

Olympic Fever

Critical Perspectives on Staging the 'Greatest Show on Earth'

When cities bid for Olympic Games they embark on much more than a formal selection process overseen by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The potential prospect of having the 'greatest show on earth' in town galvanizes both euphoric projections as well as grave concerns. On the one hand, city leaders and local business elites are enthusiastic about the allegedly unique opportunities that an Olympiad provides for host cities. The sports mega-event, they maintain, not only affords global fame, but also speeds-up investment in large-scale urban regeneration projects and infrastructures, and creates a momentum for local stakeholders to do things differently. On the other hand, oppositional groups and citizen associations crystallize that are similarly passionate in emphasizing the risks of a venture of such massive proportions. They are particularly alarmed about massive overspendings, infrastructures that fall idle after the event, and the non-democratic decision processes that are related to hosting the Games. For potential host cities, bidding for the Olympics, in effect, means launching into a highly contested process.

The third cycle of the Hamburg Lectures is conceived as part of such a process: Hamburg's bid for the 2024 Summer Games. Based on comprehensive research experience, five outstanding international academics offer critical views on different aspects on hosting an Olympiad: the cost-income ratio; the relationship between plans and their implementations; the consequences of failed bids; the rhetorics and realities of previous host places. While Hamburg's city officials frantically strive to cope with time pressure and IOC requirements, the lecture series seeks to provide a space for critical reflections about what it means to apply for the world's largest sports event.

Public Lectures

20 October, 2015

Andrew Zimbalist (Smith College, Northampton MA):
A waste of money? How most cities lose out when hosting the Games

10 November, 2015

Eva Kassens-Noor (Michigan State University):
Urban infrastructure development through Olympic Games: Dreams and Realities

24 November, 2015

Marisol Garcia (Universitat Barcelona):
Barcelona: the model of successful Games? A view after twenty-three years

8 December, 2015

Martin Müller (Universität Zürich):
Facilitating Games by eliminating democracy? Russia and the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi

12 January, 2016

John Lauer (Rhode Island School of Design, Providence MA):
Learning from failure? Lessons from unsuccessful Olympic bids

Time: on Tuesdays, 18:00 h

Place: HafenCity University Hamburg, HS 150, Überseeallee 16, 20457 Hamburg

The HafenCity Lectures are a joint enterprise of HafenCity University of Hamburg – University for the Built Environment and Metropolitan Development (HCU) – and the HafenCity Hamburg GmbH. The series started in 2014, and it was chiefly conceived to nurture the exchange between academic theory and societal practice in those areas that are mainly addressed in HCU's research and teaching work. The focus of the lectures also resonates well with the university's location in the middle of the HafenCity – Europe's largest inner city regeneration project. The HafenCity Lectures, thereby, underpin the role of the HafenCity University as Hamburg's principal place of debate on the future of cities and the built environment.

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