CALL FOR CHAPTER PROPOSALS

Working Title: *Football Politics and Cultural Production in Africa: Issues and Discourses*

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Concept Notes

In the popular imaginary, sports and politics do not mix. In line with this, most international footballing authorities – notably the International Governing Body of Association Football (FIFA), and the African Football Confederation (CAF) – claim to be apolitical in their *modi operandi*. They also claim not to be involved in the political affairs of countries. Yet, football remains one of the most politicised phenomena in the world (Carr et al 2020). This obviously follows from the fact that the collective sport has in many instances been used to project political ideologies or political symbols in some parts of the globe. In the 1930s for instance, football was deployed to project communism, fascism and Nazism in Mussolini's Italy, Franco's Spain and Hitler's Germany (Philips 2022; Dietschy, 2014). Also, football clubs, players and fans tend to lean left or right, and to even represent strong voices in secessionist agitations in their countries of origin. These stakeholders of the football industry also tend to be considerable forces in the promotion of religious identities, ethnocentrism and human rights in their countries (Kassimeris 2024; Power et al 2020). During the 2022 FIFA World Cup for instance, football players such as the German squad used the competition as a platform to defend LGBTQ+ rights. In one of their matches, this German squad wore armband in support of the LGBTQ+ rights and community. The FIFA banned this pro-LGBTQ+ armband. However, in protest of the ban and in view of continuously supporting the LGBTQ+ communities, the German players covered their mouth in a team photo during their subsequent match. The relation between football and politics is also seen in the fact that political issues most often determine the decision to award the World Cup tournament to a country. For instance, the international community questioned FIFA's decision to award the 2022 edition of the World Cup to Qatar, on the ground that the host country had a gloomy human rights record (Abdullah, 2022).

Football in Africa has likewise been political or politicised at all levels. The ostensibly apolitical space of this collective sport is often a home for political conversations (Saad 2018). In 1966 for instance, African countries boycotted the FIFA World Cup on the ground that African nations were not given a fair chance to qualify to the world tournament. This well known and greatest boycott of the World Cup brought to the fore issues of racism and xenophobia and led to the creation of the African Football Confederation (CAF). In addition to this, football has in many instances been used by many governments and political parties on the continent for political propaganda. In Cameroon for instance, the victories of the Indomitable Lions (the national football team) in international football tournaments are constantly utilised by politicians for political propaganda in the country. While football management in many African countries

most often grapples with issues of tribalism, secessionism, corruption and human rights violation among others, football players, teams and fans often get involved in political campaigns. In 2006 for instance, popular Ivorian player, Didier Drogba, embarked on a serious peace building campaign in his country. In a bid to put an end to a civil war that was brutalising his country, the international player fell on his knees and begged warring factions to disarm. Within a week, the players' touching plea was met with a ceasefire and elections, a "miracle" which experienced politicians and diplomats could not perform. Up till today Drogba is credited with bringing peace in his country and stopping a civil war which had lasted for over 10 years. Similarly, Egyptian international striker Mohammed Salah spectacularly emerged as a strong political symbol in Egypt in the days leading to the presidential election of March 2018. In the face of authoritarian military rule in their country, Egyptian youths shifted political conversation to unconventional platforms such as football, and tended to project Salah as a role model and use his image to engage in covert conversation about their political aspirations and their hostility to bad governance in their country. In the days leading to the 2018 presidential elections in the country, the internet was awash with images and memes endorsing Mohammed Salah for president. Millions of Egyptian youths made him a surprise runner-up in the elections, through serendipitous and relatively uncoordinated acts of protest (Saad, 2018).

The organisation of international football competitions on the African continent – notably the African Nations Cup (Afcon) – usually accidentally fuels issues of xenophobia, inter-state rivalry and clandestine migration. Thus, there has always been an inextricable connection between football and politics in Africa. This interaction between the two – often captured with terms such as "football politics" or "political football" – has unduly remained grossly under-studied. Most of the scholars who give a modicum of attention to the interactions between football and politics tend to exclusively focus on the Western or Asian experience (Abdullah, 2022; Brassel, 2022 Benedikter & Wojtaszyn, 2020; Alt, 1983; Maguire, 1993). Rare are scholars – such as Saad (2018), Zenenga 2013 and Derby 2003 – who explore the phenomenon from an African perspective. Also, no study in the literature available examines the impact of this politicisation of football on some other important sectors such as cultural production in Africa. In view of filling this gap, the present book seeks to examine the interactions between football politics and cultural production in the African continent.

In effect, like other human activities, sport is a source of inspiration to artists, storytellers and other stakeholders of the creative industry. This is evidenced by the enormous creative production that usually accompanies the organisation of sportive – notably football – competitions on the continent. For instance, the organisation of the AFCON always involves musical competitions aimed to collect/adopt the official anthems for the respective editions of the competition. In addition to this, the opening ceremonies of the AFCON always integrate giant and colourful spectacles of music, dance, choreography, costumes and visual arts, which do not only satisfy audiences' need for stories but also serve as powerful fora to test new artistic techniques and new art technologies. The opening ceremonies also serve as media for the

dissemination of political messages and slogans as well as the flagging of diplomatic relations. These very interesting issues are yet to catch the attention of scholars.

The organisation of the AFCON – like other international sports events on the continent – also inspires professional musicians and fans across African nations. The latter usually generate patriotic songs and other artistic works and programs which are popularly used to support national teams during the competition. These patriotic songs and movements also fuel the social debate in the respective countries taking part in the continental tournament. In addition to the issues mentioned above, national and international football tournaments on the continent have always been news-worthy events that attract the attention of both national and global media. Thus, there is a complex web of artistic or cultural activities around football events in Africa. The political dimension of the football competitions on the continent tends to even accentuate the inspiring nature and the news-worthiness of football events in Africa. How political football has interacted with the media and the creative industries in African countries is a very interesting question. This issue and many related ones have not really attracted the attention of scholars.

Against this background, the present project focuses on engaging academics in various disciplines to interrogate the interaction between political football and cultural institutions in Africa. Specific attention is given to the media and the creative industries in Africa. The editor, therefore, calls for chapters relating to:

- Football politics and the African creative artist
- Football politics and media production/programming in Africa
- Football politics, hate speech and the social media in Africa
- Football art and political activism in Africa
- Football politics, xenophobia and media diplomacy
- Politics and the organisation of football events in Africa
- Politics, football management and the socialites in Africa
- The opening ceremonies of football competitions and political propaganda in Africa
- Football politics and dance in Africa
- Football politics and cultural activism in Africa
- The representation of football politics in African cinemas
- The representation of football politics in visual arts
- Football politics and musical production in Africa
- Football politics, advertising and branding
- Football politics and traditional media in Africa
- Football politics and diasporic cultures
- Football, the arts and technological innovation
- Football politics, the arts and sustaining peace in Africa
- Football politics, gender and the arts in Africa

Submission Procedure:

Abstracts of not more than 400 words and brief authors' bios can be submitted to the following email addresses on or before **April 30, 2024**: floribertendong2019@gmail.com and floribertendong@yahoo.com . Notifications of acceptance or rejection will be given by **May 30, 2024**. Authors of accepted abstracts will be invited to submit their full chapters by **August 30, 2024**. The 7th edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) referencing style should be used. The font should be Times New Roman 12 and the word count should be a maximum of 7000. The prospective publisher for this book project is Palgrave MacMillan.

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