

Review

Udesh Pillay, Richard Tomlinson and Orli Bass
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urban legacy of the 2010 football World Cup*.
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JulianAzzopardi
jul476@gmail.com

Introduction

The FIFA 2010 World Cup (WC) to be held in South Africa between June 11 and July 11 has already netted FIFA over US \$3 billion, exceeding net revenues from the 2006 World cup by some 25 per cent whilst costing the South African government over ZAR 25 billion.¹ With an estimated 3 million supporters watching matches from within the new stadiums or the bustling fan parks, the 2010 FIFA World Cup has been dubbed as the largest footballing event in the history of the game.

Sport and specifically football has played a significant role in South Africa's history and transition from the era of segregation and separate development. As Alegi says, 'football matters to the people' (2004: 1) in more ways than one: From an expression of political and social discontent fighting segregation and isolation, representing cultures and constructing social identities, to exploring new opportunities, and personal improvements, football carries the hopes and dreams of many South Africans and Africans alike, of unity, hope and prosperity. The successful hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, its impact on the lives of those participating and those watching therefore resonates far beyond the footprint of the stadia and deep into the dreams of an entire nation. For some it represents the pinnacle of South Africa's transition process towards international recognition and acceptance – given its history of segregation – as providing a 'lasting social and economic legacy for South Africa and the rest of the African continent' (Makgabo 2006: 1).

The book *Development and Dreams – the urban legacy of the 2010 football World Cup* is therefore a welcome addition to the debate, albeit belated in the course of events. Considering the country had already attempted to host the 2006 tournament and kick-off just under a year away from the book's publication, its value, whilst undoubtedly important, is somewhat dampened by the fact that it could have provided a more than welcome and useful contribution to the preparations of the tournament when still in the early phase of conceptualisation and development. Nonetheless, editors Udesch Pillay, Richard Tomlinson and Orli Bass, have compiled an important piece of work, bringing together a series of essays penned by 17 academics and practitioners in the field of urban development, economic policy, geography, tourism, local government and social policy. It is a cautionary wake-up call to fairly tackle the many questions and aspirations surrounding the organisation of sport's largest showpiece to date.

The 2010 WC: what kind of legacy and for whom?

In the introduction, government's intentions to 'leverage the World Cup to assist in promoting economic development and halving unemployment by 2014' (Tomlinson et al: 3) is presented as one of the book's key bones of contention. This is especially evident in the discussions on the 'sobering economic perspectives' of the nature and extent of investments undertaken in preparation for the event by du Plessis and Maennig in chapter 4; poverty reduction as expressed by Pillay and Bass in chapter 5; housing (Bénit-Gbaffou, chapter 11) and, urban identity in the cases of Johannesburg and Durban by Czeglédý and Bass (chapters 12 and 13 respectively). In addition, the fulfilment of a host nation's obligations under strict FIFA rules has revamped discussions on the appropriateness of the macro/micro-economic choices taken by – and benefitting – a few at the top of the food chain, whilst the burden of the cost is shouldered by the 'citizen of the empire or subject of the imperial colony' (Czeglédý: 286). Concepts that juggle concerns over the emergence of a relationship between the South African government and FIFA equal to a form of *colonialism of a special type* – embodied by FIFA's quasi-autonomous determination of how the tournament should be organised and run – and, the embedding of the neoliberal model to regenerate economic development at the expense of crucial social interventions.

As Tomlinson states, '[t]he issue is to "get the basics right"' (108). But there is doubt that many of the basics have indeed been either put aside or completely disregarded in the developmental process of the tournament's

organisation. Lack of accessibility to South Africa's Bid Book 'which by 2005 had become unavailable' (Tomlinson: 96), as well as the un-willingness and limited availability of key individuals to provide information or interviews, has added concern in this regard. Furthermore, the political and economic *tour de force* embarked on by the Local Organising Committee (LOC) and national government to hasten procedures, at times skating the limits of the rule of law (see the chapter on displacement in the greater Ellis Park development project by Bénit-Gbaffou) gives much vent to those contributors' assertions that the well being of the masses was overlooked for the benefit of the few.

The arguments presented are hardly new in the South African context and reminiscent of the debates that encircled the developmental path of the country that followed the demise of the apartheid state in the early 1990s. With the era of socialism buried under the rubble of the dismantled Berlin Wall, policy makers in South Africa as all over the world were busy reconstructing new spaces under the auspices of capitalism and the macroeconomic principles of neoliberalism. A major criticism of both the transition phase in South Africa at the time of the 1994 general elections, as well as the election of South Africa as host of the 2010 World Cup ten years later in 2004, was the applicability of the appropriate economic model to an evolving socio-economic context: imagery on the international political and financial scenes therefore, both then and now, plays a big role in the transition process from a 'dark continent' Czeglédý discusses (284) to a land of opportunity and excellence.

The limited knowledge of what went into the original World Cup bid (including that submitted for the 2006 World Cup) and top-down modus operandi adopted to implement preparations on the ground, harks back to the times when GEAR was imposed as a set of non-negotiable macro objectives in 1996. Intended to steer the South African economy to prosperity, GEAR – whilst pleasing to the international community and successful in maintaining overall macro stability without the major boom-bust cycles the economy was suffering from in preceding years – not only curtailed some of the poverty alleviation objectives it professed, but also restricted economic growth to a level that was likely to have insignificant impact on prevailing levels of unemployment, inequality and poverty.

The same is also being said about the 2010 World Cup today. In their chapter on the poverty reduction effects of the tournament, Pillay and Bass claim that there is no association between expenditure on mega-events and

‘widespread development benefits’ and that ‘inequality may even be exacerbated by the hosting of the World Cup’ (92). An argument Tomlinson also touches on when attempting to assuage the confusion between “‘2010 legacy projects” that have little to do with 2010’ and those being labelled as such but may contribute less to the ‘global impression of South Africa in 2011’ (109). As such, careful consideration as to what infrastructure developments should be considered as actual 2010 legacy projects is key in determining the real socio-economic value of the tournament to the majority of the population.

Is it therefore an overstatement to assert that the World Cup is indeed a catalyst for growth? Or should attention be limited to developing South Africa’s sports and recreation capacity, as suggested by Tomlinson? The age-old adage of what is growth and who are its beneficiaries is an obvious concern for the contributors of the book, as it is to the government. But how does one interpret the nearly R10 billion spent on stadia and the remaining R16 billion in World Cup-related infrastructure? Are the former actually necessary considering South Africa’s poverty profile and economic circumstance? And are the latter rightly attributed to the hosting of the World Cup in 2010?

From what information has been made available, it seems like what the tournament has contributed to is an escalation of ‘free money’ (Tomlinson et al: 11) to provinces and local councils to do what they had already planned to do but had not done, either due to a lack of resources, or appropriate enough incentive to earn the public (and private) support needed to go ahead with certain controversial projects. The case of the early morning market development in Durban is a case in point, where controversial projects are forced through the network of decision-making corridors and public opinion with the excuse that it is necessary to make the 2010 event in Durban a success. Unfortunately it is managerial blunders as the one just mentioned that have constrained public opinion of the costs and benefits of the tournament (world-wide), presenting it as an opportunity for high-ranking officials and powerful business to take advantage of certain loopholes in the adjudicating system of the host nation and cities.

It has also led to criticisms by those who think that the real beneficiaries are those involved in what Horne and Manzenreiter (2006) call a tightly-knit ‘sports-business-media complex’ (quoted in Tomlinson et al: 4). A trend similar to that reported in respect to the Japan and Korea World Cup in 2002 where decision-making procedures in the build-up of the tournament have

been frequently attributed to a ruling-class involved in a ‘construction complex’ (Horne 2004), influences that similarly characterised the transitional phases in the economic history of countries like post-war America led by a ‘military-industrial complex’ (Horne 2004) and, a ‘minerals-energy complex’ in South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s (Fine and Rustomjee 1996).

In the minds of the proponents of such events however, the over R28 billion spent so far on World Cup infrastructure is an integral part of a R600 billion investment programme for 2006-2010, contributing to the country’s growth and development goals an estimated R51.1 billion to GDP and nearly 200,000 jobs (GCIU 2008:7). It also seeks to offer ‘opportunities that can be accessed by South Africans, in a way that will empower those who were systematically excluded from participation in the economy under apartheid’ (GCIU 2008:7). Such opportunities lie in projects that, whilst acknowledging they may not resolve the ailments of the majority of the poor and reduce unemployment by any substantial amount, are also important to the urban fabric of the communities within which they are being developed.

Central government has therefore allocated nearly R400 million to the development of sports festivals, education and training of volunteers, coaches and educators, and development at the grass roots level – including the installation and upgrading of community health and security facilities during the coming years (www.sa2010.gov.za/node/524: 2). Whilst these are undoubtedly needs of a more general consideration, there is no doubt that the requirement for quality social services and infrastructure is also important for the development of sports and the immediate community surrounding the developments. It is on the basis of these developments that government hopes that the provision of such infrastructure will augment interest in areas such as sports education and medicine amongst South Africa’s youth, as well as bolster social and economic activity in previously disadvantaged areas around urban city centres. It is also an area where I believe the book lacks depth.

Conclusion

Given the importance of the event in both human and economic terms, and considering the process has been ongoing since the beginning of the decade, I believe that the exercise should have been undertaken at an earlier stage and used to ensure appropriate leverage for urban and community development. However, it is also clear from the contributors’ work that information and openness to debate has proven to be and still is problematic.

This further reinforces the calls for more dialogue between residents, city and provincial planners, governments and ruling football authorities (both local and foreign) and a testimony of the books' overall appeal.

Nonetheless, citizens' perceptions are positive. As over 50,000 people assembled along Long Street in central Cape Town to watch the official draw for the tournament on December 4, 2009, many concerns over public interest and safety were successfully quashed as the event unfolded without a glitch. However, the recent protests by residents in the Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces over failed promises made to them by local councillors when selling the development of football stadiums at the expense of public amenities and service delivery, have further shrouded the feel good factor associated with the hosting of the World Cup when basic needs are hardly met.

As stadiums now start to host both international and local football matches attracting crowds of over 50,000 sporting revellers and dreams start turning into reality, there is a unilateral view that opportunities need to be more broadly distributed – as well as communicated – to ensure that those less privileged will also participate in the venture, not as mere spectators, but as direct beneficiaries of the beautiful game. *Ke Nako!*

Note

1. The cost of World Cup infrastructures would then equal FIFA net (projected) revenues so far. See www.engineeringnews.co.za

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