

## Montréal Olympic Park (1976). A Living Heritage (or the Rediscovery of an Unloved Giant that Hosted Heroic Moments)

Dinu Bumbaru

On May 12, 1970, the *Comité international olympique* (CIO) announced in Amsterdam that it had accepted the invitation of Montreal, Canada to host the Summer Games of the 21st Olympiad. For the first time in Canada, these games took place from July 17 until August 1, 1976.

50 years after this historic announcement, while the Province of Québec and more specifically the Montreal metropolitan area are the epicenters of COVID-19 in Canada, Bill 15 – an act respecting the *Société de développement et de mise en valeur du Parc olympique* – is one of only three texts of law which will be submitted to the Provincial Parliament, Assemblée nationale in these days of crisis.

Beyond the anecdote of this anniversary and parliamentary agenda, this is another clue of the timely reflection on the heritage dimension and governance challenges of these large monuments and complexes generated to host the Olympic Games of the Modern Age, their athletes and roaring crowds.

### The Montreal Games – an Olympic summary

The Summer Games of the 21st Olympiad hosted 92 nations. Led by Tanzania, 22 nations chose to boycott the Games to protest against the participation of New Zealand whose rugby team had gone to play in South Africa under the Apartheid regime.

In total, 6094 athletes (1 260 women, 4 824 men) took part in the 198 events in some 22 venues spread over 800 km. Most of these were in Montreal but some of the competitions took place in Quebec City, Kingston, Toronto and Ottawa. In addition to the athletes, officials and staff, a contingent of about 16 000 people was mobilised to ensure security at the Games, following the terrorist attack against the Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich.

The Games were officially opened by the Head of State of Canada, H.M. Queen Elizabeth II, whose daughter Princess Anne became the first member of the Royal Family to compete at Olympic Games. With the public, the queen of heart of the Montreal Games was the 14-year-old Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci who scored a perfect 10 on July 21st, causing problems with the scoring display board.

Among the innovations that were seen at the Montreal Summer Games were some in the Olympic protocol, e.g. when the torch was carried into the Stadium jointly by two teenagers, Stéphane Préfontaine from Montreal and Sandra Henderson from Toronto, representing the two founding nations of the Canadian Confederation, to light the Olympic flame. In 1980, the two young athletes were asked to deliver the Olympic flag to Moscow by the mayor of Montreal who

couldn't personally attend because of Canada's boycott of the Games following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

### Perseverance – Montreal's many attempts

The acceptance of Montreal's invitation in 1970 came at the end of a long sequence of submissions. For decades, Montreal, the major city and metropolis of Canada, had presented dossiers to host international games. It was a candidate city to host the first British Empire Games (now the Commonwealth Games) which, however, took place in Hamilton, Ontario in 1930.

In the Olympic system, Montreal was available to host the third Winter Games in 1932, which were awarded to Lake Placid, USA, and the Mayor sent a delegate to the CIO in 1939 to submit a formal candidature for the 1944 Winter Games. It also expressed interest in the Summer Games of 1936 (Berlin), 1956 (Melbourne) and 1972 (Munich) before its success bid for the 1976 Games.

Beyond the historical interest of that sequence, these submissions left a material legacy in the choice of the location and some sports facilities. As early as the 1930s, the City of Montreal's interest in bidding for such international games brought it to develop an interest in building large facilities at Parc Maisonneuve, a large park in the city's East End industrial neighbourhood of Maisonneuve. This area had been developed in a *City Beautiful* approach by leaders of the French-Canadian industrial class in the late 19th to early 20th centuries. According to the heritage study prepared in 2017 by Docomomo Québec for the Parc olympique administration,<sup>1</sup> design and construction work had already started in 1938 in preparation to host the British Empire Games in 1942, which were cancelled.

In the context of the Montreal bid for the 1956 Summer Games, the Parc Maisonneuve consolidated its commitment to large sports infrastructures. The sports-based *genius loci* of the site was acknowledged in the City's policies and investments, if not as part of the doctrine of French-Canadian affirmation, which also played a role in motivating iconic modernisation projects such as Place des Arts, Expo 67 and the Metro.

By 1956, the New York landscape and planning firm of Clarke & Rapuano had been commissioned and produced a master plan for the sports complex (Fig. 1). Structured by an axial avenue leading to the large stadium, this master plan received professional awards, but only two of its components were actually built by 1960: the Centre Maisonneuve (now Centre Pierre-Charbonneau) by architect Paul Lambert

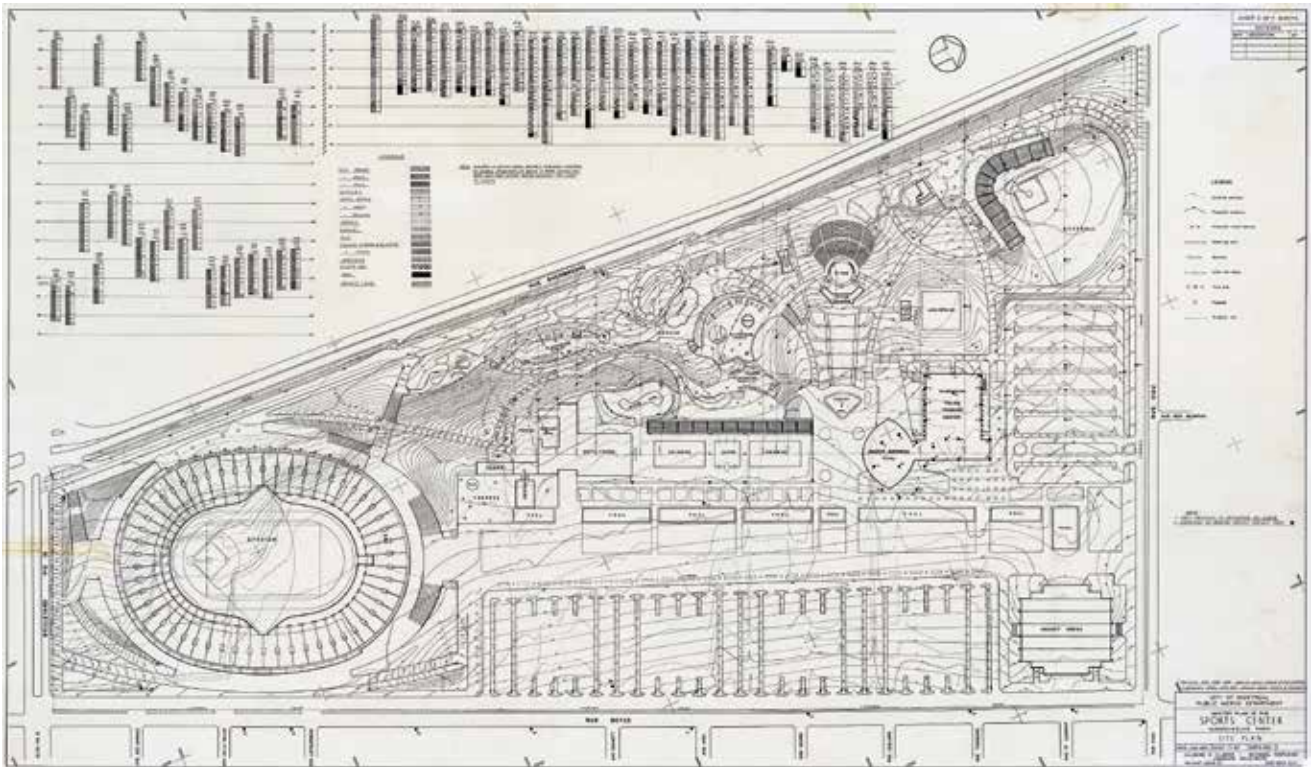


Fig. 1 Site plan for a sports centre at Parc Maisonneuve with grand axis, designed by New York firm Clarke & Rapuano, 1957

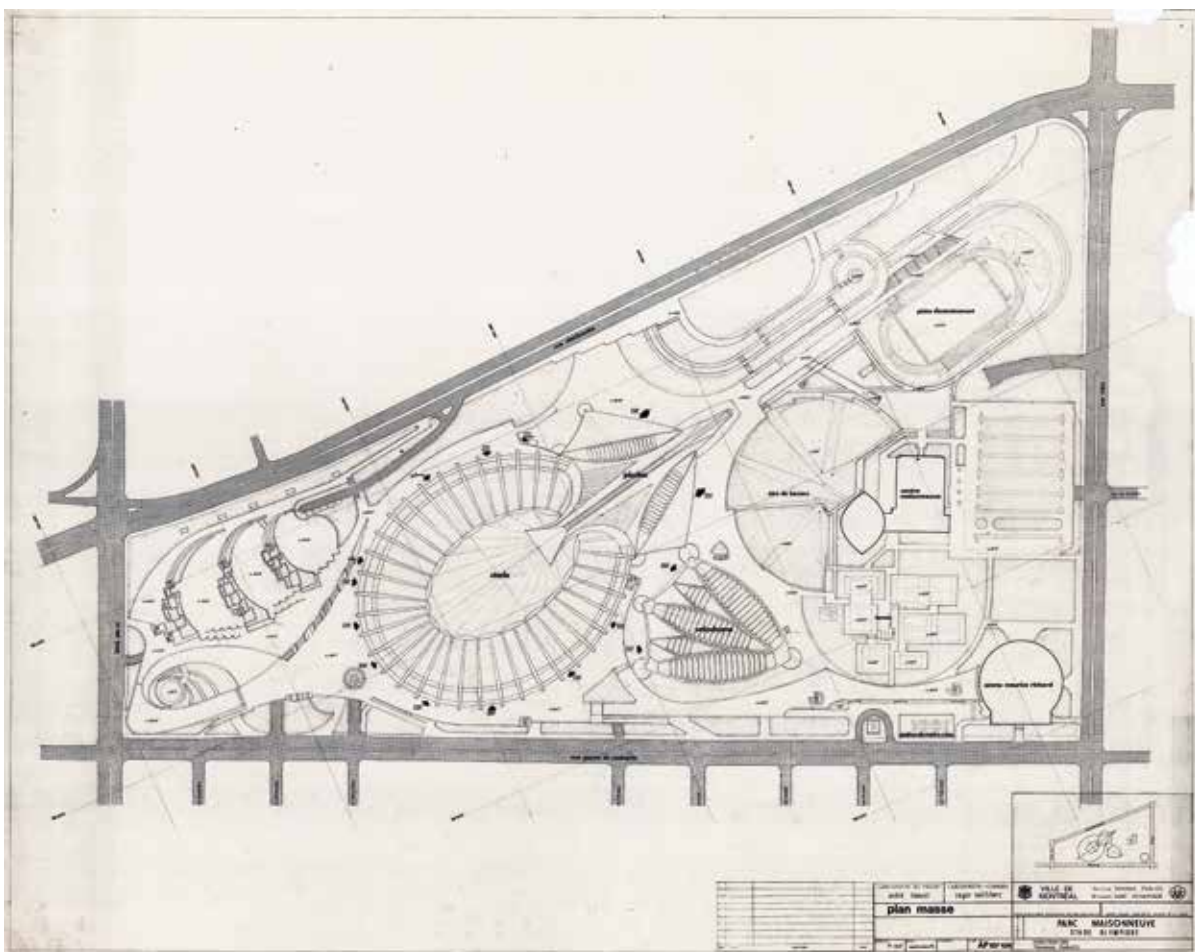


Fig. 2 Site plan for the Parc olympique with the diagonal layout by architect Roger Taillibert, 1975



*Fig. 3 The junction between the Stadium and esplanade showing the console structural system, its expressive use of concrete and original glass wall*



*Fig. 4 Interior view of the Stadium circulations showing the innovative structural system of prefabricated-concrete cantilevered consoles*

and the *Aréna Maurice Richard*, named after the French-Canadian hockey hero, by architect Jean-Julien Perreault. Each of these two buildings are significant modernist structures by Montreal architects, display innovative engineering, and are completed with figurative and abstract artworks (mosaics, ceramics, stone reliefs, frescoes), integrated into the architecture and dedicated to team and individual sports.

### **Parc/Stade olympique de Montréal**

French architect Roger Taillibert (1926–2019) was chosen as architect for the Montreal Olympic complex. The choice was based on his experience and achievement with *Parc des Princes* in Paris and the technical capacity of the construction sector in Montreal and Quebec to deliver large concrete structures of that nature. The openly Francophile Mayor Jean Drapeau who governed the city for almost 30 years, also played an important role in this decision to commission a non-national architect, apparently for the first time, for the centrepiece of the Games, the Stadium and Olympic Park. Despite his professional record with many ground-breaking sports facilities built in France, the hiring of Roger Taillibert for the Montreal Olympic complex was highly controversial, even contested in court.

Architect Taillibert's concept for the site differed from previous ones for the site in that it deployed the main stadium along a diagonal axis and integrated the swimming complex at the base of its tower rather than make it a stand-alone structure (Fig. 2). The choice of a retractable canvas roof system connected to an inclining tower responded to architectural considerations, but also to the programme for the stadium, which had to comply both with the Olympic requirements and plans for its subsequent use as a baseball stadium. But mostly, Taillibert's concept is one of an organic structure with dynamic lines and a floating character created by the innovative and daring use of concrete.

The structural system for the stadium is composed of a series of 34 overhanging cantilevered consoles that hold

the seating sections and their overhanging roof and connect via an elliptical technical ring that forms the giant oculus which originally connected the stadium plateau and the sky. These consoles are composed of a series of prefabricated and pre-stressed voussoirs assembled on site with epoxy and post-tension cables. The Velodrome structure is also a remarkable engineering achievement for its time with its single span of 172 metres deployed in an organic form as a vault resting on four points, again realised in prefabricated pre-stressed concrete voussoirs.

The construction work started in 1973 under the authority of the City of Montreal. The project encountered many difficulties, technically, financially and in terms of labour strikes, which resulted in such a high risk of failure and embarrassing cancellation that the Quebec Government ended up taking over the project in 1975 and setting up a special authority – the *Régie des installations olympiques (RIO)* – to complete the work necessary for the Games and fund it through special taxes on tobacco. The installations such as the Stadium, the Velodrome and the Aquatics Centre (Fig. 5) were ready in time for the inauguration on July 17, 1976.

The tower, however, was not completed. Only its base had been built as part of the stadium's structural integrity. Following long investigation, consultations and governmental decision-making, the tower – a 45-degree and 165-metre structure originally designed in concrete and planned to house a series of gymnasia – was only completed in steel in 1987 along with the original retractable Kevlar roof system designed by Roger Taillibert (Figs. 6 and 7).

### **The legacy of the Montreal Olympic Games: Hate/Love/Rediscovery**

As the world's most significant sports rendezvous, the Olympic Summer Games of 1976 have left a durable and fond memory in the societies of Montreal, Quebec and Canada. As a publicly financed undertaking, the memory has been more painful, marred by scandals, cost overruns, la-





*Fig. 5 The interior of the Aquatics Centre has preserved most of its original features including moulded plastic seats*

bour conflicts and other bitter feelings about the political figures involved in a time of tense political federalist-separatist debate in Quebec.

The Olympic Stadium's architecture and diagonal siting enhanced its iconic presence in the urban landscape and street grid of Montreal. Yet, the post-Olympic use of the Stadium and the issue of the roof, then and now, remain ongoing topics for the Quebec Government and City of Montreal, for users and the general public, although one senses that negative prejudice has made way to a more open attitude towards these global landmarks of late 20th-century architecture.

### Searching for an appropriate use

In 1977, a commission was set up by the Quebec Government and chaired by architect and planner Jean-Claude Marsan to issue recommendations on the future of the Olympic installations and park. The commission recommended to consolidate a sport vocation for the whole site but was divided on the issue of the roof, i.e. whether to follow the original retractable concept with the tower or to install a permanent roof. In the end, the Government chose to go with the Roger Taillibert design despite the roaring controversy. But a series of mishaps, tears and accidents with the retractable roof and with its fixed successor installed in 1998, have kept the roof issue active ever since, closely linked to the Stadium's capacity to host events throughout the year.

The issue of the post-Olympic use was well understood by the City of Montreal, even in earlier bids. In the case of the 1976 Games, it was understood that the stadium would be adapted to become the home of the Expos, Montreal's

Major League Baseball team named after Expo 67. This was integrated into the design of Roger Taillibert and the Expos played in the Olympic Stadium from 1977 until the team was relocated to Washington DC in 2004. Besides sports events, the Stadium has hosted major pop concerts, operas, car shows, even an outdoor celebration with the Pope and young Céline Dion.

Besides the Stadium's own post-Olympic use, the Velodrome lost its sporting use when it was transferred back to the City of Montreal to install the Biodome, an educational venue displaying North American ecosystems, inaugurated in 1992. As a result of this conversion, the sophisticated wooden bicycle track and the sportive soul of the Velodrome were lost, to the great disappointment of Roger Taillibert.

The Olympic Tower remained empty from 1987 until 2018. After many unsuccessful projects for university sports facilities, hotels or commercial offices, the cooperative banking movement Desjardins installed hundreds of employees in the tower. The major renovation required for that was carried out by replacing the 1987 facades made of ribbon windows and precast concrete spandrels with an all-glass curtain wall.

Since 1985, part of the large underground parking garage below the esplanade has housed the offices of various sports and leisure associations and their hundreds of volunteers and staff. (This had in fact been a recommendation of the 1977 Marsan report.)

### Heritage reveals

The 1980 report on the costs of the Montreal Games by Judge Albert Malouf puts an important focus on the Mayor's



*Fig. 6 The Olympic Stadium and its tower from the esplanade, currently being revitalized as a civic space and venue for events after decades of indifference*



*Fig. 7 View of the Olympic Tower with funicular elevator and Aquatics Centre at the base*

personal management of the project in the earlier phases. It also placed some responsibility on the choice of the architect and the design. Interestingly, the report starts with a verse from the Gospel: “For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has

enough to complete it?” – Luke 14:28. Since that blaming report, time has passed, more than a generation’s time. In 2006, the Quebec Government announced the \$1.5 billion Olympic debt had been repaid and that the tax on tobacco installed in the 1970s would be maintained in order to fund sports and heritage.

Between the reports of the 1970s and today, the Parc olympique went through a series of ups and downs in terms of governmental interest in its architectural integrity and coherence as a public asset. The unsightly accumulation of machinery on the roof in the 1990s, the construction of a commercial cinema complex in 2000 and a private football stadium in 2007, all of which had no architectural merits comparable to the Stadium, on a site carved out of the Olympic grounds, showed a worrying degree of disinterest and lack of vision among the Government’s decision-makers. Despite some warning calls by academic scholars or civic organisations like Heritage Montreal in the 1990s, the public discussion about the significance of the Olympic legacy in Montreal had to wait.

In December 2012, another report was published on the future of the Olympic Park. This time, the commission headed by Lise Bissonnette, a former journalist and CEO of the successful Grande Bibliothèque du Québec, considered the Olympic site as an asset rather than a costly curse, as the previous generation had considered it. The commission also did a tour of different regions of Québec to consult them on their relation to the Olympic installations in Montreal and their value as a national asset. The time distance and approach paid off.

As part of its recommendations, the commission lamented the lack of a “lieu de mémoire” at the site and proposed that the Parc olympique be considered for a heritage designation, specifically as a heritage cultural landscape as defined in the new Cultural Heritage Act adopted by the Quebec legislature in October 2011. Although this heritage recommendation did not prove viable, the publication of the report as a whole proved to be an important event and an indication of the new relationship people and authorities were ready to develop with the Parc olympique, nicknamed in English “the Big O”.

The Big O is also the name given by skaters to a concrete tunnel built in 1976 to connect two outdoor training grounds. In 2011, a project to expand a nearby football stadium caused a surprising revelation: the Big O was one of the best skating places in North America. Facing this uproar, efforts were made to relocate the skaters’ Big O in 2013 and to save this unexpected component of the international heritage in the Parc olympique.

For the 40th anniversary of the Montreal Summer Games in 2016, under the leadership of Michel Labrecque, the new CEO of the RIO, a series of cultural activities and exhibitions at the Parc olympique and in the Maisonneuve neighbourhood confirmed the change of heart towards the Stadium, its architect and its architecture. *Stadorama*, the book of essays edited by sociologist and techno journalist Catherine Mathys, was also published in 2016. Organised in sections – Love, Hate, Joy, Sadness, Admiration and Desire – *Stadorama* includes an essay by Roger Taillibert and explores the place the Stadium, the Tower and the Parc olympique hold in contemporary popular culture.



## International perspective

2016 was also the year the RIO and Heritage Montreal organised “Olympic Heritage and Contemporary Functionality”, an international expert round table on the theme of the International Day of Monuments and Sites suggested by ICOMOS: Heritage of Sports. Experiences from the Berlin, Helsinki, Tokyo, Munich and Montreal Olympic parks were shared and discussed, including through a very popular public conference.

Participants agreed on the need to better understand these heritage complexes and sites in the full diversity of their heritage values, beyond the human stories and athletic records, to address their architectural, social, memorial and landscape values, their place in popular culture, their political *raison d’être*, the presence of “roaring crowds” in their *genius loci* and authenticity as well as the technical systems or innovations associated with each Olympics. An exclusively historical or architectural reading of these exceptional structures and sites seemed a bit reductive. The round table produced the following three recommendations:

1. To ICOMOS/UNESCO regarding the heritage of the Olympic Games of the modern era:
  - a. Heritage survey of buildings, sites, ensembles and landscapes
  - b. Thematic/comparative survey according to World Heritage criteria
  - c. Request to the CIO and FIFA to integrate heritage in their requirements
2. To RIO regarding the heritage designation for the Parc olympique:
  - a. Possible designation under Quebec’s Cultural Heritage Act
  - b. Possible national designation for Parc olympique and Jardin botanique
  - c. Possible new designation for landmarks of Quebec’s modernisation
3. To RIO regarding the integration of the heritage dimensions in planning and development
  - a. Use ICOMOS, World Heritage and Canada guidelines
  - b. Adopt a Conservation Plan as if designated by the Cultural Heritage Act
  - c. Prepare a heritage interest statement with City of Montreal
  - d. Make heritage studies accessible to the public
  - e. Collaborate with the authorities of other Olympic sites on heritage matters.

### Theoretical question: Olympic sites and the World Heritage test

In the essay I was asked to contribute to the Stadorama collective, I examined the theoretical question of evaluating how the Parc olympique could relate to the criteria for a World Heritage nomination. This was purely an intellectual exercise considering that the site currently does not have



*Fig. 8 The Parc olympique and its tower are now acknowledged in planning tools as metropolitan landmarks along with the St Lawrence River and Mount Royal*

a single heritage designation under municipal or provincial jurisdiction. Under the Constitution of Canada, these are the authorities which have the power to actually protect such a property.

For a start, one could say that any Olympic site of the modern era, in particular the Olympic stadia where large-scale ceremonies and major events take place, conveys a universal dimension by definition and their association to a global movement founded on higher principles and aspirations. Whether these installations maintain a heritage value consistent with the World Heritage definitions or not, through their purposeful design or the historical events they hosted, or their authenticity, is another issue.

Here are some thoughts from that exercise:

#### 1. Outstanding Universal Value

Criterion i: The Montreal Stadium is an outstanding example of design and engineering, particularly in relation to the use of pre-stressed concrete and innovation in structural systems.

Criterion iv: Do Olympic stadiums or parks designed for the games of the modern era constitute a specific type of building, architectural or technological ensemble? If so, how would the Montreal Stadium compare to others?

Criterion vi: Beyond its association with the ideal of the Modern Olympic Movement, the Montreal site stands out as possibly the first where a non-national architect was hired to design its main structures.

#### 2. Authenticity and Integrity

Overall, the Parc olympique maintains most of the features and components which define and characterise it as the main

site for the 1976 Summer Olympic Games. This overall appreciation covers the general layout of the site, the form and design of the stadium, the predominance of organic concrete shapes, its connection to the Pie IX metro station, and the lasting presence of sports events and practices, for example with the swimming pool centre.

Among the most significant changes, the installation of a fixed roof contradicts the original design but, even more so, the Olympic requirement for the central plateau of the stadium to be open to the sky. For structural reasons, the tower was built entirely of steel instead of concrete. And the outstanding achievement of the 172m single span of the Velodrome roof arch has been obscured by the Biodome installation, currently being rearranged. Debate occurred over the scheduled elimination of the 15m deep diving basin but, overall, the Aquatics Centre remains in good condition, preserving even most of the original moulded plastic seats. Finally, the eastern part of the site was altered by the selling-off of a section of the site for commercial facilities or a football stadium whose function can be described as consistent. From the point of view of physical and structural integrity, the physical condition of the Parc olympique appears relatively good. Yet, the natural aging of the concrete will require attention over time.

Further east, across Sherbrooke Street, the Village olympique was also privatised. It consists of the set of pyramid-shaped residential towers designed by modernist Montreal architects Roger D'Astous, a disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright, and Luc Durand who studied in Geneva with Pierre Jeanneret, using concrete as a way to relate to Taillibert's stadium, and of the long outdoor walkways to integrate the security considerations after the deadly terrorist attack against Israeli athletes at the previous Summer Games. Although an application had been made to the Minister of Culture to designate it as a heritage site, the Village remains unprotected under the Cultural Heritage Act.

The example of the status of the Village olympique also raises the question of defining what should be the boundary of the nominated property of any Olympic Games facility, a question of great importance for assessing its integrity and authenticity. Should a nomination focus on individual buildings, or on the main Olympic park installations? Should it include the athletes' village or other facilities? How do we treat the non-purpose-built Olympic facilities where major events took place like the old Montreal hockey arena – the Forum – where Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci made history? Should the Marathon be considered as a compact cultural route, a historical journey or just limited to commemorating the Porte du Marathon in the stadium?

### 3. *Protection and management system*

The Parc olympique is currently administered by the RIO under the authority of the Minister of Tourism. Its funding is based on income-generating activities and government grants. Currently, it doesn't benefit from a specific heritage protection. As mentioned in the heritage study of Docomomo Quebec, there are municipal designations but these have limited impact in terms of protection, considering the supra-municipal nature of the complex. For example, the site

does not enjoy the benefit of a Heritage Conservation Plan as prescribed by the Cultural Heritage Act. The stadium is also registered as a metropolitan heritage landmark which can assist in preserving views and its iconic presence in the urban landscape (Fig. 8).

The current process at the Quebec Parliament to change the legal framework to change the *Régie des installations olympiques* into a *Société de développement et de mise en valeur du Parc olympique* might improve things, bearing in mind that the mission of the future Société would be “1) to develop, manage, promote and operate the Olympic Park, in particular to allow sports, cultural and community events, exhibitions, as well as tourist and recreational activities to be held there; and 2) to highlight the Olympic heritage and legacy”, and its functions include specifically “to protect, maintain and enhance the historical and architectural heritage including technical components”.<sup>2</sup> The proposed bill also introduces the creation of a Capital Expenditure Committee which could possibly include heritage expertise, but that is not explicit. Hopefully, the expenditure plan will include a strong scientific research and concrete restoration component.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Beyond its spectacular architecture dominated by the organic plasticity and poetic lightness of concrete, the Parc olympique de Montréal offers an illustration of the complexity and richness of the Olympic endeavour. It shows the importance of understanding the underlying motivation and social history of the bids, whether they were driven by national agendas or by the will of modern metropolises to affirm their role in defining the identity of modern nations, in particular those in quest of more independence and international presence.

Another dimension of the heritage value of these complexes is the technological innovation they display, a character that Munich and Montreal shared brilliantly even when we consider their fundamental differences – one is based on tensile structure and glass whereas the other uses concrete and its compression capacity.

In the case of Montreal, the Summer Olympic Games came as a follow-up to the outstanding global rendezvous of Expo 67, the international event marking the centennial of the Canadian Confederation. As shown in the Bojoul comic strip published in 1976 (Fig. 9), the construction site itself with its spectacular display of cranes and machinery is associated with mega-projects of the period like Expo 67 built on artificial islands in the St. Lawrence River using methods developed for D-Day, or the largest underground hydroelectric plant at James Bay, 1300 km north of Montreal, another project of Quebec national affirmation.

With all these considerations, the main issues observed with the legacy and heritage of the 1976 Summer Games in Montreal groups around three main lines: use (relevance, type, intensity, private or public, sports or commercial...); resources to take care and update these naturally aging infrastructures (expertise, funding, collaborations...), and, in close connection to the previous two, values society – not





Fig. 9 View of the iconic Olympic construction site and labour disputes depicted in the popular Québécois comic book *Bojoual – Le Zeus de la XXIe olympiade* by J. Guillemay, 1976

just the experts and scholars – recognises in these places in order to prioritise them on the collective agenda.

The heritage designation is an expression of the collective value attached to these sites, but its absence could be due to administrative aspects rather than fundamental aspects. In the case of Montreal, national heritage designation is as-

sociated with strict procedural controls more applicable to smaller structures than the Parc olympique, which may explain the absence of such status.

The list of heritage sites of the Modern Olympic Games is known and scholarly research and publications are increasing. In the case of Montreal, time has passed and allowed



for the reconciliation between the authorities and the general public with the memory of the Games, the Stadium and, more humanly, with architect Roger Taillibert who enjoyed a strong wave of gratitude and appreciation from Montrealers in the last years before he died in 2019.<sup>3</sup> In Montreal, the RIO embraced and posted permanently on site the four heritage values – Historical, Architectural, Urban and Iconic – derived from the Docomomo Quebec studies.

In such a development, there are good reasons to hope for a greater consideration of the heritage values of these gigantic monuments born from a vision of the world to come. The World Heritage criteria and concepts surely offer a tool to improve the understanding and good care of these ensembles. In the Olympic Stadium and in the facilities, athletes gave their best and countries competed against each other. Now, through an initiative such as this meeting between ICOMOS Germany and the City of Munich, we have the opportunity to cooperate more and more, from a spirit of competition to one of collaboration for better conservation.

Let's connect Citius– Altius– Fortius with Necessitas – Commoditas – Voluptas, the Games and their heritage.

### Abstract

Vom 17. Juli bis zum 1. August 1976, weniger als ein Jahrzehnt nach der erfolgreichen Weltausstellung Expo 67, fand in Montreal die XXI. Olympiade der Neuzeit statt. Nach gescheiterten vorherigen Versuchen waren sie 1970 gegen Moskau und Los Angeles an Montreal vergeben worden.

Trotz des Boykotts von 22 afrikanischen Ländern, die gegen die Apartheid protestierten, waren die Spiele von Montreal ein denkwürdiges Sportereignis und ein internationales Rendezvous, das unter anderem durch die beeindruckende Leistung der rumänischen Turnerin Nadia Comaneci geprägt war. Diese Spiele waren die ersten, die nach dem Terroranschlag bei den Olympischen Spielen 1972 in München stattfanden, und die Sicherheit war ein neues Element, das unter Wahrung des olympischen Geistes der Spiele eingeführt werden musste.

Das vom französischen Architekten Roger Taillibert entworfene Stadion von Montreal sollte mit seinem schiefen Turm, dem weitgespannten Velodrom und der Esplanade ein bleibendes Wahrzeichen schaffen. Stattdessen wurde es inmitten von Kontroversen erdacht und geboren. Sein Bau wurde durch Streiks, Verzögerungen, Korruption und Inkompetenz beeinträchtigt, so dass die Regierung von Quebec eingreifen musste, um den Standort und das Projekt

der Stadt Montreal zu übernehmen und das Desaster einer Annullierung zu vermeiden. Dies, die Sondersteuer, die zur Finanzierung dieses milliardenschweren Unterfangens erhoben wurde, und die anhaltende Debatte um die Überdachung des Stadions hinterließen in der Öffentlichkeit ein negatives Erbe, das die Entscheidung über Nutzung und Instandhaltung beeinträchtigt hat.

Der Parc olympique befindet sich nun im Besitz und unter der Leitung einer Sonderbehörde der Regierung von Quebec – der Régie des installations olympiques (RIO). Im Jahr 2012 gab sie ein unabhängiges Gutachten zur Zukunft des Parks in Auftrag. Man war eine Generation weiter, und ein „nouveau regard“ tauchte auf, so dass nun vorgeschlagen wurde, das Stadion und seinen Park als Kulturlandschaft unter Denkmalschutz zu stellen, eine neue Bezeichnung im Rahmen des Kulturerbe-Gesetzes von 2012. Ein spezifischer Bericht über das Kulturerbe wurde auch an Wissenschaftler in Auftrag gegeben.

Eine Versöhnung wurde möglich, und seine Architektur und Architekten wurden durch eine Reihe von Publikationen und Ausstellungen anlässlich des 40. Jahrestages der Spiele im Jahr 2016 vorgestellt. Die Publikation Stadorama, eine Gemeinschaftsarbeit, die von der jungen Journalistin Catherine Mathys initiiert wurde, beinhaltete sogar theoretische Überlegungen zum Potenzial der Ernennung zum Weltkulturerbe. Eine internationale Experten-Runde wurde von Heritage Montreal und dem RIO gemeinsam mit ICOMOS Kanada zusammengestellt, um Erfahrungen aus Helsinki, Berlin, Tokio und München auszutauschen und Richtlinien für eine bessere Pflege der Betonstruktur sowie der Innen- und Außenräume zu entwickeln.

Im Jahr 2019 erhielt der Parc olympique einen Quasi-Erbe-Status, und seine Betreuer haben Anstrengungen unternommen, seine Geschichte und die Merkmale des Kulturerbes zu dokumentieren, um vernünftige Entscheidungen zu unterstützen. Seine größten Herausforderungen sind zum Teil technischer Natur. Meistens beziehen sie sich darauf, eine angemessene Nutzung für ein so großes Bauwerk zu finden, ein wesentlicher Faktor bei der Lösung des Dachproblems. Nach Jahrzehnten der Ablehnung und Vernachlässigung dieses Erbes der Neuzeit, das dem des Münchner Olympiaparks ähnelt, weiß man nun, dass es in seinem Wesen universell und aufgrund seiner Architektur außergewöhnlich ist.

### Credits

Figs. 1, 2 Archives Ville de Montréal

Figs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 Dinu Bumbaru

<sup>1</sup> See <https://parcolympique.qc.ca/nouvelles/2017/09/historique-architecturale-urbaine-et-emblematisque-quatre-valeurs-patrimoniales-decernees-au-parc-olympique/>

<sup>2</sup> See [www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-15-42-1.html](http://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-15-42-1.html). The Act was adopted in 2020 and the reform is currently being implemented.

<sup>3</sup> This is similar to the reconciliation of Australians with Jorn Utzon, the architect of the Sydney Opera House, now a World Heritage site.