



By Christophe Dubi,
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Executive Director

DRIVING INNOVATION

Christophe Dubi was appointed Olympic Games Executive Director in 2014. He is responsible for overseeing all activities related to the organisation of the Olympic and Youth Olympic Games, from host selection to the dissolution of the Organising Committee. Prior to this, Dubi, who joined the IOC in 1996, served as Sports Director overseeing the relationship with all International Federations and responsible for all aspects of competition.

How the IOC approaches innovation and why the future of the Olympic Games will be more experiential than ever

What is the future of the Olympic Games? At the International Olympic Committee (IOC), we know we are not alone in asking the question.

If the Games have survived and thrived through generations, it is because of their capacity to adapt to changes in global lifestyles and popular expectations.

But today we are facing a significant moment of digital and societal transformation.

And today we live in a world where innovation is less a process than a discipline.

Of course, this will come as nothing new to readers of this magazine. Innovation has long been the driving force of the global sporting goods industry, whose brands provide a frequent source of inspiration and learning for our teams.



This year, more than ever, we have seen sports brands take the lead in embracing the possibilities of new technology – and particularly in encouraging new forms of sports practice – helping to keep people active in lockdown and engaged with sport during a period when elite competition was on hold.

Innovation in the context of the Olympic Games is equally purpose-driven. Our aim is to attract and retain more fans by bringing the Games closer to more people; by involving more fans in the experience of the Games; and being more flexible to their needs.

The Olympic Games belong to everyone, and the strategy is based on putting people at the centre. It's opening our arms and finding new ways to make the Games more inclusive, participative and experiential.

In real terms, it means more free-of-charge fan activities; more opportunities to actively participate; and new ways to amplify the Games experience using digital channels.

Indeed, this focus on innovation sits at the heart of Olympic Agenda 2020. It can be seen in the new Olympic House – one of the world's most sustainable buildings – and in sweeping changes to the host selection process, designed to ensure that future Games fit better with local contexts and communities. The fundamental shift is that the Games adapt to the cities. Already, bid budgets for the 2026 Games were reduced by 80 per cent.

While measures to improve sustainability and efficiency have dominated headlines, work on the Games themselves has been just as intensive.

We began by mapping all the individual experiences that make up the Olympic Games, and which make the Games unique in the landscape of global sports and entertainment.

It starts inside the venues and becomes a question of how to amplify those experiences to reach a larger audience.

The “phygital” dimension – the combining of physical and digital spaces – is where we see great potential, in common with our partners in the Organising Committees, particularly in this context of accelerated digital transformation.

Mass participation events are also a key area of focus. Take the example of Paris 2024, where an open running race will be held on the same day and course as the Olympic Marathon competition. There will be different distances to ensure people who cannot manage the full marathon distance can still compete.

Such innovations have their roots in the Youth Olympic Games (YOG), which have become a reliable laboratory for new sports events and experiences since the first edition in Singapore 2010.



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It was at those Games, for example, that we saw the first official Basketball 3X3 event – a discipline that will feature in the postponed Tokyo 2020 Games next year. Likewise, Breaking – complete with a pioneering video qualification process – was a break-out hit at the YOG Buenos Aires 2018, and is now set for inclusion in Paris 2024.

New sports such as Surfing, Skateboarding and Sport Climbing are also driving a shift towards a more experiential and lifestyle-oriented Games.

The new Playground experience concept will take future Games to the heart of host cities. Fans without tickets will be able to watch and interact with Olympians during open warm-up sessions, alongside participating in urban sports workshops, enjoying great food and experiencing live music and entertainment.

Overall, the trend is always towards bringing people closer to the action. This is equally true in the digital space, where the IOC's new strategy is based on a 'direct-to-people' approach, using personalisation, localisation and athlete-led content to drive direct engagement with Olympic Games audiences.

Meanwhile, LA 28 has made its own statement about innovation and inclusion with the launch of the first ever-changing animated Games logo, that celebrates the city's diversity through individual stories.

The Olympic Games will survive and thrive because of innovations like these – big and small; structural and experiential; inspired and driven in collaboration with our vast network of partners.

The future of the Olympic Games will have innovation at the heart of the story, just as it has always been, based on a fundamental openness to change; to new ideas; and to people.

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