

12 January 2007

Rolling Inspiration

ACCESSIBLE ENVIRONMENTS: Late Summer 2007

Well, we're getting closer to 2010. That only means one thing in South Africa: the new soccer stadiums have to be finished and ready for functioning.

Luckily I'm looking at the Durban venue for the consultant team, to advise on the suitability of the facilities for disabled people and the general accessibility. The concept of it is the same basis as the Roman Colosseum: a large oval with a dry construction roof over the playing area suspended, and removable, built in 70-82AD. The seating capacity for the old one was 50 000 people; the seating capacity for the future one in Durban is also about 50 000 with a removable top tier for an additional 20 000, (making 70 000 in total). So maybe this design capacity is the ideal given the size of the sporting arena, and this hasn't changed over 2000 years.

The size of the old one (as a footprint) is 188mX156m; and the proposed Durban venue is 300mX230m. The height of the Roman one was/is 48.5 above ground level, whereas ours will be 45m high to the outer compression ring. The one in Rome had 80 entry/exits, apparently for quick evacuation of the building. We will have 30 entry/exits. We do have the advantages of elevators, which are generously used in the modern version, but it makes one think!

Safety is the buzzword these days, and I believe our experts and requirements in our safety codes are excellent, but there are many simple adjustments that can be made here which will improve this issue for everyone, and in the process make provision for disabled people which will be unique, and inclusive. These have been proposed, and it is hoped will be implemented, as it is in good time to do this without spoiling the 'iconic' status of this project.

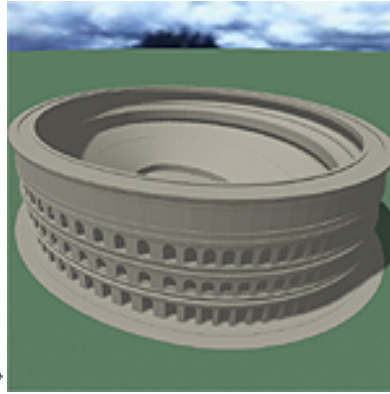
The modern designers have the additional element of vehicular traffic to contend with. Durban's stadium will have a podium which covers double the area of the stadium itself to house the storage of vehicles, and the horizontal circulation of it. As usual these so-called disadvantages can be turned into opportunities. This podium will be used as a level (Level3) from which the stadium can be accessed and from which the seating can be reached by going up and down.

It has been suggested that all the entries from this level to the lower+middle seating should have no steps. This leads to the whole of this area being a refuge area for everyone! And disabled people could have a wide variety of opportunity of sitting exactly where they want, not necessarily with other disabled people. At present the architects have provided 100 seating places for disabled people, all behind the goals at the level 5. There are also 140 VIP boxes (on level 4 and level 5) on 2 of the levels which will each seat about 20 people. These would be ideal for disabled people to be integrated; hopefully they will be accessible.

Facilities Managers of complexes like this stadium will have substantial input into how these facilities are used. Note will be taken of the amount of rubbish collected after each function; the periods of time between changing globes, cleaning materials required, where it is stored, who the lessees are for the food outlets, etc. One thing that has been noticed is that the cleaning regimes of large building complexes are controlled by the FMs. They often base their regimes on the building facilities provided. If the central cleaning store is in the basement, then the cleaners return their carts to this, and start from there every day. Or they might just feel that leaving it in the Disabled toilet facility on the floor assigned to them (after all it is kept locked) is much easier than going all the way back to the central store. This is a universal happening. This is not monitored by the Facilities Managing Team and left unnoticed for years; even in hospitals. Architects can contribute here by insisting that a subsidiary cleaning store be part of every node of ablutions.

Given our Constitution and the Employment Equity Act it is going to be vital that disabled people are also employed in this stadium. The turnstiles should be manned by some disabled people (women and black people too) as well as in all the food vending facilities. I will feel so proud if this is really

carried through, and that disabled people make themselves available to be employed here, as is their right. It will make this a truly South African Stadium.



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