

The Olympic Games and Cultural Policy

By Dr Beatriz Garcia

Published in 2012, Routledge

***The Olympic Games and Cultural Policy* is the first comprehensive ethnographic study of the Olympic Games cultural programme. It draws together theoretical foundations in cultural policy, mega-events and critical Olympic studies, to provide an in-depth analysis of the tensions involved in the programme's design, management and promotion. The book charts the historical development of cultural manifestations at the modern Games and offers a critique of existing frameworks to deliver sustainable cultural programming within a global mega event.**

Essential reading for mega event programmers, policy makers and researchers on global culture, events and urban cultural policy.

Summary

The opening of the London 2012 Games marks 100 years since the emergence of an arts and cultural programme at the Olympic Games. What is the rationale for such programme and how has it evolved over time? How does it shape the world's largest mega event? In whose benefit is it delivered? This book situates discussions about the role of culture at the Olympics within a comprehensive study of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. Drawing together theoretical foundations in cultural policy, mega-events hosting and critical Olympic studies, this is the first book to provide a thorough and in-depth analysis of the process involved in the design, management and promotion of an Olympic cultural programme. The book charts the historical development of cultural manifestations at the modern Olympic Games, based on extensive research at the IOC archives in Lausanne. It also offers an in-depth critique of the opportunities and challenges to deliver sustainable cultural programming within a global mega event by having secured unprecedented access to the works of an Olympic Organising committee in the lead-up and during the delivery of a summer Games edition. This assessment is complemented by an analysis of elements that have shaped or been ignored in subsequent Games editions, providing previously unavailable evidence of the local and international legacy of cultural policy frameworks within the Olympic Games.

Why read this book?

This monograph offers an unprecedented depth of analysis of one key aspect of the world's largest mega-event, which is deemed to be the key to ensure the event's long-term sustainability. The Olympic cultural programme has received little academic or media attention to date, however, it has become a key laboratory for policy development with implications at city and national levels and a growing role in the event legacy debate. In the current climate of fierce global city positioning and event hosting competition, sensitivity towards local culture and insight to capture its distinctiveness and project it internationally have become critical areas of priority. This book provides an unrivalled account of the limitations and failures in this area within one of the most sought after mega events and advances possible ways of addressing such limitations. Such insight is essential for city planners, urban cultural policy makers and major event programmers, as well as for the academic community and researchers working in these fields.

What is new

The issue of mega event cultural policy is an emerging topic. There is no previous publication fully dedicated to the Olympic Games cultural policy frameworks and their inherent tensions.

This topic is covered extensively in chapter 1, which highlights the need to consider the close interrelation between local and global policy cultural policy imperatives in the context of the mega event, and the interdependencies between cultural and communication policies.

Chapters 2 and 3 detail the implications of such interrelations in the context of the Olympic Games, with a particular emphasis on existing structures and defined policies within the Olympic Movement. Dr Garcia warns that current frameworks are not appropriate to meet the diverse and complex cultural needs of host cities and nations. This situation points at a misalignment between the Movement's aspirations, vision and philosophy (which place cultural engagement at the centre) and the operational structures in place, particularly in the context of the Games hosting process.

The central chapters go on to dissect these issues with a focus on Sydney 2000 as a case study and provide the most detailed analysis ever published on this topic. Indeed, the degree of access to the internal operations of a mega-event organizing committee is a unique feature of this monograph, which offers new insights into ongoing managerial and policy challenges.

The concluding chapter offers recommendations for a way forward, thus engaging with academic as well as practitioner and policy concerns on this topic.

About the author

Dr Beatriz Garcia is Head of Research at the Institute of Cultural Capital and Senior Research Fellow in Sociology at the University of Liverpool. She has led research on the Olympic Games since 1999, undertaking data collection at eight Olympic Games editions to date (Barcelona, Sydney, Salt Lake City, Athens, Torino, Beijing, Vancouver and London). She has been funded by the IOC-Olympic Studies Centre, the International Olympic Academy, the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, the European Commission, the AHRC and the ESRC, the British Academy and the Universities China Committee in London and has been involved as academic advisor on Culture and Education to the London 2012 team since the Bid stage. Dr Garcia is a member of the IOC Postgraduate Research Grant Selection Committee and has been appointed by London 2012 to conduct its Cultural Olympiad Evaluation.

Dr Garcia's research on the Games and other major events focuses on the understanding of their cultural impacts and the sustainability of their cultural legacy. She has focused on examinations of the impact of hosting arts festivals or 'Cultural Olympiads' and the role of non-IOC accredited media in exploring narratives of the Olympic city and local host communities. This is a rich source for examining the non-sporting dimensions of the Games. She is Editor of the online magazine *Culture @ the Olympics* and author of numerous journal publications on the cultural dimensions of the Games, including a special edition of *Cultural Trends* on the Cultural Olympiad (Routledge, 2013). Her monographs 'The Olympics. The Basics' and 'The Olympic Games and Cultural Policy' are published by Routledge in 2012.

For more information: www.beatrizgarcia.net, www.iccliverpool.ac.uk, and www.culturalolympics.org.uk

Chapter abstracts

The book is structured in three parts and ten chapters. **Part One** presents the book's conceptual framework, explaining the background to the Olympic Games cultural programme and providing an overview of Olympic cultural policies. **Part two** focuses on the four annual Olympic Arts Festivals (1997-2000) of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, in order to highlight key issues in the design, management and promotion of Olympic cultural programming. Respective chapters focus on the Sydney experience but refer to other Games editions to identify key commonalities and sustained trends. To conclude, **Part Three** considers the future of cultural policy at the Olympic Games.

Part I: Cultural Policy and the Olympic Movement

1. Introduction: The Cultural Policy of Global Events

Chapter One explores the relevance of cultural policy frameworks to interrogate global event hosting processes. It starts by reviewing the impact of globalisation on the definition and application of cultural policy principles, arguing that this has led to a convergence between cultural and communication policy frameworks. The chapter then touches on the implications for cities and regions and moves on to reflect on the role of mega-events as catalysts for locally-based cultural policies with a global outreach. The last section of the chapter introduces the Olympic Games as a paradigm of all these processes combined and its cultural programme as the key exemplar of existing cultural policy tensions. The chapter focuses on the state of cultural policy and mega-event debates in the late 1990s, as this is the period leading to the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games and the distinct cultural policy choices that framed its four year cultural programme, which will be the main case study explored throughout the monograph. This period is significant as it has shaped the dominant international cultural policy and mega-event hosting discourse to this day.

2. The Olympic Games Cultural Programme

Chapter Two provides a framework for understanding the functions and position of the Olympic cultural programme within the Olympic Games hosting process, noting how this is defined by the need to balance the event global media outreach with its responsibilities towards local stakeholders. The chapter begins by reviewing the notion of the Olympic cultural programme as presented within official Olympic policy documents, which articulate it as a distinct component of the Games celebration. It then describes the historical evolution of the programme since its original inception by the founder of the modern Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, charting its first implementation in 1912, up to the latest editions of the Olympic Summer and Winter Games in Beijing 2008, Vancouver 2010 and the lead up to London 2012. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of key operational challenges for the programme, from design to management and promotional tensions.

3. The Cultural Policies of the International Olympic Committee

Chapter Three explains and assesses official cultural provisions as defined by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to establish how the organization has articulated its cultural policy over the years. This involves an analysis of the positioning of cultural activities within the structure of the Olympic Movement and an analysis of how cultural references and commitments are reflected within the institution's working agenda. The chapter begins with a brief review of the elements highlighted within IOC official documents in reference to Olympic cultural activity. The second and third sections of the chapter analyse the position of cultural activities (and the cultural programme, in particular) within the structure and strategic agendas of the IOC. The period of time that is most relevant for this assessment is the lead up to the Sydney 2000 Games, as this helps explain the framework within which the Games operated and its influence on the design, management and promotional structures that are analysed in subsequent chapters. Some of the IOC developments that followed the Sydney Games are also identified and discussed in order to explain current Olympic cultural policy trends.

Part II: The Olympic Games Cultural Programme: Olympic Arts Festivals in Sydney 2000

4. Defining the Vision

Chapter Four provides an overview of the rationale behind a given Olympic cultural programme by contrasting the aspirations presented at the bid stage with the reality of planning and defining key deliverables once the Games have been awarded. The chapter starts by offering a perspective on the social, political and cultural context of Australia, host nation of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, and providing an overview of the country's cultural policy development. The chapter moves on to discuss the position of arts and culture within the Games bidding process and analyses its core narrative: multiculturalism and Aboriginal reconciliation. The last section describes the mission statements and key deliverables of the Olympic cultural programme as defined by the IOC and interpreted by the Sydney Organising Committee for the Games (SOCOG) and compares this framework with the final programme design – four Olympic Arts Festivals - highlighting the chosen themes, key objectives and flagship events. This is followed by a brief overview of the vision and programming focus for Olympic cultural programmes in the aftermath of Sydney 2000.

5. Managing the Programme: Internal Operations

Chapter Five focuses on the Games structures of management, in particular, the way the cultural programme is embedded within the Organising Committee for the Games (OCOG). The chapter reviews the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games internal management structure as an exemplar of OCOG operations. It starts by explaining SOCOG's fluid operational structure, highlighting major differences between the pre-Games and Games-time periods, and ends with a review of the Olympic Arts Festivals' equally fluid management priorities in terms of staffing, budgeting, marketing, promotions, and ticketing over the same periods.

6. Managing the Programme: External Operations

Chapter Six discusses how the cultural programme fits within the OCOG's external operations and stakeholder relationships. The emphasis is on the strategies to engage key cultural stakeholders, identified as the public sector, the local arts community, the corporate sector and the media. Each category has been identified as a key interest group with a potential to contribute to and/or gain benefit from an association with the Olympic cultural programme and a potential to influence the Games' cultural policy. The chapter begins with an analysis of SOCOG's Cultural Commission and its role reaching out to the local and national arts community; it then looks into the Olympic Arts Festivals government relations strategy, noting the difficulty to position the Festivals as a public policy priority at the same time as the rest of the Olympic programme. The chapter then explains SOCOG's dedicated arts sponsorship scheme and its publicity strategy, both of which were developed separately from the main Olympic sponsorship and media plan. The chapter explains how such an approach allowed the programme to retain a distinct identity but struggled to benefit from and maintain an association with the Games extensive corporate and media relations opportunities.

7. Marketing and Communications

Chapter Seven moves on to the Games communications and marketing framework, providing an overview of the IOC communications policy, which has resulted in one of the most widely recognised and lucrative global brands. This chapter explores the key principles that underpin current Olympic global communication and marketing strategies and reviews SOCOG's implementation model in the lead up to and during the 2000 Games. The aim of the chapter is to contextualise the promotional strategy of the Sydney Olympic Arts Festivals and to identify established Olympic communication parameters that have yet to be adapted to the characteristics of a cultural programme. This analysis highlights ongoing tensions that reveal the need to develop clearer coordination between global communication marketing imperatives and locally sensitive cultural policy requirements within the Olympic Games staging process. The chapter begins with an overview of Olympic global marketing policies and programmes as defined by the IOC. Section two describes the procedures SOCOG followed to implement these policies, and section three provides an overview of the communication

strategy and operational plan for the 2000 Olympic Arts Festival, focusing on the rationale for its distinct iconography. The chapter concludes with a discussion about the degree to which general Olympic marketing and communications guidelines in Sydney were consistent with the strategies to promote the cultural programme.

8. Stakeholder Contributions

Chapter Eight moves away from OCOG structures of management to explore the expectations and policy choices of cultural programme stakeholders. Mirroring Chapter Six, the institutions analysed here belong to four main categories: the public sector, the private sector, the arts community and the media. The chapter explores the interests and expectations of each stakeholder in the context of the 2000 Olympic Games and their reasons to support or avoid supporting the Sydney Olympic Arts Festivals (OAF) specifically. The analysis of public sector involvement looks at the correspondence between cultural policy choices and level of involvement with the OAF at local, state and federal levels. The study of relationships with the arts community looks at ways in which artists and art institutions engaged in the OAF and their ability to inform or influence the shape of the programme. Analysing the approach by the private sector helps to determine whether the programme had a market or corporate appeal and whether corporations had an interest in contributing to it. Finally, the study of the opinions by the local and national media and their interest in covering the festivals offers some indication of the programme's ability to capture public interest and its chances to project specific images about the event host community and its cultural values.

9. Media Coverage

Chapter Nine shows how the issues noted within previous chapters are reflected in media coverage of the Olympic cultural programme. This is a critical issue, as one of the greatest challenges to the perceived relevance of the Olympic cultural programme is its apparent lack of media appeal, which is in stark contrast with the Games as one of the most successful global media events. The chapter presents a selection of findings resulting from the content analysis of four years of Australian press coverage on the Sydney OAF, which broadly spans over the full period of the Cultural Olympiad. This content analysis exercise, conducted at the end of year 2000, show which elements of Sydney's Olympic cultural programme were considered news-worthy and whether they were interpreted as a significant component of the Games experience. This analysis also provides a measure of the effectiveness of the programme to project the images and values it originally intended.

Part III: Towards a Culture-Led Olympic Games?

10. The Future of Cultural Policy at the Olympic Games

Chapter Ten, the concluding chapter, draws together the different strands of assessment that have been presented throughout the monograph, identifying key ongoing tensions and providing some commentary about ways to overcome current limitations. The main emphasis is on the need to reconcile global communication imperatives with the Games' (and Movement's) social mission, so that the Games hosting process incorporates locally sensitive as well as historically informed cultural responsibilities. The chapter is structured in four sections, each of which addresses one of the book's main areas of enquiry: i) How is an Olympic cultural programme informed by the cultural policy of the Games global network?; ii) How is it informed by the cultural policy of the local host; iii) Is the Olympic cultural programme able to play a relevant role in defining the Games' cultural dimension? And, iv) Is it perceived as a core component of the Olympic Games? The chapter concludes by outlining key cultural policy tensions in the Games hosting process and suggests a way forward.