

Barcelona: City of sport

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The Barcelona Olympic Games represented a huge step forward for this city in many different respects; sport in the city was also affected, and in a very special way. The consequences of the Games are now visible in the urban transformation of the city and its sports installations, but the Games also had a less visible impact on the city which was just as – if not more – important: the legacy of acquired skills (know-how) and that of a new attitude on the part of the city's inhabitants towards active sporting activity.

1. Sports infrastructure

The first great impact of the Barcelona Games – from the sporting point of view – has been the set of sports installations created as a result of the Games, and which now make up the most important part of the city's sporting heritage.

When Barcelona decided to become a candidate host city for the Olympics, special emphasis was placed on the role the Games would have to play as the driving force behind large-scale projects of urban transformation, projects which had been held back under the Francoist dictatorship. A leap forward had to be made which would be great enough to make up for lost time and to enable the city to prepare itself fully in order to face the social, economic and cultural challenges present on the eve of the 21st Century.

The underlying philosophy of the Olympic Project – as far as installations and supporting infrastructure were concerned – was therefore underpinned by two basic elements: town planning and sports.

Basic requirements

The proposed blueprint for the Olympic installations was based on an analysis carried out by a group of town planners¹ of the situation regarding sports facilities in the city of Barcelona in 1982. On the basis of their report, an evaluation was made of existing deficiencies which served as a guideline for the final blueprint for the Olympic installations.

The entire installations programme was conditioned by three basic requirements:

- Investments in sports infrastructure would have to be based on a real, concrete need for sports facilities, which would later be exploited in suitable fashion.
- The new building work would be carried out in areas which suffered from a widespread lack of sports installations or which had considerable structural deficiencies, and where building projects would also have an obvious impact in terms of urbanistic regeneration and territorial equilibrium.
- Other projects would have to be dedicated to the modernisation of existing – but outdated – facilities, endowing the latter with the infrastructure required so that any international event might be organised there, and that the requirements of high-level sports competitions could be fully met.

Of the 43 facilities used in the course of the Games, 15 were new building projects (8 in the city of Barcelona and 7 in the Olympic subsidiary host cities), 10 were renovations, and the other 18 were existing installations which only required temporary renovation in order to make them suitable for use in the

¹ See Lluís Millet's chapter, in this book

Olympic Games.

This proposal conformed to the Plan for Sports Installations in the City of Barcelona: on the one hand, the group of installations would be distributed territorially so as to avoid a lack of balance between different districts and to bring the installations closer to the public, and, on the other hand, to diversify the offer of sports activities and amenities, while ensuring that these amenities would be of the best possible quality.

A key element in the overall process was the compromise reached between the Barcelona Town Council and the COOB'92 (Barcelona Olympic Organising Committee) with the aim of finding the right balance between the legitimate requirements of each party: on the one hand the installations needed to be located in those areas which were most convenient from the point of view of improving the city's sporting infrastructure and with a capacity which would facilitate their use after the Games were over, and on the other hand, they needed to be located and equipped in such a way that they could meet the special and highly specific needs of the Olympic Games.

The skill used in combining the interests of both parties in a positive fashion gave rise to some highly imaginative ideas and strategies. Thus it was that the concept of a «container» installation arose, in order to cope with certain particular sports, the performance of which did not require a specific type of installation. In this manner, the economic resources of the COOB which had been earmarked for creating competition space for these sports were spent on the city in a useful fashion. For example, the restoration and recuperation for the community of the Estació del Nord (a railway station of considerable architectural interest, abandoned at the time) was one of the city's long-standing aspirations and had been on the list of municipal projects since 1983, but it had not been easy to get the required financing. When COOB'92 asked the Council for a «container» space for the table tennis competitions, the requirements of both parties coincided. Similarly, the building of a large sports centre (L'Espanya Industrial) in a district lacking in sports facilities became possible when it was used to host the Olympic weightlifting competitions. Or then again there was the Municipal Sailing Centre, built as a complement to the Olympic Port and financed by funds proceeding from the sale of moorings and commercial premises.

The training installations provide another example of this. No new buildings were erected. Priority was given to the updating of the existing system of sports facilities, with renovation being aimed primarily at achieving greater social use of the latter (80% of the installations used were in public ownership). The priority given to the adaptation of the installations was clearly reflected in the distribution of funding: five sixths of the overall budget for the training plan was dedicated to improvements and renovations of a permanent nature, whereas only one sixth was used for rental and other temporary expenses.

The Decentralised Games

The underlying philosophy of the Olympic Project ensured that the Games were decentralised. The idea of concentrating all installations in an Olympic Park – as had been the case in Seoul – was immediately rejected. Barcelona decided to share the Games with as many subsidiary host cities as possible. The Olympic installations programme designated four Olympic areas within the city of Barcelona and 15 subsidiary Olympic host cities.

The games installations located within the four designated Olympic areas, the training installations set up in several different districts of the city and the road network which connected them and surrounded them, all together made up a network which involved the entire city in the Olympic project.

The four Olympic areas were selected according to criteria such as sporting tradition and the structural reality of the territory in question. On the one hand, there were two areas that were virtually obligatory, given their historical sports installations. First came Montjuïc, where the city had built several emblematic buildings at different moments in its history (such as the Olympic Stadium, built when the city was a candidate for the 1936 Olympics, or the Picornell swimming-pools, built when it was a candidate in 1972). The time had come to modernise and complete the facilities, and to complete the urbanisation of the mountain of Montjuïc. Second was the Diagonal, which had the largest concentration of private sports facilities in the city. It was a question of using the existing facilities, while seeking help from private institutions in order to adapt these facilities for the temporary needs of the Games and, at the same time, renewing and modernising the installations for normal, daily use.

But it was also necessary to establish a counterbalance, by redistributing the range of sports amenities and placing installations in areas of the city where these were lacking. The other two designated areas –Parc de Mar and the Vall d'Hebron – underwent a process of urban renovation, to a certain extent.

The Parc de Mar (the Olympic Village) was an excuse for opening the city up to the sea, thus realising a long-standing aspiration of the citizens, and the Vall d'Hebron provided an opportunity for organising and urbanising a chaotic urban space. In these two new areas, new facilities were provided, following the city plan for sports installations.

As far as the subsidiary host cities were concerned, these were selected on the basis of Catalan sporting history and tradition, in which a network of medium-sized towns had been pioneers and leaders in several different sporting disciplines. It was only right to acknowledge the contributions made to popular sport by Granollers (handball), Badalona (basketball), Terrassa (hockey) or Viladecans (baseball), for example.

On the other hand, everything had to be organised in a rational fashion. A high-capacity venue for handball, for example, was unnecessary in Barcelona, but there was a need for one in Granollers, which required a high-quality installation in order to complete its network of facilities. In Barcelona more «neighbourhood centres» were needed, covered arenas for intensive use, but no more venues with a capacity greater than five thousand spectators were required.

Inter-institutional collaboration

The organisation of the Olympic Games – from the days of the candidature up to their actual celebration – marked a period of tremendous cooperation between different institutions, in the field of sport. Through the COOB and its sports commission, cooperation between institutions was extremely positive and helped favour contacts between institutions and the different members of the sporting family, and in particular with the federations.

As a result of this climate of cooperation, an unwritten agreement – which was accepted implicitly by the institutions involved – came into being when the Barcelona Games were being prepared. Thanks to this pact, COOB'92 gave priority to investing its resources in Barcelona, building sports installations on sites ceded by the Town Council and using these buildings for the Games and then ceding them in their turn, to the Council afterwards. While the State, the Catalan Autonomous Government and the Barcelona Diputation each invested as they saw fit in a single emblematic installation in Barcelona (the Olympic Stadium, the Catalan National Institute of Physical Education, and the Palau Sant Jordi, respectively), and dedicated their financial efforts to the subsidiary host city projects.

At the same time, the Barcelona Town Council made the largest single investment in its history in order to complete the territorial equilibrium of the Olympic project. In Barcelona, 42,566 million pesetas were invested in the 15 large-scale installations for Olympic competitions, and between 1982 and 1992 a further 7,000 million pesetas were invested in non-Olympic installations. An economic effort of this magnitude and in such a short space of time could not have been made without the stimulus provided by the Olympics.

If the number of installations available in Barcelona in 1982 is compared with those available after 1992, it can be seen that the Olympic and non-Olympic investment effort resulted in an increase of 75.8% as far as installations were concerned, and of 126.4% in the case of sports venues. All together, a total surface area of nearly 300,000 square metres was involved.

Innovation of sports facilities

Another development worth pointing out is the contribution of specific sporting material to sporting – and, above all, to training – venues. The COOB invested around 3,000 million pesetas in the purchase of state-of-the-art sporting material.

Moreover, the COOB General Sports Management – in collaboration with the Cultural Olympiad – planned the revision and renovation of part of the auxiliary equipment for the Olympic Games sports venues. A range of objects were selected which had a potentially much higher visual profile in front of the television cameras. Given its origins, the design programme was called «Finestra» (*Window*).

FINESTRA PROJECT

COMMISSIONS GIVEN TO PROFESSIONALS

- The container holding magnesium carbonate for the gymnasts (Carles Martínez and Quim d'Espona)
 - The obstacles for the showjumping events (Elies Torres and José A. Martínez)
 - The obstacles for the all-round equestrian events (Dani Freixes)
 - The judges' booth for equestrian events (Eduard Samsó)
 - The judges chairs for tennis, table tennis, badminton and swimming (Josep Llusçà)
-

COMMISSIONS GIVEN TO SCHOOLS OF DESIGN

- The stand for judo belts (Escola Massana)
 - The repairs trolley (Escola Massana)
 - The starting block (Escola Elisava)
 - The throwing events footstop (La Llotja)
 - The score boards for Olympic and worldwide records in athletic events (La Llotja)
 - The starting chair for canoeing through rapids (Escola Elisava)
 - The cart for handballs (La Llotja)
 - The cart for volleyballs (La Llotja)
 - The cart for waterpolo balls (La Llotja)
-

The novelty of designing auxiliary sports equipment for the Olympic Games was extended to the way in which the commissions for such work were organised. Five projects were commissioned directly from a small group of professionals, designers and architects. Another 14 projects were commissioned from Barcelona's four main design schools: Eina, Elisava, Llotja and Massana. Each school presented different proposals, from which a winner and five runners-up were selected; a final selection was made of 9 projects. The students were able to participate in the industrial production of the pieces. The results were spectacular and some of the designed objects have continued to be used in other international events.

All these objects were displayed at the «Olympic Design» exhibition, organised by the Cultural Olympiad, in which the image created for the Barcelona'92 candidature was shown together with the innovatory sports designs created for the Barcelona Games.

The creation of the CAR and the new headquarters of the INEFC

Out of all the new initiatives and sports installations that came into being especially for the Barcelona Games, special mention should be made of two, which were absolutely fundamental, given their impact on the training and improvement of this country's sportsmen and women.

The Centre for High Sporting Performance (CAR), built in Sant Cugat del Vallès (Barcelona) towards the end of 1987 at the behest of the Catalan Autonomous Government, in collaboration with the Spanish Higher Council for Sport, was started with the aim of helping technicians and sportspeople to improve their performance vis-à-vis the world elite. The CAR was a descendant of existing sports training organisations, above all of the *Residències Blume*, created in 1960, and of the Technification Centres.

It played an absolutely vital role in the Barcelona Games. It contributed to the obtaining of 8 medals for the Spanish Olympic team, by means of scientific control and monitoring programmes which were developed for the athletes taking part in a number of different specialised sports (cycling, athletics, boxing, tennis, archery, hockey, ice hockey, taekwondo).

The CAR also contributed to the success of the Games thanks to the excellent work carried out in the field of biomechanics, and in particular to the number of research projects carried out in the course of the Games, and to the quality of the information pertaining to biomechanics and the quickness with which it was presented to TV stations from around the world.

After the Games, the CAR has continued to expand its important work of sports training and research, not only to the advantage of Spanish athletes but also to that of many others around the world through the Olympic Solidarity programme dedicated to the preparation of athletes from less developed countries.

The Catalan National Institute of Physical Education (INEFC), created in 1975) with headquarters in both Barcelona and Lleida, found the Olympic Games to be a tremendous stimulus. The construction of the new building on the Olympic Ring, designed by Ricardo Bofill and host to the wrestling events in the course of the Games, has ensured that this institution is now equipped with a series of installations which incorporate the latest technology.

The INEFC, affiliated to the University of Barcelona, is the headquarters of the European Network of Sports Sciences. Its Study Plan is organised in two cycles: the first consists of three courses (Diploma in Physical Education) and the second, of two courses (B.A. in Physical Education). It also offers M.A. and post-graduate courses. It has some magnificent sports installations, research laboratories of its own, together with a book/media library specialising in physical education, sports, and sciences applied to sport.

2. Knowledge acquired through organisation of the Games

For the Barcelona sports world, the organisation of the Olympic Games has meant a tremendous opportunity for improving its methods of management, its organisational capacity, for linking up better with the international sports network – and especially with the federations – and therefore for being better prepared to serve the city's daily sports requirements.

The clubs, sports federations, and sports management companies have also benefited from the accumulated know-how, having improved their workforces with the addition of workers and contributors involved with COOB'92, or with volunteers who took part in the preparation and celebration of the Games and who were now able to contribute their acquired knowledge on a daily basis to the above-mentioned organisations.

New sports installations: new systems of management

The Barcelona Town Council made an effort to get its management systems ready for the imminent concentration of investment in the city. The gathering of all the new Olympic installations under the

umbrella of Council management would have meant increasing the municipal staff to the tune of 500 people. This was logistically impossible to cope with. It was therefore necessary to find other forms of management.

As a result, a new by-law was passed in 1991 affecting the use of municipal sports installations. Firstly, this by-law was passed unanimously by all the political groupings within the Council, thus indicating the unity of vision required for the city's management of sports issues. Secondly, the by-law introduced new management systems, including what was known as «concerned management» based on the State's new contract laws and the new law affecting local government.

«Concerned management» meant that a private organisation could obtain management of a municipal installation by entering a public competition, although the Council would maintain control of and monitor this management by means of a monitoring commission, and would also have the power to make vital decisions concerning issues such as service rates, programmes of action, budgeting, and maintenance plans.

This «concerned management» formula also carried on the city's sporting tradition, in which the Council had usually delegated or ceded installations to clubs, associations or to the sports federations themselves. One of the keys to the successful functioning of the city's new sports facilities was precisely this management model, which made it possible for local administration to close the gap between itself and the average citizen by means of sports organisations which were in touch with the day-to-day reality of sporting activity and which were well-known in their respective neighbourhoods.

Another initiative which was taken in the field of municipal sports management was the creation of a municipal joint-stock company, with 100% municipal capital, called «Barcelona Promoció» (*Barcelona Promotion*).

The purpose of this company was to manage four flagship installations (the Palau Sant Jordi, the Olympic Stadium, the Palau Municipal d'Esports, and the Velòdrom) which were purpose-built for shows and spectacles, in particular for high-level sporting events, but also for musical, recreational and civic events.

The Palau Sant Jordi was the ultimate example of this kind of installation. The brief given to the Japanese architect Arata Isozaki already indicated that the new space would be used in many different ways and that the tiers and adjacent spaces would have to be designed in such a way that they could accommodate a considerable variety of events. The Palau Sant Jordi is a venue in which almost anything can be staged. Thanks to its technical advantages, its floor can be used for a basketball game or an indoor athletics championship, it can be converted into an Alpine ski station or a stretch of sea for windsurfing on, or into a trialbike track or a circus, into an opera set or the stage for a rock concert.

This type of multi-functional installation requires a kind of management which is able to adapt itself to market needs and which has the capacity to contract and produce both competitive events and shows.

«Barcelona Promoció» forms part of the European Arenas Association, where it is considered to be one of the most dynamic and creative member organisations when it comes to planning initiatives for different functions and for show production. Economically, «Barcelona Promoció» has always been in the black in its 6 years of existence. In other words, it has managed to finance itself, without having to rely on contributions from public funds.

	Palau d'Esports		Velòdrom d'Horta		Olympic Stadium		Palau Sant Jordi		Total	
	Events	Spectators	Events	Spectators	Events	Spectators	Events	Spectators	Events	Spectators
Sports events	35	51,392	3	8,095	12	213,821	38	268,984		
Musical events	24	63,355	64	39,641	2	64,500	17	151,624		
Family events	14	28,738	0	-	0	-	10	96,120		
Various	9	39,173	0	-	54	46,124	64	442,781		
Total	82	182,658	67	47,736	68	324,445	129	959,509	346	1,514,348

Number of events and spectators in the course of 1994 in the four installations run by Barcelona Promoció.

To give an idea of the repercussion of the new management systems, 420 new jobs have been created in these installations through assigning competitions which have taken place since the Games. To these, the 42 new permanent jobs created by «Barcelona Promoció» should be added, together with the jobs it has created indirectly, through maintenance, security, and cleaning contracts.

It can therefore be safely said that as far as management is concerned, suitable methods have been found both for neighbourhood sports facilities and for installations which are used for international competition events and massive spectacles, methods which guarantee the social, sporting and economic performance of these installations.

The Olympic and Paralympic Games – with their organisational complexity and the large-scale building required to make the Olympic project a reality – have obliged us to develop technologies, to create companies, to extend new styles and methods of working over a large area. This accumulated knowledge, this acquired know-how, will be an extremely important asset vis-à-vis the work which will need to be done in the coming years.

3. New sporting habits and customs of the community

We maintain that apart from the objective improvements in sports infrastructure and in new management methods, there has been a psychological improvement in the population at large and in improvement in the attitude of citizens as regards physical activity and sports.

The week before Barcelona was nominated as the Olympic host city in 1987, a survey was published in one of the city's newspapers («El Periódico») according to which 91% of the citizens were in favour of the Olympic project. This acceptance had a further dimension: «I agree that the Olympic Games should be in

Barcelona, but I also want to take part, I also want to do some sport: at school, in the neighbourhood.» If the Olympic Games were given to Barcelona it was clearly because sport had considerable social backing there. But what was more, as the candidature went ahead, there was a noted social acceptance – incorporating new, popular sectors of the population – which became apparent through a will to take an active part in sporting activities.

The Games of participation and solidarity

Two examples can be given which will illustrate this. Firstly, special mention should be made once more of the Olympic volunteers, who symbolised the support and enthusiasm of the average citizen vis-à-vis the Olympic project; it is also an example of how the enthusiasm of many people – including a large proportion of young people – was converted into direct contributions to a collective project, without any financial reward being given.

Secondly, Barcelona made the decision to spare nothing for the organisation of the Paralympic Games, which were organised by the same Olympic Organising Committee, and which got record attendance figures, with some installations being too small for the number of spectators on several occasions. This was another sign of how the Barcelonans wished to take part in the sporting life of the city, and not just watch from the sidelines. The Paralympic Games became a symbol for the normalisation and integration of physically disabled people, summed up in Pasqual Maragall's statement: «We are all paralympics.»² These were, without a doubt, the Games which represented solidarity above all, and which helped spread the message that everybody can participate in sports and that everybody can go beyond their own limitations.

More sport and more participation

The mood which predominated in the course of the preparation for the Games was conducive to motivating the population to take an active part in this sporting event. Barcelona saw a notable increase in the participation of new social sectors of the population in active sports. There are two pieces of evidence for this phenomenon.

- A. The figures for use of new sports centres created after the Games: in all the installations which accept subscribers or members, there has been an increase of 46,000 new users.
- B. The survey carried out by the Council in 1995 on the sporting habits of the adult Barcelonan population (between 16 and 60 years old), which can be compared with a similar survey carried out in 1985. The survey shows that the general attitude of the population towards sport has grown more positive.

The proportion of the population which does some kind of physical or sporting activity at least once a week has grown from 36% in 1983, to 47% in 1989, and went up to 51% in 1995. Similarly, the percentage of women participating in sporting activity has increased from 35% in 1989 to 45% in 1995.

² Words of Barcelona Mayor Pascual Maragall in the Opening Ceremony of the IX Paralympic Games.

In 1994, more than 300,000 people took part in sporting events on the streets of Barcelona which involved the city's inhabitants (athletic competitions, popular marathon, the bicycle festival, the roller-skating festival etc.). The citizens have turned the city streets into the world's largest stadium. One example: in Barcelona, by the end of 1995, there will be almost 50 km of bicycle paths. Barcelona currently has over three thousand sports venues, over seven hundred of which are public property. Around 300,000 citizens belong to one of the city's 1,200 sports associations and organisations, which together offer more than 100 different types of sporting activities.

It is also worth pointing out that the new installations have brought sports which have traditionally been the preserve of a minority closer to the population at large:

- The Municipal Sailing Centre – right next to the metro – has made it possible for everybody can take their first steps yachting, water-skiing, canoeing in the open sea, dinghy sailing in all its many forms, and windsurfing. In the last three years, 16,000 different people have taken part in these activities. A telling piece of information is the fact that two of the city's public schools have already including sailing as an optional subject at secondary school level.
- The Foixarda Municipal Riding School had made it possible for young people and adults to begin riding, in a public space near the city centre.
- The Picornell swimming-pools can be used for everything from swimming and waterpolo to rock-climbing on artificial walls. In the summer of 1994, they were used by 230,000 people.
- The Municipal swimming-pool not only has an Olympic diving board, but also an artificial ski slope.

Sport at school

Another consequence of the Olympic candidature was the launching, in 1985, of the «More sport than ever at school» campaign.

On the one hand, the aim was to improve the objective level of physical education and sports installations in the city's public schools, and, on the other hand, to create a project which would stimulate sport and the Olympic spirit at a time when the city was still a candidate.

One of the main objectives of this campaign was the upgrading of 230 practising teachers, in 650-hour courses lasting two years, so that they could become physical education instructors equipment. Secondly, 700 million pesetas were invested in sports installations within walking distance of schools, and a further 12 to 15 million pesetas were distributed annually to pay for sports material and equipment. The Olympic Bus was also created, by means of which 25,000 schoolchildren could visit the Olympic installations.

By way of continuing the Olympic tradition, the Council launched the «Campus Olímpia» in 1993, a programme of sporting activities to be carried out in the Olympic installations, with the aim of stimulating sporting activity in children and young people from Barcelona during the summer months.

	<i>Campus Olímpia'93</i>	<i>Campus Olímpia'94</i>	<i>Increase %</i>	<i>Campus Olímpia'95 (Estimates)</i>	<i>Increase %</i>
Installations	7	19	171	25	131
Campus	13	28	115	44	57
Activities	17	37	117	49	32
Participants	1,750	4,502	157	6,557	45.5
Mobilised capital (in millions of pesetas)		63		101	

Comparative tables for the Campus Olímpia

In a nutshell, the new demands of the inhabitants of the city as regards sport can be summed up in one crucial word: quality, be it the quality of equipment or of the maintenance of public installations, or of services and the activities made available in these installations. Barcelonans currently enjoy access to more sports than ever before (swimming, horseback riding, tennis, cycling, athletics, rock-climbing), together with new services (massage rooms, saunas, hydromassage, medical and nursing services with individualised programmes for each user), new sports programmes (corrective and keep-fit gymnastics, aerobics, yoga) and new facilities (both as regards quantity and quality). The Olympic Games of 1992 have made this possible.

Sports in Barcelona cover numerous activities, including football, hiking, running, and sailing, that all allow you to discover the city in a new way. If you know anything about Barcelona, you'll know that it's a city with sports close to its heart. This city, of course, is home to one of the world's biggest football teams. FC Barcelona has long been a juggernaut on the Spanish and European footballing stage, but they've taken it to a new level entirely in the past ten years, winning many domestic and international trophies. And they have the world's best player in Lionel Messi. Any holiday with sports in Barcelona as its theme could do worse than focusing entirely on the esteemed football club.