



THE GREAT GAME

The flip side of Olympic medals



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Genre: documentary

Duration: 69 min.

Year of production: 2025

Logline

The Milan-Cortina 2026 Olympics: the grandiose show that promises to bring millions of visitors in the name of sustainability and inclusion. But instead, it takes resources away from communities for the benefit of a few. With *Il grande gioco (The Great Game)*, the Comitato Insostenibili Olimpiadi – C.I.O. – (Unsustainable Olympics Committee) dismantles the model of these Winter Olympic Games and the predatory logic of social and environmental resources that all major events have in common. Sporting and non-sporting alike.

Synopsis

While Milan and Cortina prepare to host the much-celebrated 2026 Winter Olympic Games, touting values such as sustainability and cooperation, a network of activists is fighting in the territories to explain how, in reality, only a few businesses will benefit from this major event: a city that, thanks to the Olympics, attracts huge flows of international capital, making it increasingly expensive and difficult to live there; that dismantles public sport in favour of sports investments that benefit private corporations (which are not actually sport investments, but certainly benefit private corporations); which also exports its de-



velopment model (that of hyper-tourism linked to alpine skiing) to delicate mountain ecosystems, which is short-sighted because climate change has made it unsustainable, predatory and destructive of environmental resources.

Although no one ever asked the communities concerned what they thought about these Olympics and whether they were willing to host them in their territories, these communities decided to stop being passive spectators and to participate in the great Olympic game.

This experience gave rise to the documentary film *Il grande gioco. Il rovescio delle medaglie olimpiche* (The Great Game: The Other Side of Olympic Medals), which recounts the battle of the C.I.O. network against the gigantic rhetorical machine of Milan-Cortina 2026.

Conceived as a film divided into three acts (or 'rounds' of a match), each 'round' addresses a specific theme: in the first, the playing field is the city, and more precisely the section of the city that stretches from Scalo Romana, where the Olympic village is located, to the Corvetto district. This is where the most important social match is played, between new and luxurious housing projects and speculative and security impulses that aim to drive away the old inhabitants.

The second round focuses on sport, with the utopian-but-not-too-utopian goal of reclaiming the city through the practice of a popular, inclusive, grassroots sport that rejects the model of sports privatisation promoted by the Olympics.

In the third and final round, the competition moves to the mountains, a setting in which C.I.O. activists are engaged in an attempt to erase the traces of concrete-heavy, resource-devouring development (do the abandoned facilities of Cesana Torinese and Pragelato for the 2006 Turin Olympics ring a bell?) in order to restore the mountains to their best possible state, and then try to imagine together a future that is finally within our and their reach.

On the road to this cinematic match, the C.I.O. finds valuable allies: **Lucia Tozzi**, urban policy scholar and journalist, who takes us on an anti-Olympic tour through the streets of the Milanese neighbourhoods affected by the Games, inviting us to reflect on the process of demographic replacement that these major events produce in cities; **Duccio Facchini**, editor of Altreconomia, who explains the economic and financial deception behind the Olympics; and **Marco Albino Ferrari**, mountain writer, who, in a short circuit between past and future, leads us to (re)discover the remains of the abandoned and already forgotten facilities of the 2006 Turin Olympics, a warning of the fate that could befall the Milan Cortina 2026 facilities currently under construction. As if to say that our society never learns from its mistakes.





The story unfolds over almost two years and traces the many moments of struggle, but also artistic performances, sport, political debate and participation. Obviously with the contribution of the many local communities affected by the great Olympic event (Bormio, Valtellina, Cortina, the Fair Play Arena in Gorla, to name but a few) who participated with us in telling this story.

The C.I.O. is well aware that it cannot stop the upcoming Olympics and its well-oiled consensus machine on its own, but with *Il grande gioco* it aims to leave its own personal 'legacy' that will survive even after the Olympics and continue to subvert the model of major events.

The C.I.O.

Formed in early 2024, the Unsustainable Olympics Committee is an open network that brings together various communities in the metropolis. These are many diverse groups whose activities focus on different areas and practices: we are mainly popular sports groups, political communities of occupied spaces, communities involved in urban transformation, individuals and groups who frequent the mountains from a certain perspective, and networks and organisations involved in political, social and ecological action.

The film

The documentary project *Il grande gioco* began as a collective workshop within the C.I.O. network. It is a project that lasted about two years, was entirely self-financed, and involved filmmakers, workers, researchers, and university students.

The unique feature of the project – which sets it apart from other journalistic investigations into the model of major Olympic events – is that it is an insider's account, filmed live, of a political process in progress, with all the difficulties and uncertainties that this entails.

It is a bottom-up approach to filmmaking, which sees us as both 'participants' and narrators, and therefore requires a constant presence in the field and a continuous process of reflection and confrontation with the reality represented. The workshop dealt with all stages in a shared manner: research, writing, filming and editing according to principles of horizontality and inclusion.

For everyone, it is an act of faith in the power of imagination and collective intelligence.

What will become of this film?

Filming began in autumn 2023 and ended in September 2025. In November 2025, the film began its run-up to the start of the Games, scheduled for February 2026. During those months, thanks to and through the film, we will organise screenings and debates in the areas covered by the Olympics.

Would you like to get in touch with us?

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Would you like to stay up to date and find out more about upcoming screenings?

Instagram Il Grande Gioco <https://www.instagram.com/ilgrandegioco>

Instagram C.I.O. <https://www.instagram.com/c.i.o.2026/>

