

# **‘The exact route to achieving success’: Statecraft and the management of Third World expectations during the XIX Olympiad in Mexico**

Axel G. Elías Jiménez

Department of History, King’s College London (The United Kingdom)

Winner of the Academic Pierre de Coubertin Award 2018 (Doctoral Thesis)

*axel.elias.j@gmail.com*

## **Abstract**

From 1940 onwards, Mexico experienced economic growth for more than three decades. The Mexican government sought to communicate this so called ‘Mexican Miracle’ and placed its bid for the XIX Olympic Games in December 1962 as part of its cultural diplomacy strategies. Ten months later, and just a month away from the inauguration of the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO), Mexico City was elected as host of the 1968 Summer Olympic Games. If compared to Detroit and Lyon, Mexico City was not as economically developed, so the reasons that explain Mexico’s selection need a more complex approach. By looking at Mexico’s participation in the GANEFO and the Olympic Games, this article draws conclusions on how the Mexican government used sport to brand itself as a nearly developed country without losing its ties with the ‘Emerging Forces.’ This research uses documents from the archive of the International Olympic Committee and from different governmental archives in Mexico to assess the ways in which Mexico tried to position itself internationally. The article concludes that the bidding campaigns of 1963 had an impact on the way the IOC, Mexican government and Mexico City’s citizenry engaged politically during the Olympic Games.

## **Keywords**

State Crafting, Cultural Diplomacy, Nationalism, Olympiad, Third World, Mexico.

Elías Jiménez, A. G. (2018). ‘The exact route to achieving success’: Statecraft and the management of Third World expectations during the XIX Olympiad in Mexico. *Diagoras: International Academic Journal on Olympic Studies*, 2, 123–144. Retrieved from <http://diagorasjournal.com/index.php/diagoras/article/view/24>



## Introduction

In 1955, José de Jesús Clark Flores was the President of the Mexican Olympic Committee. As such, he was also appointed as the head of the Mexican delegation in the 1952 Olympic Games. Clark Flores viewed the progresses in Helsinki and wrote that beyond the 'utilitarian triumphs', he had found the 'exact route to achieve success' (Clark, 1955 cited in Kuri, 2003, p. 41). Clark Flores was a key player in a team that believed that the Olympic Games were an important state crafting project for Mexico. Clark Flores had helped in the organisation of the Central American and Caribbean, as well as the Pan-American Games, and planned to use the Olympic Games as a stage to obtain international recognition and improve Mexico's economic development.

The team knew that the Games were assigned to a city, but their goals and aspirations were national. The fact that from the moment that the bid was placed until their celebration, the Games were branded as 'Mexico' instead of 'Mexico City' seems like an intentional decision. As Kay Schiller and Christopher Young claim, for the IOC, cities host Olympics, but in the end, the whole country is judged (Schiller & Young, 2010, p. 3).

This article focuses on the politics of the bidding stage for Mexico regarding the XIX Olympiad. The article looks at how the Mexican government used mega-events such as the GANEFO and the Olympic Games to position itself globally. Mexico was invited to the GANEFO for what it represented to some countries, but in contrast, the Mexican government sought to host the Olympic Games for the associations they believed were linked with the developed world. Both projects reflect different engagements of state crafting but coincided in a same time. By looking at the political ramifications of the bidding stage, this article contributes to the relevant literature on the 1968 Olympics that looks at institutional projects taken in the fields of graphic design (Jácome, 2010), architecture (Fernández, 2012) and governance during the Olympics (Carey, 2016; Flaherty, 2016; Rodríguez, 2014; Brewster & Brewster, 2013; Witherspoon, 2008).

The article argues two interconnected points. Firstly, that the Mexican government used sport mega-events to try to reshape the perceived position of Mexico around the world as a modern, developed and peaceful nation. Secondly, that the IOC had political, cultural and economic interests that shaped the bidding

process and the way the country branded itself. The article will tackle the first argument by analysing the aspirations, goals and actions that the Mexican Government pursued by organising the 1968 Olympic Games. The section embeds the aspirations of becoming an Olympic host in the geopolitical interplay of the sixties to understand the possible elements that drove IOC members to elect Mexico City. The section will look at the non-intervention policies of the Mexican government, the country branding strategies to communicate 'the Mexican miracle', and the debates within the IOC concerning the threat that the Emerging Forces posed.

The second section uses the argument of IOC's political impact to draw comparison between the bidding and the planning stage. This section suggests that both stages shaped Mexico's foreign and domestic policy, as well as the perception of the nation by Mexico City's citizenry. The article suggests that the increased media attention and internalisation of Olympic ideals sparked discussions of nationhood and citizenship among the IOC, Mexican government and Mexico City's citizenry.

## **The Quest for the Olympic Games**

For Mexico, the first half of the twentieth century had many political struggles and diverse attempts to consolidate a 'modern nation.' The Mexican Revolution that began in the second decade of the century is a complex period of struggles that has received different historical approaches (Bailey, 1978; Van Young, 1999; Knight, 2002). During this period and after, the different governments tried to industrialise the country, diversify its economy and prepare Mexicans in urban and rural areas for the 'modernisation', among other ambitious goals.

The alphabetisation and educative campaigns that were implemented since the twenties were an example of the attempts to create a sense of national identity among the diverse population and simplify the governing of the country (Vázquez, 1979; Campos, 2014). The governments constantly communicated that Mexico was benefiting from its industrialisation and was ready to be among the economically developed. Luckily for these governments, from 1940-1970, Mexico went through a period of economic growth that has been labelled as the 'Mexican Miracle.'

The Mexican economy grew significantly during the Second World War and for the immediate years after that because of the international demand for the products of primary industrialisation. The government followed the recommendations of the secretary of finance, Antonio Ortiz Mena, and favoured domestic productions by raising the taxes on foreign importations. Walt Whitman Rostow, wrote at the time that these strategies had caused great progress in the developing world (Rostow, 1963 in National Security Archives [NSA]). This model benefitted the country and had great repercussion on the urban issues in Mexico City (Unikel, 1976; Davis, 2010). Mexico registered some of the most surprising levels of economic growth in the region, increasing its GNP gradually in around 7% from 1950 to 1970 (Pozo, 2009, p. 180; Hamnett, 2006, p. 282). As reported by *Excelsior* on 2 October 1968, Mexico had an economic growth beyond 7% in 1968, and many expected the same rate of growth for 1969 (1968, p. 1). Eric Zolov claims that it was this economic development and the promises of growth which allowed Mexicans to accept 'the ruling party's authoritarian traits' (2003, p. 46). It is important to say that the panorama was not so optimistic for all sectors of the population.

Part of the strategies that the Mexican governments tried to use to promote economic growth were cultural events, but their use was not new. Ever since the turn of the twentieth century, Mexico participated in World Fairs and in the first Central American and Pan-American Games, to promote a favourable image of the country abroad (Zolov, 2014; Joseph, 2013; Beezley, 2011; Tenorio-Trillo, 1996). Sport, as Keith Brewster claims, was one of many mediums that would help 'break down the insularity of the provinces and make 'useful members of society' (Brewster, 2004, p. 214).

In terms of foreign policy, from 1930 onwards, the Mexican government implemented the 'Estrada Doctrine' to avoid major international confrontations. The latter was a non-intervention document that stipulated that Mexico was not in a position to determine whether a government of a different country was legitimate or not. This was a relevant foreign policy after 1945, specifically when the struggles between the United States and Soviet Union escalated.

Soledad Loaeza claims that the Cold War was not as disruptive as in other parts of Latin America (Loaeza, 2005, p. 154), but as

Renata Keller argues, the Cold War had an impact in all Latin America, Mexico included (Keller, 2010). The apparent neutral character of the policy had a repercussion in the way Mexico interacted with other Latin American countries, but also within the rest of the world which had the United States and the Soviet Union as the two global super-powers.

The 'Estrada Doctrine' had a repercussion on the foreign policy of Mexico, and therefore with the bid for the 1968 Olympic Games. Mexico's bid was not seriously challenged by the bloc aligned with the Soviet Union or by the bloc aligned with the United States. Mexico did not take a clear side. Amelia Kiddle is one of the authors that has studied how the Mexican government implemented the Estrada Doctrine for the Abyssinian crisis and the Spanish civil war, for instance (Kiddle, 2013, p. 282). The chairman of the organising committee of the XIX Olympiad, Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, claimed that during bidding stage, the 'eastern-bloc' gave full support to Mexico during the elections for the 1968 Olympics because of the foreign policy of the latter (Ortega, et. al, 2008, p. 30).

Even Avery Brundage, IOC president, did not seem to challenge Mexico's bid despite Detroit, his home town, running as Olympic destination. Interestingly, Brundage was a friend of Marte R. Gómez and Clark Flores, IOC members invested in bringing the Games to Mexico since the fifties. As José de Jesús Clark Flores wrote to Antonio Carrillo Flores on 28 July 1966, it was Marte R. Gómez who proposed Brundage for the 'Aguila Azteca', Mexico's highest recognition for non-nationals for their job in helping the country (Archivo Diplomático Mexicano [ADM, Mexican Diplomatic Archive], Dirección de Asuntos Culturales [DAC, Direction of Cultural Affairs] Boxes 56-1 and 23-56). Brundage obtained the award on 28 July 1962, just a few months before the official bid was placed for the 1968 Olympic Games, which could have helped Mexico's case.

During most of the twentieth century, the Mexican government felt they held an exceptional position because the country had a stable and democratic government and had not had military coups like Argentina, Nicaragua, and Brazil, among others. In the eyes of the Mexican government, Mexico had had democratically elected governments and very little political fluctuations. According to Jaime Pensado, the Mexican government these features were the exceptionality that Mexico tried to communicate (Pensado, 2013, p. 153).

The internal politics of Mexico were more conflictive and problematic than what the government expressed. On paper, Mexico held regular elections since the twenties; however, Mexico's democracy was debatable. The Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI, Party of the Institutionalised Revolution) controlled most of the other parties, there was restricted freedom of speech, low electoral turnout and directed violence towards dissidents. These features made scholars such as Brian Hamnett describe Mexico as country controlled by a 'monopolist party' and Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith as a *dictablanda* or soft authoritarian regime (Hamnett, 2006; Gillingham & Smith, 2014). Mexico's government also sparked debate in non-academic forums, when Mario Vargas Llosa qualified it as a 'presidential dictatorship' and Enrique Krauze as the 'perfect dictatorship.'

It was during this period, that elected presidents from the PRI, such as Lázaro Cárdenas, Adolfo López Mateos and Miguel Alemán communicated that Mexico had gone through a revolution that gave the country a democratic government and economic growth. The nationalisation of the oil industry and the inauguration of the new campus for the National University were some of the landmarks that emphasised this narrative. For instance, during the fiftieth anniversary of the revolution, President Adolfo López Mateos (1958-1964) claimed that Mexico was achieving goals for the people by 'taking the revolutionary road' (1960). Although there was continuity in the ways the government branded the country, according to Soledad Loaeza, the need of Mexico to 'portray the image of a stable country and different from its Latin American brothers' changed in 1968, and the Olympic Games played a fundamental role (Loaeza, 2005, p. 147).

The changes, however, did not begin during the Olympic year. These could be traced at the very least from the moment Clark Flores and Gómez tried to bring the Olympic Games to Mexico in 1963. The mayor of Mexico City had placed bids previously for the Olympic Games in 1949 and 1953; however, unlike the 1963 bid the former did not receive full federal support. López Mateos heavily endorsed and supported the bid for the 1968 Olympics. López Mateos seemed even keener in using public festivities to communicate the accomplishments of the Mexican economic development and the apparent political stability.

With increased federal support, the team in charge of bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games tailored their bid to persuade the

IOC members that Mexico was the perfect location to hold the Games and that Olympism would benefit from it. The bidding team learned from past experiences and fulfilled two important formal requirements to be elected. Firstly, it showed that the bid had support from the city's maximum authority by sending mayor, Ernesto Uruchurtu, to Lausanne on 7 December 1962 to formally request the games. Secondly, Mexico City obtained IOC's validation as a candidate city, when the former was able to use its bidding documents to show that Mexico City met all the requirements to become an Olympic city. The bidding team wrote a 180 page book titled 'Mexico' which contained 'official documentation, answers to the IOC's questionnaire, a report on the existing venues in the city, medical opinions on the 'effects' of altitude in athletes, an exposition of international events celebrated in recent years and a collection of Mexican art and culture' (Committee, 1969, Vol. V, p. 11). The bid book emphasised that Mexico was a modern country with a rich heritage, but most importantly, that it was a country ready to host the Games. The book claimed to have all the necessary sporting, accommodation and transportation capacity to host the Games and proposed October 1968 as the tentative month for the event.

After Uruchurtu placed the bid, he appointed Jose de Jesús Clark Flores and Marte R. Gómez, as the chairman and vice-chairman of the 'Invitation Committee for the Olympic Games' (Committee, 1969, p. 69). Both Clark Flores and Gómez were representatives of Mexico in the IOC, and had expertise organising sport in Mexico, as well as sports events. There is little material about their concrete actions and other people collaborating in the bidding period, but in a letter from Uruchurtu to Brundage, 7 December 1962, the mayor lists Alejandro Carrillo, Josué Sanz, Federico Mariscal, Manuel Guzmán, Eduardo Hay, Armando Moraila, Antonio Estopier and Lorenzo Torres as part of the team (Avery Brundage Collection [ABC] B178). Interestingly, only a few of the people of the bidding team were directly related to sport, such as Clark Flores, Gómez, Víctor Luque Salanueva and Armando Moraila. The rest were associated with the government. The bid book showed the endorsement and support from the president and the secretaries of Interior, Education, Presidency, and Finance. In addition, Mexico City's bid also fulfilled the unofficial requirements of showing that the whole country, and not only the city, was in a favourable political and economic position. The invitation committee oversaw the promotion of the Mexican bid until the IOC elections in

October 1963 and a couple of months after. Bringing the Olympics was a national project that attempted to have a broad repercussion in international relations. The team did not only have to deal with sporting demands and the IOC, but also in using the geopolitical discussions in their advantage.

### **Using the ‘new’ world to form part of the ‘old’**

If compared to other Olympic hopefuls of the ‘first world’ such as Detroit and Lyon, Mexico’s economic success and political stability was not sufficient to be chosen as Olympic hosts. As the following section will address, the political discussions in the international scenario were more decisive in the elections. As previous celebrations, the XIX Olympic Games were of interest for several governments and these tried to advance their agendas with them (Girginov, 2011, p. 229). The Cold War and the rise of emerging forces were some of the key discussions that affected the elections for the 1968 Olympics.

Mexico as other countries thought of sport mega-events as a platform to communicate an idea of the nation. As Ramírez Vázquez stated, when the Games ‘went to one of the corners of the World’ they provided commercial and touristic character for the host destinations. Ramírez Vázquez used the example of Melbourne 1956 to say that Australians used this opportunity to be included in the ‘contemporary world’ (Tibol, 1967, p. 7).

Mexico like a few other Latin American countries were interested in the potential capacity of sportive events to highlight their development. Historically, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico have all placed four World Cup bids (only behind Germany and Spain with 6 and 5 respectively). While for the Olympics, Brazil has placed five bids, Argentina four and Mexico three. Chile and Colombia can also be included in this list. The former holding the World Cup in 1962 and the latter winning the bid for the 1986 World Cup, even though they had to resign to it a few years prior to its celebration. Sufficient to say, all these mega-events are in need of more scholarship.

Once Mexico City’s bid was accepted by the IOC, the Mexican government took actions to continue showing that Mexico was the best place to host the Olympics and tried to show federal commitment to the task. The federal government created the Organising Committee of the XIX Olympic Games by federal



decree on 29 June 1963, just a few months before IOC elections were held. The decision was officialised in the government's journal (*Diario Oficial. Órgano del gobierno constitucional de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos*). The creation of the Committee was endorsed and supported by several Secretariats. The federal law stated that even though Mexico had the necessary conditions to organise the Games, the government would 'include adaptations and constructions if necessary.' Government officials claimed that the capital was ready for the Olympic Games because the city had already hosted two editions of the Central American and Caribbean Games (1926 and 1954), and one edition of the Pan-American Games (1955). The journal was usually printed for a domestic readership, but its message seemed to be directed at the IOC. Mexico City was ready for the Olympics.

Ever since the mayor visited Lausanne, the Mexican government tried to communicate that it had experience in the organisation of mega-events, and that it was a stable country that had economic growth. The government tried to brand itself as a nearly developed country. Nevertheless, Mexico was still perceived as an emerging nation. This was evident when the Indonesian government sent a formal invitation to Mexico so that it would send athletes to participate in the GANEFO. On 10 November 1963, Jakarta would host the opening of a sporting event that would stand 'against colonialism and imperialism', as the president of Indonesia, Sukarno declared. In the formal invitation, signed on 23 April 1963, Sukarno said that the GANEFO were organised by a 'community of peoples, who want to be free, who want to be independent; who do not want to be exploited...' In his perspective, sport was political, and through the organisation of these Games, the participating countries would create a 'new world' (ADM DAC III/2888-5).

The GANEFO were charged with a political rhetoric that appealed to the decolonised countries and all those who were fighting imperialism, but despite its rhetoric it has not figured as strongly in the literature (Shimazu, 2014; Westad, 2005). The fact that GANEFO tried to have a vice-president from Africa, Europe, Asia and Latin America in its organisation is relevant to how the event can be located in the construction of the third world (ADM DAC III/2888-5). Only a few authors, such as Friederike Trotier, C. A Connolly, Terry Vaios Gitersos, Claire and Keith Brewster have studied GANEFO (2016; 2012; 2011; 2010); however, neither have

gone beyond the south-eastern region to analyse the invitation and the responses of the Mexican government in further detail. The analysis of how this event was managed contributes to the understanding of the Mexican government's foreign policy, the cultural diplomacy during the cold war and the perceptions of the third world.

The GANEFO was one of Indonesia's reactions in fighting the 'old established forces.' Given IOC's European origin, and composition, Sukarno perceived it as an institution of the old world. Yet, on 31 August 1963, Sukarno declared that the GANEFO complemented the Olympics and did not replace them (ADM DAC, III/2888-5); however, the IOC saw the GANEFO as a threat. The IOC had expelled Indonesia's Olympic Committee from its member nations because of the country's opposition to the Olympic Charter. In response, the Indonesian government organised their own sporting event.

The IOC had discussed the GANEFO ever since they were heard of. On 8 February 1963, the IOC Bulletin reported that the Executive board commented the 'several cases of politics interfering with sport' (Comité Olympique Internationale [CIO], 1963, p. 43 in ADM DAC 56-1-1a) and the discussion continued until the 60th session in October 1963. On that session, Brundage spoke about the problems in regions such as Kenya, Central America, South Africa and Indonesia, and considered that a solution had to be found (CIO, 1963, p. 68).

Mexico was invited to participate in the GANEFO on July 1963 when the organising committee sent an official invitation to the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs. Initially, the decision was left to the Mexican Olympic Committee, but very soon after, the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs changed its mind. On 12 August 1963, Manuel Tello, from Foreign Affairs, wrote to Marte R. Gómez to say that the decision had to be taken carefully given the geopolitical repercussions (ADM DAC III/2888-5). The decision was not easy. Mexico did not want to jeopardise their position with the 'emerging forces', but the dominant interest was to host the 1968 Games.

The Mexican government's first recorded response to the organising committee of the GANEFO was delivered on August 1963 to communicate that there was not enough time to send athletes, but in return they offered to speak with IOC members to reincorporate Indonesia in the IOC (ADM DAC III/2888-5). This offer caught the attention of the national press, making it to the

pages of *Excelsior* on 29 August 1963. This proposal meant that even if the Mexican government would try to help Indonesia, they were not willing to renounce to the aspirations of becoming Olympic hosts. This was one of the boxes they considered was important to cover to be considered developed. The Mexican government was not willing to challenge IOC's management of Olympic sport. Interestingly, Mexico's participation in the GANEFO changed two weeks before the elections for the XIX Olympiad (ADM DAC III/2888-5). On 4 October 1963, José Luis Laris wrote to Clark Flores confirming that Mexico would finally send athletes to Jakarta. The decision was an attempt to please both the IOC and the 'emerging forces.' Mexico sent professional athletes from sports that were not part of the Olympic programme and tried to play the geopolitical situation in their favour. By sending professional athletes to Indonesia, the Mexican government did not challenge the Olympic charter nor did they cause a conflict with the countries participating in the GANEFO.

The Mexican government's response to GANEFO was well received. IOC members feared losing its control over international sport given the involvement of many 'emerging' countries in the GANEFO, because the latter challenged IOC's monopoly to organise and validate an international multi-sportive event. Therefore, several IOC members tried to consider developing countries more seriously, until a certain extent.

The option of considering a 'third world country' or 'emerging force' as an Olympic destination appeared to be more relevant than before for the IOC. The decolonisation of Africa and the third world debate was present in IOC meetings. Alexandru Spierco of Romania raised this point during the 60th IOC session. Siperco proposed to facilitate the participation of new nations in the Olympics because in his account, there were nearly fifty African countries that were requesting membership to the IOC, but only fourteen were part of it. During this session, the IOC recognised the National Olympic Committees (NOC) of Ivory Coast, Jordan, Mali, Senegal, Libya, Cameroon and Nepal. The IOC held a political role in recognising the National Committees of these countries, because it did not acknowledge others such as Mauritania, Kuwait and Sarawak arguing that it was risky because the latter might separate (CIO, 1963, p. 71).

In commenting the work of the Brewsters, Christopher Wagner, claimed that the GANEFO helped Mexico's case (Wagner, 2013,

p. 217). If we follow this idea, it could be argued that both Mexico and Argentina played a balancing geopolitical role within the IOC. This was possible because both were considered 'emerging' nations rather than countries that experienced economic growth. This message tried to be repeated in the publications of the Mexican organising committee (Comité, 1969, p. 69). The discussions within the IOC and the debates about Mexico's position in the international arena had a repercussion not only on the sporting world, but also in the ways that Mexico was perceived in relation to Latin America, the United States and the world. The Olympics were an important arena of the international political debates.

The cultural diplomacy strategies that the government followed with the bid book and the actions that the Secretary of Foreign Affairs took regarding the GANEFO were not the only elements that had a repercussion on IOC's elections. The networks that Clark and Gómez created were also an important. The 'Invitation Committee' had a good relationship with Avery Brundage's personal secretary, Cristina Mújica, which allowed them to directly enquire about IOC's procedural elements. According to Rodríguez, Cristina Mújica had worked for Marte R. Gómez in the forties. Mújica's correspondence helped the Mexican bidding team. (Rodríguez, 2016). The collection of her correspondence with Gómez can be found in the collection of the latter (Gómez, 1978). Clark Flores' election as a member of IOC's executive board in 1963 also helped in positioning Mexico in the IOC. These and other events helped in the creation of a tailored campaign for the elections in October 1963.

### **Mexico becomes Olympic**

The elections for the XIX Olympic Games were held during the 60th IOC session in Baden Baden. Mexico City ran against Buenos Aires, Detroit, and Lyon. Previously, the IOC had also received bids from Cairo, Lausanne, Manila and Vienna, but these did not make it to the election round. Rodríguez mentions that the latter were disregarded for unknown reasons (2014, p. 247), while the Brewsters claim that it was because these cities were late in the submission of the bids (2013, p. 50). The final candidate cities had one last chance to persuade voters on 18 October 1963 before Lord Killanin and Yvar Vind organised the elections.

Mexico City won the elections by majority, obtaining thirty of the twenty-eight necessary votes. Detroit followed with fourteen, Lyon with twelve and Argentina with two. Claire and Keith Brewster consider that cold war politics ruled Lyon and Detroit out of the contention given their evident association with the capitalist bloc (Brewster and Brewster, 2013, 38–53). Rodríguez Kuri follows a similar idea, but both coincide in not looking into detail what Argentina did with its bid. This is a gap that needs to be filled. In the end, the election of the host destination had an impact on the international debates and on the way each of the bidding cities were perceived.

A couple of months after Mexico City was elected, the organising committee emphasised the importance of the Olympic Games for Mexico in the following words:

‘We are a developing country, we are building a modern country and precisely because of that, we do not want anyone to destroy it [...] México is spending, and will spend more if it was necessary, to organise the Games because they resemble the next step of our development.’  
(Comité Organizador de los Juegos de la XIX Olimpiada [COXIXJO], 1964, p. 3).

After the results were announced, Gomez and General Clark ‘offered their thanks’ and formally pledged to fulfil their promises. The invitation committee emphasised that the altitude was not a threat to the athletes’ health and that the Olympics would be low-cost. The former was one of the main difficulties in the promotion of Mexico during this period, but there were many others that came along such as the fear that the venues would not be finished on time or that the student movement would boycott the Games. Each of these topics requires their own study.

One day after the elections, the *New York Times* quoted Brundage’s declaration. The president of the IOC said that Mexico City was an example for the world because there were ‘more than a score of Spanish-speaking countries’ and the election of Mexico would inspire them. He also claimed that being ‘one of the smaller-scale countries’ some members believed that Mexico would strengthened the Olympic movement. Interestingly, while the negotiation of the GANEFO and other cultural diplomacy strategies suggest that the Mexican government attempted to be considered as developed, Brundage’s declaration suggested that Mexico was chosen mostly because it would be an example

to other 'small-scale' nations. The reasons were not mutually exclusive, but it is relevant to see that Brundage highlighted the former.

As a Latin American capital in a developing country, the organising committee and the IOC tried to defend the decision and assure that Mexico was ready for all the challenges that the Games represented. As Donald Saunders wrote in *The Daily Telegraph* on the opening day of the Games: 'Mexicans have found themselves obliged to defend the decision' ever since they won the elections (International Olympic Committee Archive [IOCA]1968SOG C-J01-1986/2).

The preparations for the Games continued immediately after the elections. The changing of perceptions were the most obvious continuities, but as the Games approached, the messages of progress became more complex with the construction of scenic highways with sculptures (Fernández, 2005), monumental and iconic architecture (Fernández, 2009; Rodríguez, 1998), and conducting a one-year cultural Olympic program, among other actions.

The cultural program was most important for the government because they thought of dance, painting and other activities as areas where countries that did not tend to medal during the Olympics would receive international visibility. The cultural program was greatly advertised to embassies, consulates, chambers of commerce, universities and businesses (Archivo General de la Nación [AGN], COXIXJO, Box 452-33-429). The goal of many of these programmes was to reshape the image of Mexico and associate it with modernity and development. The organising committee used the latter and their publications to include the Olympics in the narrative of progresses. This continued the efforts undertaken during the bid period when Mexico used the GANEFO for their own interests.

As Ramírez Vázquez claimed, Mexico was hosting the Games to communicate the 'unknown realities' of Mexico, these being the 'advances of its constructive industry... the imagination of its artists and technicians and the progress of its cities' (Valenzuela, 1968, p. 25). The issue of this claim, and many others made by the government and the organising committee is that it provided a sanitised and groomed idea of Mexico. The artificial selection of 'traditional' elements, with modern ones was problematic for several groups.

The representation of the country during the Olympics, as modern and developed, had supporters among most sections of the national press and the government. Nonetheless, for other sectors this proved to be polemic, especially in 1968. As Alberto Gonzalez Pozo wrote for *Artes de México*, Mexico had organised the Games as a developing country to show the world that it could host a sport mega-event, but it had also done it to prove itself. For Pozo, there had been a need 'to make the house bigger so the party can take place' but the changes were worthwhile (1968, p. 11). For the following years, the discourse that began as prioritising modernity would mix would references to the domestic, and the traits that were considered national and 'intrinsic' such as hospitality and friendliness.

From 1963 onwards, The Mexican government continued with their attempts to promote a modern nation, domestically and abroad. The government tried to promote this message at a national level by appealing to the nationalism of the citizenry, while internationally, they tried to use all the communication strategies that the Olympic Games provided (publications, audio-visual material and international media attention). As John Horne and Wolfram Manzenreiter, claim for the Olympics, the citizenry was invited to 'take on new identities as citizens of the world.' (2006, p. 13). Some groups agreed with the attempt to go beyond the stereotypical image of the cactus, donkey, *sarape* and *sombrero*, and promoting a friendly, cosmopolitan and peaceful country. Others saw it as a contradiction. Mexico City's citizenry would become even more divided when the government implemented physical violence on the protesting groups, but this requires its own study as well.

## Conclusions

This article suggests that ever since December 1962, the group of people interested in bringing the Olympics to Mexico tailored their bid to show that Mexico fulfilled all the requirements to be considered an Olympic host. By tailoring the Mexican bid to IOC's requirements, the sport organisation became an important actor in the state crafting of Mexico during mid-twentieth century. The Mexican government tried to fulfil IOC requirements because the interested government officials considered that by doing so, Mexico was showing the world that it was developed and modern.

As an increasing body of literature has argued for different national contexts, the political impact of the Olympics went beyond the sporting fields. Mexico City was elected as the host destination for the 1968 Summer Olympic Games given the geopolitical interplay of mid-twentieth century and IOC's desire to benefit from the international political debates. In some cases, purposely and in others by chance, the Mexican government used the decolonisation of African and Asian Countries, the alliance of these third world nations and the cold war tensions in their benefit to brand itself as the best option to host the Olympics in 1968.

Mexico City was elected on 18 October 1963, and from that day onwards, the government, through the organising committee, used the Olympic Games to continue promoting Mexico as modern and developed. The analysis of documental sources in this research, provided more evidence to suggest that the IOC members chose Mexico City as the host of the XIX Olympic Games in the grounds of being a 'small-scale' country. Mexico City was seen as a 'small' compliant country that would help expand Olympism. Mexico did not appear to oppose IOC's charter or Avery Brundage's idea of Olympism. Nevertheless, despite the IOC's attempt to remain free of politics, both the IOC and the Mexican government used the Olympics to navigate the geopolitical discussions and tried to use the 1968 Olympics in their favour. By analysing the GANEFO, the article showed how Mexican government officials used the country's position as an 'emerging force' to receive support from this group and achieve their Olympic ambitions.

The tailoring of Mexico to fit the scheme of an Olympic City brought many discussions that IOC members had not faced previously. In addition, it also brought changes in the ways Mexican perceived their national identity. This article did not have the objective of analysing the visual and textual campaigns that continued after the bidding stage; nevertheless, the article suggests that both were connected. The constant repetition of these ideas of Mexico had many different perceptions and interpretations. This caused discussions and conflict, especially in 1968. This is a theme that needs to be explored in further research.

In the end and despite the efforts of the Mexican government, the country's image did not change drastically. International newspapers continued casting doubts on Mexico's capacity of organising the Games. The implementation of the Olympic Games seemed to have a broader impact on the everyday life in Mexico



than in the international arena. The disruption became evident after July 1968 when the student protests began. These protests built their demands from previous social movements such as the railroad workers and the medics, but unlike the latter, these received more international attention given the Olympics and widespread youth protests around the world. As Rodríguez Kuri suggests, the 'subversive potential' of the Olympiad had a repercussion on the events of 1968 (Rodríguez, 2016, p. 281). Rodríguez Kuri does not deal with this point, but this article provides elements to consider that the subversive potential was fuelled in 1963 when the Mexican government attempted to brand Mexico as modern and developed with the Olympic Games.

## References

- Bailey, D. C. (1978). Revisionism and the recent historiography of the Mexican Revolution. *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 58, 1, 62-79. DOI: 10.2307/2513601
- Beezley, W. H. (2011). *A Companion to Mexican History and Culture*. Cornwall, United Kingdom, Wiley-Blackwell.
- Brewster, C., & Keith Brewster. (2013). *Representing the Nation: Sport and Spectacle in Post-Revolutionary*. Mexico: Routledge.
- Brewster, K. (2004). "Redeeming the 'Indian': Sport and Ethnicity in Post-Revolutionary Mexico." *Patterns of Prejudice*, 38, 3, 213-31.
- Campos P., L. (2014). Seducción de nación: conmemoraciones y publicidad en la prensa mexicana (1910, 1921, 1935, 1960). *Secuencia*, 88, 151-90.
- Carey, E. (2016). *Protests in the Streets, 1968 Across the Globe*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Comité Organizador de los Juegos de la XIX Olimpiada (1962). *México solicita, XIX Juegos Olímpicos*, Departamento del Distrito Federal, Mexico City, Litográfica Machado.
- Comité Olympique Internationale (February 15, 1963). Bulletin du CIO, Lausanne: Comité Olympique Internationale.
- Connolly, C. A. (2012). The Politics of the Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFo), *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 29(9), 1311-24.
- Davis, D. (2010). *Urban Leviathan: Mexico City in the Twentieth Century*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Del Pozo, J. (2009). *Historia de América Latina y del Caribe 1825-2001*. Santiago: Lom Ediciones.
- Fernández C., & Raymundo A. (2012). *Los concursos de arquitectura en los Juegos Olímpicos de México '68: Organización, propuestas y valoración de sus aportaciones*. Madrid: Editorial Académica Española.
- Fernández Contreras, Raymundo Angel (2009). Los concursos de arquitectura en el marco de los juegos olímpicos de México '68. Sus aciertos y sus desaciertos. PhD Thesis in Architecture, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Fernández C., & Raymundo A. (2005). 'La ruta de la amistad en la olimpiada cultural, Mexico '68', Master's Thesis in History of Art, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Flaherty, George F (2016). *Hotel Mexico: Dwelling on the '68 Movement*. Berkeley: Univ of California Press.

Gillingham, P. & Benjamin T. S., (2014). *Dictablanda, Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Girginov, V. (2011). Governance of London 2012 Olympic Games Legacy. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 47(5). DOI: 10.12690211413966

González P., A. (1968), Los edificios olímpicos. Un corte a la arquitectura mexicana de los sesentas. *Artes de México, La arquitectura y el deporte, numero extraordinario*.

Hamnett, B. R. (2006). *A Concise History of Mexico*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Horne, J., & Wolfram M. (2006). Sports Mega-Events: Social Scientific Analyses of a Global Phenomenon. *Sociological Review*, 54(2), 1-187.

Jácome M., & Cristóbal, A. (2010). Fábrica de imágenes arquitectónicas. El caso de México en 1968. *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, 32(96). DOI: 10.22201/iie.18703062e.2010.96.2308

Joseph, G. M, & Jürgen, B. (2013). *Mexico's Once and Future Revolution: Social Upheaval and the Challenge of Rule since the Late Nineteenth Century*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Keller, R. (2013). Building 'Nuestra América:' National Sovereignty and Regional Integration in the Americas. *Contexto Internacional*, 35(2), 537-64.

Kiddle, A. (2010). 'Cabaretistas and Indias Bonitas: Gender and Representations of Mexico in the Americas during the Cárdenas Era'. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 42, 263-291.

Knight, A. (2002). Subalterns, Signifiers, and Statistics: Perspectives on Mexican Historiography. *Latin American Research Review*, 37(2), 136-58.

Loeza, S. (2005). "Gustavo Díaz Ordaz y el colapso del milagro mexicano." Meyer, Lorenzo e Ilán Bizberg (coords.), *Una Historia Contemporánea de México*. México: El Colegio de México.

López M., A. (1960). Nationalisation of the Electric Industry. Retrieved from: <http://www.inep.org/index.php/biblioteca-del-politico/63-lanacionalizacion-de-la-industria-electrica-doralicia-carmona>.

Marte R., G. (1978). *Vida política contemporánea: Cartas de Marte R. Gómez*, 2 vols. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

NA (October 2, 1968). Crecimiento Mayor del 7% en 68; en 69 se elevará la inversión. *Excelsior*.

Pensado, J. (2013). *Rebel Mexico: Student Unrest and Authoritarian Political Culture During the Long Sixties*. Palo Alto, CA, Stanford University Press.

Rodríguez K., A. (2014). Ganar la sede. La política internacional de los juegos olímpicos de 1968. *Historia Mexicana*, 64,(1), 243-89.

Rodríguez K., A. (2003). Hacia México 68. Pedro Ramírez Vázquez y el proyecto olímpico. *Secuencia*, 56, 37-73. DOI: 10.18234/secuencia.v0i56.812

Rodríguez K., A.(1998). El otro 68: política y estilo en la organización de los juegos olímpicos de la ciudad de México. *Relaciones*, 76(19), 108-29.

Saunders, D. (October 12, 1968). 'Hopes now that XIXth Olympics will be "an Oasis of sanity"' *Daily Telegraph*.

Shimazu, N. (2014). Diplomacy as Theatre: Staging the Bandung Conference of 1955. *Modern Asian Studies*, 48(1), 225-252. doi:10.1017/S0026749X13000371

Schiller, K, & Christopher, Y. (2010). *The 1972 Munich Olympics and the Making of Modern Germany*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Tenorio-Trillo, M. (1996). *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation*. Vol. 35. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Tibol, R. (1967). México ante Las olimpiadas, entrevista de Raquel Tibol a Ramírez Vázquez. *Calli*.

Unikel, L. (1976), Crescencio Ruiz, and Gustavo Garza. *El desarrollo urbano de México*. México: El Colegio de México.

Valenzuela, G. (1968). *Instalaciones Olímpicas*. Mexico, Secretaría de Obras Públicas.

Van Young, E. (1999). The New Cultural History Comes to Old Mexico. *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 79(2), 211-47.

Vaios G., T. (2011). The Sporting Scramble for Africa: GANEFO, the IOC and the 1965 African Games, *Sport in Society*, 14(5), 645-59.

Vázquez, J. Z. (1979). *Nacionalismo y educación en México*. El Colegio de Mexico, México.

Wagner, C. (2013). Representing the Nation: Sport and Spectacle in Post-Revolutionary Mexico (Book Review). *Sport in History*, 33(2), 216-19. DOI: 10.1080/17460263.2013.786230

Westad, O. A. (2005). The revolutionaries: Anticolonial politics and transformations. In: *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (pp. 73-109). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511817991.004

Witherspoon, K. B. (2008). *Before the Eyes of the World: Mexico and the 1968 Olympic Games*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press.

Zolov, E. (2003). Toward an Analytical Framework for Assessing the Impact of the 1968 Student Movement on Us-Mexican Relations. *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research*, 9(2), 41-68. Doi: 10.1080/13260219.2007.10418855

Zolov, E. (2014). Introduction: Latin America in the Global Sixties. *The Americas*, 70(3), 349-62. DOI: 10.1017/S0003161500003953

## **Acknowledgement**

This research received the support of CONACYT, the Science and Technology Council in Mexico, in form of a PhD scholarship, and from the International Olympic Committee, as part of their PhD and early researcher grants. Most of the data was collected in 2016. The broader research which this article forms part of received the support from Uta Balbier, Christine Mathias, Jeff Garmany, supervisors at King's College London and from Raúl Nivón Ramírez, among many others.

## **Author**

**Axel Elías Jiménez** is an early career scholar interested in Contemporary Latin American History, especially on everyday politics and resistance. His PhD research looked at the XIX Olympiad as a political arena where domestic and international actors engaged in discussions about nation and political affiliation, among others. He is currently looking at performances of Mexican identity through food from a transnational perspective.

