Reconceptualising Sport for Development and Peace (SDP): An Ideological Critique of Nelson ‘Madiba’ Mandela’s Engagement with Sport

Introduction

The writing year of this paper, i.e. 2018, is one when we mourn the passing away of Kofi Annan but also in the same year we celebrate what would have been the 100th birthday of Nelson Madiba Mandela. As can be seen in the famous quotes below, the views of the two elderly African statemen are accredited a central place in the construction of the current Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) movement at beginning of the century. Mandela and Annan respectively said:

‘Sport has the power to change the world, it has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else can, it speaks to youth in a language they understand, sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers; it laughs in the face of all types of discrimination’ (Mandela, 2000).

“Sport is a universal language that can bring people together, no matter what their origin, background, religious beliefs, or economic status. Sports can play a role in improving the lives of whole communities” (Kofi Annan, 2010)

From the 2nd Magglingen conference in Switzerland held in December 2004 to date, the idea of sport as a tool for social change and development would emerge as a worthy proposition. So worthy that sport would be viewed a tool to champion and delivery of the 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and more recently the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Today however, many critics lament the failure of SDP to deliver development with many postulating that SDP is but an impersonation of the botched international development aid project (Levermore 2008; Hayhurst, 2009; Burnett 2015). Others condemn SDP as a continuation of the colonial project that advantages the global north at the expense of the global south – who are passive consumers of imported ‘development’ from overseas (Darnell 2014; Mwaanga and Banda 2014; Mwaanga and Adeosun 2017). Furthermore, leading scholars point
to an overly ‘evangelical’ discourse that presents vague theorisation of the development mechanisms as a prominent feature of the current SDP movement (Black, 2010; Coalter, 2013; Adams and Harris 2014).

At worst, critics argue that the SDP movement is a flawless public facade of international development that promises big but delivers little or nothing at all to the needy masses (Levermore and Grattan 2012). Surprisingly, and contrary to the evidence and analytical views presented above and elsewhere, the SDP global players in the global south appear to provide consent and religious commitment to the SDP movement and its norms albeit its failure to deliver development. This begs the question: why would some members of the global south buy into a project that fails to deliver development for them? This paper engages with this fundamental question among others. We entertain the notion that the SDP movement is an ideological house or what we shall analogically call the SDP temple in this paper. The paper shall explore how the SDP temple (re)produces the marginalisation of socially deprived communities while fostering the privileges of the elite few. We shall put forth and critically examine the systems of ideas, values and beliefs that result in the perpetuation of a false development consciousness. Which we argue is the cardinal component of membership to the SDP temple for SDP players in deprived global southern communities. The notion of ‘false development consciousness’ is based on the Marxist concept of false consciousness—the notion that the members of the proletariat unwittingly misperceive their real position in society and systematically misunderstand their genuine interests within the social relations of production under capitalist system (Laos 2015; Farley and Flota 2018). It denotes peoples’ inability to recognize inequality, oppression, and exploitation on one hand and to accept their position as natural and legitimate within the predetermined social strata. The paper will end with a suggestion of an alternative SDP temple that provides an alternative conceptualisation—particularly for those in the global south.
To do so, this paper argues that the quotes by Madiba and Annan previously presented are not fleeting statements: they are laden with conscious and unconscious ideologies or worldviews that work actively to (re)construct a particular social order. This is sustained by complex systems of relationships that privilege the dominant group which, in this case, is the global north. Accordingly, the paper privileges the assumption that behind a writer who is geographically situated is a motive and an agenda. Thus, all SDP texts and their associated practices and artefacts are responsible in the (re) production of collective ideological structures that become the modus operandi of SDP practice. Indeed, when SDP policy is presented to be consumed by SDP players in deprived communities, it is constructed as universal truth and politically neutral (Coalter 2009). It is an ethical imperative for SDP scholars to provide more accessible analytical frameworks and methods that SDP stakeholders can use as tools for engaging with the field in ways that allow authentic development possibilities to emerge.

To do this, the paper is supported by two main sources of evidence. Firstly, the paper is informed by the experiential knowledge from the first author’s 20 years protracted involvement in SDP as a global southern social justice activist and community development practitioner, SDP social innovator, and scholar. Secondly, the paper draws upon perspectives from Nelson Mandela’s autobiography 'The Long Walk to Freedom' and engages with the work of critical scholar Claire Oppenheim³ to discuss Ubuntu within Mandela’s worldview. Going by the assertion that SDP is in fact an ideological construction, this paper’s critique and evidence is presented and guided by the Ideological Criticism (IC) as an analytical framework.

**Ideological Criticism (IC) as Analytical Framework**

Together with other critical scholars within SDP and beyond, we postulate that dominant ideologies, more than truth or evidence, are determinant of social policy. Ideological Criticism (IC) is one analytical framework and method that can be useful to systematically debunk the dominant ideology or ideologies embedded in cultural institutions and artefact (Foss 2004).
To fully understand IC, one must familiarise themselves with the concept of ideology. Ideology is a complex system of values, ideas, and images that determines how individuals and groups interpret aspects of the world (Foss 2004). Because ideology is neatly structured within cultural artefacts or text, IC looks at the deconstruction of cultural artefacts and/or text as a starting point of the critique (Foss 2004; Yee et al. 2007).

No single school of social thought can be said to have birthed ideological criticism as an analytical framework or method of analysis. Rather, IC evolved from wide ranging scholars and schools of thought. For example, Karl Marx also used the term in stressing the connection between established economic interests and spiritual formulations (Wander 1984). Conversely, African revolutionaries such as Frantz Fanon and Steve Biko applied IC to frame their strategies to liberate against the colonial powers of their time. (Ahluwalia and Zegeye 2001).

An IC consists of four basic iterative steps, which shall be used later in the paper to uncover and critically examine the hidden dominant ideologies at play via SDP rhetoric, practices, text and artefacts. The four basic iterative steps of IC will allow us to deconstruct the ‘SDP temple’ via examining who its congregants are (i.e. temple leaders and worshippers) and what its constructive ‘bricks’ are. To aid this analysis SDP will be presented analogically as an SDP temple and one true story drawn from the lived SDP experiences of the first author will be used to contextualize this analysis.

The first step is to identify a person or elements of the rhetoric, practice and artefact. This can be the apparent recognition of, for example, the number of people at an SDP event or the length of a given text. In this step, one looks at what is initially observed on the surface. The second step is to identify the suggested elements linked to the presented or un-presented elements. In this seminal piece titled, “The ‘Ideograph’: A Link between Rhetoric and Ideology,” Michael McGee, refers to these elements as ‘ideograph’ – a word or words that build ideology and fulfil the ideological meaning (McGee 1980). Therefore, in this step, one performs a deeper observation into how the ideographs structured in texts are haunted by a
selective past, tainted by power interests (e.g. global south/north) and advocated by politically-charged worldviews both overt and covert (Foss 2004).

The third step is when one formulates an ideology or ideologies given the ideographs of the particular artefact or text.. Thus, words (and phrases) constitute a vocabulary of public motives that authorize and warrant public actions (Burgchardt 2005). McGee (1980) therefore encourages the study of ideographs (in our case sport, development and peace) to help identify the ideology from which they are manufactured. McGee (1980) describes that the difference between ideograph and an ideology is the fact that ideographs appear in the text and discourse, while an ideology is an interpretation. And finally, the last step is to identify the functions served by the ideology. During this step, the ideological critique examines the amalgamation of thoughts which structure insight and understanding with a central concern in the ways which social practices and/or artefacts frequently construct identities, freedoms and knowledge within a particular cultural institution, in our case SDP.

Within this step, the critique applies a hegemonic analysis because certain ideologies can reflects a form of manipulative control or emblematic consent in which we come to accept, knowingly participate in the substantial contribution to our own unhappiness.

Alternatively, counter-hegemonic literature aims at challenging the dominant ideologue by questioning the normative symbolic consent based on hegemonic views and values.

What constitutes ‘SDP Temple’?

As established above, this paper likens the SDP movement to a religious temple thus the ‘SDP Temple’. In this analogy it is argued that the SDP movement has its own unique system of beliefs and values that members uphold to validate its existence. By closely examining the daily practices, artefacts, text, rhetoric and discourse of the ‘SDP temple’, we can assume the framing features and underpinning ideologies. Here we start to detail the core features the ‘SDP Temple’ as an ideological structure. A personal narrative is used as a case study to contextualise
and bring to bear the core features of the ‘SDP temple’ and help debunk underpinning ideologies framing SDP as a positive movement. From the 1st author’s bank of true and lived SDP stories, we select one story for the purposes of this paper. This is a story entitled; ‘why Jonny died’. ‘Why Jonny died’ a is dark tale of one Kalingalinga EduSport peer leader who recently died from suspected alcohol and HIV/AIDS related symptoms. Jonny, his ascribed pseudonym, was a dedicated EduSport youth peer leader who diligently volunteered his time over many years (i.e. from 2004 to 2018) to provide peer mentorship and to peer teach younger children in his native township of Kalingalinga which is on the eastern outskirts of the Capital of Zambia, Lusaka. Kalingalinga, also called K-town, is a shanty compound with high levels of unemployment and poverty resulting in a myriad of consequences.

Even though Jonny only had a weak GCSE education, against all odds, he managed to excel to the point that he was selected to be one of the peer coaches who would provide SDP training and mentorship to UK students who were placed in his community under the International Development through Excellence and Leadership in Sport (IDEALS) programme. IDEALS, which started in 2006, is one of UK Sport’s bespoke partnership programmes which aims to increase the employability of UK University Students and their international counterparts through a peer to peer sport-based programme that develops their sport, leadership and life skills (As listed on the Wallace Group Universities website as of June 10, 2018). From 2007, July/August were the best for Jonny because that was the period when the UK students would be placed in his community. This period brought Jonny some financial rewards, privilege and a social status from being associated with white and privileged UK students. Jonny saw his global northern counterparts as role models, perhaps not necessarily in everyday life, but as justifying examples of his life choices. For Jonny this better life was attainable only if he maintained his voluntary membership of the ‘SDP temple’, so to extend the analogy.

However, as years went by, Jonny grew older and his family (and community) expected him to have a proper job. Jonny and other hosting peer leaders felt the pressure more in
September, the month after the UK students had gone back. Yes, gone back to UK: a glorious place; a land of opportunity and comfortable living that Jonny’s global northern counterparts had spoken about. Indeed, a view perpetuated by mainstream western media and confirmed on social media, where Jonny occasionally communicated with UK based colleagues. After the final goodbyes at the airport, Jonny would be back to his harsh and hopeless socio-economic reality of limited education, employment and businesses support opportunities. So in September, Jonny would escape this reality, this time not into the ‘SDP temple’ but into a habit of excessive drinking of cheap eliciting alcohol.

In a speech given in his honour by another peer leader during Jonny’s burial ceremony, Jonny was praised for his long service to his community as an SDP youth leader. The 1st author who was in attendance was over taken by a side conversation at the burial ceremony. The conversation was about what exactly killed Jonny. Some said it was alcohol; others said it was HIV/AIDS; while some pointed to depression. Perhaps what killed him is what had been killing other peer leaders and youth in his community – characterised by a hard-socio-economic environment of poverty, limited life opportunities made worse by a promises of good life through SDP engagement, elections promises and the evangelical rhetoric that is pervasive in many Zambian community. To be clear to state that being a member of the ‘SDP temple’ killed Jonny would be rather simplistic. However, one question still begs: what could have been done differently with the ‘SDP temple’ to save Jonny? To reiterate what the 1st author said to one peer leader, who blamed Jonny for his own death, expecting him to survive and build a good life in his socio-economically impoverished community is completely unrealistic, “it’s like trying to paint the ocean”.

Jonny was a bona-fide congregant of the ‘SDP temple’ He was a great believer in the SDP sermons and promoter of SDP’s success stories when needed. What hymns did he sing in the temple? What text did he read and hear? Who wrote the temple text and songs? Who were the other members of his ‘SDP temple’ bywhat were their privileges and opportunities compared
to his? We postulate here that examining Jonny’s engagement with SDP, it is possible to bring to the fore some defining features of the ‘SDP temple’. We start by reiterating the definition of ideology as a complex system of values, ideas, and (Yee, 2007). It is also useful to remind ourselves of three concepts that form ideology and as such this SDP temple, i.e ideograph, hegemony and false consciousness.

To further apply these concepts to understand what the ‘SDP temple’ is, we see Jonny’s worldview ideologically constructed by SDP beliefs and values that sport has the power to change his life and that of his community. This is of course what is advertised on the surface of SDP and represents the first step of our IC. After all, Jonny has seen a couple of his colleagues excel via SDP projects and have since left Kalingalinga to live in more elite communities. Therefore, the SDP dream is real, and it is confirmed in the ‘SDP temple’ hymns and sermons (analogically stated). Unfortunately, for Jonny, the SDP discourse and narrative as conveyed in SDP text, artefacts and practices, led to the deadening of Jonny’s consciousness and subsequently the engraining of the false development consciousness’. But what do we expect from desperate Jonny when his truth has been carefully packaged in mythical narratives with strategic omissions of certain truths which naturally lead to the privileging of dominant individual groups within the ‘SDP temple’ in Zambian and the global north.

To further explore the variables at play in the construction and sustenance of the ‘SDP temple’ and fostering of Jonny’s false development consciousness, one must look to the role of proof in SDP interventions. Ostensibly, the SDP field is overly concerned with a need of proof: proof of successful programme delivery; proof of critical approaches; proof of alternative voices being heard; proof of symmetrical power relations; proof of authentic participatory approaches – what Burnett (2015, 387) has later termed in sum the ‘proof of effect’. In trying to achieve ‘proof of effect’ under unrealistic resources and time frames, we find ourselves with unmanageable research questions and an inflammation of project results to justify the investments of donors and to further secure the re-investment of donors (Coalter 2009; Coalter
2013; Burnett 2015). As a result, there is a pattern of systematically ignoring contradicting evidence or perspectives which contrasts the normative expectations of said projects (Coalter 2009). In many cases, this results in dissociative or contradictory realities particularly for the target communities and individuals of SDP projects who read about the development success stories of their changed lives, even though the hardships of their live continue. We argue this last point directly from our own sub-Saharan African (SSA) black male diaspora experiences of the African development project.

The authors enjoy the privilege of now being academics and social justice activists located in the global north and therefore fundamentally represent an alternative view and voice to the white middle class majority in the ‘SDP temple’. These views are constructed from the continuous struggle of trying to negotiate multiple identities of existing in two worlds i.e. the global north and global south at the same time. Our views also represent our struggles which now revolves around promoting social justice via SDP and maintaining our heritage not just for ourselves but also our children (or future children) who like us have become engrained in western society and culture. They, like us, will operate in spaces or in ‘temples’ that privilege middle class white males. They must find ways to table their views, which are potentially rich due to their unique diaspora position which implies operating in two worlds and beyond. However, to start the ideological deconstruction of this ‘SDP temple’, we attempt to answer the following questions following the ideological critique method; who created the ‘SDP temple’? How was it created? And finally, why it was created? For this we continue to draw on Jonny’s story to contextualise our narrative.

Who are creators and members the ‘SDP Temple’?

As noted earlier, even though sport-for-development had been an influential intervention technique in global development prior to Nelson Mandela’s speech in 2000, arguably, that watershed moment helped in the UN’s adoption of the 58/5 resolution in 2003.
This resolution declared sport as means to “promote education, health, development and peace” (United Nations General Assembly 2003) and allowed sport practitioners, advocates and ‘us’ academics to inherit some of the limelight of global social change, a highly fashionable arena. Of course, when this institution in which we have all worked, studied and believed in starts to take centre stage –like the local child who becomes a global celebrity – our enthusiasm got the better of us and we let the situation play out. Similarly, for Jonny, a man of weak academic education with little prospects of employment, SDP allowed him to matter in his community as a person of central importance –especially when the IDEALS programme came to town. IDEALS in itself comes with a strap line objective “to increase the employability of UK Students and their international counterparts through a peer to peer sport-based programme that develops their sport, leadership and life skills”. (http://www.wallacegroupuniversities.com/uk-sport/45880239672018). Arguably, in Jonny’s case, it is questionable whether the IDEALS programme increased his chance of employability especially as he lives in a community (country) of high unemployment. Zambia’s 2017 unemployment rate value is 7.79 percent which makes it the 77th world’s highest unemployment rate. (As listed on the International Labour Organization website as of June 10, 2018)

Coalter (2013, 20) reminds us that sport, leadership, life-skills are terms which are “politically and ideologically advantageous”. Even the authors presenting this current critique would be remise if they did not articulate that they were co-builders in this SDP temple, and at one stage, advocated dearly in some form or another that sport could and would change the world. Whereas in reality sport and SDP represent a single piston inside the combustion engine of the global development vehicle. Sport advocates saw the increasing glory that could be had with being attached to sport, as by extension, this meant you were changing the world.

How was the ‘SDP temple cemented’?
In further studying this ideograph identified previously we begin to see the development and formulation of this ideology, which cements the bricks of the SDP temple and represents the third step of our IC. As noted previously, an ideograph are words and/or phrases which authorise accepted public actions. In this case, the accepted public action in sport and SDP practice is the use of sporting role models or iconic figures to confirm the universal success of sport (Lyle 2009). Nelson Mandela, since his speech endorsing sport, has been held as an iconic figure within the realms of sport for social change (Morodi 2011). Further proof of this can be found on the international platform of sport and development where, at the time of writing this paper, there are over sixty articles that make mention of Mandela's name in some form or other. Similarly, Keim (2003) argued that Mandela's speech led to an upturn in the number of organisations dedicated to development through sport agendas. Mandela aside, we appreciate that the use of role models and celebrities in the global north is perhaps an effective form of raising awareness of development issues around the world generally. But, as Easterly (2007) argues, we need to face an unpleasant reality that if celebrities or role models could have cured the issues of the global south, it would already have been achieved.

In the sad case of Jonny, the role models that were presented to him, knowingly or unknowingly, certified the possibility of an expeditious route out of poverty and deprivation through SDP, which only served to grow his false development consciousness. Jonny perceived SDP to be superior to his everyday struggles because iconic figures like Mandela are used in SDP rhetoric and their words taken as literal proof of the power of sport. In reality, Mandela also said that ‘education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world’ (Mandela 1990) and yet so far, we have not built education for development and peace movements and programmes in the same manner as we have for SDP.

*Why was it created?*
To understand why, we need to understand the function SDP serves for organisations; some of which may not necessarily be sport specific organisations, but have been quick to adopt SDP initiatives into their strategic operations. For example, organisations such as CARE International and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) have invested millions into SDP-focused programmes (Burnett 2010; Hartmann and Kwauk 2011). Similarly, BP, Deloitte and Vodafone – to name a few – support SDP programmes, despite the lack of substantial evidence to validate the power of sport (Levermore 2008; Levermore 2010; Coalter 2013). Indeed, in a world where corporate social responsibility (CSR) is imperative, the expectation is that companies contribute to some form of social, economic and environmental development (Levermore 2010; Coalter 2013). As such, sport serves as an obvious artifice to accomplish such outreaches and represents a win-win for non-sporting organisations (Levermore 2010).

Firstly, for an international organisation it is seen as good practice to be involved in some aspect of CSR, whether taken seriously or not (Levermore 2010). Therefore, supporting an SDP programme, which claims social change on a macro level, helps to tick off the CSR objectives in most corporate boardrooms (Levermore 2010). Thus, corporate social responsibility within this context can actually be construed as corporate image responsibility – especially as most corporations only simply require proof of the success of programmes without really questioning methods or mechanisms – and researchers have duly obliged (Burnett 2015).

Unfortunately for Jonny this is where he becomes an essential and functional cog in roofing the SDP temple. His snapshot testimonies as to his own experiences of SDP are multiply reproduced within the hegemonic discourse of SDP (Darnell and Hayhurst 2012). Despite his personal anguish at the state of his own reality that SDP has not improved, this ideology has taking hold. He consents and continually contributes (yearly) in a programme which at its conclusion repeatedly fuelled his own unhappiness, representing directly the fourth aspect of our IC. Though it must be said that within this hegemonic ideology, in this case SDP; resistance is at best ineffective as this will not succeed Jonny’s anguish given what he has already seen.
and been unable to accomplish through SDP. Whilst resistance at worst is counterproductive, given that to not participate means to not get his two-month yearly escape from his anguish and the realities of his everyday life (De Sousa Santos and Rodriguez-Garavito 2005). Therefore, his testimonies and the testimonies of many others just like him become evidential proof that SDP is making a significant difference. Whilst, on the other hand if SDP did make a significant positive contribution towards social change, for international organisations, such as the few mentioned above, their businesses are likely to function more successfully in a more thriving social climate anyway – hence the win-win (Levermore 2008). In both cases the ‘SDP temple’ and belief systems grow.

Summary

This analysis of an ‘SDP temple’ is by no means conclusive, nor is it meant to be, in reality it is simply meant to give a snapshot of some of the issues within the SDP field. With that said, it is important given that much has been made so far over the somewhat illusive power of sport, that we offer some counterpoints as our aim is not to completely dismiss SDP. As noted by Hartmann and Kwauk (2011) and agreed by us, SDP can be a powerful social force in certain circumstances: SDP can build bridges and teach much needed social skills including leadership, tolerance and cooperation. As well as moral values through the humility to be found in victory and the acceptance of defeat (Hartmann and Kwauk 2011; Spaaij and Jeanes 2012; Mwaanga 2012; Schuklenkorf, Sugden and Burdsey 2014). It does not really require us to reiterate these positive aspects, though given the critiques presented within this paper so far, we feel it necessary to at least clarify this position. Furthermore, SDP as a global focused development strategy is here to stay especially as the International Olympic Committee and the Commonwealth have identified sport to meeting several objectives from the SDG’s (Dudfield and Dingwall-Smith 2015; IOC 2015). Therefore, this paper advocates for greater consideration
of the philosophical worldview of Ubuntu based on the ethos of Nelson Mandela into SDP programmes of change.

Ubuntu is a diverse and multidimensional construct which at its core represents the ontological disposition of Africa and stresses that an African person is only complete through other persons, emphasising relationship through communal participation, (Bhengu 1996; Ramose 1999; Kamwagamalu 1999; Shutte 2001; Mwaanga and Banda 2014). This philosophical disposition of Ubuntu underpinned Mandela's worldview (Oppenheim 2012) and underpinned his engagement with political issues, economical issues and social issues including sport (Oppenheim 2012). Unfortunately, many contemporary SDP initiatives and projects do not account for Ubuntu in their construction, thereby lacking a unique African perspective (Mwaanga and Banda 2014). Unsurprisingly, Mwaanga (2012) noted that the cognisance of Ubuntu seems to have eluded many (not all) of the practitioners and academics (both northern and southern) who practice and work in the global south. As expected then, the inclusion of southern discourses into the SDP movement is still a rarity as opposed to commonplace practice (Mwaanga and Banda 2014).

Further, we are aware that in an ironic or paradoxical way, we ourselves may be repeating some of the flows of SDP, centring a role model (Mandela) with our version of what he implied about Ubuntu. As made clear earlier, our arguments are not directly against the express use of role models per say; but more against who is used and the manner in which they are used. Indeed, Mandela served as an inspiration for this paper due to his international renown, his popularity within SDP and his public recognition and understanding of a SSA. We are not suggesting because of this, that SDP can suddenly disassemble the current SDP temple through more consideration of Nelson Mandela’s Ubuntu philosophy. Nor do we suggest that the cognisance of Ubuntu is easily applicable to every SDP project; but we apply it specifically to the case of Jonny, as an example of how this may have saved his life. So the question therein is what does Ubuntu really have to offer?
**Ubuntu: Examples from Nelson Mandela**

To reply we turn to Nelson Mandela, who when questioned about his Ubuntu in 2006 by South African journalist Tim Modise, gave this response:

'A traveller through a country would stop at a village and he didn't have to ask for food or for water. Once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him. That is one aspect of Ubuntu, but it will have various aspects. Ubuntu does not mean that people should not enrich themselves. The question therefore is: Are you going to do so in order to enable the community around you to be able to improve?'

(Oppenheim 2012, 1)

We can see from Mandela's own explanation of Ubuntu, the tenets of diversity expressed previously, but still with an innate, natural and instinctive responsibility to support one’s fellow human beings at its core. It is these traits which make Ubuntu valuable in African societal contexts (Broodryk 2002). Whilst Mandela’s explanations offer little more than superficial evidence as to the traits of Ubuntu, these explanations also resonate with the authors who grew up in a Zambian village and Nigerian city. We recognise that these traits are better understood when lived as opposed to communicated, when orally exchanged as opposed to written about (Nussbaum 2003). So the questions why Ubuntu and why Mandela as an analytical lens from which to scrutinise the SDP temple. To answer, we turn to the work of Claire Oppenheim⁵, who deconstructs Ubuntu specifically within Mandela's worldview, creating a springboard to critically understand where this SDP temple presented above has missed the Ubuntu philosophy in its theoretical and practical conceptualisations (Mwaanga and Banda 2014).

The first community stage of Mandela's Ubuntu philosophy and practice is derived from his childhood and heritage (Oppenheim 2012). The term Ubuntu actually originates from the Xhosa culture, the culture in which Mandela was born into, but can be equally found in other
SSA cultures with similar semantic value (Broodryk 2002; Mwaanga 2012; Oppenheim 2012; Mwaanga and Banda 2014). With a direct translation as a ‘person is a person through other persons’ its emphasis is on ‘other’ or ‘otherness’, an extremely prominent feature in the Ubuntu philosophy which drives Mandela towards his first community stage (Broodryk 2002; Mwaanga 2012; Oppenheim 2012; Mwaanga and Banda 2014). Through the recognition that the 'other' (white South Africans) are all part of one family of South Africans and all require liberation through meaningful relationships and genuine connection, (Oppenheim 2012; Mwaanga 2013).

Mandela noted that within the African culture an individuals extended family such as cousins, nephews, nieces, uncles and aunties are actually brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, fathers and mothers (Mandela 1995; Oppenheim 2012). Demonstrating the idea of connection required to relate to the 'other', recognising every South African as one family and one community. The diverse range of familial relations used to describe extended families in the West signifies the importance of distinction and the establishment of individual place and position, which is akin to the capitalist individualism of western society (Oppenheim 2012). This distinction in Jonny’s case perhaps contributed to his demise. The fact that he knew that he would most likely always be on the outside looking in. The fact that there was always a distinction between him and the volunteers as at least they got to leave the poverty and misery of the locality every year. This distinction reinforces the nature of individualism (Easterly 2007) perhaps leaving Jonny to feel like he was on his own.

Whereas, if we started to move towards the family like approach expressed by Mandela in the Ubuntu philosophy and detailed in Oppenheim (2012), it could bridge the dichotomy of distinction and foster genuine connections between people allowing for more openness and honesty on both parts. Perhaps Jonny may have become more open about his everyday struggles, which at that stage, SDP may have given him the support he truly needed. This approach would also humble ‘us’ SDP scholars and practitioners sport, allowing us to recognise
that we require more than sport alone, more than our intellect, more than surface relationship, more than our enthusiasm to truly change people’s lives.

The second community stage of Mandela’s Ubuntu philosophy reconstructs the concept of individualism described above, shifting its frame of reference to that of an individual for the collective good. Oppenheim (2012) argues that the second community stage of Mandela’s Ubuntu philosophy stems from the realisation of his own individual purpose to his people and to all the peoples of South Africa. Mandela has himself reflected in his autobiography that there was no defining moment nor divine revelation that instructed him to devote his life to fighting for his people, he simply found himself doing so and could do nothing else (Mandela 1995).

Certainly, Mandela noted in his autobiography, when ‘Krune Mqhayi’, the Xhosa historian and poet, criticised the white foreign interlopers, who did not care nor respect the native African culture and had stolen much from the native Africans including their freedom, Mandela saw that a black African person may stand up to white supremacy (Oppenheim 2012). This inspiration infused Mandela to begin his ‘long walk to freedom’ (Mandela 1995). At a time when perhaps more globally known icons such as Martin Luther King (MLK) would have served as a more obvious inspiration, Mandela noted that the conditions of MLK’s struggle were totally different to his and therefore had to draw his inspiration from within South Africa (Mandela 1995). Recognising South Africans themselves can generate the praxis of their own liberation (Freire 1970; Freire 1993; Mwaanga and Adeosun 2016).

On reflection, our discussion of ‘how’ the SDP temple came to be comes to mind. Nelson Mandela should indeed serve as a role model to us all, as we all need liberation in one form or another; however, his inspiration should apply on a macro level. On a micro level, the individual struggles of local communities are heterogeneous and as such SDP programmes should aim to identify local role models who understand the conditions of their struggle; after all, continual changes on the micro level will eventually effect macro level change (Blumberg 1991). Jonny’s role models were the volunteers who came to his community and whilst this is not necessarily
a bad thing, these volunteers arguably could not fully comprehend or advise on his everyday struggles. Hence, more promotion of people in SDP who understand and have prospered in the local context may have given Jonny a more realistic ambition. Clearly, similar arguments have been echoed frequently in the literature with varied suggestions for example, more focus on peer leaders (Lindsey and Gratton 2012; Spaaij and Jeanes 2013) or searchers (Easterly 2007) or bottom up knowledges and approaches (Schulenkorf 2012). However, within the Ubuntu context, a role model is not just someone who is looked up to for inspiration but someone with a collective responsibility in which he or she owes themselves to others and has a responsibility to help his or her community (Louw 1995). This is based upon the concept of your struggle is my struggle, reaffirming the Ubuntu proverb of “the river that forgets will soon dry up” (Nussbaum 2003; Malunga 2009, 75).

The third community stage of Mandela's Ubuntu philosophy came to fruition during his time in prison (Oppenheim 2012). Guided by the Ubuntu principles of communication and conversation, Mandela realised that his vision for South Africa required all communities including white, Asian, Indian South Africans. However, his previous stance as a freedom fighter had restricted him from negotiating with the white community (Mandela 1995). Therefore, his time on Robben Island gave Mandela access to the previously distant Afrikaner community, allowing him to develop relationships, firstly with his guards and secondly with the South African government, (Oppenheim 2012). Mandela's experience in prison taught him a valuable lesson: whilst he always assumed Ubuntu to be an innately black African quality4, Mandela realised through his guards that all humans have a core Ubuntu, which can be accessed if the right buttons are pushed (Oppenheim 2012).

Mandela himself recalls in his autobiography one exceptionally cruel guard, who was forced to leave the Island due to prisoner complaints, but before doing so spoke to Mandela and wished him and his people luck (Mandela 1995). The guard’s comment was proof to Mandela that in all humans, even the most ruthless, there is a core of decency and if their soul can be
touched, they can change (Oppenheim 2012). Further to this and as noted by Mandela (1995), hate is a learnt trait, but people can be taught to love as love is a natural human condition. Mandela argued that it was the apartheid system which was cruel, not the people indoctrinated by it; therefore, every human is an individual with a core of Ubuntu which can be accessed (Oppenheim 2012; Mandela 1995). Consequently, during the long years spent in prison striving for the freedom of his people, Mandela realised that all the people of South Africa needed to be free of apartheid (Mandela 1995; Oppenheim 2012).

Mandela recognised that both freedoms were inextricably entwined: black South Africans needed liberation from oppression and the oppressor needed liberation from hate, which was externally imposed on his Ubuntu, (Mandela 1995; Oppenheim 2012). Unlike Ubuntu, SDP has a one-dimensional focus and mostly sees people of the global south as the ones to be liberated whilst the global north does the liberating (Mwaanga 2013; Darnell 2014; Banda and Holmes 2017). For many like Jonny, this impression is perhaps one of the failings of SDP researchers and practitioners. This naivety to expose the livelihood of those they are working with alone, without exposing their own livelihood, struggles, journey, ambitions, hopes and fears. (Mwaanga and Adeosun 2016; 2017). Exposing their everyday struggles, hopes, fears and demons may have helped Jonny realise that life is not automatically better in the west or elsewhere, and that struggles still exist. This may have assuaged his depression and general mental health, though of course there are no guarantees.

To sum up here, we advocate that the Ubuntu philosophy can greatly assist in the socio-political negotiations of global southern development, given its distinctive manifestation within African cultural contexts (Bhengu 1996; Ramose 1999; Kamwagamalu 1999; Shutte 2001). We acknowledge the limitations of these arguments as speculative and theoretical at present. Furthermore, Ubuntu and its application within SDP cannot and will not be flawless. Firstly, there is no guarantee that people of the south will passively accept Ubuntu or its tenets when advocated in SDP projects. People should not (and we would not wish to do so) be
underestimated in their abilities to exercise their individual agency and resist and/or reject the teachings of Ubuntu, and they may well do so (Teffo 1994; Rossi 2004). At the same time many may reject the teachings of Ubuntu for the favouring of philosophies introduced or brought in by northern experts given the obvious successes of the global north compared to the global south. Secondly, Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013) claim that the recent widespread promotion of Ubuntu in African social discourse is simply an elitist project conceived by the new black elite. Therefore, any mobilisation of Ubuntu-ism will likely end in social, political and economic failure (Matolino and Kwindingwi 2013). Further, they argue that Ubuntu and its uses are antiquated, thereby applying to a more archaic period, because of this there is nothing promising about the uses of Ubuntu today (Matolino and Kwindingwi 2013). However, like Metz (2014) and Koenane and Olatunji (2017), we argue that there is promise in Ubuntu and suggest like the title of Metz’s paper, it is ‘Just the Beginning for Ubuntu’.

An illustration of the last point is Mwaanga and Prince (2016) who provide a critical commentary on how liberatory pedagogies can be developed within an SDP programme through the combination of Ubuntu and Paolo Freire’s critical pedagogy. Using the Go Sisters programme as a launchpad, the authors principally enable us to understand the possibilities of SDP as a site for transformative education – especially when the programme is indigenously developed. Using the analytical lens of Freire’s critical consciousness, which is underpinned by the concept of ‘Ubuntu Sisterhood’, Mwaanga and Prince (2016) not only give a considerate presentation on how an SDP initiative may be a site for empowering and transformative education, but also detail how ubuntu was an effective tool in the process of fostering dialogue (Rossi and Jeanes 2016). The authors are careful and clear in their conclusions that their study is merely a starting point and pose several questions for scholars in this area to consider when moving forward. Beyond Mwaanga and Prince (2016), the relationship between Ubuntu and Freire has historical links. For example, Steve Biko the anti-apartheid activist is known to have read Paolo Freire’s seminal work ‘The Pedagogy of the Oppressed’ and agreed that education
should be a political act, related to ideas of nationhood, culture and community, linked to Ubuntu (MsiLa 2013). Biko’s ideas related to concepts such as black consciousness very much in the Freirean outlook of consciousness raising, but talked clearly about the interrelationship between the consciousness of the self and the consciousness of the community, denoting aspects of ubuntu-ism (Biko 1987).

In SSA, we consider this Ubuntu-ism a work in progress, meaning that in situations when its ideals are compromised, social meetings (called Indaba) should be summoned in order for the community of actors (practitioners, academics, participants, peer leaders) to discuss the fostering of Ubuntu (Mwaanga 2012). Moreover, in the wider SSA socio-cultural context, indabas are a common occurring during social occasions such as weddings and funerals. Therefore, we dare to imagine a future were ‘SDP Indabas’ are embedded in the community discourse of SDP.

To conclude, by presenting Ubuntu and using Nelson Mandela as an example, we demonstrate how a global southern philosophy can counter the dominant ideologies shaping the SDP movement with good transformative potential.

**Concluding Thoughts**

We began by conceptualising SDP through the iconic quote of Nelson Mandela and Kofi Annan, which further promotes the hegemonic discourse that sport is inherently great regardless. Tenuous validations such as these have considerably supported the growth of the SDP movement to date, to which we argue is an ideological temple. Through the perspective of a personal narrative, we detailed the story of Jonny, a young man whose involvement in SDP couldn’t save his life but his involvement in SDP helped build this ideological temple. We deconstructed this ideological house through the ideological critique method expressed through four iterative steps.
The first step is to identify a person or elements of the rhetoric, practice or artefact. In our case, the identification of Jonny and the IDEALS student. The second step identifies presented and un-presented elements usually texts known as ‘ideographs’ which help form ideology. In this step we took a deeper observation into Jonny’s story and the rhetorics surrounding his involvement in the IDEALS programme. The third step involves the development of ideology, from ideographs. This ideology is propagated in common discourse that SDP is legitimately a way out of endemic poverty and such ideas are cemented through iconic figures like Mandela and Annan who once advocated for the unquestionable transformative power of sport. Finally, step four, identifies who is served or whose interests are safeguarded by this ideology. A hegemonic analysis is applied because the ideological critique recognises that some ideologies become dominant which form a false development consciousness.

As a response using excerpts from Jonny’s story, we argued for more cognisance of Ubuntu represented through Nelson Mandela as an alternative house within SDP research and practice. With respect to some notable exceptions (see Mwaanga [2012]; Mwaanga and Banda [2014]; Mwaanga and Mwansa [2014]), the use of Ubuntu within SDP work appears to be limited, even though most SDP initiatives and projects attempt to focus their efforts in SSA (Mwaanga and Banda 2014). A curious fact given that SSA is a region of the world as mentioned previously in which the Ubuntu philosophy is perhaps most prevalent. For that reason, we agree with the warning offered by Giulianotti (2011) that the SDP field needs to remember the large amount of diversity and differences within the sector and as such there must be room to consider alternative viewpoints – such as Ubuntu – within field work. A committed application of Ubuntu through Nelson Mandela's examples will be one that privileges southern perspectives, mobilises community engagement and contributes to restorative justice. Chuwa’s (2014, 44) recent analysis of justice in African contextual situations is worthy of quoting here:
'Most indigenous African cultures that embrace Ubuntu require restorative justice which is founded on human dignity and equality within human society. Its objective is restoration of peace and order. In his autobiography, Nelson Mandela explains Ubuntu restorative justice. He states that the oppressor and the oppressed both need liberation since a person who takes another person’s rights is a prisoner of his own hatred and prejudice’.

How restorative justice through Ubuntu in SDP will look like in practice remains to be seen. One possible idea from the authors perspective and from reflecting on the paper, which at the outset was meant as a tribute to Nelson Mandela, but in our own reflexivity have come to realise this paper is both a tribute to Mandela and Jonny alike. The authors believe that restorative justice has to do with the un-silencing of voices in SDP, whilst we know that this claim has been made numerous times in SDP and by numerous authors. In the specific case of Jonny and Mandela, we see two people invested in similar worlds albeit at different times but one of them is never talked about. Therefore, perhaps indabas practice especially in the SSA context become a tool to dig deeper, to allow more voices to be heard and to allow more people to be heard, seen and talked about. What is required then, is more SDP research and programmes, especially those committed to SSA, to further consider Ubuntu within their specific methodologies. This is one of the ways that the relative normative practice of SDP can be upset (Darnell 2014) whilst simultaneously offering more empirical evidence to support the application of Ubuntu within SDP.

Notes

1. It is important to note that the authors of this paper were both born within sub-Saharan Africa and their views and perceptions are framed from an African male Diaspora.

2. The binary of global north and global south is ‘of course, geographically inaccurate and too generalised to encompass the complexities within and between nations, but it is perhaps the least problematic means of distinguishing between relatively wealthy countries and continents [Europe/North America] and relatively poorer ones [Africa]’(McEwan, 2009, pp. 13-14). Therefore, in this case the global south is meant to mean Africa, specifically sub-Saharan Africa.
3. Much of the literature on Nelson Mandela’s Ubuntu philosophy is derived from the work of Claire R. Oppenheim’s paper titled ‘Nelson Mandela and the Power of Ubuntu’ which contributed greatly to completing this paper.

4. Despite this, we say in lieu of the arguments presented in this paper (and the first endnote) that the tenets of Ubuntu are not restricted or unique to black Africans and/or Africans alone. Indeed as recognised by Nelson Mandela himself, that whilst Ubuntu is not necessarily a uniquely African trait, it tends to resonate most prominently within African people and communities (Mandela 1995; Oppenheim 2012).

5. The authors would like to extend their gratitude to Dr. Ben Powis for his linguistic support.

References


