‘Olympic’ had long appealed to organizers of sporting events (Redmond, 1988; Buchanan and Mallon, 2001). Robert Dover, described as an ‘English captain and attorney’ (*Anon*, 1910, p. 453), established a ‘Cotswold Games’ on his estate in 1604, largely as a protest against Puritan proscriptions of sporting pastimes and other frivolities (Mandell, 1976, p. 29). The festival that contemporary writers described as ‘Mr Robert Dover’s Olimpick Games upon the Cotswold Hills’ included ‘cudgel-playing, wrestling, running at the quintain, casting the ball and hammer, hand-ball, gymnastics, rural dances and games, and horse-racing, the winners in which received valuable prizes’ (*Anon*, 1910, p. 453). The Cotswold Games lasted until 1644, although they were briefly revived during the reign of Charles II, with a separate ‘Olympics’, largely devoted to dog racing, occurring at Hampton Court Palace in 1679.<sup>3</sup>

During the first half of the nineteenth century, a series of separate initiatives consciously sought to use Olympic sport to cement nationalist or pan-national aspirations. The Scandinavian Olympic Games of 1834 and 1836, founded at Ramlösa (Sweden) by the sports educator Gustav Johan Schartau, were designed as national festivals for the ‘strong sons of Scandinavia’ (Øresundstid, 2003). The Anglophone community in Montreal staged an Olympics in 1844 to assert their identity against the Francophone majority. The influential Much Wenlock Games, founded by Dr William Penny Brookes, grew from an initially limited affair to subsequent grander aims. Founded in October 1850 and still held annually, they aimed ‘to promote the moral, physical and intellectual improvement of the inhabitants of the Town and neighbourhood of Wenlock’ (WOS, 2006). Gradually, Brookes’s vision expanded, most notably assisting the establishment of a National Olympian Association (NOA) in the 1860s. This eventually foundered, particularly due to opposition from the Amateur Athletic Club – an aristocratic and elitist group founded in 1866 to counter the NOA. Nevertheless, during its

brief lifespan the NOA stimulated a brief flowering of athletics events in British cities, including the London Olympics – which attracted 10,000 spectators to Crystal Palace between 31 July and 2 August 1866.

Understandably, there was considerable interest in reviving the Olympics in Greece. Having achieved political independence in 1830, groups within the country campaigned to restore the Games as a symbol of their re-emerging nationhood (see chapter 16). In 1859, an Olympic sports festival took place in Athens, assisted by sponsorship from Evangelis Zappas, a wealthy expatriate Greek landowner living in Romania (figure 2.1). The so-called ‘Zappas Games’, held again in 1870 and 1875, constituted a different scale of competition and spectacle than other events previously styled as ‘Olympian’. The 1870 meeting, for example, attracted 30,000 spectators to watch Greek athletes compete in the partially restored Panathenian stadium.

Historians, however, show considerable selectivity in relation to these events. Official versions of Olympic history typically styled them as ‘pseudo-Olympics’ (Redmond, 1988); interesting as expressions of the desire to create prestige sporting competitions, but not representing progenitors of the revived Games as developed by the IOC under Baron Pierre de Coubertin’s leadership.<sup>4</sup> This selectivity had an ideological purpose since, by emphasizing the originality of Coubertin’s vision and downplaying the contribution of others, it privileged the IOC’s claims for



**Figure 2.1.** Statue of Evangelis Zappas, situated outside the Zappeion, the building named in his honour and used for the fencing competitions at the Athens 1896 games.

ownership of the Games. The traditional treatment of the personal relationship between Pierre de Coubertin and William Penny Brookes is a case in point. Historical accounts recognize that the two men actively corresponded and that Brookes had staged a special Autumn version of the Wenlock Games in Coubertin's honour when he visited England in October 1890, which featured award ceremonies and pageantry that greatly impressed Coubertin (Young, 1996, p. 78). The 1866 London Olympics, by contrast, received no mention in official Olympic histories; nor do Brookes's speeches in which he proposed an international basis for the Games and advocated that they should have a permanent home in Athens (Young, 1998, p. 31; Toohey and Veal, 2000, p. 29). Brookes, therefore, emerged as the organizer of a small rural sporting festival rather than one of the lynchpins of the Games' revival.

The ideological dimension was even stronger in the disparagement of Greece's attempts to reinstate the Games. Downgrading the significance of the Zappas Games denied approval to any proprietorial claims by Greece to the revived Olympics, even though they were clearly based on a classical festival held on Greek soil for almost 1,200 years. In one sense, this ran counter to the mood of the times which favoured folk revival and saw collectors scouring the margins of Western nations in a nationalistic search for the 'authentic' roots of folk culture (Gold and Revill, 2006). Instead, the founders of the Olympics perceived their task as resuscitating an event that represented the quintessence of ancient cultural achievement to which Western civilization in general, rather than the late nineteenth-century Greek state, was heir. That outlook, in turn, imbued the modern Olympics with an internationalist stance, able continually to move to new host cities without loss of purpose, rather than needing to return permanently to Greece as a geographic hearth that would give the revived Games authenticity. Ceding control to the Greeks would have interfered with the freedom of action to pursue that policy.

Yet recognition of alternative precursors scarcely detracts from the importance of Coubertin's role in campaigning for the revival of the Olympics and, subsequently for his formative influence on the Games' early development. Commentators (e.g. Mandell, 1976; MacAloon, 1981) rightly identify Coubertin's contribution as a reformer who gradually moved beyond specific concern with promoting sports education within France as a medium for fostering national regeneration to addressing the 'democratic and international' dimension of sport. On 25 November 1892, his speech at the Sorbonne in Paris exhorted a somewhat sceptical audience to aid 'this grandiose and salutary task, the restoration of the Olympic Games' (quoted in Müller, 2000, p. 297).<sup>5</sup> Coubertin repeated his exhortation, with greater success, at an international Sports Congress that he organized in 1894, which supported the re-establishment of the Games and laid down key principles for organizing them.

To summarize its recommendations, the revived Olympics would reintroduce the ancient Games' four-yearly cycle, but would be ambulatory rather than based



at a permanent site. They would be open to amateur sportsmen and should comprise modern rather than classical sports, although there was no definitive list of which sports to include or exclude. The Congress initiated the process of constructing a Charter of 'fundamental principles, rules and by-laws' to run the Games, normally known as the Olympic Charter. Central to its outlook was the notion of 'Olympism', the humanistic philosophy that mediated the cultural construction of the revived Games and guided the development of the supporting ceremonial content that steadily accumulated in subsequent years (see chapter 4). Finally, it founded the IOC to control the movement and to select the host cities, although local Organizing Committees would plan the Olympics,<sup>6</sup> with the first two Games scheduled for Athens in 1896 and Paris in 1900. Both locations were pragmatic choices (Young, 1987, p. 271). The Congress accepted the inevitable by recognizing that Athens's symbolic associations made it the only city that could effectively launch the modern Olympics, in spite of wanting to resist Greek claims to ownership of the Games and having given serious consideration to London in view of its advantages regarding access and venues. The choice of Paris for 1900 reflected Coubertin's hope to capitalize on the International Exposition taking place that year and to draw spectators to the newly established Games.

### **Surviving the Fairground (1896–1906)**

The first distinct phase of development saw a sequence of four Summer Games, in which the fortunes of the Olympics fluctuated profoundly. Athens 1896 proceeded against a difficult political and economic background that made preparations problematic and led to the first airing of a perennial question: should money be spent on the Olympics as a prestige project in light of competing needs? In this instance, one side, led by Prime Minister Charilaos Tricoupis, argued against the Games for economic reasons; the other, led by Opposition leader Theodorus Delyannis and supported by the monarchy, sympathized with the Games as a prestigious project that might reflect well on Greek identity and international standing (MacAloon, 1981, p. 182). The latter camp won the day, with the necessary finance raised through a mixture of public funds, appeals for subscriptions, private sponsors and the first special issue of Olympic postage stamps (*Ibid.*, p. 196; see also chapter 6).

Athens 1896 set an early pattern of low expenditure, pressing into service the existing Zappeion Building and the restored Panathenian stadium, with new construction restricted to a velodrome, shooting gallery and seating for the swimming events (Davenport, 1996, pp. 4–5; Gordon, 1983). This policy posed some problems. The Panathenian stadium, for instance, successfully held crowds of more than 50,000 and accommodated a modern running surface, but its traditional elongated horseshoe shape with accentuated curves at each end, hindered athletic performance (figure 2.2). Nevertheless, the revived festival worked well. The Games, symbolically opening on Greek Independence Day (6 April), attracted 245



**Figure 2.2.** The Panathenian stadium, Athens during the 1896 Olympic Games.

athletes from fourteen countries to compete in forty-five events. The Opening Ceremony filled the stadium, with the spectators who occupied the surrounding hillsides and streets swelling the audience to an estimated 80,000–120,000.

The city beyond the stadium readily embraced the Games. The Athenian authorities decorated the streets, illuminated the Acropolis and arranged an entertainments programme that included torchlight processions, parades, fireworks, an orchestral concert by the Athens Philharmonic Orchestra and a performance of Sophocles's *Antigone* (Mallon and Widland, 1998). The marathon, introduced for the first time, added spectacle, provided a link with tradition<sup>7</sup> and supplied an important, if invented, symbol. Spectators lined the route through the Greater Athens region and filled the stadium to see the finish. Its popularity, enhanced by the victory of a local man, Spiridon Louis, not only brought a new fixture to the athletics calendar,<sup>8</sup> but also served to provide a focus that stressed the unity of city and Olympics.

Although small scale by contemporary standards, the 1896 Games showed that the modern Olympics had considerable potential as a coherent framework for a new international festival. By contrast, the two succeeding Games came perilously close both to derailing the Olympic movement and to downgrading the relationship between host city and Games to inconsequentiality. In both cases, the reason lay in the conflict between the nascent Games and larger, more important International Expositions. At Paris 1900, the connection between the events was the conscious, if misguided policy of associating the second Games with the 1900 Paris Exposition Universelle. Coubertin believed that the Olympics could capitalize on the Fair's many visitors and festive backdrop and, in particular, wanted to build a replica of Olympia, with temples, stadia, gymnasia and statues and an archaeological display.<sup>9</sup> The organizers, however, remained unmoved by this idea. Disputes over the

control of the sporting element resulted in the Olympic movement effectively withdrawing, with a new committee appointed to plan the Exposition's Games (Mallon, 1998, p. 6). The Olympics became an International Games rather than a true Olympics. They were of indeterminate length, given that they lacked Opening or Closing Ceremonies and that the organizers haphazardly added events to the programme, some of which, like fishing in the River Seine (Harlan, 1931, p. 88), did not conform to Olympic standards. Indeed some competitors in tournaments connected with the Exposition never realized that they had entered Olympic competitions. For example, Michel Theato, the marathon winner, only learned in 1912 that he was the 'gold medallist' at the 1900 Olympics (Mallon, 1998, p. 9).

Compared with the considerable impact that the Exposition had on Paris – with a 543 acre (219 hectare) fairground located in the heart of the city in the Avenue Alexandre III and the Bois de Vincennes – the Olympics scarcely registered a presence. There was no stadium or running track. The track and field events were staged at the Racing Club of France's grounds in the Bois de Bologne, but the owners refused permission to remove any trees. As a result, discus and javelin throws often landed in wooded areas. The 500 metre (546 yard) grass running track sloped and undulated. Rigid former telegraph poles served as hurdles. The organizers hastily constructed a grandstand, but a row of trees obscured the track from spectators (Howell and Howell, 1996). Wholly overshadowed by the Exposition, the movement that had shown 'so much promise in 1896 seemed to have collapsed by 1900' (*Ibid.*, p. 17).

The next Summer Games at St Louis proved equally inimical to the revival of the Olympics. The IOC had strongly backed selection of a North American city and chose Chicago in May 1901 to stage the 1904 Games. Spoiling tactics by the organizers of St Louis's Louisiana Purchase International Exposition, however, led the IOC reluctantly to revise that decision even if it was inevitable that the Olympics 'would only be a sideshow attraction to the much larger international exposition' (Barnett, 1996, p. 19). Their fears had justification. The Exposition itself brought considerable kudos to St Louis, created an extensive fairground from the wooded Forest Park, and allowed much needed improvement works to the erstwhile heavily polluted and flood-prone Des Peres River. By contrast, the Olympics left little trace. There was at least a stadium, capable of seating 10,000 spectators, although with a one-third mile (536 metres) track instead of the standard quarter-mile circuit of the time, and 'something approaching' an Opening Ceremony on 14 May 1904 (Mallon, 1999a, p. 11). The programme, however, supplied little sense of continuity, with sporting competitions held at irregular intervals through to November, with scarcely any distinction between 'Olympic' sports and other competitions. The organizers added sports of their own choosing such as college football (gridiron), local cross country championships, professional events, the national championships of the American Athletic Union of the United States, and 'automobiling' (Anon, 1904, pp. 3, 48). In addition, the festival was tarnished by the infamous 'Anthropology Days' (12–13 August 1904) when African, Asian and

Native American competitors competed in racially motivated athletic contests that denigrated their performances and gave succour to theories of white supremacy (Brownell, 2008). Following hard on the heels of the 1900 debacle, St Louis 1904 threatened the continuance of the modern Olympics (Barnett, 1996, p. 23).

In the event, it took a sporting festival not usually reckoned as part of Olympic history – the 1906 Intercalated Games held in Athens – to secure the future (Young, 1996, p. 166; Mallon, 1999*b*, p. 5). This was the first, and only, product of a tactical compromise made in 1897, when a Coubertin-inspired initiative offered Greece the opportunity to hold a series of Intercalated Games at four-yearly intervals in non-Olympic years. Greece's defeat in the first Greco-Turkish War (1897) had left the country bankrupt (Davenport, 1996, p. 10), but improved economic circumstances allowed the staging of an Intercalated Games by 1906. This returned to the Panathenian stadium, with more extensive and eye-catching rituals and accompanying festivities than those staged in 1896. The sporting festival once more spilled over into the city, in a manner that contrasted with the experience of Paris and St Louis. The streets and buildings of Athens were again decorated, the city's squares staged evening concerts and there was a sustained programme of entertainments. The international press was more in evidence than at previous Games, although the eruption of Mount Vesuvius (4 April) and the San Francisco earthquake (18 April) detracted from the coverage that the Games received (Mallon, 1999*b*, p. 6). Nevertheless, the Intercalated Games effectively rescued the Olympics from its disastrous flirtation with the fairground and initiated a period in which host cities actively welcomed the Olympic Games as a premier and prestigious sporting event that merited purpose-built facilities.

### **Olympics by Design (1908–1936)**

Just as the eruption of Vesuvius in April 1906 detracted from the coverage of the Athens Intercalated Games, so, arguably, did it put paid to its successor as the severe strains that recovery from the devastation placed on the Italian economy led to Rome abandoning its attempt to hold the 1908 Games.<sup>10</sup> In November 1906, the IOC formally confirmed the transfer to London (Mallon and Buchanan, 2000, p. 3). With just 20 months in which to prepare the Games, the OCOG decided to use existing venues in the London region wherever adequate facilities were available. Hence, *inter alia*, the tennis competitions were held at Wimbledon, polo at Hurlingham and shooting at Uxendon School Shooting Club and Bisley Rifle Range. Nevertheless, the organizers also decided to seek a purpose-built stadium where most of the Olympic competitions and ceremonies could take place; a strategy that broke with the practice of the previous Games.

Its construction was facilitated by developing a partnership with the Franco-British Exhibition of Science, Arts, and Industry, held to celebrate the recent Entente Cordiale between the two nations, which was due to open in the summer of 1908. This arrangement seemed at first glance to pose precisely the same threat

of eclipsing the Games as at Paris 1900 and St. Louis 1904. That this did not happen was due largely the 1908 Games being both organizationally and spatially separate from the International Exhibition. Organizationally, they were firmly under the control of sports interests, in the shape of the newly-formed British Olympic Association. Spatially, they gained distinctiveness from having a separate stadium. The Franco-British Exhibition, then under construction on a 140 acre (56 hectare) plot of former agricultural land and brickfields at Shepherd's Bush (West London), had included plans for entertainments to be staged at a small stadium with spectators standing on a surrounding mound. Under the new agreement, the Exhibition Organizing Committee agreed to develop this prototype into a full-blown stadium in return for 75 per cent of the Olympics' proceeds.<sup>11</sup>

The largest stadium of its day, its enormous concrete bowl enclosed athletics and cycle tracks, a 100 metre swimming pool, platforms for wrestling and gymnastics and even archery. Dressing rooms, restaurants and emergency services were located under the stands (figure 2.3). The foundation stone of the White City stadium, so-called because the Exhibition Buildings were finished in gleaming white stucco, was laid on 2 August 1907 and the stadium was inaugurated on the opening day of the adjoining Exhibition (14 May 1908). It held 93,000 spectators, with 63,000 seated. A newly opened station at Wood Lane, on an extension of the Central London Railway from its terminus at Shepherd's Bush, supplied both the Exhibition and Olympics with direct connections to central London.

London 1908 left a considerable positive legacy for the Olympic movement by developing the spectacle of the festival and supplying the basis for 'a compact and independent Olympic festival' (Wimmer, 1976, p. 22). Yet while it allowed the Games to prosper as an event in its own right, London 1908 also provided the less desirable physical legacy of a huge and largely unwanted stadium. Although the



**Figure 2.3.** The White City stadium, Shepherd's Bush, London, 1908.

initial intention was to demolish the stadium and provide ‘no permanent addition to the athletic grounds of London’ (*Anon.*, 1907), its continued existence after 1908 made it arguably the first instance of the ‘limping white elephants’ associated with the Olympics (Mangan, 2008). It remained scarcely used for two decades before passing to the Greyhound Racing Association in 1926. The stadium was then renovated, with its capacity reduced from 93,000 to 80,000, installation of a greyhound track over the existing running track, and removal of the cycling circuit and the defunct swimming tank (Hawthorne and Price, 2001, p. 7; Jenkins, 2008). In 1932, the reconfiguration of the running track to a new 440 yard (402 metre) circuit allowed the stadium’s use for national and international athletics events. On occasions, the White City did stage large-scale sporting festivals, such as the 1934 British Empire Games and the 1935 International Games for the Deaf, and provided a base for British athletics from 1933 onwards. However, when the athletics events moved to their new home at Crystal Palace in 1971, the stadium languished before eventual demolition in 1985 to make way for offices for the British Broadcasting Corporation and housing.

The 1912 Games in Stockholm saw the Olympics move to a far smaller city.<sup>12</sup> Partly as a result, the Stockholm Organization Committee found it easier to create a festival that integrated city and stadium. The design of the latter, built in the grounds of the royal Djirgaden (Zoological Gardens), assisted that aim. More modest than the White City, it seated 22,000 people, with stands arranged around a 400 metre running track (figure 2.4). From the outset, it was intended to be multipurpose, a decision that Coubertin applauded:

The Gothic Stadium ... seemed to be a model of its kind. You could see it turned into a banquet hall, a concert hall, or a dance hall, and yet on the following morning always ready once again for carrying on with the contests. You could see how in a single night it got covered with ready-made squares of lawn, how hurdles were being put up, and how it decked itself with blossoming brushwood for the riding tournaments. All this was achieved without any ado, any delay, any blunder. While in London it had proved impossible for the life of the great city to be in any way affected by the proximity of the Olympic Games, Stockholm turned out to be thoroughly imbued with them. The entire city participated in its efforts to honour its foreign guests, and one had something like a vision of what the atmosphere must have been like in Olympia in the ancient days ... (quoted in Wimmer, 1976, p. 27)

The stadium’s evening entertainments included military concerts, displays of Scandinavian sports, gymnastic displays, fireworks and illuminations. The city provided street decorations, opera, theatre, a two-day aquatic festival, the usual round of receptions and banquets, and played reluctant host to the artistic competitions that were a cherished part of Coubertin’s vision of linking sport and the arts. For the first time, too, the organizers took steps to publicize the Games internationally, through the Olympic movement, the Swedish diplomatic service



**Figure 2.4.** The American team entering the stadium during the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games, Stockholm, 1912.

and advertisements in national newspapers of other countries. The makings of the promotional activity that typified later Olympics Games had started to emerge.

The next Games took place 8 years later. Hidebound by its observance of the four-year cycle of Olympiads despite the inconvenient reality of the First World War, the IOC retained the fiction of a sixth Olympiad in 1916. Although six cities in the, as yet non-belligerent, USA (Chicago, Cleveland, Newark, New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco) had offered to act as hosts to avoid disrupting the series, the IOC maintained that it had awarded Berlin the right to stage the 1916 Olympics and could not withdraw a nomination without that city's agreement. As the German Olympic Committee remained adamant that Berlin held the nomination, the sixth Olympiad was never held and the Games resumed their four-year cycle with the seventh Olympiad in Antwerp in 1920.

Awarded at an IOC meeting in Lausanne in April 1919 as much as a political act of moral support for Belgium than as a sporting event, Antwerp 1920 used the quickly renovated Beerschot stadium. Shortage of resources and materials meant that the standard of facilities was much poorer than at Stockholm, with constant rain leaving the running track pitted and rutted. A canal at Willebroek near Brussels, used for the rowing events, provided an industrial setting so ugly that Coubertin called it 'anti-Olympic' (Renson, 1996, p. 57). There were few associated festivities in the city. Yet despite the austerity, Antwerp 1920 recorded a deficit of 626 million Belgian francs, prompting accusations of acute financial mismanagement and leaving the organizers accused of treating the event as 'a symbol of conspicuous consumption' (*Ibid.*, p. 59).

The responsibility of consolidating the progress made at London and Stockholm therefore passed to the Organization Committees of the two ensuing Games. Paris 1924 represented the first occasion on which the growing prestige of the Olympics led to serious international competition among cities to act as hosts. Four American cities (Los Angeles, Atlantic City, Chicago and Pasadena) and five European (Rome, Barcelona, Amsterdam, Lyons and Paris) expressed interest in staging the Olympics (Welch, 1996, p. 61). The return to Paris proceeded with assurances that, unlike 1900, the organizers would treat the Olympics as an important international event. Rather than employ the Pershing stadium, which staged the 1919 Inter-Allied Games,<sup>13</sup> the Organization Committee decided in June 1922 to construct a purpose-built stadium at Colombes. The Stade Olympique Yves-du-Manoir had seating for 20,000 spectators, standing room for an additional 40,000 (*Ibid.*, p. 64) and would remain the main venue for national soccer and rugby matches until the opening of the Parc des Princes in 1972. Paris 1924 saw the birth of the concept of the Olympic Village at Rocquencourt, although the barrack-like accommodation with few services had ‘very little to do with what was to be the first Olympic village’ at Los Angeles 1932 (Muñoz, 1997, p. 30). Paris also witnessed the first significant dissatisfactions about the growing size of the Games, given that the scatter of the Olympic venues around the Paris region necessitated long bus journeys for most competitors.

The 1928 Amsterdam Games favoured the now familiar idea of clustered Olympic sites. Although the athletes were housed on ships in the harbour rather than in a specially constructed Village (Goldstein, 1996), the Dutch employed the ‘Cité Olympique’ idea of bringing the stadium and associated facilities together in a sporting complex. The new athletics stadium, built on reclaimed marshland,



**Figure 2.5.** Water polo competition in progress, the Olympic Pool, Amsterdam, 1928.



had seats for 40,000, with the other venues having a capacity of a further 30,000. The open-air swimming pool was located next to the main stadium (figure 2.5), with adjacent gymnasia for boxing, wrestling and fencing. Concerns were again expressed about the growing size of the Games, although the target was now the 'excessive festivities', with proposals that there should be reforms to allow only those that 'the reception of authorities and officials demanded' (Organizing Committee, 1928, p. 957).

The two final interwar Games completed the Summer Olympics' development into a high-status international festival that would play an important part in the lives of host cities. Los Angeles 1932 was an Olympiad conceived in the American boosterist tradition, resolutely advancing the city's economic and cultural interests against rivals. The city gained the right to stage the 1932 Olympics in 1923, but faced severe funding problems in the wake of the 1929 Wall Street Crash, with the federal government refusing to contribute. The Games' survival rested on the city issuing bonds and capitalizing on connections with the private sector, most notably the film industry which actively promoted the Olympics. Yet perhaps the key to encouraging participation lay in making the Games affordable to competitors by assisting travel and in constructing the first true Olympic Village, an innovation that combined economy with the spirit of Olympism.<sup>14</sup> The Official Report of the Games (TOC, 1933, pp. 235, 237) waxed lyrical about the symbolism of the Village and intermixing of peoples, to the extent that the observers recommended the Organizing Committee for the Nobel Peace Prize for their work in promoting the fellowship of the Games through the nations' athletes living peacefully side-by-side (Stump, 1988, p. 199).

With the assistance of substantial subsidies for food and accommodation, 1,500 athletes from thirty-four nations competed at Los Angeles 1932 despite the vicissitudes of the international economy. Apart from the auditorium for the indoor competitions, most of the stadia were at Olympic Park (the former Exposition Park). The Memorial Stadium, the last Olympic arena to use the old-fashioned modified U-shape (Wimmer, 1976, p. 39), was created by refurbishing and enlarging the Coliseum into a venue with a seated capacity of 105,000. The swimming stadium and the State Armoury, which staged the fencing competitions, were built nearby. The Olympic Park also housed the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art, which held more than 1,100 exhibits from the thirty-two countries that supplied entries for the Olympic Art Competition. The organizers added another important innovation by coordinating the decoration of the Olympic venues and the city using streamers and bunting in the official colours of blue, yellow, black, green and red. Flags of the competing nations, Olympic banners and large insignia hung across the main streets. The organizers also encouraged the owners of buildings and businesses to buy specially manufactured materials to embellish their buildings.

Despite the economic situation, the Games achieved an enviable operating surplus, with 1.25 million people paying \$1.5 million to watch events over the 16

days of the Games. Tourist agencies put together packages featuring the Olympics and the scenic attractions of Southern California. Sixty-two conventions were attracted to Los Angeles, enabling their delegates to enjoy the Games and further boosting the local economy at a time of continuing economic depression (TOC, 1933, p. 215). A visiting journalists' programme dealt with several hundred reporters from around the world in the 3 years leading up to the Games (*Ibid.*, p. 211); a strategy that maximized the possibility of favourable coverage. Not surprisingly, the 1932 Games left the city eager to repeat the exercise, with repeated candidacy before the Olympics finally returned in 1984 (see below).

Berlin 1936, the final Summer Games before the Second World War, was a landmark in political as well as sports history. The background to the Berlin Games, as chapter 11 shows, resonates with the history of Germany in the interwar period. Berlin, the host city, bid unsuccessfully for both the 1908 and 1912 Games, had seen the cancellation of the 1916 Games for which it held the nomination, and saw its further ambitions placed in abeyance until Germany was readmitted to the Olympic movement in time for the 1928 Games in Amsterdam. In May 1931, the IOC awarded the 1936 Games to Berlin as an act of reconciliation, but the choice proved problematic with Hitler's rise to power. The Nazis' initial hostility to the financial burden and avowed internationalism of the Games seemed likely to bring rapid cancellation, but subsequent reappraisal of the classical origins of the Games to align them with National Socialist ideas of German origins<sup>15</sup> quickly brought enthusiastic support. This led to concern within the Olympic movement that the Games would be hijacked by the Nazi leadership for propaganda purposes (Hart Davis, 1986).

Certainly the creation of the stadium, the surrounding complex and other Olympic venues proceeded with wider ideological and propaganda goals in mind. As chapter 11 shows, the regime vetoed Werner March's original plans for expansion of the 1913 stadium, already approved by the IOC, favouring instead a proposal for a 110,000-seater stadium with a steel- and stone-clad structure. The stadium would lie at the heart of the Reichssportsfeld, soon to become the world's largest sports complex, complete with swimming and diving pools (with seating for 18,000), facilities for lawn tennis, hockey, equestrian sports, the House of German Sports (Deutschland Halle) for boxing, fencing, weightlifting, wrestling, the Reich Academy of Physical Education, accommodation for female competitors and the Maifeld Parade Ground (figure 2.6). Located in a peripheral area of Berlin but well connected into the city's U-bahn rail system, the site became the focus of attention throughout Germany in the period leading up to and including the Games for a regime that appreciated and mobilized the opportunity for powerful spectacle. Berlin was specially decorated throughout the Games and codes of behaviour issued to present the best possible impression to visitors, with careful concealment of explicit aspects of racial policies. After the Games, the city and state gained the infrastructural legacy of a sports complex and parade ground that could be used for military purposes and for future National Socialist celebrations.



**Figure 2.6.** Aerial view of the Reichssportfeld, Berlin, 1936.

### **Austerity (1948–1956)**

The bidding process after 1945 revived the pattern set in the interwar period. American cities, with their ingrained city rivalries, featured prominently, with formal bids for the 1948 Games from Baltimore, Los Angeles, Minneapolis and Philadelphia as well as informal interest from several other potential US contenders. There was a feeling, however, that the United States was too far away for affordable travel in these austere years (Voeltz, 1996, p. 103). Therefore, after conducting a postal ballot, in 1946 the IOC officially awarded the Fourteenth Summer Olympics to London.<sup>16</sup>

The next 2 years proved far more difficult economically than the British had anticipated when agreeing to host the Games, with few surplus resources available (Holt and Mason, 2000, pp. 27–29). The organizers quickly abandoned any idea of laying on stunning spectacle and custom-built stadia in favour of existing sports facilities. Instead, mild renovation of existing facilities saw the Empire Stadium at Wembley, originally built for the 1924 British Empire Exhibition, become the Olympic Stadium, with the adjacent Empire Pool staging the swimming events. Although both venues needed conversion and repair, along with a new approach road to link the stadium to Wembley Park railway station, the costs were borne by Wembley Stadium Ltd rather than by the state – as with 1908 for a share of the proceeds (Hampton, 2008, p. 29). Royal Air Force accommodation at Uxbridge, a convalescents' camp in Richmond Park, Southlands College in Wimbledon, and convenient school premises provided bargain basement substitutes for an Olympic Village. Other venues pressed into service included the Herne Hill Velodrome (cycling), Bisley (shooting), Henley-on-Thames (rowing) and the more distant

Torbay (yachting). The organizers borrowed sports equipment from the Armed Forces or from manufacturers on a lend-and-return basis. The Board of Trade adjusted rationing regulations for participants and new Tourist Voucher Books made it easier for foreign visitors to spend money in British shops.

Despite the difficulties, there were tangible and intangible non-sports legacies from London 1948. The city was not *en fête* as Berlin or Los Angeles had been, but the Games undoubtedly lifted the mood of postwar Britain and recorded a profit of £30,000. Visitor numbers to London in 1948 were a post-war record, with the city's hotels enjoying bumper visitor numbers (Holt and Mason, 2000, p. 31). The nation also received a temporary respite for the unrelenting greyness of Austerity and the morale-raising experience of hosting a premier international event. Yet the main legacy from London 1948 was again for sports. Admittedly, there were few tangible outcomes given the lack of purpose-built facilities or associated infrastructural improvement. By contrast, in intangible terms, London 1948 successfully relaunched the Games after the traumas of war, drawing the highest-ever attendance figures for an Olympics. In return, the Games sowed the seeds of important change for British society through sports development. They eroded the long-established notion that participation in such sports was the preserve of gentlemen amateurs (Hampton, 2008, p. 318). In addition, they indirectly played a catalytic role in developing disability sport. As chapter 5 shows, the archery competition held on the front lawns of Stoke Mandeville Hospital on 28 July 1948 – the same day as the Opening Ceremony of the London Olympics – is widely accepted as the first competitive sporting event for seriously disabled athletes. This symbolic event also marked the start of the process of convergence that would see London 2012, like other aspirant twenty-first century host cities, bidding to stage the Olympic *and* Paralympic Games rather than just the former.

The two succeeding Games followed London's low-key approach. Helsinki had held the nomination for the Twelfth Summer Olympics in 1940, after the Japanese withdrew, and had built a stadium, swimming and diving arena, and a competitors' village in anticipation of that event. The organizers renovated and expanded the sporting facilities for the 1952 Games (figure 2.7), with the aid of a \$1.25 million grant from the Finnish government, but the Olympic Village posed greater problems. The one originally constructed at Käpylä, 3.7 miles (6 kilometres) from the city centre, had long since been converted to public housing. The increased size of the Games required new accommodation not just at Käpylä, but also at two new sites, Otaniemi and Töölö. The situation was further complicated by the Soviet Union's demands for a separate village for the socialist bloc's athletes (Hornbuckle, 1996, p. 117). In response, the organizers allocated the Otaniemi site to the USSR and its allies, placing competitors literally as well as figuratively into two ideological camps.

Melbourne 1956 was the last Summer Olympics developed under conditions of postwar financial stringency. The city's bid document for the Games (MIC, 1948) projected an image of a prosperous, developed and well-equipped 'city of



**Figure 2.7.** Olympic stadium, Helsinki, 1952.

culture’, with the promise of a new Olympic stadium complex on the banks of the Yarra River east of the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). Once Melbourne won the Games, the organizers decided to reduce costs by modifying the MCG and restricting construction of major new buildings to the swimming pool and velodrome. Available spaces at the local university, museum, art school and public library were employed to display the four associated art exhibitions – on architecture, painting, graphics and literature. The Olympic Village was built as a cheap housing project in the suburb of Heidelberg, using the existing system of government loans. These buildings, however, presented so many subsequent construction and social problems that the Games might well have been ‘a force for urban degeneration rather than regeneration’ (Essex and Chalkley, 1998, p. 194).

### **Catalyst (1960–1976)**

Although important for their host nations, the financially straited 1948–1956 Games made little lasting impact on the Olympic cities. By contrast, Rome 1960 threw off the pall of Austerity and propelled the Games into the modern era. The city’s Olympian aspirations stretched back many years. Rome, as noted above, initially held the nomination for the 1908 Games and, under Mussolini, had lobbied hard for the right to stage the 1940 Olympics. Indeed, Rome 1960 effectively capitalized on two districts developed by the Fascist regime with international festivals in mind. The first, the Foro Italico in the north of the city, already offered two imposing arenas: the Stadio dei Marmi, built in 1932, and the Stadio Olimpico, built in

1936. The second district was EUR, so-called because it was initially designed to supply a spectacular setting for the (cancelled) 1942 Esposizione Universale di Roma. Located to the south of the city, it was only partially developed before the Second World War, but its monumental and spacious qualities made it an ideal place for the core of the Olympic facilities. These included the Palazzo dello Sport (Sport Palace), the Velodrome, the Piscana delle Rose (swimming pool) and the Fontane Sports Zone training area. Ten other venues were scattered throughout the city, with several using sites with classical associations to underline the Games' pedigree. The vaults of the Basilica of Maxentius built in 303 AD, for instance, housed the Greco-Roman and free wrestling contests, while the Caracalla Baths (217 AD) staged the gymnastics.

These 'Olympic areas' made a permanent contribution to the city's sporting and cultural life. The Village at Campo Paroli provided private sector housing (Wimmer, 1976, p. 202; see also Muñoz, 1997) and the city also gained from infrastructural improvements undertaken with the Games in mind. These included new roads and bridges built to connect the Village to the main Olympic sites, modernization of the airport, improvement of the telephone, telegraph and radio networks, and initiatives to expand hotel accommodation. The Rome Olympics also had a major impact on financing the Games. Core funding came from the Italian soccer pools, the Totocalcio, but now supplemented for the first time by sales of television rights. Broadcasters had refused to pay for rights at Melbourne, arguing that covering the Games was akin to televising news and should be similarly free to the broadcaster. The organizers of the Rome Olympics, however, managed to convince the major television networks that the Games were a proprietorial commodity for which payment was necessary. The American Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) paid \$600,000 for US television rights, with Eurovision subscribing another \$540,000. It marked another significant step towards realizing the economic potential of the Games and ensured that, when leaving aside wider infrastructural improvements, the Rome Olympics ran at a profit.

Tokyo 1964 followed Rome's example by embarking on major redevelopment projects before the Games, merging the specific proposals for the Olympics into the city's 10-year development plan. Aiming to cater for Tokyo's infrastructural needs up to the year 2000, the combined works cost \$2.7 billion and included housing, hotel developments, harbour improvements, a monorail system, water supply, sewage disposal and a public health programme (Essex and Chalkley, 1998, p. 195). The city had thirty Olympic sites, with thirteen major facilities concentrated into three districts: the Meiji Olympic Park, which contained the Olympic Stadium; the Yoyogi Sports Centre, which housed the swimming competitions; and the Komazawa Sports Park. Accommodating participants in six Olympic Villages ensured, at least in principle, that competitors and officials had no more than a 40-minute journey to reach their venues (Organizing Committee, 1964, p. 114). Hoteliers received grants to remodel their premises for Western tourists, with a further 1,600 visitors lodged on ships in Tokyo harbour.

Importantly, Tokyo saw the introduction of an approach concerned with the ‘look’ of a city during the period of the Olympic festival. This represented more than the old approach of simply decking the city in flags, but instead saw conscious attempts to unify the disparate sporting and Olympic infrastructure into a cohesive whole through design of signage, dressing the venues and decorating the streets. As a result of an open competition, the Japanese designer Yusaku Kamekura won a contract to provide visually consistent designs for all the ephemeral elements of the Games – symbols, signs, pamphlets, posters, tickets, decorations and even the colour scheme used for the city and at Olympic venues (Yew, 1996, p. 176).

The 1968 Games in Mexico City saw Latin America, and more specifically a developing nation, host the Olympics for the first time. Set against a background of political tension and sports boycotts, the Olympics stretched Mexico’s resources and contributed to domestic unrest in the months leading up to the Games. The organizers’ approach was to use existing sports facilities and blend them with new venues by means of a common ‘look’, in the manner pioneered by Tokyo, to supply a sense of visual unity (see chapter 12 for details). Despite troubled beginnings, the Mexico City Games finished with a favourable balance sheet. Costing \$175 million, much of which was expended on facilities with a lifespan that extended well beyond the festival, the Olympics were considered to have covered their costs. For some observers, the 1968 Games represented an important moment of achievement and harmony for the Mexican nation that fully justified the cost (e.g. Arbena, 1996), but others argued that money diverted into the Olympics had exacerbated the divide between Mexico City’s rich and poor. Before the Games, for example, the city chose to transfer \$200 million from the social services budget to city improvement projects in an elaborate urban and national re-imagining campaign. Not only did this have a detrimental long-term impact on the city’s provision for the poor; it also prompted protest demonstrations that left no less than 325 dead (Lenskyj, 2000, pp. 109–110).

The ability of the Olympics to polarize opinion would escalate steadily over the next decade. In their different ways, Munich 1972 and Montreal 1976 created crises for the Olympic movement: the former due to problems over security and the latter finance. Initial planning for both events, however, proceeded unproblematically with an upbeat view that emphasized the Olympics’ apparently risk-free character; seemingly guaranteeing host cities advantageous international attention and endless prospects for undertaking urban development. Partly because of this mood, the 1970s Games were lavish affairs, with huge expenditure on iconic facilities and distinctive urban quarters.

The return of the Olympics to Germany in 1972 inevitably raised the spectre of 1936. The powerful militaristic and nationalist images still associated with that Olympics encouraged the Munich organizers to stage a ‘Carefree Games’ (Organizing Committee, 1972, p. 28). Their bid to the IOC emphasized Munich’s claim to embrace international and modern cultures; a rich hearth of ‘the arts and Muses’ that offered four orchestras, twenty-three museums and seventeen

theatres (*Ibid.*, pp. 24, 28). At the same time, Munich in the early 1970s was in the throes of rapid economic and demographic growth, with severe pressures on services and physical infrastructure. Preparation for the Games, therefore, also addressed the host city's broader planning goals, fitting Olympic developments alongside schemes designed to restore and pedestrianize Munich's historic centre, to improve and extend public transport, construct 145 miles (233 kilometres) of expressways, provide underground parking, and build new retail and hotel accommodation (Essex and Chalkley, 1998, p. 195).

The location for the new Olympic Park in the north of the city was a derelict area long earmarked for redevelopment. Originally flat, its surface was bulldozed into a gently rolling landscape, with a hill created from wartime rubble and a small lake formed by damming the Nymphenburg Canal. The organizers then placed the athletes' warm-up facilities, the swimming pool, many smaller sports venues, restaurants, a theatre, the Olympic Village, press centre and stadium around the lake. The 80,000-seater Olympic stadium was an innovative tent-roofed structure designed by Gunter Behnisch and Frei Otto. The Olympic Village, which housed 10,000 athletes, was designed for conversion into a 'self-sustaining' community for single people and middle- and lower-income families – groups who found it difficult to find accommodation in the city (Essex and Chalkley, 1998, p. 195; Organizing Committee, 1972, p. 125). Trams, an underground rail line and a rapid transit provided physical links between the complex and the city centre. Symbolic links were again added by attention to the 'look' of the city. Coordinated by a German designer Otl Aicher, the city adopted a holistic design policy towards decorations for the city, venues and orientation of visitors. Besides choosing colours felt to resonate with Olympic values, the dominant colour of blue was chosen to symbolize peace with the 'aggressive' colour red deliberately avoided (Organizing Committee, 1972, p. 269; Yew, 1996, p. 213).

Viewed in organizational and financial terms, the Twentieth Summer Games were critically regarded as a success. They generated a working profit, with marketing and television rights producing over \$12 million for the IOC and international federations. Munich and Bavaria gained lasting publicity benefit (Brichford, 1996, p. 151). Other aspects of their legacy proved more difficult. Despite the efforts to promote the 'carefree' theme, Munich 1972 brought the Olympics face-to-face with the realities of security. The massacre of the Israeli athletes and officials on 5 September effectively destroyed the OCOG's attempts to stage a light-hearted, non-nationalistic Olympics. It also ensured that future host cities faced a bill for security measures of a wholly different order, recognizing the Olympics' new, and unwanted, status as a prime target for international terrorism (see chapter 8).

The ensuing Games were a landmark in Olympic history for being ill-conceived and poorly planned. Although intended as a 'modest Games', Montreal 1976 produced a final shortfall of \$1.2 billion, primarily caused by cost overruns on over-ambitious buildings. Admittedly, the times were not propitious. The Games took



place against a background of severe world recession and inflation that profoundly affected costings, especially those concerning the surfeit of transport infrastructural projects associated with the Olympics. Nevertheless, as chapter 13 makes clear, a large measure of the blame rested with the counterproductive machinations of the political regime led by Jean Drapeau and the flawed architectural design of the Olympic complex, particularly the stadium. The organizers ditched the notion of providing an orthodox open-air Olympic stadium in favour of a design that might be used all-year round. As the Olympic movement would not countenance a covered stadium for athletics, it was decided to build a new stadium with a retractable roof – understandably at much greater cost (Killanin, 1983, p. 123). The chosen design by the French architect Roger Taillibert, architect of the critically acclaimed Parc des Princes in Paris, exacerbated the problems by embracing an unmistakable monumentality. Most notably, it featured an innovative system for opening and closing the roof involving a 575 foot (190 metre) tower, inclined at 45 degrees, which supported the roof on 26 steel cables (figure 2.8). This radical conception produced problems that plagued construction. In fact, the infamous



**Figure 2.8.** Olympic stadium, Montreal 1976 (architect Roger Taillibert).

roof was not completed until 1987 and quickly became unusable. It was an episode that led, in the fullness of time, to a stadium with an impressive observation tower and a non-retractable roof.

Other buildings contributed their share of problems. Difficulties with subsoil meant the velodrome needed new foundations to support its roof (Organizing Committee, 1976, pp. 16–17). The adjacent Olympic Village lodged participants in four architecturally innovative ziggurat structures, around 19 storeys high at their tallest points, which proved difficult to service. Among the infrastructural investment projects was the remote, expensive and unnecessary international airport at Mirabel, which closed three decades later without ever achieving any useful function. In addition, labour problems caused the loss of 155 working days in the 18 months leading up to the Games. Lack of proper operational planning and failure to sequence the construction process led to delays and bottlenecks. Round the clock working was introduced at great expense to meet the Games deadline, but it still proved impossible to complete all the facilities. In May 1976, emergency work began to erect temporary installations for several sports rather than continue with the intended venues. It all contributed to an event that inevitably presented a ‘kaleidoscope of contradictory narratives and outcomes’ (Kidd, 1996, p. 153).

### **Ideological Games (1980–1984)**

The 1980 and 1984 Summer Games were essentially rival Olympics, staged by two superpowers as indicators of the superiority of their ideological systems, but which left less mark on their host cities than the Games of the previous two decades. Moscow and Los Angeles were the only candidates for the 1980 games and, after the withdrawal of a half-hearted bid from Tehran, Los Angeles was the sole formal bidder for 1984. With an eye to the lessons of the Montreal Games, both sets of organizers made virtues out of economy and pragmatism. Both OCOGs would also have to cope with political boycotts orchestrated by their superpower opponents. In 1980, the USA led a boycott of Moscow 1980, as part of a package of measures taken in response to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. This reduced participation to eighty competing nations compared with 121 at Munich and even ninety-two at boycott-hit Montreal, with many other nations sending weakened teams. Not surprisingly, a Soviet-led tit-for-tat boycott of the subsequent Los Angeles Games, ostensibly over the security of athletes and officials, saw fourteen socialist countries miss the Los Angeles Games in 1984. These Cold War gestures, however, only materialized in the final weeks before these Games and, therefore, had little effect on the plans made by the host cities for staging their respective Olympics.

The OCOG for Moscow 1980 made much of rejecting the recent trend towards gigantism, leaving behind expensively maintained and underused sports facilities. Rather they ‘sought efficiency’, building only ‘essential’ installations that would ‘not remain monuments to vanity’ but would be ‘in constant use for the

benefit of the Soviet People' (Organizing Committee, 1980, p. 43). They therefore planned to use Moscow's existing sports facilities wherever possible, employing temporary grandstands and ensuring that any new structures would be designed as multi-purpose venues. The main ceremonies and the track and field competitions, for example, centred on the renovated Lenin Stadium (built originally in 1956).

Given the nature of the command economy, the authorities subsumed preparations for the Olympics into the city's planning strategy (the General Plan for the Development of Moscow 1971–1990) and the state's tenth Five-Year Plan of Economic and Social Development. The former adopted decentralist principles, dividing Moscow into eight functional zones, each with a population of between 600,000 and 1.2 million and their 'town public centres' and subsidiary centres, to achieve a 'balance between labour resources and employment opportunities' (Lappo *et al.*, 1976, pp. 138–140). The Olympics provided the opportunity to improve access to sporting, cultural and entertainment facilities for those living within these zones by designing new venues for use once the Games were over (Promyslov, 1980, p. 230). The main Olympic facilities were distributed into six main areas, with the Village in a seventh. Located in the south west of the city, the Village comprised eighteen blocks, each 16 storeys high, arranged in groups of three with associated communal catering facilities, entertainment, shopping and training facilities. After the Games, the Village would become a self-contained neighbourhood complete with cultural and sporting facilities (*Ibid.*, pp. 245–246). This dispersal posed logistic problems, but there was little need for new road construction given the low levels of private car ownership at this time. Infrastructural improvement was primarily confined to building new media centres and renovating the city's three airports, with a new international air terminal added to Sheremetyevo International Airport. The authorities also renovated historic buildings (especially churches), planted trees, and commissioned new hotels, cafés and restaurants. In a distant echo of Berlin 1936, Moscow was unusually free of banners expressing party slogans, posters and even the legendarily flinty guides working for Intourist desisted from propaganda during the Games (Binyon, 1980).

Notwithstanding the rhetoric of virtuous utilitarianism, the regime could not resist the urge to display Soviet technological expertise in designing large structures. This contributed to the organizers commissioning the world's largest indoor arena in north Moscow for the basketball and boxing competitions. Capable of seating up to 45,000 spectators, it could be used either as a single space or divided into two separate auditoria, allowing it to serve as a multipurpose space for sports, political and cultural events after the Games (Promyslov, 1980, pp. 236–237).

Like Moscow, Los Angeles sought economy in staging the Games, with the organizers' commitment to funding the Games without the public funds available in the USSR resulting in an event that added fine-tuned commercialism to cost-consciousness. This meant using volunteers wherever possible and making maximum use of existing facilities. The Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum was refurbished as the Olympic stadium, with just four new venues required – for

rowing, cycling, swimming and shooting. Each attracted high levels of sponsorship. The McDonald's Swim Stadium, for example, was built in Olympic Park for the University of Southern California. The Southland Corporation, parent company of the 7-Eleven chain of convenience stores, funded the velodrome on the California State University site. Fuji Film sponsored the shooting range. The three Olympic Villages used sites on university campuses (University College at Los Angeles, University of Southern California and the University of California at Santa Barbara), with the accommodation later available for students (Burbank *et al.*, 2001, pp. 76–77). This emphasis on named sponsorship and private finance introduced a measure of commercialism that the Olympic movement felt powerless to resist at that time. Rather more serious perhaps was the lack of intimacy caused by using existing facilities scattered around the sprawling, car-based Los Angeles city region rather than creating a nucleated Olympic Park. Some effort to create a sense of place came from decking the city in standardized colours to create a 'festive federalism' (Yew, 1996, p. 288), although it was recognized that only so much could be achieved by design.

Where Los Angeles 1984 scored most heavily was its success in changing ideas about Olympic finance. Los Angeles's commercial approach dramatically altered the prospects for other prospective host cities. The Games made a profit of \$225 million that was channelled into American sports bodies and programmes. Local universities gained major new facilities. The event injected an estimated \$2.4 billion into the Southern Californian economy.<sup>17</sup> After the events of the 1970s, the act of being host to the Olympics was fully restored as the pinnacle of ambition for cities with global aspirations.<sup>18</sup>

### **Shifting Horizons (1988–1996)**

Seoul's decision to seek the 1988 Games was less inspired by the thoughts of financial benefit – which had yet to re-emerge when the city gained the nomination in 1981 – than by the success of Tokyo 1964, which the Koreans believed had altered perceptions of the Japanese and helped Japan join the ranks of the developed world in the cultural, social, diplomatic and economic fields. The Games would provide a positive context for international scrutiny, show the economic transformation and political progress within Korea, and establish dialogue with Communist and non-aligned nations, even though there was a real risk of terrorism or international conflict from continuing tensions with North Korea. It also provided an opportunity to regenerate Seoul. The South Korean capital faced severe environmental, economic and demographic problems for which staging the Olympics seemed to offer a means to short-circuit the process of replanning and reconstruction.

The organizers concentrated the Olympic facilities in the Seoul Sports Complex, built in the Chamshil area on the south bank of the Han River around 13 kilometres south of central Seoul, with another six venues at the Olympic Park,

just over 3.5 kilometres to the east. The South Korean government had originally commissioned the Seoul Sports Complex in 1977, when the country lacked the facilities even to host the Asian Games. The 59 hectare site contained a major stadium, which became the 100,000 capacity Olympic stadium, as well as a 50,000-seater venue for the exhibition sport of baseball. The complex was linked to the Olympic Expressway, which connected the airport with Seoul's downtown. The Olympic Park provided the venues for the cycling, weightlifting, fencing, tennis, gymnastics and swimming events. The Athletes' Village comprised blocks of flats of various heights (6–24 storeys) clustered in groups around common open spaces. In total 5,540 units were built, which were sold after the Games as private housing for upper middle-income families (Kim and Choe, 1997, pp. 197–198). During the construction of the Park, the discovery of the earthen walls of a fortress from the Baekje Kingdom (18 BC–660 AD) led to the designation of a historic park within the masterplan (*Ibid.*, p. 208; also see Yoon, 2009).

Beyond the Olympic Park, the authorities conducted a programme of repairing historic monuments, including palaces and shrines, tree planting, and improvements to streets, drainage and power supply. Two new urban motorways linked the airport to the Olympic sites and improved east–west traffic flows in the city. The authorities built new Metro lines and expanded the airport. Seoul's planners instigated the Han River Development Project, which combined anti-flood measures, water treatment for the heavily polluted river, habitat regeneration and the creation of a series of recreational areas. Temporary measures that applied for the duration of the Games included encouraging dust-producing firms along the marathon route and around Olympic venues to switch to shorter working hours or night-time operation, and advising public bath houses to take holidays on days of key events.

The strategies chosen to improve the city's built environment and infrastructure, however, drew international criticism for paying greater attention to urban form than social cost. Ideas of improvement centred on the removal of slums and the creation of modernistic, often high-rise, developments for high-income residential or commercial use. Traditional walking-scale urban forms (*hanoks*), built at high density with narrow streets and passageways, were bulldozed for commercial redevelopment. Laws covering preservation and conservation were not introduced until 1983 and, even then, only the oldest historic buildings with connections to the Yi dynasty benefited. Clearance continued in areas without that historic cachet (Kim and Choe, 1997, pp. 209, 212).

Barcelona 1992 would take the regeneration theme further and supply a model that is a benchmark for prospective Olympic cities. Although still facing significant domestic security threats from Basque separatists and other groups (see chapter 8), the Games took place against a political background of brief-lived optimism about the world order, with no boycotts and lowered security problems. In conditions that allowed the potential of the Olympics to act as a vehicle for urban development to shine through, Barcelona launched a challenging package of regenerative measures

that countered years of neglect under the Franco regime (Maloney, 1996, p. 192). This was not an entirely new strategy. The city had used earlier international festivals to address urban planning goals, with the 1888 Universal Exhibition in the Parc de la Ciutadella to the east of the old medieval centre and the International Exhibition of 1929 on Montjuic to the west both resulting in urban improvements and enhancements to the city's cultural institutions, open space and transport (Hughes, 1996; see also chapter 14).

The Olympics were seen in a similar light. Barcelona had previously bid to host the Games for 1924, 1936 and 1972. Selected at the IOC meeting in 1986 over Paris, the only other credible candidate, Barcelona's bid claimed that 88 per cent of the necessary facilities for the Games *per se* were already 'available'.<sup>19</sup> The Olympic Stadium was an updated and renovated version of that used for the 1929 International Exhibition. Ten other venues came from refurbishments to existing facilities, with forty-three other facilities used very much in their existing state (Essex and Chalkley, 1998, p. 198). The promoters emphasized that only fifteen new venues would be required. Altogether, less than 20 per cent of the total expenditure for the 1992 Games went on sports facilities (Varley, 1992, p. 21), with the lion's share of the investment devoted instead to urban improvements. Barcelona's planners concentrated the Olympic facilities in four areas located in a ring around the city, roughly where the outer limits of the nineteenth-century city met the less structured developments of the second half of the twentieth century. These were: the Vall d'Hebron in the north (cycling, archery, and accommodation for journalists); the Diagonal (football, polo and tennis); the Montjuic (the major Olympic site including the 60,000-seater stadium, the Sant Jordi Sports Palace, and the swimming and diving pools); and Parc de Mar, which housed the Olympic Village (figure 2.9). Large-scale investment in the city's transport systems,



**Figure 2.9.** The Olympic Village, Barcelona 1992.

substantially stimulated by the Olympics, served to link sites together. The Metro system was extended, the coastal railway rerouted, the airport redesigned and expanded, and the telecommunications systems modernized (see also Brunet, 2009).

Barcelona 1992 codified the changing nature of the criteria by which to judge whether or not a Summer Games had been a success. The spectacle of the Games delighted the Olympic movement and television audiences were captivated by images from the outdoor pool, showing divers performing against the panoramic backdrop of the city beyond. Economically, the Olympic festival *per se* performed less well. Cost overruns ate into the projected \$350 million surplus such that the Games barely broke even (a mere \$3.8 million surplus). The innovative Sant Jordi Sports Palace, for example, may have supplied stunning architecture but cost \$89 million rather than the estimated \$30 million. Construction costs on the ring road were 50 per cent more than the estimated \$1 billion. The Cultural Olympiad also spawned heavy losses, despite trading on Barcelona's rich heritage in the arts and architecture (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 106).<sup>20</sup> Inflation and adverse movements in foreign currency rates also severely increased costs. Unemployment rose by 3 per cent in the city immediately after the Olympics, prices soared and business taxes rose 30 per cent (Maloney, 1996, p. 193). Nevertheless, critical opinion remained highly positive with regard to the wider regenerative impact on Barcelona. The city had deployed the Games as part of a conscious long-term development strategy that existed before obtaining the nomination to stage the Olympics and continued afterwards. It represented a major transformation in the fortunes of Olympic cities just 16 years after the debacle of Montreal.

Atlanta 1996, by contrast, would renew questions about staging the Games, particularly regarding commercialism. Unusually for Olympic practice, a private consortium undertook the organization, with heavy representation of and deference to business interests. Funding came from sponsorship, broadcasting rights and merchandizing which, when combined with ticket sales, raised \$1.72 billion (Burbank *et al.*, 2001, p. 94). In addition, the Federal government expended nearly \$1 billion on infrastructure, housing, safety and security, with smaller amounts spent by the state of Georgia and the city (*Ibid.*, p. 116). Most of the spending on the Games and on infrastructure took place in central Atlanta's 'Olympic Ring' – an area around 3 miles (5 kilometres) in radius that contained sixteen of the twenty-five Olympic facilities and most of the urban improvements. The Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) made use of existing facilities such as the Georgia Dome and Omni Arena, coupled with facilities at Atlanta's universities. The Georgia Institute of Technology, for example, provided sites for the Olympic Village, a new aquatic centre (swimming, diving and water polo) and boxing. ACOG commissioned a new but temporary Olympic Stadium in the Summerhill district in the south of the Olympic Ring. This was tied in with a longer-term plan to develop baseball in the city. The Olympic Stadium was located next to the Atlanta Fulton County Stadium, which was used for

the baseball competition. Built to seat 85,000 spectators, the Olympic Stadium was scheduled for partial demolition after the Games to create a new 47,000-seater stadium (Turner Field) for the Atlanta Braves, with the Fulton County Stadium demolished to provide parking space (Larson and Staley, 1998, p. 281). Neighbourhoods near Olympic sites experienced beautification, with projects designed to improve central city streets and upgrade twelve pedestrian corridors that linked the venues. This work included widening pavements, burying power-lines, installing new street furniture, tree planting, history panels, signage, and the redesign of five parks and plazas.

Atlanta disappointed those who looked for more from the Games that marked the centenary of the modern Olympics. The conduct of the Games and the quality of ceremonial content led Tomlinson (1999, p. 69) to describe it as ‘an elongated event of tattiness and tawdriness’. Concentrating so many facilities at the centre of the city placed pressure on the transport systems. Traffic congestion, slow journey times, and long queues to use the shuttle buses added to the difficulties for athletes, officials and spectators reaching venues (Larson and Staley, 1998, p. 278). The organizers’ claims that Olympic sites were within walking distance of one another proved meaningless given the excessive summer temperatures. The repeated systems failures of the results service, the arrogance of officials, poor relations with the press, the large numbers of unauthorized street vendors, aggressive sponsorship and rampant commercialism undermined Atlanta’s desire to stage a modern and efficient event. The city’s policy towards regenerating two areas close to the Olympic sites encountered particular condemnation. One, the Techwood and Clark Howell public housing district to the south of the Georgia Institute of Technology, was demolished and replaced by a mixed gated community, effectively replacing poorer tenants with more affluent residents. The other, a rundown housing and industrial area near the Georgia World Congress Centre (GWCC), was cleared to create Centennial Park as an area where visitors and spectators could congregate during the Games and where entertainment could be provided (figure 2.10). Clearance here and in nearby Woodruffe Park removed more than 16,500 of Atlanta’s poorest inhabitants to make way for the stadium. The additional loss of a hostel and three shelters displaced around 10 per cent of Atlanta’s homeless (Burbank *et al.*, 2001, p. 112). Aggressive use of city ordinances that criminalized anti-social behaviour and measures to remove the homeless resulted in the physical eviction of ‘undesirables’ from the vicinity of the Games (Lenskyj, 2000, pp. 138–139).

The passage of time has eroded the force of some of these criticisms. For example, Atlanta’s policy towards the stadium fully acknowledged the realities of post-Games use and spared the city from being saddled with expensive and underused venues, as was subsequently the case with Sydney, Athens and Beijing. The central area was remodelled and Centennial Park stands as a memorial to the Games. The Olympics raised Atlanta’s profile as a sporting venue, even if it failed to enhance its broader image as a cultural centre. Nonetheless, the distaste for





**Figure 2.10.** Centennial Park, Atlanta 1996.

commercialism persisted, with the IOC stating that the Games would never again be entrusted to an entirely privately-run organization (Whitelegg, 2000, p. 814; also Poynter and Roberts, 2009). Even a century after the revival of the modern Olympics, the formula for staging a successful event remained downright elusive.

### **Towards Sustainability**

Although chosen as Australian nominee for candidate city in March 1991, Sydney's bid for the Olympics had actually been in gestation since the late 1960s (see chapter 15). The city drafted feasibility plans for both the 1972 and 1988 Games, with the latter envisaging an Olympic Park at Homebush Bay, approximately 9 miles (14 kilometres) upstream from Sydney's city centre. Originally tidal wetlands and scrub, Homebush Bay at different times had housed Sydney's racecourse, a saltworks, the country's largest abattoir, the state brickworks and a naval munitions store. In the 1930s, the bay had regularly spawned algal blooms through contamination from waste products from the slaughterhouses and from depositing household and industrial waste in landfill sites. Work had begun in the 1980s to clean up and redevelop the area, but a successful Olympic bid would help regenerate the remainder of the site, tackle its severe environmental problems, supply the city with a replacement for the Royal Agricultural Society's outmoded Showground at Moore Park, and provide a cluster of modern world-class sports facilities. Any bid would involve the state and federal governments as funding agencies and as the owners of the land, as well as the city of Sydney.

Sydney gained the nomination for the 2000 Games in September 1993 against competition from Beijing, Manchester, Berlin and Istanbul, with a key element in its candidacy being the promise to concentrate the Olympic venues in one central park, which would eventually have a built core surrounded by parkland. The main Olympic venue, named Stadium Australia, was built using public funds, sponsorship and sale of corporate packages. Designed to hold 110,000 spectators during the Games, its capacity would be reduced to 80,000 for its subsequent life as a rugby and Australian Rules football stadium. The other major stadia at Homebush were the Hockey Centre, Superdome (basketball and artistic gymnastics), International Athletics Centre (warm-up facilities), Tennis Centre, the Aquatic Centre (swimming and diving) and the Archery Park. The adjacent Olympic Village would accommodate all participants at a single centre for the first time. It comprised a mixed development of apartments and town houses, arranged into three precincts and designed to ecologically sustainable guidelines. Provision of a school and commercial precinct looked ahead to the area's post-Games future as a residential suburb of Sydney. The other Olympic facilities, particularly those associated with rowing and sailing, were located within the Sydney city-region at a maximum distance of 60 miles (100 kilometres) from Homebush Bay.

Planning for the Games embraced different agendas. First, responding to the growing mood of environmentalism the bid claimed these would be a 'Green Games' expressing environmental responsibility in use of resources and design of facilities. Secondly, the Sydney Games were a national project, celebrating the 'entire continent of Australia' rather than just the host city: a strategy also adopted at Melbourne 1956. Thirdly, capturing the Games would allow the organizers to highlight the profound changes that had taken place in the 44 years since Melbourne, in particular the need for explicit recognition of the multicultural identity of Australia. The organizers of the Sydney Olympics in 2000, for example, were mindful of problems that arose at the Australian Bicentennial in 1988, when the celebration of European conquest had led to severe inter-communal frictions. Part of the adopted solution was to broaden the constituent basis of support for the Olympics, making efforts to gain the involvement of community leaders. Another element lay in seeking to change modes of representation, particularly with regard to tackling prevalent negative and stereotypic representations of Aboriginal peoples. Most notably, the Olympic Opening Ceremony commenced with an enacted encounter between indigenous and white Australians, emphasizing the antiquity of indigenous culture, its diversity, myths, legends and spirituality. The Aborigines emerged as environmentally-wise managers of the land, in contrast to the approach of what the Official Report described as the European period of 'vitality and violence' (SOCOG, 2000*b*). Later in the ceremony, the Aboriginal athlete Cathy Freeman was selected to receive the relay-run Olympic torch to light the cauldron of the Olympic flame in the stadium.

One indication of the IOC's sense of relief at the success of the resulting Games came with the IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch, resurrecting the

statement that ‘these have been the best Games ever’, a description that he had pointedly omitted at the Closing Ceremony of Atlanta 1996. An early study of impact by the Australian Tourist Commission revealed that 75 per cent of the Americans surveyed had seen pictures and stories concerning Australia as a holiday destination as part of the Olympic coverage and half reported that they were more interested in Australia as a destination (Morse, 2001, p. 102). Locally, the Games passed off well. Potential demonstrations about homelessness, the plight of Aborigines, ticketing, and the claimed misuse of public funds did not occur. An economic analysis (Haynes, 2001) argued that the total cost of the Games at A\$6.5 billion was roughly neutral in that it was covered by an equivalent amount in extra economic activity in Australia between 1994–1995 and 2005–2006, of which A\$5.1 billion would accrue in New South Wales. For this price, Sydney had achieved the regeneration of a severely blighted industrial region, gained significant improvements to infrastructure, improved its tourist standing, and gained world-class sports facilities. For the Olympic movement, it again showed the value of a festival largely held at a central venue rather than the dispersal of Atlanta.

The experience of Sydney 2000 continues to influence subsequent OCOGs, albeit sometimes in complex ways (Cashman, 2009). The Sydney Games retain a positive aura in terms of organization, friendliness and raising the profile of the city, but specific questions have arisen about cultural legacy (see chapter 15) and certain aspects of the Olympic Park. Environmentalists have continued to question whether the decontamination of the toxic waste site had been fully tackled (Berlin, 2003). Critics note the lack of the promised affordable housing. The main stadia have had a chequered post-Games usage. The Superdome, latterly rebranded as the Acer Arena, had a post-Games history that parallels London’s O2 Arena. Initially languishing and lacking a viable legacy plan, it eventually developed into a thriving and internationally recognized entertainments venue on the basis of a successful private-public partnership (Jefferies, 2006). By contrast, Stadium Australia, first renamed the Telstra stadium, operated consistently at a loss from the moment that it was handed over for post-Games use. In November 2006, the group running the stadium defaulted on its debts and was taken over by its bankers (Askew, 2006). Subsequently rebranded as the ANZ stadium, the venue continues to struggle against competition from the pre-existing modern stadia clustered in the Moore Park area of east Sydney (Searle, 2002, p. 857).

Similar uncertainties cloud the legacy of Athens 2004, although any Games involving Greece inevitably involves circumstances unique to that country. As chapter 16 shows, the reconstruction of Athens and the return of the Olympics were parallel themes in the consciousness of the Greek people during the nineteenth century and continued to have resonances in the late twentieth century. The city’s successful bid in 1997 for the 2004 Olympics claimed that most of the competition venues and almost all the training venues were already in place, with the makings of an Olympic Stadium and Park in the complex already constructed for the 1982 European Athletics Championships. The subsequent decision to

revisit the plans and make drastic alterations, in particular exchanging the nucleated Olympic centres for a more dispersed approach, undermined the timetable to the point where completion on time hung in the balance.

The immediate impact of the Games was a profound psychological boost for the country and agreement that tourism had benefited from transformation of the city centre, creation of pedestrianized routes interlinking Athens's major archaeological sites, and investment in the city's hotels, cultural sector and, especially, public transport. Yet, as with Sydney, wider questions about *sustainability* quickly surfaced. In the narrower sense, critics focused on the way in which the environmental guidelines for the Olympics were, at best, perfunctorily observed. In the more general sense of sustainable development, profound doubts surround the potential use of the Olympic facilities. Despite its architecturally sophisticated buildings being intended as a symbol of the new Athens, the Olympic Sports Complex at Maroussi remains heavily underused (figure 2.11), with the stadium only open to the public when concerts or soccer matches are being staged. The Faliro and Helleniki complexes have also struggled to find alternative uses. All have continued to lose money as borrowing and maintenance costs have still to be met. The evidence suggests that pre-Games plans for post-Games use of Olympic facilities contained a strong dose of wish fulfilment; a product of a lingering wish to have a comprehensive set of facilities available whenever the opportunity arose to stage further sporting mega-events.



**Figure 2.11.** The Olympic Stadium and Park for the Athens 2004 Games, June 2009.

## The Highwater Mark?

Questions of how to turn the lavish and large-scale facilities required for the Summer Olympics into sustainable legacy, however, did not in any way daunt the organizers of Beijing 2008. Rebuffed by just two votes in 1993 in its candidacy for the Millennial Games, largely due to the recent memories of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre and concerns over environmental issues (Poast, 2007, p. 76; also Gartner and Shen, 1992), Beijing decided in November 1998 to launch its candidacy for the 2008 Games. This time, its bid gained overwhelming support, achieving an absolute majority on just the second round of voting against opposition from Istanbul, Osaka, Paris and Toronto. The ease of its victory partly reflected memories of 1993, in which Beijing had led the voting in all rounds apart from the final run-off with Sydney, but the first bid had also served as a valuable learning process. The Chinese team carefully crafted a message that recognized ‘the importance of considering what others might think of China and making adjustments to be sure that nothing offended’ (Guoqi, 2008, p. 243). The bid team deftly promised an environmentally-friendly but ‘high-tech’ Games that would promote cultural exchange, act as ‘a bridge of harmony’ between peoples and embody the ‘unique integration of sport and culture’ intrinsic to Olympism (*Ibid.*, pp. 243–234). It effectively addressed key areas of dissatisfaction with the first bid and allowed the attractions of the site plan and other elements of the proposal to shine through.

Within days of the city’s success in the bidding process, Beijing’s municipal government unveiled an ambitious five-year plan to modernize the city’s infrastructure, carry out urban regeneration and improve the environment (Broudehoux, 2004, pp. 200–201). While some of the estimated 180 billion yuan (\$22 billion) expenditure would have been incurred anyway as part of the city’s development plans, there is no doubt that the Olympics acted as a catalyst for a substantial part of this investment. In addition, a total of \$14.25 billion was officially earmarked as funding for developing the sites for the Beijing Games, although as Brunet and Xinwen (2009, pp. 166, 169) note: ‘the total investment catalysed by the Games is likely to be much larger – between \$20 and \$30 billion dollars – especially when the private sector contribution is added’. Modernization and development, however, rested substantially on urban clearance, with estimates in 2007 that at least 1.5 million people had been displaced to make way for Olympic-related developments (COHRE, 2007c).

In total, the Games required thirty-seven venues, of which thirty-one were in Beijing and the rest scattered elsewhere within the People’s Republic of China (particularly for soccer and sailing) and Hong Kong (equestrianism). Of the venues within Beijing, twelve were newly built, eleven were renovated or extended from pre-existing structures, and eight were temporary sports facilities or related installations (such as the Media Centre). The main examples of architectural spectacle were among the seventeen venues clustered in and

around the Olympic Park in the north of the city (He, 2008, pp. x–xiii). The new National Stadium served as the Olympic stadium and the setting for the Opening and Closing Ceremonies. Designed by the Swiss firm of Herzog and de Meuron in association with the Chinese office of Arup Associates, this oval-shaped arena seated 91,000 during the Games, with post-Olympics reduction to 80,000. Its nickname, the ‘Bird’s Nest’, derived from its open lattice structure of interwoven steel trusses, which exposed glimpses of the interior to the outside (*Ibid.*, pp. 2–7). The National Aquatics Centre, situated to the east of the ‘Bird’s Nest’, provided an equal measure of spectacle. Widely known as the ‘Water Cube’, its exterior covering of 3,000 irregularly-shaped, translucent, blue ‘air pillows’ provided a highly distinctive panorama when set against the background of the adjacent National Stadium (*Ibid.*, pp. 20–26).

In most respects, Beijing 2008 was a Games for the television audience, without the now customary carnival atmosphere in the streets provided by live entertainments and giant screens. The pre-Games Olympic torch relay proved a public relations disaster when it passed through countries willing to allow protests and occasional disruption by Free Tibet activists and other demonstrators. Once the relay came within the control of the Chinese authorities, however, such incidents disappeared. Viewers around the world joined the spectators in the stadia in witnessing the stunning and intricately choreographed Opening and Closing Ceremonies, albeit with television viewers of the former witnessing effects that were partly enhanced by overlaying of computer graphics.<sup>21</sup> Summarizers and analysts were routinely seen against the backdrop of the Bird’s Nest and Water Cube – two of the most iconic structures ever produced for an Olympic Games. After the Games, these facilities have remained very much on the tourist trail, even if the initial signs suggest that their post-Games use is likely to be sparse enough to join the ‘white elephant’ category.

The instant punditry maintained that Beijing 2008 had established a new yardstick for the Olympic movement; leaving behind a hard legacy of magnificent facilities and memories of spectacular ceremonies that might never be equalled. Yet however plausible that view might seem at a subsequent time of severe financial stringency, the hairshirt principle rarely persists when dealing with the staging of the Olympics. The Games invite indulgence in architectural spectacle and grand gestures intended to leave a lasting favourable impression with visitors. No matter how much attitudes might currently tend towards downscaling facility and infrastructural provision, such ideas have a habit of seeming mean-spirited once prosperity returns. They might also prove counterproductive to subsequent place promotional ambitions.

It would be a foolhardy analyst who would make long-term predictions about Beijing 2008 representing the highwater mark for Olympic spectacle and expenditure.

## Notes

1. Spoken by Prince George, later Duke of Clarence, in William Shakespeare (1593) *Henry VI*, Part 3, Act II, Scene III, lines 53–56.
2. Although there was a nearby village called Andilalo – the name means ‘village of the echo’ – it is just as possible that the name simply relates to the spot where the remarkable reverberating echo found at Olympia occurs (see Leake, 1830, I, p. 31).
3. The event was mentioned in a letter dated 30 April 1679, written by Colonel Edward Cooke in London and addressed to the Duke of Ormond, Viceroy of Ireland, in Dublin (Source: Notes and Queries, Tenth Series, X (22 August 1908), p. 147).
4. Baron Pierre de Coubertin (1863–1937), a French educational reformer, was the key figure behind the movement that founded the IOC (see note 6).
5. This came at the end of a speech made at a Jubilee event to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the founding the Union of French Sports Associations.
6. At the outset, the IOC was a small, conservative and entirely male-dominated body, heavily under the sway of Coubertin, comprising prominent sportsmen and titled individuals whose social status might lend weight to the embryonic organization. The first committee comprised fifteen members from twelve countries. By 1904, this had increased to thirty-two members, of whom seventeen had aristocratic or civil titles (eight counts, three barons, two princes, a knight, a professor, a general and a bishop). To Coubertin, that social background seemed to suggest people whose impeccable pedigree and private means would insure their impartiality. To later commentators, it would provide the recipe for cronyism and an unrepresentative self-perpetuating oligarchy (e.g. Simson and Jennings, 1992; Sheil, 1998; Lenskyj, 2000).
7. The marathon made connection with ancient legend, with the story of the runner who brought news of the Greek victory over the Persians from Marathon to Athens in 490 BC. In reality, however, the race had no parallel in ancient Greek practice, where races rarely exceeded 5 kilometres. For other suggestions as to the martial connotations of the original Games, see Rustin (2009, p. 11).
8. Athletes returning from the Athens Games established the Boston Marathon the following year (Lovett, 1997, p. xii).
9. Mallon (1998, p. 5) points out that Coubertin had previously suggested a recreation of Olympia for the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris, with some sporting events.
10. There may well have been an element of pretext here: it is now suggested that the Italians were preparing to withdraw from the Games before the eruption occurred (Mallon and Buchanan, 2000, p. xxxvii).
11. British Olympic Association, Minutes of Council Meeting, A7/3, 18 February 1907.
12. With a population in 1900 of 300,624 compared with Greater London’s 1901 figure of 6.5 million.
13. Named after General John Pershing, the Commander-in-Chief of the American Expeditionary Force, the Pershing stadium was built by the Americans on land donated by the French.
14. This prefabricated encampment was for male athletes and was demolished after the Games. Female athletes were housed in the Chapman Park Hotel as it was thought they required a rather more permanent type of residence (TOC, 1933, p. 292).
15. It was suggested, for example, that ancient Greece was partly settled by early Germanic migrants during the Neolithic period (Arnold, 1992, p. 32).
16. The Games of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Olympiads were not celebrated because of the war.
17. Although accusations of commercial excesses galvanized the IOC into taking control of sponsorship through TOP (The Olympic Programme). For all the disdain of commercialism, the IOC now found itself in the position of inviting corporations to pay tens of millions of dollars to become worldwide Olympic sponsors.

18. Discussion of the televisual portrayals of the Games and their implications is found in MacAloon (1989).
19. Financial Times, 15 October 1986.
20. This was partly through facing the competing attractions of Expo 92 in Seville and having Madrid as 1992 European City of Culture.
21. Notably for a sequence that involved a set of twenty-nine footprints in the sky (Spencer, 2008).