Strengthening Community University Research Partnerships

Hall, Budd, Tandon, Rajesh, Tremblay, Crystal

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Hall, Budd, et al.
Strengthening Community University Research Partnerships: Global Perspectives.
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One Bangle Cannot Jingle: Community-University Research Partnerships in South Africa

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The promotion of community-university research partnerships (CURPs) in South African public higher education must be seen in terms of the mandate of higher education to be responsive to the needs of social, political and economic transformation of post-apartheid society and the development of the country into the future (Department of Education (DOE), 1997; National Planning Commission (NPC), 2012). Among the legacies of apartheid is that South Africa is one of the most unequal societies in the world, characterised by very high levels of unemployment, poverty and deprivation coexisting with pockets of great wealth and privilege. Against this, higher education in South Africa is well developed; it is understood within the larger system of post-school education and training and constituted by a differentiated system of twenty-five public institutions, including traditional research and teaching universities, universities of technology, and comprehensive universities, as well as numerous small and largely vocationally oriented private institutions. The institutional landscape of public higher education in South Africa includes large comprehensive universities such as the University of South Africa, which is the oldest distance learning university in the world and enrols over 330,000 students, as well as new and small institutions such as Sol Plaatjie University in Kimberley, which started in 2014 with less than 150 inaugural students. It includes urban research universities such as the University of Cape Town (UCT) as well as teaching-focused rural institutions such as the University of Venda.

All higher education is governed by a national regulatory framework, which includes the national Higher Education Act (1997), and has been amplified by the White Paper for Higher Education Transformation of 1997 (DOE, 1997) and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training of 2013 (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2013; see also DHET, 2014).
Most higher education institutions in South Africa were specifically established to cater to the needs of an apartheid society, in that they were segregated by race and ethnicity and directed to serve a particular population group only. While the dawn of democracy meant that all institutions were opened to all population groups and the “geo-political imagination of apartheid planners” (Asmal, 1999, p. 11) was to some extent ‘undone’ in a process of post-apartheid mergers and incorporations, directing public institutions to address a developmental mandate and avail their expertise to directly engage with the needs of multiple and new constituencies, including communities which have been historically underserved by public higher education in general, remains an ongoing challenge at the conceptual, political and practical level. Universities in South Africa enjoy a fair degree of institutional autonomy in a context of public accountability and limited ability of the national government to directly interfere in their operation. In order for national policy to be implemented at the level of institutions, government has a limited set of steering instruments related to the planning, funding and quality assurance of higher education. Hence, there is variation in how universities respond to national policy, including policy related to social responsibility.

Considering the trajectory of post-apartheid policy development in South African higher education in general, three periods can be discerned in terms of the predominant focus of policy and the development and implementation of related policy instruments (Lange & Luescher-Mamashela, in press, p. 6). The first period from 1994–2000 focused on establishing a political consensus for the transformation of higher education in a democratic South Africa, and putting key policy, legislation, and structures of government into place. This included a single national Department of Education and a statutory advisory and quality assurance body for higher education. The second period (2001-2009) was characterised by much contestation in the course of the implementation of key policies, such as the restructuring of the programme and qualification mix of public institutions and, in some cases, mergers and incorporations. It was also characterised by a perception of the “rise of the evaluative state” (Neave, 1998) and increasing managerialism at the institutional level. Finally, in the third and current period the scope of general system-level policy has widened to view higher education more explicitly within the overall system of the post-schooling sector, along with technical and vocational training institutions and adult learning institutions. At the same time, the development of new policy structures and instruments such as a Transformation Oversight Committee and new reporting requirements, signal a more directive intent of the current Ministry and way of demanding responsiveness and accountability from autonomous institutions (Lange & Luescher-Mamashela, in press). Correspondingly, national policy on the social responsibility of higher education has evolved over the twenty years of post-apartheid policy from the largely symbolic pronouncements in the White Paper of 1997 to a number of initiatives, including the development of policy instruments, to quality assure various forms of community engagement including community-based research (CBR)
facilitated through community-university research partnerships (CURPs) (Favish et al., in press).

**Table 4.1 Periodization of policy development**  
(Adapted from Lange and Luescher-Mamashele (in press))

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Periodization</th>
<th>General system level policy</th>
<th>National community engagement policy</th>
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<td>1994 - 2000</td>
<td>Political consensus, implemention vacuum and the setting up of government</td>
<td>Symbolic policy of community engagement; dominant notion of CE service learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001 - 2009</td>
<td>Policy contestation, state steering and the rise of the ‘evaluative state’</td>
<td>National quality assurance criteria include community engagement; seeking national conceptual consensus fails; wide-spread establishment of institutional CE structures</td>
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<td>2009 - 2014</td>
<td>State managerialism and the question of democratic accountability</td>
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This chapter analyzes South African higher education’s experience of community-university research partnerships by means of an analysis of national policy development, institutional policy and case studies. It conceptualises CURPs in terms of higher education’s commitment to be socially responsive, and community-based research as mutually beneficial partnerships with external constituencies whereby university-based capacity, resources and expertise are employed to address challenges and needs in collaboration with external partners (cf. Favish, McMillan & Ngcelwane, 2012). The aim is to describe and analyze the policies and structures established at the national, university and civil society level related to community-university partnerships, and illustrate actual practice in the concrete cases of two partnerships.

Except with reference to the university-based South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF), the chapter does not explicitly discuss the roles of national networks or mechanisms that promote community engagement in South Africa, as there are no community-based networks specific to this task. There are, however, several sector-based organizations and networks which include the promotion of CBR (but not specifically CURPs) in their respective constitutions. They include, for example, Disabled People South Africa (DPSA) (see www.dpsa.org.za), Equal Education (EE) (see www.equaleducation.org.za), and the African Bioversity Network in Kenya (ABN), which are mentioned in the institutional case studies.
The first section discusses the trajectory of national policy development in relation to community engagement in general, focusing on key policies and structures, mechanisms and instruments put in place to strengthen community engagement of universities with particular reference to community-university research partnerships. The following sections consider CBR partnerships in the case of two different public universities: the University of Cape Town and Rhodes University which, despite sharing some important characteristics as urban research-led universities established in the anglophone South African tradition, vary in size, context of operation, and approaches towards creating an enabling environment for CURPs. The case studies discuss the institutional conceptualization of community engagement and related notions such as ‘social responsiveness’ and ‘engaged scholarship’ as they apply, as well as related policies and structures established at each university respectively and how they support CURPs. This includes illustrations of the different types of community-university partnerships. The case of a specific research partnership is then described and analyzed in-depth with reference to each university. The case studies consist of purposefully conducted interviews with persons immediately involved in the partnership, including academic staff and postgraduate students, university-based community engagement staff, and NGO and community-based partners, as well as primary and secondary documents related to the partnerships. The chapter concludes with a summary highlighting the main findings and a comparison of the two institutional approaches and their respective partnerships insofar as they provide new learning for ways to strengthen community-university research partnerships in the global South.

South African National Policy and Community Engagement

The notion that higher education should serve the public good is widely recognised in higher education internationally as well as in South Africa at the national policy level and in the policies and practices of public universities. In the wake of the transition to democracy, South African post-apartheid policy committed higher education to a process of transformation in the spirit of an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom (DOE, 1997). ‘Development’ became one of the key principles to guide higher education “to contribute to the common good of society...” in the process of democratic transformation (DOE, 1997, Section 1.20). This was elaborated inter alia “to promote and develop social responsibility and awareness among students of the role of HE in the social and economic development through community service programmes” (DOE, 1997, Section 1.27) and the institutional goal “to demonstrate social responsibility of institutions and their commitment to the common good by making available expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes” (DOE, 1997, Section 1.28).

The erstwhile policy-based conceptualization of social responsibility as ‘community service programmes’ masked a wider range of notions related to social responsibility familiar in the South African context, including civic and commu-
nity engagement, community service and outreach, and volunteering. It also could not account for a wider range of practices by which universities engage with communities. Moreover, the ensuing transformation programme focused on equity of access and quality as well as a process of fundamental restructuring of the higher education landscape by means of a process of rationalising academic program provision and institutional mergers (CHE, 2004). Hence Favish et al. (in press) would argue that:

…despite the South African government’s articulated desire to see higher education institutions play a more active role in addressing development needs of the country, there has been a policy vacuum with respect to strategies for enhancing the developmental role of universities. (Favish et al., in press, p. 1)

National higher education policy in relation to higher education and social responsibility or community engagement was largely a matter of symbolic policy (Jansen, 2001). It signalled a new discourse to key political constituencies without putting in place national policy instruments for steering the sector. This policy environment only changed after the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) was set up in 2001 and the first phase of post-apartheid higher education restructuring drew to a close.

In the process of moving from political symbolism to state steering, the South African Council on Higher Education (CHE) played a key role. The CHE started operations in 1999, to monitor and evaluate the higher education system, provide advice to the Minister, and assure the quality of higher education. The HEQC became the key driver of an extended process of conceptualizing and promoting community engagement and was committed to establishing a transformative and developmental national system of quality assurance in which “knowledge-based community service” would be relevant in programme accreditation and institutional audits. According to the HEQC’s first Executive Director, Prof. Mala Singh,

The reasons for the HEQC focus on community engagement in higher education had to do with issues of academic reconstruction, and wanting to bring the three core functions much more explicitly into the restructuring framework…In addition…there was already in the HEQC a clear awareness that…community engagement was a potentially powerful way of giving content to the transformation agenda in higher education, through new partnerships and relationships between higher education and its multiple communities. (Singh, 2006, p. 17-18)

In addition to applying quality assurance criteria to community engagement, the HEQC formed a partnership with a local education NGO to expand the thinking about the nature and practice of community engagement in South Africa in a series of workshops, conferences and publications. An authoritative
analysis of audit reports reveals “a remarkable degree of homogeneity in recommendations [for improvement], and very few commendations” in relation to institutions’ conceptions, policies and practices of community engagement (Favish et al., in press, p. 11).

A second key national policy actor in community engagement policy and strengthening community-university partnerships was the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and its research funding agency, the National Research Foundation (NRF) (see www.nrf.ac.za). The NRF was established in 1998 by the DST to support research in higher education. The NRF’s objectives for promoting and supporting research and facilitating the creation of new knowledge, while not explicitly supporting community engagement, would support CBR projects by providing funding to emerging and established researchers and scholarships for research students working on community engagement. For example, the NRF established South African Research Chairs (SARChI) dealing with matters of social responsibility in higher education, such as the SA Research Chair in Higher Education and Human Development at the University of the Free State which explicitly interrogates the role of education in advancing human development (University of the Free State…, 2014).

The South African Higher Education Community Engagement Forum (SAHECEF) was established in 2009 as a national forum representative of all South African higher education institutions with the objectives to advocate, promote, support, monitor, and strengthen community engagement at South African higher education institutions; further community engagement of higher education in partnership with other stakeholders; and foster an understanding of community engagement as integral to the core business of higher education. The forum serves as an important platform for community engagement debates and discussion among CE professionals, and for sharing best practices in SA community engagement (SAHECEF, 2014; UWC, 2014).

After lobbying by SAHECEF, the NRF launched a community engagement funding programme in 2010 with a funding allocation of over R30 million. The analysis of the first two cycles of disbursement shows that about sixty percent of the CE funds were allocated to the running costs of community engagement programmes and most of the remaining forty percent as scholarships to research students and staff (Favish et al., in press; NRF, 2014). At the same time, the DST created its own Community University Partnerships Programme (CUPP), involving four rural universities. According to Kaniki and Steele CUPP was designed precisely “as a corollary to the NRF Community Engagement Programme…to facilitate community-based assessments that will promote partnerships between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and communities, as an effective vehicle for solving problems and facilitating development” (2012, p. 13). In addition, the Minister of Science and Technology established a Ministerial Review Committee on the National System of Innovation which highlighted the need for the NRF
and the entire national system of innovation, to develop strategies for the advance-
ment of social innovation, including a social innovation fund (Nongxa Committee,
2012). These concerted initiatives by the DST and NRF were accompanied by com-
missioning research into community engagement in South Africa, resulting in the
HSRC-NRF collaborative study “Investigating the Contribution of Uni-
versity-Community-based Interaction to building a National System of Innovation”
published in 2012.

A third policy actor was the national Department of Higher Education
and Training (DHET) which has shown increased resolve since 2009 to fol-
low up on the 1997 White Paper commitments to include social responsibility
and community engagement in its policy instruments. With regard to funding,
the 2013 Report of the Ministerial Committee for the Review of the Funding
of Universities dedicated an entire section to community engagement. On the
one hand, it acknowledges that “the debates on community engagement in South
African higher education—its conceptualization, practice, and funding—remain
unresolved” (Ramaphosa Committee, 2013, p. 262). On the other hand, it also
considers that among the diversity of conceptualizations and practices there are
common elements in the criteria in HEQC institutional audits, the development
of academic staff performance indicators in several universities, and the fact that
many institutions have structures to promote, support and monitor community
engagement (van Schalkwyk, 2011, in Ramaphosa Committee, 2013, p. 264; see
also Kaniki & Steele, 2012). However, in its recommendations to the DHET the
Committee noted with reference to submissions it received from universities that:

…(t)he tendency was to locate community engagement in what hig-
her education scholars would describe as the ‘extended perip hery’ as
opposed to the ‘academic core’ (Clark, 1998). The extended perip-
hery refers to “all those activities that are situated outside the aca-
demic core of universities, and that are usually associated with their
third mission”. (Ramaphosa Committee 2013, p. 264)

Hence, in terms of the funding of community engagement, the Committee
came to the conclusion that “only those community engagement activities that
are an integral and structured part of the research and teaching functions of uni-
versities should be funded” (Ramaphosa Committee 2013, p. 265). Therefore no
new item for community engagement would be introduced in the higher educa-
tion funding formula over and above the regular subsidies for teaching inputs
and outputs as well as subsidies disbursed for accredited research outputs (such
as peer-reviewed scholarly publications). Moreover, no special allocation was re-
commended for block grant funding of community engagement. The committee’s
recommendations eventually informed the DHET’s 2013 White Paper. On the
one hand, it recognises that “community engagement, in its various forms—socially
responsive research, partnerships with civil society organizations, formal learning
programmes that engage students in community work as a formal part of their
academic programmes, and many other formal and informal aspects of academic work—has become a part of the work of universities in South Africa” (DHET, 2013, Section 4.8). The White Paper maintains that “it is likely that future funding of such initiatives in universities will be restricted to programmes linked directly to the academic programme of universities, and form part of the teaching and research function of these institutions.” (DHET, 2013, Section 4.8). Thus, costs associated with community engagement per se including costs related to building CURPs are likely to remain unfunded.

The DHET did, however, introduce minor changes relevant to community-university partnerships in a planning instrument. New regulations for the annual institutional reporting to the Ministry published in June 2014 include the explicit requirement for university councils to report on “how a public higher education institution has both positively and negatively impacted on the economic life of the community in which it operated”, including the “inclusivity of stakeholders; innovation, fairness, and collaboration; [and] social transformation” (DHET, 2014, p. 26). In addition, included in the reporting of university management is a provision to report on “relationships with the community, both academic and service” (DHET 2014, p. 28). Whether the reporting will eventually lead to the development of indicators that can inform funding decisions remains to be seen; overall they represent minor additions to rather onerous new reporting requirements.

This section shows that after a period of largely symbolic policy, the policy discourse shifted due to efforts by the HEQC and other university and NGO-based actors to develop a national consensus on what constitutes community engagement. As this process drew to a somewhat inconclusive end towards 2009, the debate and scholarship which it generated invigorated the actual practice of community engagement, with a diversity of conceptualizations grounded in institutional practice and local and international scholarly work. Policy instruments beyond quality assurance were developed with respect to funding and monitoring CE in the current period. Moreover, as Favish et al. (in press, p. 24-25) highlight, while there is no explicit national agreement, there is an emerging consensus among universities in South Africa on “common elements which institutions believe should characterise the field of community engagement.” These are that:

- community engagement involves universities and multiple social partners, excluding academic constituencies;
- the interactions between universities and social partners should be characterised by reciprocity and mutual benefit;
- community engagement is a key mechanism for building civic consciousness amongst students and their commitment and capacity for critical citizenship;
- engagement can take multiple forms (including research oriented forms such as participatory action research and community-based research);
teaching oriented forms (including service learning, clinical service, continuing education courses, and the collaborative production of popular educational materials) at multiple levels - local, regional, national, sectorial, etc.; and

• activities should have an intentional public purpose and form part of the broader notion of the social responsiveness of universities. (Favish et al, in press, p. 25)

Against the developments of national policy with regard to the funding of CE in particular, it can be understood why research partnerships between communities and universities carry a high level of currency in the South African public higher education context: they are an expression of higher education’s commitment to social responsibility and contributing to social development. In addition, there is some potential for attracting national research and third-stream funding, on which public universities increasingly depend for their financial sustainability.

**Strengthening community-university research partnerships: the case of the University of Cape Town**

The University of Cape Town (UCT) is South Africa’s oldest and internationally highest ranking research university (see www.uct.ac.za). Of 26,000 students enrolled, about one-third are postgraduate students and about one in five international students. The University is home over 30 NRF A-rated researchers and over 400 with B, C, and other NRF research ratings.

In 2010, the South African Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) conducted a survey of community engagement among five South African public universities “to map the scale and forms of interaction of South African universities with external partners” (Kruss 2010, p. 21). We found that UCT’s approach to interacting with external social partners included distinctive features such as a clearly articulated and senate endorsed guiding policy and conceptual framework. Unlike other public institutions influenced by the HEQC’s conception of community engagement, UCT’s notion of ‘social responsiveness’ included an intentional connection of teaching, learning and research to the public good by means of partnerships with external, non-academic partners, such as local communities, community-based organizations and NGOs, as well as firms, government, and development agencies. Furthermore, the university’s approach to enabling knowledge connectivity partnerships was one of advocating, brokering and show-casing, as well as providing a system of recognition and rewards for researchers and students. Finally, unlike other institutions, UCT’s reporting on social responsiveness tended to focus on research; only after 2009 did teaching and learning receive the same attention (Kruss, 2010, p. 21-22).

The University’s Social Responsiveness (SR) Policy Framework as revised in 2012 outlines the scope, forms and practices, and institutional structures and
incentives established to “provide an enabling institutional environment for SR” (UCT Senate, 2012, p. 1). It locates executive accountability for social responsibility in the office of a Deputy Vice-Chancellor but also asks faculty deans to oversee SR in their faculties by assessing staff performance in this category and reporting annually on SR activities. It similarly tasks all heads of academic departments and directors of support services “to ensure that an enabling environment is created for promoting social responsiveness in their areas of competence” (UCT Senate, 2012, p. 2). The Senate’s Social Responsiveness Committee, which is chaired by the DVC and includes Senate and faculty representatives, representatives from key support departments, and students (but no external members), is responsible for promoting and strengthening SR at UCT.

The University’s SR conceptual framework, while acknowledging all forms of engagement with external constituencies, explicitly promotes engaged scholarship as

…the utilization of an academic’s scholarly and/or professional expertise, with an intentional public purpose or benefit (which) demonstrates engagement with external (non-academic) constituencies. It can help to generate new knowledge, promote knowledge integration, the application of knowledge, or the dissemination of knowledge. (UCT Senate, 2012, p. 2)

UCT’s conceptualization of social responsiveness and engaged scholarship are underpinned by reflexive contemplation on practice and theoretical engagement championed by academics and staff in the Department of Institutional Planning (compare Cooper, 2010, p. 26-37; Favish et al., 2012; Lorenzo & Joubert, 2011; McMillan, Goodman & Winkler, 2013).

In practice, the approach of the university to support engaged scholarship is decentralized in keeping with its overall governance and management approach. Nonetheless, an enabling environment has been created institution wide through several means, such as: the establishment of a “Distinguished Social Responsiveness Award” by the Vice-Chancellor; inclusion of SR staff promotion categories; staff development workshops in social responsiveness; seed funding to support new initiatives through the Vice-Chancellor’s Strategic Fund and a partnership between the Western Cape Provincial Government, the City of Cape Town, and four public universities in the Western Cape under the auspices of the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC); and the Social Responsiveness Unit and the Knowledge Co-op established in the Directorate of Institutional Planning (UCT Senate, 2012; S. Ngcelwane, personal communication, October 27, 2014). Moreover, in response to a commitment in the UCT Strategic Plan 2010-2014 to “expanding and enhancing the university’s contribution to South Africa’s development challenges,” the University Council allocated an annual R20 million over five years to four strategic themes. They are championed by four vice-chancellors specifically appointed to provide academic leadership and coordinate partnerships in
areas of safety and violence, public schooling, African climate and development, and poverty and inequality (Favish et al., 2013, p. 46-49).

Other institution-wide structures supporting CURPs are the SR Unit and the Knowledge Co-Op established in the Department of Institutional Planning. The SR Unit promotes SR through its annual social responsiveness report, and the organization of an annual SR colloquium. The SR Unit also facilitates the Western Cape-CHEC partnership, which includes collaborative research around social inclusion, digital innovation, climate adaptation and mitigation. (UCT Senate, 2012; S. Ngcelwane, personal communication, October 27, 2014)

Apart from the initiative of individual academics and research groupings, the UCT Knowledge Co-Op established in 2010 is a “gateway for external constituencies to access the knowledge, skills, resources and professional expertise within the University” (UCT Knowledge Co-op, 2014). Moreover, it “builds capacity of community-based organizations through research and skills development” (Favish et al., 2013, p. 34). The Knowledge Co-Op office receives requests from community groups and NGOs, local government, small and medium enterprises, and trade unions. It explores the fit between the requests and disciplinary/professional expertise at the university, and then arranges for matching partners to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). To date community groups have submitted 220 collaboration requests. This brokering role for new community-university partnerships, as well as the partnerships themselves, is typically of no cost to the external part-

Prof Theresa Lorenzo, Disability Studies, School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, UCT

Debates and negotiations between academics at UCT and South Africa’s Disability Rights Movement led to the launch of the first postgraduate programme in Disability Studies offered in Africa and an ongoing mutually beneficial partnership between Theresa Lorenzo of UCT and disability rights activists. Over the years, the programme has provided a platform to forge a research community made up of academics, activists, policy makers and practitioners (UCT, 2013, p. 25; 2007, p. 15-19).

Recently, Lorenzo was among the partners collaborating in a country-wide multi-site study that “explor[ed] how disabled youth from vulnerable communities in South Africa are able to sustain their livelihoods given the high levels of poverty”. It involved academics from six universities, community-based workers, NGO representatives and research students (Lorenzo & Joubert, 2011, p. 254). By purposefully reflecting on the research process of the main study, Lorenzo and Joubert (2011) developed a set of principles for reciprocal capacity building and collaborative relationships involved in country-wide collaborative relationships with multiple organizations.
ners. An external grant has given the Knowledge Co-op the means to provide bursaries to a few Master’s students to collaborate for their dissertation research. The Knowledge Co-Op is an expression of UCT’s commitment to linking the academic community to communities at the grassroots level (S. Ngcelwane, personal communication, October 27, 2014).

Individual initiative as well as the policies and structures established by the institution have resulted in a wide range of CURPs across all faculties at UCT. They include partnerships with the City of Cape Town; the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology providing postgraduate research capacity to conservation bodies; the Development Policy Research Unit facilitating and producing research as part of the Employment Promotion Programme; the Centre for Law and Society in partnerships with rural community-based organizations and NGOs; and the Programme in Disability Studies which involves a long-standing relationship between UCT academics and disabled and non-disabled activists, policy makers and practitioners (UCT, 2013; 2010; 2007). The following section discusses one successful CURP between UCT, national NGOs based in the KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces, community-based organizations, and local farming communities.

The “Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI)”: Biowatch SA and UCT’s Department of Environmental Geographical Science

The “Seed and Knowledge” partnership between the University of Cape Town’s Bio-economy SARChI Chair (see bio-economy.org.za), the national environmental NGO Biowatch South Africa (SA) (see www.biowatch.org.za) and the Mupo Foundation, is a recent one, even though Biowatch SA was established in 1997 as a small public interest NGO working in the field of biodiversity, food sovereignty and security, and striving for social and ecological justice through research, advocacy work and the development of training materials (Wynberg & Fig, 2013, p. 13). In its early years of establishment, Biowatch SA became tied up in a lengthy court battle with the National Department of Agriculture (NDA) and the multinational agro-biotech company, Monsanto (Wynberg & Fig, 2013, p. 28). The landmark case eventually ended in victory and research again became a significant part of the work of Biowatch, but the NGO needed to build research capacity.

In a collaboration with UCT from 2011, Biowatch became a partner in research into farmers’ rights in South Africa (Wynberg, van Niekerk, William & Mkhaliphi, 2012), which provided the prelude to the Seed and Knowledge Initiative (SKI) between Biowatch SA, UCT, the Mupo Foundation, various funders, and small-holder farming communities. A pilot project started in 2013 involving three communities in KwaZulu-Natal, some of whom Biowatch SA had been working with for over five years (R. Wynberg, personal communication, October 20, 2014).
Rachel Wynberg, a founder of Biowatch SA, joined UCT in the mid-2000s and continued her involvement with the NGO. Wynberg holds the South African Research Chair on Social and Environmental Dimensions of the Bio-economy at the University of Cape Town (funded by the NRF/DST) and is a crucial partner in providing capacity for CBR in partnership with Biowatch. Generally, the university’s commitment to engaged scholarship provides a relevant conceptual and policy framework. UCT is experienced by Wynberg as “very supportive” because her community engagement work is recognised along with other forms of engaged research approaches. The work of the Environmental Evaluation Unit was recognised with the UCT Social Responsiveness Award of 2012 for the various ways the unit worked with marginalised communities, which signals support for the approaches taken, a financial grant and publicity. Wynberg’s work is also evaluated as one of four categories relevant for promotion.

One of the concerns that engaged scholars like Wynberg have with UCT is that in keeping with national criteria for research subsidy, only conventional scholarly outputs, such as peer reviewed articles and books, are included in the university’s research reports. Policy briefs, community briefs and other popular publications do not receive such recognition even though their social impact may be much greater (R. Wynberg, personal communication, October 20, 2014). Another constraint the SKI partnership with Biowatch SA faces in relation to the university’s framework is the top-slicing of external funding to recover administrative costs and the use of university facilities, typically up to 20% but potentially as high as 40% in cases where rights to intellectual property have to be shared between UCT and an external partner (R. Wynberg, personal communication, October 20, 2014).

Other institutional structures established to support SR at UCT, such as the Knowledge Co-Op and the SR Unit mentioned above, are of little consequence for the UCT-Biowatch SA partnership. This is not to say that their work is not appreciated. For instance, the SR Unit’s publications provide an important form of recognition to SR work, which in turn give evidence to other social partners, the public in general, and to external funders and the NRF (R. Wynberg, personal communication, October 20, 2014). However, the relationship with the NGO has matured to a point where no brokerage or facilitation is required from the side of institutional structures.

Possibly the most crucial university-based support for the research partnership with Biowatch SA related to Wynberg’s institutional location is that graduate students can get involved in the projects. National funding channelled through the university is a key enabler for mobilizing research capacity for the partnership. The SARChI Chair includes funds for scholarships, fieldwork, and post-doctoral research (R. Wynberg, personal communication, October 20, 2014).
All research projects related to the Biowatch partnership, including postgraduate students’ research proposals, are considered at the SKI Project Steering Committee level in terms of their topical fit, research questions, as well as the methodology and implication of involving community members. The research may be theoretical or practical in nature but it must be community needs driven and follow ethical research procedure which includes confidentiality, ensuring community feedback, and highlighting the voices of community partners. Not all research is necessarily participatory action research; rather the research methodologies will vary in keeping with the research questions, the disciplinary backgrounds, expertise and preferences of the researchers, as well as the committee’s experience of what is appropriate in a particular community setting. Finally, a protocol or agreement has to be put in place with the community. Student and staff researchers meet with Biowatch SA and are introduced to community members by Biowatch staff. In this process Biowatch acts as a broker in initiating the relationship with the local community, facilitating introductions to the community and assisting in drawing up jointly the rules of the research encounter. Thus, if a conflict situation arises, Biowatch can step in to act as mediator. A final principle is that there must be feedback to community on the findings and implications of the research (R. Wynberg, personal communication, October 20, 2014; R. Williams, personal communication, October 31, 2014).

While postgraduate student research represents one of the major ways in which UCT lends research capacity to Biowatch SA for addressing community needs, community-based research is conducted at many levels and in various modalities. University and NGO staff also support communities to conduct their own agricultural research using tools such as “eco-mapping, calendars and community research” (Seeds and Knowledge, 2014, p. 3). Innovative approaches to knowledge production and knowledge sharing include facilitating seed festivals, farmer exchanges and training “to revive and enhance traditional seed and agricultural knowledge systems” and thus “to build a community of practice around seeds and knowledge in the region” (Seeds and Knowledge 2014, p. 30).

One of the striking features of this partnership is the large geographical distances between UCT Biowatch and the farming communities in rural KwaZulu-Natal. According to Lawrence Mkhaliphi, Biowatch’s Agro-Ecology Manager, this is not an issue. As Rose Williams related his experience:

Community members felt empowered because they had something to tell the University; it [was] empowering and motivating. [Community members felt that] even if UCT is far away, it is still in contact with the community and values the importance of their community work. (personal communication, October 31, 2014)

The approach of UCT to enabling CURPs and “Seed and Knowledge” can be compared with Rhodes University and the case of its Maternal and Infant Health Initiative in the Faculty of Pharmacy.
Strengthening community-university research partnerships: the case of Rhodes University

Rhodes University (RU) is a medium-size public research-led university located in Grahamstown, a small town in the mostly rural Eastern Cape province of South Africa. Its roots go back to 1904, which makes it one of the first English, liberal universities in South Africa. It has more than 7,000 students, of which 26% are postgraduate students and 20% are international students (Rhodes University, 2014). For Grahamstown and its rural surroundings, RU is very important. The university is the largest employer and contributes to an air of cosmopolitanism. Grahamstown serves as an educational centre and knowledge hub for this part of the Eastern Cape. At the same time, the Eastern Cape is the second poorest province of South Africa with huge socio-economic developmental challenges, which the university seeks to address as part of its vision to be “recognised and respected nationally and internationally as a leader in community engagement; and for its commitment to social and individual transformation, sustainable community development, student civic responsibility and scholarship of engagement” (RUCE, 2012, p. 10).

The university’s current policy of community engagement was adopted by the Senate in 2010. Senate has established a Community Engagement Management Committee, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) of Academic, Students and Community Engagement and includes broad representation from faculty, students and staff, the Director of Community Engagement as well as external CE partners and NGOs.

The Rhodes University Community Engagement Directorate (RUCE) was established as a separate entity to directly report to the DVC in 2009. Its role is to support community engagement as a core responsibility of the university (RUCE, 2012, p. 9). Alex Sutherland, Senior Lecturer, Applied Theatre, Drama Studies, RU

Sutherland is a recipient to the 2013 VC Distinguished Community Engagement Award of Rhodes University. As part of her community engaged research focus, Sutherland works among others with men in the Maximum Security Unit of the Psychiatric Hospital and the Medium Correctional Facility in Grahamstown. The partnership with the hospital called the Performing Change Project, is part of the hospital’s rehabilitative programme and has many benefits for the men in the facility (Dugmore 2013, p. 11-22).

For Sutherland, in turn, who specialises in applied drama and drama education, the partnership provides an opportunity to integrate her applied teaching and research focus, which includes “the social and aesthetic meanings of performance for adults in criminal justice contexts” with community engagement in a mutually beneficial way (Sutherland 2013, p. 131).
Among its aims is to “contribute to the sustainable development of Grahamstown communities”; “contribute to the development of the Eastern Cape Province through partnerships with provincial government departments, NGOs and other institutions of higher learning in the Province”; and “create and sustain partnerships between the university and its community partners” (RUCE, 2012, p. 14). The focus of CE activity is therefore decidedly local, seeking to contribute to social development in the communities surrounding the University.

Given its broad range of responsibilities—which include encouraging and supporting a scholarship of engagement along with service learning, outreach programmes, volunteerism, student leadership development, and various kinds of partnerships between the university and external partners, community engagement at Rhodes is defined by principles that apply across all types of CE programmes and projects, including CURPs. Accordingly, such engagement must be “planned, focused, reciprocal and mutually beneficial” (RUCE, 2012, p. 20; D. Hornby, personal communication, October 24, 2014). RUCE does not only broker relations between the academic community and external partners but also develops and implements programmes of its own, monitors and reviews all CE related activity and reports on them to the Senate committee.

CE at Rhodes is incentivized in various ways. In 2008, the merit-based “Vice-Chancellor’s Distinguished Community Engagement Award” was established, which includes R 40,000. The three runners-up for the award are recognised with an “Excellence Award in Community Engagement”, which also has a funding component. Community partners, student organizations and student researchers are honoured annually at the Community Engagement Gala Dinner, where the CE awards for the year are announced in various categories, including “Community Partner of the Year”, “Volunteer of the Year”, and “Engaged [Student] Researcher of the Year”. In all cases, the criteria relate to excellence in community engagement (RUCE, 2014). For academic staff, community engagement has become one of the five criteria assessed in the promotion process (along with teaching, research, professional involvement, and leadership/management involvement). The Director of CE and Head of RUCE, Di Hornby, introduces academics to potentially matching partners. Her experience in this respect has been very positive: “The lucky thing is that there is no academic who has got started with community engagement who has stopped…It has added value to their academic programme and they think it’s worthwhile” (D. Hornby, personal communication, October 24, 2014). In addition, RUCE also assists start-up initiatives in applying to the university’s Sandisa Imbewu (Growing the Seed) Fund for seed funding.

Moreover, Rhodes has established various ways of showcasing community engagement. They include major events on the university’s annual calendar like the Community Engagement Week. It is a week filled with debates and dialogues for academics, students, and community partners to sample their work, and refresh their thinking and networks. Other events of that sort are the annual
Science Festival, and the University’s weeklong Mandela Day celebrations. Finally, in collaboration with the RU’s Communication Department, CE is featured in a number of university publications, including the University’s Engaged Research report (Dugmore, 2013). Engaged research at Rhodes covers a wide range of disciplines, including drama education with street youth and men in correctional facilities, environmental science, computer science, journalism and media studies, and water research (Dugmore, 2013). The example of a successful CURP in pharmacy studies as a public health initiative in two rural communities surrounding Grahamstown is analysed in detail below.

**Maternal and Infant Health Initiative: Ubunye Foundation, RUCE and the Rhodes Faculty of Pharmacy**

The collaborative partnership between Prof Sunitha Srinivas of the Faculty of Pharmacy of Rhodes University, the University’s Community Engagement Office (RUCE), and Ubunye, a non-profit community development organization located in Grahamstown (see www ubunyefoundation co za), along with participants from the rural communities of Glenmore and Ndwayana at the outskirts of Grahamstown, was originally conceived as a “community-engagement-based health promotion intervention”. The initiative focuses on the Millennium Development Goals which address infant and child mortality and maternal health (Srinivas et al., unpub.). The partnership illustrates the key role a well-networked CE office can play in facilitating community-university research partnerships.

The rural community of Glenmore is an apartheid resettlement of a forcibly removed Xhosa community, while Ndwayana is an organically settled rural Xhosa community. They face similar challenges in maternal and infant health. RU Master’s students were introduced by Ubunye to community health workers and conducted a series of focus group discussions with key stakeholders in the community. The public health concerns identified were the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding as an intervention in infant mortality, and maternal health in teenage pregnancies (K. Court, personal communication, October 23, 2014).

Ubunye started its work in the villages in 2006, taking an asset-based approach to community development. It encouraged community members to start savings and credit self-help groups which over time developed strong bonds of trust in the communities. As the relationship with Ubunye grew, early childhood development, public health, and food security became part of the work (Lucy O’Keeffe, personal communication, October 23, 2014; Diana Hornby, personal communication, October 24, 2014). Ubunye’s approach to local development has helped community members to confidently interact with local, provincial and national government offices. They have adopted the asset-based approach to the extent that when asked what would happen if Ubunye was to disappear tomorrow, MaNomhlobo, a nurse in the local clinic of Ndwayana and Ubunye answered: “We would sit down and talk; maybe we must start our own Ubunye” (N. Gidane, personal communication, October 23, 2014).
Prof. Srinivas was introduced to Ubunye through RUCE. She is a health care professional who uses transdisciplinary approaches in her student-centred teaching and community-centred research (S. Srinivas, personal communication, October 23, 2014). Her work challenges the traditional notion of pharmacy as a profession focused on dispensing medicine based on a biomedical model. Using a public health approach, health promotion and disease prevention based on social determinants of health has been part of her holistic view of the profession (S. Srinivas, October 23, 2014). Srinivas works with groups in the Grahamstown community as part of her engaged academic work, including patients with chronic conditions, school learners, and traditional health practitioners, integrating health promotion in her teaching and research (Srinivas & Hornby, 2011). Srinivas and a colleague were awarded the “Vice-Chancellor’s Distinguished Community Engagement Award” in 2008 (RUCE, 2014). Srinivas is deeply involved in various activities related to CE at Rhodes. Most recently, the Pharmacy Students Association was one of the 2014 finalists in the university’s “Student Society of the Year Award” which recognizes excellence in CE. It was her initiative to develop a community-based response to the maternal and child mortality pandemic, which led to a meeting with the Director of Community Engagement of Rhodes University (D. Hornby, personal communication, October 24, 2014).

RUCE is the fourth crucial partner in the CBR partnership between Ubunye and RU. Di Hornby, its director, acts as a networker and broker in this partnership and as co-supervisor of the Master’s students involved. Before she joined RUCE in 2010, Hornby was an educator and community development activist and in 2006 helped define the Ubunye Foundation’s assets-based approach to holistic community development as its first Director. Her approach to resourcing CE initiatives at RU is deliberately cautious, suggesting that “a needs-based model alone is not enough; communities have capabilities and the assets-based approach is about valuing that” (D. Hornby, personal communication, October 24, 2014).

The partnership is informed by this philosophy. External funding extends little beyond providing scholarships for the research students involved and for producing a first run of the information materials that are jointly developed. Funding has been received from the Rhodes University’s Sandisa Imbewu fund. More energy has gone into identifying with the communities the resources and strengths they can bring to the partnership and establishing relationships of trust. Limited funding in this partnership is a consciously preferred approach, yet Srinivas also noted that as an international scholar with international students on the project, funding is difficult to raise in South Africa (S. Srinivas, personal communication, October 23, 2014). The Masters’ students involved in the research would not have been able to do postgraduate studies without the scholarships attached to the partnership (S.M. Katsinde & N. Chemuru, personal communication, October 23, 2014).
In the relationship between the four partners, the research aspect is facilitated through the NGO, Ubunye, whose role includes: introducing the project and the research students to the community; facilitating the relationship with the community health care workers; helping to set up community meetings and focus groups; stepping in when a problem arises, and eventually leading the project to sustainability. Thus, when the second cohort of students was initially introduced to the community in 2014, there were questions by community leaders about the purpose of their presence. Ubunye’s Family Health Programme Coordinator and the community-based health champions sat down with all parties and listened to their questions and concerns. Yet the health information booklets that had been produced by the first two students, which are now widely used by the health champions and nurses at the local clinics, spoke for themselves. After it was explained that the production of training and facilitation manuals will further the project, which is the second cohorts’ work, community members embraced the two students. According to one student on the project, being outsiders to the community and foreigners (Zimbabweans), “we would never have been able to talk to [the community members] was it not for Ubunye” (S.M. Katsinde, personal communication, October 23, 2014). Similarly, Srinivas argues:

For me, the role of the NGO is a non-negotiable one. The reason is we are Rhodes University; we are foreigners in every aspect. And there are no connecting points with the community that is embedded in a deeply rural place. [...] So we are banking on the trust factor that the NGO brings into this. [...] The other key factor that the NGO brings into this is sustainability. [...] Sustainability cannot be ensured if it is just an academic and a bunch of students. (S. Srinivas, personal communication, October 23, 2014)

Considering that the main researchers and actors from the side of the University are Master’s students who will eventually complete their degrees and move on, the NGO who has facilitated the research encounter also ensures that the health information materials that have been developed through their research will continue to be in use in the public health programmes in the communities and the clinics in which they work (S. Srinivas, personal communication, October 23, 2014). Along with various intangible benefits of the research encounter, as well as the academic outputs, there are lasting benefits to the community. According to Ubunye, they include the community dialogues and focus groups which formed part of the research, manuals on teenage pregnancy and exclusive breastfeeding, and training manuals for health workers. The booklets are already highly sought after in clinics in other communities, and they will be translated from English into isiXhosa and Afrikaans to make them more accessible. Ubunye hopes that Rhodes University will be able to bring more research students to develop resource materials on similar topics. It also hopes that with Rhodes will become involved in developing a community-based methodology for the evaluation of the NGO’s work and participate in the evaluation itself (K. Court & L. O’Keeffe, October 23, 2014).
Discussion

The two case studies of community-university research partnerships analysed in this chapter suggest that research collaborations between academics and local communities rely on community-based intermediaries and an enabling environment in the university to be successful. Community-based organizations bring the necessary social capital, particularly trust, while university-based partners contribute intellectual capital in the form of research capacity and, perhaps, prestige. Conversely, there is a more ambiguous relationship between community-based resources and external funding for partnerships; the two case studies offer therefore very different approaches to the mobilization of external funds. Moreover, community-based organizations bring to a partnership the potential of greater continuity and sustainability as university-based partners are bound to operate by the logics and calendar of the academic life cycle as against those primarily determined by the context and locality of community members.

Against the evolving national policy framework for social responsibility and community engagement, South African universities have developed largely autonomously, but in conversation with each other and with an eye to national funding opportunities, approaches to creating an enabling environment for, and strengthening existing CURPs. Both the University of Cape Town and Rhodes University’s approaches share many features in terms of the structures that have been set up to broker, seed fund, monitor and showcase research partnerships, and give recognition to the academics involved. UCT’s approach is more devolved and responsibilities are shared by a number of units. In contrast, Rhodes has established an institution-wide CE hub in the form of RUCE, its Directorate for Community Engagement, which combines a similar range of responsibilities in one central office. There are also differences in the geographical scope of partnerships. Rhodes University’s CE policy explicitly prefers to focus on communities in the more immediate environment of the university whereas UCT’s policies express no such preference.

Accordingly, external support for the partnerships has a different status. The two partnerships also require a different scope of networking. For the purpose of the partnership profiled at Rhodes, Ubunye’s network does not need to extend far beyond the local communities and their governance structures, clinics, and the self-help organizations and local health champions. Conversely, the Biowatch partnership draws on an international network of civil society partners like the African Biodiversity Network in Kenya (www.africanbiodiversity.org), local partner organizations in Zambia and Zimbabwe, and the Mupo Foundation in the Limpopo province. It is funded by several world-wide development funders, and can draw on substantial national funding through the NRF rating and Research Chair held by the university-based partner. The Ubunye-Rhodes partnership, in contrast, is able to operate at a fraction of those funds, most deriving internally from the university-based Sandisa Imbewu Fund. Yet both are examples of suc-
successful community-university research partnerships in South Africa, and offer different models for thinking about how to strengthen such partnerships in the Global South.

**Conclusion**

The African idiom ‘one bangle cannot jingle’ reminds us that it takes more than one to affect change. In their reflections on collaborative disability research, Lorenzo and Joubert (2011, p. 256) argue that the idiom “seemed to symbolize the intention of the process we were engaging at the time.” This chapter has analyzed and highlighted conditions that facilitate the ‘jingle’ in successful community-university research partnerships at two South African universities against the background of the evolving national policy on community engagement and social responsibility. The “Seed and Knowledge” partnership and the “Maternal and Infant Health Initiative” provide diverse and rich material for considering different models and ways of strengthening CURPs.

**Acknowledgements**

This research was conducted under the auspices of the Department of Institutional Planning at the University of Cape Town, in response to the call for participating in the research on Strengthening Community-University Research Partnerships by the UNESCO Chair in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education. Financial support was received for the study from the UNESCO Chair, as well as from the Rhodes University Community Engagement Directorate. We are grateful to all interviewees who readily shared their time, experiences and expertise, and provided us with valuable comments on a draft of this chapter. SDG.

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