A record of “Olympic firsts” to celebrate

The 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games definitely influenced the course of History in many ways, and first of all through a series of historical “firsts” that had a long-lasting impact. As the last Games of the turbulent 1960s, these Olympics were the first to be held in Latin America, the first in a developing country also the first in a Spanish-speaking country. They were also the first Summer Games organised at high altitude, the first where gender testing and doping disqualification appeared, the first in which a majority of events – and not only opening and closing ceremonies – were broadcasted worldwide in colour, the first where tartan was used on athletics tracks, and the first when a woman lit the Olympic Cauldron. Bob Beamon set a world record that stood until 1991 and Dick Fosbury introduced a new high jump technique, later renamed the Fosbury flop. On the political side, the Mexico City Games remain in all collective memories associated with the Black Power salute by the US athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos.

Through a year-round programme that celebrated sport, culture and iconic moments, Mexico City revived its Olympic legacy in a very stimulating forward-looking perspective and managed to connect the past and the present in a broader sense that encompassed people, sport and culture.

A celebration to remember and build upon

The Olympic movement was undoubtedly a catalyst for the socio-economic development of Mexico City, so it was essential for the organizers of this Anniversary that the new generations know the background and the impact that these Olympics had on the capital city of the country.

For the Government of Mexico City, celebrating this anniversary represented the opportunity to recover the values linked to sport and Olympism, such as peace and solidarity, respect for others, the culture of effort, the search for excellence and fair play.

This philosophy was aligned with the city’s objectives helping to leverage the main role of sport which had a transversal effect in the development of a more participative citizenship, with better health habits and with world-class sports entertainment options.

The anniversary celebrations accelerated the refurbishment of almost all the purpose built venues of the 1968 Olympic Games being one of the main objectives of the programme. The millions of users of the venues benefited from these works having access not only to better venues but to a broader offer of activities in the Olympic facilities.
The refurbished venues were the perfect stage to celebrate and connect the past with the present, most of the anniversary activities were held in the different venues always aiming to have a great impact in the community involving sport and physical activation.

**FACTUAL DATA**

**Event Format**

A year-round programme that celebrated sport, culture and iconic moments with the objective of connecting the past and the present in a broader sense (sport, culture and people) through the 1968 Olympic Games legacy.

**Infrastructure**

- 7 refurbished venues
- 3 new venues

**Sports**

- 35 sporting events
- 20 national events
- 15 international events
- 20 different sports were celebrated
- High performance sport and community events

**Culture**

- 2 high performance sport dialogues
- 3 round table discussions
- International Children painting contest
- Museum commemorative exhibition
- Commemorative fashion show
- Mexico 68 sports infrastructure legacy

**Iconic moments celebrations**

- Commemorative fire: CUBA – MEXICO CITY
- IOC President visit
- Olympic rings spectacular unveiling
- Commemorative athletes’ parade
- Olympic rings live postcard
- Mexico 68 legends programme: national and international
- Olympic village “Robert Beamon” running track venue naming
- Mexico 68 Mexican Olympic Medalists Plaza inauguration
- Mexico 68 Mexican Olympic Medalists Victory Commemorations

**Other initiatives**

- Commemorative metro tickets and BRT cards
- Commemorative lottery ticket
- Venue dressing
- Dedicated webpage: mex68.mx (currently inactive) & social media
- Dedicated publications

**Worldwide celebrations**

- Olympic Museum exhibition
- Heritage clothing line by Lacoste
- World Union of Olympic Cities’ communication
- IOC communication outlets
- Olympic Channel
- National Olympian Association celebrations
- National Olympic Committees commemorations
Duration
A year-round programme, from February to November 2018

Location
- Olympic Stadium
- Magdalena Mixhuca Sports Complex
- Olympic Fencing Hall
- Palillo Athletics Stadium
- Olympic Rowing venue
- Olympic Pool
- Olympic Gymnasium
- Azteca Football Stadium
- Other sports facilities: Chapultepec golf course, Champ de Mars, Basque Pelota Hall.
- Mexican Olympic Committee headquarters
- Private and public universities
- National Cinema
- Museums
- Theatres
- City streets (torch relay)
- Habana, Cuba (torch relay).
- Other states in the country: Veracruz (torch relay), Valle de Bravo (sailing).

Partners
“Internal” partners:
Mexico City’s Government through INDEPORTE (sports agency)
NOC

“External partners”:  
National Autonomous University of Mexico
Federal Government (Army, Sport, National TV Channel)
Embassies (various countries)
Event organisers
Olympians
Ramirez Vazquez Archives (1968 Mexico Olympic Games contents)
IOC

Mobilisation & visibility
Throughout the celebrations, many people participated including:
Local volunteers (currently involved with the City sports events)
1968 national and international Olympians
Other national and international Olympians (other OG editions)
1968 Games Makers (staff and volunteers)
Journalists
Local and Federal authorities
Influencers (relevant to the anniversary; related to sport, culture, lifestyle, design)
Sports communities (national sport federations, NOC, young athletes)
1968 Mexico Olympic Games Family and friends (including those who are gone)

To connect at the international level for both sports and cultural activities:
- IOC
- World Union of Olympic Cities
- World Olympians Association
- Embassies
- Other NOCs

Combination with other events

The objective of the year-round celebrations programme was to include the sports and cultural communities as much as possible.

Besides organising events dedicated to the anniversary, the celebrations aimed to include big sporting and cultural events that were already going to happen in the City. Much effort was made with many event organisers to celebrate the 50th anniversary within their events, some include: the World Golf Championships, the Men’s Basketball World Cup Qualifiers, the Farewell Football match on the road to the 2018 FIFA World Cup and the Mexico City Marathon.
INVENTORY OF ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, 35 sporting events (20 national, 15 international) took place in the Olympic infrastructure of Mexico 1968, celebrating 20 Olympic sports of its sports programme and also some of the Tokyo 2020 edition.

It should be noted that sports development events were held, which impel the new generations towards an active lifestyle or even the birth of Mexican Olympic athletes.

In order to commemorate the ‘Cultural Olympiad’ that took place in Mexico 68 - the first in the history of the Olympics - various activities were developed in the artistic and academic fields that approach the Olympic movement from these perspectives. Activities were diverse including dialogues, discussions and conferences around sports and infrastructure. There was also a Museum exhibition and a commemorative fashion show around the iconic design of the Olympic Games Mexico 1968.

Within the framework of the celebrations of the 50th Anniversary, actions to rehabilitate the Olympic infrastructure of Mexico 1968 were identified and implemented, reaffirming the viability and sustainability of the project five decades after its planning and construction. 7 venues were refurbished. At the same time, the construction of some sports facilities for the new Olympic disciplines of Tokyo 2020 was achieved (BMX track, aquatic centre, skatepark).

All 1968 venues are still dedicated to sport practice today.

Regarding IOC resources:
- Anniversary emblem: the IOC validated the development and use of an anniversary emblem.
- Olympic rings spectacular: the IOC facilitated the rights to reproduce an Olympic rings spectacular (all costs related were paid by the city).
- Multimedia archives: the IOC facilitated access to the Multimedia Library, and created a special selection that was used to an extent in the official website of the anniversary.

HISTORY & STORY
A historical moment in the spotlight

The Olympic Games Mexico 1968 were full of Olympic firsts and iconic moments, many of which, were celebrated during the 50th anniversary. The Legends programme aimed at giving tribute to exceptional athletes from 1968, and through them to honour all athletes. The Legends attended a variety of activities including a media tour, 1968 venues visit, sports clinics with the local communities as well as their participation in the anniversary main festivities. Many of them were coming back to Mexico City for the first time after the Games, giving a unique energy to the experience.

Zoom on an (extra)ordinary story

In 1968 the Olympic cauldron was lit for the very first time by a woman, Enriqueta Basilio; 50 years later and despite physical impediments that she was facing, she went up and re-lit the cauldron once more. It was a very special moment during the anniversary since it didn’t only celebrate the event, but it also reminded everyone of the focal role of women in sport. To learn more about Enriqueta Basilio, the woman who changed paradigms, read the annexed text!

A another short inspiring story, in the field of sport spirit, is worth being told. It was shared by Maria del Pilar Roldan (MEX fencing). She could have won the gold medal since her opponent Elena Belova (BLR fencing) did not show up on time. According to the rules, she was entitled to win by default; but she decided to wait for Elena and compete, stating that she preferred a silver medal that she got competing than a gold that she didn’t win.

LEGACY OF THE CELEBRATIONS

Linking Past, Present and Future

7 venues were refurbished and 3 new were open:

Olympic venues that have been used for 50 years would not have had the chance to be uplifted without the anniversary due to the need for public resources. It was also a platform to accelerate the construction of 3 new venues that promote other Olympic sports included in the Tokyo 2020 programme and will prepare the competing athletes and develop future Olympians.

Celebrations allowed to strengthen social cohesion and link to the local territory and local population. It played a role in transforming the communities. Collecting memories from the Games’ actors also contributed to generating social cohesion.

The anniversary was also the perfect framework to celebrate the national athletes. The Mexico 1968 is up to today, the best medal result for Mexico in the Olympic Games. However, medallists were not properly recognised and their triumph was lost in memory.

The celebrations allowed the city and the NOC to give them proper recognition and connect past and present, dedicating a Plaza within the Magdalena Mixhuca Sports Complex to their achievements.

The Plaza is located in front of the Fencing Olympic Hall, in the main entrance of the Sports Complex, just besides the Olympic rings spectacular, giving it great visibility to share the message with a larger number of people.
FEEDBACK SECTION

Key challenges

Funding
Initially, the Anniversary celebrations had a comprehensive budget that came mainly from the local government (tourism fund) and some sponsors (TOP programme local branches and others).

Unfortunately, collaboration between the city and the IOC began late in the city’s planning process (2 months before the start of the celebrations) impacting the plans that were already made. Due to the restrictions related to the association with Olympic properties, many of the proposed events could no longer be part of the celebrations and the scope and budget of the anniversary programme was largely reduced.

Also, the possibility of generating other sources of funding, like a licensing programme or sponsorships, was highly limited due to the IOC programmes in place. Nevertheless, the IOC did great efforts to facilitate other type resources to make the most of the anniversary.

Evaluation

There was not a specific success evaluation, but the outcomes of the celebrations relate to the following:

- Number of organised events (sports and culture)
- Number of participating National Sports Federations
- Number of refurbished/built sports infrastructure
- Media coverage

Replicability

Mexico City underwent political changes by the end of 2018 and the continuity of the vision is still unknown. Nevertheless, the infrastructure is still used for sports and physical activation purposes which continue to celebrate the legacy of the Games.

Regarding replicability, the format of the celebrations is highly replicable, to include sports, cultural and protocolary events as well as celebration of iconic moments. Also, the Athletes programme could be something that could be replicated and has a large storytelling potential.

Mexico 68 Celebrations may hopefully ease the way for next celebrations regarding the dialogue, negotiations and joint collaboration with the IOC.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Project Management - Timeline

Formal preparations for the celebrations started late 2016 (a year and a half before the anniversary). Resources sourcing for infrastructure refurbishment started right away and the anniversary programme development started in 2017.
Programme development included meetings with the NOC, National Sports Federations, Local government, Federal Government, potential sponsors and other entities.

Communication strategy was planned early on but not executed due to lack of resources and efforts were made only on social media platforms.

The majority of the venues belonged to the local government, so access to them was flexible. Once National Sports Federations started confirming their events, the dates started to be blocked.

Contact from the IOC was made on early November 2017.

Finance and Cost

Financing was ensured by the local and federal governments. External funding options were highly limited given the conflict with the IOC programmes in place. The IOC contributed to the expenses related to the IOC President’s visit for the unveiling of the Olympic rings spectacular. This was arranged through the NOC.

Human Resources and Time

During the anniversary, resources from the local government (Mexico City Sports Institute) constituted the coordination team of the activities. The NOC collaborated with the coordination of the cultural activities. Due to budget limitations, there were no dedicated resources for the anniversary celebrations.

During the main day of celebrations, the local government mobilised close to 500 people to be part of the festivities.

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