



Beyond the rhetoric: Chinotimba residents' perceptions of the legacy of the 2010 FIFA World Cup

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Abstract

This study sought to unravel the perceptions of Chinotimba residents surrounding the tangible and intangible legacy of the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup. This mega-event, although hosted by South Africa, was framed as a continental event that would unleash considerable spin-offs, particularly for the neighbouring countries in the Southern African Development Community region. In line with this dominant representation of the event, hereinafter, rhetoric, the Zimbabwean government announced a raft of measures that were aimed at leveraging maximum benefits from the mega-event for the nation at large. Using interpretive methods, this study engaged thirty willing residents of Chinotimba high density suburb in semi-structured interviews to better understand the legacy of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. In addition, the perceptions of Chinotimba residents were compared with the rhetoric that was produced by the country's ruling elite and representatives of private tourism businesses. Field evidence suggested that Chinotimba residents could not identify any major tangible or intangible benefits of the World Cup. The majority could only speculate that tourism operators were the major beneficiaries. In stating this, the residents expressed misgivings with regard to the disjuncture between the rhetoric and their livelihoods, which largely remained untouched by the mega-event. A key conclusion of this study is that mega-events are not apolitical processes; rather mega-events are capable of producing both empowerment and disempowerment among local non-host communities. Besides calling for 'coal-face' perspectives of mega-events, this paper urges for research that acknowledges the politicised nature of mega-events.

Key words: mega-event, FIFA World Cup, legacy, rhetoric, tourism

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Introduction

The FIFA World Cup often referred to simply as the World Cup, is an international football competition that is held every four years. The World Cup finals features the best national football teams in the world in a month-long competition that attracts millions of spectators from across the globe. Indeed, this premier international football tournament is the world's most widely viewed sporting event (Vincent *et al.*, 2010). To illustrate, "nearly half the world's population watches the World Cup finals on television every four years" (Vincent *et al.*, 2010: 200). The World Cup is also an expensive undertaking requiring billions of dollars on the part of the host community; for hosting the 2014 World Cup, Brazil's estimated costs are US\$12billion (Horne, 2012). This brief description of some of the key features of the World Cup neatly fits Roche's (2000: 1) following definition of mega-events: "large-scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events, which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance" that is adopted in this study because of its preciseness.

It has been observed that in the past three decades sport mega-events have attracted a small but growing literature (Cornelissen, 2004; Ritchie *et al.*, 2009). Most of this literature has focused on the impacts of mega-events, particularly "the economic impacts at the expense of the social and environmental dimensions" (Ritchie *et al.*, 2009: 143). The burgeoning literature has also been dominated by accounts that focus solely on the impacts of mega-events on host destinations/cities. This line of enquiry has often neglected non-host destinations, yet most mega-events envision delivering benefits beyond host destinations as well. Indeed, non-host destinations' approval and support of a mega-event is often crucial in the bidding process. For instance, as cogently argued by Cornelissen (2004), the powerful bids presented by Morocco and South Africa for the 2010 FIFA World Cup were premised partly on delivering benefits beyond the countries' borders. In this respect, the then South African President, Thabo Mbeki claimed that if South Africa won the right to host the World Cup, the event would not be a South African event but a continental event or an 'African World Cup' (Pillay & Bass, 2008) presenting a chance for Africa to join the international community on an equal footing or as a dignified member:

...the successful hosting of the FIFA World Cup in Africa will provide a powerful, irresistible momentum to [the] African renaissance... We want to ensure that one day, historians will reflect upon the 2010 World Cup as a moment when Africa stood tall and resolutely turned the tide on centuries of poverty and conflict. We want to show that Africa's time has come (Black, 2007: 268).

In addition, the rhetoric swirling around the June 2010 FIFA World Cup suggested that neighbouring countries would form the bases and practice locations for foreign teams thereby delivering benefits beyond South Africa (City Press, 2007).

The term rhetoric is used in this paper to represent the dominant representations of the 2010 World Cup by government representatives. Rhetoric is an art of communication that is intended to persuade listeners to a particular viewpoint. Across the globe, governments use rhetoric for a wide variety of reasons. For instance, rhetoric is used by politicians to win the 'hearts and minds' of the electorate over one issue or the other. In doing so, politicians use a range of rhetorical devices such as violent rhetoric, hyperbole, anaphora and metaphors. To illustrate, from 1980 to around 2009, Robert Mugabe's speeches (i.e. the President of Zimbabwe) were replete with violent and inflammatory language, descriptions encouraging supporters to seize land from whites and to 'deal decisively' with the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party. Another illustrative example is when after the 9/11 terror attacks, the then America President, George Bush, used such metaphors as 'evil/evil-doers and good' as well as 'us and them', to cite a few, with reference to Muslims or the

alleged terrorists. It is also worth noting that in this paper, the term rhetoric is used interchangeably with the term narrative.

Despite the acknowledged importance of non-host destinations referred to above, it is somewhat surprising that “literature on the impacts of mega-events on non-host cities and rural areas is minimal” (Pillay & Bass, 2008: 341). Deccio & Baloglu’s (2002) study of 100 adult residents of Garfield County, Utah that found that non-host communities did not anticipate any significant economic impacts from the Olympics represents one of the few scholarly attempts in this direction. Their study concluded that residents could only support mega-events if they perceived that they could receive some socio-economic benefits from them. Ritchie *et al.*’s (2009) quantitative longitudinal study of non-host city residents’ perceptions of the 2012 London Olympic Games that established perceived concerns around the increased cost of living, transport congestion and parking problems is another exception. Ritchie *et al.*’s (2009) study focused on Weymouth and Portland, two locations that hosted part of the London 2012 Olympic Games but were found outside the main host-city, London. Thus, it appears that greater attention has been focused on the perceptions of residents of the main host city communities, yet, as pointed out by Pillay & Bass (2008), the potential impacts of mega-events such as the FIFA World Cup are not confined to the main host city. Furthermore, Ritchie *et al.*’s (2009: 144) observation that “despite a number of research studies being conducted on mega events...few have focused on resident perceptions and even fewer have developed a longitudinal approach to better understand these perceptions and how or why they vary over time” clearly points to the need for research priorities to shift towards these neglected aspects.

The aim of this paper is to document and unravel the perceptions of Chinotimba residents surrounding the tangible and intangible legacy of the 2010 FIFA World Cup and thereby contribute to filling the above-cited research gap. As stated above, although the 2010 FIFA World Cup was hosted by South Africa, it was framed as a continental event that would unleash considerable spin-offs, particularly for the neighbouring countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region (Cornelissen, 2004; Black, 2007). The other aim of the paper is to document and compare the rhetoric surrounding the 2010 FIFA World Cup with the perceptions of Chinotimba residents. This objective is borne from the observation that the examination of the rhetoric and non-host residents’ perceptions of mega-events are oft-neglected aspects in tourism studies.

The first section of this paper contextualizes the research problem by discussing the research gap the study intends to fill. This is followed by a review of prior research surrounding the rhetoric associated with mega-events and residents’ perceptions of mega-events. The third section of this paper outlines the methodology used. The paper then presents and discusses the findings of the study. Finally, the key conclusions and implications of the study are outlined.

Literature review

It is well-documented that many countries are keen to host mega-events mainly as a result of the perceived wide range of political and developmental benefits (Black, 2007). Mega-events are touted as an important source of income, infrastructure and employment opportunities by several scholars (e.g. Gertz, 1997; Madden, 2002; Black, 2007). Indeed, to gain public support for mega-events, optimistic, and often wild, projections are made of the windfall that is likely to be obtained by a host nation (Black, 2007). For example, the projected economic impacts of the 2010 FIFA World Cup to South Africa were the creation of 150 000 new jobs and a boost to the economy to the tune of R60billion (Pillay & Bass, 2008). The forecast employment cited above, as Cornelissen (2004: 1297) observes, became a “key rhetorical

argument used with some degree of success by the South African Bid Committee [given that] it is estimated that more than 40% of the [South African] population is unemployed.” Pursuing the same argument, Matheson & Baade (2004: 1085) make the riveting comment that the primary consideration by developing countries for hosting mega-events is the “promise of an economic windfall.” One can extend this argument by pointing out that the lure of a windfall is cross-cutting, i.e. it affects proponents of mega-events in both the developed and developing world. To illustrate the ‘irresistible’ magnitude of the funds involved, the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City were expected to generate more than US\$1.2 billion to the state of Utah (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002).

Mega-events are also packaged as opportunities for place-promotion, they represent a country’s chance to gain international visibility and are considered powerful vehicles to attract potential investment and increased tourism demand (Ritchie & Lyons, 1990; Jeong & Faulkner, 1996). It has been further observed that some host-cities have used mega-events as part of larger urban regeneration schemes; for example, Barcelona and Manchester when they hosted the 1992 Olympic Games and the 2002 Commonwealth Games, respectively (Ritchie *et al.*, 2009). It is worth noting that an emerging literature has cautioned the pre-hosting optimistic assessments of the economic impacts of mega-events. As observed by Matheson & Baade (2004: 189) “claims that sports mega-events provide a substantial boost to the economy of the host city, region and country have been strongly criticized.” Rather, it appears that hosting a sport mega-event often fails to live up to the economic aspirations and expectations of host nations. For example, the associated infrastructure such as the stadiums that are constructed or refurbished for a mega-event often leave host nations saddled with high operation and maintenance costs. Indeed, this was the case with the Nagano Winter Olympics in 1998, the 2002 Japan-Korea FIFA World Cup (Whitson & Horne, 2006), and the Montreal, Atlanta, Sydney and Athens Olympic Games (Horne, 2007), to cite a few examples.

Besides economic impacts, mega-events are also projected as having positive social and environmental impacts. A wide range of positive social impacts are advanced including the generation of increased community pride, improved quality of life, the provision of entertainment opportunities (Gursoy *et al.*, 2004; Kim and Petrick, 2005; Kim *et al.*, 2006) and the preservation of the physical environment and local heritage (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002). Mega-events may also be associated with a range of negative social and environmental impacts. In this connection, there are reported conflicts between tourists and locals as a result of disparities in purchasing power (Tosun, 2002), loss of locals’ recreational amenity (Waitt, 2003), traffic congestion and parking problems (Mihalik & Cummings, 1995; Ritchie *et al.*, 2009) and increased prices of goods and services and real estate in host cities (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002). Furthermore, Collins *et al.*’s study concluded that sporting mega events are laden with

... a series of ‘costs’ that are rarely considered in *ex ante* or *ex post* assessments. These might include the effects of overcrowding and noise pollution, increased crime rates and ‘hidden costs’ associated with policing and security, the removal of ‘undesirables’, sanitization and property cost inflation around venues (2007: 459).

Overall, the international literature suggests that host nations should approach mega-events with a far more critical and cautionary approach. However, ironically, despite the observations that “the forecasts of the benefits [of sport mega-events] are nearly always wrong” (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006: 9) “and [are] nearly always overstated; [this] has thus far done little to dampen the enthusiasm of would-be hosts” (Black, 2007: 262).

One of the rarely explored ways to understand and analyse sport mega-events is the use of narratives produced and employed by various stakeholders before, during and after the hosting of a mega-event. One of the exceptions is Black’s (2007) study that explores the

narratives adopted in three disparate sport mega-events, namely the 2010 World Cup, the 2010 Commonwealth Games and the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. Black's study concluded that,

for ambitious civic and national boosters [mega-events] provide unique opportunities for the pursuit of symbolic politics - a chance to signal important changes of direction, reframe dominant narratives about the host and or/reinforce key messages about what the host has become/is becoming (2007: 262).

To illustrate, Black (2007) demonstrates how the narrative strategy used by South Africa attempted to portray hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup as a chance for Africa to shed the pervasive afro-pessimism among Western populations. This was done by a narrative strategy that portrayed that the World Cup was an "African showpiece - an instrument of continental unity, solidarity and peace" as stated by the South African Minister of Sport (Black, 2007: 268).

In a similar vein, Cornelissen's (2004) study assesses the narratives and legitimations surrounding the Moroccan and South African bids for the 2006 and 2010 FIFA World Cup. In doing so, Cornelissen (2004: 1293) asserts that "not much analysis has been done of African countries' involvement in the growing mega-events enterprise. Little is known of the broader political character and consequences of events and bid campaigns in the international system." The study shows how the two countries attempted to use both colonial and postcolonial discourse in their quest to win the right to host the FIFA World Cup. Cornelissen (2004: 1295) further laments the lack of attempts to understand the broad processes that surround mega-events and the ideologies that underpin them "yet, much can be learned about governmental/elite agents' political objectives and directions by looking at their stated aims and rationales for hosting mega-events, and at the narratives, legitimations and promotional rhetoric that they employ." To address this concern, this study examines the narratives generated mainly by Zimbabwe's ruling elite and representatives of private tourism businesses around the 2010 FIFA World Cup. In doing so, the study sheds light on how mega-events are produced, reproduced and appropriated by non-host countries. This line of thinking is inspired by the observation that mega-events "are increasingly developing into a *political commodity* for countries" (Cornelissen, 2004: 1294, italics in original).

A number of theoretical perspectives have been used by researchers to analyse resident perceptions of mega-events. Ritchie *et al.*, (2009) provide a comprehensive review of such studies including the use of social exchange theory by Waitt (2003), social representation theory (Pearce *et al.*, 1996), expectancy-value model (Lindberg & Johnson, 1997) and the intrinsic and extrinsic dichotomy (Faulkner & Tideswell, 1997). There is also the pioneering work involving the social dilemma theory (Chien *et al.*, 2012). This study used the social exchange theory to better understand the perceived legacies of the 2010 FIFA World Cup following several prior studies (e.g. Yoon *et al.*, 2001; Deccio & Baloglu, 2002; Waitt, 2003) that found it a useful analytical framework.

It is noteworthy that it has also been found that variations in residents' perceptions regarding the impact of mega-events are an outcome of a range of factors including socio-demographics (e.g. Kim & Petrick, 2005) and proximity to the event or key tourism resources (e.g. Fredline, 2004). These factors are important but are beyond the scope of this qualitative research. In terms of research design, most studies have adopted the cross-sectional design (Kim *et al.*, 2006; Ritchie *et al.*, 2009) as is the case with this study. However, as stated above, the few studies that exist mainly focus on perceptions of host communities hence this study may inspire others that involve non-host communities.

Methodology

This study is rooted in the interpretive research paradigm. A qualitative approach was used in this study as it is strongly recommended when meanings and individual interpretations are sought (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). A qualitative approach was also a clear choice as this study was exploratory (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) due to the existence of limited baseline information. The study draws evidence from semi-structured interviews that were conducted with 30 willing residents of Chinotimba high density suburb. Chinotimba high density suburb is one of the two high density suburbs of Victoria Falls town. Victoria Falls town is located in the western portion of Zimbabwe, across the border from Livingstone, Zambia. The main economic base of this resort town is tourism as Victoria Falls is a World Heritage site and considered one of the natural wonders of the world.

It is worth noting that pseudonyms are used for all interview participants from Chinotimba to protect their identity; a precondition guaranteed in the interviews. The residents were approached at their individual households and invited to participate in the research. Willing residents were asked a range of questions including their perceptions regarding the legacy of the 2010 World Cup at a personal, communal and national level. Out of the 30 residents that were interviewed both females and males were equally represented as the researcher wanted the research to be inclusive. 75% of the respondents had spent ten or more years living in Victoria Falls whilst 80% had attained secondary school education and above. In terms of age-distribution all the age-groups were represented with younger males and females who were 40 and below proving more willing to participate in the research. The other interesting characteristic about the respondents was that 60% were in informal employment, probably reflecting the massive disinvestment that has characterized Zimbabwe since 2000. All the interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed for subsequent analysis. In line with interpretive qualitative research, interviews were stopped when data saturation was reached (Jennings, 2005). To ensure plausibility and credibility of the findings, member checking was done to ensure respondent concordance in line with Polkinghorne's (2007) recommendation.

The other qualitative materials were drawn from a consideration of narratives produced by Zimbabwe's ruling elite and representatives of private tourism businesses around the 2010 World Cup. The main sources of these narratives were representatives of the Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Finance, the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (a National Tourism Organization) and the Zimbabwe Council of Tourism (a representative body of the country's private sector tourism businesses). These narratives were found mainly in parliamentary speeches and in local and international newspapers. It is worth noting that in stating the sources of these narratives, reference is made to the narrator's professional organization or profession (e.g. journalist, traditional chief, SVC white farmers) with the exception of government representatives.

The narrative's that were used in this study were selected on the basis of the researcher's own judgment concerning their usefulness. This study was also inspired and guided by Cornelissen's (2004) narrative enquiry around sport mega-events. Narrative enquiry is the study of narrative materials (Lieblich, 1998) that are either spoken or written presentations (Polkinghorne, 1988). This mode of enquiry is advantageous because of its unobtrusiveness, which eliminates researcher reactivity. The qualitative materials that were gathered from the public media were analysed through thematic analysis. In this connection, the main interest of the researcher centered on how and why the narratives' were constructed. In addition, in interpreting these storied descriptions (narratives) by various stakeholders I used philosophical hermeneutics which "holds that the interpreter encounters a text from within his or her own prejudices" (Schwandt, 2000: 192). Thus, my interpretations of the

narratives used in this study do not represent the ‘positivistic or historical truth’ but only one among many possible narrative truths. This assertion is in line with qualitative interpretive research as Creswell argues:

...[qualitative] researcher’s make an interpretation of what they find, an interpretation shaped by their own experiences and background. The [qualitative] researcher’s intent, then, is to make sense (or interpret), the meanings others have about the world.

This is why qualitative research is often called “interpretive” research (2007: 21).

It is worth noting that a potential limitation of this study is that, as Polkinghorne (2007: 9) argues, the “storied descriptions” that I studied might not after all, reflect “the felt meanings” of their articulators.

A cross sectional research design was adopted because of time and financial constraints on the part of the researcher. The cross sectional design adopted proved a cheap and quick method of gathering the required data. One of the major limitations experienced was the limited baseline information around the perceptions of non-host communities in the broader literature and in Zimbabwe in particular. Judged from a positivistic paradigm perspective, this study can be criticized for lacking external validity due to the convenience sampling that was adopted. However, this ‘shortcoming’ is compensated for by the intense and personalised engagement with the respondents that was adopted in this study that proved a more revealing approach than the quantitative approaches of some prior studies. Given the increasing recognition among researchers that residents’ perceptions of mega-events change before, during and after the event or collectively, with the passage of time (Tynaman & Johnston, 2004), it is hoped that this study forms a platform for future comparative studies.

Findings and discussion

The rhetoric

There were several interesting findings from the assessment of narratives produced by Zimbabwe’s ruling elite and representatives of private sector tourism businesses. It is worth noting that Zimbabwe experienced political and economic problems from 2000 that led, among other things, to shortages of food, fuel and foreign currency, massive disinvestment, brain drain and deindustrialization. However, the macroeconomic instability receded substantially when the country’s two main opposition parties formed a Government of National Unity (GNU) in early 2009. The GNU subsequently adopted a multicurrency trading regime in place of the highly devalued local currency. Whilst there are discernible and significant signs of economic recovery, the country is still plagued by several challenges including a liquidity crisis, an unemployment rate of some 80%, water and electricity shortages, and limited industrial and agricultural output.

It is against this backdrop that Zimbabwe’s coalition government was keen to leverage some economic relief from South Africa’s hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Indeed, Zimbabwe’s ruling elite quickly latched on to the framing of the FIFA World Cup from a national to a continental event by forming a Ministerial Taskforce that, among other things, was tasked to use the World Cup as an opportunity to rebrand the country. Prior to this, from 2000 to 2009, the country’s tourism image had suffered considerably due to the macro-economic instability and concerns for the safety of Western tourists that saw major source markets issuing travel warnings. To illustrate further, according to the ZTA (2008), in 1999, the country recorded about 1.4million tourists and earned US\$400million whereas in 2008, it received 223 000 tourists and earned US\$42.9million, for example. The intent to construct a new tourism identity of the country through the 2010 FIFA World Cup was summarized by a representative of the Ministry of Tourism who said: “*We must all*

understand that Zimbabwe is a destination that has been under attack for ten years and that such rare opportunities give us a chance to re-engage the world and boost our tourism industry” (Financial Gazette, 2009). It was further announced by another representative of the Ministry of Tourism that *“a budget of US\$25m had been set aside for the World Cup preparations”* and that duty was waived for an array of capital goods for the tourism industry (Financial Gazette, 2009).

Furthermore, the government-controlled media reported that the Ministry of Tourism had received assurances from one of South Africa’s Ambassadors that South Africa would assist Zimbabwe with financial resources to prepare for the World Cup, and with technical assistance to reduce congestion at Beitbridge Border Post. Beitbridge Border Post is the gateway to South Africa. Interestingly, there were no follow-ups on whether the assistance was provided by the South African government. On a related note, a representative of the Ministry of Tourism was quoted as urging for *“increased cooperation with South Africa so that the country could reap a windfall from the World Cup...funds permitting we should have cabinet ministers visiting South Africa on a weekly basis to share and compare notes....indeed, a team of technocrats that will interface with South Africa will be formed next week...”* (Great Indaba, 2010a).

The Ministerial Taskforce referred to above, among other strategies, led delegations to several countries in an effort to lure foreign teams so that they could use Zimbabwe as a base and practice location whilst the general public in mainly Harare, Bulawayo and the resort town of Victoria Falls were enticed to register their houses so that they could lease them to visiting soccer fans. The latter was done on the premise that the 30 000 rooms that private tourism businesses had availed for the visiting fans were deemed inadequate. The exact tourism demand expected by the ruling elite is captured in the narrative of a Zimbabwe Tourism Authority representative: *“We are expecting an influx in arrivals during the World Cup...South Africa expects 450 000 tourists and we are expecting to generate about US\$200m from about 100 000 tourists as a third of the tourists who visit South Africa, also visit Zimbabwe”* (ZimEye, 2010).

Furthermore, some hoteliers and restaurants undertook expensive refurbishment programs whilst plans were mooted to build several fan parks/public viewing areas to allow ‘everyone’ to watch the month-long event. Two months before the staging of the 2010 World Cup, a Ministry of Tourism representative revealed that US\$1.5m had been secured from the private sector for the establishment of 15 fan parks across Zimbabwe (The Zimbabwe Mail, 2010a).

Whilst many questions remained unanswered such as the adequacy of the fan parks in terms of catering for the entire country’s population and, more importantly, how, in light of the power outages that affected the country, the fan parks would operate, the government-controlled media went on a drive to popularize this development. Indeed, through what appeared as a carefully constructed media strategy, the ruling elite presented the 2010 FIFA World Cup as a win-win solution to the private sector, ordinary people and the country at large. Critical voices that questioned the preparedness of the country to benefit from the event given *inter alia*, its negative tourism destination image, the lack of plans to upgrade the country’s stadiums, the crippling power and water shortages as well as the poor state of the country’s transport and telecommunications system were marginalized in the government-controlled media. For instance, observations by one representative of the private tourism businesses that *“The World Cup is in South Africa, 99.9% of arrivals will be in South Africa. The benefit for Zimbabwe will be for future marketing”* (Great Indaba, 2010b) were only given prominence in the privately-owned media outlets. This development mirrors Nauright’s (2004: 1328) observation that protests and resistance to the Sydney Olympic Games was *“quickly silenced within Australian public debate”* and Horne’s (2007: 89) observation that

because of mega-events “some journalists increasingly act as cheerleaders and voices critical of the impact of the mega-event are marginalized.”

A few months before the 2010 World Cup was held, FIFA announced that all the 32 competing teams would be based in South Africa for the event. In spite of this development - a severe setback for Zimbabwe that had banked on hosting some of the participating teams - government representatives continued to represent the FIFA World Cup as a major windfall for all citizens, particularly for those in Victoria Falls. For example, a Ministry of Tourism representative stressed that: “*I maintain Victoria Falls is a must-see for any tourist, more so, if he or she comes to southern Africa. So all is not lost yet*” (The National, 2010). The representative added that Victoria Falls was a convenient location “*as it was only 90minutes from Johannesburg*” (The National, 2010). However, tourism demand in Victoria Falls during the 2010 FIFA World Cup proved that tourists were not concerned about either the proximity of Victoria Falls or its ‘*must-see*’ status. The tourism representative’s dogged determination to ignore the reality gives some credence to Atkinson *et al.*’s (2008) argument that is succinctly paraphrased by Curi *et al.*, when they state:

...citizens’ support throughout the country, not just in the host city is always quite broad in terms of a mega-event - even when they are confronted with empirical data that compares costs and benefits. The non-rational appeal of this kind of sport mega-event is very difficult to pinpoint, but must be taken into consideration (2011: 143-144).

Arguably, one sees here, for political expediency, how the ruling elite attempted against all odds to extend the illusion that the 2010 FIFA World Cup would generate benefits for all. On this basis, it seems the mega-event was used to temporarily divert the local populace’s attention from the myriad socio-economic problems they faced and to entrench political control by the fragile GNU. This line of thinking is further supported by another interesting development just before the opening of the 2010 FIFA World Cup; an announcement by a Zimbabwean Cabinet Minister that banned protests and other demonstrations during the World Cup in order to “*rebrand the country image*” and present “*Zimbabwe and the region as a whole as a safe destination*” (The Zimbabwe Situation, 2010a).

In sharp contrast, Zweli Mnisi, a spokesman for South Africa’s Police Minister said there were no plans to ban demonstrations as “*to protest and to march is a constitutional right of every South African*” (The Zimbabwe Mail, 2010b). The two contradictory statements illustrate how mega-events can be used to either undermine or strengthen civil and political liberties in both host and non-host communities. Furthermore, the statements illustrate how mega-events can be used to construct national identities with the South African testimony signifying the intent to be seen as a more democratic country than Zimbabwe. A parallel here can be drawn with the 15th Pan American Games held in Brazil where the authorities “*actually constructed a ‘big wall’ around the stadiums which turned them into islands of excellence to be shown on television, thus hiding the unsightly parts of the city, that is, poor neighborhoods and favelas*” (Curi *et al.*, 2011: 140). Similarly, in the 2008 Beijing Olympics there were media reports of attempts “*to hide social problems through press censorship. International observers commented about the construction of shields to hide shanty towns*” (Curi *et al.*, 2011: 153). There are numerous other examples recorded in the international literature where host countries attempt to hide social grievances from the sustained international glare associated with mega-events. Much more importantly, the testimony by the Zimbabwean Cabinet Minister adds credence to the observation that mega-events “*can also become a catalyst for state-sponsored restrictions on civil and political liberties*” as happened in the 16th Commonwealth Games held in Malaysia in 1998 (van der Westhuizen, 2004: 1278) and in the evictions of marginalized communities as a result of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games (Black & Bezanson, 2004).

The reality that the 2010 World Cup was not a boon for the tourism industry elicited some interesting narratives. For instance, a representative of the Ministry of Tourism said:

The World Cup was a false euphoria for the past four years... I recall two or three years ago, Zimbabwe was talking of building stadiums in Beitbridge, Harare, Masvingo and Victoria Falls. The top leadership of this country was going out to inspect sites for the new stadia. They were going to build stadiums and if the understanding was that there were going to be matches played in this country, it means that those were false promises or probably we were misled (The Zimbabwe Situation, 2010b).

It is quite evident in this testimony that the representative of the Ministry of Tourism attempted to shift responsibility for the country's failure to gain from the 2010 FIFA World Cup to outsiders, probably FIFA. In sharp contrast, the private tourism businesses' narratives usually blamed "the government for having exaggerated the benefits of the World Cup and poor planning that saw limited efforts to upgrade the necessary infrastructure" (a representative of the Zimbabwe Council of Tourism, The Zimbabwe Mail, 2010b). Another representative of the Zimbabwe Council of Tourism summed up the main reason why the World Cup was a flop from a Zimbabwean perspective when he said; "the benefits of the World Cup have been exaggerated. People do not come to Zimbabwe to watch soccer in South Africa" (The Zimbabwe Mail, 2010b). Proof that the World Cup resulted in minimal benefits for the tourism industry is succinctly expressed by another representative of the Zimbabwe Council of Tourism who said:

Unfortunately, there has not been much business that has been generated other than the excitement we had here over the trip by the Brazilian team last week. We have not seen any upturn in business volumes as a result of the 2010 World Cup and this has been a great disappointment to the industry at large because things have not happened as anticipated (ZimEye, 2010).

It is worth noting that the Brazilian team came to the country at a cost of some US\$2million whilst the coalition government was not able to invite other teams as a result of the high appearance fees the teams charged. The only other team that was successfully invited was North Korea. However, the team failed to come because local political activists raised the association of the North Korean government with the early 1980s political instability in Zimbabwe that reportedly led to the killing of over 20 000 civilians in the southern part of the country. It is alleged that the North Korean government trained Zimbabwean army personnel that were then deployed in the southern part of the country. This example serves somewhat to show how mega-events can be used by 'voices from below', that is, local political activists, to advance their cause and at the same time challenge the identity of a country or the dominant narratives a state would want to project to the rest of the world during a mega-event. I now turn to findings from my interactions with residents of Chinotimba high density suburb.

Chinotimba residents' perceptions of the impacts of the 2010 FIFA World Cup

Field evidence suggests that Chinotimba residents could not identify any major tangible or intangible benefits of the World Cup. The majority could only speculate that tourism operators were the major beneficiaries. In stating this, the residents expressed misgivings with regard to the disjuncture between the rhetoric and their livelihoods which largely remained untouched by the mega-event. Some of the residents' sentiments are captured below:

Personally the World Cup was a non-event, I benefited nothing at all. One needed to have money to get into any World Cup related business such as providing transport

services to tourists. They said you could lease your house but most of us here are either lodgers or we have one house only (Sibusiso, a 23 year old student teacher).

The only benefit was to see the 32 matches and the Brazil team that came to train here. But I only saw it on television because the cheapest ticket for the Brazil-Zimbabwe match was going for US\$10. Do you know that the government spent millions to bring the Brazil team? Hey, if they could have used that money to improve just one thing here in Victoria Falls it would have been better, for example, the water shortage (George, a 43 year old mechanic).

We were told in the radio and newspapers that our lives would change for the better, but as you can see we are still struggling as before. The World Cup maybe benefited some big tourism companies, not us ordinary people (Thomas, a 27 year old curiosity-trader).

The last testimony lends credence to Robertson & Rodgers' (2009) argument that the media can affect how residents understand the impact of an event. It is further interesting to note the disappointment expressed by George above, over what he felt was a misuse of public funds. Some residents however, felt that the mega-event had provided temporary succour from their daily focus and struggles with grinding poverty:

During the matches, we really would forget about our poverty...there was a party atmosphere everywhere... (Martha, a 48 year old vegetable vendor)

The excitement of some of the games really was uplifting. At least we had somewhere to put our minds to, but now we only focus on our problems (Tichaona, a 21 year old security guard).

There was also reference by some residents to the possibility that western perceptions of Africa in general, and Zimbabwe in particular, had altered due to the hosting of the World Cup by South Africa. As stated above, prior to the 2010 FIFA World Cup, Zimbabwe's unprecedented political and socio-economic problems had produced a negative destination image especially among the traditional western markets. It must further be noted that whenever mega-events are held in peripheral societies, doubts around the organizational capabilities of the countries are always raised (Curi *et al.*, 2011). For instance, among several western countries "widespread doubts about South Africa's ability - a developing country - to stage the event..." were expressed (Curi *et al.*, 2011: 141).

Maybe because of the World Cup, Zimbabwe will regain those white tourists from Britain and so on, who are afraid of coming here... (Kuda, a 26 year old food and beverage manager).

The World Cup provided a good public relations exercise as many in the western countries believe nothing good can come from Africa except wars, coups, and hunger. We have shown them that Africa is as good (Ramos, a 46 year old secondary school teacher).

Many people were saying the World Cup cannot be held in South Africa because of crime but it was successfully held. This was a good opportunity for our continent and it gave me pride as an African (Martha, a 48 year old vegetable vendor).

Finally, residents also felt that the 2010 FIFA World Cup had precipitated massive emigration to South Africa by both unskilled and skilled personnel. There were diverse opinions regarding the effect of this 'accelerated emigration' to South Africa with some perceiving it as beneficial from both a personal and national perspective:

A lot of qualified builders and artisans left this town. You know, those people are now better off because companies in South Africa pay better, not here where a civil servant gets on average salary of US\$300 per month. Now, like our neighbour, his son went and he is supporting his father, sending money every month (Tichaona, a 21 year old security guard).

If it was not for the World Cup, our family would be starving because my husband had been retrenched. But now he is working for a big construction company in South Africa. The only problem is that we are living far apart; this is not good in these days of the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Masitondo, a 35 year old mother of three)

Yes, people left the town in droves, but this does not help the country...we need these people to rebuild our country. This is why there are still problems in this country; these people are refusing to come to rebuild the country (Tawanda, a 51 year old electrician)

The bad thing is that some people who left this country are doing menial jobs in South Africa and some are tarnishing our country's image by being involved in all sorts of criminal activities in order to survive (Ramos, a 46 year old secondary school teacher).

The backdrop of these sentiments is that South Africa embarked on massive infrastructural developments in preparation for the 2010 FIFA World Cup thereby opening massive employment opportunities; especially for Zimbabwe where unemployment stood at around 80%. It is quite evident that the rhetoric of the ruling elite created a lot of expectations of improved well-being among the residents of Chinotimba high density suburb. There is also sufficient evidence in Chinotimba residents' testimonies that they evaluated the impacts on mainly economic considerations. This gives support to the social exchange theory that suggests that residents evaluate events on the basis of expected returns on investment and is consistent with some prior research's findings (e.g. Yoon *et al.*, 2001; Deccio & Baloglu, 2002; Waitt, 2003). Overall, there was symmetry between the narratives of representatives of the ruling elite, tourism businesses and Chinotimba resident's testimonies in that all stated that the 2010 FIFA World Cup left negligible tangible and intangible benefits.

Conclusions

Through this study I attempted to document the rhetoric and residents' perceptions surrounding the 2010 FIFA World Cup in a non-host country; a feat that is often lacking in prior research. I also attempted to produce embodied accounts of residents' perceptions that are often lacking in the international literature by providing brief biographies and giving 'voice' to my research participants. A key conclusion of this study is that mega-events are not apolitical processes; rather, mega-events are capable of producing both empowerment and disempowerment among non-host communities. Besides calling for the incorporation of 'coal-face' perspectives of mega-events, this paper urges for research that acknowledges the politicised nature of mega-events.

The explored narratives of the ruling elite reveal that deliberate and costly efforts were made to create the illusion that the mega-event would be a major windfall for the country. This case study further reveals that mega-events' benefits are not misleadingly represented by host countries only as observed by Horne & Manzereiter (2006), but also by non-host countries. In this misrepresentation, a range of discursive practices were employed to win over the 'hearts and minds' of the general public as equally observed by Horne (2007) in relation to host communities. Indeed, this case study adds weight to the observation that "a culture of deceit surrounding mega-projects [events]" exists (Horne & Manzereiter, 2006: 15). Therefore, the major implication of this study is that the rhetoric associated with mega-events needs to be treated warily by academics.

I also argue that the 2010 FIFA World Cup was used by Zimbabwe's ruling elite to pursue 'symbolic politics' (Black, 2007). This was done by constructing a new identity of Zimbabwe as a safe tourist destination that had attracted negative publicity from the western media. However, the reconstructed identity could not be sustained as the GNU did not have

the resources to address structural problems that afflicted the country as a tourist destination. These included the dilapidated and collapsing infrastructure, poor air links, transport and telecommunications networks, and lack of funds on the part of the GNU and tourism businesses to build and upgrade the required facilities. The reconstructed identity also failed to take into account other external factors such as the global financial crisis that made the pre-hosting projection of 450 000 tourists that were expected in South Africa a misguided calculation. These factors conspired to translate “the seductive discourse of development” (Swart & Bob, 2004: 1311) that was deployed by the country’s ruling elite into wishful thinking.

Whilst there could have been some commercial opportunities for some sections of the Zimbabwean society that were generated by the World Cup, the bulk of the testimonies of Chinotimba residents underscore their marginalization and disappointment arising from the “*false euphoria*” - to use a representative of the Ministry of Tourism’s phraseology. Undeniably, for some residents, the World Cup was a boon as it opened employment opportunities in South Africa besides boosting their self-esteem and pride. Some of these employment opportunities have had long-term impacts as they were benefiting families through remittances over a year after the hosting of the World Cup.

As this paper pinpoints the ‘tip of the iceberg’, more detailed future studies are required to assess the full range of the political and socio-economic impacts of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Such studies would profit from the baseline information provided by this study through its documentation of some of the perceptions and narratives associated with the 2010 FIFA World Cup. It would also be fruitful if similar studies are undertaken in other non-host countries. There are further opportunities for studies that either adopt different methodological approaches or that examine the influence of various variables such as the passage of time, socio-demographics and political affiliation on the perceptions of non-host communities.

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