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## On Seizing the Olympic Platform

Monroe Price

University of Pennsylvania, [Mprice@asc.upenn.edu](mailto:Mprice@asc.upenn.edu)

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### Abstract

When Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz wrote *Media Events*, their masterful analysis of mass ceremonies of the twentieth century (coronations, the moon landing, the Kennedy funeral), the emphasis was on the celebratory or cohesion-building qualities of such global incidents. Now, reflecting on geopolitical changes that have intensified since the publication of the book, they have come to think more of the brutal competition that occurs to appropriate these phenomena by a variety of groups and powers in society. Katz has argued that "terrorism" has created a new category of media event. Dayan, with whose modification this chapter is more concerned, has used the word *hijack* to imply the sometimes forceful, but certainly involuntary or antagonistic, seizure of world attention by altering the expected and legitimated narrative of these singular moments (2005). Dayan reflects the hunger by a multitude of groups to gain the extraordinary benefit of huge investments in platforms established by others, and, in so doing, take advantage of elaborately created fora to advance political and commercial messages. Media events become marked by efforts by free riders or interlopers to seize the opportunity to perform in a global theater of representation.

# On Seizing the Olympic Platform

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*Monroe E. Price*

When Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz wrote *Media Events*, their masterful analysis of mass ceremonies of the twentieth century (coronations, the moon landing, the Kennedy funeral), the emphasis was on the celebratory or cohesion-building qualities of such global incidents. Now, reflecting on geopolitical changes that have intensified since the publication of the book, they have come to think more of the brutal competition that occurs to appropriate these phenomena by a variety of groups and powers in society. Katz has argued that “terrorism” has created a new category of media event. Dayan, with whose modification this chapter is more concerned, has used the word *hijack* to imply the sometimes forceful, but certainly involuntary or antagonistic, seizure of world attention by altering the expected and legitimated narrative of these singular moments (2005). Dayan reflects the hunger by a multitude of groups to gain the extraordinary benefit of huge investments in platforms established by others, and, in so doing, take advantage of elaborately created fora to advance political and commercial messages. Media events become marked by efforts by free riders or interlopers to seize the opportunity to perform in a global theater of representation.

The most dramatic kind of hijacking is asymmetric, where small, seemingly powerless groups gain momentary attention and sometimes enduring strength by storming (literally or figuratively) a platform media event so as instantly to control the narrative (the Palestinian gun-

men in the Munich Olympics). But the concept of hijacking raises more complex questions of power and how narratives are generated and diffused in society. Societies or public spaces are hijacked, ways of living are altered, and the predominant notion of propriety and normal behavior displaced. Hijacking can be supplemented by softer versions, such as piggybacking, which I describe subsequently, and that too may involve both marginal and established players (as in “ambush marketing,” described later).

Within these ideas there is a torque-like twist that transforms the emphasis, place, and analysis of *Media Events*. This chapter, and this book, co-edited with Dayan, locates this idea of hijacking or seizure, looking at the 2008 Olympics as a case study. Through this study, I look at the more abstract questions surrounding “platforms,” as the thing that is hijacked, looking at the category as a relatively underexplored vehicle for systematic communication. I turn next to the historic use of the Olympics as a platform and, finally, to a few examples of seeking to seize the Olympic platform by external civil society advocacy groups and others to exploit the 2008 Olympics to their advantage. I dwell specifically on a campaign to increase China’s pressure on Sudan over the Darfur crisis. Because of the centrality of China and narratives of China in the global and domestic imagination, the stakes in producing and controlling the stories produced through the Beijing Olympics have been great. Through this, the event has become something of a watershed for altering perceptions and engendering change.

### **Platforms and Their Uses**

What do we mean by platforms? For the purposes of this analysis, I consider as a “platform” any mechanism that allows for the presentation of information and its transmission from a sender to a receiver. The term grants a sense of solidity and implies a locus for action, for platforms that exist physically, in the electronic universe or simply as the relationships or links between various entities. Platforms have enormous value if they are successful in attracting large, indeed massive, audiences and serving the need of their sponsors, whether they are selling goods or ideas or have the potential to do so. Of course, one can consider newspapers and broadcasting as not only “media” but as historic platforms, and the process by which various groups gain access and influence with them has, of course, been much studied (Montgomery

1990). But in this chapter, I want to use the term *platform* in a special way. What I wish to emphasize is the appropriation of already created platforms by those who seek new opportunities to deliver messages and pathways to persuade. By restricting this approach to “already created” platforms, I want to distinguish between the fostering of a new event as a platform and the effort to take a platform created by others.

This phenomenon of platforms exists in a world in which much clamoring for attention—to sell goods or alter political attitudes—encounters few effective channels to reach the desired audience. Furthermore, the existing channels are often tightly controlled and present significant barriers to entry. Globalization plays a large role in the shifting efforts to perform and persuade. In the twentieth century, media systems were designed so that issues would be articulated, framed and discussed largely within national boundaries, and the residue of that system persists. Increasingly, however, issues such as human rights, environmentalism, and even the impact of domestic political choices are seen with respect to their vast transnational implications. The interests and actions of civil society and other groups shift from a national to a global level. These passions are made all the more frustrating by the fact that they are often blocked from entry (purposely or merely because of patterns of scarcity) into domestic media systems. As a result, these groups seek new ways of reaching widely distributed elites (and masses).

There is, of course, a very long history of alternate modes of gathering audiences together through various mechanisms that allow persuasive messages to be articulated and widely diffused. Demonstrations, marches, strikes or manifestations are exemplary. In the last several decades, global civil society groups have organized huge concerts, terrorists have caused immense catastrophes, and political figures have staged gatherings of dignitaries: all widely differing efforts to create an opportunity for significant audiences to experience arguments or assertions that would not otherwise come to their attention—or not with such emphasis. Media coverage of such events plays a major role in bringing them to the attention of the public. Much of the work in Dayan and Katz’s well-known book, *Media Events*, is about the communications-related aspects of creating such platforms.

But in this chapter the emphasis is on the effort (and this is a rough distinction) not to create a platform, but rather to appropriate one that was already established or constructed for another purpose, turning the message from that of its sponsors to those of others, commercial enti-

ties or global civil society groups. It is that specific irony—the notion of hijacking or piggybacking—that becomes of interest with respect to the Olympics. The central idea is to find a platform that has proven highly successful in establishing a major constituency for one purpose and then convert that constituency to a different, unintended objective. The cost of creating the platform (very likely considerable) is borne by one player, but the benefits are then obtained by another. The Olympic Games, which offer advocacy groups opportunities for alliances among disparate groups that make up global civil society, provides an important example of this phenomenon. Embedded in this idea are a variety of subnotions: (a) that the Olympic Games are such a platform; (b) that one can identify a dominant narrative that is the intended and approved narrative for which the platform was designed; and (c) in contrast, one can categorize other uses of the platform as counternarrative in ways that are worthy of distinction. In other words, there is some (possibly illusionary) accepted use for the Olympics that is crowded out or violated and that it is possible to tell, sometimes in advance of the event, who the contenders are for the secondary use.

Because of the ever-present danger of appropriation, one defining characteristic of significant platforms is the effort to protect them from unwanted or unremunerated uses. In the Internet world, platform software is created to protect a site from hacking. But what about complex platforms like the Olympic Games? These are protected through physical modes of security (limiting who may actually enter the Olympic facilities or who receives press accreditation for coverage). They are protected through assertion of intellectual property and contractual rights, using highly developed legal mechanisms to enjoin or impose high costs on those who seek to be free riders. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) sets terms for the uses of the platform (and limitations on those uses) by the organizers, the sponsors, and the athletic federations. And platforms are protected, most subtly, through intense management of narrative and response to efforts to subvert or countermand what is chosen to be dominant.

In the case of the Olympics, some fundamental problems present themselves. First, there is a built-in ambiguity as to the “ownership” of the Olympics platform. In some Games, the platform has belonged more to the International Olympic Committee, and in some more to the Organizing Committee; in recent Olympics, ownership is increasingly a combination of these two. Further ambiguity is added as the host city or country seeks to control part of the narrative. In China,

while 2008 is the Beijing Olympics, there is no doubt that the Games are an opportunity for China to tell its stories at home and abroad. And finally, because of commercialization and the high revenues sponsors engender (Payne 2006; Schmitz 2005), increasingly it is the sponsors who have a stake in creating a platform (or using an already-created one) to advance their goals, whether they are selling soda, burgers, or large scale perceptions about citizenship, consumption, and identity.

Because ownership of the platform is multiple and ambiguous, so too is the question of dominant or accepted narratives (Morgan 1995; Hoberman 1997; Barney, Wamsley, Martyn, and MacDonald 1998). It is not fully transparent how potential conflicts in narrative or even differences in emphasis on narrative are negotiated among these competitors for the accepted narrative. The IOC, for example, must monitor for over-commercialization, for proper conduct of participants during the Games, for coverage, and even for the architecture of the venues themselves, to ensure its continued control over a particular representation of the Olympic ideal.

I also distinguish among various efforts to appropriate the platform. Such uses can be merely complementary (indeed reinforcing), in competition with or in contradiction to the accepted narrative (assuming that narrative can be specified). I use the term *complementary* for uses in which the appropriator gains benefits, but those who built the platform bear no additional costs. For example, cities other than Beijing in China may wish to use the Olympics to promote their value as tourist destinations, rather than Beijing. Large commercial entities—including Johnson & Johnson and other major sponsors—may wish to propagate a vision of China (or a particular sense of “One World, One Dream”) that is slightly different from that of BOCOG or the regime, though not in conflict with it. They may wish, for example, to emphasize China’s advances in health technology or in science as opposed to achievement in athletic prowess or, subtly, in military power. Or commercial sponsors may seek to integrate their product with the Olympic dream, propagating a message that is a variant on what the state seeks to propagate, or slightly (but not very) subversive of it. And finally, The Olympic Partner Programme (TOP) sponsors as a group may have messages that subtly or less subtly reinforce attitudes toward consumption, or the increased power of China and the pride that that should engender. Johnson & Johnson’s theme as a TOP Partner within China is “Golden Touch, Golden Mom,” an idea that strongly ties the Olympics to motherhood in Chinese society.

Alongside these complementary narratives, there are major and minor efforts to throw off the dominant narratives of the Beijing Olympics and, via a kind of jujitsu, turn global competition to images of China that are less favorable, or to use the Olympics for some wholly different purpose. The 1999 World Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization was a hallmark recent event, not Olympics related, exemplifying the exploitation of a platform created for one general narrative (furthering one vision of world trade relationships) to convey quite another. Just as China is using the 2008 Games to influence public opinion at home and abroad, many advocacy groups and other interests—both inside China and internationally—are using the occasion to deflect this official representation. These groups fight for space in U.S. and global media, mainstream and not, to reinforce China's flaws and weaknesses, all issuing body jabs against the depiction of the new Colossus. The Olympics magnifies the attention given to the repeated reports of manufacturing defects in China.

But from the point of the view of the Olympics there is little difference between a complementary and a competitive user (where the dominant and alternate use are in more of a zero-sum game). Both are "free riders"—sometimes involved in what might be more gently called piggybacking, rather than hijacking, the platform. Free riders threaten the exclusivity of the platform and the underlying marketing theory that yields compensation for the IOC. Even where the free rider does not damage the Games or its family of participants, the IOC has an interest in capturing the economic benefit to the appropriator, thus internalizing the benefit of the Games and protecting those who pay for the privilege. It is a widely told tale that at the 1984 Olympics, Fuji was an official sponsor, but Kodak was a principal advertiser of both U.S. television broadcasts of the Games and named supporter of the U.S. track team. In 1992, at the Barcelona Olympics, official sponsors including Reebok paid \$700 million, but when the U.S. basketball team won a gold medal, Nike sponsored the press conference. Increasingly, legislation, at the behest of the IOC, restricts and bans such practices. For the London Olympics, there is already legislation preventing any business making reference to the 2012 Olympics in its promotions, unless it is an official sponsor (House of Commons 2005–6). There is a specific rhetoric that captures the commercial appropriation of the endorsed and official narratives. "Ambush" or "parasite" marketing refers to efforts by a company, not an official sponsor of the Olympics, who, by centering its advertising campaign around the event, appears to



have that status (Vancouver 2010). A nonsponsoring company, barred from the use of official logos and other trademarks associated with the sporting event, seeks to inveigle itself by sponsoring an individual athlete or in other ways (Schmitz 2005; Davis 1996).

These commercial appropriations are a way of thinking about the greater stories of the Olympic platform: because so much is spent, because the economy of the Olympics depends upon controlling them, and because there are lawsuits with extensive explanations, struggles in this sphere are better articulated than they are in connection to more substantial areas of competition. More is written about a sneaker manufacturer who is not an official sponsor trying to obtain market share, than about competition over the generalized narratives established by the IOC or the Organizing Committee. Dayan's emphasis on hijacking moves toward the effort to promote contrary or contradictory uses subversive of the principal narrative. The most-cited "hijack" of the Olympics, the frightening presence in the Olympic past, was the terrorist attack in Munich. Each Olympic Organizing Committee is haunted by Munich and its planning is to some extent about mechanisms for avoidance.

### **The Problem of the "Base Narrative"**

To have a category of the subversive, there must be an idea of what constitutes the dominant. Hijacking assumes a legitimated base narrative that is displaced. And that raises the question of who owns or controls the platform—for example, whether it is the platform of the IOC or, in 2008, of the Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games (BOCOG) or of China, or of the commercial sponsors, or of the great transnational broadcasters, like NBC. A more radical perspective, with respect to the Olympics, is that all claimants have only relative primacy or ownership of the platform. One could go further and argue that the Olympic platform has been seized from a purer Olympic past by commercial interests (since 1984) or by various incarnations of the IOC which, it has been argued, has not always been a true bearer of the Olympic torch. John Hoberman, who has used "amoral universalism" as a descriptor of IOC's approach in the past, has written, in an interview for this chapter, that:

I have read Coubertin's major works and analyzed them in *The Olympic Crisis* (1986), and I have no doubts about the authenticity of his ideal-

ism and his good intentions about achieving world peace through international sport. The problem, from my perspective, is that a lot of the wrong people have wielded power over the “movement” from even before Coubertin passed from the scene in 1937—viz. the Nazi Olympics and my account in “Toward a Theory of Olympic Internationalism” of who played influential roles in 1936 and how they acquired them. So the question here is whether the IOC has played politically wholesome roles in international diplomacy in the past, and whether, in the light of this past, they are capable of doing so now as 2008 approaches. (e-mail exchange with the author, June 12, 2007)<sup>1</sup>

For Hoberman, it is precisely an absence of understanding of history that renders the current acceptance of the dominant narrative of Olympism possible. Only an absence of understanding allows the positive glow in which NBC and corporate sponsors, who underwrite the Games, can thrive.

It is clear that the Olympic ideology satisfies a deep yearning for globalism (in the key of sentimentalism). The Olympic “movement” (along with Esperanto and the Red Cross) is one of the late 19th-century internationalisms that has actually survived and succeeded. The difference is that ceding the Olympic Games to the sports entertainment industry has inevitably resulted in multiple forms of corruption from which the Esperantists and the Red Cross people—shielded from temptation—remain happily immune. (e-mail exchange with the author, June 10, 2007)

It is against this perspective that one might examine more traditional views of the IOC and its efforts to affect and control the narrative. Here, and elsewhere in this book, one major area for examination is the use of the Games to advance specific goals of civil society. Before I turn to specific areas of competition with respect to Beijing, it is useful to look at expectations that the history of the Games sanction efforts to legitimate pressures for change, and are not just an occasion for measuring athletic performance. In this regard, I borrow from James Nafziger (1992) in his analysis of the traditional interplay between the Olympics and the processes of legal and political change.

Scholars such as Nafziger argue that political activity to this end should be encouraged as strongly consistent with the Olympic ideal. They invoke the Olympic Charter and its aspirations that render, for example, as incompatible with the Olympic Movement “any form of dis-

crimination with regard to a country or person on the grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise" (IOC 2007). Here the dominant Olympic narrative is the promotion of harmonious interaction between peoples and states and the cultivation of international dialogue. Advocates of this approach point to the role of the IOC in the decision of the North and South Korean teams to march together at the opening ceremonies of the 2006 Torino Olympics. This event was trumpeted as a symbol of a renewed effort to cooperate and was commended as being representative of the Olympic goal of camaraderie and peaceful relations. Olympic officials encouraged North and South Korea to use the Asian Games as a chance to mend diplomatic relations, despite a growing rift between the two over the communist regime's recent missile launches and nuclear test. When the two countries announced their intentions to forge a joint team for 2008, the political decision was applauded by the IOC. A spokesperson announced: "Today marks a milestone in the completion of this important project for the two Koreas and the Olympic movement" (*People's Daily Online* 2006).

Coursing through Olympic history are more aggressive notions of intervention, for example using international sporting events as a bargaining tool to criticize behavior of certain states. The prevailing example of the embrace of international sport to advance the cause of human rights is the IOC's campaign to abate racial discrimination and apartheid in South Africa. Between 1964 and 1991, the IOC not only precluded South Africa from competing in the Olympic Games, it urged all International Federations to do the same until South Africa abandoned apartheid. The IOC recognized that apartheid was "in contravention of the Olympic Charter" (ANOC 1984) and by imposing penalties for its practice, "the IOC rightly subordinated the Olympic goal of widespread international sports participation to the more fundamental principles of international human rights law" (Mastrocola 1995).

Individual states also use the platform of the Games for purposes that can be easily classified as propagandistic and certainly are intended to enhance national prestige: the decision of the USSR to absent itself from the Games until 1952 because of the "bourgeois and capitalist" nature of the event is one well-known example. Intractable regional or international conflict can shift the meanings of, and the narratives expressed during, the Games, and underscore the importance of the IOC to provide control. The 1936 Berlin Olympics was a misuse of the Olympic ideal, exploited by the Nazi regime to strengthen its hold at home while providing foreign spectators and journalists with a pic-

ture of a peaceful, tolerant Germany. By rejecting a proposed boycott of the 1936 Olympics, the United States and other Western democracies acted in a way that skirted international obligations (Large 2007).

Nafziger recalls that “At the end of the Cold War, the Olympic Movement helped end a sort of negative ping-pong in the form of reciprocal boycotting by the United States and the Soviet Union, joined by their national allies, of each other’s Olympic venues. With governmental support initiated by the IOC, the national committees of the two countries signed an antiboycott and cooperative agreement that was adopted by their Governments in an early hint that the Cold War was drawing to a close” (Nafziger 1992, 497). And the IOC played a key role in conflict between North and South Korea during and around the Seoul Games. It proposed that some of the scheduled events be held in North Korea; though this was eventually rejected (and North Korea boycotted the Seoul Games after it was refused status of co-organizer), mediation encouraged competition that remained peaceful—and ultimately encouraged negotiations to explore ending four decades of near conflict between the two Koreas.

Upon the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the International Olympic Committee ruled that Taiwan’s Olympic committee would represent China; after the PRC gained the Chinese seat at the United Nations in 1971, the IOC recognized Beijing’s Olympic committee. The conflict over representation gained another level of complexity when Taiwanese athletes were allowed to compete, but only as part of the “Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee.” Under the formal arrangement, the Taiwanese entrants were prohibited from using Taiwan’s national symbols, such as Taiwan’s flag; the national anthem of Taiwan would not be sung when its athletes won medals.

In this sense the dominant narrative of the IOC hurtles between a more positive notion of Olympian harmony and global cooperation, and a claim of interventionist achievement and the “amoral universalism” in Hoberman’s term. The IOC affirms a role in forwarding Olympic goals that seeks, rhetorically and in practice, to avoid the political. But a broad perspective—linked to the history of the IOC—asks whether the IOC sees the Olympics as a mode for moving a society, and the host city itself, “forward” along a number of dimensions. If that is part of the legitimated narrative, civil society groups and others consider advocacy not only an ethical use of the Olympics moment, but wholly consistent with historic Coubertin-like objectives. There are those, including the IOC itself at times, who hew to the notion that the

principal overt purpose or intended narrative of the Olympics should only have to do with sports and performance, and any attempt to inject broader social or political meaning and impact is an intrusion, a side effect of the extravaganza. Soon after China was awarded the Games, Jacques Rogge, president of the IOC, said, "The IOC is not a political body—the IOC is a sports body. Having an influence on human rights issues is the task of political organisations and human rights organisations. It is not the task of the IOC to get involved in monitoring, or in lobbying or in policing" (BBC Sport 2001). And in 2006, Rogge's chief of staff wrote a letter to a protesting Tibetan group, the International Campaign for Tibet, rejecting the Tibetans' appeal that the IOC bring pressure to bear on China. Of course, the spokesperson said, a Beijing Olympics would play a positive role "in China's changing social and economic fabric," but "We believe your demands fall unquestionably well outside the remit of our organization" (Hutzler 2006).

These expressions underscore the IOC's reluctance to respond to petitions and letters demanding action from a plethora of civil society groups and others. In contradistinction, the Olympics' capacity to promote positive political, economic, and social change is almost always an element of the bid award process. Before the Games were awarded, the IOC was less reluctant to tie the Games to China's human rights record: in April 2002, Rogge told BBC-TV, "We are convinced the Olympic Games will improve human rights in China . . . However, the IOC is a responsible organisation and if either security, logistics or human rights are not acted upon to our satisfaction, we will act" (*Australian* 2002). One might argue that the Olympic Bid is the occasion for setting forth competing narratives and that after the award, the role of the IOC is reduced, but this would be an odd reading of intentions. The conflict among these views undergirds the extraordinary global interest in what might be called "shaping China" from a variety of perspectives. Thus, it is important to look at the way the International Olympic Committee is being perceived, hectored, influenced, and pressured to alter its sense of mission and how this is done by countries, interest groups, and corporations within and outside China.

### **Competing Narratives, Civil Society and the Beijing Olympics**

What makes the 2008 Olympics different from these previous experiences is the increased complexity of issues and players involved in the

process. Beijing is not only the most expensive Games and the Games with the largest potential audience, it is also the Olympics with the most substantial geopolitical consequences. It is about shifts in power toward Asia and shifts in China's role in the global imagination. It comes at a time when every event, including the Olympics, has a transforming environmental agenda. For China it is about the PRC's ability to promote itself as a harmonious society, both at home and internationally. In a not atypical comment, Qin Xiaoying, in *China Daily* (2007), wrote that "Comparing the Olympic spirit and China's quest for a harmonious society, one sees clearly that the aspirations of the Chinese people and the ideas of the Olympic movement have so much in common with respect to interactions between people, between people and society and between man and nature." The official slogan for the Games—"One World, One Dream"—encapsulates this theme of harmony, and renders older competing narratives of China jarring. In the run-up to the games, Chinese scholars have been scouring the foreign press to determine what is written about the PRC, and whether the Games are being portrayed as a moment of potential glory or as symptomatic of larger social and economic flaws and political differences.

The 2008 Games are precariously poised between the zeal and sophistication of NGOs and builders of global civil society on the one hand, and the many complex issues raised by the evolution and development of China on the other. What in the past constituted a debate among governments and national groups has been further transformed and complicated as the battle over representations in the Olympics has expanded and intensified. The major players in this new world are the increasingly global NGOs, a group distinguished by notably more sophisticated means of leveraging power. With their political acumen and reach, these civil society groups have become important entrants in the struggle over the way Beijing is interpreted. In short, the 2008 Olympics are taking place at a moment when an expanding civil society sphere more effectively organizes and communicates globally, and the event provides an ideal opportunity for the relevant actors to mobilize support for their various causes and appeals. The civil society organizations taking up the issue of the Olympics include general human rights advocates and groups specifically concerned with issues of religion and press freedom. There are groups involved in China's relationship with Tibet, and entities with specific public agendas such as environmental organizations and opponents of China's one-child policies. This emerging global society uses a variety of venues to mobilize, to

generate support and achieve prominence. They set up BOCOG, the IOC, China, and the advertisers and sponsors of the 2008 Games as foils. They enlist their national parliaments. And in so doing, these civil society actors have become the functional equivalents of the official sponsors, seeking the looming billboard of the Games to attract audiences and loyalties for their views and to reshape the Olympics as an agent for change.

Though it is impossible to chart the various modes of shifting the agenda of the IOC (and through it China) completely or exhaustively, some examples should help to convey how these groups have aggregated to form a kind of global civil society, and how, in competing and different ways, they seek to shape an agenda around the Olympics. Most of these efforts to open up a kind of public sphere—whether coordinated or isolated—involve individual NGOs, some of which were designed especially to bring pressure to bear on the IOC and China. These groups use a variety of techniques and address them to a wide variety of individuals and entities. They use sample letters and electronic petitions to activate their members as intermediaries. They attempt to assert pressure on groups, including the IOC, directly and through sponsors such as Coca-Cola and other companies with vested interests in the country. They act as clearinghouses of information on human rights abuses, keeping track of developments and reporting on the activities of other human rights groups regarding China and the Olympics. They stress continued media pressure on China as a way to directly embarrass or shame the CCP into improving its record and also to prompt the IOC to influence China.

Among the various Christian groups seeking to make their claims part of the Olympics agenda is the Cardinal Kung Foundation, which asserts its ties to and advocates for the underground Roman Catholic Church in China, detailing China's record of religious persecution in an attempt to include religious freedom on the Olympic change agenda. In testimony to the U.S. Congress and in letters to President Hu Jintao, the Foundation has sought to invoke the Olympic aura, describing the "current Chinese government religious policy" as the direct opposite of the Olympic goal of friendship, decency and solidarity, and calling on China to prove that the country "is honoring the spirit of the Olympic Games" (Cardinal Kung Foundation, n.d. and 2005). Groups concerned with issues in Tibet have been particularly active. In 2006, a group of Tibetan cyclists held a freedom rally in New Delhi to protest Chinese rule and appeal to the Indian government to help re-

solve the Tibet issue for its own security. The rallyists were also garnering support for an Olympic boycott because of China's poor human rights record and in particular, the jailing and disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama, Tibet's second-ranking religious figure. A small group of Tibetan monks and Tibetans held a hunger strike in Turin, Italy during the 2006 Winter Games to pressure the IOC to pressure China to improve human rights in Tibet. It is not just NGOs that are involved, but a wide variety of organizations, tribal entities, and other political forces. When an Uyghur activist (and Canadian citizen) was extradited from Uzbekistan to China and jailed, lawyers and family members attempted to exert pressure on the Canadian government to influence China by invoking the Olympic values. In cases such as these, the Olympic spirit becomes a kind of symbolic or disembodied code which is invoked as an instrument of rhetorical power.

Some of the themes or tropes of these entities can be identified in a letter issued on August 7, 2006, by an international coalition of human rights organizations, including Olympic Watch (a human rights monitoring association created especially to focus on the Games), Reporters Without Borders, the International Society for Human Rights, Solidarité Chine, and Laogai Research Foundation. The letter maintains that "The IOC has the obligation to protect the Olympic ideals of 'harmonious development of man,' 'human dignity' and 'peace,' and to prevent the political propaganda abuse of the Games." And it alleges that "the IOC has refused to face the reality in which Beijing 2008 is to take place," charging current IOC leadership with being "either too cynical, or too incompetent, or both, to protect the Olympic ideals and take a clear stance on the continuing human rights abuses in China." The group called on National Olympic Committees and individual athletes "to start discussing ways how they can protest the conditions under which the 2008 Games are to take place." As to implementation, the letter suggests that "At a minimum, the IOC could demand that the Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games not be personally linked to the perpetrators of human rights violations, the Chinese Communist Party." It recommended that National Olympic Committees organize boycotts, stage peaceful protests in Beijing during the Games, include Chinese, Tibetan, and Uyghur exiles in their teams and delegations and visit human rights defenders in prison. Corporate sponsors were urged to "show their commitment to corporate social responsibility by making it clear to the IOC and to BOCOG that their business philosophy does not condone propaganda abuse of the Games



and human rights violations” (Olympic Watch 2006). The Human Rights Watch Olympic campaign sought to open the narrative by focusing on three questions. One was “How will China’s pervasive censorship and control of domestic and international media and the Internet play out when thousands of international journalists descend on Beijing?” The implication here is of course that there will be necessary consequences when the legions come to cover the Games. Their second question was posed as follows: “How are the Olympic Games being used to justify the violent forced evictions of thousands of people from their homes?” And a third question, revisited later in this chapter, asks “. . . how do China’s restrictions on labor rights affect workers on the ground?” (Human Rights Watch n.d.).

### Two Case Studies

I want to close this chapter by focusing on two specific efforts of civil society, one involving domestic policy in China and labor standards, and the other involving foreign policy, in particular, China’s relationship with Sudan and Darfur. The first example involves a campaign that stretches across several Olympics, and the second involves one that is targeted specifically at 2008. Each example shows civil society mobilizing to use the Olympics platform to gain global attention and change China’s behavior.

#### PlayFair Alliance

An important case study involves the PlayFair Alliance, a group with foundations in the international labor movement (among other bases) which has been engaged in a long-term effort to improve working standards for children and others. Begun before Athens, as the “Play Fair at the Olympics Campaign,” it claimed to be one of the “biggest ever global mobilisations against inhuman working conditions” (Play Fair at the Olympics 2004). Somewhat reconstituted for the 2008 Olympics, the PlayFair Alliance demonstrates modes of highlighting a subversive narrative—the exploitation of child labor—and legitimating its claims by bringing them into of the world of the IOC’s own documents. PlayFair has skillfully used the rhetoric of the Olympic movement, including the IOC Code of Ethics, and has gained advantage by mastering the intricacies of the IOC and national licensing agreements.

In short, it appropriated an officially proclaimed narrative of Olympic decency and then sought to hold those involved to their articulated high standard.

Their efforts resulted in a report that was published in June 2007 and that documented the illegal use of child labor in China's manufacture of the Olympic-related mementos that were under license to BOCOG. The report was well-documented and provoked an instant reaction from Chinese authorities, always prepared for crisis management, in which they announced that local officials would be punished, businesses closed, and the contracts immediately terminated.

One of the striking features of the report is the way in which it shows how traditional IOC rhetoric can be deployed to create a frame for altering narratives. Quoting directly from extracts of the IOC's Code of Ethics, PlayFair invoked the following principles:

1. Safeguarding the dignity of the individual is a fundamental requirement of Olympism.
- . . .
5. The Olympic parties shall use due care and diligence in fulfilling their mission. They must not act in a manner likely to tarnish the reputation of the Olympic Movement.
6. The Olympic parties must not be involved with firms or persons whose activity is inconsistent with the principles set out in the Olympic Charter and the present Code.

The report details the Alliance's efforts, since 2003, to discuss with the IOC the conditions under which Olympic-branded sportswear is produced. In response to requests for meetings, the IOC commented "that it condemns the practice of unfair labour practices, which are contrary to the spirit and ideals of the Olympic movement," but that day to day licensing is managed by the 202 National Olympic Committees around the world, and "The IOC has no direct involvement with regards to such contracts." PlayFair's report also referenced a 1998 cooperation agreement signed between the IOC and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) that focused on respect for social justice in the labor field. In that agreement, "the IOC and the ILO undertake to encourage activities in pursuit of this objective, particularly those which contribute to the elimination of poverty and child labour . . ." (PlayFair 2008 2007, 6).

Invoking this history, PlayFair urged the IOC to "Adopt a clear and public statement, including inclusion into the Olympic Charter, in

support of labour standards and in particular in sporting goods supply chains; Incorporate into IOC licensing/sponsorship contracts, binding language on labour standards issues throughout the supply chains(s) of the company(s) concerned; Establish an effective mechanism through which cases of violations of labour rights in such supply chains can be dealt with, in cases where it has not been possible to remedy these through direct contact with the company(s) concerned; Take concrete steps to ensure that national Olympic committees and games organising committees adopt and implement equivalent provisions.” (PlayFair 2008 2007, 6).

The Beijing 2008 Olympic Marketing Plan overview describes an official Olympics Games License as “an agreement that grants the rights to use Olympic marks on products for retail sale. In return, licensees pay royalties for the rights, which go directly toward funding the Olympic Games. The program aims at promoting the Olympic Ideals and the Olympic Brand, providing quality consumer touch points for the inspiration of the Games” (BOCOG n.d.) Thus, PlayFair’s style of argument made the IOC’s policies on merchandise licensing much more transparent than they had previously been.

PlayFair understood the implications not only for the IOC story, but for the China narrative as well. For China, much was at stake in terms of the relationship between the Olympics and changing global perceptions of the quality of domestically produced goods. The stated “mission” of the Beijing 2008 Licensing Programme is to promote the brand image of the Beijing Olympic Games and the Chinese Olympic Committee (COC), that is, to “express the unique culture of China and Beijing by offering an array of traditional cultural products; make a strong effort to involve Chinese enterprises in Olympic licensing; showcase Chinese products and build the brand image equation that conveys a quality message, i.e. ‘Made-in-China = High Quality;’ and raise funds for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.” (Chinese Olympic Committee 2004).

### **The “Genocide Olympics”**

There is no gold medal for the NGO narrative that comes closest to hijacking, usurping or piggybacking on the immense investment in the Olympics. But if there were, one of the competitors for the 2008 award might be Eric Reeves, an English professor at Smith College, who created the accusatory concept of the “Genocide Olympics” as a way of altering China’s dealings with Sudan. Reeves’s was a classic effort to seize

the platform, and to use the social and financial capital invested in the Olympics in order to turn it to the advantage of an NGO policy advocate “free rider.” It is useful to trace the intense history of this effort and its implications for the earlier discussion of platforms.

Many have remarked on China’s close relationship with countries of marginal stability and democracy, seen to be partly an imperative of the country’s growing domestic economy and need for oil reserves. A prominent actor in this arena is Sudan. Since the mid-1990s, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) has been the dominant player in both exploration and production in Sudan’s oil reserves. Human Rights Watch and others have charged that China’s involvement in oil exploration has been marked by complicity in gross human rights violations, including clearances of the indigenous populations in the oil regions and direct assistance to Khartoum’s regular military forces. In addition, China has purchased a great share of Sudan’s oil exports, and these revenues are a major source of financial support for the Sudanese government. These policies have undermined the effectiveness of sanctions imposed by other global players.

Most important and relevant to the subject of Reeves’s use of the Olympics platform has been international concern about widespread killing and displacement in the Darfur region, and the specific role of China in this crisis. In September 2004, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution threatening Sudan with oil sanctions if it did not stop atrocities in the Darfur region. China abstained. In August 2006, China abstained again in a vote on Resolution 1706 which provided for the transfer of responsibility in Darfur to the United Nations from the African Union (United Nations 2006). Many advocates felt that China was shielding Sudan in its refusal to consent to the entry of UN forces.

The public efforts to pressure Sudan, and countries that can influence Sudan, have, of course, been massive. What was particularly novel however was the leveraging of the 2008 Olympic Games as a method of bringing such pressure to bear. Eric Reeves’s “rebranding” of the Beijing events as the “Genocide Olympics” was a kind of asymmetric image warfare, which also proved to be a highly effective mode of mobilizing support for his position. Various elements distinguish Reeves’s counternarrative from those of the NGO advocacy projects described earlier in this chapter. But there are also similarities. From the outset, the most salient characteristic was Reeves’s rhetorical strategy, deploying the evocative and immediately understandable phrase, “Genocide Olympics.” This elegant and powerful formulation effec-

tively juxtaposes two complex worlds that are not readily associated with each other. It is a phrase that assaults and awakens the reader, and invites further inquiry. It is a phrase that, for some readers, plays on deep and abiding concerns about China and 2008 that could not otherwise be easily summarized and compressed. The brilliance of this two word phrase was what gave the project its initial momentum.

Reeves was able to build on Beijing's own contribution to the notion of multiple sorts of Olympics. As part of its expansive claims for the Olympics, BOCOG chose the "One World, One Dream" motto to convey the idea of simultaneous and overlapping Olympics, Olympics that asserted and followed certain themes: a Green Olympics, a People's Olympics and a High-Tech Olympics. The Green Olympics would emphasize harmony and mutual promotion of man and nature, and China's commitment to sustainable development. The People's Olympics would promote an internally harmonious society, facilitate the formation of a peaceful international environment and emphasize solidarity between East and West.<sup>2</sup> The High-Tech Olympics would, according to BOCOG, "be a window to showcase [China's] high-tech achievements and innovative capacity" (BOCOG 2005). In another, slightly more worrisome interpretation, however, the High-Tech Olympics provides an "arena to exhibit the comprehensive power and the highest level of the scientific and technological development of China" (Hua 2004). Playing against the quasi-hyperbole of Beijing's claims, the coining of Reeves's phrase was a small act of jujitsu.

The second reason the phrase was so striking was that it broke through the dense layers of complexity about Darfur, atrocities, geopolitics, oil, and weapons trading. The phrase "Genocide Olympics" was issued and introduced to a global audience that understood something horrible was proceeding in Darfur and that there had been numerous seemingly ineffectual attempts to resolve the crisis. There was, as is often the case, a generalized hope for a new solution that could be understandable and workable. By fixing responsibility on China and suggesting a potential solution, the concept of "Genocide Olympics" had staying power. It gathered, under a single banner, much of the accumulated discontent, anxiety, and suspicion about China and human rights.

### *Strategy and the Launching of the Narrative*

Reeves's public and transparent campaign makes it possible to document and analyze what he proposed to do and how his small campaign

played off of great platforms such as the Games. The campaign is an interesting example of diffusion of an idea. Reeves has long experience as a Sudan activist; his Web site, [www.sudanreeves.org](http://www.sudanreeves.org), carries many of his writings and analyses on this subject. He has spent eight years fully devoted to Sudan related-questions. And he has always had the ability to use newspapers, radio, and other means to keep his views in the public eye. When Reeves turned to the Olympics as a platform for mobilization, he met with the *Washington Post* editorial board and convinced them to write an editorial (2006) that had “Genocide Olympics” in its title (the first such publication of the term). He wrote an opinion piece in December, 2006 in the *Boston Globe* about his proposed campaign. In March, Reeves appeared again in the *Boston Globe*—this time as a subject of a story—with an account of his campaign (Cullen 2007), which he launched with an e-mail manifesto sent in February, an “Open Letter to Darfur Activists” (Reeves 2007a).

The manifesto is interesting for its differing modes of achieving the goal of hijacking the Olympics for secondary purposes. The letter starts by challenging current NGO techniques for citizen actions regarding Darfur:

Enough of selling green bracelets and writing letters. . . . It’s time, now, to begin shaming China—demanding that if the Beijing government is going to host the premier international event, the Summer Olympic Games of 2008, they must be responsible international partners. China’s slogan for these Olympic Games—“One world, one dream”—is a ghastly irony, given Beijing’s complicity in the Darfur genocide. . . . The Chinese leadership must understand that if they refuse to use their unrivaled political, economic, and diplomatic leverage with Khartoum to secure access for the force authorized under UN Security Council Resolution 1706, then they will face an extremely vigorous, unrelenting, and omnipresent campaign to shame them over this refusal.

In opposition to the established means of exploiting the Olympics platform, Reeves suggested that a boycott of the Games would not be the most effective technique:

It is important to remember that this should not, in my strongly held view, be a campaign to boycott the Olympics: a boycott would defeat the whole purpose of the campaign, and be deeply divisive. Moreover, if a boycott were successful (extremely unlikely) the political platform from which to challenge China would disappear.

Reeves's aspiration, rather, was for the Olympics platform to foster a global, grassroots movement. He intuited the bigger the platform (and the Olympics is certainly among the biggest), the greater the room for major uses by the appropriator:

There is tremendous scope for creative advocacy here, and for the deployment of diverse skills and energies: linguistic, internet, communications, graphic design, advocacy writing, and organizational. What happens, for example, if 1,000 students and advocates demonstrate before the Chinese embassy in Washington, DC, declaring with banner, placards, and T-shirts that China will be held accountable for its complicity in the Darfur genocide? What happens if such demonstrations are continuous, and grow, and take place outside China's embassies in other countries? in many other countries? What happens if everywhere—everywhere—Chinese diplomats and politicians travel they are confronted by those who insist on making this an occasion for highlighting China's role in the Darfur genocide?

#### *Diffusion and Losing Control of the Narrative*

Almost immediately, there was rapid diffusion of the idea. Reeves gave interviews to NPR and other broadcast outlets. On March 22, 2007, in a stump talk barely noted in the United States, one of the candidates for president of France, François Bayrou, called for a potential boycott of the Olympics if China did not assist in altering Sudan's stance (Keaten 2007). Even at this early stage, other candidates for the French presidency seemed to concur in the idea of a Darfur-related Olympics action.

But the most noticeable step occurred when Mia Farrow and her son, Ronan, published an opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal* (2007). Reeves had had long discussions, as a kind of tutor on Darfur, with the actress, a goodwill ambassador for UNESCO and a committed Sudan activist before the essay's publication. The essay, not surprisingly titled "The 'Genocide Olympics,'" repeated much that was in Reeves's campaign manifestos and analyses. "[S]tate-owned China National Petroleum Corp.—an official partner of the upcoming Olympic Games—owns the largest shares in each of Sudan's two major oil consortia. The Sudanese government uses as much as 80% of proceeds from those sales to fund its brutal Janjaweed proxy militia and purchase their instruments of destruction: bombers, assault helicopters, armored

vehicles and small arms, most of them of Chinese manufacture. Airstrips constructed and operated by the Chinese have been used to launch bombing campaigns on villages.”

Then the Farrowes introduced a new point—one that also likely originated with Reeves—that turned the rhetorical heat up by more than a few notches. They aimed a verbal volley at the producer Steven Spielberg who had been contracted to orchestrate and produce the opening and closing ceremonies for the 2008 Olympics. “Does Mr. Spielberg really want to go down in history as the Leni Riefenstahl of the Beijing Games? Do the various television sponsors around the world want to share in that shame? Because they will. Unless, of course, all of them add their singularly well-positioned voices to the growing calls for Chinese action to end the slaughter in Darfur.”

Bringing Spielberg into the frame seemed to instantly alter the dynamic of the campaign. In a sense, it meant, for Reeves, a slight loss of control of the narrative. All of a sudden, this was now a Hollywood celebrity campaign. A great reputation (Spielberg’s) seemed on the line. Diffusion spiked as more and more newspapers carried elements of the story. The *Washington Times*, a frequent critic of China, found the Olympic platform a suitable vehicle for their views. Nat Hentoff wrote for them as follows:

It astonishes me that the same Mr. Spielberg so admirably founded the Shoah foundation that records the testimony of the survivors of the Nazi Holocaust. How can he fail to make any connection with Shoah and the holocaust in Darfur?

The Farrowes also ask whether “the various television sponsors [of the Beijing Olympics] want to share in that shame” of the host’s complicity in genocide along with such American corporate sponsors of the games as Johnson and Johnson, Coca-Cola, General Electric and McDonald’s. (Hentoff 2007)

By mid-2007, the campaign sparked by Reeves and reinforced by Farrow was beginning to be visible in many contexts. The world’s largest mutual fund, Fidelity Investments, slashed its stake in PetroChina amid pressure to sell shares in companies doing business in Sudan (*Wall Street Journal* 2007). In May, more than 100 members of the United States’ House of Representatives sent a joint letter to China’s President Hu Jintao, urging him to use his influence with the Sudanese government. The letter concluded on a Reeves-like note: “It would be a disas-



ter for China if the Games were to be marred by protests . . . Already there are calls to boycott what is increasingly being described as the 2008 Genocide Olympics" (U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs 2007).

Athletes also joined the campaign. A reserve player on the National Basketball Association's Cleveland Cavaliers, Ira Newble, inspired by an article about Reeves in *USA Today*, convinced his teammates to join in a plea to the government of China: "We, as basketball players in the N.B.A. and as potential athletes in the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, cannot look on with indifference to the massive human suffering and destruction that continue in the Darfur region of Sudan" (Beck 2007). And in July, Joey Cheek, a speed-skating medalist from the 2006 Winter Olympics, delivered to the Chinese Embassy in Washington 42,000 signatures on a petition from the Save Darfur Coalition. He proposed leading a group of American and Chinese athletes on a trip to Sudan. A column in the *New York Times* celebrated his idealism (Araton 2007).

In July 2007, two scholars from Harvard, one of whom had previously worked with the Chinese government, wrote an op-ed piece for the *Boston Globe*, later reprinted in the *International Herald Tribune*, criticizing "some in the West" who were labeling Beijing 2008 as the Genocide Olympics (Qian and Wu 2007). "Is China really turning a cold shoulder to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur," they asked, or, as they suggested, "has the explosive charge of complicity in genocide blinded observers to China's aid and quiet diplomacy in Sudan?" "In the face of increasing pressure from the international community, China may consider bolder options," but "China's principle of exerting influence but not interfering and imposing is consistent with African practice, and the final political decision will have to be made by Africans." A few days later Liu Guijin, China's special envoy to Darfur, criticized American politicians who, he suggested, had "unfairly played up the Darfur issue to burnish their moral credentials amid the presidential election campaigns." Those who linked Darfur with the Olympics "were either ignorant of reality or steeped in obsolete cold war ideology" (Dickie 2007). And the same week, Steven Spielberg made it known that he might resign his appointment as artistic director of the opening ceremonies if he did not receive a satisfactory response to the letter he had earlier sent to China's president (BBC News 2007).

### Controlling the Narrative

I mentioned earlier in this chapter that a platform is defined in part by the modes available to defend it from appropriation. Copyright and trademark laws offer a fierce and aggressive way to protect the Olympic platform from certain contenders who are usually but not exclusively commercial “parasites,” as is discussed earlier. I have suggested as well that enhanced physical security (protecting Web sites from hacking) also serve this function. Far more intriguing and interesting, however, are efforts by the dominant players (the IOC, China or BOCOG and the sponsors in this case) to control the discourse and discourage counternarratives. Here again the case study of the “Genocide Olympics” is illustrative.

The consequences of the *Wall Street Journal* essay by the Farrows demonstrated that the launching of a campaign does not guarantee control of how it will be carried and diffused. Reeves’s narrative was carefully constructed and phrased, with specific objectives and specific means of persuasion. It was to be a “grass roots”-supported narrative, with a broad international base. It would engage and energize people around the world concerned with Darfur (and the relationship between Sudan and China). The option of boycott as remedy would be sidelined. However, the publication of the *Wall Street Journal* piece subtly shifted the campaign. Mia Farrow’s fame launched the concept of tarring 2008 as the “Genocide Olympics” to a wider audience, as indicated by the examples I have given. But despite (or perhaps because of) the success of Reeves and others who initiated the campaign, control of the narrative had been weakened. At the outset they could influence almost every related element in seizing the Olympics platform. Now the platform of Darfur and the Olympics had plural authors.

A different tale began to be told, and, in a way, the shaming seemed to begin to have consequences. China (and Steven Spielberg) sought to regain control of the narrative for themselves. In mid-April 2007, Spielberg’s spokesperson, Marvin Levy, announced that the producer had written a four-page letter to the Chinese president, Hu Jintao, urging him to take further action regarding Sudan and Darfur. At the same time, China—while denying any connection to the Genocide Olympics campaign, or to Spielberg’s letter—announced that they were sending a special ambassador to Sudan.<sup>3</sup> These events led to a journalistic denouement—at least a temporary one—on the front page of the

*New York Times*, in an April 13 story by Helene Cooper that realigned the Olympics narrative, placed Steven Spielberg in a good light, and also shifted the dynamic from the perspective of the government of China by suggesting political movement.<sup>4</sup> The story was entitled: “Darfur Collides with Olympics, And China Yields.” The following day, it was republished in the *International Herald Tribune*, with the headline “China acts on Sudan after Hollywood push.” According to one observer, Cooper, instead of writing about the complexities of the issue, “chose instead to write what seemed a jazzier story: ‘Hollywood vs. Hollywood,’ with a happy ending in which Steven Spielberg ends up wearing the White Hat and with a single letter to the Chinese government does what no one else in the world can do, with little Mia Farrow by his side.”

Two days later, Sudan agreed to allow UN support for African Union troops. This was by no means the end, hardly even the beginning of the end. For Sudan had not yet agreed to the entry of UN troops, which many believed to be necessary for any possibility of resolution. The monitoring of China, of Spielberg, and the rest would no doubt continue. Whether the narrative of a Genocide Olympics would survive—or how it would continue to diffuse—remained to be seen.<sup>5</sup>

There is hardly a more important set of narratives for the twenty-first century than those concerning the role of China in the world and as an internally-governing power. And, as a consequence, there are few narratives that so many actors seek to shape with such fervency. In this chapter, I have concentrated on global civil society groups as actors in this narrative-shaping effort, but it is clearly a process in which multiple other bodies have a stake as well: states, regions, corporations, and large scale movements. For all of these, the 2008 Olympics represents a great opportunity—and both the IOC and China are mindful of this fact. Russell Leigh Moses, professor of politics and international relations at Renmin University of China, put it as follows: “Beijing is spending as much effort on controlling the environment for the Olympics as it is on construction. For the sports authority this is about gaining as much gold as possible. For the party, it is about the greatness of their rule. For the construction team, it is about image and showcase” (Marquand 2006).

The drama of constructing representations of China have underscored what might be called the jurisprudence of platforms: who constructs them and who has access; the mode of controlling their use or defending them; and the modes of seeking access. Over decades, the

way of thinking of traditional platforms has been well articulated. There are ways of conceptualizing the structure of broadcasting and the press, thinking about certain public spaces and even zones of transnational discourse. In all these instances, beneath notions of rules and practices, there is the issue of who has what degree of control over the narratives that define our lives. As advocacy groups seek new platforms to advance their messages, understanding of mechanisms by which this takes place becomes crucial. The Beijing Olympics is a site which can aid in this understanding, one in which the role of civil society groups in the shaping of narratives and the effort to seize control of them has been a sign of the increasing role of these groups on the global stage.

#### NOTES

1. See Hoberman 1986.
2. Before 2006, the People's Olympics was called the Humanistic Olympics. However, the awkward phrasing of this term, as well as its semantic signals to related concepts, such as humanitarianism, resulted in a change to the People's Olympics. The problems might have been even greater without this change.
3. The Press Trust of India (2007) reported that "China's latest attempts to pressurise Sudan to allow UN peacekeepers in Darfur is [*sic*] partly a result of the efforts of Hollywood actress Mia Farrow and film-maker Stephen [*sic*] Spielberg . . ."
4. Reeves sought to keep the pressure on Spielberg. See Reeves (2007b): "What are the obligations of artists in the face of genocide? Spielberg and the others are at two removes from the ethnically targeted killing in Darfur; they are helping with the Olympics that China's government cares so much about, and China is helping Khartoum. But how do we assess degrees of complicity in the ultimate human crime?"
5. Cooper's story was republished in abbreviated form in Scotland. There were editorials in the *Austin American-Statesman* and in Syracuse, New York, and *New York Newsday*; Daniel Schorr discussed Spielberg's role on National Public Radio's *Weekend Edition*.

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