Managing event places and viewer spaces: Security, surveillance and business interests at the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa

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Security at sport mega-events is now big business and involves unprecedented expenditure. Despite the growing strategic and financial significance of security issues at sport mega-events (Yu et al., 2009) there is a lack of interdisciplinary research pertaining to security and surveillance at sport mega-events, in developing countries especially. A deep connection between security politics, consumption, economic interests, and space is unmistakable (Bryman, 2004; Eick, 2011; Klauser, 2007). However, much academic research has focused on public order and risk management, with minimal attention given to relationships between security politics and business interests. The increase in sport mega-event hosting nations in the developing world and its economical and political importance attached especially emphasises the urgency for research to be conducted. To address that research lacuna, this study presents an in-depth case-study examining security management of public urban spaces at a sport mega-event. The specific foci here are on the relationships between security politics and business interests of various stakeholders, especially with regards to the securitization of the exclusivity of sponsors within the urban environment.


Upon review of security and urban geography literature, a theoretical framework was designed. I draw upon Jessop (2002) approach of neocommunitarianism, Häußermann and Siebel (1993) concept of festivalisation as well as Bryman’s (2004) concept of Disneyisation. An inductive interpretive qualitative approach is used utilizing a content analysis of a range of documents including minutes, public speeches, policies, contracts, official reports, media releases, and newspaper articles. Qualitative research is defined here according to Byrne (2001b, p. 207) ["... as inquiries of knowledge that are outside the framework prescribed by the scientific method, as well as assumptions of inferential statistics"]. This is markedly important, as this study is concerned with the pre-event creation of public order policy, the implementation of securitisation strategies during the event, and post-event reflections on the efficacy and legacy of risk management, security and surveillance protocols. These inquiries into human agency and power relationships suit a qualitative approach, though where appropriate statistical data, such as spectator numbers and police arrests are drawn upon to further substantiate interpretive claims, require quantitative research.

In order to explore the security management of public urban spaces at a sport mega-event, I use the case study approach focusing on the 2010 FIFA World Cup security management of, particular event spaces in the public urban environment in the City of Cape Town in South Africa. In fact, choosing a case study for its uniqueness gives me, the researcher, the opportunity to glean specific insights (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2003). While cognizant of the overall variety and complexity of many different event spaces (e.g. stadium, training grounds, team hotels), I chose to focus on the FIFA Fan Fest (FFF), Fan Walk, municipal public viewing areas (PVAs), and Commercial Restriction Zones (CRZs).

This research provides an entry point to understanding dynamics related to contemporary security more generally (Boyle & Haggerty, 2009). Also, it will make a contribution to practice since there is an urgent need for transparency (Pillay, Tomlinson & Bass, 2009) and sharing of information about the securitisation of sport mega-events. As Horne and Manzenreiter (2006, p. 3) complain, the organisation of sport mega-events has been dominated by the opaque
interests of a 'sport-business-media-alliance', and government. Research on sport mega-events in the Global South is a relatively new context is marked by significant definitional, methodological and theoretical differences compared to studies conducted in the developed world.