

**Football and Politics in Africa**  
**Special Issue of *Politique africaine* (2010)**  
**Call for Proposals**

The 2010 World Cup in South Africa has been heralded as a major milestone not only for South Africa, but for the entire African continent. As a bold alternative to Afro-pessimism, it marks “Africa” as an international player. Moreover, FIFA and the organizers explicitly offer a vision which celebrates Africa’s humanity, supposed to be embodied by Zakumi, the 2010 mascot who “symbolizes South Africa and the rest of the African continent through his self-confidence, pride, hospitality, social skills and warm-heartedness.” Whether this vision will be the enduring legacy of 2010, remains to be seen. What is eminently clear is that the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa is infused with political meaning, actions and aspirations at multiple levels.

The occasion of the FIFA World Cup offers an opportunity to reflect on the significance of association football in Africa and its relationships with politics. For this special issue of *Politique africaine*, we seek articles that explicitly tackle the strong, yet often ambiguous relationships between football and politics in Africa whether experienced in South Africa, elsewhere on the African continent, or in African communities around the world. Contributions may range from examinations of the quotidian politics of football to analyses of the international political economies of football; they may examine local teams, or global mega-events such as the African Cup of Nations or the FIFA World Cup; they may analyze transnational dynamics, or national peculiarities in the organization of football and its public support. We invite papers which may deal with one or several of the following topics:

– **The relationships between local, national or international politics and football teams, associations or federations.** Darby has established the significance of the growth of organized football at the supra-national level in African decolonization and the anti-Apartheid movement, as well as the importance of African football to internal FIFA politics. In recent times, there have been several conflicts between FIFA and national governments over ‘interference’ in national football associations. Indeed, it is not uncommon for local or national leaders to mobilize football as a political resource; hence one might examine the link between football and partisan politics, or the relationship between specific political leaders and the football world.

– **The impact of political economies on football.** The ‘interferences’ of different political entities often result in corruption charges, suspensions, or normalization committees, among other maneuvers in the struggle over resources and control. One may also ask why some national teams are structurally stronger than others, and how resources are distributed among different clubs and a national team. Moreover, there has been a decline in the fortunes of most African national leagues and club teams concurrent with the commercial and global media success of European leagues, such as the English Premier League, La Liga, etc. This also highlights the importance of football migration as well as its contradictions and relationship with international politics and its history.

– **The politics of gender and identity.** The presence of Africans in European football has crystallized debates over race and nationalism within Europe. In addition, local, regional or national teams have been utilized for the construction and representation of nationalism and

ethnicity. Papers may question political imaginations and representations of football in Africa as well as the role and influence of fans, fandom, nicknames of teams, or social practices of fan cultures interrelated with local or national politics. What is more, as in most of the world, football is a mainly masculine endeavor. The women's game is growing, but still marginalized. Yet, two of the three women worldwide who have led national association have been African. Gender and identity are thus very much interwoven with political power relations and its representations.

– **Football as an arena of conflict, reconciliation and development.** Political violence and peace are also invoked in football. Football has been seen as a force for reconciliation in South Africa, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. However, it also has been a channel for the strengthening of ethnic identities, tensions and violence as seen at certain times in Kenya or even more brutally in Rwanda. Apart from that, football has been increasingly utilized in different forms of 'development' politics and has emerged over the last decade as a 'new' tool for development by multilateral agencies, states and NGOs. Football is invoked as a solution to social problems including poverty, the AIDS pandemic, illegal drug use, post-conflict reconstruction, refugees and gender inequality.

– **Football, governance and politics of space and infrastructure.** Alegi has demonstrated how 2010, as a mega-event, provides a major example of the politics of space played out through football as stadiums and other infrastructure are developed. The relationship between governance, political ideology and politics of space and infrastructure was most obvious during the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Other colonial and postcolonial governments in Africa have implemented politics of space and infrastructure in sports and youth politics which have been at times inclusive or exclusive, and which have not only influenced developments in local and national football, but which have also reflected different forms of governance.

One important task of this volume is to contribute to the effort of documenting the relationship between football and politics on the ground across time and space, emphasizing that there is not one African experience, but many. Another task is to continue developing the theoretical frameworks and methods to appreciate the ways in which football advances political agendas as well as reflects political relationships, both formal and informal, from the local level outwards as it reverberates through and traverses across networks. In what ways specifically are football and politics interwoven? How essential is it to examine African football to understand African politics? Or is it a mere window, a lens that helps to focus in on particular, telling aspects? How important is football to politics? Likewise, is football unique? Given the essence of the game and its particular grounded historical manifestation, does it embody, represent, advance African political experiences in ways different from other forms of leisure, popular culture and social forms? Papers addressing these and other aspects of the relationship between football and politics in Africa are welcome.

Papers can be written in French, in English or Portuguese.

Please send an abstract of your paper of about 250 words to the coordinators no later than **15<sup>th</sup> of June 2009**.

You will be notified if your contribution has been accepted for the submission of a full paper by **15<sup>th</sup> of July 2009**.

Submissions of the full paper versions (7,500 words) are due on **1st October 2009**.

Coordinators:

Martha Saavedra ([martha@berkeley.edu](mailto:martha@berkeley.edu)) and Susann Baller ([susann.baller@unibas.ch](mailto:susann.baller@unibas.ch))