

Radio Soccer Commentary as Reconstruction and Performance of Political and Socio-Cultural Reality: The Case of Kenya in the 1980s

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The proposed paper seeks to develop the argument that African soccer and the practices that have developed around it can be perceived as a site for the re-construction and performance of political and socio-cultural reality. It is an argument that fits in a discourse that has been developed by, among others Peter Alegi (2010), Michael Schatzberg (2006) and Richard Giulianotti (1999). The paper locates its significance to the selected panel in two ways. First, it perceives Kenyan radio soccer commentary as a performance practice; in the sense that it is not a strait-jacket mediation of soccer match events but a distinct oral performance that fits in the genre of popular culture. Secondly, political and social cultural themes can be read to be underlying these radio soccer commentary performances, an observation that has also been made by Tern Van Dijk (1985) in his proposed approach to the analysis of media texts. Thirdly, the paper observes that the mediatization of soccer is not a simple instrumentalist process but a larger performance practice, an argument that has been made by Robert Craig (2006) in relation to media communication in general.

The major assumption of this paper is that an analysis of the structure and texture of the Kenyan radio soccer commentaries of the 1980s reveals patterns of the political and socio-cultural reality of that era. The paper adopts the inter-textual approach in the reading and interpretation of the radio soccer commentaries. We also draw upon Mikhail Bakhtin's theoretical approach to cultural texts. The methodological approach of this paper involves the selection and of samples of audio-recorded commentaries of Kenyan soccer in the 1980s from the Kenyan Broadcasting Cooperation (KBC). These are subjected to content analysis and the emergent structural and textural patterns perceived against the background of the Kenyan society and culture of the 1980s.

The conclusions drawn from the analysis and interpretation of the audio commentaries will be perceived against the background of our overall view that soccer cultures are sites for re-creation and performance, an observation that is perhaps put more clearly by Giulianotti (1999) in his observation that different cultures and nations have constructed their unique forms of identity through their interpretation and practice of soccer.