



## OLYMPIAN RESPONSIBILITY: THE IOC MUST NOT SACRIFICE ETHICS FOR PROFITS

MARCH 23, 2017 | BRAZIL, INTERNATIONAL OLYMPICS COMMITTEE, LOS ANGELES, OLYMPIC GAMES, PARIS, SHAUN M. ANDERSON

By Shaun M. Anderson

When the International Olympics Committee selected Rio as a host city in 2009, thousands of jubilant Brazilians crowded Copacabana Beach to celebrate. The Brazilian government vowed to use the Olympics to solve long-existing problems, including a pledge to treat 80 percent of Rio's sewage. Most citizens seemed optimistic that the games could ignite the local economy and clean up their city. Fast forward to the current day, and [exceedingly high crime rates](#), [dilapidated buildings](#), and [contaminated water](#) remain an issue.

As the IOC prepares to announce the winning bid for the 2024 Olympics on Sept. 13, the discrepancy between the grand promises of socio-economic improvement and the reality on the ground in previous host cities is worrying. Although host cities and countries must [participate](#) in revitalization plans, the IOC must help develop strategies of its own. From infrastructure woes to human rights violations, the IOC has a [responsibility](#) to focus on both the ethics and profits of conducting business.

Given the long-term detrimental effects of the Olympic Games in Rio, it's no surprise that Budapest, facing [civil unrest](#) and [a lack of cohesion](#) among its political parties, withdrew its bid for the 2024 games. With this move, there are now two potential host cities: Los Angeles and Paris. As the decision draws near, there are several factors for the IOC to consider when determining which city would reap the most ethical and profitable scenarios. The LA committee points to the 1984 Summer

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Olympics—[considered](#) “one of the most successful games on record” for netting the IOC \$225 million as the first to [utilize](#) television contracts to advertise the games—as a baseline for future success. With this track record, it is not hard to assume that the 2024 Olympics Games in the city would be financially lucrative for both the IOC and the LA itself.

But issues of social responsibility may hinder LA’s bid. If approved, the most current [travel ban](#) forwarded by U.S. President Donald Trump would [block](#) migrants and refugees from the majority Muslim countries of [Syria](#), [Libya](#), [Sudan](#), [Iran](#), and [Yemen](#) from entering the U.S., and foreign dignitaries and officials may consider this as a discriminatory act toward Muslim athletes. The ban would also stand in stark contradiction to the LA committee’s [claim](#) that “LA is a cultural and industrial mashup unlike anywhere else, where citizens from 115 countries are held together by a collective optimism, a push for progress, and a dedication to sport and a healthy lifestyle.” Despite the projected high revenues, it would be socially irresponsible for the IOC to choose a host country enacting such discriminatory laws without addressing the dismay that could ensue from the ban.

Additionally, [traffic congestion and homelessness](#) remain important issues that the LA committee must address for a successful bid. The city is moving in the right direction to address these two issues, with the passage of legislative Measures [M](#) and [HHH](#) during the Nov. 8, 2016 elections, but it is too soon to judge how successful these efforts will be prior to the Olympics. Only one point is clear: Los Angeles can ill afford to follow in the footsteps of the 2016 Rio games.

While the LA committee works to finalize its petition, it must continue to contend with Paris’ Olympic bid. Unlike LA, Paris does not face the travel ban controversy, but the issue of security is paramount. The [2015 Paris terrorist attacks](#) that killed over 120 people, the [robbery](#) of reality-TV star Kim Kardashian at gunpoint in a Paris apartment, and the recent [terrorist threat](#) when a man attempted to enter the Louvre with a machete must concern the IOC. There can [never be a guarantee](#) that nothing will happen. As a result, the IOC and Paris committee must work to implement a strategic public safety plan.

The forecast for both LA and Paris as potential host cities emphasize the IOC’s need for socially responsible strategies. First, the organization would [improve](#) its brand reputation and global standing if it manages to dispel rumors that the organization is solely driven by profits. Recently, a litany of negative news about the IOC has surfaced, including allegations that its member has accepted [bribes](#) in return for voting for host cities. Such accusations could permanently taint or, worse, eventually lead to the upheaval of the games in their entirety.

Second, the IOC could gain buy-in from stakeholders—consumers of the games, suppliers, sponsors, and other individuals who are directly affected by the games—if it provides tangible evidence of the socio-economic advantages of the games. As [stated](#) on their website, “the IOC is committed to building a better world through sport.” But if stakeholders perceive the IOC as complicit in acts of discrimination, like the U.S. travel ban, then both pre-established relationships could be severed and future relationship development stunted.

Third, the IOC must be willing to be transparent and adapt to organizational change if it is to contend with an interconnected globalized society. Organizations can no longer operate under a closed-system mentality in which they simply ignore or fail to respond to public criticism.

Scandals and deception have often **plagued** the IOC’s **mission** “to promote sustainability awareness, capacity building, and far-reaching actions for environmental, social, and economic development across society.” Therefore, it is imperative that the IOC focuses on restructuring its organization to meet stakeholder needs and generate positive social change.

Social responsibility has never been a requirement for an organization’s bottom line, but an increasing number of businesses now **recognize** its importance and are working to reorient their strategies to incorporate ethical concerns. Given the **history** of problems in the cities hosting the Olympic Games, the IOC must not derail its ethical decision-making processes in favor of profit. Otherwise, the IOC will continue to blemish their reputation, leading others to **question the relevance** of the games.

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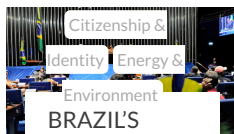
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[Photo courtesy of [Agência Brasil](#)]

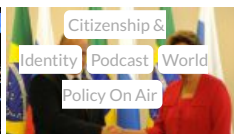
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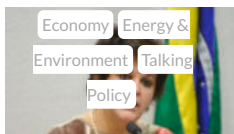
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