

Practicing Spectacular Urbanism in China: Mega-Events, the City of the Spectacle, and Spatialization of State Power

Authors : George Lin

Abstract : This study examines a practice in which Chinese municipal governments actively pursue momentary and spectacular urbanism through the hosting of mega-events as an instrument to reproduce urban space for the enhancement of place competitiveness and advancement of political career. Practicing event-driven spectacular urbanism is found to have a short-term impact upon the economy and an effect upon the career advancement of the party secretary more than the mayor. Hosting mega-events has been used as a means to create “a harmonious society” and unified social space whereby grievance and discontents are glossed over, ignored, excluded and marginalized. Geographically, a new urban space has been created for the central city to reassert/consolidate its leading competitive position in the regional and national economy at the expense of the disadvantaged and marginalized. Findings of this research call for a critical re-evaluation of the sophisticated state-space inter-relations in the ongoing processes of planetary urbanization and global urban revolution in which China has taken an important part.

Keywords : Chinese cities, mega events, urbanism, urbanization

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