‘A Nation To Be Reckoned With’: The Politics of World Cup Stadium Construction in Cape Town and Durban, South Africa

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On Saturday 15 May 2004, Nelson Mandela wept tears of joy as the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) awarded South Africa the right to host the 2010 World Cup finals – the first on African soil. ‘I feel like a boy of fifteen,’ he told the audience in Zurich. In South Africa, people of all races erupted in simultaneous, raucous celebration of the much-anticipated announcement. A young man standing next to me watching the event on a giant television screen in Soweto’s Mofolo Park exclaimed: ‘This is bigger than the elections!’ Ahmed Kathrada, the former political prisoner incarcerated with Mandela for twenty-six years, described the cathartic power of this moment in the closing passage of his Memoirs: ‘To some extent this outburst of euphoria surpassed 1994 . . . The scenes of jubilation, the spontaneous outpouring of celebration following FIFA’s decision, the solidarity of pride and unity evoked by a sporting event should serve as a shining example to black and white alike’ (Kathrada 2004:371). More recently, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela made clear South Africa’s intention to use the planet’s pre-eminent sporting event as political theatre: ‘The 2010 World Cup is about nation-building, putting us on the global map and making us a nation to be reckoned with. The event is going to make us proud. We are going to show the world wonders come 2010’ (The Mercury 16 March 2007).

This article explores the interconnections between local, national, and global factors that influenced South African policy makers’ decision to fund the construction of monumental new World Cup stadiums in Cape Town and Durban. Drawing on government and media sources, documents from South Africa’s 2010 World Cup Local Organising Committee (LOC), as well as available FIFA data, this article argues that the stadium building shows how the 2010 World Cup can be understood primarily as a national project aimed at enhancing the prestige and credibility of the South African nation-state and its leadership. This work also posits that external pressures exerted by a political economy of world football dominated by monopolistic institutions (FIFA), global media, and transnational
corporations accountable mainly to themselves (Maguire 1999; LaFeber 2002; Giulianotti 2005; Desai 2007) strongly influences local policy-making and the decision-making processes. In doing so, this article begins to raise questions about the real and potential impact of the 2010 World Cup on South African sport and society in a global context.

**FIFA, South Africa, and the new global capitalism: a brief overview**

From its luxurious hilltop headquarters in Zurich, Switzerland, FIFA (formed in 1904) governs a global business comprising ‘shifting alliances of marketing companies, media networks, multinational corporations and opportunist technocrats’ (Sugden 1999:4). As the most popular sporting event on earth, an estimated cumulative audience of 26.7 billion television viewers watched the 2006 tournament held in Germany, the World Cup is FIFA’s most valuable asset. The sale of World Cup television rights and corporate sponsorships accounts for ninety per cent of FIFA’s income (www.fifa.com 6 February 2007 and 22 May 2002). Cloaked in the de Coubertinian motto ‘For the Good of the Game’, stewardship of world football netted FIFA 816 million Swiss francs in profit during the 2002–2006 period.

These handsome financial returns have raised eyebrows in and out of FIFA. ‘Still considered a non-profit making organization in the eyes of Swiss law, despite revenues amounting to billions of Swiss francs,’ the organisation recently acknowledged, ‘FIFA faces a conflict of interests now more than ever, torn between idealistic values and commercial interests’ (www.fifa.com 22 May 2002). FIFA President Joseph ‘Sepp’ Blatter expects US$690 million of the total surplus to fund development projects: ‘We are not a bank. It’s not important how much money we have but rather what we do with it.’ While the world body discusses how to spend World Cup profits, FIFA’s extraordinarily high technical requirements for stadiums, media facilities, accommodation, security, and overall infrastructure unload the enormous financial burden of staging the competition on the host nation.

The high costs associated with hosting the World Cup and the Olympics and the fact that only a selected few countries have the capacity to host sporting mega-events calls attention to their ideological and political significance. Hosting the World Cup (like the Olympics) can bestow quasi-Great Power status on middle-power and emerging nation-states (Allison and Monnington 2002) as seen in Mexico in 1986 (and previously in 1970) and South Korea in 2002 before South Africa. Wealthier (‘core’) countries stage the World Cup mainly to consolidate their dominant place in global society and to construct new multicultural, cosmopolitan ‘imagined communities’. This process unfolded most recently in France in 1998, Japan in 2002, and Germany in 2006. Finally, hosting the World Cup can transform ambitious national politicians into world statesmen.
Bolstered by the emergence of an influential coalition of business interests that sport scholar John Nauright (2004) labelled the ‘sport-media-tourism complex’, post-apartheid South Africa has displayed a voracious appetite for hosting sporting mega-events. The African National Congress (ANC)-led government has fed this desire in part to promote ‘sportive nationalism’ (Hoberman 2005:249) in a divided society. South Africa’s triumphs on home soil in the 1995 Rugby World Cup and the 1996 (football) African Nations Cup produced spontaneous and emotional outpourings of pan-racial sportive nationalism that boosted rainbow nationalism. These extraordinary episodes encouraged and legitimised the pursuit of a mega-event hosting strategy. Before being awarded the 2010 World Cup, South Africa narrowly and controversially lost its bid to stage the 2006 finals to Germany (Alegi 2001) and Cape Town unsuccessfully bid for the 2004 Olympics (Hiller 2000). This cumulative experience spawned a ‘seductive discourse’ (Swart and Bob 2004) that spread widely across government, business, and labour circles. In this view, ‘global games’ are valuable image-enhancers and catalysts for accelerated economic growth. This conviction underpinned the government’s decision to bid again for the 2010 World Cup.

President Thabo Mbeki’s imprimatur and the country’s success in hosting international sporting events persuaded increasingly self-confident political and business leaders to use mega-events to market ‘Brand South Africa’ on a global scale. In his powerful speech at FIFA House the night before the executive committee was to award the 2010 World Cup hosting rights, Mbeki articulated his vision for African regeneration through football. ‘This is an African journey of hope,’ he said; ‘Nothing could ever serve to energise our people to work for their and Africa’s upliftment more than to integrate among the tasks of our Second Decade of Democracy and the African Renaissance our successful hosting of the 2010 Soccer World Cup’ (quoted in Cornelissen 2004:1303). The consolidation of democratic institutions in South Africa and the commercial transformation of the domestic game (evidenced by the inauguration of the Premier Soccer League (PSL) in 1996) made football less of a force for the production of ‘rainbow nationalism’ and more of a vehicle for the promotion of ‘patriotic capitalism’ and the discourse of the ‘African Renaissance’. This shift was already noticeable in South Africa’s successful attempts to host the 1999 All-Africa Games and 2003 Cricket World Cup. These bids constructed ‘a particular conception of the African continent,’ political scientists Scarlett Cornelissen and Kamilla Swart have argued; one built ‘around arguments of the need for Africa’s revival – and axiomatically the obligation on the international community to reward all efforts towards this end, including South Africa’s goals of furthering the so-called African Renaissance through political programmes’ (Cornelissen and Swart 2006:113).

Building five brand new World Cup stadiums (and renovating five more) is critical to the South African government’s objective of manufacturing and marketing an image of South Africa as a modern, technologically advanced, democratic,
business-friendly, tourist destination. Stadiums also seek to re-craft the global image of the African continent as a whole. As an eloquent observer pointed out, futuristic arenas ‘could show off our technical capabilities and project management skills and capture the world’s imagination. Buildings that could become a focus point and serve as [a] platform to build Brand South Africa.’ The gargantuan stadiums in Cape Town and Durban are the largest and most expensive of the new facilities. The construction of these cathedrals of sport is aimed at helping to achieve 2010’s three main goals: (a) host a successful World Cup that meets FIFA requirements, (b) leave a legacy beyond 2010, and (c) market South Africa globally. The government budgeted around R18 billion (as of May 2007) to host the tournament, about half to be spent on building impressive new stadiums in Port Elizabeth, Nelspruit, Polokwane, Durban, and Cape Town.

**Struggle for the common: FIFA and the rise of Cape Town’s new stadium**

The story of Cape Town’s new World Cup stadium reveals the extent to which FIFA and its corporate backers dictate the terms and conditions for staging sporting mega-events to host nations and cities. But an examination of South African complicity in this process also highlights the need to adequately take into account how local agency and landscapes of power shape the history, culture, and economics of world sport. This approach is especially relevant when analysing Africa and other areas at the ‘periphery’ of global sport’s capitalist economy, such as South Asia and Caribbean (see Gupta 2004 on cricket). Africans, Asians, and Caribbeans play (produce) and watch (consume) the game and legitimise FIFA’s universalistic claims about football’s planetary purchase and even its developmental potential. By examining the complex process of selecting and building Cape Town’s match venue, it is possible to begin to assess the city’s strategic role in South Africa’s World Cup experience and its connections to national and global networks of sport, power, culture, and capital.

Before delving into a detailed analysis, the regional specificity of Cape Town must be acknowledged. From a demographic standpoint, nearly half the population comprises coloureds (nine per cent of South Africa’s total population), with Africans making up about one-third and whites about one-fifth. In addition, Cape Town’s deeper colonial history, its status as a port long integrated into an international economy, and the traumatic impact of apartheid social engineering on its urban space distinguish it from much of the rest of the country.

These factors contributed to the creation of a local sport culture in which rugby and cricket, not soccer, capture the lion’s share of media attention (see Odendaal 1995 and 2003). The two main daily newspapers, *The Cape Times* and *The Cape Argus*, and local radio stations offer far more coverage of the English Premier League and UEFA competitions than the vicissitudes of South African football and the city’s top clubs: Santos (founded in 1982) and Ajax Cape Town.
Santos and Ajax typically play their home matches in front of small crowds of 1,000 or less at the recently refurbished Athlone Stadium, situated in a largely coloured, working-class area in the Cape Flats. The core of Cape Town football’s constituency is rooted in this proletarian milieu, a world apart from the middle- and upper-class suburbs where most white Capetonians live, work, and play. When Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates, the most popular clubs in the country, play Santos and Ajax then Newlands Rugby Stadium is used to accommodate larger crowds of up to 40,000 spectators.

An appreciation of the Western Cape’s social topography of football is a necessary starting point from which to examine the strategic thinking and decision-making processes that resulted in Cape Town’s World Cup venue moving initially from Newlands Rugby Stadium to Athlone Stadium, and then finally to the new multi-billion rand Green Point Stadium. Set for completion in late 2009, the new stadium is situated close to the ‘sanitized Disneyesque world of entertainment, leisure, and recreation’ (Murray 2007:234) of the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront – South Africa’s main tourist attraction – about two kilometres from the city centre.

The first major turn of events in Cape Town’s 2010 stadium saga came in September 2005 when the city council and the Western Cape provincial government initiated a proposal to change the World Cup venue from Newlands to Athlone (Provincial Government of the Western Cape and the City of Cape Town 2007 [hereafter CTSP]). This decision sought to address the apartheid legacy of inadequate sporting facilities in black communities and football’s dependency on rugby grounds for marquee matches. Originally slated as the venue for three first-round matches and one quarter-final, Newlands had been praised in 2004 by FIFA’s inspection team as one of three South African stadiums ‘which would easily be suitable’ for the 2010 tournament (FIFA Inspection Report 2004:68). It is located in a predominantly white upper-middle class southern suburb and is the 46,000-seat home of Western Province rugby. But the Western Cape ANC leadership decided to ‘propose Athlone as the Cape Town venue, rather than Newlands as it was perceived that hosting the games at Athlone would bring more developmental benefits to the city’ (CTSP 2007:7).

The move away from Newlands and into Athlone seemed like a commonsense idea: to leverage broader social development from the World Cup. The plan enjoyed the support of Mayor Nomaintdia Mfeketo and Western Cape Premier Ebrahim Rasool, both members of the ANC national executive committee. Prior to South Africa’s selection as 2010 World Cup host, Cape Town authorities had spent R60 million to upgrade Athlone Stadium. Athlone’s seating capacity tripled to 30,000 spectators; a flexible master design allowed for future expansion to 48,000 seats in case it became a World Cup venue. To ensure long-term sustainability, stadium capacity would revert to 30,000 after 2010.
FIFA, however, peremptorily dismissed Athlone as a 2010 venue. In October 2005, a FIFA inspection team conducted a five-day visit of South Africa, Swaziland, and Mozambique (Pretoria News 22 October 2005). In closed meetings, City of Cape Town’s 2010 Project Director Teral Cullen explained the city’s position to FIFA: ‘Having the World Cup at Athlone,’ she pointed out, ‘would be a catalyst for other development, which is why the City of Cape Town wants it there’. In pursuing this approach, local officials believed they were dutifully carrying out social responsibility programmes for the benefit of historically disadvantaged communities, as advocated by both FIFA and the South African authorities.

The negative reaction of world soccer’s governing body brought into stark relief how the World Cup is FIFA’s main source of revenue, and not a tool for social development and broad-based empowerment. ‘During their inspection in October 2005,’ a government official told the Mail&Guardian newspaper, FIFA delegates objected that the low-cost council housing around the Athlone Stadium would not form a suitable backdrop. ‘A billion television viewers don’t want to see shacks and poverty on this scale,’ a FIFA delegate allegedly told the paper (Mail&Guardian Online 12 January 2007). ‘During this visit [on 18 October 2005], the FIFA delegation indicated that they were not willing to consider Athlone as an alternative venue to Newlands,’ stated the joint city/province strategic plan of January 2007; ‘they [FIFA] were surprised that Green Point had only been proposed as a training venue and not as the site for a semi-final,’ the document noted, ‘as it was the prime location to profile South Africa and the African continent through the world’s biggest football event’ (CTSP 2007:7). Apparently, the FIFA delegation suggested to their South African hosts that a renovated stadium on this site – nestled between the majestic backdrop of Table Mountain to the south and Robben Island in Table Bay to the north – would provide a magnificent televisual image of the city to billions of viewers. Later that day, a Cabinet member informed Rasool of FIFA’s wishes (CTSP 2007:8).

The South African LOC, headed by former ANC activist and member of Parliament Danny Jordaan and Pirates and PSL boss Irvin Khoza, promptly endorsed FIFA’s choice of venue. Both organisations agreed that Cape Town was ‘seriously underselling its potential by placing its event infrastructure in Athlone or even Newlands. According to the local authorities:

The LOC indicated to the Provincial and City leadership that should they want the honour and benefit from the considerable advantages of hosting a semi-final, which would attract well over a billion TV spectators as well as thousands of international fans and their families, not to mention all the lead-up events, product launches, possible FIFA congress and high profile other events, they should consider expanding the Green Point Stadium. (CTSP 2007:8)

As a result of this external (FIFA) and internal (LOC) pressure, in February 2006 the joint city/province 2010 committee officially shifted its position and
announced a new plan to build a state-of-the-art 68,000-seat stadium at Green Point, which would host a World Cup semi-final.\(^{14}\) A few weeks later, FIFA and Cape Town organisers signed a legally binding ‘Host City Agreement’ formalising the deal.

Suddenly, local political dynamics disrupted the process. The March 2006 municipal elections saw the ANC lose control of city government (though it maintained its power at the provincial level). The new mayor, Helen Zille of the Democratic Alliance (DA), immediately expressed concerns about the financial affordability of the new Green Point Stadium. After the mayoral committee’s inaugural meeting in late March, Ian Neilson, mayoral committee member for finance, told the press:

> It was clear the new stadium would provide ‘very significant’ benefits for FIFA, and also for the national government through benefits such as increased VAT [value added tax] revenue. But there are virtually no positive cash flows into city coffers. We would very much love to host the (World Cup) semi-final, but if it is to be affordable, then we have to have other (income) sources coming in. (Cape Argus 28 March 2006)

The public space of Green Point Common was transformed into a site of fierce struggle. The clash pitted citizens of Cape Town concerned about the impact of a massive taxpayer-funded sports facility in their neighbourhood against a powerful boosterist coalition comprising the LOC, government, the private sector, most of the mainstream media (electronic, print, and broadcast), as well as trade unions. Area residents formed the Green Point Common Association (GPCA) in late summer 2006 to oppose the construction project. Echoing the activists who had vigorously objected to Cape Town’s bid for the 2004 Olympics (see Hiller 2000; Swart and Bob 2004; Lenskyj 2004), the upper-middle class, overwhelmingly white constituency of the GPCA argued that the city’s scant resources would be best used to address widespread poverty, homelessness, unemployment, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and violent crime. The GPCA held its first public meeting in a local auditorium on the night of 11 April 2006. Teral Cullen and other city officials joined several hundred people in attendance at the clubhouse of the Hamiltons Rugby Club. At the gathering, David Polovin, the group’s chair, threatened litigation; he warned that court proceedings might lead to lengthy, costly delays in the city’s 2010 preparations (Cape Argus 12 April 2006).

Stadium supporters countered the GPCA’s criticism by trumpeting the proposed mega-stadium’s role as a booster of both civic pride and economic growth. The new Green Point Stadium enjoyed the support of national political leaders, including ‘President Thabo Mbeki [who] had confirmed that . . . FIFA had the right to demand the highest standards and said South Africa would abide by those standards,’ in the words of Teral Cullen (Cape Argus 12 April 2006). In the end, Cape Town ‘wanted to play its part in the tournament,’ Cullen said, ‘including hosting a semi-final which required the stadium.’ Taking stock of Mbeki’s weighty commitment to FIFA’s agenda, the DA-led municipal government
came to accept the new World Cup stadium as a fait accompli. As a result, local authorities began to think about ways of using the stadium in ‘destinational branding’ campaigns (Morgan et al. 2002) for Cape Town and South Africa.

Meanwhile, the ‘historically advantaged’ communities of the Green Point area vehemently criticised the decision-making process as unilateral and undemocratic. The GPCA explained its resistance to stadium construction in terms of a desire to prevent adverse environmental effects on one of the city’s last remaining ‘green lungs’. The neighbourhood group went on to propose alternative sites for the new stadium. These proposals included Culemborg, an area of about 300 hectares comprising mostly rail yards adjacent to the central station, as well as the former Wingfield military air base in Goodwood near the Grand West Casino. Furthermore, the GPCA called attention to the authorities’ admission that ‘the challenge of delivery [of the stadium] is enormous, but not impossible’ (CTSP 2007:56). These points were raised in a low-intensity, but interesting public debate in the Cape Town newspapers over the 2010 stadium issue (see Cape Argus 24 April, 1 May, 12 May 2006). Public opinion, always difficult to gauge (let alone document), seemed divided. But after the official announcement in February of government tenders for design and planning of the stadium, and the submission in August of an initial business plan with a budget of R3.3 billion to the national Treasury, many Capetonians appeared resigned to the fact that a pharaonic stadium would be built at Green Point.

While local political leaders negotiated with the GPCA, the Cape Town 2010 organising committee crafted a World Cup business plan. This document placed Green Point Stadium at the centre of its strategy for complying with FIFA requirements: to leave a legacy beyond 2010 and to leverage the city’s image worldwide from the tournament (Cape Town 2010 Business Plan, hereafter CTBP). Cape Town’s World Cup business plan was explicitly linked to consumption- and development-based policies articulated in the municipal Integrated Development Plan (City of Cape Town 2004/05); the provincial Growth and Development Strategy; and the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA), the 2006 macroeconomic plan that replaced the ten-year-old Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy. The different sectors of government are expected to work together under the guiding principle that 2010 policies aim to promote tourism, stimulate economic growth, and increase the global visibility of ‘Brand South Africa’. Within this overarching strategy, the main duty of municipalities is to ensure compliance with the obligations set in the Host City Agreement with FIFA, while the provinces are expected to focus more on development and promotion (CTSP 2007:51).

Some Cape Town residents and officials seemed worried about the risks of building a multi-billion rand stadium with public funds. These were legitimate concerns given that the stadium’s long-term sustainability, according to the local authorities’ projections, is closely tied to Western Province rugby moving from
Newlands to Green Point. In addition, the Cape Town authorities underlined how the most likely scenario was that the stadium would host no more than seven major football matches and just one international rugby match annually. Even after taking into account the possibility of using the stadium for seven music concerts a year, as well as conferences, exhibitions, and rallies, the council still expected an operating loss of approximately R6 million by 2012 (CTBP 2007:25). An outside auditor commissioned by the city concluded that indeed stadium revenues would be ‘considerably lower’ than reported earlier (Cape Argus 24 May 2007). For opponents of the stadium this analysis demonstrated how ‘ratepayers will thus subsidise the stadium operator to the tune of R20 million per annum.’

Leaders of both the ANC and the DA played down the long-term costs and instead stressed how stadium development offered a wonderful opportunity to attract new outside funds for infrastructural improvements. As the summer holidays approached, the organising committee grew impatient with the GPCA’s opposition to the project. Organisers emphasised the importance of intangible (and thus unquantifiable) benefits:

These include possible FIFA funding, benefits from the upgrade and use of the common, showcasing the City, civic pride and integration. The overall conclusion is that the decision to rebuild the Green Point stadium needs to be a strategic and political decision rather than one that is based on the strict cost benefit analysis. The cost to Cape Town, the country and the continent of not building the stadium in Green Point and taking advantage of this prime position at this time is immeasurable [my emphasis]. (CTBP 2007:28)

Of special concern to the government were neighbourhood activists’ lawsuits to halt the rezoning process required for construction to get underway. Sensing further delays, mayoral committee member Ian Neilson warned that: ‘Cape Town has only one option as far as 2010 is concerned. Build a 68,000-seat stadium on Green Point or we won’t get 2010’ (Cape Argus 7 December 2006). A furious GPCA chair responded that ‘it is a deliberate misconception that our actions threaten Cape Town’s prospects to have 2010. We will still enjoy 2010, but with no stadium on Green Point Common.’ Setting aside her sympathies with Green Point’s DA constituency, Mayor Helen Zille said: ‘Whether a threat or not, the provincial and national governments have said that we must host a semi-final or we lose 2010. This is the choice that we face as a council.’

As has been noted elsewhere, these policy decisions can lead to a situation in which ‘wealthier, mostly white areas would receive public funds for the construction and upgrading of stadiums . . . and other infrastructure . . . [while] people living in the poorer black townships – already lacking adequate jobs, housing, schools and many other basic amenities, let alone recreational facilities – are unlikely to see comparable improvements’ (Alegi 2001:15). Zille candidly acknowledged the awkward position the city found itself in: ‘Under normal circumstances we would not be able to justify putting money into one of the wealthiest precincts. But we are doing it to make 2010 a success and we trust that residents will see it in
that light.’ Given the turmoil, the official announcement of the winner of the stadium construction tender was delayed until after the Christmas and New Year’s holidays.

On 5 January 2007, the struggle for Green Point Common was resolved: construction of the new World Cup stadium would go ahead as planned. Western Cape provincial minister for Environmental Affairs, Planning, and Economic Development, Tazneem Essop, approved the council’s application to rezone Green Point from a public open space to a community facility use zone (Essop 2007). Essop also turned down the GPCA’s two-dozen appeals. To the delight (and relief) of planners, Essop decided in favour of erecting the arena on the builders’ preferred site: the Metropolitan Golf Course located on the eastern portion of the Common.

Significantly, the minister extended an olive branch to the GPCA. Essop mandated the creation of a seventy-hectare urban park around the stadium. It was to feature landscaped gardens and tree-lined walkways, playing fields, and regulated spaces for informal trading. ‘My decision,’ Essop wrote, ‘addresses the triple bottom-line of sustainable development which ensures environmental integrity, economic development and social justice.’ Polovin and the GPCA hailed the minister’s decision to protect the Common from commercial development beyond 2010 and to incorporate the neighbouring community in the area’s future planning and development: ‘[this decision is] a significant advance and victory . . . a huge step forward . . . For us the issue of public space is critical,’ the GPCA chair said (Cape Times 8 January 2007). Residents commended Essop for ‘limiting the height and addressing the visual impact of the stadium and its surrounding podium’ and for requiring noise mitigation measures, as well as restrictions on parking and other transportation projects (Essop 2007).

Having extracted important concessions, the majority of GPCA voted in favour of dropping any additional legal challenges to building the stadium. In the pragmatic words of Polovin: ‘The vote doesn’t mean we’ve fallen in love with the project, but we believe that if you can’t beat them, join them’ (Business Day 27 January 2007). The resolution of the struggle for the Green Point Common in Cape Town resonates with international patterns: wealthier neighbourhoods threatened by construction projects for sporting mega-events are far more successful in asserting their citizenship rights to resist or alter development plans than poorer communities (see Burbank et al. 2001:165; and Lenskyj 1996).

Differences between local and national government over Cape Town’s 2010 budget caused additional delays and strained relations between the ANC and the DA. In the original agreement, the national government had planned to contribute approximately eighty per cent of the construction funds, the City of Cape Town about fifteen per cent, and the Western Cape provincial government five per cent. But as the estimated cost of the new stadium increased to more than R3 billion, the Treasury balked. Mayor Zille and the preferred bidder, the
Murray & Roberts/Wilson Bayly Holmes Ovcon (WBHO) consortium, turned to ‘value engineering’ to lower costs by about R1 billion: they reduced the stadium radius by four metres and height by two metres, opted for a smaller roof, and implemented other minor structural changes (Cape Argus 6 February 2007). Zille took care to point out that the savings ‘would not compromise the requirements laid down by FIFA for the stadium nor the environmental authorisation, functionality or sustainability of the stadium’ (Cape Argus 6 February 2007). Three weeks later the city council had not yet approved the R2.68 billion budget so the tender could not be awarded.

The main sticking point was the final tender price, which exceeded the budget by R180 million. Finance Minister Trevor Manuel refused to increase the national government’s share of the stadium budget, declining responsibility for any cost overruns over ten per cent (www.SABCnews.com 6 March 2007). Speaking before Parliament on 21 February 2007, Manuel proudly announced a budget surplus of nearly R11 billion; he also pledged government restraint on spending for the 2010 World Cup: ‘we must go out of our way to ensure a successful tournament and a lasting legacy beyond 2010,’ he said; ‘but fiscal prudence and sound budgeting principles must be adhered to at all times’ (Manuel 2007). Zille and the DA, of course, agreed with the minister’s position on fiscal responsibility: ‘We’ve got to make absolutely sure that people understand that there is a ceiling to the amount of money that this city can put in without seriously compromising our service delivery mandate’ (Business Day 27 February 2007). The Independent Democrats criticised the DA for ‘holding the Treasury and the provincial government “to ransom”. This political ploy is placing Cape Town’s 2010 project in serious jeopardy,’ said their chief whip Lance Greyling (Cape Times 28 February 2007). Despite the heightened politicisation, LOC Chief Executive Danny Jordaan expressed confidence in Cape Town’s leadership: ‘if they could resolve a R1.2bn problem, I can’t see why they can’t resolve a R180-million issue’ (Creamer Media Engineering News 28 February 2007).

The banking group Investec came to the rescue. The company, which targets wealthy clients and finances high-end commercial and industrial development, extended a R180 million loan guarantee to the city to cover the budget gap (Cape Times 9 March 2007; on Investec see Padayachee 2002:154–155). Having secured the necessary financing, on 8 March 2007 the municipality finally approved the R2.85 billion budget for a new 68,000-seater stadium at Green Point, as yet without a name (Cape Times 9 March 2007). Zille seemed very relieved: ‘No stadium would mean no semi-final and much less investment from the national and provincial governments in the city’s infrastructure,’ she concluded. On 13 March, the Murray & Roberts/WBHO consortium officially won the government contract to build Green Point Stadium (Business Day 14 March 2007).
Ultimately, the decision to build a monumental World Cup stadium in Cape Town was profoundly political. FIFA’s economic self-interest marginalised local concerns and dictated organisers’ final decision. But the forceful and voluntary support for Green Point Stadium from the LOC, national and local government, and other South African interest groups influenced the process as well. The sod-turning ceremony in March 2007 was celebrated by FIFA as marking the occasion of what would become ‘the South African finals’ most scenic venue’ (www.fifa.com). Shovel in hand, Western Cape Premier Ebrahim Rasool reminded the small crowd of the tortuous decision-making process that led to that moment: ‘We never thought we’d reach today – one year ago we all stood on different ground. The African National Congress preferred Athlone, the Democratic Alliance wanted Newlands, and Green Point residents preferred anywhere else’ (www.capetown.gov.za 20 March 2007). In contrast to Cape Town’s capitulation to FIFA’s desires, the decision-making process behind the stadium construction initiative in Durban, the economic hub of KwaZulu-Natal province and one of the fastest growing cities in Africa, was far less contentious.

**Durban’s iconic stadium: toward a global ‘Sport City’?**

Several factors explain the smoother path of World Cup preparations in Durban – a fast-growing metropolis of three million people, two-thirds of whom are African (mostly Zulu-speaking), one-fifth Indian and slightly less than one-tenth white. Firstly, the ANC recently expanded its political power in KwaZulu-Natal, a region where the Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) once held sway. Following the 2006 local elections (www.eisa.org.za), and for the first time since 1994, the ANC gained an absolute majority in Durban (57.6 per cent of the vote) and won the largest share of the provincial vote (46.6 per cent). Growing ANC power in KwaZulu-Natal made coordination between local and national government in the 2010 planning and implementation process smoother than in politically divided Cape Town.

The second factor that influenced the process has to do with the disabling effects of de-industrialisation and trade liberalisation on Durban’s manufacturing economy. For a ‘new democratic urban regime [that] now has to find ways to restructure urban growth without undermining the potential for earning and spending revenue’ (Freund and Padayachee 2002:4), 2010 offers an enticing opportunity to revamp its infrastructure, attract outside investment, and generate growth. The third factor is geographical. As in Cape Town, Durban too had originally proposed to use an existing rugby stadium (King’s Park/ABSA) for World Cup matches in 2010. But when local ANC leaders decided to build a monumental new 70,000-seater arena in 2006, it was planned for a site adjacent to the rugby grounds – King’s Park Soccer Stadium (capacity 15,000). The venue switch kept the Durban project within the geographical boundaries of a designated ‘sports precinct’. The absence of a residential neighbourhood around the proposed
mega-stadium allowed the Durban municipality to avoid a rezoning process, which pre-empted the kind of bitter civic opposition and legal conflicts over the decision to build the stadium on Cape Town’s Green Point Common.

The final local factor that distinguishes stadium construction in Durban from Cape Town is related to FIFA’s limited role in the process. In 2004 FIFA had accepted Durban as host of one semi-final match, albeit at King’s Park Rugby Stadium. The home ground of the Sharks and KwaZulu-Natal rugby was to undergo a relatively modest upgrade to expand its capacity from 52,000 to 60,000 seats in order to meet FIFA’s minimum requirements. It seemed sensible to use an existing stadium. At the time Durban boasted two rather modest PSL clubs: Golden Arrows and AmaZulu (in 2007 a third was added: Thanda Royal Zulu). While these clubs have passionate followers in the townships, crowds at their home matches are far smaller than those at rugby matches, which regularly attract crowds of 30,000 to 40,000 (mostly white) spectators. Football fans, as in Cape Town, fill King’s Park only for games featuring Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates, or perhaps a glamorous European club such as Manchester United.

One of the most vocal and powerful advocates for stadium construction was ANC mayor of eThekwini/Durban (since 1996) Obed Mlaba. He combines a long-standing personal interest in football with professional experience in business and marketing – he has a Master’s in Business Administration and worked in the private sector for three decades prior to entering public service. Mlaba leads a pro-business local administration (Lodge 2002:102) that views international mega-events as engines of economic growth and branding tools for a city eager to reposition itself as ‘South Africa’s Playground’. Recognising sport’s potential to bring together an urban coalition of public and private actors seeking to attract investment and enhance the city’s image, Durban’s corporate leaders quickly got behind the stadium project. ‘The logic of capital is one that the ANC is very unwilling to counter,’ as economic historian Bill Freund explains; ‘there is complete acceptance of the need to accommodate and attract business through “competitiveness” as the key dictate in urban policy’ (Freund 2007:191).

KwaZulu-Natal Premier (since 2004) S’bu Ndebele, an ex-political prisoner and ANC national executive member closely tied to ANC President Jacob Zuma, shared the enthusiasm of the local political and business elite for building a grand new facility. According to Ndebele,

> an iconic, world-class, multi-purpose soccer stadium . . . will not only give our country a second world-class soccer stadium, but it will be designed in a way that after 2010 we will have the major stadium at King’s Park precinct and other top class facilities at locations where our professional teams can play. (Ndebele 2006)

Whether Durban clubs really needed such an expensive facility was a different issue. Some commentators observed that ‘What soccer needs are some manageable, intimate 15,000-seater stadiums . . . Spanking new homes for clubs such as Golden Arrows, Moroka Swallows and Silver Stars’ (Sunday Times 1 October
Former chief executive officer (CEO) of the PSL, Trevor Phillips, seemed to endorse this view when asked about the utility of mega-stadiums after 2010: ‘it would have been more sensible to have built smaller stadiums nearer the football-loving heartlands and used the surplus funds to have constructed training facilities in the townships’ (The Observer Monthly 3 June 2007).

The decision to build a new stadium at King’s Park had been made, however, and by early 2006 the eThekwini Municipality (EM) devised a 2010 strategic plan aimed at making Durban internationally known through event-led growth. In February 2006 the municipal Strategic Projects Unit, headed by Julie-May Ellingson – coordinator of the city’s 2010 preparations – announced the launch of the stadium project. The official announcement for the competition to design and manage stadium construction contains language indicative of the government’s long-term vision: ‘The EM has resolved to redevelop the existing Kings Park Stadium (opposite ABSA Stadium) ... into an international standard venue capable of hosting major sporting events including inter alia, the FIFA 2010 World Cup, IRB World Cup, International Athletics’ (eThekwini Municipality Strategic Projects Unit [EMSPU] 2006:3). Crucially, the document also notes that, ‘The stadium should also be capable of expanding to accommodate such events as the Opening and Closing Ceremony of the Commonwealth, Olympic and other games’ (EMSPU 2006:3).

The new arena had to be ‘iconic’, by which the authorities meant a structure that was more than simply a sporting facility. Its architectural design and grandiose size aims to revolutionise Durban’s urban landscape and give it global recognition: ‘the stadium needs to be flexible, cost effective and “ICONIC” such that [it] is regarded ... as having a unique quality and a desirable “sense of place” which will be a hallmark of its reputation in the sports world’ (emphasis in original; EMSPU 2006:6). The new stadium, in other words, is to have the kind of spectacular visual impact associated with globally renowned buildings like the Sydney Opera House or Bilbao’s new Guggenheim Museum. In developing its pitch, the Durban 2010 committee made reference to the Montreal Olympic Stadium – a rather infelicitous choice given that it took Quebecois taxpayers thirty years to pay off a debt of $1.4 billion (Canadian) for a project originally expected to cost $250 million. Be that as it may, the Durban stadium was to have a seating capacity of 70,000 people for an initial estimated cost of about R1.6 billion. It was expected to be financially self-sustaining and to this end, plans for exhibition spaces, and other attractions were included in the design to transform the venue into an everyday tourist destination (see Alegi 2006). ‘The development of the stadium,’ planners argued, ‘is intended to enhance EM’s standing as a “Sports City” and position itself within the Greater Kings Park Sport precinct as the premier sport location and venue in Southern Africa’ (EMSPU 2006:3). The master plan for Durban’s sports precinct includes a 10,000-seat multi-purpose indoor arena, a swimming complex, a high-performance sport centre, and additional world-class facilities capable of
hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2014 and the Olympics in the near future (Sunday Tribune 11 February 2007).

The ANC-led Durban municipality and KwaZulu-Natal provincial government worked together to implement their objectives of hosting a successful event; leveraging long-term benefits from the tournament; and enhancing the international image of both the city and the province. Despite institutional cooperation at the highest level, a formal joint city/province committee was not put in place, as it was in the Western Cape. Instead the task of articulating to the public the World Cup’s potential benefits fell mainly to Julie-May Ellingson and City Manager Michael Sutcliffe, a former academic and ANC member. The local administration stressed the familiar argument put forward by many cities involved in mega-event hosting around the world. 2010 had to be understood as a catalyst that would attract outside funds of at least R6 billion, which would foster the development of Durban’s public infrastructure. At the top of the list of infrastructure projects was the construction of a new R2.5 billion King Shaka Airport at La Mercy (part of the Dube Trade Port project), followed by many improvements in urban transport and telecommunications networks (Daily News 12 September 2006).

Urban transformation in post-apartheid South Africa is not limited to infrastructural development, but often entails the political manipulation of symbols to address past inequities. As James C Scott and others (2002) have suggested, the power to rename people and places is a ‘tool in the development of the modern nation-state’ and its self-aggrandisement. The process of naming the new Durban stadium revealed some fissions within the ruling ANC, as well as between the ruling party, the IFP and other opposition groups such as the DA and the Minority Front. At S’bu Ndebele’s prompting, the iconic arena was initially baptised as ‘King Senzangakhona’ after Shaka Zulu’s father. This attempt to glorify historical figures from pre-colonial times can be read as an instrumental use of Zuluness to promote the province to tourists. It may also have been a convenient way to foster friendly relations between the ANC and IFP. Then suddenly, as the process of renaming nearly 200 streets and public buildings in metropolitan Durban got underway, the ANC proposed to change the name of the arena from Senzangakhona to Moses Mabhida Stadium (Daily News 23 March 2007).

The switch intended to honour a prominent trade unionist and ANC leader from the Natal Midlands who died in 1986 in exile in Maputo. An important reason for this name change was the Mabhida family’s having taken offence at the ANC’s proposal to rename Durban International Airport, slated for demolition in the near future, after their deceased loved one. To compensate for this embarrassing misstep, local trade unionists and communists allied with Zuma’s faction within the tripartite alliance put forward Mabhida’s name for the World Cup stadium. The city council then approved the stadium’s name change from King
Senzangakhona to Moses Mabhida, despite energetic objections from the IFP. IFP leader in Durban, Theresa Nzuza, announced plans for a protest on 1 May: ‘We will be marching against the ANC’s autocracy. It will not be an IFP protest, but for all concerned residents. We are . . . hoping to be joined by hundreds of Zulu people who are not happy with the fact that the new stadium is no longer going to be named after King Senzangakhona’ (Daily News 26 March 2007). Violence erupted in the city centre on the day of the demonstration. Protestors clashed with riot police and caused minor damage (but no injuries). IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi criticised the ANC for choosing only its members in the renaming process. ‘This is short-sighted and in the long run, counterproductive,’ he said. Renaming cannot be conducted ‘in a manner befitting Mao’s Cultural Revolution, in which names and events that do not fit into the ruling party’s liberation narrative are disdainfully ejected’ (Mail&Guardian Online 1 May 2007). IFP protests notwithstanding, the stadium is now officially called Moses Mabhida Stadium.

Aside from public jousting over the name change, disagreements between local government and the national Treasury over stadium funding caused problems and delays. In June 2006 the Ibhola Lethu consortium won the competition to design and manage the stadium. A 100-metre arch over the entire length of the stadium provided the ‘iconic’ quality that promises to change the skyline and help market Durban globally. A preliminary construction budget submitted in August 2006 to the national government amounted to R1.855 billion (eThekwini City Manager’s Newsletter, 21 December 2006). As in Cape Town, rapidly rising cost estimates sparked conflict between city and national government. The spending increases stemmed partly from escalating cement and steel costs. But spiralling costs were also the result of construction companies’ inclination to inflate prices due to time pressures, lack of competition, and a tight labour market for civil engineers and the like. According to news sources, the winning bid came in hugely over-budget, which forced a postponement of the announcement of the winning tender to build the stadium. As in Cape Town, Treasury refused to pay more than the original R1.8 billion, thus leaving the municipality (and province) to figure out how to finance the rest of the construction project (Business Day 27 December 2006; Daily News 15 January 2007).

Following intense discussions at the highest levels of government, the construction tender was officially awarded in January 2007 to a consortium led by Group Five in partnership with WBHO and Pandev. By this time, the stadium’s price tag had ballooned to an astonishing R2.6 billion. Faced with the Treasury’s fiscal intransigence, and unable to cut costs by changing the design of the stadium so late in the process, local authorities dipped into their coffers to make up the financing shortfall. eThekwini Metro used an emergency reserve fund to cover R500 million of the shortfall, thereby avoiding politically unpalatable tax hikes and service cuts. KwaZulu-Natal province agreed to pay the outstanding R300 million (The Mercury 31 January 2007).
Having coped with the funding crisis, Durban authorities were confronted with a legal challenge that forced additional delays. On 1 February 2007, the losing bidder – PG Mavundla Engineering and the Italian company Co-operativa Muratori Cementiti di Ravenna – went to court to challenge the council’s award of the tender to the Group Five consortium (The Mercury 2 February 2007). Acting Judge Gregory Harpur issued an injunction against commencing building operations. It required the municipality to ‘supply Mavundla with all documents spelling out the bid adjudication committee’s reasons and minutes of all relevant meetings by Friday [9 February].’ Court documents revealed that Mavundla’s fixed and escalation prices both came in lower than Group Five. Pouring fuel on the fire, Mavundla CEO Philani Godfrey Mavundla argued that his company should have received a higher Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) score since it was wholly black-owned and held a fifty per cent stake in the joint venture with Cementiti. But managing director of Group Five KwaZulu-Natal, Craig Jessop, pointed out that the rival firm scored low on quality. Playing to organisers’ worst fears, Jessop also took care to point out the potentially disastrous consequences of additional construction delays, including cancelled World Cup matches, lost business opportunities, and international embarrassment to South Africa (The Mercury 7 February 2007).

Tensions deflated on 12 February 2007 after attorneys for Mavundla withdrew their application to renew the injunction against the signing of the stadium contract. The Durban High Court agreed to review the tender and finally dismissed the case in April. In an affidavit, attorneys for the city cited Group Five’s greater capacity and experience as critical factors in its ability to deliver the project according to FIFA specifications in time for the 2010 showcase (Business Day 13 February 2007). Jessop sought to reassure his disgruntled competitors by noting how the construction boom in South Africa made it ‘probable that Mavundla would secure other contracts, providing them with work and enabling them to make a profit’ (The Mercury 7 February 2007).

The evidence from Durban shows that the South African government’s decision to invest in targeted infrastructural development under the AsgiSA strategy has been a boon for Group Five, Murray & Roberts and other corporate giants. With nearly 12,000 employees, Group Five, launched in 1974, operates in Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania, Angola, and Democratic Republic of Congo and other African countries, as well as in the Middle East (for example, Dubai), and Eastern Europe (www.g5.co.za 18 May 2007). According to its CEO Mike Lomas, company profits from construction increased twenty per cent in 2006; roughly half of its 2007 building projects (totalling R6.5 billion) are locally based (Business Day 19 February 2007).

Group Five’s projects in KwaZulu-Natal include Mabhida Stadium and King Shaka Airport, both of which are crucial to the company’s 2010 World Cup windfall. A key reason behind this firm’s ability to win government contracts is
the creation of partnerships with BEE companies led by ANC ‘comrades in business’ (Adam et al. 1997). Mvelaphanda and iLima, for instance, own about one-quarter of Group Five. Billionaire businessman Tokyo Sexwale leads the former, while Bulelani Ngcuka and, until recently, Durban entrepreneur Mzi Khumalo of Metallon Ventures, have a large interest in the latter. Given this mutually beneficial relationship, it is perhaps unsurprising that Group Five perceives BEE as ‘an opportunity, not a cost’; Sexwale’s contacts with African leaders (via his active role in the New Economic Partnership for African Development, or NEPAD), Lomas said, ‘have been coming through very nicely,’ and iLima ‘has been useful in securing public works contracts for hospitals and World Cup soccer stadiums’ (Sunday Times 13 March 2006).

Not everyone was pleased with this outcome. Frustrated black contractors, for instance, staged a demonstration outside the courthouse criticising Group Five’s success in the tender competition. The protestors argued that this award would make it nearly impossible for small, medium, and micro-enterprise (SMME) companies to work as sub-contractors on the massive project (Business Day 13 February 2007). But with the World Cup kick-off fast approaching, the South African government does not seem to want to risk relying on SMMEs for stadium construction and delivery. This shows, among other things, how the 2010 World Cup provides Durban’s urban growth coalition of government and big business with a mechanism to control lucrative public contracts at the expense of smaller companies and ordinary taxpayers. This trend is not unique to either Durban or South Africa. Indeed, with very few exceptions, the recent history of stadium development in North America (Trumbour 2007) indicates that while the public takes on most of the financial risks and assumes long-term responsibility for eventual losses, private concerns quickly privatise profits.

Conclusion

A combination of local, national, and global dynamics led to the decision in Cape Town and Durban to build publicly funded cathedrals of football for the 2010 World Cup. FIFA’s monopolistic control of world football pressured Cape Town into accepting a new Green Point Stadium, but it did so with the vigorous support of the LOC. The national government’s huge financial investment in both Green Point and Moses Mabhida stadiums demonstrates the extent to which the nation-state is relying on new playing facilities to market ‘Brand South Africa’. Stadiums are seen as architectural expressions of a modern, technologically sophisticated, self-confident, proud African nation eager to score an Eiffel Tower-like branding effect on the world stage. At the local level, the construction of iconic new stadiums illustrates how, for good or ill, ‘[i]n order to compete on a global catwalk for investment and tourism, cities are remaking their physical landscapes and creating new experiential milieus’ (Degen 2003:879).
World Cup stadiums have ideological implications as well. These arenas could help to challenge pervasive negative views and stereotypes about Africa as a backward, unchanging, ‘tribal’, and hopeless continent (The Economist 11 May 2000). As Mayor Mlaba of Durban pointed out: ‘The building of our stadium is not simply a local matter, but a continental one. We cannot afford to have those who don’t want Africa to succeed to have anything to gloat about’ (The Mercury 13 February 2007). ‘It’s an opportunity for image makeover for this country,’ said Danny Jordaan. ‘And that’s why we said this is an African World Cup, this is a world-class event. There is no contradiction between being African and being world class’ (Brisbane Times 30 November 2007). Stadium-building projects are unusually important in blending nation-building rhetoric and African Renaissance discourse (see Lodge 2002:227–240) within the culturally legitimating context of football.

The stories of stadium construction in Cape Town and Durban also shed some light on changing ideas and practices of citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa. Surely, it is important that in neither city was there popular consultation about constructing stadiums with public money, especially in a country struggling with widespread poverty, high unemployment, lack of housing, an HIV/AIDS pandemic and other massive social problems. Yet the specifics of the Cape Town case also illustrated how educated, privileged, predominantly white South Africans were able to use their civic power and democratic rights to compel the state to negotiate, and eventually compromise, on some aspects of stadium development. The competitiveness of the DA in the Western Cape vis-à-vis the ANC provided ballast for the DA-dominated constituency in Green Point to oppose stadium building in their neighbourhood. These local specificities need to be taken into account in any evaluation of the broader impact of the 2010 World Cup. This point is reinforced by events observed in the case of the Durban stadium, where citizens were marginalised by a top-down, highly centralised strategic planning and implementation process.

In the end, the inequalities of global capitalism, FIFA’s financial self-interest, and South African policy makers and elites’ ambition to enhance their standing and the prestige of nation-state motivated the decision to spend billions of rand on stadium construction in Cape Town and Durban. The marginal role of most South Africans in this process presages a 2010 World Cup in which many people may be limited to exercising a kind of cultural citizenship. Despite organisers’ efforts to sell some tickets to South Africans for US$20, working-class people will find it exceedingly difficult to watch World Cup matches at the glittering new stadiums. ‘Will I see a game? For $20 a ticket? No way,’ said a security guard at the Green Point construction site. ‘We are building the stadium but we will not be able to come and watch games in it. I will have to watch it on TV or listen on the radio rather than come to the stadium for that money’ (The Guardian 1 December 2007). Encouraged by political and business leaders, as well as broadcast and other media, black South Africans in particular are expected to infuse FIFA’s global
mega-event with so-called ‘African’ cultural flavour via rituals of spectatorship in front of giant television screens erected in tightly policed FIFA-approved ‘Fan Parks’. Whether cultural citizenship without economic empowerment will propel this massively expensive nation-building project forward and assist the global marketing of ‘Brand South Africa’ remains to be seen.

Epilogue

Since this article was written in mid-2007, preparations for the 2010 World Cup in South Africa have proceeded apace. South Africa’s public and private sectors, with assistance from FIFA, are making steady progress on construction, accommodation, transportation, communication and other key areas in the lead up to the inaugural ceremony on 11 June 2010 at Soccer City in Johannesburg. Meanwhile, stadium-building costs have increased from the originally budgeted figure of R8 billion in 2007 to R10 billion in 2008. Among the main causes are higher oil prices, inflation and exchange rates, as well as a series of strikes at several of the construction sites, including Green Point and Moses Mabhida, which were eventually resolved with wage increases and bonuses for workers.

In Cape Town, Green Point Stadium is due to be completed in December 2009 with a projected cost of at least R4 billion, far exceeding the approved budget of about R2.9 billion (Cape Times 10 April 2008). Green Point residents’ legal challenges have been put to rest and the final design of the urban park was approved with a budget of R210 million (Cape Times 2 July 2008). The most egregious cost overruns have occurred in Port Elizabeth (Nelson Mandela Bay), where the new 40,000-seater stadium’s price tag has doubled to R1.5 billion and its completion date pushed back to the end of 2009.24 Durban’s Moses Mabhida Stadium is on track to meet its October 2009 deadline. However, a recent financial report presented to the KwaZulu-Natal authorities warned of a long-term R3 billion deficit for 2010 infrastructure maintenance (Daily News 13 June 2008). ‘I’m very concerned that we [Durban taxpayers] will essentially be lumped with what is the responsibility of national government,’ said DA Councillor John Steenhuisen. City Manager Michael Sutcliffe responded to these anxieties by saying that it was ‘highly unlikely that the national government would burden Durban with the shortfall’ (Daily News 13 June 2008).

In October 2007 a FIFA inspection team conducted a three-day visit to Soccer City, and the stadiums in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, and Durban during which they noted positive ‘signs of huge transformations in the host cities’ (www.fifa.com 10 October 2007). Another positive development was Durban’s hosting of the 2010 World Cup qualifying draw on 25 November 2007 at the Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre. The flashy media event included performances by the Soweto Gospel Choir, the Senegalese star Youssou N’Dour, and singers from the Disney production of The Lion King. President Thabo Mbeki and FIFA President Sepp Blatter told the world media that preparations
were going well (www.usatoday.com 26 November 2007). The South African
government’s official mid-term report (Department of Sport and Recreation
South Africa 2008), essentially came to the same conclusion, although it noted
concerns about energy supply and safety and security issues, the need to work
quickly and improve coordination between government agencies and personnel.

Notes
1. Thanks go to my research assistants Leslie Hadfield and Jill Kelly for their meticulous work in
locating South African and international news sources on 2010 stadium construction. This
article benefited from constructive feedback received at the 2007 Northeast Workshop on
Southern Africa (NEWSA) in Burlington, Vermont, where I presented a preliminary draft,
and by anonymous reviewers from African Studies.
2. For a critical ethnography of FIFA, see Sugden and Tomlinson (1998). A FIFA-funded institu-
tional history provides a different perspective, see Lanfranchi et al. (2004).
yahoo.com/sow/news?slug=reu-fifafinances&prov=reuters&type=lgns (accessed 2 April
2007). FIFA profits from 2006 totalled 303M Swiss francs ($250 million), a huge increase
from $140 million on revenues of $1.65 billion in 2002.
4. Blatter quoted in ‘FIFA profits boosted by World Cup Success’. It is difficult to understand how
FIFA intends to spend $690 million on development when its expenditures on development-
related initiatives in recent years never exceeded twenty-five per cent of total expenses.
For budget data, see FIFA Financial Report 2004:18; online at http://www.fifa.com/
2007). FIFA’s GOAL development project has had important ramifications in Africa, some of
which are discussed in Darby (2002:156–159). Recently, FIFA decided to fund the installation
of ‘FieldTurf’ in many African stadiums: artificial surfaces with a ‘natural’ feel that promise all-
weather playability, low maintenance costs, and unlimited playing time.
5. Historically, international sporting events have also served to legitimise authoritarian regimes.
For a review of the most recent scholarly literature on Nazi Germany’s 1936 Berlin Olympics
see J.M. Pitsula (2004) and Kruger and Baker (2003). Perhaps the most egregious example of a
similar process in post-Second World War football was the Argentinean junta’s hosting of the
1978 World Cup (which Argentina won). An excellent source on sport and politics is Houlihan
(1994).
6. There is a rich academic and popular literature on South African rugby, but the sharpest insights
on the 1995 Rugby World Cup are found in Black and Nauright (1998); Booth (1998); and
7. For comparative perspectives on the local politics of hosting sporting mega-events, see Burbank
et al. (2001); and ‘Global Games’, a special issue of Third World Quarterly (2004). On South
African economic policy, past and present, see Hirsch (2005).
9. On mega-events, see Roche (2000, 2006); on Africa’s role in FIFA politics, see Darby (2002);
for a general introduction to football in Africa, see Armstrong and Giulianotti (2004).
10. The PSL was founded in 1996–97. Since then, Santos claimed the league championship in
2001–02, while Ajax was runner-up in 2003–04. These clubs have had greater success in
Cup competitions: Santos won the 2003 ABSA Cup, 2002 BP Top 8, and 2001 BobSave
Super Bowl, while Ajax triumphed in the 2007 ABSA Cup and the 2000 Rothmans Cup.
It should be noted that Ajax CT was created out of a merger of two Cape Town-based
teams: Seven Stars and Cape Town Spurs. The new club is jointly owned and operated by Ajax Amsterdam FC and a South African group led by businessman John Comitis.


12. Deputy director-general in the Western Cape Premier’s Office, Laurine Platsky, vehemently denied the veracity of this account (personal communication, 25 April 2007). Platsky did not dispute, however, the newspaper’s assertion that FIFA had indeed rejected Athlone.


15. It is interesting to note that Cape Town’s bid for the 2004 Olympics had proposed Culemborg as the venue for the Media Village and Wingfield as the Olympic Village site (Hiller 2000:447).

16. Cost estimates for the stadium have fluctuated wildly since early 2006. The first estimate was around R1.4 billion not inclusive of stadium-related infrastructure development (roads, transport, electrical upgrading, etc.), see Igsaan Salie, ‘World Cup stadium costs could hit R3bn,’ Cape Argus 2 April 2006:1. The figure of R3.3 billion was quoted in CTSP 2007:11.

17. The money would be applied to Investec’s payment for the contract to manage and operate the stadium after 2010. The city council stressed that this agreement would not affect that tender process.

18. Founded in 1903, Murray & Roberts is South Africa’s largest construction firm (www.murrob.com). It has a forty-five per cent stake in the Bombela joint venture that is responsible for all civil works along the R23 billion Gautrain’s eighty-kilometre route connecting Johannesburg, Oliver Tambo International Airport, and Pretoria. The minority partner in the Cape Town stadium joint venture is Wilson Bayly Holmes Ovcon (established in 1970; www.wbho.co.za). For details on Gautrain, see J. Van der Westhuizen (2007). In Cape Town, WBHO recently built the International Convention Centre, as well as the new headquarters of Investec – the company that provided the R180 million loan guarantee for the Green Point Stadium. WBHO is also the leading partner in the joint venture (which includes a subsidiary of Murray & Roberts) awarded the R716.8 million government contract to build the 45,000-seater Mokaba Stadium in Polokwane.

19. For a preliminary case study of the effects of the 2010 World Cup stadium strategy on football in poor communities, see Alegi (2007).

20. According to the 22 December 2006 issue of Business Day, the winning tender was thirty per cent higher than the R1.8 billion budget.

21. Mavundla’s prices were 2.08 billion and 1.9 billion, while Group Five’s were 2.19 billion and 2.12 billion; quoted in The Mercury 2 February 2007:1.

22. Bulelani Ngcuka’s Amabubesi Investments owns fifty-one per cent of construction company Basil Read, which in turn owns thirty per cent of iLima Projects and the iLima Group. Khumalo sold his twenty-five per cent shares in Basil Read to Ngcuka for R70 million; see

23. For critical insights on publicly funded sport stadiums in the United States, see Noll and Zimbalist (1997); Coates and Humphreys (1999); and Siegfried and Zimbalist (2000).

24. As a result of construction delays, FIFA dropped Port Elizabeth from the list of host cities of the 2009 Confederations Cup, a tournament with eight national teams that is held the year before the World Cup.

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Provincial Government of the Western Cape and the City of Cape Town (CTSP). 2007. ‘2010 Football World Cup Strategic Plan for Provincial Government of the Western Cape and the City of Cape Town’.


