

The Heritage of the Olympic Games – Future Outlook, World Heritage List and Way Forward

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This joint article was written from the perspective of young ICOMOS architects and researchers as an experience and meeting report of the conference “The Modern Heritage of the Olympic Games. Historic Sports Sites between Conservation and Conversion”, held in the Olympic Park Munich, 7–8 November 2019. The text reflects the engagement of emerging professionals in ICOMOS on a global level and emphasises the close relationship of the ‘youth of the world’ with the Olympic spirit and heritage and asks for an adequate synergy of youth and heritage. The authors participated in the Olympic Games and Heritage Conference as well as in related side events, like the ‘Olympic Follies’, a session with the Working Group 2020 (AG 2020) of ICOMOS Germany and the Professorship for Recent Building Heritage Conservation at the Munich Technical University (TUM), where posters and an exhibition were presented at the Vorhoelzer Forum of the Technical University of Munich on 9 November 2019.

The two-day conference was structured in five sections with an introductory block, a visit to the premises, and an evening event. Setting the tone for an international conference that promotes a critical discussion concerning the legacy of the Olympic facilities is not an ordinary task, but was successfully achieved by the organisers and participants, who were fully committed to the heritage of sport and its relation to architecture and urban planning.

The background of the conference topic was comprehensive: there have been several previous instances where ICOMOS recognised the value of “The Heritage of Sport”, particularly at the conference “Sports – Sites – Culture. Historic Sports Grounds and Conservation” in Berlin in 2001. The rationale behind it is the undeniable importance of sport in our societies and places, how it has shaped our environments, technology, and even our clothing. Therefore, the modern Olympic Summer Games and their association with the development of the 20th century set a favourable base for debating the modes of heritage of modern sports, such as “World Heritage”, “Olympic Heritage”, “Architectural Heritage”, “Landscape Heritage”, among others, and the conservation challenges within current issues such as sustainability, responsibility, and conflict.

Olympic Games and the world

Housed in the iconic Olympic Stadium in Munich, the conference venue set the tone for learning and discussing the history of the modern Games of Olympics, the nature of the architectural ensemble, the impact on the hosting nations,

the spirit of the Games, the role of sponsors and the aftermath or afterlife of the Olympic infrastructure in various countries. The presentations delved into the dynamics of the Olympic heritage and the pressing need for its preservation, protection, and recognition at the global level before it is too late. The recognition of the archaeological site of Olympia as a UNESCO World Heritage Site sets a precedent for the modern heritage of the Olympic Games.

The opening session was moderated by Gregor Hitzfeld (ICOMOS Germany, Landesdenkmalamt Berlin) at the VIP Area of the Olympic Park in Munich. Prof. Jörg Haspel, President of ICOMOS Germany, and Prof. Toshiyuki Kono, President of ICOMOS International, inaugurated the conference. Welcoming the participants to the conference, as an opening remark they expounded on the peace mission of the creation of UNESCO in 1945 and the 1972 World Heritage Convention for the protection of cultural properties, which was also the year when the Munich Olympic Games were held.

On behalf of the Third Mayor of Munich, Prof. Elisabeth Merk, head of the urban planning department in Munich, recalled the past when the application for the Games was started. Engrained in the collective memory of the people, the planning of the 1972 Munich Games took place on a human scale in contrast to the monumental Nazi constructions of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin.

Dr. Hans-Jochen Vogel, Lord Mayor of the City of Munich from 1960 to 1972, joined the conference through a video message, giving a glimpse into the preparation of the application to host the Olympic Games in Munich. The design of the Olympiapark was conceived by Frei Otto and architect Günter Behnisch executed it to the way it is now. The 1972 Olympic structure was designed in a manner that gave birth to a cultural landscape that was for the benefit of the people of Munich.

Bernd Sibler, Bavarian Minister of State for Science and the Arts, spoke about how Olympic facilities are prone to a high burden of alteration and conversion of its built fabric for its post-Games use and mentioned the constant need for upgrading to match the ever-evolving international standards for sporting competitions. Prof. Gudrun Doll-Tepper, Vice President of the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), shared her experience as a student volunteer in Munich 1972 and highlighted the special aura of the Olympiapark Munich, for instance, the slogan of “*Die heiteren Spiele*” (the cheerful Games) and the Games logo was a blue radiating sun designed by Otl Aicher. Both reflected the nation’s positive and optimistic approach in overcoming the darkness of the past.

To conserve or to convert: the modern heritage of the Olympic Games

The architectural history of the Games was succinctly articulated by Elisabeth Spieker, giving a glimpse into its origin and its relevance in the present. The universal value of the Games is adorned with many heritage symbols derived from the past, such as the ritual fire, the stadium architecture, and the marathon. These traditions are still kept alive in the form of the Games. The challenges and opportunities concerning the listing of the Olympic Games were described by Miranda Kiuri, who stressed the importance of making informed decisions on conservation and conversion. Sigrid Brandt from ICOMOS Germany reflected upon the sustainability of the Games in Athens, Montreal, and Rio, emphasising that sustainability should play a key role in future Games.

In terms of sustainability, the reuse of the existing Olympic facilities for future Games is a viable solution that will be explored in the next Games in Japan. Toshiyuki Kono spoke about the architectural significance of the Games, especially Kenzō Tange's work for the Tokyo Games of 1964 which rendered the Games in a favourable mix of regional and contemporary architectural language.

The Games are considered a reflection of human society, which also caused their brief suspension due to the two World Wars. Enrique Xavier de Anda Alanis described the Games in Mexico in 1968, which was considered the year of the youth revolution and of student demonstrations, reflected through the past and contemporary design language of Mexico with the use of black stone for volcanic forms, and artistic murals emphasising the regional identity.

The conceptualisation of the Montreal Olympics was similar to its predecessor, the Munich Games, concerning urban planning, creation of metro facilities, and the Olympic village. Dinu Bumbaru from ICOMOS Canada spoke about the impact of the Games on the hosting nation in terms of infrastructure and economy since it took Canada 30 years to pay back the money spent on the Olympics. Similarly, Frank Guridy from Columbia University New York expanded on the question of why some sports facilities have more impact on the host cities than others. He questioned the sustainability and the importance of reusing the existing facilities for future Games, since Los Angeles will be hosting them again in 2028.

Marieke Kuipers gave a presentation on the Amsterdam Olympics of 1928, where the marathon gates were first introduced, a tower for the Olympic fire was built and women were allowed to participate for the first time. A vital topic was discussed by Riita Salastie from ICOMOS Finland, asking "Does conservation still make sense", a query raised because of the constant changes that have been made to the Helsinki stadium. Her study concluded that only change is permanent. Similarly, Calogero Bellanca and Susana Mora talked about the Olympic heritage in Rome, mentioning that the Games should reduce indulgence in commercialisation and devote time to the transfer of knowledge for the next generation.

Impact of the Olympic Games – challenges and losses

Over the years, due to the rising significance of mass media the issues of corporate sponsorship and commercialisation of the Games have increased, which has resulted in fulfilling impractical demands. Werner Skrentny addressed these issues and probed into the conversion aspect of the stadiums and their eventual maintenance after the Games. As seen in Beijing, after the Games the seats in the Bird's Nest stadium were reduced for easier management, while in the case of Rio the absence of maintenance has led to the theft of seats, the collapse of rusted roofs, etc. In a similar vein, Anna-Maria Odenthal presented the Olympic grounds of Berlin (1936) and spoke about the multifunctionality versus the monofunctional aspect of the Games and their long-term impact.

Nikolai Vassiliev, DOCOMOMO Russia, spoke about the impact of the Games on Moscow and that the modernisation and extension of the metro network contributed to a considerable extent to the functioning of the city. Even though the stadiums are not listed by Moscow's governing body, the positive impact of the Olympic infrastructure has been felt by the City of Moscow and its citizens. The listing of the Olympic facilities would be of additional help.

The range of urban regenerations experienced by cities in the 20th century has principally happened in congruence with some major sports events, such as the Olympic Games and Football World Cups, as explained by Sandra Zenk in connection with the Tokyo Games where the high-speed train inspired many others, or in Munich where the city benefitted from the construction of the underground metro line. However, in the case of Montreal 1976 the Games had less reference to urban planning. Similarly, in Athens, none of the modern Olympic sites have been used continuously since the Games. Gentrification has also been observed, as in Los Angeles.

Regine Keller spoke on the built and unbuilt heritage of the Munich Olympic Park where the landscape of the park is as important as the built mass. Jean-Pierre Blay's presentation explored the circumstances under which architects have reacted to the restrictions set by the rules of the sport. Laura Brown's research focused on the Games between 1948 and 2012 and how in the history of the three London Olympics, every time a new stadium was built after demolishing the previous one, thus always questioning the sustainability factor of the Games.

Ugo Carughi spoke about the Flaminio Stadium in Rome by Pier Luigi and Antonio Nervi and its unique construction that represents a highly effective and very original union between architecture and engineering. Jörg Stabenow described the Munich Games as a utopian design which is aptly described by the slogan used during the application process: "Olympics in the green".

Side events – Olympic heritage and emerging professionals

The public evening event on 7 November was held at the "Haus der Kunst", a neoclassical building from 1937. The

event focused on the spirit and future of the Munich Olympiapark. With the participation of witnesses of the events surrounding the '72 Olympics, the programme included a short film, statements from different points of view, and a panel discussion. The outcome was encouraging: There is an increasing heritage awareness among the public and stakeholders and the perspectives for a World Heritage nomination are an inspiration and sustainable perspective for the 50-year jubilee of the Olympic facilities in 2022.

The poster session and exhibition on "Olympic Follies" on Saturday, 9 November were a good opportunity to learn about the potential of ICOMOS activities. The meeting started by acknowledging the participation of young colleagues from abroad and presentations from the national scientific committees and the Emerging Professional Working Group of ICOMOS Germany (AG 2020). The meeting and poster session provided an excellent opportunity to learn about their projects and engage with fellow heritage professionals.

The case of engaging young professionals as a heritage resource in the conference is an example of involving emerging professionals in current debates as a resource for heritage conservation. From sharing heritage actions to inheriting the assets, the emerging professional is a crucial stakeholder who directly contributes to the future of heritage. By liaising with mentors, young professionals can access resources and receive funds to attend conferences, produce and share scientific knowledge and current debates on different levels as active and future heritage users and practitioners who will not only inherit the assets, but also the debate and the challenges of responsible heritage practices.

Conclusion and recommendations

Olympic stadiums around the world bear testimony to the evolution of sports architecture and its relation to the intangible cultural, social, and political values. The Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Olympic sites should be evaluated on the basis of the global nature of the event and its location all across the world. While considering the stadiums for World Heritage nomination, it should be taken into account that the analysis should go beyond the aesthetic values since the architectural language of the stadiums varies greatly. The listing category should be made based on the overall consensus of stakeholder workshops and consultations and explore its practicality on the world stage.

Currently, most of the Olympic sites around the world are listed/graded either by regional or national government authorities, except for a few. They all would benefit greatly if this were done cohesively so that they could be considered as an ensemble of Olympic stadium sites/Olympic sites. This could stimulate the protection of individual sites that are of local significance and aid other historic sports facilities, such as *akhara*s in India or martial arts training centres in Southeast Asia.

The Munich Olympiapark, including the Stadium, Olympic Hall, Indoor Swimming Pool, Television Tower, and

Ecumenical Church Centre, and the Olympic Village were included as an ensemble in the Bavarian heritage list in 1998. Work towards nominating the Munich Olympic site for World Heritage has been underway for some years. So far, the stadium of Mexico City is the only modern Olympic stadium to be inscribed as a World Heritage site, but it was listed in 2007 only as part of the UNESCO site "*Central University City Campus of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM)*" and is under developmental pressure from the surrounding areas.

Here are the points which we as external observers and authors of the conference report consider necessary for the preparation of the UNESCO nomination dossier:

- An ICOMOS working group to be formulated to discuss sports heritage and encourage collaboration with ISC20C for material conservation research.
- The stakeholders involved in the nomination process to be diverse: heritage experts, local planning and urban authorities, architectural councils, universities, national sports associations, sports patrons, sponsors, and the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) as well as the International Olympic Committee (IOC).
- The type of nomination should be determined to anticipate difficulties; for example, a transnational serial nomination would require an understanding of the specific heritage protection laws in the various countries and the countries' willingness to participate.
- Prepare a management plan for all potential Olympic facilities for nomination: conservation or/and conversion.
- As a sustainable measure, previous host countries should be allowed to host the Olympics in alternate years for long-term sustenance and economic equilibrium. Encourage new host countries to partner with previous hosts, within their geographical proximity.
- Formulation of a declaration for historic sports facilities.

The Olympic Heritage conference hosted by ICOMOS Germany and the Bavarian state capital of Munich, in cooperation with partner organisations and institutions from sport and heritage conservation, like the Bavarian Heritage Conservation Authority (BLfD), the Deutsche Akademie für Städtebau und Landesplanung (German Academy for Urban Development and Regional Planning – DASL) and the German Olympic Sports Confederation (Deutscher Olympischer Sportbund – DOSB), has come at a time when the importance of 20th-century architecture is finding its foothold in many countries and the protection of this type of cultural properties has become the need of the hour. After all, never before has the time between the creation of a building and its listing as a heritage property been so short but extremely necessary. Even the type of heritage is unprecedented. Olympic Games hosting nations have given us a unique set of tangible inheritance in the form of Olympic stadiums and halls, Olympic villages, or grounds accentuating the skyline and the urban layout of various cities around the world, which deserves its due recognition and protection.