

Towards redefining the concept of legacy in relation to sport mega-events: Insights from the 2010 FIFA World Cup

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Increasingly, governments from both the developed and developing world look to hosting sport mega-events as a way to stimulate development. There is much debate over what the legacies of sport mega-events are, how to stimulate positive legacies and how they should be studied. Drawing on a growing body of scholarship on legacy best and worst practice, this article discusses the economic, physical, infrastructural, social, political and environmental consequences of sport mega-events, using insights from South Africa's hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. It examines pertinent debates, highlights prominent approaches to assessing legacy impacts, notes the lack of consensus on the meaning of 'legacy', and suggests steps towards a clear definition of the concept. These include the need to consider event impacts in relation to the context in which they occur, and to integrate triple bottom-line principles systematically into mega-event planning, design and evaluation.

Keywords: sport mega-event; mega-event impacts; legacy praxis; sustainability; 2010 FIFA World Cup

1. Introduction

Given the magnitude and prominence of sport mega-events in the global arena and massive investments by the host cities and countries, there is a growing interest in examining the legacies of these events. Developing nations such as China, South Africa and Brazil have become significant players in the sport mega-event industry, thanks to China's hosting of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, South Africa's hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup and Brazil's upcoming hosting of the 2014 football finals and the 2016 Olympic Games (see for example [Cornelissen, 2010](#)). Governments often justify bids to host mega-events on the grounds of the long-term macroeconomic and sectoral gains they purportedly bring. Yet a growing body of scholarly literature (e.g. [Compton, 1995](#); [Cashman, 2006](#); [Preuss, 2007](#); [Matheson, 2008](#); [Higham & Hinch, 2009](#)) reflects a large degree of scepticism about the projected economic benefits of such events. Thus far, much of the research on sport mega-event legacies has been selective in its focus, centring on the economic and infrastructural impacts, and tending to neglect the social, political and environmental legacies. Increasingly, however, a broader spectrum of impacts (including the social, environmental and political impacts) is being integrated into assessments of these events. In recent years, the need to use events to drive long-term developmental plans has popularised the concept of appropriate 'event legacies' as an aspect of event planning ([Weed & Bull, 2004](#)), but another, more critical, literature has also recently emerged that focuses specifically on

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the long-term sociocultural and political consequences that hosting a mega-event can have (see for instance Lenskyj, 2008).

South Africa's hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup has stimulated debate not only about whether developing countries can host mega-events successfully, but also about what ex post methods and indicators researchers should use to evaluate the impact of these events on these countries. This article reviews and appraises the emergent scholarly discourse on sport mega-event legacies. It examines the debates and methodologies that underpin the study of mega-event legacies and raises key issues for consideration when assessing the long-term ramifications of these events. In so doing, the article provides a conceptual framework for the other contributions in this special issue that address various dimensions of South Africa's 2010 FIFA World Cup. Drawing on the experience of this event, we provide a set of guidelines for analysing event legacies that may be applied to a wider range of cases. We first review salient discussions and debates in the field of legacy research, pointing out some limitations of existing research, and the prevailing methodologies for appraising event legacies. We then provide a more thorough assessment of the multiple dimensions of sport mega-event legacies, considering the various spheres that can be affected by these events: national and local economies, the natural and built environment, and the sociocultural domain.

2. Legacies and sport mega-events

It is striking that despite the focus of several studies on the legacy impacts of sport mega-events, there is little consensus within the research community on what the term 'legacy' entails or how it should be defined. This has complicated the measurement of events' legacies (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006). The result is that countries bid to host mega-events without fully understanding the complexity of event legacy and without acknowledging that not all legacies are positive, nor can they always be planned (Preuss, 2007). Hosting a sport mega-event has both intended and unintended consequences, as Chappellet and Junod (2006) point out; and although many understand the term 'legacy' as having only positive connotations, the term can also have negative connotations. Importantly too, experiences from other events suggest that several of the expected legacies of hosting mega-events may not in fact be realised at all. In particular, the economic impacts (the main reason usually articulated for attracting these events) are seldom at levels anticipated in consultants' ex ante projections. In certain cases events may leave hosts with escalating public debt. For instance, it took three decades for the city of Montreal to pay off the debt it incurred in hosting the 1976 Summer Olympics. Additionally, there is scant evidence for the popular claim that events can lead to immediate tourism and investment gains for the hosts. Typically there is a time-lag of several years before a host's tourism sector displays growth. There have, however, also been instances (such as during South Korea's co-hosting of the 2002 FIFA World Cup) where the host's tourism market actually shrank during the year of the event (Lee & Taylor, 2005). These negative aspects of events' potential legacies are rarely adequately considered (or even mentioned) in the bidding processes.

Preuss proposes the following comprehensive definition for 'legacy' in the context of sport mega-events: 'irrespective of the time of production and space, legacy is all planned and unplanned, positive and negative, tangible and intangible structures created for and by a sport event that remain longer than the event itself' (2007:211). A similar definition is offered by Chappellet and Junod, for whom such a legacy means: 'the material and non-material effects produced directly or indirectly by the

sport event, whether planned or not, that durably transform the host region in an objectively and subjectively positive or negative way' (2006:84). While the tangible effects are easier to monitor, intangible effects – which often relate to subjective experiences – can generally only be felt, such as the change in resident and visitor perceptions of a host city or region. These intangible effects are also important to consider and may have significant social impacts. Thus, effects may be linked to the event either directly or indirectly. Direct effects are sport facilities and infrastructure that were built specifically for the mega-event. Indirect effects are facilities and infrastructure that would have been built even if the event had not taken place, but the mega-event served to speed up these developments. Indirect effects also include intangibles such as enhancement of the host city or country's image, more efficient local governance or improved communal well-being (Poynter, 2006).

It is important to stress that legacies should be sustained for a significant period after the event and have long-lasting effects, and should be evaluated for at least 20 years after the event. Besides being vague about the temporal aspect, the definitions cited above do not detail the spatial parameters or 'reach' of an event's legacy. Suffice to say that legacy impacts are most acutely experienced near to where the mega-event is held and, in the case of multi-site events such as the football World Cup, within the host cities. Most sport mega-events are either explicitly city-based, or the city constitutes the most 'natural' site for these events because of the magnitude of the events and their logistical and organisational requirements. Regional or rural hinterlands can be both negatively and positively affected by an event; the former because of the possible withdrawal of resources from surrounding regions to host sites, and the latter because of the trickle-through of income gains. As Kirkup and Major (2007) note, whether an event's net impacts on regional hinterlands are positive or negative depends largely on pre-event planning: 'good planning' seeks to mitigate resource extraction from the host cities' hinterland, and to maximise potential positive impacts.

Chappelet and Junod (2006) distinguish five types of legacy, according to their effects:

- *Sporting legacy.* This refers to sporting facilities built or renovated for an event and which will serve some purpose after the event has concluded. These sporting infrastructures often become 'emblematic symbols' for the host city and depict its link with sports (Chappelet & Junod, 2006:84). They may also play a role in changing local sporting culture, since the availability of a new venue may increase people's participation in sport, new and different types of sport may be introduced to the area, and more mega-events may be organised on a regular basis.
- *Urban legacy.* This refers to buildings erected for the mega-event but which serve no sporting purpose, and also changes made to the structure of the host city and the development of new urban districts and specialised areas (Chappelet & Junod, 2006:84).
- *Infrastructural legacy.* This refers to the various networks, ranging from transport to telecommunications, that are renovated or developed for a mega-event and maintained after the event is complete. New access routes by air, water, road or rail are part of this legacy. Chappelet and Junod (2006) also argue that an event can trigger the modernisation of basic services, such as water, electricity and waste treatment.
- *Economic legacy.* Mega-events are often associated with increases in the number of tourists to a host city. Although it is difficult to determine the impact of tourism in the long term, the tourist legacy needs to be evaluated by measuring the number of tourists over a longer period. The economic legacy also includes the 'setting up of non-tourism orientated companies that were attracted to the host region by its

dynamism' (Chappelet & Junod, 2006:85); that is, leveraging investment opportunities. Other indicators of this legacy are changes in the number of permanent jobs created and in the unemployment rate of the host region or city.

- *Social legacy.* Mega-events are symbolic in nature and thus often lead to the creation of many stories and myths. These form part of what Chappelet and Junod (2006: 85) term the 'collective memory' of an event. This term refers to local residents' memories of the mega-event and can also include the skills and experience they gain through their direct or indirect involvement. An essential part of the social legacy of mega-events is the change in local residents' perceptions of the host city or region.

Environmental and political legacies are not in Chappelet and Junod's list, but these are an equally important part of events' consequences. Environmental aspects are the sustainability imperatives associated with hosting these events, reducing the negative and enhancing the positive effects on the environment. Key aspects are minimising the carbon footprint of an event and integrating greening principles. Political legacies include the promotion of democracy and rights, and improved governance. Planning, approving or statutorily overseeing new infrastructure developments for an event creates new tasks for government actors and could lead to the enhancement of capacity in the public sector. The development of collaborative or transversal relations between the various tiers of government during the planning phases for an event could build trust and leave new political structures that help improve political governance post-event. The upskilling and improvement of human resources could occur in not only the public but also the private sector, as firms may train their staff to perform new or more complex tasks. Communities may also gain from interventions by the government or non-governmental organisations aimed at skills development.

3. Legacy impacts: Lessons for and from South Africa

The above discussion highlights the dense and disparate nature of the debate on the impacts of sport mega-events. Most standard contemporary accounts seek to incorporate the multidimensional character of these events and therefore the compound ways they can make an impact. In practice, however, the economic dimensions have received by far the most attention (Roberts, 2004), while others, such as the sociocultural, environmental and political aspects, have been largely underplayed. More recent years, however, have seen the emergence of a discourse on maximising positive event legacies. This encourages a more integrative approach that attempts to incorporate all components of events in appraisals of their impacts.

Figure 1 summarises the range of material, spatial and symbolic legacies, both positive and negative, that a host city and its wider region could experience.

The setting in which an event is hosted plays a vital role in determining the nature and intensity of the legacies. With respect to developing countries, Matheson and Baade (2003) note that the overall impacts of mega-event investments on national economies are amplified since the expenditure required and the relative opportunity cost are likely to be much higher than for developed countries. They argue further that since sport and entertainment is a luxury good, the demand for sport infrastructure in the aftermath of an Olympics or World Cup is likely to be lower in developing countries. They also note some positives, such as lower operating and infrastructure costs due to relatively lower wages, the tendency of mega-events to catalyse other infrastructure devel-

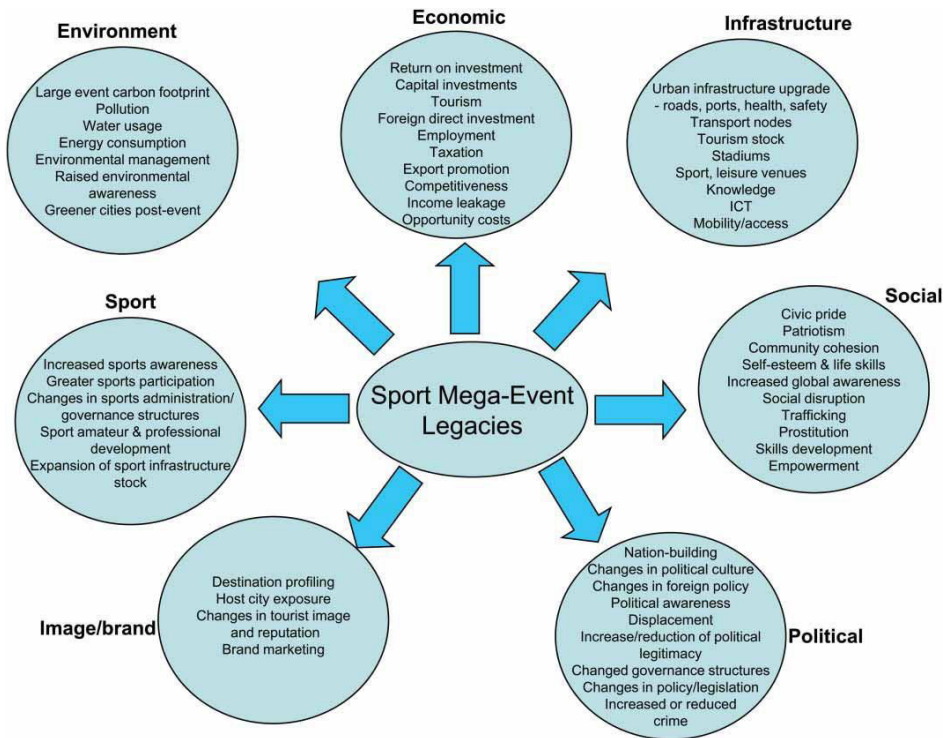


Figure 1: Sport mega-event legacies
 Source: Adapted from Swart (2008) and Matheson (2008).

opment, and the greater availability of unemployed or underemployed local labour, who could gain new skills through appropriate intervention programmes.

3.1 Economic legacies

As noted above, the economic impacts of sport mega-events are generally regarded as their most important aspect and usually constitute the primary reason why governments bid to host an event. Potential direct economic effects are the generation of revenue (sourced from both domestic and foreign investors), mainly through the development of event infrastructure; new income derived from spectators and participants; and the creation of short-term employment through the development of stadiums and other event facilities. Potential indirect effects are the increase in governments’ tax bases, and the longer-term maintenance of new employment. Sport mega-events can also stimulate growth in ancillary sectors, in particular leisure consumption, tourism and construction.

Despite these potentials, ex post studies of many events have shown inconclusive or negligible impacts. [Almers and Maennig \(2008\)](#) provide an ex post analysis of the economic impacts of the World Cups in France in 1998 and Germany in 2006. They argue that, on the basis of macroeconomic indicators, the findings about these events are in line with existing empirical research on large sport events and sport stadiums which have rarely identified significant net economic benefits, and that other factors such as the novelty effects of the stadiums, and intangibles such as image effects and feel-good effects (discussed below), are of greater significance. Their analysis of visitor data for France during

1998 in fact shows a decline in the number of foreigner overnight stays. They therefore conclude that the effects for the tourism sector, which is generally expected to be one of the main beneficiaries of mega-events, are small and mostly negligible. Similarly, expected increases in retail sales and employment appear to be, at least in the short term, smaller than initially supposed. Retail sales may be influenced by consumers diverting their normal consumption behaviour as a result of the World Cup, whether by attending the matches, watching at dedicated public viewing areas, or staying home to watch live broadcasts (the 'couch potato effect') (Allmers & Maennig, 2008). These short-term economic effects on income and employment tend to be confirmed by other econometric studies of the 1994 World Cup (Baade & Matheson, 2004) and the 1974 and 2006 World Cups in Germany (Hagn & Maennig, 2008).

Prior to the 2010 FIFA tournament in South Africa, it was estimated that the event would generate additional revenue of R93 billion (Grant Thornton, 2010). More than two thirds of this was to come from direct spending on stadiums and infrastructure, while the remainder would be made up of revenue from the sale of match tickets, spectatorship and tourism, and event sponsorships (Grant Thornton, 2010). It was also projected that the event would generate R19 billion in tax revenue for the government, and that up to 415 000 new jobs would be created. In expectation of these gains the national government undertook to spend more than R600 billion in the years leading up to the tournament, as part of a much larger spending programme on infrastructure developments, the upgrading of ports of entry, roads, railway lines and energy provision.

The positive aspect of this was that public investment was made on much needed infrastructural programmes. For instance, a large portion of the R600 billion+ was spent on upgrading South Africa's dated road network and improving public transport. Yet those investments far outstrip the investments made by the German and Chinese authorities for the 2006 FIFA World Cup and the Beijing Games. As Du Plessis and Maennig and Preuss observe in this issue, early indicators of the 2010 FIFA World Cup's economic legacies are mixed, and the realisation of the long-term positive macroeconomic impacts projected pre-tournament is still uncertain (also see BER, 2010). It is estimated, moreover, that there were 309 000 World Cup visitors (South African Tourism, 2010) – about one third fewer than the predicted number (see Grant Thornton, 2010). Tourist expenditure during the event is estimated to have been R3.64 billion (South African Tourism, 2010), significantly less than the R8.9 billion in tourism receipts anticipated pre-event. The long-term impacts – positive and negative – on South Africa's tourism sector have yet to be determined. The same is true for the ramifications of international media attention and destination marketing, which before the tournament were viewed as critical components and as a means to leverage long-term benefits. As Donaldson and Ferreira (2007) note, persistent negative media focus has had detrimental effects on South Africa's tourism industry. A positive destination image will be critical to the sustainability of the industry.

3.2 Infrastructural legacies

Stadium development is a critical component of legacy benefits associated with hosting mega-events. The sustainability of infrastructural investments after the hosting of a mega-event remains an important legacy issue. If sustainable, these investments can result in continued and long-term social and economic benefits. However, if unsustainable they can become a financial burden and political embarrassment for host cities and

countries. The 2002 World Cup was an opportunity to 'introduce an international audience to a vibrant and variant, yet hardly well known, football region at the edge of the Eurasian continent' (Horne, 2004:1237). Both Japan and South Korea spent significant public funds on stadium construction, each providing 10 stadiums. Evidence suggests that the World Cup stadiums in Japan have left a negative financial legacy (Horne, 2008), exacerbating a long-term economic recession experienced since the late 1990s (Kelly, 2010). There are numerous examples of event infrastructure lying fallow or underutilised in the wake of an event, not regarded as a local cultural asset by communities, and possibly continuing to be a fiscal burden for municipalities (also see [Smith & Fox, 2007](#)).

Despite these potential negative effects, Allmers and Maennig (2008) contend that new stadium construction associated with mega-events consistently has a novelty effect. An increase in comfort, improved view and better atmosphere in new or upgraded stadiums regularly leads to significantly higher spectator figures for the clubs, at least for a period after these improvements. Moreover, the potential exists to exploit the opportunity offered by large sport events to create an architectural legacy. A newly constructed 'iconic' building can become a landmark and be a part of a city's character, enhancing that city's image. It can also be an aesthetic focal point for the city and serve as a catalyst for further urban development and recreational facilities, for local and other use. However, if sustainable regeneration is to be achieved, it is critical to plan for the effective post-event use of facilities ([Smith & Fox, 2007](#)).

The analyses of previous World Cups provide a context for estimating the potential risks and benefits of stadium development in South Africa. Upgrading the training venues was a significant part of the 2010 FIFA World Cup bid and was regarded by the South African Government as part of the overall strategy to leave a 'lasting legacy for local communities for decades to come' (South Africa 2010 Bid Company, 2003). The government therefore invested heavily in stadium development. Despite considerable local interest in football in South Africa, attendance at premier league football matches is considerably lower than in Germany or France (40 000 and 20 500 on average, respectively). An additional concern is the cost of maintaining the stadiums. It is beginning to appear that the significant amount of pre-tournament public expenditure on stadiums stands in strong contrast to the moderate possibilities of post-2010 usage (see for instance [Ajam, 2010](#)).

3.3 Sociocultural, political and sport development legacies

The social impacts of sport mega-events have been neglected in the literature. In the main this is because it is more complicated to grasp the social than the economic impacts of an event; they are thus more difficult to 'measure'. Social impacts may be negative: traffic congestion, threats to security, prostitution, drug peddling, increases in crime ([Deccio & Moglu, 2002](#)). [Kim and Petrick \(2005:26\)](#) caution that failure to examine residents' perceptions sufficiently may have negative consequences in the form of 'loss of support for tourism development, an unwillingness to work in the tourism industry and hostility towards tourists'. Event organisers therefore need to recognise the importance of social and cultural impacts and recognise that they are as significant as the economic impacts.

[Allmers and Maennig \(2008\)](#) suggest that consideration should also be given to the 'non-use' or 'feel-good' effect of events, that is, the benefit for the host country's population of

the event taking place in their neighbourhood even if they themselves do not visit the stadiums. Economists' survey-based assessments of the intangible effects of mega-events (using contingent valuation studies and the measurement of hypothesised willingness-to-pay values) suggest that feel-good impacts can have significant economic ramifications for the hosts (see e.g. [Atkinson et al., 2008](#)).

Research in South Africa into resident perceptions (Bob & Swart, 2008; [Pillay & Bass, 2008](#)) suggests that in general most South Africans supported the country's hosting of the FIFA World Cup. However, there were reservations about who stood to gain most, and directly, from the event, how those benefits were likely to be distributed, and what negative impacts there might be on their daily lives.

In many instances sport mega-events are used as a mechanism for nation building. South Africa's pursuit of mega-events has also been used as an instrument for national reconciliation. The country's bid for the World Cup was distinctly pan-African in nature, and this was enhanced during the tournament itself by the slogan '*Ke Nako: Celebrate Africa's Humanity*'. South Africa built its campaign on a rhetorical portrayal of Africa that both assented to and challenged the view of the continent as predominantly struggling, lost or backward ([Cornelissen, 2004](#)). This aim of engendering a continent-wide legacy and extending potential benefits beyond the host country set the 2010 World Cup apart from previous World Cups and centralised a key political feature. The Africa Legacy Programme, established in 2006, had several objectives: to 'support the realisation of African renaissance objectives', to ensure that all African countries participated in the event, to further the development of African football, and to improve the international image of the continent and 'combat Afro-pessimism' (RSA, 2010). The 'Win in Africa with Africa' project, launched in 2007, aimed to provide the African continent with the 'tools to progress and the skills with which it can continue its own development' (FIFA, 2008). These programmes were rather limited in their conceptualisation from the outset, however, and one year after the end of the tournament have yielded few of the substantive results initially promised (see e.g. NPR, 2010).

The same can be said of the potential sport legacy of the tournament. Scholarly assessments pre-tournament of the possible sport development impacts of the event were fairly negative and suggested that, given the historical under-resourcing of grassroots football, the World Cup may lead to greater inequality between elite professional clubs and grassroots teams (e.g. [Alegi, 2007](#)). Women's football was also judged to be largely unaffected by investments in the male sport and to remain peripheral to the potential gains in sport development (Bob et al., 2009; [Figh, 2011](#)). Similarly, the World Cup provided the occasion for establishing an array of sport-for-development programmes in South Africa, ranging from large-scale projects run by FIFA and various government ministries to small-scale projects set up by community based organisations. Many of these projects were short-lived, although their introduction may have stimulated new directions in the broader sport-for-development landscape in South [Africa \(see Cornelissen, 2011\)](#).

3.4 Environmental legacies

Mega-events can attract significant numbers of people globally and thus can be assumed to have a substantial negative impact on the environment (Schmied et al., 2007). The positive environmental impacts of mega-events are most frequently said to be 'greener' new infrastructure such as stadiums, transport infrastructure and airports,

and upgrades in water and sewage services that might not have been politically or financially feasible without the event (Dodouras & James, 2004). On the other hand, the greatest ecological threats of any form of mass tourism are indisputably caused by the infrastructure and transport arrangements required to support it (such as the development of resorts, consumption of fuel by buildings, aircraft, trains, buses, taxis and cars, overuse of water resources, pollution by vehicle emissions, sewage and litter). This can lead to substantial and often irreversible environmental degradation, and may also have social ramifications (Davenport & Davenport, 2006).

South Africa's 2010 World Cup had the largest carbon footprint in the history of the FIFA tournament and exceeded that of the Beijing Olympics by a factor of two (Pellegrino et al., 2010). This was largely because of South Africa's geographical distance from the central World Cup spectator markets (increasing the need for long-haul flights to the tournament), the vast distances between the venues (necessitating short-haul air travel), and the country's reliance on coal for about 90% of its energy resources. Several of the larger host cities incorporated 'greening' programmes into their event preparations, although only a few did so systematically and with a view to improving environmental governance practices after the tournament. As Death (2011) notes, the potential for generating a positive long-term ecological legacy from the tournament, driven by greater societal awareness and governmental planning for environmental protection, was not realised. Death (2011) suggests that some lessons can be learned from South Africa's experience for future mega-event hosts. These include incorporating explicit environmental (or 'greening') programmes into bid documents, gaining support at the outset for environmental development programmes from sport federations such as FIFA, and devising national mechanisms for coordinating 'greening' projects at the host city level. If event related environmental programmes are coupled with broader aims of appropriate long-term ecological governance, better foundations may be laid for sustainable development.

4. Conclusion

This article underscores the importance of understanding and assessing the legacies of sport mega-events. It observes that there is considerable debate about the definition of legacies, the range of event impacts and how they should be assessed, and the importance of examining both positive and negative impacts. The authors suggest that positive legacies may result if more attention is paid to changing perceptions and profiling the destination in a positive light, and promoting behavioural change, particularly when it comes to environmental issues.

As Getz notes, 'sustainable events are those that can endure indefinitely without consuming or spoiling the resources upon which they depend' (2005:123). However, considerations of sustainability usually require a long-term outlook (at least 20 years) and necessitate a holistic and integrated view at both global and local levels. Yet mega-events are by their very nature intense and of fixed duration. Staging a mega-event can leave the host with not only positive but also negative material, spatial and symbolic legacies. Among the strongest predictive factors for how a host could be affected in the future are the governance relationships that exist in the host city or country, and the management structures that are set up to stage an event.

A sport mega-event provides a useful opportunity to learn from experience and plan better for future events. South Africa's experience of the World Cup offers some

lessons not only for this country but for legacy research generally. First, it is important to consider the various event impacts in relation to the context in which they occur. Second, the fast-tracking of budgets in the face of delivery deadlines and the prioritisation of particular sectors may leave important development foundations, even if this was unplanned. Third, it is important to integrate triple bottom-line principles consistently and systematically (i.e. focusing on sustainability in terms of economic, social and environmental dimensions) into mega-event planning, design and evaluation.

