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# HONG KONG'S DUAL IDENTITIES AND SPORTING MEGA-EVENT POLICY<sup>1</sup>

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*Since Hong Kong's reversion to China in 1997, the Special Administrative Region's government and its people have grappled with the problem of trying to pursue dual objectives at the same time. Firstly, to adjust to being a 'new' part of China and what that means in terms of national consciousness and local identities, particularly given the Beijing leaders' expectations that Hongkongers should come to 'love China'. Secondly, drawing at least in part on the past British colonial legacy, to maintain Hong Kong's international role as a cosmopolitan and commercial city as typified through the aspiration to be 'Asia's world city'. This paper explores the ways in which these two competing narratives intersect in the sports policy arena. Sport is frequently seen as a means to express or reflect nationalism or at the very least contribute to the formation of national identity. By using the case studies of Hong Kong's partial involvement in the 2008 Beijing Olympics (hosting the equestrian events), its hosting of the 2009 East Asian Games and the abortive domestic debates over applying to host the Asian Games, it will be shown that the mixed messages coming from these mega-events (or putative mega-events) reflect the ambivalence felt by many Hongkongers themselves about their place in China and the world.*

## **1. Introduction**

Last year, 2012, marked the fifteenth anniversary of the handover of the former British colony, Hong Kong, to the People's Republic of China (PRC). While the anniversary was celebrated by the Hong Kong and Chinese governments with due pomp and ceremony,

including a visit to Hong Kong by Chinese President Hu Jintao, opinion amongst Hongkongers was decidedly mixed. On 1<sup>st</sup> July, soon after President Hu had invested the newly-selected Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Chief Executive, Leung Chun-ying, a large-scale protest march against perceived Chinese intervention in Hong Kong affairs wound its way through the city centre. Probably to a greater extent than at any time since 1997, opinion in Hong Kong is divided over whether the unique policy concept of 'one country, two systems' is actually working in practice. But not just politically, perhaps more fundamentally at the social-cultural level, the nature of inter-personal relations between mainlanders and Hongkongers had also never been brought into such sharp focus. A series of incidents during 2012-13 involving what can best be described as 'clashes of culture', either individually or seemingly collectively between mainlanders (often derided as 'locusts') and Hongkongers, served to remind people in Hong Kong - and in China - that Hong Kong does have its own special identity.

After more than 150 years of British rule, Hong Kong in 1997 did not become independent but instead reverted back to Chinese sovereignty. Nonetheless, Hong Kong's unique international standing, even after the 1997 handover, has led some experts to comment that it is 'clearly the most visible and powerful non-sovereign entity in the international system' (Neves 2000: 272). As in many other aspects of its international status, Hong Kong finds itself in a rather anomalous situation in terms of its global sporting status. Although now a part of China politically and administratively as a Special Administrative Region (SAR), Hong Kong has retained its separateness from China in a wide range of international organisations, including sporting recognition within the Olympic movement and international sporting federations, under the designation of Hong Kong, China. This is accepted under and is in compliance with both the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law, Hong Kong's mini-constitution, both of which enshrine the principle of 'one country, two systems' and a 'high degree of autonomy' for Hong Kong.

Under the 'one country, two systems' principle, Hong Kong and Hongkongers have been struggling to reconfigure their relationship to mainland China since the handover from

Britain in 1997. While Hongkongers accept that they are indeed part of China once again and draw pride – and quite often profit - from the economic growth record of the rising China, there have been nonetheless frequent debates within Hong Kong during the past decade about the evolving nature of the relationship, particularly in political terms. Government leaders and ‘pro-China’ figures have stressed the importance of ‘patriotism’ and the ‘one country’ part of the formula (and the role that national education within Hong Kong should play in reinforcing that aspect of Hongkongers' identity), but other social and political groups have argued that the ‘two systems’ part is also vital to Hong Kong’s own special identity in the international system, of which the global sporting system is one important example (Ho 2009: 19-29; Wong 2004).

Hong Kong, of course, is not a nation or state in international law terms, but its global image, or branding, is of concern to its citizens and, above all, to its government. At the same time, domestically, inducing a greater (national) identification of the local population with the HKSAR and with China remain high priorities for both the Hong Kong government and the so-called 'pro-China' figures within the Hong Kong elite. It should be noted here that although outside observers frequently refer to 'Chinese nationalism', the Chinese political leadership and state-run media are wary about using the word 'nationalism', since there are many national minorities within China's borders whose own 'nationalism' should not be encouraged in contra-distinction to majority Han Chinese nationalism. Consequently Chinese authorities prefer to focus instead on 'patriotism'<sup>2</sup>.

As has been widely identified in the literature, sport has been frequently utilised by governments and politicians as a means of nation-building and identity-building (Jarvie, 1993; Lee 2009; Ho and Bairner 2012). In this context, international success by individual sportsmen/women or teams is seen as contributing, consciously or unconsciously, to the creation of a 'community' or as Benedict Anderson argues, 'a deep, horizontal comradeship' (Anderson 1991: 7). But, in recent decades, hosting a sporting mega-event is frequently seen by major - and, indeed, minor - powers as contributing to these domestic or internal endeavours, even though in reality the impact may only be

fleeting. David Black and Byron Peacock have noted that Asian developmental states in particular have seen 'mega-events as a pivotal marker of rising developmental status, with spillover effects in other regions' (Black and Peacock 2013: 48). Hong Kong has frequently been included in the 'Asian tigers' grouping of developmental economies (even though controversy still rages over whether the 'positive non-interventionism' by the government in its economy should place it in a separate category), but clearly its political status has been and remains different to its fellow 'Asian tigers'. Nonetheless, the Hong Kong SAR government has come to see participation in and hosting of sporting mega-events as a powerful symbol of its role within China and the broader regional and global environment. By using the case studies of Hong Kong's partial involvement in the 2008 Beijing Olympics (hosting the equestrian events), its hosting of the 2009 East Asian Games and the abortive domestic debates over applying to host the 2023 Asian Games, this paper seeks to explore the competing narratives within Hong Kong and show how the Hong Kong (and the Chinese) governments seek to overcome the contradictions of Hong Kong's dual identities through sport, or to be more precise, through one particular high-profile facet of sport<sup>3</sup>.

## **2. The Dilemma of World City versus Chinese City.**

'Ours is a cosmopolitan city. Our ability to embrace the cultures of east and west is one of the secrets of our success, shaping a unique social culture of our own.' [Tung Chee Hwa's Policy Address, 9 October 1997, *The Standard*, 10 October 1997]

Despite the phraseology of the above quotation, it is fair to say that in the first post-handover policy address by the then HKSAR Chief Executive, Tung Chee Hwa, in 1997, he wanted to emphasize above all that Hongkongers should come to understand and love China better: 'As we face the historic change of being reunited with China, for every individual there is a gradual process of getting to know Chinese history and culture, so as to achieve a sense of belonging' (*The Standard*, 10 October 1997). In the view of two social commentators, in the immediate post-handover years 'Tung's emphasis on national identity and Chinese values was the central element of his campaign to depoliticise Hong

Kong' (Loh and Lai 2007: 35). John Flowerdew, after analysing many of Tung's speeches in his first term, concludes that 'the notions of Hong Kong people as believers in Confucian values and their essential Chineseness were emphasised or grafted' onto pre-1997 policy discourses (Flowerdew 2012: 195).

However, Hong Kong's postwar history in relation to China has been a convoluted one. In the first years after the establishment of the new communist government in China in 1949 and the associated influx of refugees into Hong Kong, the colonial authorities deliberately tried to 'de-nationalize' the local population; a tendency that was reinforced by the riots of 1967. However, by the 1970s a distinctive local identity began to emerge as the city's social and economic development moved forward and by the 1980s this identity was frequently manifested through disparaging contrasts with mainland China. By the 1990s the attitudes of many in Hong Kong reflected a 'self-understanding of being superior to their Mainland compatriots' (Lee 2009: 196, 205). It was against this background that Tung and his officials tried to instil in Hongkongers a new sense of pride in and identity with China. In effect this would be a 're-nationalization' project. The results have been rather mixed, however.

Since 1997 public opinion polls have fluctuated in displaying Hong Kong people's identification with China. The University of Hong Kong's now regular six-monthly polls provide ample evidence of these changes in mood, even though they often seem to reflect recent events or anniversaries in the preceding weeks before the polls (*South China Morning Post*, 18 June 2012). Asked to choose between four categories - Hong Kong citizen, Chinese Hong Kong citizen, Hong Kong Chinese citizen and Chinese citizen - the middle two self-designated categories seemed to change little over the years, but the Hong Kong citizen and Chinese citizen have been more variable<sup>4</sup>. Up until around 2001 (when China joined the World Trade Organisation) Hong Kong citizens outnumbered those who felt themselves to be Chinese citizens, but during the 2000s the balance began to swing the other way, culminating in the highest percentage (38.6%) for Chinese citizens on the eve of the Beijing Olympics in 2008 (only 18% of those interviewed identified themselves as Hong Kong citizens). But since the melamine milk scandal on

the mainland was exposed later in 2008, the general trend has been for declining identification with China and greater identification as Hong Kong citizens. The latest poll, in December 2012, showed the sense of identity as Chinese citizens at one of its lowest levels since the handover (though marginally higher than in December 2011, which had been the lowest since 2000), while if the two categories of those who saw themselves as Hong Kong citizens and as Chinese Hong Kong are added, 60% saw themselves as 'Hong Kong people' (*South China Morning Post*, 27 June 2012; <http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/eidentity/poll/datatables.html>). These opinion polls - and similar polls by other organisations and universities produce somewhat similar readings (see, for example, Mathews et al 2008) - do not always make comfortable reading for the Hong Kong government and so-called 'pro-China' circles.

So, one continuing policy headache for the HKSAR government over the past 15 years has been how to encourage and foster that greater sense of belonging that Tung advocated. Various socialization agents have been at play here. Undoubtedly, the mass media has had a role to play, with television in particular shifting to programming that emphasizes a 'strong and powerful' Chinese nation (Mathews et al. 2008: 58-77), while the print media broadly seems to be exercising some degree of self-censorship regarding 'sensitive' news stories from the mainland. However, the spreading of the internet and social networking sites has made it much easier for Hongkongers to learn more about both the 'good' and the 'bad' sides of what is happening on the mainland. Hongkongers are more engaged with the mainland, but that does not mean just travelling there more frequently for pleasure or business; it also implies wanting to do more to support the rule of law, environmental protection, or even democratization. Education in Hong Kong is also seen as important, with schools increasingly stressing Hong Kong's Chineseness both through the formal curriculum and through flag-raising, school visits to the mainland, etc (Mathews et al. 2008: 78-95). A new 'national education' curriculum, with greater emphasis on civic education and 'love' for the Motherland, had been planned to be introduced, even though the newly-created 'liberal studies' courses in secondary schools do cover different - and controversial - aspects of modern Chinese history and politics. As will be argued below, sport has also become another means by which the Hong Kong (and Chinese)

governments try to inculcate patriotic identity.

The other problem for the new HKSAR leadership, however, was how to secure Hong Kong's competitive advantage, especially as the Asian financial crisis ravaged the Asian Pacific region, including Hong Kong, after 1997. Closer integration with the expanding Chinese economy, which proved resilient both in the late 1990s and subsequently, was an inevitable part of that process, but so too was sustaining, and even strengthening, other external linkages through better branding of the city's cosmopolitan characteristics.

Actually the word 'cosmopolitan' only comes up infrequently in the HKSAR government's public pronouncements about the city; instead 'world' is much more prominent<sup>5</sup>. Since the concept was first raised by Tung in 1999 Hong Kong has been promoting itself as 'Asia's world city': this positioning was designed both to highlight Hong Kong's existing strengths in areas such as financial services, trade, tourism, transport, communications, and as a regional hub for international business and a major city in China as well as to be aspirational as a benchmark by which Hong Kong's development as a society and an economy could be gauged and debated (Hong Kong Government 2010). However, although Hong Kong has established a strong record as a major financial centre and a trading entrepot in the global economic system, it does lack some characteristics of other global cities, not least in terms of facilities for and achievement in culture and the humanities (Lee 2007)<sup>6</sup>. The SAR government did follow earlier colonial administrations in advocating capitalist values but with added emphasis on globalization and a more interventionist approach than the previous colonial government (Flowerde 2012: 262-282). However, as Simon Shen observes: "No matter how hard the HKSAR government might try to construct a global image for the city, Hong Kong's evolution has been significantly different from that of acknowledged world cities like London or New York, underlining just how hard it is to construct a "world city" out of the blue' (Shen 2010: 214). The HKSAR government's official definition of a 'world city' does not specifically mention sport (referring only to Hong Kong being a 'cultural hub'), but, as will be demonstrated below, trying to act as the host of international sporting events has come to be seen by policy-makers as chiming in well with the aspirations to be such a 'world city'.



### **3. Modest Sporting Mega-events**

Hong Kong adopted a low profile in global sport during the colonial era. The Hong Kong colonial authorities twice discouraged any attempts to bid to host the Commonwealth Games, for example, while Hong Kong athletes achieved limited success in winning medals at the Olympics and other international sports mega-events, only gaining its first Olympic gold medal in 1996 (SF&OC 2011: 204-205). Olympism as a concept was not widely understood. Despite being aware of (or perhaps even because of) Hong Kong's relatively under-developed sporting culture, the post-1997 HKSAR government did, by contrast, begin to seek a more prominent role in global sport. Although funding was put into elite sport support, such as expanding the Sports Institute, it was through bidding to host regional-level mega-events that the new government tried hardest to make its mark in the global sporting world. These efforts to host such events were frequently cast in terms of improving sporting infrastructure, raising the standards of sporting performance and bringing economic benefits to Hong Kong. More altruistic aims, such as promoting Olympism, were rarely mentioned. Although a bid to host the 2006 Asian Games lost out to the financial clout of Doha (Qatar), in 2008 Hong Kong hosted the equestrian parts of the Beijing Olympics, in 2009 it hosted the East Asian Games, and in 2010-11 it actively debated whether to bid to host the 2023 Asian Games. Using these 3 sporting mega-events as case studies, the tensions between the two identities of Hong Kong as played out through the policies and actions of the Hong Kong government, local Olympic officials, public and politicians will be tested.

But, first, a brief overview of Hong Kong's sporting development. Although there is evidence of the very ancient origins to Chinese physical culture, in the case of Hong Kong, as indeed in many other British colonies, the development of modern sport was strongly linked to the British predilection for taking their sports with them as their 'chief spiritual export' wherever they conquered territories. Although the British forces and expatriates set up sporting clubs from the mid-19th century and physical education became part of the school curricula, sporting activities for the general public were

haphazard and limited even well into the twentieth century. Even post-WWII Hong Kong found it difficult to develop a strong sporting culture. Long-standing constraints remained a factor: Hong Kong is a highly urbanized and modern city, with excellent infrastructure but limited space available for sporting facilities; the legacies of the colonial authorities' lack of vision to create a well-organised structure and integrated policies for sports development; and continuing family and societal pressures in the local Chinese community to concentrate on study rather than sport (which offer few if any employment prospects) all played a part (Johns and Vertinsky 2006:184-194; SF&OC 2011: 60-175). Against this background of a relatively under-developed sporting culture, the post-1997 government became increasingly interested in utilising the hosting of regional/international sporting events for utilitarian purposes, including harnessing sport for national identity enhancement.

### **3.1 Olympic Equestrianism**

Hong Kong was, of course, much interested in and enthused by the successful Beijing bid in 2001 to host the 2008 Olympic Games. Subsequently, senior Hong Kong government and sporting officials hinted to the Chinese authorities that Hong Kong would be willing to stage one or two events, even though the original Beijing bid document had not mentioned Hong Kong at all (*South China Morning Post*, 3 September 2004). Finally, with the approval of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Hong Kong was given the responsibility for hosting one of the sports, the equestrian events, that for animal health and other logistical reasons Beijing was unable to host. In the context of a Hong Kong which was still not far removed from the traumatic human and economic effects of the SARS epidemic outbreak, it might also be seen as a political decision by the Chinese central government. Although many Hongkongers have a strong interest in horse-racing (which garners a large income through betting, much of which is re-cycled for charitable purposes), it has to be admitted that very few had previously participated in or watched equestrian events, whether dressage, eventing or show-jumping. Equestrianism is not a sport that has widespread popular appeal in Hong Kong, not least because facilities are both extremely limited and expensive.

As Glos Ho has carefully elaborated, the HKSAR government embarked on a three-phase education campaign to deepen public knowledge and appreciation of equestrian sports as well as popularise the meanings of Olympism, which seemed to have some short-term impact, though significant doubts remain about its longer-term Olympic legacy as such (Ho 2012: 8-9, 12). Although the local media did pick up on the 'boredom' factor (pictures of sleeping spectators at dressage events), nonetheless, there was undoubted pride and enthusiasm at being part of the Olympic event and at experiencing the overall Olympic atmosphere, even though the geographical (and psychological) distance between Beijing and Hong Kong was not insignificant<sup>7</sup>.

As a part of China, Hong Kong in May 2008 also hosted the torch (flame) relay in the run-up to the Beijing Games. The local enthusiasm generated by the torch relay - and more broadly by the preparations for the Olympic Games hosting in Beijing - undoubtedly contributed to a rise in 'Olympic nationalism' in Hong Kong in the run-up to and during the Olympics (Ho 2012: 9-10; Lau et al 2011)<sup>8</sup>. In the words of Choy So-yuk, a leader of the pro-Beijing political party, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, 'the whole Olympics has raised Hong Kong people's sense of being part of China and their sense of pride in being Chinese' (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/21/sports/olympics/21hong.html>). One of the first Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa's closest advisers, Paul Yip, later reflected on a related phenomenon: 'Hongkongers used to look down at the mainlanders. But the watershed came in 2008 because of the success of the Olympic games in Beijing and then we suddenly found we should look up to them' (So 2102).

Speaking in advance of the Olympics, Home Affairs Secretary Tsang Tak-sing argued that the equestrian events 'will help arouse Hong Kong people's interest in sports, foster a stronger sense of national identity as well as promote Olympic spirit and the idea of healthy living' (*South China Morning Post*, 8 August 2007). So, although the approach of the Hong Kong government, the equestrian organising committee and even major advertisers tended to draw on both the Chinese patriotic and the 'internationalist' Olympic

dimensions, overall the emphasis fell more strongly on the 'one country' side of the Hong Kong-China equation. The government's Leisure and Cultural Service Department set up open air 'cheering sites' with live broadcasts of events on giant screens, but the motto was: 'Go! Go! China! Go! Go! Hong Kong!'. In addition, given that Hong Kong athletes failed to win a single medal, it was also understandable that Hongkongers became enthusiastic about mainland Chinese athletes and their medal successes.

In the aftermath of the Olympics, however, the HKSAR government and the local population may have drawn different lessons. Coverage in the local media of the controversy over the young girl's fake singing may have only marginally marred Hongkongers' pride in the dramatic opening ceremony, but the revelations of the tainted food scandals (which had been deliberately hushed up during the Olympic period) did cause Hongkongers to again wish to distance themselves from being Chinese (Ho 2012: 11). The government, however, drew positive lessons, namely that through the equestrian events not only had Hong Kong demonstrated to the world its ability to host such an important sporting event but also that Hongkongers had shown their patriotism towards China. In the short-run to try to reinforce the latter point, the Hong Kong government arranged for China to send a group of Chinese Olympic medallists to visit Hong Kong to perform demonstration events and meet the people. 'I hope the Hong Kong public can use this opportunity to share the joy and pride of their country', said HKSAR Chief Executive Donald Tsang ([http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-08/30/content\\_9741891.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-08/30/content_9741891.htm)). However, Glos Ho and Alan Bairner report that surveys of secondary school-children in October 2008 showed that although there was strong awareness of the opening and closing ceremonies in Beijing there was much less awareness of the Hong Kong equestrian event or the visit of Chinese athletes (Ho and Bairner 2012).

### **3.2 East Asian Games**

The December 2009 East Asian Games (EAG) held in Hong Kong were more problematic than the Olympics in terms of public enthusiasm. Held regularly every 4 years since 1993, the EAG had nonetheless remained a fairly low profile multi-sports

event in the region. Taipei had been the only rival bidder to Hong Kong and no doubt China's lobbying behind the scenes had helped to ensure that Hong Kong won out as the host. The Hong Kong EAG was the largest ever, featuring over 2,100 athletes competing in 262 events in 22 sports (two of which were exhibition sports). The chosen slogan for the Hong Kong EAG was 'Be the Legend', implying that athletes could become a legend in their lifetime by performing well in the games. A catchy theme song was composed and two white, flame-haired cartoon lion mascots, Dony and Ami, based on the two words for East Asia in Cantonese, were created to display the 'Hong Kong spirit'. The opening ceremony adopted a unique approach, forswearing the traditional march of athletes into a stadium, and instead utilising nine large fishing boats, one for each team, rigged out with LED lights to sail across the Hong Kong harbour, while strobe lights and laser beams swept the scene (*Sunday Morning Post*, 6 December 2009).

1<sup>st</sup> October 2009 marked the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the PRC and that event was specifically tied in with the hosting of the EAG, at least in terms of the messages put out in the first three-quarters of 2009. At a prominent position in the Central district of Hong Kong island two large drums celebrated both the EAG hosting and the PRC anniversary; the official 'Events Calendar' placed the PRC anniversary logo prominently on its cover; and all the August torch relay publicity materials gave equal billing to the Hong Kong EAG logo and the PRC anniversary logo. However, once the actual anniversary date was passed in early October the HKSAR government switched its emphasis to Hong Kong alone. The opening ceremony themes and the congratulatory messages given at that ceremony focused exclusively on the 'beauty, efficiency and hospitality' of Hong Kong as a 'perfect host city for this premier international event', but within the context of the East Asian region.

Hong Kong's unexpected victory in the final of the football competition before a packed stadium (the penalty shoot-out against Japan was a nerve-racking but ultimately euphoric occasion) was greeted with front-page banner headlines in the local press. The EAG brought only rather limited economic benefits to Hong Kong and significant changes in popular attitudes to sport, especially sports participation, have also been difficult to verify,

at least in the short run. Speaking soon after the EAG had finished, the Home Affairs Secretary Tsang Tak-sing said the legacy of the EAG would be 'mainly about the achievement of Hong Kong athletes and the sporting culture it generated in the community' (Legislative Council Home Affairs Panel, 8 January 2010, cited in Bridges 2012: 661). However, probably more important in reality was the extent to which hosting the EAG had promoted the image of Hong Kong as a city that could efficiently and successfully host such multi-sports events, at least within the Asian region.

### **3.3 Asian Games Bid**

The third mega-event was expected to be the Asian Games. Following on the 'success' of the EAG, by June 2010 Timothy Fok, President of the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee (SF&OC) of Hong Kong had persuaded the Hong Kong government to issue a letter of support enabling the SF&OC to send a letter of intent to the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) (*Sunday Morning Post*, 1 August 2010). In setting out the arguments to support the 2023 bid, the Hong Kong government focused on three categories of benefits which could be expected:

1. Promoting sports development.
2. Enhancing social cohesion.
3. Stimulating economic activity. (Home Affairs Bureau 2010: 4-7).

Out of these 3 anticipated outcomes, the desire to enhance social cohesion was the most problematic. In the context of mainland China's recent advocacy of a 'harmonious society' as a way of dealing with the stresses and strains of socio-economic transformation, the Hong Kong officials seem to have been using the term 'social cohesion' in a manner that suggests that sport could help to eradicate feelings of social exclusion and minimize social conflict. 2009-10 had been marked by some sharp social conflicts within Hong Kong, particularly highlighting the so-called 'post-80s' generation's dissatisfaction with both mega construction projects and the slow pace of democratization. In this situation, the government no doubt wished to promote an atmosphere in which society was less polarized and policy agendas could be promoted more smoothly.

Hong Kong's self-confidence and belief in its ability to host a sporting mega-event was justifiably strengthened by the 2008 equestrian events and the 2009 EAG. But, a double challenge had to be faced: firstly, to convince the Hong Kong public and their elected representatives that the tangible and intangible benefits would outweigh the costs and then, secondly, to persuade the other OCA members that Hong Kong would be the best place for the 2023 Games. By January 2011 the government was faced with the reality that even the first challenge could not be met. Public opinion was ambivalent at best, being especially concerned over the expected costs, and the political parties gradually changed from lukewarm support to opposition. The HKSAR government's own credibility suffered when it suddenly announced reduced estimated costs. Consequently, when the Legislative Council's finance committee refused to approve funding the SF&OC's dream was over. China, which had come out in support of the Hong Kong bid (no doubt in part because again it wanted to stymie a Taipei bid) and would undoubtedly have lobbied hard for Hong Kong behind the scenes within the OCA, was surely disappointed at the outcome. In 2011 the OCA actually postponed a decision on which city should host the 2023 Games; the 2012 OCA meeting only decided on Hanoi as the host for the 2019 Asian Games, leaving the 2023 issue in abeyance. Consequently, some within Hong Kong have not given up hope that the new HKSAR Chief Executive might somehow swing opinion in favour of a bid (see Alvin Sallay, writing in *Sunday Morning Post*, 1 July 2012).

Since Hong Kong never proceeded as far as a formal bid, it is difficult to anticipate how that bid would have been marketed, but the indications from government and SF&OC officials' statements made during the internal debates are that more emphasis would have been placed in public on the 'cosmopolitan' and 'international' aspects of Hong Kong's situation ('highlighting Hong Kong's position as Asia's World City and a centre for major international sports events' to use the phraseology in the government's consultation paper) rather than the China connection, but that is not to deny that there would have been an expectation that China would have been a powerful backer within the OCA's decision-making elites.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Since the handover, the Hong Kong government and its citizens have been grappling with the dilemma of how to implement 'one country, two systems' in practice and how to reconcile national identity with local identities (and with global citizenship). Backed up by the central Chinese government, the HKSAR government, without using the term nationalism, has tried to encourage its citizens to construct a new patriotic discourse and to feel pride in being part of China and so celebrate its accomplishments. But the results have not been altogether successful, since Hong Kong society has, if anything, become more polarized and divided over mainland China's perceived political interventions and over personal interactions with individual mainland Chinese, even though so many Hongkongers have relied on and are relying on the economic benefits of closer integration. At the same time, Hong Kong has sought to retain its cosmopolitan appeal and not to lose its international role, especially when Shanghai, within China, and Singapore, outside China, are increasingly seen as rivals as financial and trading centres.

Sport, therefore, has become one instrument through which this dual identity is not only expressed but, ironically, also reinforced. The study of the three mega-events debates within Hong Kong during 2008-11 suggests that (a) the Olympic equestrian events, as part of the greater Beijing 2008 events, were utilised by government primarily as a means to foster patriotic feeling and pride towards China; (b) the EAG was initially closely linked to mainland China's major patriotic anniversary, but that it was later marketed as enhancing Hong Kong's regional/global cosmopolitan image; and (c) the Asian Games bid was pitched primarily at the world city dimension, even though it was to founder on local politics. Whatever the impact externally of these sporting events (which is not the subject of this paper), domestically within Hong Kong, however, the dual nature of Hongkongers' thinking - and even sense of belonging - remains active and relevant. These results show, therefore, that despite the efforts of the Hong Kong government to make use of sport in general and sporting mega-events in particular to advance certain agendas, the results have not been as clear-cut as officials might have hoped, as Hongkongers continue



to display their own particular brand of 'identity'.

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<sup>2</sup> One mainland academic wrote that the choice of Leung as the next HKSAR Chief Executive was a milestone in Hong Kong's constitutional development: 'Leung and the patriotic leftist camp have created a new era in the history of Hong Kong' (*South China*

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*Morning Post*, 19 June 2012). However, Leung was 'elected' by a small group of 1,200 people, not by universal suffrage.

<sup>3</sup> This paper does draw on some earlier analyses, but up-dated in certain respects, contained in two articles published in the *International Journal of the History of Sport* in 2011 and 2012. See Reference List.

<sup>4</sup> Different surveys by Anthony Fung in the late 1990s suggested what he called a growing 'hybridisation' of local-national culture (covering the two middle categories of the HKU spectrum), but those surveys were taken in the early years of post-colonisation (Fung 2004).

<sup>5</sup> One rare example is: 'Hong Kong, a cosmopolitan city in China and the Asian region, has her unique characteristics. In order to let the Hong Kong people understand Hong Kong more, the Hong Kong Public Libraries, since April 2005, has been presenting a talk series entitled Subject Talks on "Cosmopolitan Hong Kong". It introduces and analyzes Hong Kong's advantages, challenges and development, covering economic, cultural, social and environmental aspects.' Hong Kong Public Libraries website, <http://www.hkpl.gov.hk>, accessed 1.6.2012. On the difficulties of defining 'cosmopolitan', see Calhoun 2008.

<sup>6</sup> For the debate over world cities' characteristics, albeit using London as the starting point, see Doreen Massey (2007), *World City*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>7</sup> As an interesting sidelight, Katherine Dashper has written about the mixed feelings of British equestrian participants in being part of the Olympics yet away from Beijing, with a consequent 'detrimental effect on athletes' Olympic experiences' (Dashper 2012).

<sup>8</sup> One well-known local commentator, Chris Yeung, noted after the torch relay that 'The Olympic flame has fuelled patriotism - and nationalism - in Hong Kong.....a wave of nationalism is set to engulf the city'. *Sunday Morning Post*, 4 May 2008.