Social Capital and Collaborative Environmental Governance: Lessons from Western Cape, South Africa

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ABSTRACT

To cope with the increasing complexities of environmental challenges, new innovative models of governance that are capable of greater flexibility, speed and adaptability have emerged. A collaborative partnership, linking the public, private and voluntary sectors should be flexible, open to learning and capable of restructuring itself over time. South Africa has followed international trends with new collaborative partnerships varying greatly in form and purpose emerging over the last 15 years. The generally facilitating context which coincided with the transformation of the post-apartheid South African state after 1994 characterised by an openness to consider and experiment with organisational learning and institutional innovation flourished in the environmental sector with a diversity of new forms evolving in less than a decade.

The Western Cape Province in South Africa, world renowned for the Cape Floristic Region and one of the world's 25 most threatened biodiversity hotspots has also experienced a proliferation of 'collaboratives'. In an effort to contribute to our knowledge and understanding of building social capital and institutional capacity in these type of governance settings, this paper will focus on the evolution of one of the more successful of these new forms – the Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve - from an organisational learning perspective before reflecting on the question if the concepts of social capital and organisational learning are useful to explain its apparent success?. Although inconclusive, enough pointers have been found in the exploration of the case study to warrant further research as to the role of social learning and social capital as explanation why particular collaboratives seem to be more successful in achieving desirable outcomes than others.

INTRODUCTION

To cope with the increasing complexities of environmental challenges, new innovative models of governance that are capable of greater flexibility, speed and adaptability have emerged. These innovations are necessitated by the need for governments to find alternative ways to add to public value and adopt new roles to cope with 'the limits to governance' which threaten to overwhelm public action in the environmental arena. It is in this context that the trend towards decentralised and localised collaboratives that are self-regulated and diverse, which can act locally and freed from much of the standardising constraints characteristic of hierarchical bureaucratic government, must be viewed.

South Africa has followed international trends with new collaborative partnerships varying greatly in form and purpose emerging over the last 15 years. The generally facilitating context which coincided with the transformation of the post-apartheid South African state after 1994 characterised by an openness to consider and experiment with organisational learning and institutional innovation flourished in the environmental sector with a diversity of new forms evolving in less than a decade. The Western Cape Province in South Africa, world renowned for the Cape Floristic Region and one of the world's 25 most threatened biodiversity hotspots has also experienced a proliferation of collaboratives.

As South Africa is still at a relatively early phase in the evolution of collaboratives for environmental governance, it presents us with a window of opportunity for studying and learning from both our successes and failures. Initial research focussed on developing an analytical tool for identifying, describing and documenting the evolving characteristics of collaboratives (Muller, 2007a), organisational innovation and new governance models (Muller, 2007b), application and refinement of the tool using case studies in the Western Cape (Muller, 2008), the role of multi stakeholder processes in collaborative environmental governance (Muller, 2009) and the challenges of public leadership in involving new actors and the question if collaboratives improve the public value outcomes (Muller, 2010).

The conclusions so far are inconclusive so the quest for identifying the key success factors continues. However so far we did learn that (1) a surprising variety of new decentralised and innovative forms of collaboratives emerged in the last decade; (2) there is apparently no single blueprint or model for collaboratives that will suffice for all problems and contexts; (3) the analytical tool which is made up of 15 criteria is useful to comparatively describe and map the key characteristics of collaboratives; (4) inclusive multi-stakeholder processes is key for trust and consensus building; (5) on face value one could argue that collaboratives have created considerable public value; and (6) the leadership challenges associated with collaboratives requires a shift of emphasis from management to enablement skills and collaborative leadership requires a strategic vision while activating, orchestrating and modulating the co-management processes to achieve the desired collaborative outcomes.

The question, however still is why a particular collaborative seems to be more successful in achieving desirable outcomes than another one in a comparable context? This paper intends to explore the informal dimensions beyond the formal - captured in the concept of social capital - to gauge if concepts such as social learning and social capital could be helpful to provide some explanations to the

question posed above. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that social capital could have an enormous effect on natural resource management and even the effectiveness and functioning of governments. These emerging governance structures could therefore offer an exciting window of opportunity to study social and organisational learning at this point in time.

SOME THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Collaborative environmental governance

Various terms are used interchangeably to refer to collaboration, such as co-management, participatory management, stewardship, multi-stakeholder processes and pluralism (Hara 2003: 19; Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004: 64-70). Margerum (2008: 487) describes collaboration as the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders from a broad cross section of organisations engaging in an intensive process of consensus building in search of innovative solutions, and sustained commitment to problem solving. Co-management — a form of collaboration — is defined by Borrini-Feyerabend et al. (2004: 69, 70) as a partnership in which relevant role-players develop and implement a management agreement. It is based on the principle that local communities have a role in conservation and management, and that partnerships with government are essential (Hara 2003: 20).

Collaborative resource management and associated processes strive to facilitate the expression of concerns by all role players, taking advantage of the diverse stakeholder capacity. Effective organisation and the willingness to reach consensus by stakeholders is therefore essential. The purpose of consensus building is to meet the needs of all participants, facilitating acceptance of responsibility for the solution and the implementation thereof (Carley and Christie 2000: 184). Where stakeholders have conflicting interests, the negotiation process, in pursuit of the common good, attempts to underscore how agreement among stakeholders is more advantageous to pursuing contrasting interests (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004: 69, 103—105). Teamwork required for consensus building requires leadership that is emotionally intelligent, as concealed agendas and power struggles need to be effectively managed. Effectively managed teamwork also facilitates collaborative learning (Cowling et al. 2008: 9484).

The involvement of civil society in collaborative processes increases the knowledge base for influencing decisions, and plays an increasingly important role in achieving participatory democracy (Hara 2003: 20—23; Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004: 103—105). Power sharing, and the equitable distribution of benefits in the joint decision making process, also uplifts the less powerful stakeholders. The capability of different stakeholders and the willingness of governments to delegate will determine the stakeholders' responsibilities (Hara 2003: 24, 29). Collaborative management therefore adopts the subsidiarity principle which requires governments to decentralise tasks and responsibilities to the lowest level in society that is capable of effectively managing the specific tasks (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004: 356; Müller 2009: 78), and calls for the maximisation of civil society participation (Carley and Christie 2000: 184;185).

Given the declining financial and capacity resources of many state institutions, collaboration provides the opportunity for maximising the efficient utilisation of resources and competencies (Bovaird 2004: 202). By acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of institutions and other stakeholders, collaboration deviates substantially from the simplified approach to governance (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004: 103—105). If we focus on the local level, the implications and changes of our impact on our natural capital and ecosystem services on which we depend, may be seen, and felt, more immediately. It is on the local level where the consequences of environmental degradation are most keenly experienced and where successful intervention is most noticeable, and there tends to be greater confidence in government action at the local level (Blewitt, 2008: 76-77).

The form of structures through which co-management are implemented – generally known as collaboratives - are typical non-hierarchical network-like social systems which constitute the basic social form that permits inter-organisational collaboration to develop. A collaborative partnership, linking the public, private and voluntary sectors should be flexible, open to learning and capable of restructuring itself over time. In this regard a core competency is networking because the most important functions of networks is their capacity to share ideas and values and develop trusting relationships and methods of cooperation and collaboration.

It is pointed out by Blewitt (2008: 79) that networks also frequently serve to facilitate reflexive and critical social dialogues, the sharing and accumulation of collective knowledge and understanding, and social and community learning, creating avenues in which common ideas and purposes can be recognised and expressed.To create experimentation or learning-oriented organisations, one should evolve visions that invite continuous questioning; one should foster values that can open the organisation to new insights and encourage staff to develop understandings that generate capacities for learning and continuous self-organisation.

Social Learning

According to Pahl-Wostl et al (2007) different authors which explored the dimensions and nature of governance that enable adaptive ecosystem-based management, identified the following four critical factors for dealing with social-ecological dynamics during periods of rapid change and reorganisation: *firstly* learning to live with change and uncertainty; *secondly* combining different types of knowledge for learning; *thirdly* creating opportunities for self-organisation toward social-ecological resilience; and *fourthly* nurturing sources of resilience for renewal and reorganisation. The notion of social learning is increasingly cited as an essential component for co-management of natural resources. The concept is defined by Schusler et al (2003:311) as “learning that occurs when people engage one another, sharing diverse perspectives and experiences to develop a common framework of understanding and basis for joint action”.

The foundations of social learning can be conceptualised as a group process taking place in networks or “communities of practice” which emphasise the development of shared meanings and practices that characterise the social entity as a whole and which are embedded in a structural governance context and produce specific outcomes (Pahl-Wostl et al: 2007). According to the authors the *governance context*

includes the pertinent legal and organisational framework as well as the cultural and socioeconomic environment. The *processes* typically taking place within networks as the core have a duel nature: *firstly* the processing of factual information about a problem and *secondly* solving management problems through the integration of social and content issues facilitated by relational practices such as joint field visits or common training sessions. The content management and social involvement are strongly interdependent and cannot be separated. The *outcomes* also refer on one hand to the implementation of measures to deal with an environmental problem; but also on the other, to the capacity of the stakeholder group to deal with problems as well. It is assumed that high quality processes in this type multi-stakeholder collaboration lead to outcomes that are of better quality both in technical and relational terms.

Focussing on community-based co-management, Schusler et al (2003:317-324) identified eight process characteristics that enabled social learning. These characteristics are (1) open communication; (2) diverse participation; (3) unrestrained thinking; (4) constructive conflict; (5) democratic structure; (6) multiple sources of knowledge; (7) extended engagement; and (8) facilitation. They concluded that social learning is necessary but not sufficient for collaborative management and other requisites for co-management including capacity, appropriate processes, appropriate structures and supportive policies are necessary to sustain joint action. According to Pahl-Wostl et al (2007) a key suite of complementary processes in analysing and understanding social learning are: (1) the establishment and agreement of the ground rules for interaction; (2) strong leadership and facilitation; (3) the framing and reframing of a problem domain; (4) the negotiation strategies; and (5) the management of boundaries between representation of constituencies and the development of a collective identity during the learning process.

Social learning increases adaptive capacity and leads to sustained processes of attitudinal and behavioural change by individuals in social environments through interaction and deliberation. For social learning to increase both the adaptive capacity and the effectiveness of collaborative governance requires according to Pahl-Wostl et al (2007) writing in the context of water management, a fine balance between the stabilising and change-supporting elements of a governance regime. Where regulatory frameworks and cultural values provide long-term stability, flexibility and change are provided by learning and negotiation processes in dynamic networks. The most resilient collaborative networks show a balance between increasing institutionalisation and the formation of social capital, in other words if structures and rules become rigid too quickly, the formation of social capital is impeded.

Social capital

The idea that communities not only possess physical capital (roads and infrastructure), economic capital (investment and assets), and human capital (people and skills) but also social capital (interpersonal networks) was according to Margerum (2011: 182, Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000:16) popularised by Robert Putnam (2000) and others. In the same line Blewitt (2008:78) states that social capital is “a term we can use to denote those relationships by which groups and

individuals communicate, network, build trust, enter into dialogue, resolve conflicts, identify and solve problems and realise collective and individual potential as agents of sustainable development." Pahl-Wostl et al (2007) emphasise the role of networks, sense making, leadership, diversity and trust as well as the role of organisations capable of accumulating the experiences and collective memory they need to cope with surprise and turbulence. A distinction is also made between bonding and bridging social capital: bonding social capital is inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups whereas bridging social capital is outward looking and tends to cut across social cleavages (Margerum, 2011: 186).

In this regard social learning and the formation as social capital take place in networks or "communities of practice" (CoP) (Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000:16). CoPs can be understood, according to Pahl-Wostl et al (2007) as social forms to manage and generate knowledge and where membership goes beyond participation and is linked to joint practice. CoPs constitute social capital because the results of social learning practices are preserved in its shared roles and practices where the concept 'social capital' is used here to refer to the features of social organisation such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. It is argued that the higher the social capital in a given social context, the lower the transaction costs needed in the provision of a public good such as environmental quality or improving ecosystem resilience.

The importance of social networks that can develop among the participants in a collaborative group (building social capital), allowing them to communicate effectively, identify common goals, build trust, and seek consensus, is often emphasised in the literature on collaboration (Margerum, 2011: 182). Margerum (2011: 182) identifies five factors that can be used to assess collaborative efforts as well as the ways in which these elements might be measured. The assessment factors and measures are summarised in the table below:

ASSESSMENT FACTORS	MEASSURES
Community networks: *there are strong networks in the community in which the collaborative is working*	▪ Participation and turnout ▪ Membership number ▪ Volunteer rates in community organisations
Linked Stakeholders: *stakeholders are linked into social networks*	▪ Representativeness of participating stakeholders ▪ Membership networks of stakeholders ▪ Amount of communication through networks
Connectivity:	▪ Membership numbers and

collaborative is connected into the community through members and volunteers	meeting attendees ▪ Volunteer numbers ▪ Newsletter subscribers ▪ Cross-sectional community interviews
Reputation: *collaborative has a good, established reputation in a community*	▪ Longevity of collaborative ▪ Staff experience and turnover ▪ Change agent reputation ▪ Community perception and awareness
Implementation programmes: *implementation programmes capitalise on social networks of collaborative*	▪ Implementation approach designed around existing linkages ▪ Programmes linked to reputation ▪ Programmes targeted to leverage points ▪ Evaluation of programme outputs and outcomes

Adapted from Margerum (2011: 188)

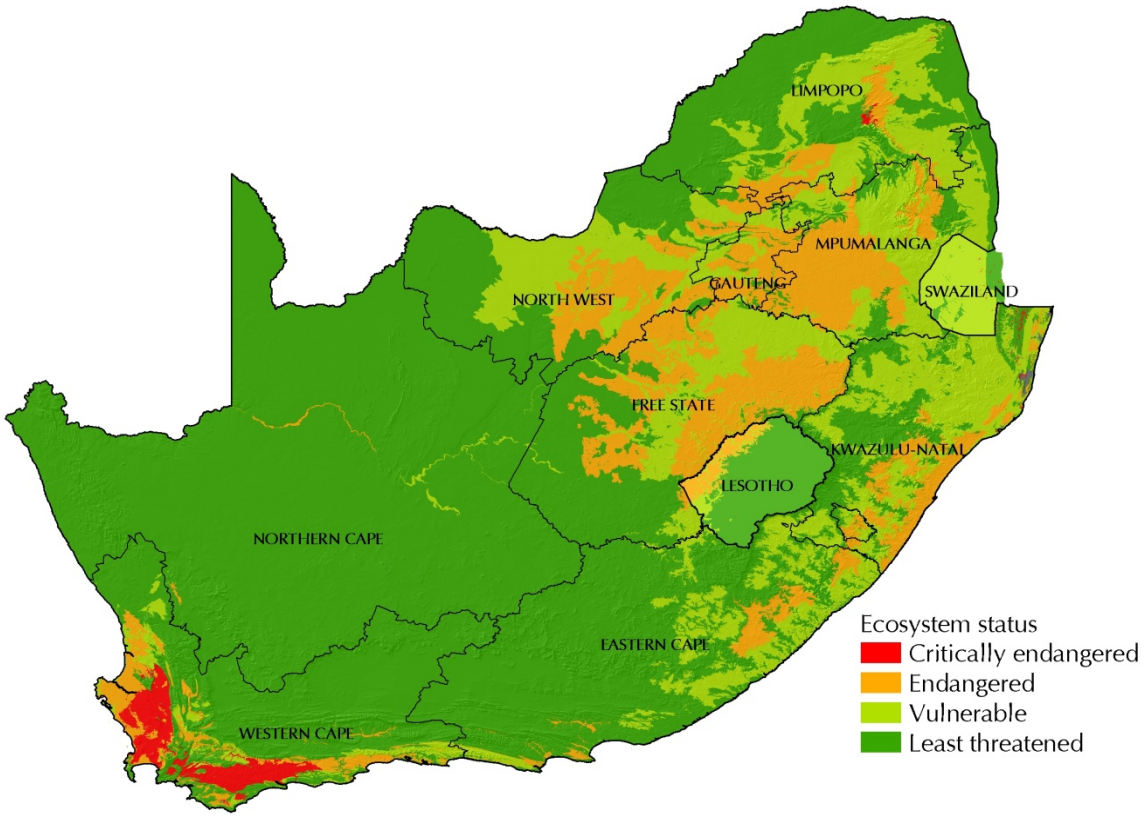
CASE STUDY: CAPE WEST COAST BIOSPHERE RESERVE (CWCBR)[i]

To explore the potential of the notions of social learning and social capital to provide some pointers to explain to the question why a particular collaborative seems to be more successful in achieving desirable outcomes than another one in a comparable context, the Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve (CWCBR) – as an example of a apparently successful collaborative - was chosen. The CWCBR has received international 'best practice' recognition by being requested by United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to build capacity of other biospheres by being one of only five biospheres elected to present a case study at the 3rd Congress of International Biosphere Reserves held in Madrid. The details included in this section were mostly obtained through a personal interview with the CEO of the Cape West Coast Biosphere Company Ms Janette du Toit (2012) and won't be referenced repeatedly. Where other sources are referenced, this will be indicated.

The initiative to establish a biosphere reserve originated with civil society when a group of landowners recognised in 1998 that urgent action was necessary to ensure that appropriate development plans been put into place to guide the

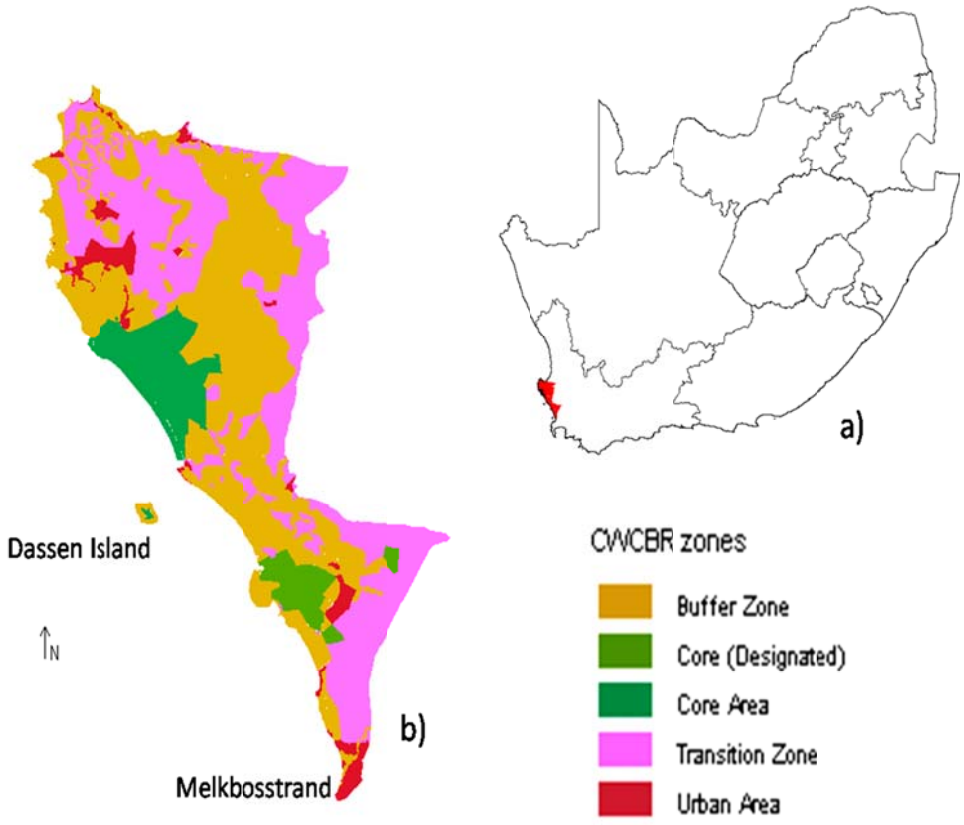
sustainable development of the Cape West Coast. The West Coast is unique in terms of its' natural beauty, biodiversity, history and culture, but the expansion of housing, industry and agriculture have placed great strain on terrestrial, marine and aquatic natural ecosystems. As the City of Cape Town expands northwards, the population of the West Coast is projected to double between 2002 and 2012 (CAPE, 2012). The City of Cape Town (one landowner from the group who initiated the idea was also a councillor) and the landowners funded a private consultancy (Dennis Moss) to initiate the process and prepare the application for the establishment of a biosphere reserve. Through a process of extended stakeholder engagement the buy-in was sought and the support obtained from the relevant national government departments, provincial government, the City of Cape Town and the four smaller local authorities in the area. A decision made to proclaim the Cape West Coast Biosphere as a biosphere reserve was ratified by local, provincial and national government in 2000.

The Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve (CWCBR) covers 378000 hectares of coastal lowland plains and is located in the Western Cape Province in South Africa - world renowned for the Cape Floristic Region and one of the world's 25 most threatened biodiversity hotspots (see map below) – and stretches northward from the City of Cape Town to the Berg River (Cape West Coast Biosphere, 2012). It is one of seven biosphere reserves in South Africa and was established in 2000 when the area was designated by the UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme as a biosphere reserve. The biosphere reserve model promotes harmony between development and the natural surroundings and serves as models of sustainable development and social learning. Biosphere reserves have three basic functions: (1) to protect the biodiversity, natural ecosystems, attractive landscapes and the local culture; (2) to promote social and economic progress, without damaging or depleting the natural resources (sustainable development); and (3) to promote education, research and monitoring (UNESCO.2012).



The CWCBR reserve is known for its mosaic of diverse ecosystems and habitats which include marine, beach and frontal dune environments, pans, wetlands and rocky outcrops. The land cover and uses in the Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve consists of agriculture, which covers 47 per cent of the CWCBR, natural vegetation covering 25 per cent, and other vegetation including alien vegetation 16 per cent. Urban uses were found to cover 8 per cent of the reserve already. The aim of the Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve is to: (1) foster human development that is ecologically sustainable; (2) conserve the landscapes, vegetation and species of the West Coast (3) lend support for research, monitoring, education and information exchange related to local, national and global issues of conservation and development (Cape West Coast Biosphere, 2012).

A biosphere reserve typically has three different management zones: a core zone (areas protected by law), a buffer zone around the core zones to protect these from the impacts of human activities, and a transition zone where human settlements are located. The CWCBR has two core areas: the West Coast National Park, which includes the Langebaan lagoon, a recognised wetland of international importance under the RAMSAR convention form the northern core zone of the biosphere. The southern core zone consists of the Blaauwberg Conservation Area which is also a formally protected area as required by UNESCO's criteria. The zoning of the CWCBR in terms of the different zones is illustrated by the map below:



a) The Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve in relation to the Western Cape and South Africa
b) The Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve and the zones which comprise it

Source: Vardien (2010)

The governance structure of the Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve takes the form of a not-for-profit company (section 21 company under South African law) - known as the Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve Company - which is managed by a board of nine directors. The directors are elected annually by the members (both individual and institutional). After the formal establishment of CWCBR in 2000 the governance structure for the first six years consisted of the Board of nine Directors (elected by the first 12 members) of the company with as office and administrator funded by the province. During the period the board focussed on the development of a strategic plan and initiated the process to develop a spatial development plan for the reserve. The first coordinator was appointed in 2006 with international funding, initially for a 3 year period.

The governing board has monthly meetings which are well attended. Although the board provide strong leadership it also allows the CEO freedom to explore opportunities as she sees fit. The board members represent a variety of stakeholders and communities and diversity of skills (financial management, environmental consultant, legal, political, community leadership) and are linked to other networks for example Birdlife Africa, Langebaan Ratepayers Association, local governments and political networks (also being councillors), West Coast National Park Forum, co-operatives and tourism organisations. The board is supported by a team of technical advisors from provincial and local government stakeholders.The staff employed by

the CWCBR now includes a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), conservation, education tourism officers. Due to the number of successful funding applications the implementation of projects (mostly 2-3 year projects) gained momentum in 2008 and the staff compliment grew from 2 in 2006 to 14 in 2012.

The goals of biosphere as formulated in its strategic and business plans are implemented through programmes and projects. The programmes/projects are focussed on three main areas namely (1) conservation projects (for example the development of the spatial development plan, the conservation stewardship programme which aims to conserve biodiversity on private land through different contractual agreements and incentives; alien vegetation eradication, fynbos restoration projects); (2) education (outreach to school children and teachers); and (3) the trails and tourism project (Cape West Coast Biosphere, 2012).

The conservation and education projects got first off the ground in 2006 through international and local funding but the trails and tourism project, although part of the original strategic plan, took the longer. In 2007 funding for a feasibility study was acquired and in 2010 the project got SA Lottery funding and has since develop into a separate unit employing 7 people. The latter project has a strong social development component in that local community organisations (e.g. !Kwathu, the San community centre, Fossil Park and local tourism organisations) are contracted by the CWCBR to execute subprojects thereby contributing to the building of capacity in the community. A small grants programme made possible by funding by the Table Mountain Fund in 2010-2011 saw community organisations, co-operatives and churches implement a total of 18 conservation and tourism projects, also contributing to building capacity. The trails and tourism project has given the CWCBR considerable exposure with newspaper articles appearing in the local press and a feature article in a national outdoor magazine (Getaway) while it also communicates through electronic newsletters and utilises social media with a Facebook page and Google advertisement. CWCBR employs its own social media person.

In 2010 the CWCBR started to target industry specifically with the conservation stewardship programme in mind as some companies also owns land valuable from a biodiversity point and has attracted six corporate members to date. One company (Afrisam) joined the stewardship programme and a contractual nature reserve was established on land it owns. It is also funding two conservation officers to manage the land. This prompted the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to buy an adjacent property which will also managed by the CWCBR. The CWCBR are now getting funding from industry, the province, 3 of the four local governments, SA National Lottery and tourism organisations on a continuing basis which makes it financially more sustainable and less dependent on short term project based funding.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

By all accounts the CWCBR is an example of a successful collaborative which has added to the creation of public value in terms of environmental, process and socioeconomic outcomes. Although it might not be possible to draw any concrete conclusions on the question why it is more successful in achieving desirable outcomes than others in a comparable context, it could be worth exploring some

pointers based on some of the theoretical points of departure relating to social learning and social capital theory.

Collaborative development and the formation of social capital: In the 12 years of its existence it has evolved from the pre 2000 phase when problems and partners was identified and encouraged to commit themselves to the establishment of the CWCBR. The period from its establishment in 2000 till 2006 when the current CEO was appointed can be characterised as the information gathering and stakeholder engagement where issues were explored and strategic and business plans were formulated. Since 2006 the CWCBR moved into the implementation phase where agreements were put in place and programmes and projects implemented. The structuring and regularisation of the on-going interactions among stakeholders or the institutionalisation phase might have already commenced with the rapid expansion of staff after the trails and tourism project got off the ground in 2010.

The evolution of the CWCBR followed the textbook model of collaborative partnership development and extensive stakeholder engagement has preceded the conceptualisation and implementation of the strategic plan, business plan and projects. This process is mostly independently facilitated by the consultants commissioned by the CWCBR to do feasibility studies before embarking on any project. The rapid expansion of staff after the trails and tourism project got off the ground in 2010 could trigger institutionalisation which would indicate that it has moved into the next life cycle phase. In its success there might be a danger lurking as the most resilient collaborative networks show a balance between increasing institutionalisation and the formation of social capital, in other words if structures and rules become rigid too quickly, the formation of social capital is impeded. Although the fact that the CWCBR has lately also become directly responsible for the conservation management of land could be beneficial for its long term sustainability, it indicates a shift from being an organisational collaborative working through other organisations to that of an action collaborative (Margerum, 2008).

The governing body has shown strong strategic ***leadership*** over the lifetime of the CWCBR in the way they have built trust and consensus around its vision and goals and ensured a continuity of approach. An important measure of the trust (and indirectly the stock of social capital) is how conflict and disagreement is managed. The diverse group of individuals who serve on the Board do not always agree on all issues. Decision-making by voting is avoided and decisions are made on a "sufficient consensus" basis, an example is a recent board meeting which lasted eight hours and eventually a decision was taken with 80% consensus. This illustrates a degree of maturity and constructive conflict management.

The CEO has also displayed considerable strategic and tactical acumen in her approach. Realising that local governments in the area are important but potentially the weak links she focussed initially (2006-2007) on building a personal relationship with the individual city managers and to work and build on their individual visions for the reserve and their communities' role (and making a point of making the local authorities 'look good') as well as identifying and personally meeting with potential funders while preparing funding applications. Her ***networking*** skills – a core competency in working in collaborative settings – undoubtedly contributed to a large extend to the success of the biosphere.

Social capital and adaptive management: It is reasonable to ague the continuity of approach and activities facilitated shared experiences and collective memory that contributed to the accumulation of social capital and the development of adaptive capacity and resilience. In the South African context with its Apartheid past, one could argue that it is of key importance to build 'bridging' social capital (as contrasted with 'bonding social' capital where elite environmental interest groups are allowed to push only the environmental agenda as has happened in one of the other biosphere reserves in the Western Cape) which is outward looking and to cut across social cleavages. In this regard the biosphere has done particularly well by targeting individuals and community based organisations from previously disadvantaged communities as project contractors through for example the small grants programme which has saw community organisations, co-operatives and churches implement conservation and tourism projects. In this type of approach the CWCBR has created more than 800 (some temporary) jobs and contributed to capacity building and poverty alleviation.

The ability to learn to live with change and uncertainty is also important in this regard (Goldstein, 2012: 131). The uncertainty caused by short term project funding and how to proceed, necessitated a 'learning by doing' approach. A case in point is the appointment of a conservation manager to implement the conservation stewardship programme in the area. It was the first example of where a government mandate (CapeNature the provincial conservation agency) was given to an NGO to implement. He had to feel his way and first developed trust and relationships through stakeholder engagement before he started to negotiate contractual reserves and biodiversity land offsets with developers.

Presence of community networks and linked stakeholders: Although not empirically verifiable there are indications of fairly well developed networks in the community from environmental interest groups (e.g. Birdlife Africa), ratepayers associations, political parties, tourism promoting associations, national park forum to church groups which has interacted with CWCBR in some or other way. Of interest is the use of social media in in this regard by the CWCBR. Again, although not quantifiable in terms of the role they play in communicating the CWCBR vision, one can assume that stakeholders i.e. the board members, the team of technical advisors, project contractors, tourist operators, teachers and any other beneficiaries are well linked to networks both formally (e.g. examples above) and personal.

As far as ***connectivity*** into the community is concerned there is evidence that through the exposure gained, especially by the trails and tourism project, the profile of the biosphere has considerably been raised and meetings and workshops are well attended and the number volunteers are increasing. There is considerable community perception and awareness of the CWCBR because of its impact on poorer communities by creating jobs (more than 800) through the implementation of its projects and education (more than 5000 children and teachers reached).

Reputation: Probably the best pointer to the stock of accumulated social capital is the fact that the collaborative has a good, established reputation in the community: as one of the longest functioning collaboratives in the Western Cape the WCBR has managed to build a very solid reputation for itself in the 12 years of its existence. It

has experienced a very low staff turnover (in fact only one staff member left the company) and although the board has experienced some turnover the core of directors are the same individuals (two who resigned came back after 5 years) which facilitated continuity of approach and activities. The shared experiences and collective memory must have contributed to the accumulation of social capital.

Implementation programmes: The biosphere concept with its philosophy of experimenting with models for sustainable living through learning by doing lend itself well out for the study of social learning and the building of social capital. On face value it can be argued that considerable value has been created by this collaborative in terms of environmental, process and socioeconomic outcomes. For example 24010 hectares more land is under better conservation management than before by statutory, contractual and voluntary protection in reserves ; the leveraging of R1 286 778 in funding since 2008 for projects from both national and international sources and which brought in over R5 054 000 into the region as revenue; the flexible organisational forms and apolitical stance of the not-for-profit company facilitated cooperation between stakeholders less hampered by bureaucratic and political constraints; inclusive multi-stakeholder processes with information and knowledge sharing and building trust and consensus over extended periods of time; as well as capacity building and job creation.

SUMMARY

Although social learning is a necessary but not necessary sufficient for collaborative management and other requisites for co-management including capacity, appropriate processes, appropriate structures and supportive policies are necessary to sustain joint action, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests that social capital could have an enormous effect on natural resource management and even the effectiveness and functioning of governments. Although inconclusive in so far this case study is concerned, this paper has explored and found enough pointers to warrant further research as to the role of social learning and social capital as possible explanation to the question why particular collaboratives seem to be more successful in achieving desirable outcomes than others in a comparable context.

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[i] The observations in this section are based on a personal interview with Janette du Toit (Chief Executive Officer: Cape West Coast Biosphere Reserve) on 9 May 2012.