



urban forum



Sports vs. Politics

Transcript of the Online Forum

In cooperation with

SINOPRESS



Speakers

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Former State Secretary for Europe, Arts and Sport in the Federal Chancellery, Former President of the Austrian Federal Sports Organization, Former President of the Paralympics

Mag. Marcus Schober

Director of the Vienna Education Academy, Member of the Vienna State Parliament as well as City Council

Martin Sörös

Free consultant and journalist for sports, politics, media and investment for the daily newspaper "Kurier" in Vienna

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3rd February 2022

Impressum:

Urban Forum –

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ZVR-Zahl: 169347700 |

Titelseite: © Adobe Stock



Transcript

Moderator: Distinguished panelists, ladies & gentlemen, a warm welcome to the online forum on "Sport versus Politics". This forum is – after several successful cooperation – again jointly initiated and organized by Urban Forum and SINOPRESS.

Urban Forum is a non-profit association in Austria with the objective of enhancing the meaning of urban local affairs and contributing to a modern administrative reform with emphasis on the values of the European Union.

SINOPRESS is an independent, non-profit, and self-supportive media outlet based in Vienna dedicated to the free expression of cultural and social opinions east and west.

My name is Alice Schmatzberger, founder of the platform ChinaCultureDesk based in Vienna. I'm honored to be your moderator today.

Our topic today – Sport versus Politics – is highly up to date, as the official opening ceremony of the 24th Winter Olympic Games will take place in Beijing tomorrow. This forum, therefore, is only a few hours ahead before the grand ceremony, against the polarizing backdrop of today's geopolitics worldwide and a rather polarized news coverage.

In this context, we are looking forward to discussing the following highly relevant issues:

1. Today's sports in relation to politics
2. The role of Olympic Games as an alliance between sport, education and culture
3. Sports ethics in the post-pandemic era
4. The future of sports in the digital and AI age

We are honored to have the following distinguished guests with us today, all with profound expertise on the topic:

Dr. Peter Wittmann: Former State Secretary for Europe, Arts and Sport in the Federal Chancellery; Former President of the Austrian Federal Sports Organization; Former President of the Paralympics

Mr. Ernst Woller: Chairman of the Sports Committee of the City of Vienna for more than two decades; President of the Vienna State Parliament since 2018; President of OECB in sports issues

Mr. Woller was very much looking forward to this discussion but is hindered at the last moment by some priorities with the Vienna city government.

Therefore, I would like to welcome Mag. Marcus Schober. Thank you so much for taking over at the short notice the important discussion at this forum!

Mag. Marcus Schober is Director of the Vienna Education Academy, and Member of the Vienna State Parliament as well as City Council.

And finally, Mr. Martin Sörös, who is free consultant and journalist for sports, politics, media and investment. He worked for more than two decades for the daily newspaper "Kurier" in Vienna, and he visited 5 Olympics including the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing plus more than 100 World and European championships in 15 different sports.

Representing the organizers today are Mag. Bernhard Müller from Urban Forum and Mag. Helena Chang from SINOPRESS.

Thank you all for coming to this forum to share your knowledge, expertise & experiences with us today!

Before we start the talk, allow me to give a short introduction to today's agenda:

As we know, the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics is opening tomorrow. Against the polarizing backdrop of today's geopolitics worldwide, the president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Thomas Bach emphasized, in a video message on December 31, 2021, the political neutrality of the IOC. The Olympic Games are above any conflict, he said, referring to the recent UN resolution declaring the Olympic ceasefire. This shows that the mission to connect the world through sports can only be successful if Olympia stands beyond all political disputes.

Originated 3000 years ago in ancient Greece, the principles of the Olympic Games are reshaped by Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic Movement in the 1890s. In the Olympic Charter "Olympism" is expressed as "a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and

education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles."

Olympism was formalized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in the Olympic Charter. The spirit of Olympism and the Olympic Games enable the IOC to promote sport, culture, education and positive values in the modern world. More importantly, the IOC helps set up programs that bridge the cultural and political divides.

The principle of Olympism, therefore, is to create positive social change including Non-Discrimination, Sustainability, Humanism, Universality, Solidarity, and the Alliance between sport, education, and culture. For the sake of these principles, today's forum aims to discuss the present attitude towards the Winter Olympics, sports versus politics, today's sports ethics, as well as the post-pandemic future of sports and more.

My first question on the relation of sports and politics is designed to be answered by all 3 panelists:

On January 28, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres sent a message to the world calling for the observance of the Olympic Truce for the Beijing Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games – expressing the wish that all parties stop hostilities throughout the course of the games. "With conflict spreading and tensions rising, this appeal represents a chance to overcome differences and find paths towards lasting peace," he stressed.

As we have seen during the past weeks, the advent of the opening of the Olympic Games has been accompanied by polarizing media coverage and a diplomatic boycott by several countries led by the USA. Politics has therefore entered the world of sports.

How do you see sports in relation to politics in today's polarizing world, Dr. Wittmann?

Peter Wittmann: Thank you! I think there is no question it is a polarized world today. But if we think of the past, it was always difficult to bring together different systems, different ideas, dif-



ferent cultures, different histories. Today, there are some new situations but such things happened a lot of times in the past. I think sports has been always one of these wonderful things which bring together people even if they are in the most difficult situations in the world. Even during the Cold War, –there was an understanding that the Olympic Games are above all the differences between the systems. Of course, the media coverage is more polarized in these times, but it is a problem we should overcome. We haven't got many places where we can overcome these differences, to think in another way and to bring together different cultures, different ideas, different systems. When you are an athlete from a different system or different race, or from different parts of the world, you come together in a community for some week to exchange thoughts and respect each other. The sports event could teach us all how to respect each other to accept different opinions, different views and different cultures.

I think it's bit of arrogance of the Western system and countries to boycott the Beijing Winter Olympic Games for the sake of their particular interest, trying to convince other countries that their system is better than other systems without any respect of the people living in different cultures and different traditions.

It makes no sense to do so in any time if a country with a different system from the Western one is hosting the Olympic Games. We have a community of states gathering at the Olympic Committee, with more systems other than just the Western system. We should see that there are different histories behind it, different traditions behind it, different cultures behind it, and we'll have to accept this.

To bring politics into the Olympic Games is the wrong way. I think being together without putting thoughts on political systems behind it will help. The friendship will last long. Sport is something where only facts count – the fastest, the strongest. And there are objective measurements to measure the victory. This is the most significant part of the Olympic Games, depending on the fitness and the training, the preparation for the competition and the will to win. There is no place for politics behind it, only the opposite: sports should be a place to overcome differences, to go beyond any political system. Sports competition is a fair one, an

objective one. It doesn't care about the system or the culture behind it. It doesn't care about division behind it. And it is a way to overcome all those problems having been developed. The arrogance of the Western countries with the idea of boycotting should end.

Moderator: Thank you very much for such a clear statement, Dr. Wittmann! May I now invite Mag. Schober to share your point of view on this issue with us?

Marcus Schober: Thank you very much. Even though that I believe that politics have no reason to meddle in sports, I think sports and politics will always be closely connected. The prime example of this was for me Tracey Holmes on the Olympics in Berlin 1936. I think that sports and politics are more connected today than ever before, as they can directly address millions of people through social media. Take Cristiano Ronaldo for example. He has 400 million followers on Instagram and Facebook. If he states his opinion on a medal, it can directly impact society and therefore our politics. Athletes are therefore not just athletes but highly influential people. They behave like role models on and off the sports fields. Sometimes, athletes are being criticized for the country politics and I don't approve of this because they are athletes. We don't know their own political view or ethical belief.

To answer your question, I believe it's good that athletes can reach out to millions of people to help, and I do not believe that an athlete should be directly associated with their country's politics. However, by cases with influential persons, it is important not to divide but to unite, especially in the world of sports where everyone should feel at home. I really agree with Mr. Wittmann that these are the games for the athletes and that nobody should boycott the Olympic Games 2022.

Moderator: Thank you very much, Mr. Schober, for the new input on the roles of the athletes through social media! It is definitely a new phenomenon which deserves attention. I'd like to invite Mr. Sörös now to share with us his considerations on the relationship between sports and politics.

Martin Sörös: Thanks for the invitation! When we talk about the world of sports and politics, I

think we'll have to accept the fact that the world of sports in all respective countries directly depends more or less on the politics. Because it is up to politics and to the government to establish the basics, the infrastructure, the frame conditions, and the basic funding for sports federations in the country. From my point of view, this is all over the world. It might be different from country to country, but I think in Austria and many other European countries, sports cannot survive without politics.

Looking more into the depth, I think political leaders and governments have –also down to local levels, on the legal base – taken advantage of sports, to use but also to misuse the stage of sports for their political messages. This is exactly the situation we're facing now in connection with the Games in Beijing. When we look into some so-called free democratic countries like Germany, France, Austria, or the USA, the leaders are creating now some sort of peculiar atmosphere, mostly through some media, about the Games, and about China. In this special case, with the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing, the USA in the first position is doing everything possible to create pictures and simultaneously to take the chance to transport their kind of politics and way of life, on the nonsense base.

The first message coming from the USA and many other countries, is that there is no free media in China. I would like to ask Mr. Wittmann – I respect him a lot and I know him for many years – if he could tell me one media institution in Austria which is so-called free from politics and not depending on politics directly. This means that the discussion about the media in China could be a discussion for all countries all over the world. The second message from the USA is about the so-called free Western countries: We are free, we are the world, we know what's right and what's not right. But to lead the country with 1.3 or 1.4 billion people is a different challenge than to lead the country of a few million people. I'm very confident that the answer of China will be quite easy. First of all, I am convinced they will organize the best Winter Games ever. I was working for the newspaper "Kurier" during the Olympic Games in 2008 in Beijing. I visited altogether five Olympic Games. I can tell you the worst Games ever – it's not my opinion, you can read all the media reports back then – the worst Olympic



Games ever happened is the one in 1996 in Atlanta. No organization, chaos, terror attacks and more. And the best Games ever, not the friendliest one, is the one in 2018 in Beijing. Why not the friendliest one? In Sydney Games in 2000, it was still a common party lasting for three weeks. But then in 2001, as we know, September 11 changed everything on this planet and also the world of sports. This means 2000 was a free party with all included but 2008 had to be more restricted for safety reasons.

I think Beijing will not only organize a perfect Games but also a friendly Games. I want to mention, too, that Beijing Games is setting new standards. All the venues will work on green electricity. I know China quite well. I've travelled there for decades. There's only one really weak point when you talk about China: sales and marketing. The sports in China and the media in China never understood how to convince the world and how to make promotion for themselves.

There are some countries boycotting the opening ceremony. To be quite honest, for Xi Jinping, it's more important to join Mr. Putin than to join Mr. Nehammer (Austrian Chancellor). I completely agree that the Games are for the athletes, and for the future. What the stage of sports in the Olympics could do in political area, one can think back to the Sydney Games in 2000. There, for the very first time, an Indigenous person called Cathy Freeman won the gold medal for the women's 400 meters competition. She also lit the torch in the Sydney Olympic Games in front of 1700 people. It was an unbelievable political statement! Don't forget it is very much China-related issue. A so-called Ping-Pong diplomacy happened in 1971/1972. A small ball made politics work and reopened relationships. Let's talk about the chances behind sports, about the upcoming opportunities, even though we shouldn't be blind because we'll have to face the reality. And it would be nice if the political leaders see more chances for this.

Moderator: Thank you very much for the input, Mr. Sörös! I try to summarize a bit. It is not clear if sports and politics have always been intended as a whole, because there are always different systems, different cultures.

But sports is dependent upon politics when it comes to infrastructure or money for example.

As far as I understood, you agree that sports offer a place to overcome differences, to focus on the athletes and to overcome difference. Let's celebrate together such an event as the Olympic Games. You also mentioned that those polarized media coverage are just one-sided about the Olympics in China, right? Thank you again very much for extending this topic so we see more points of view!

I would like to turn towards another issue now, which is the potential relevance of the Olympic Games. Entering the digital and artificial intelligence age, will the traditional Olympic Games still play an important role for the alliance of sports, education and culture in the future? Can we still expect the principles of Olympism to continue to create positive social change?

May I invite again Mr. Peter Wittmann to the floor. You are amongst other things co-founder and former President of the Australian Paralympic committee. Would you share with us your considerations on this issue?

Peter Wittmann: I think the Olympic Games will always be a place to overcome disputes. Even if everybody is talking about artificial intelligence, sports will still be one place where all differences can be overcome. Sports bring people together and allow them to have fun for a certain period of time, during which they exchange their best attitudes and their best results. The Olympic Games will always be placed beyond political disputes in the human world.

Moderator: You are stressing that the Olympic Games will still be a place where people can overcome the differences. But do you think that in the AI and digital age, the traditional Olympic Games can still afford to play an important role in making positive social changes?

Peter Wittmann: Of course! Because even the future is full of AI media coverage and everything related, there are always people behind it. These people will have the same ideas, same ideals as they had before. There are always technical developments. Everything is developing in different ways. 50 years ago, the world was another one than now. But all those ideas still exist. Sports are places where you can learn from each other personally as human beings, as a person or as a community, to learn each other's values, to respect each other, and to exchange your professions, as is shown by

the Olympics. Sports will be still very valuable in the future. Technical developments will not completely change human values and human respect for each other. Otherwise, we cannot live peacefully together.

Moderator: You are an optimist, Mr. Wittmann, believing in the continuation of human values despite of all technological developments. You believe that people will continue to learn from each other, respect each other, as an individual and as a community, and that the social co-values will still be relevant in the upcoming decades.

Peter Wittmann: I think sports will play an even bigger role than it does now. In a high-tech world, you need to have another possibility to keep you in shape, to keep your head up, keep your health, keep everything fit. In the age of new technology, you probably have more time to yourself, more time for a change in your working systems. The values of the Olympic Games, therefore, will be even more important than now.

Moderator: Thank you, Mr. Wittmann, for your estimation of the Olympic Games' role in the future decades! Allow me now to move on to a more specific aspect of the Games. Here's a question for Mr. Soros if I may.

Mr. Sörös, Alpine skiing is known as the jewel in the crown of Winter Olympics. As an important country for Alpine Skiing, what has been the spirit of the Austrian team according to your observation in the past? And how would you anticipate their potential performance in Beijing?

Martin Sörös: Please, allow me first to make a short reply to what Mr. Wittmann said. I agree with him that we should talk about respect. I think that respect, first of all, comes from inside the athletes. Secondly, about the Olympics, about sports and its future, we'll have to talk about money and business, too. This is the reality we face. Also, we'll have to talk about winning, losing, cheating, about all those things that are part of our world, part of our game. It was very important for Peter (Mr. Wittmann), too, to get young people away from their computers and other electronic gadgets, to mobilize them, to get them out to play and to sing, maybe supported by the artificial intelligence. It is a big challenge for us.



But now directly to your question about Alpine skiing. As for Alpine skiing, the expectations in Austria are always high. But we also should be honest with ourselves. We face the reality that 10 to 15 countries on this planet take Alpine skiing as a very serious and important sport. Sure, about sports like tennis, table tennis, swimming, or athletics, we're talking about 220 countries. There's a big difference. But nevertheless, Alpine skiing in Austria is very important for tourism and economy. Quite true that this is more or less the sport with which Austrians identify themselves. Everyone knows about this here in this forum, for example, when Franz Klammer won the Olympic gold medal, or stories about Hermann Maier, Dorfmeister and others. The expectations for famous people in this country are always very high.

As for this Winter Olympic Games, it takes place during the pandemic. So, the first thing to do is to check who is corona negative on day of the start. The second point is to see who can adapt in the best way to the circumstances and conditions in China, because snow in China is completely different from the snow in Europe or in the USA, or wherever. There is chemical snow, things like this. But nevertheless, the expectations are high for the Austrian team concerning Alpine skiing. I think altogether Austria is expected to win around 20 during this Olympics. We will collect in this case more medals than China for sure. This is not even competitive for us in the Winter Olympics. Yes, I think we will win many medals, for sure!

Moderator: Ok, you're optimistic on this point.

Martin Sörös: Always!

Moderator: What you mentioned brings me to another question for you, that is, the sports world with money, cheating, doping, and all those aspects. You are an experienced sports journalist. How do you see today's sports ethics in general?

Martin Sörös: Let me give you this answer: If I ask a hundred athletes at the beginning of the competition: "take this pill and you will win! It's forbidden, but nobody will know about it." From 100 athletes, 100 athletes will take it. For sure, people talk about respect, about ethics, but also about reality. This is the highest level of sports, the so-called VSO.

When we talk about the Winter Olympics, millions of dollars are invested through the TV stations, the suppliers, the ski companies and more. I always try to be realistic as much as possible. It's not only about sports. When there are two peoples, two systems or two countries competing against each other, everyone tries to win. One of the most famous boxers of all times was Mike Tyson. He was fighting against Evander Holyfield. On that very day, he wasn't good enough to beat Holyfield so he bit the latter's ear. This means you always try to find ways to win. If you cannot make it on the natural way, you try to do something else.

I had 5 to 6 books published and one of them is in this connection. It was a book about doping, published in 2006. I'm hundred percent convinced – there was also an interview with a very famous doctor – that people who try to avoid doping have always had one Olympic period behind as cheaters. We are now in the opening stage of this Winter Olympics. Some medicine and pills are taken, but nobody knows so far. Maybe in 4 years from now they will say "Oh my God, they did it four years ago!" I think I'm far from being negative and disrespectful, but the world of sports is about winning and losing, money earned or money not earned.

Moderator: Ok, so on the one side, we have Mr. Wittmann mentioning earlier that we should have respect for each other, and the athletes respect each other. But on the other hand, they are competitors. We shouldn't be too naive about this aspect.

Martin Sörös: It is the same as Nike competing with Adidas, or Coca Cola competing with maybe Almdudler, or political parties competing against each other. Everybody tries to be in the better position. In this situation, many ugly things could happen. It's part of our life. Cheating is also part of us, like it or not. Hundred percent of people would confirm this, I think.

Moderator: Yes, it is important to hear different points of view here. It offers a bigger picture for us. One last aspect, Mr. Sörös: Since we were talking about respect and sports as a place to overcome differences, how do you see the medals won by athletes? Aren't they also symbolic of nationalistic self-esteem?

Martin Sörös: Definitely! And there was one perfect actual example of sports having abso-

lutely a lot to do with nationalism. You know what happened to Mr. Djokovic in Australia a few days ago. We're talking about this reality, about what it means as a successful sports personality. We can discuss about Djokovic, who is right, who is not, but it is not the point. I can tell you that for 99% of the Serbian people, Australia is a bad country, and they will never again go to Australia. And this is the connection between sports, politics and nationalism.

Moderator: Thank you very much for this input, Mr. Sörös! Your view is very complementary to what Mr. Wittmann was telling. It gives us a picture of what the whole business of sports versus politics could be.

Now I would like to invite Mr. Schober to the floor. Mr. Schober, the President of the International Olympic Committee Thomas Bach sees great international support for the upcoming Winter Games in Beijing. He believes that Beijing is making history with the games. It's the city to host both Summer Olympic Games and Winter Olympic Games. And he's expressing great confidence that they will host safe and protected Winter Olympics. What is your opinion on it? How do you think the recent development will influence the Winter Olympic Games in Beijing? Plus, what might be the scenario of the Olympics in the post pandemic era?

Marcus Schober: I believe that the Winter Olympic Games 2022 will be a success. Looking at 2008 Games, I think Beijing is more than capable of hosting the Olympic Games. Personally, I'm excited to see engineering and technologies that will be used this time, and the way they could change the sports after these Games. Of course, the pandemic made everything more complicated. Athletes fly across the globe to compete while large areas of the planet are still in lockdown because of the pandemic problems. It is important that we try to reach some form of normality and live our lives the way we did before Covid. Therefore, I hope sports in the post-pandemic world is not different in the way it was before. However, I believe that things like climate change will change everything, for example, when talking about the Winter Games. Take football as an example: In 10 years I'm not sure if we will have teams flying thousands of kilometers across Europe every week.

I think Beijing Games will change everything. I'm looking forward to this. We will see totally



different games. What I'm missing now is the message of the Olympic Games. We have a lot of conflicts in the world. In Europe is the Ukrainian crisis. We have wars around the globe. On the Olympic Games in Beijing, I would say that there should be a message of freedom from a big country and a big player like the United States. I'm missing this peace message for freedom in the world. I remember Mr. Wittmann talked about systems. Yes, China is a big system. United States is a big system. Europe is a system. But what I'm missing is this message of the Olympic Games. This should be a message for the athletes, for all the countries and for the organizers, to live the Olympic feeling and the Olympic history.

Moderator: But when you say you miss the message of the Olympic Games, would it be like an entanglement of sports and politics? We heard today from some speakers that sports should be sports, even if it's entangled with money and infrastructure problems behind the scenes.

Marcus Schober: We're talking about the Olympic Games, the most important sports event every 4 years. I think every Olympic event should have a big message. We saw messages in the time of the Cold War, and those in the last 20 years. I think it needs a new message now because we have conflicts everywhere. We have all the same problems, plus the problem of climate change. This could be a great chance to make a big statement in China. That's my wish for the Olympic Games this year.

Moderator: We have heard different opinions today, from optimistic ones like sports being a place where we can overcome differences, to less optimistic ones like being naïve not to consider money business behind and all the cheating. Now hoping for a message also in the post-pandemic era for the Olympic Games, I would like to give Peter Wittmann again the floor. Would you like to react to the Mr. Sörös and Mr. Schober on this point?

Peter Wittmann: Just one word about the pandemic. The world is in the third year of the pandemic now. Mankind is able to organize the Olympic even during this time. I think it's just a question of organization to overcome the pandemic. China will show that they are able to organize this event very well during the pandemic. I guess we are focusing too much on this

thing. In ten years, no one will talk about the pandemic anymore. Everybody will still speak about the games, though. After three years, this mysterious pandemic should be overcome. We are able to organize our games, we are able to bring the athletes to one point. We're meeting already this time. We need to organize ourselves, even at this point.

Moderator: Maybe this could become one potential message of the Olympic Games in Beijing, that we can have safe Olympic Games in a great dimension during unrest times!

We have discussed quite a lot of hard facts today concerning the Olympic Games, politics, cheating, potentials of sports as a bridge and more. Concerning the upcoming Beijing Winter Olympic Games, I would like to come to a Chinese peculiarity connected to it: The Beijing Winter Olympics is coinciding with the Chinese spring festival which started on 1st February and as usual will last for 2 weeks. It is the most celebrated traditional festival in China to begin the Lunar New Year.

As you may have experienced yourselves, Chinese people are very hospitable and good food – or let me put it this way – enjoying good food together is very important in Chinese everyday life. Due to the pandemic, the health issue is essential, but hospitality and enthusiasm as the host are priorities, too. Food issue is thus very important during the Games. The „Winter Olympics Menu“ will offer a diversity of delicacies – around 678 dishes from all over the world. Those dishes will be rotated in an 8-day cycle. And the aim is to meet the needs of athletes from different countries, regions, ethnicities, and dietary habits.

You might have seen on the internet channels like YouTube or in the newspapers that this time digitalization and artificial intelligence are used to serve the food during the Beijing Winter Olympics. Robots will cook and deliver the food to people. They put together for example hamburgers. Dishes can be served in an overhead way, through a system of robot grappers.

The traditional Chinese hospitality, therefore, will be shown in a different way this time through AI solutions. Do you care for being served by robots? Will the future Olympic Games focus on such technological infrastructures?

Peter Wittmann: May I start? I lived for two years in China and know that coming together for food is part of their life for thousands of years. The development of food in China is completely different from the Western world. It is a much bigger culture than here. As for the robots, I guess this kind of technology will be part of the organization during the pandemic. But in the future, we will come together, eat together and have fun together. We are human beings. We need socializing. We need to speak to each other. I think the robot technology for food supply won't be the future. It is part of the organization during the pandemic. I hope it will not be part of the future Games! Hopefully we will sit together, speak to each other, have fun with each other, and continue to have all the social advantages we should have as human beings.

Moderator: Do you have a favorite Chinese dish?

Peter Wittmann: Of course. If you translate it into German or English, it is meat which smells like fish: „Yu Xiang Rou Si“.

Moderator: Great! Thank you very much, dear Mr. Wittmann! Mr Sörös, how would you comment on the food tradition in China and those technical solutions during the Games? Modernity?

Martin Sörös: First of all, in many places in this world, people try to create robots that are in the future better than human beings, to take over the world so the human beings disappear. It is not my future, but some people try to do this!

Talking about food and catering for the Olympics, I can also tell you some stories. When I was working as a media representative during the Olympics, it was always hard stuff. Especially when one works in a region with time difference. For example, if you work from Sydney like what I did, you are always more or less one day ahead, so you'll have to produce for the actual newspaper as well as to start for the next day. It means you'll probably sleep not more than 2 hours per day during the 3 weeks' Olympics. All the other hours, you'll have to either work or to eat.

This brings me to the next point: the catering and the dishes. In an Olympic village, the media catering is completely different from the ones for the athletes.



The athletes take healthy food, noodles, rice, fish... and drink a lot of mineral water, trying to live very healthily. But a media journalist holds the mobile phone onto his ear, the laptop in his other hand, and with a third hand, he tries to eat... completely away from the food culture. It's only about survival. No time to go out at all. I completely agree with Peter and am looking forward to the time when we can sit together to eat. I really want to go to Wiener Neustadt to join Mr. Müller, too!

As for my favorite cuisine in China, it is Szechuan kitchen. I love Chengdu! I love spicy food. I have been to Chengdu around 25 times. I would love to sit together with people. But now, we are facing the pandemic. This food service with robots is the situation right now because of the pandemic, like what Peter said. People don't like to be touched. But by the way, the robots have to be touched by the human beings. For sure we will miss the Chinese hospitality and friendliness during this Olympics. It's simply not the right time for it.

I remember when I grew up, my parents always reached their hands and said "Guten Tag" when meeting other people. Today, if you randomly reach your hand out to someone, you might even end up with the police, being accused of "he wants to kill me". Behavior changes with time. Cultures, friendliness, dishes, restaurants, and all things change. I am not so optimistic as Peter. I've been talking to my friends in China. Yesterday I called my friends in Guangdong and Beijing. They both believe that the pandemic will last until 2025, whatever it means. I'm prepared that it will take a bit longer, and I look forward to the time when we can all go to a restaurant and sit together without worries.

Moderator: Thank you very much, Mr. Sörös! We all look forward to it!

Now that we have the meaty fish and the Szechuan kitchen as favorites, I'd like to invite Mr. Schober to tell his beloved food in China and to comment on the cultural aspects of the Olympic Games.

Marcus Schober: My favorite Chinese food is all possible cuisine with duck!

To use robots' service for the food during the Olympic Games, I think, is a great idea. I have a friend, an athlete who was in London, Rio

and Beijing. He was always talking about those big restaurants, all those foods you can eat during the Games. He said all you can find in the world to eat are at the Olympic Games. "I have to bring my performance", he said, but then they were eating before the competitions. Last week, we talked about the upcoming Games and he made a remark: "I hope that the things will change because athletes need the atmosphere of celebration, have parties after competitions, celebrate when it's over!" They have as long as 4 years of training before attending the Olympic Games.

I'm really looking forward to the ending of the pandemic. Hopefully this year or next year. I think one of the greatest achievements of the mankind – this could be another message for the 2022 Olympic Games – is to fight this pandemic together. I think young people should have a chance to get to know each other and to celebrate the great time, because this is one of the first biggest moments in the last two years. So many people come together. For many of them, to be at the Olympic Games is the only chance. They need a place for celebrating. They should enjoy the best time there.

Moderator: Absolutely! We are all inclined to close this forum with an optimistic view. In case of the Olympic Games, this shall be the last one focusing on the pandemic. Let's hope that the athletes can celebrate, and we can come together again, leaving this pandemic era behind us, not only in sports, but also in everything!

Let me sincerely thank the organizers of today's event as well as all our distinguished guests for sharing their know-how on "Sports versus Politics"! As I mentioned at the beginning of our forum, tomorrow the 24th Winter Olympic Games will be officially opened in Beijing. Let's take the opportunity to get a picture of how these Games are being organized and carried out – an event that without any doubt is being watched by more or less the whole world as athletes from 91 countries will take part in the Games. Good luck to all of them!

And last not least: the Chinese Year of the Tiger has begun. Tiger symbolizes courage, spirit, power, optimism, and boldness. These are all qualities useful to the world when looking at the challenges ahead of us.

Approaching the end, I would like to give the floor to Mr. Bernhard Müller from Urban Forum, one of the organizers, for his closing remarks on today's forum. Please, Mr. Müller, the floor is yours!

Bernhard Müller: Thank you, Alice!

Ladies and Gentlemen! Today we have once again experienced a high-level and high-quality online forum. We were able to enjoy the interesting statements of three gentlemen who have a lot of experience in the fields of sport, politics, internationality and journalism. For this, the organizers SINOPRESS and Urban Forum would like to thank you! We would also have liked to have had representatives of the Austrian Olympic Committee or athletes with us, but obviously that is not possible one day before the start of the Olympic Games.

Olympic Games have always been wonderful competitions, with outstanding sporting performances. For many athletes, they are the highlight of their careers. However, there have always been attempts in history to misuse the competitions for political purposes. The worst example is certainly the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin. During the Cold War, the two superpowers, the USA and the USSR, each boycotted the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow and the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles. As a result of these measures, there were only losers: the athletes, the spectators and international understanding through sport.

Unfortunately, there have also been attempts to persuade athletes to boycott the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics. Fortunately, only a few diplomats are now missing as visitors. The Covid-19 pandemic makes it hard enough for many great athletes as it is.

I have always held the opinion that culture and sports must be a bridge for peaceful exchange of views and international understanding. Boycotts must have no place here. We live in dangerous times. We must work hard to prevent a new Cold War. Only together can we solve the world's major problems such as climate change, poverty, terrorism, social inequality, and world hunger. Everyone must make efforts and listen to others, to reach out to each other.

I wish the 2022 Olympic Games good and peaceful course, great sporting performances and



many records! I wish us all a good and healthy Year of the Tiger. Many thanks to Helena and SINOPRESS, to our wonderful moderator Alice Schmatzberger, and to the gentlemen on the podium! Have a great day! Good bye!

3rd February 2022



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BUCHTIPP



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Herausgegeben von: Bernhard Müller

ISBN: 978-3-200-06846-9

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Erschienen 2020, 292 Seiten

In einer ganzheitlichen Betrachtung, die sich diese Publikation zum Ziel gesetzt hat, werden die Zukunftsperspektiven jener Instrumente untersucht, die die Menschen „für die konkrete Umsetzung der Mobilität“ in den urbanen Räumen (Städten und Stadtregionen) benötigen. Die Palette erstreckt sich dabei vom Fußverkehr über Zweiräder jeder Art, den motorisierten In-

dividualverkehr und die öffentlichen Verkehrsmittel hin zu modernen, digitalen Hilfsmitteln. Aber auch Logistik und Luft- sowie Schifffahrt wurden untersucht, weil thematisch unverzichtbar. Ausgehend von einer geschichtlichen Retrospektive und einer Feststellung des Status quo, haben alle Autorinnen und Autoren den Blick (aus unterschiedlichen -winkeln) in die Zukunft gerichtet und versucht, Prognosen abzugeben. Abgerundet und aufgewertet werden die Beiträge durch internationale Beispiele und Interviews mit Fachleuten.

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Perspektiven 2030

17 Ziele für den Weg in eine lebenswerte Zukunft

Herausgegeben von: René Hartinger
(Ökosoziales Forum Wien) & Florian Leregger
(Institut für Umwelt, Friede und Entwicklung)
ISBN: 978-3-200-07090-5
EUR 22,- (zzgl. Versandkosten)

Der Sammelband bietet umfangreiches Grundlagenwissen zur Agenda 2030 und ihren 17 Zielen für nachhaltige Entwicklung (SDGs). Entstehungsgeschichte, Struktur, inhaltliche Fundamente, Hintergründe und Relevanz, besondere Merkmale sowie Chancen und Herausforderun-

gen ihrer Umsetzung werden umfassend erläutert. Fachkundige AutorInnen beleuchten in 18 Beiträgen vielseitige praxisbezogene Facetten der Agenda 2030 in unterschiedlichen Gesellschaftsbereichen und zeigen Perspektiven ihrer Umsetzung auf: Städte und Gemeinden, Wirtschaft und Unternehmertum, Arbeit, Wissenschaft, Bildung, Kunst, Digitalisierung, Ernährung, Abfallwirtschaft, Inklusion, Klima- und Umweltschutz sowie privates Engagement und Handeln.



Wege zur Wohlfahrtsstadt

Wirtschafts- und sozialpolitische Überlegungen für eine moderne Kommunalpolitik

Herausgegeben von: Renate Brauner & Bernhard Müller
ISBN: 978-3-200-07300-5
EUR 25,- (zzgl. Versandkosten)

Dieser Sammelband will einen kompakten Überblick zur Rolle der öffentlichen Hand und vor allem der Kommunen und ihrer Leistungen der Daseinsvorsorge, aber auch der wirtschaftspolitischen Rolle, die Staat und Kommunen, gerade in Krisenzeiten haben können und müssen, geben. Die aktuellen Diskussionen und Erfahrungen stehen dabei ebenso im Fokus wie der Versuch eines Blicks in die mögliche Zukunft

einer progressiven, kommunalen Wirtschaftspolitik. Der Begriff der Wohlfahrtsstadt ist im Gegenzug zu jenem des Wohlfahrtsstaates jung und wenig etabliert – zu Unrecht, wie die HerausgeberInnen meinen. Nach Jahrzehnten an Privatisierung, Deregulierung, Outsourcing und reiner Austeritätspolitik hat in den letzten Jahren ein gewisses Umdenken stattgefunden. Nicht zuletzt durch die COVID-19-Pandemie und ihre mannigfaltigen verheerenden Folgen wurden die Vorzüge einer öffentlichen Daseinsvorsorge inklusive stabilem Sozial- und Gesundheitssystem öffentlich wahrgenommen, thematisiert, geschätzt und dadurch mancherorts gestärkt.



50 Jahre österreichisch-chinesische Beziehungen

Urbane Überlegungen

Herausgegeben von: Bernhard Müller
ISBN: 9 783200 077928
EUR 25,- (zzgl. Versandkosten)

Im Mai 2021 feierte Österreich 50 Jahre diplomatische Beziehungen mit der Volksrepublik China. Als diese 1971 begannen, konnte keines der beiden Länder erahnen, wie sich die bilaterale Zusammenarbeit in den nächsten 50 Jahren entwickeln würde. Wiewohl im Laufe der Jahrzehnte einige Festschriften bzw. Monografien erschienen sind, hat es noch keine Publikation gegeben, die urbane Überlegungen in das Zen-

trum ihrer Betrachtungen stellt. Der Sammelband setzt nach einer einleitenden Chronik bewusst auf die Mischung aus wissenschaftlichen Texten, Interviews und persönlichen Erlebnisberichten, um ein möglichst breites Spektrum der Beziehungen zwischen der Alpen- und der Volksrepublik abzudecken, ohne den Fokus auf Urbanität und damit zusammenhängende Politikfelder (wie Bildung, Digitalisierung, Kultur, Mobilität, Wirtschaft etc.) zu verlieren.



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