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THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN POST-SOCIALIST CITIES – A REAL GOAL OR DISTANT FUTURE? CASE STUDIES OF CRACOW AND ALMATY

The collapse of the Soviet Union has led to historical transitions in Central and Eastern Europe. The political and economic transformation in countries located in this world's region has caused their dynamic socioeconomic development and more stable position on the international stage. Regarding the potential of hosting the Olympic Games as an opportunity for infrastructural improvements, employment boost, and presentation of a positive image and traditions of a country, post-Soviet cities have entered the race for staging Olympic events. The main aim of this article is to analyse the bidding process for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games with an emphasis on case studies from two bidding cities with post-socialist history – Cracow and Almaty. Characteristic patterns and features of both cities' bids, as well as differences between them are drawn, with conclusions on why these were unsuccessful. Cracow and Almaty's bid paths in the 2022 Winter Olympics process were different. Cracow pulled out from the race during the applicant phase because of referendum results: the city residents were against the Olympics, while Almaty reached the final phase and lost to Beijing in final voting. It seems that post-socialist countries still have a weaker bargaining position in the bidding process than candidates with advanced and established economies.

Key words: Winter Olympic Games, mega-events, post-socialist cities, political economy

INTRODUCTION

Since the disintegration process of the Eastern Bloc was accomplished, many new independent countries or those which regained their sovereignty lost after the Second World War have appeared on the world map. Despite a huge socioeconomic and institutional gap between East and West, the transformation process of post-Soviet states has caused dynamic, mostly positive, changes in their economies. The past two decades have proved that Eurasian post-socialist countries clearly marked their position on the global stage, also through hosting some of the sports mega-events (Müller & Pickles, 2015). Although the requirements are the same for each country interested in being a host for a particular sporting event, the planning and organisational process in post-Soviet states

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has its own characteristics and patterns, such as a strong role of centralised state and neopatrimonial forms of resource allocation (Wolfe & Müller, 2018). State-led economy and public sector dominance are present even if a private business sector operates. This combination allows the authorities to control the majority of investment undertakings or any other projects on the appropriate scale, including those linked with sports events.

Trends and patterns in bidding for the Olympic Games have changed significantly over years. The last two decades proved that the Olympic Games organisation was no longer a domain of the highly industrialised Western countries, as shown in Table 1. The Olympic bids from developing countries, including those from Eastern Europe, have been present in actually every candidate process since 1990s. Staging the Olympics or any other mega sporting event has one undoubted advantage: acceleration of many strategic investments in the hosting region. That is why cities, especially those in emerging countries, still bid for the Olympics. For them, the Olympics are still perceived as a catalyst for urban change (Essex & Chalkley, 1998, 2004). So far, after 1991, the Russian resort of Sochi was privileged to host the Winter Games in 2014. But this event triggered a recurrent discussion about its role in the contemporary world as expressed in the following question: 'Are the Olympics still a sports festival or a scene for political and economic showcase of host power and enhancing global image?' (Boykoff, 2016, p. 131). Without a doubt, the Sochi Games 'were intended to elevate Russia's status worldwide to that of a superpower' (Zimbalist, 2016, p. 83) and revealed multiple controversies, e.g. regarding notorious breaking of human and workers' rights, forced evictions, construction delays. If one considers the enormous costs, escalated to the amount of USD 51 billion, and difficulties in accomplishing all investments on time, the Sochi Olympics emerge as belonging to the most contentious in the sports history. But Sochi is just one of the costly examples of the Games; there are several publications proving that almost all Olympics since 1960 noted cost overruns (Flyvbjerg, Stewart, & Budzier, 2016; Preuß, Andreff, & Weitzmann, 2019). Much more sophisticated and detailed requirements relating to the Olympics organisation – from sports venues to transport and communication aspects – have caused a giant expansion of this event, both summer and winter editions (Chappelet, 2002, 2014). Apart from organisational gigantism, there are also several social issues which are problematic for the Olympic Movement, namely social and gender inequalities, race and ethnic discrimination, human rights abuses in host cities, or corruption scandals (Kaźmierczak, 2013); these should be subject to adequate reforms. It could be concluded that every subsequent Olympics in a particular country disseminate numerous issues, not only of sports, but also of social, economic, and political nature, which, by the occasion of staging the Olympics, acquire global meaning and become a serious challenge for the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the whole Olympic Movement.

The vast majority of post-Soviet countries are classified as emerging economies with respect to their socioeconomic development status. They need capital influx, interest from foreign investors, and widespread promotion (Dinnie, 2004), and staging mega-events, especially sporting ones with global reach and audience seems to be a reasonable way to achieve this goal (Bravo, Shonk, Silva-Bórquez, & González-Mesina, 2018). But it must be highlighted that some post-Soviet countries' political systems are troublesome and present poor or non-democratic standards; throughout hosting global sports mega-events, they can improve their image and implement a soft power strategy

Table 1. Number of bids for summer and winter Olympic Games

Event	Bidders			Hosts		
	Industrialised countries	Developing countries	Eastern European / former Soviet states	Industrialised countries	Developing countries	Eastern European / former Soviet states
Summer Olympics:						
1896–1996	71	9	7	20	2	1
2000–2022	23	21	4	4	2	0
Winter Olympics:						
1924–1998	51	1	3	17	0	1
2002–2022	21	4	12	4	1	1

Source: Baade and Matheson (2016, p. 203)

(Grix & Lee, 2013). Even though it has been over 25 years since the Eastern Bloc collapsed, post-Soviet countries are still undergoing the transformation process on the economic, political, or institutional field. Utterly, the need for modernisation and 'catching up' Western societies pushes them to seek opportunities to rejuvenate their major cities. Sports mega-events such as Olympic Games may promise a short-term investment capital injection in infrastructure, as well as national image enhancement with long-term legacies. But this development strategy is burdened with risk and uncertainties.

THE 2022 WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES BIDDING PROCESS

The candidature process for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games may be perceived as one of the most peculiar and difficult ones in the history, especially to IOC. Out of the initial number of six bids submitted, four pulled out owing to lack of political or public support and fears of high costs (Table 2). Moreover, it is worth mentioning that two polls took place before the official term of submitting applications to IOC, namely Munich and Graubünden residents had voted against bidding for the 2022 Games. This situation fits into the trend of a declining number of cities willing to host the Olympic event. Olympic referendums and their increasing popularity were one of the major motivations for IOC to reform the bidding process. The Winter Olympics 2022 bid stage signalled ascending concerns of how to make the Olympics an attractive and encouraging option for cities. After a series of Games cost overruns (Flyvbjerg et al., 2016) and leaving cities with debts and 'white elephants,' IOC had to reform the host election process and, as a consequence, implement the Olympic Agenda 2020.

Oslo, a world capital of winter sports, was for a long time perceived as a favourite for hosting the Games, also because previous Olympics took place outside Europe[1]. Moreover, before Oslo's bid submission to IOC, a referendum among city residents was

[1] The 2018 Winter Olympic Games took place in Pyeongchang.

Table 2. Reasons for withdrawal from hosting the 2022 Winter Olympic Games

City	Status in bidding process	Formal reason of withdrawal
Cracow	Applicant	Negative result of local referendum
Lviv	Applicant	Ukrainian crisis caused by war and political turmoil
Stockholm	Applicant	Lack of political support and financial arguments
Oslo	Candidate	Lack of political support

Source: own elaboration based on *Bids for the 2022*...; Könecke and de Nooij (2017)

conducted in autumn 2013 whether they were in favour of staging the Olympics or not. This poll showed that 55% of Oslo citizenry voted 'yes' for the Olympics (MacAloon, 2016). The Norwegian bid for the Olympics was mainly driven by the Oslo city government, partner municipalities, and relevant counties. The national government obliged themselves to secure state financing and guarantees, but everything changed on 1st October 2014, when Oslo was forced to quit the race owing to lack of political support from the ruling parties (Solsvik, 2014).

After a series of withdrawals, only two Asian cities left in the race for the Winter Olympic Games in 2022: Almaty, the largest Kazakhstan city, and Beijing, a global financial, industrial, and economic hub and host of the Summer Olympics in 2008. In the following sections, the author explores the characteristic patterns and features of the bidding process regarding two selected cities with post-socialist origin: Cracow and Almaty.

CRACOW 2022

The capital of the Lesser Poland region is one of the most developed tourist resorts in Poland and the city most visited by foreign guests. Thanks to its tourist attractiveness, Cracow is one of the Polish trademarks and must-see places to visit, mainly because of its historical and cultural determinants and architectural richness.

Cracow bid for the Olympics in 2022 but the origins of the idea to organise the most hallmark winter sports event in Poland dates back to 1993, when Zakopane submitted its bid for the 2006 Olympics. Support by the public authorities, not only local ones but also on the governmental level, was based on the belief that the Games would be an important element in the long-term country development plan, especially in the Zakopane and neighbouring municipalities (International Olympic Committee, 1999). Despite the fact that the time after the democratic transformation was relatively short, Poland expressed its strong will to participate on international sports stage as a potential host and to showcase its best geographic and cultural heritage, such as Cracow and the Polish Tatra mountains. However, during the 109 IOC Session in Seoul in 1999, the Polish candidature did not gain broad support among the IOC delegates and Zakopane did not qualify to the final selection stage, where Turin defeated Sion.

It can be presumed that the Polish candidature did not achieve a successful result owing to several reasons. First of all, in spite of the dynamic socioeconomic transformation and positive growth at that time, the Polish economy was still under a transition process, which implicated uncertainties and fluctuations on markets (Jarmołowicz &

Piątek, 2013; Kołodko, 1992). Environmental constraints might be perceived as a second cause of Zakopane's bidding failure (International Olympic Committee, 1999). The IOC Evaluation Commission indicated that, except for the biathlon venue, environmental impact studies were not made available to their members (International Olympic Committee, 1999). Moreover, the Tatra region is under a quite strict preservation because of its unique nature. Previous studies on the effect of sports and recreation in the Tatra Biosphere Reserve advocated a limitation on the extension of skiing areas (International Olympic Committee, 1999). Investments required for staging the Olympics, among others, new alpine skiing venues and transportation infrastructure, could violate the ecologically fragile area (International Olympic Committee, 1999). There were also huge doubts referring to the location of the bobsleigh and luge run because of the possible deforestation of fragile biological areas and the potential activity of non-governmental organisations and the scientific community opposing against the planned venues in the Biosphere Reserve (International Olympic Committee, 1999). The final probable reason for rejecting Zakopane's bid might have been the insufficient state of sports and non-sports infrastructure in comparison, for example, with Sion or Turin.

Although the Polish initial attempt to candidate for the Olympic Games ended up with a fiasco, Poland did not give up the idea to host the Olympics. After the unfavourable decision regarding Zakopane in 1999, the concept of organising Games, this time with Cracow as a candidate city, was maturing for the next few years (*Zimowe Igrzyska…*, 2013).

Despite the fact that Cracow is a cultural capital of Poland, a place of national heritage, where a lot of festivals take place, the city had relatively modest experience in organising sports events on international scale before bidding for the Games, not to mention about winter competitions. The biggest events held in Cracow were the 2014 FIVB Volleyball Men's World Championship (several matches) and the European Canoe Slalom Championships (in 2008 and 2013). Moreover, Cracow is a host for the final stage of Tour de Pologne, one of the most prestigious bicycle races in UCI World Tour. Zakopane, planned to be one of the 2022 Olympic sites, hosted an internationally recognisable event of the 2001 Winter Universiade and, annually, the FIS Ski Jumping World Cup, widely appraised by the discipline fans and ski jumpers for its atmosphere and organisation.

The idea of staging the Winter Olympic Games in Poland emerged again in mid-2012, when the first Olympic project concept 'Cracow – Winter Olympic Games 2022' was presented by Jagna Marczułajtis-Walczak, member of the Polish Parliament and the future Chairman of the Cracow Bid Committee, together with Szymon Krasicki, Professor of the University of Physical Education in Cracow. The project was acclaimed by the most prominent Polish politicians and local authorities, who supported the idea not only by adopting adequate laws to regulate it, but also by financially participating in the project, providing all necessary amenities. The project also involved Slovakia, where alpine skiing competitions were supposed to take place in the Jasna Tatra region (Jasna-Chopok downhill course). The bid was supported by a variety of state and local institutions on the national, regional, and local levels (*Ekstrakt…*, 2014).

The Polish Olympic Committee officially submitted Cracow as a bidding city for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games on 7th November 2013 and the application with Bid Book document was notified to IOC on 13th March 2014. According to the initial estimations, the total budget amounted to around 1 billion USD (*Ekstrakt…*, 2014). The concept and

vision for the Olympics sporting venues were concentrated on two clusters: the Cracow cluster (Cracow, Katowice, Oświęcim, Myślenice) and the Tatra cluster (Zakopane, Kościelisko, Jurgów, Liptovský Mikuláš, Jasna). The Olympic Village and the International Broadcast Centre / Main Press Centre were aimed to be built in Cracow, and a subvillage in Zakopane (2000 beds) (*Kraków 2022*…, n.d.). This kind of solution, though, has its advantages and drawbacks. IOC prefers sports venues and the Olympic Village to be concentrated in one place or in a radius of a few kilometres away from the main host city. That would not be a drawback if intra-urban transportation system operated in the region. The Olympics in Cracow were supposed to be a stimulus for an urban change in Lesser Poland, but appropriate roads, railways, venues, and hotels would have to emerge to meet all the requirements. These concerns about the project feasibility were reflected in Hula and Bisson's analysis (2014), where Cracow was ranked on the last place in the ATR Olympic Bid Power Index for 2022.

If Cracow's bid had turned into success, the whole Lesser Poland, Silesia, and Tatra Euroregion would undergo massive upgrades in rail, road, and air transport infrastructure. Also, emphasis on environmental issues and improving air quality were among the pivotal aims, not surprisingly, as Cracow is one of the most polluted cities in Europe. Taking into consideration the Cracow Bid Committee concept for the Olympics, as well as substantial improvements and numerous initiatives and collaborations between municipalities and regions, it can be concluded that the project would positively serve Lesser Poland. With the additional context of Polish athletes' success in Sochi 2014 with six medals won, it seemed that the atmosphere around this idea would be favourable for further promoting actions.

However, this positive approach started diminishing, especially when it comes to rather negative press attitude towards Cracow's bid (Gwiżdż & Jarczewski, 2017). Lack of transparency in spending public money, controversial collaboration with a company hired to prepare the application documents, costly marketing campaign and unclear employments in the Bid Committee are only some of the charges revealed (Cieśla, 2014). An argument of enormous budget and costs was also raised in the public debate, according to some journalists, in the amount of 21 billion PLN (approximately 5 billion USD) (Serafin, 2013). Moreover, Grabowski (2014) indicates that controversies around the Cracow 2022 bid derive from a clash of public authorities' perception of the Olympics in the category of prestige, promotion, and opportunity for additional infrastructural investments with economic arguments encompassing sources of financing the preparations for the Olympic Games, subsequently maintaining the built infrastructure, and further costs of winter sports strategy implementation.

The local referendum on the 2022 Cracow Olympic Games was a consequence of decreasing public support and trust in this project, mainly determined by concerns of economic and financial nature that the Olympics would leave Cracow with debts and unused facilities. One of the recurrent arguments raised during the bidding process was that there were much more important and urgent needs in municipalities than giving public finances to the very costly and rather economically unprofitable Olympic project.

In Poland, referendums are not a popular form of citizens' participation in co-governing, but the idea of the Olympics in Cracow inspired a group of activists to run a non-governmental initiative 'Cracow against the Olympics' (Gwiżdż & Jarczewski, 2017). In spite of initial local authorities' reluctance, the President of Cracow Jacek Majchrowski

made a decision to organise a poll. The referendum took place on 24th May 2014, along with elections for the European Parliament. With a 35.96% turnout, 69.72% of the city residents voted against the Olympic Games in Cracow. This defeat was even more shocking for the Cracow Bid Committee if we take a look at the opinion poll carried out just 6 months before the referendum. The public opinion poll in November 2013 revealed that local residents, not only in Cracow but in the whole Lesser Poland region, supported the idea of the Olympics (79% in Lesser Poland, 66% in Cracow) (*Tak dla ZIO…*, 2013). The reasons for this high result may be twofold. Firstly, Cracow's bid preparation was still in a developmental phase; therefore, city residents did not have enough knowledge about the overall concept and costs of the event. Social consultations with local residents commenced in March 2014, a few days after submitting the bid to IOC (*Kalendarium…*, 2013). Secondly, the media interest at the time of the poll was low. Media constitute a fundamental source of information and a place where public debate takes place. The idea of staging the Olympics was relatively new and the public opinion might have not been well informed about it. After Cracow resigned from bidding, the Polish Supreme Audit Office released a report about public funds spent by the Cracow Bid Committee, which questioned the purposefulness of some expenses (Najwyższa Izba Kontroli, 2016).

Taking into consideration all the circumstances linked with the Cracow bidding process, several conclusions on the reasons for the bid's unsuccessful end can be drawn. Badly conducted information campaign among city and country residents, lack of transparency, and too many doubts and controversies with regard to spending public funds could have led, firstly, to the referendum and its negative results for the Bid Committee, and, consequently, to the withdrawal from the bidding process for the 2022 Winter Olympics. Now, it seems that the idea of staging the biggest sporting event in Poland has been postponed even till next decades. In order to bring it back to reality and feasibility, it is also suggested that before any Polish city decides to submit its Bid Book to IOC, state authorities should impose an obligation on the local government to conduct a local referendum, which must clearly indicate a wide support for staging the Olympic Games (Rulka, 2015).

ALMATY 2022

Having a positive, but relatively modest experience in delivering international sports events, Almaty presented its bid as a very ambitious project with an emphasis on economic legacy and gaining global recognition. Kazakhstan has thrived as one of the leading Central Asian countries, despite the autocratic political system and moderately free economy (Freedom House, 2019; The Heritage Foundation, 2019). Having relied on profits from oil extraction and other natural resources, Kazakhstan is perceived as an emerging economy. However, economic stabilisation was reached only after 2000s, when post-communist elites consolidated their power and implemented autocratic regime, taking control over the political, economic, and social spheres (Nurmakov, 2016). Lack of civil liberties and freedom of speech were, and still are, issues of great concern expressed by international non-governmental organisations, also referring directly to the Kazakhstan Olympic bid (Borden, 2015). But despite poor human rights records and the 'not free' country status (Freedom House, 2019; Human Rights Watch, n.d.), Kazakhstan has achieved an economic strength and begun to be more active in self-pro-

motion internationally (Nurmakov, 2016). Pursuing for the sports mega-events was one of the activities taken by the Kazakh authorities in order to reach the aforementioned goal.

In the past, Almaty bid for the 2014 Winter Olympics, but without success[2] (International Olympic Committee, 2006). The idea was widely supported not only by public authorities at the national, regional, and local levels but also by public opinion. Before 2006, Kazakhstan represented limited experience in hosting globally-recognised events, especially major winter events. The first important sporting event held in Kazakhstan was the 2011 Asian Winter Games in two main Kazakhstan cities: Almaty and Astana (*Sports*..., 2011). Preparations for this event unfortunately coincided with the global financial crisis in 2007–2008 and the event budget had to be reduced (Nurmakov, 2016). Despite this economic turmoil, sports venues and major infrastructure investments were finished. The event was organised without serious problems and this experience allowed the Kazakh authorities pursue for the Olympic dream once again.

Staging sports mega-events is one of the governments' instruments to fulfil the strategic aims of Kazakhstan 2050 roadmap for future country development; this was included in Almaty's motivation and vision in the 2022 bid for the Winter Olympic Games. The Kazakhstan bid had a full support on all levels of government. The idea of Olympics in Almaty had a broad public support, underpinned by the results of the opinion polls conducted separately by IOC and the City Bid Committee (International Olympic Committee, 2014). What is more, public support increased, when comparing the application and candidature stage, from around 65% to over 80% in Kazakhstan and Almaty city (International Olympic Committee, 2014). Such results of the opinion polls could have been perceived as a fundament for the further hopes and expectations of the Almaty Bid Committee that this time the city bid would be successful.

Overall venue concept assumed establishing two main zones – city and mountain ones. The location of competition venues, villages, and media centres was one of the advantages of Almaty's bid as all city venues were planned to be situated within a radius of approximately 30 km. Three Olympic Villages were proposed, with the central one established in the city zone and two others in the mountain zone. Generally, 58% of competition venues already existed in the Almaty region before 2014, when IOC made an evaluation of three applicant cities: Almaty, Beijing, and Oslo, and 42% were still to be built (International Olympic Committee, 2014). Whereas there were many concerns about the post-Games use of the venues, IOC tried to put an emphasis on legacy issues. Almaty focused on three principal legacy areas: Sports and Physical Activity, Venues and Infrastructure, and Economic Legacy (International Olympic Committee, 2015). Throughout hosting the Olympics, Almaty wanted to improve winter sports infrastructure and training base, promote healthy lifestyle, and create thousands of workplaces.

Almaty proposed a very comprehensive and ambitious master plan for the Olympics. After Oslo had pulled out from the bidding process, Almaty and Beijing stayed in the race as the only two contenders. Until 31st July 2015 and the IOC Session in Kuala Lumpur, where the Olympic host was about to be selected, Almaty was perceived as a favourite by many experts. Right before the final selection, the 'Around the Rings' web portal published an ATR Olympic Bid Power Index, in which the Kazakhstan bid was still ahead of Beijing, scoring a total of 71 points as compared with 70 points for Beijing

[2] Bid rejected in the application phase.

(Hula, 2015). Albeit the gap between the two candidates was very narrow, it was indicated that the Chinese capital had a stronger bargaining position than Almaty, precisely speaking, stronger reputation and political influence, while Almaty was distinguished by an atmosphere and natural conditions – nearby mountains and real snow (Hula, 2015). Despite the capability of Almaty's bid, Beijing won the final voting 44 to 40 (International Olympic Committee, n.d.). This decision caused mixed feelings among public opinion as Beijing will rely mostly on artificial snow, and the mountains are relatively far from the city. Additionally, the Chinese capital becomes first to host summer and winter Games (Phillips, 2015). For IOC, financial security and a high rate of feasibility of the Olympic projects seem to be the most important factors. To support this argument, the IOC Working Group indicated in its report that even though the Chinese GDP per capita was low, the overall scale of the economy and government support for the Games were such that the required investments were considered to be entirely feasible and should not present a significant risk (International Olympic Committee, 2014). On the other hand, Almaty's economic strength was underlined by IOC but with the significant exception that there might be challenges in supporting several investments in competition and non-competition venues necessary for the Games due to the size of the economy and its reliance on oil unless there were extraordinary government support (International Olympic Committee, 2014). The economic chasm between those two Asian countries seems to be the predominant argument for Almaty's defeat. The best conclusion for the aforementioned explanation is what Thomas Bach, the IOC President, said: 'It really is a safe choice. We know China will deliver on its promises' (Borden, 2015). In three years, we will see if it was true.

REASONS FOR UNSUCCESSFUL OLYMPIC BIDS FROM POST-SOVIET CITIES

The organisation of the Olympic Games, the most recognisable sporting event and platform to showcase the host nation identity, culture, and tourist attractions, could be a catalyst for dynamic urban and economic development. Hosting Olympic events could thrive post-Soviet countries' economies and improve their image on the international stage. However, this group of states are very politically and economically heterogeneous, which leads to different results during the bidding process. Könecke and de Nooij (2017) presented an interesting socioeconomic analysis of bids from democracies and authoritarian regimes adapting transaction cost theory as a base to investigate the bidding processes for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games and the 2024/2028 Summer Games. According to their findings, post-Soviet cities with non-democratic authorities are more consistent and stable candidates in the bidding process than those from Western countries, where mega-events are mainly associated with enormous costs of organisation and investments. Once countries with an authoritarian regime decide to bid, it is very probable to be upheld for good. In democratic countries, a general decision to submit a bid to IOC requires a large number of initial supporters in politics and the sports world (Könecke & de Nooij, 2017). Moreover, in this type of countries, where the political system guarantees fundamental political rights and civil liberties, public referendums have become a common practice (Könecke, Schubert, & Preuß, 2016). That was also the case of Cracow, where the negative referendum result ended up the city's hopes for hosting

the Games. This voting was historical not only because it decided whether the public opinion was in favour of the Olympics in their city or not; it was also the first local referendum conducted in the city after 1989. Quite the opposite is Kazakhstan's political background. As a consequence of the Soviet Union collapse, the country regained its independence, but under the authoritarian regime with limited political rights and civil liberties. Thus, the referendum in Kazakhstan actually was not possible owing to the current political system and its features. As Table 3 shows, Cracow was the only city to conduct a referendum, and Lviv had to pull out from the bidding process because of political turmoil.

For several Eurasian cities, deeply rooted in the former communist political system, mega-events and their strength of influence with all historical, economic, and political background embedded, being in the centre of worldwide public attention as a host, are treated more as an opportunity for enhancing the country image than a potential source of economic downward trends and debts. Even though the dominant governing

Table 3. Causes for unsuccessful bids from Central and Eastern European / former Soviet cities

City and year	Reason for unsuccessful bid
Summer Olympics	
Belgrade 1992	Lost in third voting round to Barcelona (host), Paris, Brisbane
Belgrade 1996	Lost in first voting round to Atlanta (host), Athens, Toronto, Melbourne, Manchester
Tashkent 2000	Bid withdrawn by the city
Saint Petersburg 2004	Bid dropped by IOC in 1996
Moscow 2012	Lost in first voting round to London (host), Paris, Madrid, New York City
Prague 2016	Bid dropped by IOC after Working Group Report evaluation
Baku 2016	Bid dropped by IOC after Working Group Report evaluation
Baku 2020	Bid dropped by IOC after Working Group Report evaluation
Budapest 2024	Bid withdrawn owing to lack of political unity and local support[a]
Winter Olympics	
Sofia 1994	Lost in first round to Lillehammer (host), Östersund, Anchorage
Poprad 2006	Not selected to two 'finalist cities' (Turin – host, Sion) that were subjected to the voting
Zakopane 2006	Not selected to two 'finalist cities' that were subjected to the voting
Borjomi 2014	Bid dropped by IOC after Working Group Report evaluation
Sofia 2014	Bid dropped by IOC after Working Group Report evaluation
Lviv 2022	Unstable political situation
Almaty 2022	Lost to Beijing in final voting
Cracow 2022	Bid withdrawn owing to local referendum negative result

[a] The political movement against the idea of Olympics in the Hungarian capital collected more than 250,000 signatures to organise a referendum on the Olympic issue. That is why Budapest decided to withdraw from the Olympic race as a result of public opposition.
Source: own elaboration based on *Bids for the 1992…*; *Bids for the 1996…*; *Bids for the 2000…*; *Bids for the 2004…*; *Bids for the 2012…*; *Bids for the 2016…*; *Bids for the 2020…*; *Bids for the 2024 and 2028…*; Horne and Whannel (2016); International Olympic Committee (2006)

model has radically changed from government to governance since World War II (Müller, 2011) and liberalism has shaped the global economy and reached its prevailing position in market mechanisms, in post-socialist countries, there is still more state-led thinking about particular ventures. Olympic Games are a combination of business, economic, social, urban, political, and marketing projects with sizeable budget and their symbolic connotations. That is why the Games perception among Eurasian representatives is somewhat different from that in Western countries. In his paper, Müller (2011) argues that, for example, the 2014 Sochi Olympics megaproject pursues a model of *state dirigisme*, where the national state plays a prominent role in the planning process and steers the investment. To some extent, the macro-social and political system determines the sports mega-events bidding path chasing by post-socialist countries.

Whereas post-Soviet cities' efforts for staging the Olympics (obviously excluding the Russian Federation) have not been successful yet, the European Games might be regarded as an alternative for Eurasian countries to gain appropriate sports experience in events organisation. This multi-sport competition is a relatively new concept, created in 2012 by the General Assembly of the European Olympic Committees (*EOC*…). The European Games, their organisation and structure relate to the already existing continental championships such as the Pan American Games, the Pacific Games, the African Games, and the Asian Games, where athletes from countries in those continents compete in several, mainly Olympic, disciplines. Europe was the only continent that had not organised such events. The first edition of the European Games was held in Baku in 2015; the IOC President Thomas Bach praised this idea as the 'missing fifth ring' of competitions in the Olympic Movement (*Baku*…). But it was a very difficult job for the European Olympic Committee to find a country willing to host the event. Finally, the first European Games were awarded to the capital city of Azerbaijan. After a series of Olympic bidding process failures for the 2016 and 2020, President of Azerbaijan and simultaneously head of his country's Olympic Committee Ilham Aliyev considered the European Games as a prelude for future potential Olympic editions (Gibson, 2014). Moreover, in order to increase the prestige of this event, 12 competitions were aimed to be qualifying tournaments for the 2016 Rio Olympics. The Azerbaijani capital gathered 5898 athletes who competed across 20 sports and gathered the audience of 1.7 billion (*EOC*…). However, the first edition of the European Games triggered a lot of controversy because of human rights violations in Azerbaijan. Several non-governmental organisations such as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch strongly criticised Baku as a host of the European Games in 2015 for breaking human rights, political activists' imprisonment, and lack of freedom of speech (Gibson, 2015a, 2015b; Walker, 2015). Moreover, staging this kind of events, where spending billions of dollars on infrastructure investment is on a regular basis, may create an opportunity of rent-seeking for narrow interest groups, and this happened in the case of Azerbaijan. Presumably, the second edition of the European Games in 2019 might trigger another dispute and controversies as Minsk, the Belarusian capital, stages the event.

CONCLUSIONS

Hosting the Olympic Games has ambiguous consequences. On the one hand, it means a huge prestige for the country, on the other – an enormous financial burden with no cer-

tainty to cover it with the profits. The declining number of cities in bidding processes is an alarming signal, especially for IOC and the whole Olympic Movement, and that is why the Olympic Agenda 2020 has been created. The 2022 Winter Olympic Games bidding process was one of the most peculiar and difficult for IOC as only two candidates stayed in the race. The history of bids from Eurasian countries shows that they are willing to host the Olympics but the fact that they are still undergoing economic and political transformation brings too much potential risks and challenges. From the economic and marketing perspective, it should not be surprising that IOC prefers globally established candidates such as China than still 'catching up' post-Soviet Eurasian countries. Maybe within years, if only the latter ones gain their global status and join advanced economies, we will observe a significant and historical change, and hosting the Olympic Games will be a culmination of those countries' economic success.

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STRESZCZENIE

Igrzyska olimpijskie w miastach postsocjalistycznych – realny cel czy odległa przyszłość?
Studia przypadków Krakowa i Ałmatów

Upadek Związku Radzieckiego doprowadził do historycznych przemian w regionie Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Rezultatem transformacji ustrojowej i gospodarczej w krajach postsocjalistycznych jest społeczno-gospodarczy rozwój tych państw i zaznaczenie ich pozycji na arenie międzynarodowej. Mając na uwadze potencjał wynikający z organizacji olimpijskiego wydarzenia, miasta postsocjalistyczne zaczęły zgłaszać swoje kandydatury na gospodarza igrzysk. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza procesu ubiegania się o organizację Zimowych Igrzysk Olimpijskich w 2022 r., ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem dwóch miast z postsocjalistyczną historią – Krakowa i Ałmatów – wraz z nakreśleniem podstawowych cech procesu, różnic oraz przyczyn braku sukcesu. Główną metodą badawczą zastosowaną w pracy jest metoda deskryptywna polegająca na analizie dokumentów, raportów oraz informacji prasowych i medialnych. Analiza wspomnianego procesu w przypadku obu miast wskazała, że brak sukcesu Krakowa wynikał z negatywnego wyniku przeprowadzonego wśród mieszkańców lokalnego referendum. Jednak jego zorganizowanie było pokłosiem postępującego braku zaufania mieszkańców do olimpijskiego projektu, również ze względu na obawy związane z ogromnymi kosztami organizacji. Jeśli natomiast chodzi o Ałmaty, wciąż niedostateczny stan rozwoju gospodarczego oraz infrastrukturalnego oraz zbyt duża niepewność olimpijskich władz wobec kazachskiego konceptu igrzysk przeważyły o braku sukcesu w rywalizacji z Pekinem, globalną metropolią, gwarantującą realizację niezbędnych inwestycji. Wydaje się, że miasta postsocjalistyczne chcące kandydować na gospodarza największego wydarzenia sportowego na świecie wciąż mają słabszą pozycję przetargową niż kandydatury z państw doświadczonych w przeprowadzaniu olimpijskich wydarzeń bądź mających odpowiedni status społeczno-gospodarczy.

Słowa kluczowe: zimowe igrzyska olimpijskie, wielkoformatowe wydarzenia sportowe, miasta postsocjalistyczne, ekonomia polityczna