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The Legacy of the FIFA 2010 World Cup

Edited by Tendai Chari and
Nhamo A. Mhiripiri



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African Football, Identity Politics and Global Media Narratives

The Legacy of the FIFA 2010 World Cup

Edited by

Tendai Chari

University of Venda, South Africa

Nhamo A. Mhiripiri

Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

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Introduction, selection and editorial matter © Tendai Chari

and Nhamo A. Mhiripiri 2014

Individual chapters © Respective authors 2014

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2014 978-1-137-39222-0

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First published 2014 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

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Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

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ISBN 978-1-349-48323-5 ISBN 978-1-137-39223-7 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9781137392237

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to sincerely thank our anonymous reviewers, without whose dedication and sacrifice this book would not have seen the light of day. We would also like to sincerely thank the reviewers of our book proposal for their insightful comments, and Andrew James at Palgrave Macmillan for his support and expert guidance throughout the compilation of this edited volume.

Contributors

Tendai Chari is Lecturer in the Media Studies Department at the University of Venda, South Africa. Previously, he lectured at the University of Zimbabwe, where he headed the Media Programme. He has also lectured at the Zimbabwe Open University, the National University of Science and Technology, and Fort Hare University (South Africa). His research interests include political communication, sports and communication, new media, media ethics, and media and development. His other publications have appeared in *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies*, *African Identities*, *Muziki*, and *Journal of African Media Studies*.

Rosemary Chikafa is Lecturer in the English and Media Studies Department at the University of Zimbabwe, where she teaches literature and the media, African American and Caribbean literature, and film and literature, among other courses. She is currently studying towards a DPhil in gender and film with the University of Zimbabwe. Her research interests include gender studies, feminist theory, film and media studies, and African and African diaspora film and literature.

Emma Durden is a research associate and postgraduate student supervisor at the Centre for Communication and Media in Society (CCMS) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. She is also a partner in the PST Project, an industrial theatre performance company, and also manages Twist Theatre Development Projects, a Non-Profit Organization (NPO) that works with community theatre groups in KZN. She is a specialist in the field of theatre for development, with a focus on using theatre and other participatory techniques for public health programmes and other social issues. She is a consultant to a number of organizations, including NGOs, municipalities, universities and businesses, through the company Act Two Training.

Christoph G. Grimmer is Lecturer in the Institute of Sports Science, University of Tübingen, Germany. He studied sports science with a specialization in media and journalism at the University of Hamburg. He was previously a research associate at Macromedia University for Media and Communication. He has also worked for Deutsche-Press-Agentur (dpa), a German news agency, as a freelancer and has gained extensive media experience.

Thomas Horky is Professor of Sports Journalism at the MHMK (Macromedia University for Media and Communication) in Hamburg, Germany. After studying sports sciences, journalism and linguistics, he worked for the

German press agency dpa and as a freelance journalist. He was previously a research assistant at the Department of Sports Sciences at the University of Hamburg and the Hamburg Institute of Sports Journalism, as well as a lecturer at the Institute for Sports Journalism at the German Sports University in Cologne. His main research projects are media sport and staging, quality of sports journalism, and sports journalism and entertainment.

Nathalie Hyde-Clarke is Head of the Department of Culture and Communication, Arcada University of Applied Sciences, Helsinki, Finland, and Senior Research Associate of the Department of Communication Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg, South Africa. She has pursued a diverse research agenda over the past decade that includes aspects of political communication, peace journalism and new media/mobile studies. Her research celebrates the uniqueness of the South African context, and aims to inform a broad international audience of the advances and debates in this regard.

Bernadine Jones is a PhD candidate at the University of Cape Town, and tutors undergraduate students on media theory and practice. Her research interests include South African representation on broadcast news, social semiotic theory and analysis, news values and multimodal semiotic practice. She has a particular interest in issues of power and discourse within news. Her research entails a longitudinal analysis of the 20 years of South African democracy, looking at the first five elections as represented on television news. When not researching and analysing, she can be found behind the camera lens or re-watching *Lost*.

Luke Jones is Lecturer in Coach Education at the University of Hull in England. A former semi-professional footballer in the UK, his research concentrates upon adopting the socio-cultural theory of Michel Foucault to re-examine dominant practices and knowledge surrounding the sport of professional football (soccer). Specifically, he has engaged in research in the areas of fan interaction, coach education and sports retirement. A former assistant coach with the women's varsity football (soccer) programme at the University of Alberta Luke is a self-confessed 'football tourist', having attended the two previous World Cups in Germany and South Africa.

Jeffrey W. Kassing is Professor of Communication at Arizona State University. His work, which has appeared in *The Routledge Handbook of Sport Communication*, *The Routledge Handbook of Sport and New Media*, *The International Journal of Sport Communication*, *Communication & Sport*, *American Behavioral Scientist* and the *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, explores communication between coaches and athletes, parents and youth athletes, and fans and athletes. His recent studies have examined fans' and athletes' uses of

social media. He has served on the editorial board of the *International Journal of Sport Communication* and *Communication & Sport*.

Joyce. T. Mhiripiri is an independent researcher. She is a graduate of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply and holds an MBA from Midlands State University. She has lectured in purchasing and supply and business management at Chinhoyi University of Technology and the Midlands State University.

Nhamo A. Mhiripiri is Visiting Lecturer at St Augustine University and Senior Lecturer at Midlands State University. He has also lectured at the Zimbabwe Open University and the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He studied at the University of Zimbabwe and the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Toby Miller is Distinguished Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at the University of California, Riverside.

Teke Ngomba is Assistant Professor of Media Studies at the Department of Aesthetics and Communication at Aarhus University, Denmark. His research in the fields of political communication, communication and social change, and journalism and media studies has been published in several peer-reviewed journals.

Wycliffe W.S. Njororai graduated with a PhD from Kenyatta University in 2001, with his dissertation research focusing on association football. He served as Athletics Director (2001–2004) and Chair of the Department of Exercise, Recreation and Sport Science (2004–2007) at Kenyatta University. He was Lead Professor of Kinesiology at Wiley College from 2007 to 2012, and in autumn 2012 moved to University of Texas at Tyler, where he currently serves as Associate Professor and also served as Interim Chair of the Department of Health and Kinesiology in the spring semester of 2013 in the USA.

Toussaint Nothias is a PhD student at the School of Communication and Media Studies, University of Leeds. He holds a degree in philosophy (Paris-X Nanterre) and an MA in cultural and creative industries (King's College London). His research intersects journalism, post-colonial and cultural studies. His thesis is on Afro-pessimism in the French and British elite press through a critical discourse analysis of newspaper articles, news agencies' wires and interviews with journalists. He has presented his work in the UK, Belgium, South Africa, Portugal and France, and was a visiting doctoral student at Centre for Film and Media Studies, University of Cape Town.

Kiran Odhav is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at North West University, South Africa. His research focuses on sports at universities in terms of notions of elite sport and sports fans' perceptions. He has done research on higher education, HIV/AIDS and schooling in the North West Province. He has also been involved in poverty and water shortage projects with postgraduate students in the Mahikeng district, as well as with trade union issues and popular culture.

Chuka Onwumechili is Professor and Chair of Strategic, Legal and Management Communication (SLMC) at Howard University in Washington, DC. He previously served as Vice President of the Digital Bridge Institute (DBI) of Nigeria and as Interim Dean for the School of Communications at Howard University in Washington, DC. He has authored, co-authored or edited ten books and published several book chapters and peer-reviewed journal articles. His recent peer-reviewed articles have appeared in the *International Journal of Sports Communication* and the *International Journal of the History of Sport*. He currently maintains a sports blog titled *Football Nigeria: Eagles Etcetera* and a large database of Nigerian football statistics.

Rune Ottosen is Professor of Journalism at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences. He has also held positions as professor at Sámi University College and at the University of Nordland. He has written extensively on sport, press history and media coverage of war and conflicts. He is co-editor with Stig Arne Nohrstedt of several books and articles, the latest being 'Wikileaks and War Laws' in Freedmann, Des and Thussu, Daya (Eds.), *Media and Terrorism: Global Perspectives*. In 2010 he was one of the editors and co-author of the four-volume *Norsk Presses historie (1767–2010)*.

Abbreviations

AFN	Athletic Federation of Nigeria
ANC	African National Congress
CODESA	Congress for a Democratic South Africa
EPL	English Premier League
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
IAA	International Association of Athletics Federation
IOC	International Olympic Committee
LOC	Local Organizing Committee
NFF	Nigerian Football Federation
NIHL	Noise-Induced Hearing Loss
PVAs	Public Viewing Areas
SATOUR	South African Tourism
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
WTO	World Trade Organization

Introduction: Towards an Epistemology of African Football – The Symbolic Significance of the 2010 FIFA World Cup

Nhamo Mhiripiri and Tendai Chari

Mega-football events are highly mediated, with a vast potential to attract the attention of millions of people across the globe. Live matches are broadcast on television and big screens in public viewing areas, and radio, newspapers and the internet do their fair share of mediation of the actual sport and the politics and fanfare surrounding the sport. This edited volume uses the FIFA 2010 World Cup in South Africa as a lens through which the multiple narratives about Africa, both those rooted in stereotypical assumptions and those with counter-hegemonic tendencies, are critically examined. In particular, it focuses on how media constructions of the 2010 FIFA World Cup contributed to and were informed by these narratives. The book examines football as a mediated discourse imbued with potent symbolic meanings that permeate ordinary life. The backdrop for such theorization is the FIFA 2010 World Cup, the first World Cup on African soil. Various chapters in the book reveal how the FIFA 2010 World Cup became a site upon which identities are imagined, constructed, reconstructed and deconstructed, thus demonstrating how football events can become positive forces for transforming societies.

Contributions in this volume draw from a range of interdisciplinary scholars based in the African continent, the African Diaspora, Europe and the USA. More broadly, the volume explores the way in which football in Africa is intimately bound up with deeper social, cultural and political currents. Chapters examine the 2010 FIFA World Cup as a potent social signifier from different theoretical and methodological approaches. The idea of the book sprang from the realization that sport, and African football in particular, existed on the margins of the academic enterprise and was narrowly being studied as a mere form of leisure, while its social elements remained on the back burner.

We are convinced that the contributions in this book will expand knowledge on the cultural and symbolic value of football in the African continent

beyond the realm of leisure. Our intention was to broaden and complement the growing body of scholarship on African football, particularly its interface with the communication media, and we felt that there was no better way to do so than by using the 2010 FIFA World Cup as the backdrop of this academic enquiry. Unlike earlier publications that focus on various aspects of African football (Darby, 2002; Armstrong & Giulianotti, 2004; Hawkey, 2009; Alegi, 2010; Alegi & Bolsmann, 2010; Korr & Close, 2010), our edited volume has been conceived around the backdrop of a mega-football event, with a particular focus on the symbolic significance of football in society.

The edited volume illuminates the multiple narratives around the 2010 FIFA World Cup and the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic logic of the event. The book straddles a range of disciplines such as cultural studies, media studies, the sociology of sport and the social sciences of sport. It will be the first to consider African football as a mediated discourse around which multiple narratives cohere. These narratives not only broaden understanding of the social significance of football and its enmeshment with African politics and culture, but also the socio-political character of Africa. It seeks to augment and complement scholarship on African sport, media and cultural studies, adding more voices, theoretical approaches and empirical enquiry. Our inspiration derives from the realization that the disciplines mentioned above have been slow to recognize African football as a legitimate field of academic enquiry. An epistemology of sport in Africa, especially one with more and more African scholars called to the party and sharing their views, has come a long way since the publication of Baker and Mangan's groundbreaking collection, *Sport in Africa: Essays in Social History*, in 1987. The 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa gave new impetus to examining the multiple utility of football in Africa from an academic perspective, and this book is evidence of this impetus. Raymond Boyle (2012: 89) opines that 'sports matters most because of what it tells us about aspects of society rather than specifically about the nature of sporting competition . . . It reveals aspects of individual and collective identity and its rich diversity of forms . . .'

Scholarly publications in the form of books and journals and postgraduate theses on the socio-economic, cultural and political significance of sport throughout the continent have been written. In addition, critical studies assessing the interface between sport and society in Africa, straddling the precolonial, colonial and post-colonial periods and applying a range of disciplinary perspectives, including political science, history, anthropology, human geography and sociology, have been produced. We also acknowledge the coterie of works on the study of sport in Africa, which include esteemed journals and dissertations (some of which have been inspired by the FIFA 2010 World Cup).

While previous scholarship on African football has been championed by scholars from the Northern hemisphere, the hosting of the FIFA 2010 World

Cup in South Africa has witnessed new interest on the subject by scholars from the African continent. Our volume attempts to combine voices from the North and from the South.

We are encouraged by the fact that the study of sport in Africa is gaining recognition as an important field of social-scientific and historical enquiry, not only because of a fast-evolving fandom on the continent but because of the critical position of sport as popular spectacle, albeit a part of the culture industries entangled in production, distribution and consumption of sport commodities. It is befitting that sport is finding its deserved space in critical African scholarship. The academic legitimization of African sport scholarship has seen the inclusion of panels on sport and leisure being organized at conferences such as the African Studies Association. In 2010 a number of journals such as *Ecquid Novi: Journalism Studies*, *African Identities* and *Third World Quarterly*, *Soccer & Society*, to name but a few, had special editions on the FIFA 2010 World Cup, and for the first time featured a significant number of articles by African-based scholars. Other serious journals such as *Africa Today*, *Journal of African History*, *Critical Arts: South-North Cultural and Media Studies*, *Journal of African Media Studies* and *International Journal of African Historical Studies* have, in recent years, published papers dealing specifically with African sport. Notwithstanding these efforts, scholarship on African football remains peripheral compared with football epistemology in other regions, notably Europe, Asia and the Americas.

Our book is being published soon after Peter Alegi and Chris Bolsmann's ground-breaking *Africa's World Cup: Critical Reflections on Play, Patriotism, Spectatorship, and Space* (2013). Although critical differences are anticipated to arise from the set of scholars and writers in the two edited volumes, our wish is that these books will complement each other and inspire a more humane, insightful and critical appreciation of and engagement with African sport and the African condition as a whole. Gone are the days when the study of African sport/football was a peripheral subject in academic scholarship, and the publication of *African Football, Identity Politics and Global Media Narratives* is a further reminder of this fact. At no time will there be adequate literature on any specific issue. Literature on African football, particularly its cultural dimensions, can never be enough in comparison to the popularity of the game on the continent and the pervasiveness of football imagery in all facets of social life in Africa. Historian Peter Alegi (2010) notes how football has become a rare form of 'national culture' in post-independent Africa, having gained its mantle as a tool for expressing dissent against the colonial system. Alegi and Bolsmann (2010) note that football is the most popular sport on the African continent, and many African countries have thriving domestic leagues.

The collection coheres around media narratives, identity politics and the 2010 World Cup, so it has a tight thematic focus. The methodological

approaches adopted in various chapters in the proposed collection are innovative and have, no doubt, elicited highly original empirical data gleaned from a variety of sources, such as blogs, travelogues, surveys and media content analysis. Many of the chapters also adopt original theoretical perspectives in their analyses of football during the 2010 FIFA World Cup tournament. Contributions in this volume utilize different theoretical and methodological approaches to examine representations of football events in the media, popular culture and everyday communication in the context of the FIFA 2010 World Cup. The initial call for chapters was ambitious and expansive, inviting abstracts in sub-thematic groups linked to the 2010 FIFA World Cup. These included mediation of African football events in Africa; representations of the FIFA 2010 World Cup in the Western media; the FIFA 2010 World Cup in the African media; the interface between football and popular culture in Africa; football, music and dance; football and commercial advertising; football, patriotism and myth-making in the African context; football, politics and society in Africa; football, nationalism and identity; football as a leisure activity; commercial imperatives of football; football and gender in Africa; corporatization of football; football, religion and religiosity; football as a developmental tool; football, fandom and fanaticism; and representations of national soccer teams.

The ambition was not fully realized due to, among other factors, spatial considerations; sheer author burn-out, resulting in some contributors falling by the wayside along the long road of writing and rewriting; and editorial interventions, not least the rigorous peer-review work that saw the rejection of full papers whose abstracts were initially appealing and promising.

This volume is, therefore, an attempt to bring African football to the centre of sport media and cultural studies scholarship through engaging with the cultural and symbolic aspects of football and football events in Africa using a multidisciplinary lens. It examines the multiple narratives on the first football extravaganza on African soil: the FIFA 2010 World Cup, which was held in South Africa.

Unlike other single-authored books which focus on a single aspect of African football, this volume brings together papers on diverse aspects and experiences of African football written from a multidisciplinary perspective. Authors hail from different academic backgrounds and deploy equally diverse methodological and theoretical approaches to interrogate the way in which the FIFA 2010 World Cup was experienced in different parts of the world. Existing books on sport and Africa, which are either single-authored or single-country case studies, have a bias towards a historical perspective on the development of football in Africa. For instance, Peter Alegi's *African Soccerescapes: How a Continent Changed the World's Game* (2010) chronicles the trajectory of football in Africa from the 1860s to the time when South Africa won the bid to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup, with South Africa being the main focus of the book. Because the book covers a long period and primarily

focuses on one African country, it is difficult to delve more deeply into the social signification of football in an African context. Alegi and Bolsmann's book *South Africa and the Game: Football, Apartheid and Beyond* (2010) has a bias towards one country, as it examines how South Africa transformed from international isolation in the world of sport to win the bid to host the FIFA 2010 World Cup in 2004, and how the hosting of the mega-event enhanced the country's image. Another book by Ian Hawkey (2009), *The Feet of the Chameleon: The Story of African Football*, gives a historical account of the development of football in Africa, covering a number of countries with diverse cultures and histories. What is missing in many books on African football are diverse perspectives engaging with the multiple meanings of football in African society and how those meanings are mobilized in different spheres of life. Alegi and Bolsmann's *Africa's World Cup* is an exception, and our *African Football, Identity Politics and Global Media Narratives* is a worthy companion, presenting apt contrasts and verisimilitude.

Chapters in the book examine the instrumental logic of football in the sphere of nation-building, national identity and national development. Equally important, but omitted in most existing studies on African football, are football and its interface with communication, and the question of fandom and African fan cultures. These issues are also addressed in this volume, and of particular interest are chapters on gender and fandom by Rosemary Chikafa and Emma Durden, written against the backdrop of dominant patriarchal assumptions that soccer is a male sport.

The collection of essays in our edited volume straddles diverse disciplines, and authors hail from equally diverse geographical regions, but their contributions are unified and converge around common thematic, theoretical and methodological approaches. The list of authors speaks of a combination of emerging, mid-career and established academics and some early career researchers. The contributors are well positioned to engage with the subjects of sports, media and cultural studies, as they are well published in the area of communication, media and society. A few, such as Horkey and Grimmer, have established backgrounds in the social-scientific study of sport per se, but those without such a background compensate for the lack with their informed understanding of media and cultural studies and the capacity of these fields to accommodate interdisciplinarity. What was refreshing in all the chapters was a preparedness to engage with other existing literature on African football and sport.

That the hosting of any future mega-sports events particularly in contexts where socio-economic disparities exist and huge expenditure of national resources on sports mega-events is difficult to justify, makes this volume both timely and relevant. The struggle over the meaning of mediate sports events was evident during demonstrations that plagued Brazil before and during the 2013 Confederations Cup and the preparatory stages for the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. These developments echo events in South Africa in the run-up