Hosting Major Sports Events in East Asia: Connections, Challenges and Contradictions

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“Catching the Wave: Connecting East Asia through Soft Power”
University of California, Berkeley
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Olympic Merchandise BC (Before Copyright) – Japan c. 1940
2008 Merchandise Shop, Forbidden City, Beijing (October 2005)
The Allure of Sports Mega-Events: Connections

- ‘Megas’
- ‘large-scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events, which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance’
  - Maurice Roche (2000) Mega-Events & Modernity

- Three key features of sports mega-events
- One off events
- Significant for the host (city, region, nation)
- Considerable global media coverage.
The Allure of Sports Mega-Events: Connections 2

- Different orders of megas - size, reach, response:
- 1. Summer Olympic Games, FIFA Football World Cup
- 2. Winter Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games
- 3. IAAF World Athletics Championship, Asian Games, Asian Football Association Cup
The Challenges of Hosting Sports Mega-Events

- 1. Nation building
- Promotional value - internal and external nation signalling or branding as ‘world class’
- 2. Development - social, cultural and economic
- Elite and mass participation sport
- Attracting tourists via place marketing
- Urban (re-)generation
- 3. Liberalisation - economic and political
- Marketization
- Democracy
Bird’s Nest under construction
Hotels for the IOC ‘Family’ in Beijing
Contradictions of Sports Mega-events

- 1. Instability of sports events - ‘uncertainties of outcomes’, especially in non-Western locations

- 2. Overestimated benefits and underestimated costs

- 3. Connections and disconnections: promotion and xenophobic nationalism; expansion and extension
The 2008 Olympic Mascots - Bei Jing Huan Ying Ni ("Welcome to Beijing")
Olympic Related Campaigns

- The Tibet Question

QuickTime™ and a TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor are needed to see this picture.
Potential for Bad Publicity

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Xenophobic or…

- …Sportive nationalism?