

# South Africa: Will the World Cup party be worth the hangover?

Thursday 10 June 2010, by [BOND Patrick](#) (Date first published: 20 May 2010).

## Contents

- [‘Democracy-free zone’](#)
- [Economic farce, political \(...\)](#)
- [Global soccer apartheid](#)
- [Comments](#)
- [Why communist Moses Mabhida is](#)
- [S.Africa World Cup contracts](#)

May 15, 2010 — On June 11, South Africans start jolting [jol — to have fun, to party] like no time since liberation in April 1994, and of course it is a huge honour for our young democracy to host the most important sporting spectacle short of the Olympics. All the ordinary people who have worked so hard in preparation deserve gratitude and support, especially the construction workers, cleaners, municipal staff, health-care givers and volunteers who will not receive due recognition.

But balancing psychological benefits against vast socioeconomic and political costs is vital, for we will hear plenty about the latter from visitors who will see us at our best and worst. One of the world’s greatest sportswriters, Dave Zirin, called Durban’s new Moses Mabhida Stadium the most breathtaking he’d ever seen, but provided us a needed reality check: “This is a country where staggering wealth and poverty already stand side by side. The World Cup, far from helping this situation, is just putting a magnifying glass on every blemish of this post-apartheid nation.”

In Durban, our worst face is usually to be found at City Hall, where time and time again, municipal manager (de facto executive mayor) Michael Sutcliffe bans community protests against his anti-poor policies, compelling urgent court interdicts to restrain his vicious police.

As a leading journalist (eNews’ Morgan Collins) learned on his way to jail while trying to cover a nurses’ strike six weeks ago, cops stamping on constitutional rights has become a bad habit here. Officials from the national security apparatus told parliament they will go yet further in democracy-removal, throwing a 10-kilometre “cordon” around Mabhida Stadium, named (without irony) after a grand old Communist Party leader.

During June-July, our city’s activists are meant to be shocked and awed by “air sweeps by fighter jets, joint border patrols with neighbouring countries, police escorts for cruise ships and teams of security guards with ‘diplomat’ training”. The aim is to “prevent domestic extremism, strike action and service delivery protests”, the sleepy members of parliament were told.

How ridiculous can the government get? On May 10, trade union allies of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) in the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union had perfectly valid reasons to begin the biggest strike in South African history, as they described it, as do regular service-delivery demonstrators who are victimised by corrupt housing contractors or the victims of shack fires caused by denial of electricity.

To equate non-violent protest with “extremism” is old apartheid paranoia at its worst. According to South Durban Community Environmental Alliance leader Des D’Sa: “On Youth Day, June 16, Durban citizens will test this with a peaceful march to city hall. Sutcliffe’s order to kick fisherfolk off beaches ... with arrests and police violence, is the last straw.”

### **‘Democracy-free zone’**

Much of the blame for Durban’s commercialised democracy-free World Cup zone goes to the International Federation of Football Associations (FIFA), based in Zurich, especially FIFA president Sepp Blatter. To illustrate the stupidity, just a few dozen metres away from where poor people are now denied their source of fish and income, FIFA’s expensive imported (German) marquee tents apparently require erection by a German construction company.

Little will trickle down. Aside from extremely loud plastic trumpets (*vuvuzelas*), the much-vaunted “African” feel to the World Cup will be muted, as women who typically sell “pap” (cornmeal) and *vleis* (meat) just outside stadiums will be shunted off at least a kilometre away. According to analyst Udesb Pillay of the Human Sciences Research Council, in 2005 one in three South Africans hoped to personally benefit from the World Cup, but this fell to one in five in 2009, and 1 in 100 today.

And FIFA gets sole occupation of Mabhida Stadium, even on the 75 per cent of days that soccer won’t be played, keeping the facility off-limits to visitors. Their anticipated profit from these games: more than \$3 billion.

FIFA sponsorship is hazardous to this economy, as witnessed by ANC member of parliament (and KwaZulu-Natal businessperson) Shiaan-Bin Huang’s import wizardry. Teenage workers at Shanghai Fashion Plastic Products and Gifts have been paid just \$3 a day to manufacture Zakumi mascot dolls, which could easily have been produced in our region’s idle factories.

The local World Cup organising chief, Danny Jordaan, predicted in 2005 that 400,000 people would visit. In reality, there will be half as many, and the hospitality industry’s market is glutted after a third of rooms booked by FIFA’s Match agency were cancelled.

### **Economic farce, political tragedy**

Benefits are down and costs are soaring. South Africa’s 2003 bid estimate of between US\$150 million and \$1.2 billion expenditure rose in October 2006 to a final projected \$1.5 billion and now, with insane escalations, \$5 billion.

On May 8, at a community class on economic justice we run at our university, a student pointed out that if Greece’s hosting of the 2004 Olympics was partially responsible for the latest episode of world financial crisis and a €500 billion bailout, South Africa — with our untenable \$80 billion foreign debt (triple what Nelson Mandela inherited in 1994) — may get the same treatment.

From economic farce we slide into political tragedy. There have been at least two (and potentially more) assassinations of honest politicians who criticised World Cup contracts in Mpumalanga province’s host city, Mbombela (formerly Nelspruit). More than 1000 pupils demonstrated against Mbombela Stadium when schools displaced in the construction process were not rebuilt.

We’ve seen other World Cup-related protests against Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town municipal officials by informal traders, against Johannesburg officials by Soccer City stadium

neighbours in impoverished Riverlea township, against construction companies by workers, and against national bureaucrats by four towns' activists, who are attempting to relocate provincial borders to shift their municipalities to a wealthier province.

Durban is a special case because of both the grandiose new stadium (\$380 million worth, overrun from an original \$220 million budget), and the country's highest-profile chutzpah exuding from the bureaucracy and building contractors.

Sutcliffe has presided over a string of expensive management disasters: failed bus privatisation due to cronyism; denial of Blue Flag status at the city's otherwise excellent beaches due to high E.coli counts, followed by his angry retreat from the program; his foiled attempt to replace a century-old Indian market (Warwick Junction) with a shopping mall; unending public subsidies for elite-oriented megaprojects; a delusional new trade port nowhere near Africa's largest harbour; disastrous water/sewerage breakdowns; and an economic development strategy reliant upon sports tourism in a coming era constrained by climate change and fast-rising air travel taxes, to mention just a few foibles.

But worst of all, as Dave Zirin put it, "To see a country already dotted with perfectly usable stadiums spend approximately \$3 billion on new facilities is to notice a squandering of resources that is unconscionable."

The contradictions are evident when comparing Mabhida Stadium — built next to a fine rugby fixture which could have been upgraded quickly and cheaply — to the horrendous shacks in which hundreds of thousands reside within more than a hundred informal settlements across Durban. In April, for example, Cato Crest township residents survived their fourth fire of 2010, with 200 shacks destroyed. Once again, a paraffin [kerosene] stove was to blame, because denial of affordable electricity to poor people is long-standing city policy.

Yet pathologically self-congratulatory officials don't seem to give a damn. The chair of the municipal housing committee, Nigel Gumede, recently joined Sutcliffe to reject findings of the National Home Builders' Registration Council. Its bulky report on a city sub-contractor, Zikhulise Cleaning, Maintenance and Transport, criticised a \$40 million deal to build 18,000 tiny houses (smaller than apartheid "matchboxes"), which began in December 2006. The report found three quarters were built below municipal building standards and need repairs. Sewerage in the project represented a pollution and health risk, and without stormwater drainage, there is "a high possibility of mudslides".

Zikhulise owner Shauwn Mpisane reacted: "I stand by what I have always said, and that is that the houses do not have any structural defects." Shauwn's husband is S'bu, who notoriously commuted to his police constable job in a Lamborghini after turning state's evidence in a taxi murder trial in which another policeman was shot dead and S'bu allegedly drove the getaway car. Their extraordinary lifestyle includes a \$2 million mansion and \$13 million automobile collection. S'bu allegedly intimidated a brave news editor (Philani Makhanya of the Durban Mercury), but his police docket was subsequently stolen, and only just reconstructed a month ago.

The recent defence of the Mpisanes by Sutcliffe must be the lowest level a state official has yet stooped: "The reports that these houses were built to sub-standard levels are absolute nonsense and part of media frenzy."

Across KwaZulu-Natal province, 49 housing projects like Zikhulise's contain more than 40,000 defective houses, according to a government forensic investigation. Two years ago, Sutcliffe stated that the housing backlog would be eradicated by 2016, while an ANC campaigning document promised that "ANC members will get houses this year". Mayor Obed Mlaba justified the vote-catching language: "We are politicians. But when you make promises and don't keep them, then that

is wrong.”

Also wrong is a new municipal policy in which a private debt collection company will enforce \$9 million in arrears from 600 council flats. According to a municipal report, council debt collectors have already generated “massive homelessness”, notwithstanding tenants’ attempts to “try their best to pay their levies”.

## **Global soccer apartheid**

So who in Durban represents the core welcoming committee for the World Cup? A city elite overpopulated by venal elites, quite capable of playing the race card (a Sutcliffe speciality, although he is white), enriching themselves and talking left so as to walk right.

Unless something is done, the world-scale embarrassments will pile up faster than goals against the local soccer team, Bafana Bafana, which fell in the global rankings from 81<sup>st</sup> in early 2010 to 90<sup>th</sup> today (they are in the World Cup only because they are the host team). No wonder: global soccer apartheid means that the best African players are sucked up into European clubs with little opportunity to prepare for such events.

Asks Trevor Phillips, former director of the South African Premier Soccer League, “What the hell are we going to do with a 70,000-seater football stadium in Durban once the World Cup is over? Durban has two football teams which attract crowds of only a few thousand. 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 local winners in this World Cup will not be our soccer players nor even rugby teams, which municipal officials fruitlessly hope will one day fill the white-elephant stadiums, but instead, large corporations and politically connected black “tenderpreneurs”.

The tenderpreneurship strategy is profoundly corrupt, according to Moeletsi Mbeki, brother of former South African president Thabo. “It was a matter of co-option, to co-opt the African nationalist leaders by enriching them privately”, he has said.

But because co-option of the politicised grassroots is not easy, once the soccer hype fades and protests become more insistent, local elites will realise their mistake in hosting these games in such a wasteful, arrogant manner.

They will learn what we already know: this scale of profiteering by business and genuine joy associated with the world’s most loved sport are mutually incompatible.

**By Patrick Bond, Durban**

*\* Patrick Bond directs the University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Civil Society, which offers a register of social protests covered in the national media and a new socioeconomic “World Cup Watch” update at <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs>. This article also appeared as a ZNet commentary. It is posted at Links International Journal of Socialist Renewal with permission.*

---

## Comments

Fri, 05/21/2010 - 14:51 — normd

### Why communist Moses Mabhida is rolling in his grave

**May 19, 11:24 AM · Wanda Hennig - South Africa Travel Examiner**

***Durban's iconic new state-of-the-art Moses Mabhida Stadium, inspired by World Cup 2010. Courtesy of Tourism Durban***

Moses Mabhida Stadium's iconic arch is visible from throughout the city. At the top of the arch is a viewing platform, reached by a SkyCar, that gives visitors 360 degree views.

Sydney has its bridge. San Francisco has its Golden Gate and Transam Pyramid. Cape Town has its mountain. All are iconic and much photographed. Now Durban has its Moses Mabhida Stadium that — granted, at a lower-key level — has joined the ranks.

The city has long had its sweeping beachfront views of Indian Ocean shoreline, hotels and high rises — it's so-called Golden Mile.

But the new stadium — visible from vantage points throughout the city and designed as a legacy feature for Durban — grabs the eye as no city feature has before.

The stadium was inspired by the need for a world-class venue for World Cup 2010. The modern, graceful structure soars to the height of a 31-story building. Its stylishly waved roof — the Teflon-coated glass fiber material and how it's constructed is designed to keep the sun and rain off 95 percent of spectators — looks like it was inspired by the white capped waves that lure surfers and swimmers year-round to the city's beaches.

In fact, the stadium's iconic arch drew its design inspiration from the South African flag. The Y-shaped grand arch represents unity. The two legs on the southern side of the stadium that come together on the northern side symbolize the uniting of a once-divided nation.

While the primary design function of the arch is to support the stadium's roof and structure, it also supports a SkyCar, which transports up to 20 people at any one time to a viewing platform at the arch's highest point, providing spectacular 360 degree views. For the energetic there is a 550-step climb up the southern side of the stadium. And for adrenaline junkies, the Big Rush Big Swing "bungee" drops enthusiasts into the stadium bowl.

The acoustics are great, which makes it an ideal concert venue. There are convention rooms; the stadium's function rooms are already becoming popular for weddings and events.

The stadium also has Imbizo Place, a lifestyle and retail area that is becoming a popular meeting space filled with shops and restaurants frequented by locals and visitors alike. Two popular eateries already open are the Keg and Spear Restaurant and Nino's. More will follow.

The stadium has a seating capacity for 70,000 fans. It has the potential to expand to 85,000 seats to meet the requirements of large-scale events like the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games.

To quote Julie-May Ellingson, head of strategic planning for Durban's 2010 program: "The

completion of the Moses Mabhida Stadium was a defining moment for Durban. This world-class engineering and architectural feat is a true example of what can be achieved by team work, the sharing of skills and collaboration between public and private enterprise. While the project has not been without its challenges, there is no doubt that each and every person who has worked on this project can ... know that they have made their mark in history. Thanks to their effort, Durban, Africa's Sports Capital, will continue to grow from strength to strength."

The Moses Mabhida Stadium is part of the Kings Park Sporting Precinct. Included in this is an Olympic-size swimming pool; "People's Park," which includes expansive sports fields, children's play areas, a fountain and restaurants; and "Heroes Walk," a heritage tourism-style walkway celebrating sporting and cultural heroes along with a circular track for walking, jogging or cycling and accessible from Durban's newly developed beachfront promenade that runs the full length of the city's beaches.

### **Who was Moses Mabhida?**

Moses Mbheki Mncane Mabhida — Comrade Baba, as he was known to his friends — was born on October 14, 1923. His father was a farmer forced off his land and his mother was a washerwoman who instilled in her children an understanding of the importance of education.

Mabhida joined the South African Communist Party (SACP) in 1942 and was soon involved in the trade union movement and rose to vice-president of the South African Congress Of Trade Unions. He developed a close working relationship with ANC President Chief Albert Luthuli and was involved in drawing up the Freedom Charter.

He was sent into exile in 1960 and in 1963 began to work on the development of the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto weSizwe. In November 1979 he was elected general-secretary of the South African Communist Party.

He died of a heart attack in Maputo, Mozambique, on March 8, 1986, at the age of 63, and was given a state funeral with full military honors at Maputo's Lhanguene cemetery.

"We who have walked with the giants know that Moses Mbheki Mabhida belongs in that company too," said the then president of the African National Congress Oliver Tambo, at Mabhida's funeral.

In December 2006 Moses Mabhida's body was returned home and laid to rest in the Heroes Acre in Slangspruit, Pietermaritzburg.

\*

<http://www.examiner.com/x-25057-South-Africa-Travel-Examiner~y2010m5d19-How-exSA-Communist-Party-leader-Moses-Mabhida-and-World-Cup-2010-changed-Durbans-skyline>

---

## **S.Africa World Cup contracts raise issue of nepotism**

*Wall Street Journal*, 20 May 2010

JOHANNESBURG - South Africa has spent billions building stadiums and roads for the World Cup, with only one major corruption scandal but growing worries about nepotism in public works.

Any “mega-event” presents “ample opportunity for corrupt individuals to influence outcomes through bribes, fraud and extortion,” wrote the Institute for Security Studies, in a report on conflicts of interest at the World Cup.

The new stadium in Nelspruit, which cost one billion rands (\$183 million), has drawn the most intense scrutiny.

In 2007, the speaker of the local municipal assembly, Jimmy Mohlala, alleged irregularities in the awarding of the contract to South African firm Basil Read and French firm Bouygues Travaux Publics.

After an independent report into his claims, provincial authorities sacked the municipal team in February 2009.

One year later, Mohlala was shot dead in his home by two hooded men. And police are investigating the killings of several other provincial politicians in 2009, amid news reports of a “hit list” of people targeted because of their opposition to certain World Cup contracts.

Worrying as the Nelspruit case is however, it does not appear to be the norm, said one observer.

“The World Cup infrastructure programmes were reasonably clean in most cases,” said Anthony Butler, political science professor at Witwatersrand University in Johannesburg.

The real problem in the football championship appeared to one of nepotism in South Africa, said Butler.

“More recently, there appears to be a major growth in patronage relationships centred around public sector procurement,” he told AFP.

“At all levels of government, contracts appear to be determined by relationships - political, personal or familial - rather than by open competition.”

The problem of nepotism was underscored in the study by the Institute for Security Studies. It focused on the new stadium in Durban, which cost 3.1 billion rands (\$567.3 million).

“While there was no evidence of corruption, the benefits of this new stadium are highly concentrated, among big construction firms... and the local political elite,” researcher Sam Sole wrote.

In South Africa, such conflicts of interest are increasingly the rule rather than the exception. More than 50,000 government workers also have private businesses, according to the ISS.

Unions and the communist party, both aligned with the ruling African National Congress (ANC), regularly lash out at “tenderpreneurs”, people who build fortunes from government contracts thanks to their political connections.

Such conflicts have dragged South Africa down the Transparency International index of perceived corruption, from a ranking of 34 in the world in 2000 to 55 last year.

“Many senior ANC leaders are horrified. At the same time, too many of them are compromised by their own behaviour,” Butler said.

“The kinds of enrichment that were once confined to the ANC elite are now becoming widespread,” he added.

Since President Jacob Zuma took office last year, he has loudly condemned corrupt politicians.

But every South African remembers that prosecutors dropped a graft probe into Zuma just before last year's general elections that brought him to power.

---

---

**P.S.**

\* From Links:

<http://links.org.au/node/1684>