



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

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INTRODUCTION

- ❑ institutional innovation flourished in the South African environmental sector with a variety of new collaborative partnerships emerging over the last 15 years
- ❑ the trend is towards decentralised & localised collaboratives that are that are capable of greater flexibility, speed and adaptability, self-regulated and diverse and which act locally free standardising bureaucratic constraints of government

STUDY OPPORTUNITY OF EVOLVING COLLABORATIVES:

- analytical tool for identifying, describing and documenting the evolving characteristics of collaboratives (Müller, 2007a)
- organisational innovation and new governance models (Müller, 2007b)
- application and refinement of the assessment tool using case studies (Müller, 2008)
- the role of multi stakeholder processes in collaborative environmental governance (Müller, 2009)
- the challenges of public leadership and the question if collaboratives improves the public value outcomes (Müller, 2010)

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WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED SO FAR?

- a surprising variety of new decentralised and innovative forms of collaboratives emerged in the last decade
- apparently there is no single blueprint or model for that will suffice for all problems and contexts
- the analytical tool which is made up of 15 criteria proved useful to comparatively describe and map key characteristics of collaboratives
- inclusive multi-stakeholder processes is key for trust and consensus building
- on face value one could argue that collaboratives have created considerable public value
- collaborative leadership requires a shift of emphasis from management to enablement skills

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THE SEARCH CONTINUE

The question, however still is why a particular collaborative more successful in achieving desirable outcomes than another one in a comparable context?

Could (part of) the explanations to the question posed above lie in the informal dimensions - captured in the concept of social capital – and processes such as social learning?

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SOME THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE: ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Environmental governance, which essentially concerns the sustainable management of natural resources is therefore not the sole responsibility of government but requires collaboration, partnerships, co-managements, and negotiation with all stakeholders, including civil society, non governmental organisations (NGOs), businesses and land owners

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SOME THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE: CO-MANAGEMENT OR COLLABORATIVE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

collaboration is 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

Margerum (2008: 487)

co-management (or collaborative environmental management) can be defined 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

Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.* (2004: 69-70)

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SOME THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE: SOCIAL LEARNING AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

social learning can be defined 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”.

Schusler et al (2003:311)

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.”

Blewitt (2008:78)

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SOCIAL CAPITAL

- ❑ the idea that communities not only possess physical capital, economic capital, and human capital but also *social capital* was popularised by Robert Putnam (Margerum, 2011: 182)
- ❑ the formation as social capital takes place in networks or “communities of practice” (CoPs) which can be understood as social forms to manage and generate knowledge and where membership *goes beyond participation and is linked to joint practice* (Pahl-Wostl et al, 2007)

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SOCIAL CAPITAL

- ❑ 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 to refer to the features of social organisation that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit. (Pahl-Wostl et al, 2007)
- ❑ 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. (Pahl-Wostl et al, 2007)

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PROCESS CHARACTERISTICS (Schusler et al, 2003)

process
characteristics
that enable
social learning

1. open communication
2. diverse participation
3. unrestrained thinking
4. constructive conflict
5. democratic structure
6. multiple sources of knowledge
7. extended engagement
8. facilitation

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ASSESSMENT FACTORS AND MEASSURES (Margerum, 2011)

ASSESSMENT FACTORS	MEASSURES
Community networks: there are strong networks in the community in which the collaborative is working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participation and turnout ▪ Membership number ▪ Volunteer rates in community organisations
Linked Stakeholders: stakeholders are linked into social networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Representativeness of participating stakeholders ▪ Membership networks of stakeholders ▪ Amount of communication through networks
Connectivity: collaborative is connected into the community through members and volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Membership numbers and meeting attendees ▪ Volunteer numbers ▪ Newsletter subscribers ▪ Cross-sectional community interviews
Reputation: collaborative has a good, established reputation in a community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Longevity of collaborative ▪ Staff experience and turnover ▪ Change agent reputation ▪ Community perception and awareness
Implementation programmes: implementation programmes capitalise on social networks of collaborative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementation approach designed around existing linkages ▪ Programmes linked to reputation ▪ Programmes targeted to leverage points ▪ Evaluation of programme outputs and outcomes

CASE STUDY: THE CAPE WEST COAST BIOSPHERE RESERVE

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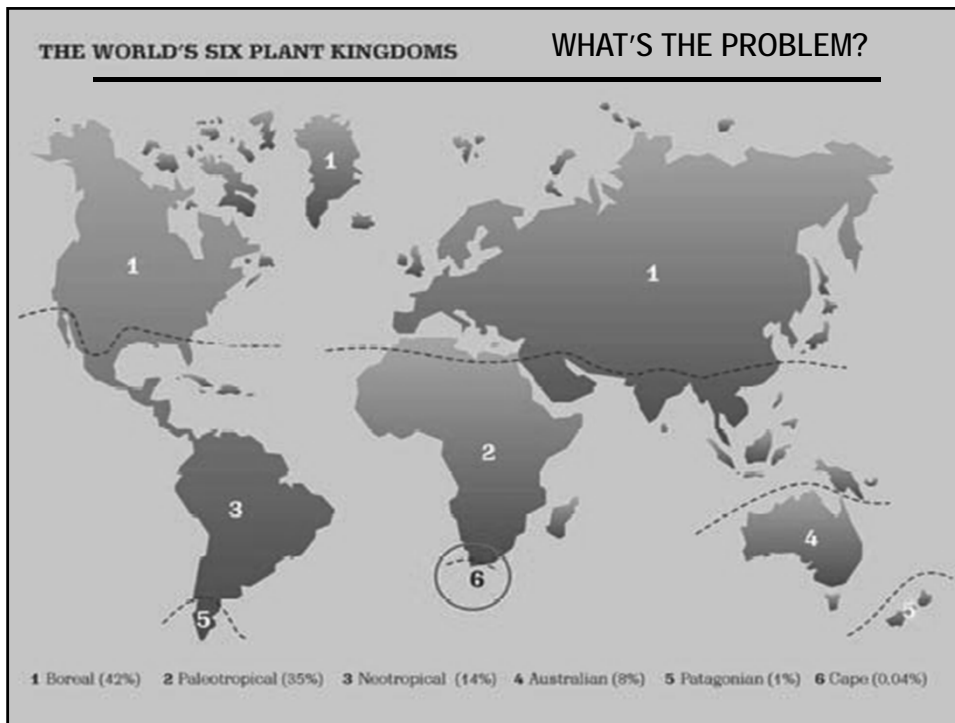


BACKGROUND

- ❑ 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

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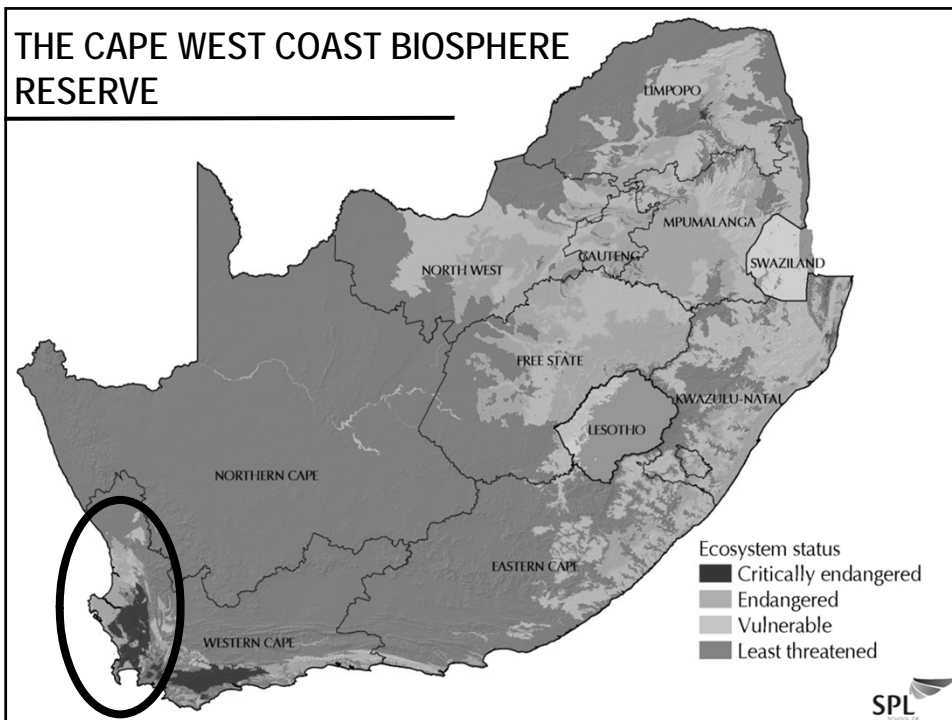




CAPE FLORAL KINGDOM

the world's sixth and smallest floral kingdom
only one within confines of a single country
more than 9 000 plant species
with 2400 species considered threatened
another 300 species critically endangered

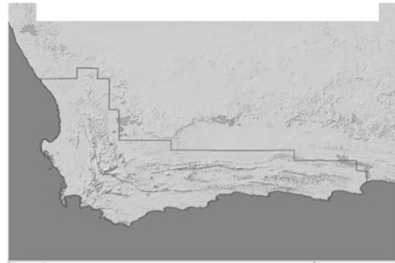
Photo: Dirk Bellstedt



BACKGROUND

- 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
- the environmental governance challenge is that most of the priority areas fell outside of existing statutory protected areas and mostly on privately owned land

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?



most of the priority areas fall outside of existing statutory protected areas and mostly on privately owned land



Photos: Dirk Bellstedt

BACKGROUND

- 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
- the environmental governance challenge is that most of the priority areas fell outside of existing statutory protected areas and mostly on privately owned land
- it was established in 2000 when the area was designated by the UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme as a biosphere reserve, one of seven biosphere reserves in South Africa

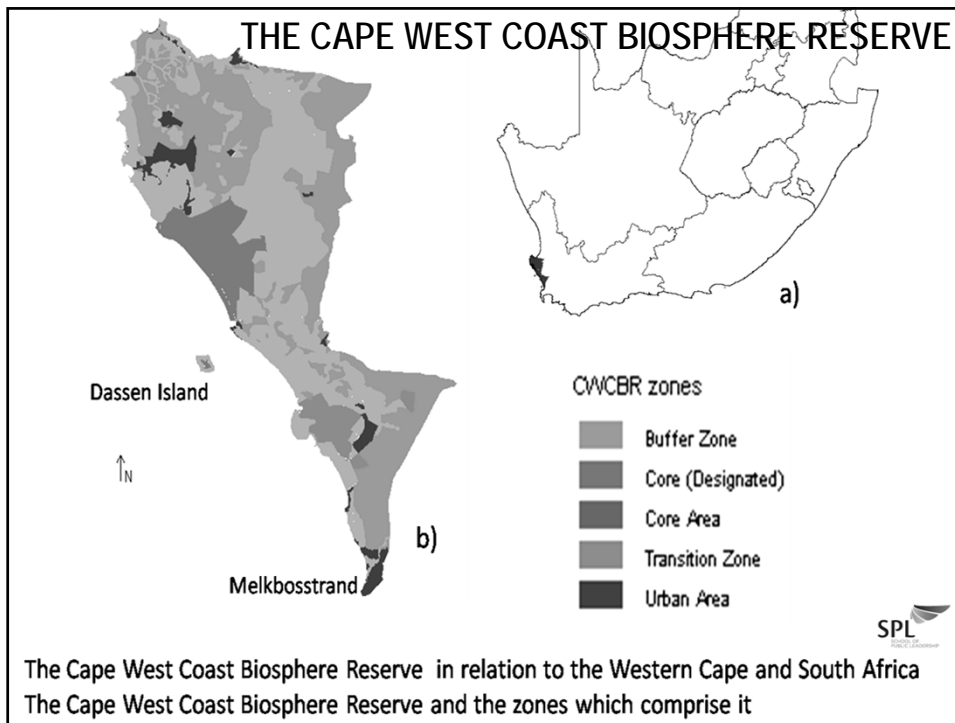






Photo: Dirk Bellstedt



CWCBR was selected as case study because:

- 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 the CWCBR an example of a apparently successful collaborative and has received international 'best practice' recognition UNESCO
- since establishment the CWCBR has added considerable public value in terms of the increase ha of land under better conservation management and the leveraging of funding

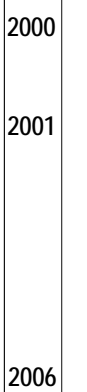
THE CAPE WEST COAST BIOSPHERE RESERVE (1)

- 
- 1998 initiated by group of landowners to ensure proper development plans are put in place
 - 1999 preparation of application funded privately
 - 2000 stakeholder engagement to get the buy-in and the support from the national government departments, provincial government, the City of Cape Town and the four smaller local authorities in the area.
 - 2000 CWCBR formally established after UNESCO approval

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THE CAPE WEST COAST BIOSPHERE RESERVE (2)

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- 2000 a not-for-profit company with board of directors was set up as governance structure
 - 2001 an office and administrator funded by the province
development of a strategic and business plans with programmes/projects focussed on three main areas (1) conservation (2) education (3) tourism through a process of extensive stakeholder engagement
 - 2006 appointment of full-time coordinator

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THE CAPE WEST COAST BIOSPHERE RESERVE (2)

2006	conservation and education projects got off the ground first after international and national funding was secured
2007	funding for a feasibility study for the trails and tourism project acquired
2010	trails and tourism project got SA Lottery funding strategy to target industry which owns land valuable from a biodiversity point is beginning to pay off
2012	the staff compliment has grown from 2 to 14 with conservation, education and tourism officers and membership to over 300 including 6 corporate members

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EVALUATION: THE EVOLUTION OF CWCBR

- ❑ the evolution of CWCBR followed the textbook model of collaborative partnership development with the problem-setting phase (1998-2000), direction-setting (2000-2006), implementation (2006-2012?) whereas the institutionalisation phase might have commenced
- ❑ the rapid expansion of staff after the trails and tourism project got off the ground in 2010 could trigger institutionalisation
- ❑ CWCBR has lately also become directly responsible for the conservation management of land which implies a change from being a primarily an organisational collaborative to a hybrid action collaborative

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CHARACTERISTIS WHICH ENABLE SOCIAL LEARNING (1)

- ✓ extended stakeholder engagement during the information sharing phases where issues were explored and strategic and business plans were formulated.
- ✓ independent facilitation by consultants commissioned to do do feasibility studies before embarking on any project
- ✓ strong strategic leadership by board meeting monthly but with adequate space for CEO to pursue opportunities as she identifies them
- ✓ CEO with strong networking skills has initially built personal relationships with individual city managers and funding agencies

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CHARACTERISTIS WHICH ENABLE SOCIAL LEARNING (2)

- ✓ there are active community networks such as rate payers associations, community organisations, co-operatives, tourism associations and churches in the area
- ✓ stakeholders are diverse (for example board, team of technical advisors) and well linked to various conservation, business, political, tourism and community interest groups as well as public agencies and local governments
- ✓ the exposure gained, especially by the trails and tourism project strengthened connectivity into the community as evidenced by attendance of meetings, raising number of volunteers, articles in press, magazine features and social media

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CHARACTERISTICS WHICH ENABLE SOCIAL LEARNING (3)

- ✓ as one of the longest functioning collaboratives in the Western Cape the WCBR has established a good reputation for itself in the 12 years of its existence, low board and staff turnover, apolitical stance facilitated cooperation with public agencies
- ✓ the manner in which decisions are made and how conflict and disagreement is managed, illustrates a degree of maturity and trust
- ✓ its implementation programme outputs and outcomes has added considerable public value in terms of environmental, process and socioeconomic outcomes.

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CONCLUSION

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 1 As one of the longest functioning collaboratives in the Western Cape, the CWCBR has a good, established reputation in the community which has created considerable public value in environmental, process and socioeconomic outcomes

It can be argued that the continuity of approach and activities facilitated shared experiences and collective memory that contributed to the accumulation of social capital and which potentially results in lower transaction costs needed to realise the biospheres' vision

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 2 CWCBR has done particularly well by targeting individuals and community based organisations from previously disadvantaged communities as project contractors to implement conservation and tourism projects and in this way contributed to capacity building and poverty alleviation

taking the South African context with its Apartheid past into account, WCBR succeeded in building 'bridging' social capital which is outward looking and to cut across social cleavages and avoided the potential trap of accumulating 'bonding' social capital which is inward looking and tend to reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

3 the success story of CWCBR saw the rapid expansion of staff after the trails and tourism project got off the ground in 2010 which could trigger rapid institutionalisation

but there might be a danger lurking here 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

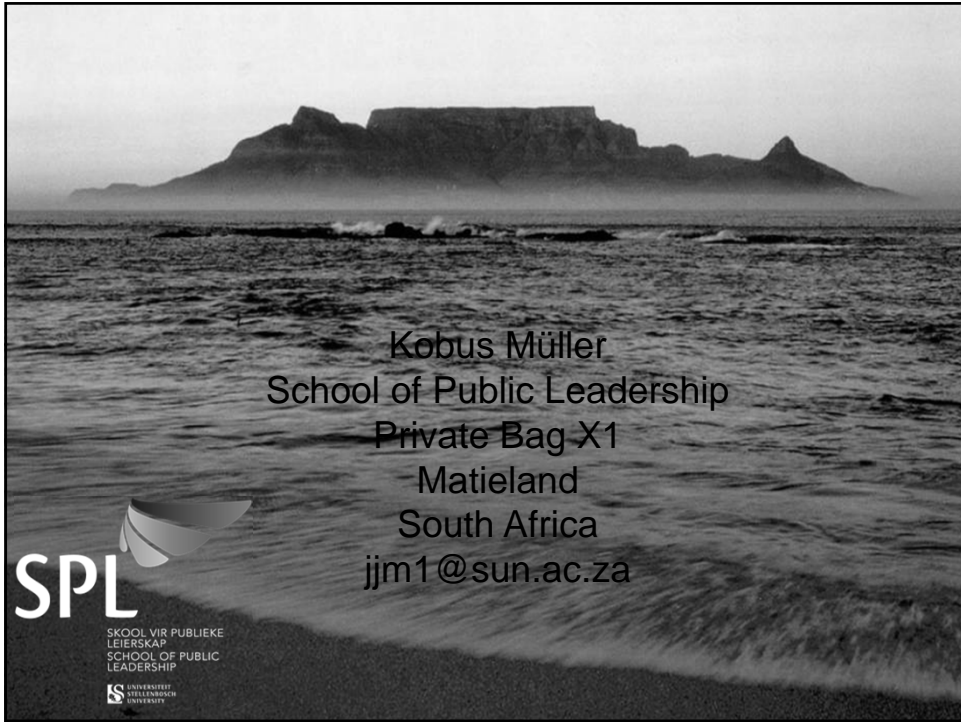
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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

4 Finally, although social learning is necessary but not necessary sufficient for collaborative management and other requisites for co-management including capacity, appropriate processes, 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

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

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