

2010 The HSRC's Research Project

The contribution of the 2010 FIFA World Cup for South Africa in terms of economic development, including tourism, job creation and poverty mitigation, has been overstated, UDESH PILLAY concludes in considering the findings of a five-year research project on the 2010 legacy.



Major international sporting events have an extraordinary capacity to generate powerfully emotional, shared experiences. Sport has historically been employed as a means to enhance nation building, and constitutes striking moments of intense identity formation, projection and patriotism, often transcending entrenched social cleavages and providing politicians and other elites with opportunities to build and project common political identities.

These large events are positively associated with processes of political liberalisation, democratisation

and human rights – with enhancing the prospects for, and quality of, democratic life. People feel empowered by the successful staging of sporting mega-events and by succeeding in the eyes of the world.

GAINS IN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

However, it is the economic and social development benefits that draw most attention. The anticipated economic legacy of a sporting mega-event includes short- and medium-term job creation, international investment and dramatic increases in tourism, ideally

sustained over time. These events are thus seen as having direct revenue potential and able to unlock vast public and private investments for physical and social infrastructure as governments invest heavily in urban renewal, which causes a surge in local construction activity.

Urban rejuvenation and infrastructure upgrades, including property revitalisation and the targeting of new areas for urban development are seen as key social-development goals, as are opportunities for sport development in terms of the legacy of world-class facilities for training and competition.



almost certainly been overstated. For example, while there have been low- and intermediate-skilled job creation opportunities in the construction and built environment sectors in the run-up to 2010, these have been mostly short-term and/or temporary employment opportunities involving finite numbers. The wider urban development benefits are also likely to be rather circumscribed, with little evidence of infrastructural, service and facilities provision beyond the lifespan of the event.

The event's contribution to GDP is also being questioned in recent modelling exercises. Furthermore, in a country like South Africa where disparities among the rich and poor are among the highest in the world, inequality may even be exacerbated as a result of what many consider to be a failure to prioritise expenditure in a developing economy.

On the other hand, if one takes into account the distinction between capital investment in the stadiums and associated infrastructure, and capital investment that was already planned but fast-tracked for the 2010 World Cup, then the host cities and the economy generally may benefit considerably from investment in transport and information and communication technology.

With respect to the former, the 2010 World Cup will no doubt contribute to the design and implementation of an integrated public transport system in our major urban conurbations. An efficient public transport system is a critical national and public good – a development that has suffered historically through the imperatives of separate planning and development, and the spatial anomalies and distortions under apartheid. Getting our public transport infrastructure up to speed therefore augurs well, not only for the event itself, but for all South Africans. This could well turn out to be the event's biggest material legacy.

Similarly, the 2010 World Cup does provide an opportunity to aid identity formation and instil a sense of patriotism. While identities are multiple and identity formation itself can be a polarising and marginalising experience, sport does promote political nation building. In a country like South Africa, where 'social capital' is strong and the citizenry is empowered and well informed, this is a possibility.

RETHINKING AFRICAN CULTURE, GENDER AND IDENTITY

It is important to keep sight of the notion that the 2010 World Cup also presents an opportunity to rethink how African culture, gender and identity are experienced and represented. For Africa, the measure of success will lie not only in being seen to manage the 2010 World Cup to world-class standards, but also

in the ability to assert and embrace a contemporary African culture and identity both at home and on a global stage. A reinvigorated continental image may well be an important spin-off, although an intangible and indeterminate one.

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THE CONTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH TO 2010

Given that the 2010 project represents a scholarly endeavour, it begs the question how relevant research is to the 2010 World Cup. Our research shows that despite the technical planning imperatives associated with delivering the World Cup, it is critical that research informing aspects of the event – as this project has tried to achieve – needs to be taken seriously. The value of informed scholarly analysis and rigorous impact-assessment research cannot be overestimated in its articulation of the legacy the event is likely – or needs – to leave behind.

Finally, the 2010 World Cup has allowed us to speak to each other as a nation, especially at a time of some political uncertainty and social stress. Rooted in the reality that in June 2010 the event will definitely kick off, and that no manner of public opinion and scholarly analysis will impair preparation, South Africans have been eager – using the event as a lens – to exchange opinions, trade solutions and articulate positions on issues of national interest. If our policy-makers have been listening carefully, it should provide telling insights on some of our major developmental challenges as a new democracy and emerging economy.

It is not always the case that dreams are realised through development, but if the articulation between the two in a developing economy context is well formulated and then scrupulously applied, the prospects of a better life for all are that much more easily realisable, and social justice so much more attainable. The 2010 FIFA World Cup will, unfortunately, fall short of these objectives.

**The book, *Development and Dreams*, is available on the HSRC Press website.
www.hsrcpress.ac.za.**

In a context where the demands of globalisation bear heavily on nation states, sporting mega-events have become highly sought-after commodities as developed countries, and increasingly some leading developing countries, move towards event-driven economies as symbolic representations of prestige and power.

FINDINGS OF THE HSRC 2010 RESEARCH PROJECT

The HSRC 2010 Research Project, currently in its fifth year but now drawing to a close with the publication of the book *Development and Dreams*, has interrogated some of the key assumptions mentioned above in relation to the 2010 FIFA World Cup. In the process, the project unravelled the complex interplay of relationships between these objectives as they relate to the potential to foster urban and economic development in particular. It has asked some difficult questions along the way.

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The overall conclusion, based on sound, rigorous impact assessment research, is that the contribution of the event to economic development, including tourism, job creation and poverty mitigation, has

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