

John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold (eds.), *Olympic Cities: City Agendas, Planning, and the World's Games, 1896–2012*. London: Routledge, 2007. xix + 348pp. 46 plates. 4 figures. 19 tables. Bibliography. £24.99 pbk.
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In 1908, 2,008 competitors from 22 countries travelled to London for the fourth Olympic Games. They stayed in hotels, hostels and private homes. The main events were held in a purpose-built stadium in Shepherd's Bush with a state of the art running track, cycling track and swimming tank, paid for by voluntary donations and public subscriptions; but this was meant to be only a temporary structure, and it should have been demolished the following year. It survived until the 1980s, but was by then far from Olympian in character, a home to greyhound racing and speedway. In 2012, at least 12,000 competitors from over 200 countries will travel to London for the 27th Summer Olympic Games. They will stay in a purpose-built high security village, compete in new facilities in the Lower Lea Valley, and the estimated 1.5 million spectators who will watch the events will be served by a new transport infrastructure. The facilities will have been funded by public and private money, with taxpayers providing a significant chunk of it. Compare and contrast approaches to history do not come much starker than this snapshot of two of London's Olympic Games.

In this setting, Gold and Gold's collection of essays *Olympic Cities* is a timely and significant contribution to urban and environmental history. The collection is the latest in Dennis Hardy's Planning, History and Environment Series for Routledge, and is the first in that collection to concentrate on sport. The importance of such mega-events as the Olympic Games justifies this inclusion. Central and local governments invest millions in bidding for the Games, and billions in hosting them, because of the prestige that the Olympic brand brings to a city. The financial and social benefits can also be huge, with politicians, planners and property developers seeing the Olympics as a focus for tourism, inward investment, urban regeneration, community enhancement and house price booms. With the Olympics being far more than just a game, this excellent book provides a rigorous and thorough survey of the inter-relationships between the Olympics and the places in which they take place.

The 18 essays, written by academics from such fields as human geography, planning, political science, and heritage management, range widely over the history and future of the Olympics. Through thematic sections on 'The Olympic festivals', 'Planning and management', and 'City portraits', the contributors explore the development of the Games from a *fin de siècle* curiosity into their current money-spinning status. The collection includes explorations of the Winter and Summer Olympics, of the Cultural Olympiads with their art and drama competitions and of the Paralympic Games, which grew out of the post-World War II Stoke Mandeville Games. The collection's emphasis falls most heavily on the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as it was from the 1960s that the Olympics really became linked with planning and regeneration in the minds of politicians and planners. Rome in 1960, Tokyo in 1964 and Mexico City in 1968 all linked transport, housing and regeneration to their Games, and all host cities since have followed suit. Moreover, it has been in this period that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has required all host cities to have legacy plans in place, strategies that will show how any new facilities built for the

Olympics will be used, both for elite and community sport, after the fortnight of the Games. For this, the authors do not look only to the past, but also to the plans for Beijing in 2008 and London in 2012. However, despite this more modern weighting, earlier Olympics are also dealt with, particularly in thematic essays that explore finances and Olympic villages, and in a splendid essay on the Berlin Olympics of 1936. The overall tone is critical, with the authors consistently asking awkward questions of the history they explore. These are not just the usual awkward questions asked by many Olympic historians, such as those dealing with racism, sexism, propaganda and terrorism, but also questions more closely linked to the hyperbole of Olympic hosts, and the gaps that have often existed between promises and realities. For example, accidental death rates amongst construction workers (Athens 2004, Beijing 2008) and inflated tax bills to pay for the Games (Montreal 1976) are discussed alongside the benefits that some cities have gained from hosting the Olympics, such as job creation schemes, and improved transport, housing and sports facilities. This collection is an excellent way into the influence that sport has had on the design of modern urban spaces, and it provides many fascinating case studies of the relationships that have developed between global trends and local realities. Moreover, the extensive use of illustrations and tables, and the helpful consolidated bibliography, make the book a useful source of reference.

Martin Polley

University of Southampton