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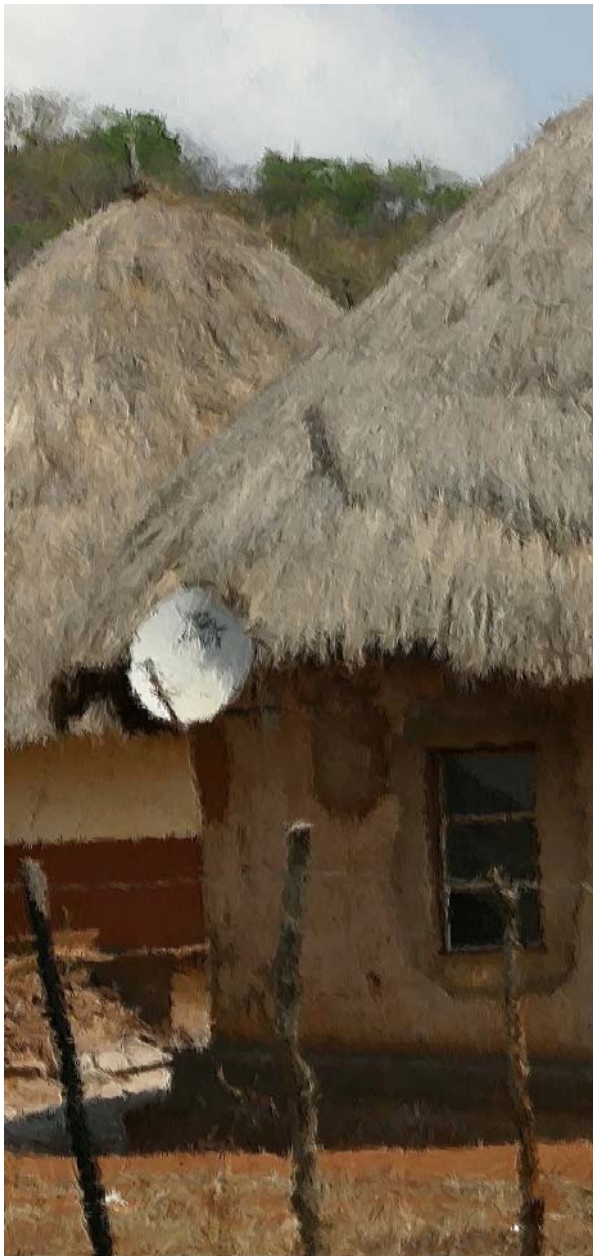
A Culturally Embedded Approach for River Basin Organisations in SADC
-A Guideline-



Karen Nortje, Inga Jacobs, Shanna Nienaber

GTZ/SADC Tools and Approaches for RBOs

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A Culturally Embedded Approach for River Basin Organisations in SADC
-A Guideline-

Report prepared by:	**Council for Scientific and Industrial Research** **P.O. Box 395, Pretoria, 0001, South Africa** **knortje@csir.co.za**
Report prepared for:	**SADC Water Division under contract to GTZ** **Private Bag X12 (Village), Gaborone, Botswana**
Authors:	**K Nortje, I Jacobs, S Nienaber**

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GLOSSARY FOR TERMS

Deductive research – research is guided by the testing of hypothesis (top-down)

Developing world – those countries in the world that are poor in terms of *per capita* income. It may also be that the country has not yet reached the stage of development sufficient to yield domestic savings which will finance further economic growth (Scruton, 1982).

Context – Can refer to the immediate or specific features of a social situation or environment that surround a particular interaction or communicative interchange; it may also those wider social, historical and political circumstances and conditions within which certain actions, processes or events are located and made meaningful (O'Sullivan et al, 1994).

Emic – description of behaviour or a belief in terms meaningful (consciously or unconsciously) to the actor; that is, an emic account comes from within the culture.

Etic - description of a behaviour or belief by an observer, in terms that can be applied to other cultures; that is, an etic account is '"culturally neutral". The etic account is from a self-consciously outsider perspective, and it attempts to be neutral or objective.

Hegemony – The ability in certain historical periods of the dominant classes to exercise social and cultural leadership, and by these means, rather than coercion of subordinate classes, to maintain their power over the economic, political and cultural direction of the nation (O'Sullivan et al, 1994).

Hermeneutics- the science of interpretation, traditionally applied to the discovery of the real but hidden messages of sacred texts. Currently it is also understood as the activity of understanding the world not as a physical system but as an object of human thought and action.

Identity markers - are those characteristics (physical or non-physical) that we attribute meaning to in terms of our identity, for example, religion, culture, gender, sex, etc.

Inductive research – research is guided by observations and detections of patterns (bottom-up)

Livelihoods - A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base (Scoones , 1998)

INTRODUCTION TO A CULTURALLY EMBEDDED APPROACH FOR RIVER BASIN ORGANISATIONS (RBOs[1])

INTRODUCTION

Transboundary waters traverse both borders and cultures. One internationally shared river may wind its way through hundreds of communities, each with its own cultural belief system/s. Simultaneously, rivers in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) are largely managed by national governments, who may hold unique political viewpoints as a result of historical contexts. River basins and subsequently RBOs, are largely influenced and shaped by individuals and the perceptions they hold to be true. Identity markers (race, gender, religion, qualifications, age, profession and ethnicity), historical contexts (personal histories, the development trajectory of the RBO, and national histories) as well as the biophysical environment and the uses of a particular river, shape individual perceptions and how they relate to the river and each other. Similarly, longstanding cultural belief systems regarding water and the way it is used/approached may offer useful suggestions as to how transboundary river basin management can and should be conducted.

RBOs may be described as organisations which consist of a group of individuals who have different cultural backgrounds, and who may be influenced to a more or lesser degree by their cultural practices, beliefs or ways of understanding the world. In such a multi-cultural environment issues of cultural hierarchy and dominance may be a deciding factor in the way in which these individuals create a shared vision and collective understanding of the RBO.

As a result of their geographical position, river basins are embedded within various socio-cultural, economic, political and environmental contexts. Indeed, southern African RBOs are faced with challenges such as institutional memory loss as a result of skills flight, insufficient sustainable knowledge transfer and capacity building, and the lack of adaptive and flexible institutional capacity. One possible reason for this lies in the transposing of foreign institutional systems and/or processes on people who cannot relate to them. The result is a lack of ownership and trust in the institution itself. In response, RBO strengthening projects are underway to address these challenges. Several (e.g. CSIR TWO Analysis, SIWI Business

1 Terminology clarification is important since the terms RBO and SWI are often used interchangeably. In this project we separate the two: SWI is a broad institutional category, while an RBO is a type of SWI.

Models) indicate the importance of an awareness of the socio-political context, however, none have strived to conceptualise this intangible domain. Further still, the recent development of southern African RBOs, particularly those of a multilateral nature, has evolved as a result of templates from the North. It is therefore arguable, that transboundary river basin management in SADC has developed as a brainchild of European development.

Research delving into the dynamics of cross-cultural interactions in resource management and the complex cultural and power dimensions of water resources management has steadily grown (Wittfogel, 1957; Donahue and Johnston, 1998; Webster, 2006; Jackson, 2002). Yet, a truly comprehensive interdisciplinary approach that would frame water issues in the larger cultural context has been missing from mainstream water resource management discourse. UNESCO-IHP attempted to address this gap by establishing the Water and Cultural Diversity Project that aimed to project a new vision in water resource management, that sustainable management is as much culturally embedded as it is technical. According to the UNESCO IHP Water and Cultural Diversity Project, our attitudes to water and ways of dealing with water issues are mediated by a diversity of cultural meanings, values and perceptions of water, which shape our behaviour and motivate us toward or away from sustainable use (UNESCO, 2007). Additionally, the relationships between people, culture and technology regarding its transfer, knowledge, community participation and cross-cultural learning have been documented in several analyses (Hazeltine and Bull, 2003; Visscher, 2006; Visscher et al, 2006). However, not enough attention has been placed on factoring in local social and cultural configurations into institutional processes of management in this region.

RATIONALE

The interface between cultural contexts and scientific research, policy recommendations and practice as it relates to international/transboundary water resource management is critical. According to Thompson (2002: 233), academic discourses are heavily permeated by power relations. There is a bias within the scientific community towards producing and replicating mainstream understanding and knowledge, i.e. a masculinised normative vision of immutability and impenetrability that is inherently hermeneutic (Thompson, 2002: 233). Due to the expert and specific skills that scientists are trained to have and the amount of time they spend exploring issues they tend to assume that they ultimately 'know best' about the issues that they specialise in. As such their recommendations tend to represent an 'ideal type' in terms of how to proceed in understanding or addressing any given challenge. Whilst the value of scientific recommendations should not in any way be underestimated, it is critical to recognise that this assumption of the correctness, validity and superiority of science is not some objective phenomenon but something constructed,

created and cultural. This perception of self superiority within the scientific community is in many ways a cultural characteristic of the scientific community.

The consequence of this scientific culture is that it can hegemonically impose its values and recommendations on other cultures or communities that it interacts with and studies, often with scant recognition of existing knowledge paradigms and practises. The problem with hegemonically 'imposing scientific' recommendations on societies is that they lack relevance or utility within the cultural understanding and knowledge of other communities of people. Put simply, recommendations that have no relevance beyond the realm of the scientific community are not good science because the recommendations, however well researched they may be, are not implementable or valuable beyond the realm of the scientific community (also see section on Knowledge Dissemination on p.37) .

FILLING THE GAP

The question that begs to be answered is how does one produce culturally relevant recommendations? How can science use its expertise to benefit communities in a real, relevant and helpful manner? How does one start to address the understanding gap between different cultures: in this case the culture gap between science and other communities?

These are complex questions with few clear cut answers. There are however some useful starting points for researchers to consider:

- Firstly, it is important to be continually aware of the divide between the culture of science and other cultures;
- Secondly, in the process of research it is important to understand not only the issue at stake (e.g. water and sanitation access) but also the mindset of the people affected by this issue. It is only by beginning to understand what people think and value that community relevant recommendations can be made.
- Thirdly, the balance between the etic and the emic is crucial to generating relevant recommendations and solutions. As much as science (as an outsider looking in on a community – etic – promoted through deductive research) can make recommendations to communities; communities (as the insiders looking out on science – emic – promoted through inductive research) can respond and add value to the recommendations of science. As such it is potentially at the intersection between the etic and the emic that relevant and useful recommendations can emerge.

This guideline forms part of a broader research project conducted by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) on the development of tools and approaches to help RBOs better carry out their mandate, by emphasising the benefits of including a culturally embedded approach to river basin management. Essentially, this approach argues for a nuanced understanding of the biophysical environment.

Through a descriptive analysis, this guideline aims to highlight several key aspects for a culture and values approach to not only the effective and sustainable operation and management of RBOs, but also the overall conceptualisation and culture of the RBO. This guideline is divided into three main sections. Section one presents the underlying theoretical influences that underpins the culture and values approach. In other words, this section looks at understanding the context for the culturally embedded approach. Issues that are dealt in section one are, a justification for context-specific approaches, a definition of culture, cultural relativity, issues of representation, poly-vocality, and valuing the resource. Section two looks at the practices within RBO that can benefit from the thinking presented in section one. These practises are cultural diversity mainstreaming, decision-making, public participation, social and inter-cultural learning, and knowledge dissemination. Lastly, section three takes the practical application of this guideline further by exploring ways in which the thinking and practices dealt with in sections one and two may be applied to a basket of tools suggested by the CSIR for optimal conceptualisation, operation and management of RBOs.

FIGURE 1: KATSE DAM (PHOTO BY SUZAN OELOFSE, 2008)

SECTION ONE:

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

WHY A CONTEXT-SPECIFIC APPROACH?

While international cooperation on a range water matters dates back to 805 AD,[2] the oldest multilateral state-based institutions for water management can be found in Western Europe and North America (van Ast, 2000). In the Rhine River basin, for example, formal international cooperation commenced with agreements on navigation between Holland and Germany in 1755 which became formalised in the establishment of the current Central Commission for shipping on the Rhine in 1885 (van Ast, 2000). Van Ast (2000) also argues that North American international water management started in 1889 with a joint commission for the settlement of the border between Mexico and the United States. If multilateral RBOs and/or SWIs are western models, the questions that then ensue are:

- How have these western models been transposed onto non-western contexts?
- What "indigenous institutions" or other systems of governance are western-centric models substituting, if any?

Shah et al. (2001) in their seminal paper on "Issues in Transposing Successful River Basin Management Institutions in the Developing World" ask the question: is it possible for developing countries to successfully adopt models which are working well in developed countries? These authors evaluate the ways in which western (or "developed" to use the terminology of the paper) models of river basin management have been implemented in the developing world. They argue that due to four sets of characteristics (or realities) existent in a river basin: hydro-geological, demographic, socioeconomic, and the organisation of the water sector; this results in a highly situational institutional framework based on context. Essentially, this means that institutional arrangements in a river basin with one basket of characteristics may not be the best model for another basin with a distinctly different set. The need for a "contextual fit" therefore implies that the uncritical and insufficiently evaluated imposition of developed-country institutional models on developing-country river basin contexts may prove "dysfunctional and even counter-productive" (Shah et al. 2001).

As examples, Shah et al. (2001) explain that successful institutional reforms in the water sector (in the developed world) have been based largely on the management of surface water bodies; have been aimed at improving the productivity of publicly diverted large water bodies; have seldom addressed groundwater, have not had to face the challenges of dominant informal water sectors; they have centrally been about "blue water" productivity and have largely ignored "green water" (Shah et al., 2001).

2 According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation legal database, over 3,600 treaties exist that relate to international water resources dating between 805 AD and 1984, the majority of which deal with some aspect of navigation (UN FAO 1984)

However, the authors explain that the challenges that developing countries find critical are often ignored, left as unresolved (e.g. groundwater over-exploitation) or rendered irrelevant by their evolutionary process (e.g. using irrigation as a means to provide poor people with livelihoods and food security). Shah et al (2001) conclude that while there may indeed be lessons to be learned from developed country examples, imposing institutional models uncritically in different socio-ecological contexts can be, and often is counter-productive.

Despite the fact that Shah et al. (2001) employ broad generalisations of developing contexts, the question of the existence, appropriateness and/or effectiveness of non-western systems of governance is a crucial one. This question coincides with the socio-cultural context within which the transboundary river basin is set, and provides an understanding of the success or failure of the transposition of western models onto non-western contexts.

Several context-specific water management arrangements have for example, been documented by Manzungu et al. (2008) in the Limpopo basin portion of Zimbabwe. They concentrated their research on two particular areas within the basin comprising of several villages each. Local customary institutions dominate in the Sibasa communal lands, where a dam, multiple boreholes and a government-constructed canal providing water to an irrigation scheme are all managed through locally managed arrangements. The researchers report that a unique "water security system" exists that includes the following: water access rights linked to residency, the centrality of livelihoods in determining

A comparison of basin realities

Developed Countries	Developing Countries
Temperate climates, humid, higher river-stream density	Rainfall low, climate extreme, higher mean temperatures, lower stream density, water scarcity an emerging constraint
Population concentrated in the valleys, downstream	Densely populated in both valleys and catchment areas; population high both upstream and downstream of dams
Water rights based on riparian doctrine and prior appropriation	Water rights based on rights to rainfall or ground-water; people's notions of ownership relate more easily to rain than to large-scale public diversions
Focus on blue surface water: water found in rivers, and lakes	Focus on green water: water stored in the soil profile or blue water stored in aquifers
Most water users get water from 'service providers'; most water provision is in the formal sector-making water resources governance feasible	Most water users get their water directly from rain and from private or community storage without any significant mediation from public agencies or organized service providers. Because the bulk of water provision takes place in the informal sector, it is difficult to pass enforceable water legislation
Small numbers of large-scale stakeholders	Vast numbers of small-scale stakeholders
Low transaction costs for monitoring water use and collecting water charges	High transaction costs for monitoring water use and collecting water charges

Source: Shah et al, 2001

water access (in place of the usual distinction between domestic and productive uses), the emphasis placed on managing multiple sources of water for complementary uses to accommodate seasonal variations in supply and demand, flexible enforcement of rules during normal times (these become stricter during periods of scarcity), and overall governance through traditional chiefs balanced by consultation and consensus building, and supported by rituals and spirit mediums (cited in Merry, 2009). Manzungu et al. (cited in Merry, 2009) conclude that the threat of water scarcity in this area has resulted in the establishment of relatively strong overarching institutions encompassing regulation of use and access to multiple sources of water.

In the second study area, i.e. the Maramami communal lands, at the confluence of the Shashi and Limpopo rivers, a different ethnic group dominates, and livelihoods are driven by the management of a large flood plain as well as a government-constructed irrigation scheme (cited in Merry, 2009). The importance of livelihoods is also prioritised in this area, which often results in a conflict situation with government, which gives priority to the environment on the flood plain (cited in Merry, 2009). Access rights on the flood plain are based on land clearing, and property is created through investment (and not based on residence as is the case in the Sibasa communal lands). Moreover, access to land and irrigation on the government irrigation scheme is governed by a similar principle, which is contrary to the rules set by government. All local residents have access to the water from the canal for livelihood purposes and unlike Sibasa, there is no central control through chiefs (cited in Merry, 2009).

How may an awareness of the context-specific nature of river basin management benefit RBOs?

Owing largely to the different levels of scale at play, i.e. local indigenous governance arrangements vs. national institutions involved in transboundary river basin management, Manzungu et al. (2008) conceded that the implications of their research for transnational basin management are not easily implementable. They do, however, conclude that effective local management arrangements have several useful principles to offer basin management along with state-sponsored institutions, which include culturally sanctioned stakeholder consultation processes; flexible rules that are applied in a way that recognises social relationships and the degree of water scarcity; priority to water for livelihoods rather than an artificial separation between domestic and productive water; a universal right to drinking water even in times of scarcity usually combined with broad rights to land and water for basic livelihoods (Derman et al., 2005 cited in Merry, 2009); and exploitation of multiple sources of water for multiple uses.

CULTURE

WHAT IS CULTURE?

Culture can be defined as a "set of abstract values, beliefs and perceptions of the world that lies behind people's behaviour and that are reflected by their behaviour" (Haviland, 1999: 35).

All individuals are at some level influenced by their culture. We are not often conscious of the impact it can have on our thoughts, beliefs and actions and the reason for this is that it becomes such an integral part of who we are, that we tend to forget about it.

To truly understand the impact of culture in the way that we do things, one has to look at the **characteristics of culture**:

Culture is shared – the common denominator that gives shared meaning to the actions of individuals by other members of the same culture.

Culture is learned – knowing how to 'practice' one's culture can be described as learned behaviour through a process of socialisation, first through our parents and family and later through our peer group, education and even the media.

Culture is based on symbols – symbols of shared culture are easy to identify for example, dress, flags, etc. However language is the most prominent symbol of culture because it facilitates the process of early socialisation. In other words, we learn how to describe our world through a language which is culturally embedded.

Culture is dynamic – all culture changes over time. This change may occur because of different reasons such as a change in the environment, intrusion of outsiders or because the values within a culture has changed. At times, change might rapidly occur, usually as a quick response to something, but mostly culture changes slowly – a process that spans generations.

Culture is integrated - in the study of an idea or concept; it might seem prudent to break it down into discrete parts in order to understand it. When it comes to culture however, one finds that while you can break it down into discrete parts one cannot fully understand its purpose or impact without considering it in relation to the other parts. Thus one could argue that all aspects of culture tend to function in an integrated whole.

WHAT DOES KNOWING ABOUT CULTURE MEAN FOR RBOS?

- Because culture is shared, that which is considered 'cultural' is easily legitimised. Therefore it is essential to invest some thinking into what does and does not become a part of the culture of the RBO.
- Since culture is learned and dynamic, the way in which RBOs conceptualise, operate and manage need to be revisited often. Issues that may have an impact are skills shortage and staff turnover.
- The fact that culture is integrated brings to the fore the essential realisation that RBO culture will be multi-dimensional and should be treated as such. This means that it has to make sense in terms of the whole. In the case of the RBO, the 'whole' would be both that which has been chosen as operational practises but also individuals' culture that make up the organisation

GOOD TO KNOW: HOW DO ORGANISATIONS CONSTRUCT A CULTURE?

Fincham and Rhodes (1999) suggest that "organisations are . . . one constituent element of society . . . (thus) organisations . . . have cultures of their own as they possess the paradoxical quality of being both 'part' and 'apart' from society. They are embedded in the wider societal context but they are also communities of their own distinct rules and values".

Organisational culture can be more or less visible. Visible aspects of organisational culture are evident in the types of building and offices of the organisation and in the images that the organisation project onto society in order to market its specific purpose and expertise. Less visible parts of the organisational culture involve the attitudes and values of the organisation and its employees. Does the organisation encourage high levels of bureaucratic protocol and micro-managing or does it encourage an innovative, flexible and independent work ethos? Does the organisation value a high degree of unity or does it tolerate large differences whether they be technical, ideological and so on?

Regardless of the organisation, its culture is an extremely important aspect of the effective functioning of an organisation. The culture impacts on how the outside world perceives a given organisation, on what kind of person will approach the organisation for employment and how the employees or participants in the organisation will function and perform. Fundamental to sustainable forming or reforming of an organisation is the issue of culture formation or reformation.

There is no 'one size fits all' formula to culture formation. Three issues are however important:

- Formation of culture takes an extended period of time;
- Formation of organisational culture demands leadership. It is the leaders of an organisation that play a critical role in the construction of the social reality and values of the organisation they lead;
- Creating an organisational culture is, at least in part, a purposive activity and as such it requires carefully considered visioning to effectively achieve.

CULTURAL RELATIVITY

WHAT IS CULTURAL RELATIVISM?

Cultural relativism is an anthropological approach which has been used as a mechanism for not merely understanding different cultures but also facilitating shared value of all cultures present. Anthropologists developed this methodology in response to an early evolutionist approach to studying and understanding culture which argued that culture develops in a uniform and progressive manner. Proponents of cultural relativism argued that all cultures are equal with no culture existing as superior or inferior. In this regard, all premises of *upper and lower*, and *more or less civilised* are culture bound and ethnocentric.

Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's own culture is superior to all others (Haviland, 1999). By being ethnocentric it is easy to misinterpret another culture as you are inappropriately applying the concepts and values of your own culture to that culture.

Cultural relativism also necessitates personal reflexivity about one's own positioning as actor on the cultural stage by highlighting the fact that the way we view (and thus also understand) something is not absolute and is influenced by our own culture, context and experiences.

THE BASIC PREMISE OF CULTURAL RELATIVISM

- All cultures are of equal value, are qualitatively different and have their own inner logic
- Any culture can be understood at its own merits and not another culture's merits
- There is no single scale of values which pertains to all cultures and by which all culture can be judged. Rather, beliefs, aesthetics, morals and other cultural markers can only be judged through their relevance to a given culture

WHAT DOES CULTURAL RELATIVISM MEAN FOR RBOS?

- Cultural relativism speaks to the inclusion of different ways of understanding or doing in all the processes of the RBO. It is therefore important to keep in mind when planning and implementing RBO related projects.

GOOD TO KNOW: **E. EVANS-PRITCHARD – THE AZANDE OF NORTHERN AFRICA**

In 1937 Evans-Pritchard, while studying the practice of witchcraft among the Azande of northern Africa, taught the world that just because something is not rationally defined, recognisable and scientifically elucidated does not mean that it cannot have a real impact upon the lives of people and how they experience life (Evans-Pritchard, 1937). Evans-Pritchard's Azande believed in witchcraft and while he could not experience the effect of witchcraft himself he acknowledges that it does not mean that it did not exist. When dealing with understanding cultural difference we are in the business of examining that which makes an impact on the lives of those involved - whether it is real, tangible, rationally definable or even factually correct really does not matter. Our role here is not to ask whether it is real, true or scientifically reproducible, rather our mission should be to acknowledge its effects. Therefore, the perceptions and stereotypes that people ascribe to other cultures, while not always 'real' or factually correct does have significance in the impact that it has on their lives and the relationship/s they cultivate with the other groups. Consequently, negative stereotypes (often racially/culturally/ethnically driven) about one another, reinforces notions of moral hierarchy. That which is virtuous, moral and honourable therefore becomes defined according to historical legacy and context which in turn underpins continued division and assumptions about one another (Nortje, 2006).

Further Reading: Evans-Pritchard, E. 1937, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*, Oxford University Press: Oxford:

FIGURE 2: KATSE DAM (PHOTO BY SUZAN OELOFSE, 2008)

ISSUES OF REPRESENTATION

CONSTRUCTING THE 'OTHER'

In history, one can argue that many of the great divides were built and sustained around complex constructions of the 'other.' Colonialism and the Cold War are good examples. During colonialism, for instance, people such as traders, conquerors and missionaries would take back home stories about their interactions and dealings with colonised peoples and cultures. In this way the colonised world was reproduced through the eyes of the colonisers. As such, cultural constructs were created from these colonised peoples and their cultures by people who used their own cultural references to, not only make sense of, but also judge those cultures and people they encountered (ethnocentrism).

Think about:
Is there such a thing as an African way of doing things? Would it be different from a European way of doing things? What is 'African' or 'European" and on what are these constructs based?

Such a sense-making process produces two groups, namely 'us' and 'other'. The 'us' in this process is easily defined through the negative, i.e. "I am not this, therefore I am that". And thus by knowing what we are not, we define what we are and more importantly, who or what we align ourselves with or to.

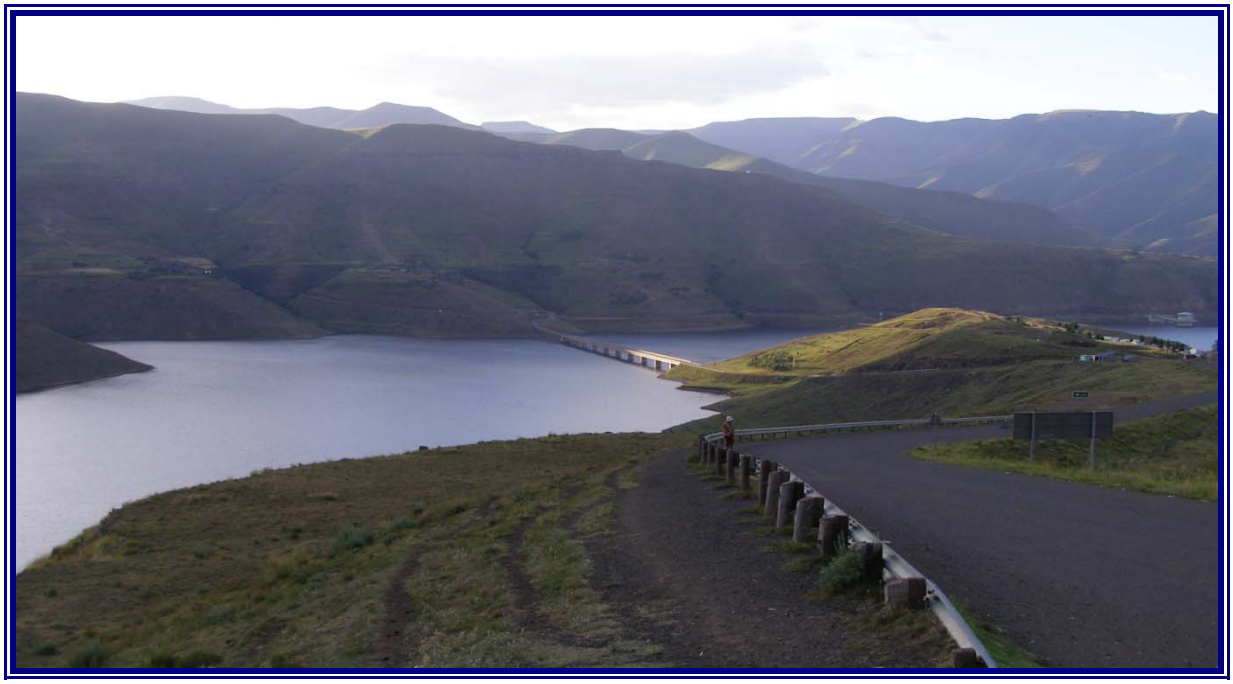


FIGURE 3: KATSE DAM (PHOTO BY SUZAN OELOFSE, 2008)

Perceptions of history can play a defining role in how we construct the 'other' (Nortje, 2006). Firstly, history and our perceptions of history influence how we live today, our opinion of others, and how we consequently treat other people. Secondly, our actions today will become history tomorrow. Therefore our everyday interaction with others lays the groundwork for future interactions to come.

WHAT CAN THINKING ABOUT ISSUES OF REPRESENTATION MEAN FOR RBOS?

- In the geographical surrounds of a river basin it is unlikely that there is only one nation or one culture that shares the basin. 'Othering' can thus easily occur and may just as easily become a continuous process. It is essential therefore to remain reflexive, for example one may ask to what extent is this 'othering' expressed in negative terms and how is this taken up into the everyday practices of the RBO?

GOOD TO KNOW: ORIENTALISM – EDWARD SAID

In 1979 Edward Said, pre-eminent scholar and important figure in post-colonial studies wrote a book called *Orientalism*. This book, and its theory of Orientalism, has had an important impact on the way in which scholars today understand the politics of representation.

What is Orientalism?

Orientalism refers to the power relationship between the Occident (the West) and the Orient (Asia originally but today may refer to other non-Western countries), and how the Occident has used and continues to use and understand the Orient on its own terms.

"Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it, in short, Orientalism as a Western Style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said, 1979:3).

Important questions that emerged from the theory of Orientalism:

- How do we construct representations of others?
- Are we aware of the power relationship involved in the 'othering' process?
- In terms of cultural representation, who has the right to speak for someone else?

Useful Web Links:

- YouTube video of Edward Said speaking on Orientalism: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZLA-mwOdSs

POLY-VOCALITY

WHAT IS A POLY-VOCAL APPROACH?

The poly-vocal or dialogical approach was introduced primarily by post-modern theorists as a textual strategy in order to do away with the dominating western mode of scientific writing, i.e. the monograph (Barrett, 2002). More popularly, this approach is known as the use of multiple voices as a narrative mode within a text, typically in order to encourage diverse interpretations and readings rather than to promote one preferred interpretation. Specifically, by employing a poly-vocal approach, room is made within texts (or rather stories or narratives) for multiple authors with a suspension of judgement particularly in relation to questions around authority and legitimacy. In other words, there is equal room for different voices.

Think about: Power relationships within a meeting and its affect on creating equal room for different voices.

Who sets up the agenda? Who has opportunity to influence the agenda? Who is the chairperson? Who are given time to air their views? Where is the meeting being held and who has easy access to this meeting place?

The poly-vocal approach however extends well beyond merely text. A poly-vocal approach is also a conscious choice on the part of an organisation, for example, to make space for different voices to be heard in the process of the organisation fulfilling mandates, constructing identity, and creating a vision. Therefore it is not just about "shouting the loudest"; it's about making sure that those who are not heard are given the opportunity to be heard and to make a valued contribution to the process or issue under review (see for example the section on public participation in this document).

WHAT CAN A RBO GAIN FROM A POLY-VOCAL APPROACH?

The inclusion of multiple voices:

- Facilitates the co-creation of meaning which does away with top-down management
- Fosters a sense of belonging for those on the periphery. For example, by allowing for documenting the issues/stories of women, minorities, or any individual outside the power base and centre of decision-making
- Creates space for alternative ways of sharing knowledge, for example oral history

HOW DO WE VALUE THE RESOURCE?

WHAT IS EMBEDDED WISDOM?

Embedded wisdom relates to a diverse range of practices, traditional and otherwise, that contribute to the conservation of water and related resources, which are rooted in customs, beliefs, knowledge, worldviews and values of local people. According to a UNESCO-IHP report, indigenous knowledge in particular has played vital roles in protecting springs, rivers, lakes, wetlands and forests that protect watersheds across the globe (UNESCO-IHP, 2007: 4-5). The UNESCO-IHP report further argues that these types of knowledge and practices often reflect sustainable ways of managing natural resources because the worldviews that underpin such knowledge are holistic and:

"typically emphasize the symbiotic nature of the relationship between humans and the natural world… [and] view people, animals, plants and other elements of the universe as interconnected by a network of social relations and obligations" (ICSU and UNESCO, 2002: 9 & 10).

Studies that have examined the way in which indigenous knowledge is embedded in religious beliefs or worldviews that have in turn fostered the conservation of water resources in Africa include, for example, analyses by Toulmin et al (1996), Dixon (2001) and Anoliefo et al (2003). A fundamental issue to recognise is the relationship between these indigenous knowledge and belief systems, and western and other dominant belief/knowledge systems. The UNESCO-IHP (2007) report cites Hill and Woodland's (2003) study of Tunisia, where Islamic law enforces decentralised rainwater harvesting.

The term 'indigenous knowledge' has been contested in its use and application. On the one hand 'indigenous knowledge' is often equated with 'traditional' and associated with static and fixed knowledge. Understanding indigenous knowledge in this way provides an easy basis for discounting its legitimacy as a knowledge system.

On the other hand, the notion of 'indigenous knowledge' has also been romanticised where indigenous people and their knowledge are seen to be 'closer' to nature and more sustainable for the environment. This is not necessarily the case as some food production strategies such as the slash-and-burn technique are not always the most suitable technique for environmental sustainability of an area.

CASE EXAMPLE: THE CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL LIFE OF WATER IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

In Southern Africa, indigenous people (Khoisan- and Bantu-speaking people) attribute more than a utilitarian value to water. In these cultural traditions water is regarded as sustenance for both physical and spiritual life (Bernard, 2003). Here water, river systems and riparian zones are often infused with cultural and spiritual meaning. For example, human ancestors and zoomorphic spirit manifestations such as the snake and mermaid are said to reside in water and occasionally also interact with humans (Bernard, 2003).

Due to the cultural meaning attached to many of the rivers, pools and water sources in Southern Africa, they have gained sacred status which in turn has had implications regarding their profane access and utilisation. For example, in the Phiphidi Falls in the Limpopo Province of South Africa the Vha-Venda maintains good relations with their spiritual ancestors by placating the water spirits who reside in the Falls by leaving beer and grain on a sacred stone near the top (Zenani & Mistry, 2005). The reasoning behind this behaviour is that if they foster good relations with their ancestral spirits they will be granted good rainfall during the year which would sustain their agricultural and livelihood practices (Zenani & Mistry, 2005).

FIGURE 4: THE PHIPHIDI FALLS IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE: A SACRED PLACE FOR THE VHA VENDA (IMAGE REPRODUCED FROM ZEHANI & MISTRY, 2005)

Another good example is that of Modjadji the Rain Queen. The Rain Queen or Modjadji is the traditional ruler of the Balobedu, the people of the Limpopo Province, South Africa. The Rain Queen is believed to have supernatural powers, including the ability to control the clouds and rainfall. Cultural practises borne in the tradition of the Rain Queen have arguably led to the preservation of natural resources in the surrounding catchment area. According to Ikageng Community Empowerment (ICE) the Balobedu have revered the thick forests surrounding the Queen's home in Setlhakone, which were used for traditional ceremonies and which are home to the ancient Modjadji cycads. Recognising the value of the forest, the Queen bequeathed it to the National Government, which in turn declared the area a protected reserve (ICE, 2009). Established in 1979, the Modjadji Nature Reserve aims to conserve the Modjadji cycad. The cultural declaration of this area as sacred as has had positive repercussions for the conservation of the catchment as a protected area.

Useful Web Links:

- Ikageng Community Empowerment Website - http://tzaneen.co.za/ice/
- Orange-Senqu River Awarenss Kit: People of the Basin, Indigenous/Traditional Knowledge - http://www.orangesenqurak.com/people/people+of+the+basin/cultural+diversity/culturetek.aspx

How can RBOs benefit from 'embedded wisdom'?

Knowledge or wisdom that is embedded in a particular culture can be useful to RBOs at many levels. Firstly, by soliciting the input from local and indigenous people, RBOs and the projects they manage can facilitate local empowerment and development, increasing self-sufficiency and strengthening self-determination (Thrupp, 1989). By using this knowledge during the implementation of projects, projects are endowed with legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of both local people and outside stakeholders (Hatfield Consultants, 2008). Moreover, the utilisation of indigenous knowledge systems increases the sense of ownership and cultural pride and provides incentives to solve problems with local ingenuity and resources.

Herero Praise Songs: a way to locate historic water sources

As an example, in her analysis of the connection between land and culture in Herero oral histories, in the Waterberg region in Namibia, Larissa Forster (Forster, 2005: 10-12) tells of the network of natural springs and hand dug wells that are spread over the Waterberg in the Herero territories.

The geographic location of water sources and its availability were essential elements to the survival of Herero families that migrated across the landscape, moving with the availability of water for their own needs and that of their livestock. She argues that oral histories in the form of praise songs offer us extraordinarily precise and detailed documentation of the pre-colonial network of wells and settlements from an insider's view of Herero society.

This could potentially enlighten contemporary groundwater research and the relative uncertainties that still exist between trans-boundary groundwater and trans-boundary surface water.

Secondly, embedded wisdom can provide valuable technical input about the local environment, and how to effectively manage natural resources. Some examples include knowledge about: rain fall patterns; crop production; location, collection and storage of water; water resource management and irrigation methods; conservation strategies; natural forestry management; biodiversity science, including local flora and fauna and the identification of new species, and management; hunting, fishing and gathering; medicinal plants and medicinal practices; and, agricultural practices including: crop domestication, breeding and management; swidden agriculture; agro-ecology; agro-forestry; crop rotation; and pest and soil management. However, incorporating indigenous knowledge raises a number of complex issues, such as, land tenure rights, genetic resource ownership, intellectual property rights and benefit sharing (Hatfield Consultant, 2008). Despite the obvious benefits to integrating knowledge systems with western science, indigenous knowledge and understanding related to water are misunderstood and/or ignored in water projects (Hatfield Consultants, 2008).

A Train of thought worth wondering down: In what way does embedded wisdom play a role in management of natural disasters?

In 2009 Southern Africa experienced a severe bout of flooding related to the La Nina climatic phenomenon which has dramatically impacted on seven different countries in the region. The Zambezi, in places, has reached its second highest levels since 1969. Parts of Namibia have experienced the worst floods they have had in four generations. Angola has had its worst floods since 1963.

In the eyes of multiple local communities in Zambia, Namibia and Angola these floods are the 'worst ever' (Leary *et al*, 2008). Why have these floods been experienced as 'worse' than other floods that happen on an annual basis in the region?

On a quantitative level one can make the case that these floods, in terms of the actual costs and damages to infrastructure, crops, lives and human displacement, have been more severe than in recent years. On a more qualitative level however, we need to recognise who has been affected by these floods. In simple terms, the majority of people most severely affected by these floods have never in their living memories experienced floods before. As such there is no 'tradition of coexistence with floods' (Leary *et al*, 2008), thus there is no existence informal networks and embedded knowledge which enable earlier warning and self-help evacuation strategies when disaster strikes. This leaves the affected communities more vulnerable than communities that experience more regularised floods (such as those in Mozambique) as there is no practise of dealing with these disasters.

SECTION TWO:

PRACTISES THAT CAN BENEFIT FROM A CULTURALLY EMBEDDED APPROACH

CULTURAL DIVERSITY MAINSTREAMING IN WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND ITS IMPORTANCE

WHAT IS CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Cultural Diversity is an everyday reality in a world which is becoming increasingly heterogeneous. As such cultural diversity is also about different kinds of knowledge, wisdom and energy which all contribute to improving and changing the world. In the same vein, UNESCO (n.d.) argues that "cultural diversity presupposes respect of fundamental freedoms, namely freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of opinion and expression, and freedom to participate in the cultural life of one's choice" (UNESCO, n.d.)

The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development (Sept, 2002) acknowledges the importance of cultural diversity as follows:

We are determined to ensure that our rich diversity, which is our collective strength, will be used for constructive partnership for change and for the achievement of the common goal of sustainable development. (Par 16)

Recognizing the importance of building human solidarity, we urge the promotion of dialogue and cooperation among the world's civilizations and peoples, irrespective of race, disabilities, religion, language, culture or tradition. (Par 17)

WHAT IS MAINSTREAMING?

The three-pronged multi-sectoral approach guided by South Africa's Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG)[3] framework delineates mainstreaming aptly:

Internal Mainstreaming:

Much like the internal mainstreaming of gender and HIV/AIDS in the water sector, internal mainstreaming of cultural diversity looks at organisation performance of the institution/workforce and emphasises to what degree institutions support staff coming from various cultural backgrounds. It therefore includes workplace policies and guidelines that inform day to day activities. Worker awareness, specifically of diversity, and respect/tolerance of difference, are at the centre of this intervention.

External Mainstreaming:

External mainstreaming focuses on community impact of projects and includes an incorporation of an awareness of cultural diversity in management projects, particularly

3 Note: The names of national departments have been updated in line with the new Ministries as announced by President Jacob Zuma. (See: http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2009/09051016451001.htm)

To answer the question of what mainstreaming is, it is important to establish what is in the mainstream. For example:

- Ideas/ theories framing the organisational culture of RBOs
- Practices relating to the operational praxis of an RBO
- RBO institutions involved in the delivery of cultural diversity mainstreaming.

those impacts at a local community level. Special emphasis must be placed on the crucial role that cultural practices may play in ensuring sustainability at the community level.

Policy Review and Update:

The main aim of this intervention is to create an enabling environment for both the internal and external mainstreaming processes to take place using existing policy structures and the legal framework. Cultural diversity mainstreaming has to be integrated at all levels of the project management cycle to ensure that culturally-specific issues are identified in the analysis of programmes and projects and are subject to specific interventions whenever appropriate.

DECISION-MAKING PRACTICES

TWO-THIRDS VERSUS CONSENSUS DESISION-MAKING

Decision-making is a fundamental element of organisational processes and is best understood as a social representation: it influences organisations' members' ways of understanding and behaving in organisations, thus influencing processes, facilitating action and adding meaning to what happens in an organisation (Laroche, 1995: 62).

The relationship between personal trust as a prima for institutional trust is a noteworthy research node to understanding the effectiveness of consensus decision-making practices in RBO management in southern Africa.

Most legislative frameworks around the world have adopted two-thirds majority decision-making as best practice. Legislative and organisational practice in southern Africa reflects this arguably euro-centric model. Indeed the 1995 SADC Water Protocol (SADC, 1995) and the 2000 Revised Water Protocol (SADC, 2000) prioritise two-third majority as the rule of thumb in order to respect political equality. The 2000 Agreement on the Establishment of the Orange-Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM), however, prioritises consensus stipulating that "the Council shall make every effort to take decisions on the basis of consensus. If all efforts of reaching consensus on a particular matter at a meeting of the Council have been exhausted and no agreement was reached, then the matter shall be dealt with at the next meeting of the Council. In the event of failure to reach agreement at such meeting of the Council, the matter shall be made the subject of negotiations between the Parties" (ORASECOM, 2000: Art. 3.9). While the two-thirds majority decision-making approach is considered to be the global standard, it is interesting to note the way in which consensus decision-making has longer historical roots within numerous indigenous southern African cultural practices of governance. Indeed, what we see in many instances in southern African institutions (not only water related), is the use of consensus as an initial process. Should this approach result in an impasse, two-thirds majority decision-making processes can ensue.

According to Kwasi Wiredu, consensus decision-making practices in politics were cultivated by even the most centralised of ethnic groups in Africa i.e. the Zulus and the Ashanti (Wiredu, 1995 as cited in Coetzee and Roux, 1998: 356). Based on these two ethnic accounts, Coetzee and Roux (1998: 356) emphasise that consensus involves agreement, and that the potential for agreement lies in the idea that ultimately the interests of the members of a community are the same, though their perceptions may differ.

As a decision-making process, consensus decision-making aims to be:

- Inclusive: the incorporation of as many stakeholders as possible in the process.
- Participatory: an active attempt to solicit the input and participation of all decision-makers.
- Cooperative: A positive-sum outcome approach, i.e. an attempt to reach the best possible decision for the group and all of its members that is non-conflictive, rather than opting to pursue a majority opinion, potentially to the detriment of a minority, which result in a win-lose outcome.
- Egalitarian: implying an equal right to input into the process. All members have the opportunity to present, amend and veto or "block" proposals. Indeed, the ORASECOM Agreement reflects this characteristic in that it stipulates that the Council shall consist of one delegation per Party that ratified this Agreement (ORASECOM, 2000: Art. 2.2). Additionally, Articles 2 and 3 speak to the equality of all member states in both organisational structure and organisational processes.

Within the RBO governance context, a key aspect worth considering is the process of trust-building and how this is facilitated as well as the importance of individual actors and personal relationships in the management of freshwater resources, producing both positive and negative repercussions. National departments and river basin commissions alike have had water resource managers and planners that have held these positions for years, and have in recent times retired or are fast approaching retirement age. Therefore, creating an environment of trust for individuals at a personal level is not enough; skills shortage within the organisation due to little or no new managers and policy-makers entering the ranks needs to be addressed.

CASE EXAMPLE: KGOTLA: A PROCESS OF CONSULTATION IN BOTSWANA

Boege (2009) describes a local decision-making practice in Botswana called *Kgotla. Kgotla* (which literally means within a *kraal*, a place where matters of common interest are discussed) is a culturally-sanctioned way of life for rural communities in Botswana that involves a decision-making process of consultation with local chiefs and community members (Merry, 2009). The process is also referred to as *legotla* in other southern African cultures. Merry indicates that this process gives legitimacy to decisions and ensures full community support. Stakeholder involvement or public participation mechanisms evident within river basin management processes may therefore be able to benefit from *kgotla* principles, which prove to be more effective because of the legitimacy it warrants from communities in the long-run, than from decisions based on majority voting systems.

A NOTE ON THE NUANCES OF WORDS

Part of the challenge of getting decision-making processes to work is to generate consensus around the meaning of the names we give to the processes that we follow. In many ways language or words as a mode of communication are extremely volatile and inadequate at times. Words are particularly fallible when used in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual context. In order to limit the confusion that language can generate it is vital to generate consensus around meaning and implication rather than a word itself.

By way of example: We suggest that consensus decision-making is solution oriented. We also suggest that compromise is a possible option or solution to a disputed decision.

What does compromise mean to you?

Does this word have a positive or negative ring to your ear? Does compromise conjure images in your mind of 'exposure to vulnerability', of 'jeopardising your position', of 'losing a fight' or of 'opening yourself up to scandal and suspicion'? Alternatively, does compromise conjure images of 'reaching agreement though mutual concessions', or of 'restoring relationships damaged by conflict'?

Depending on your background, culture, experience and exposure, your answers are likely to be very different. It is for this very reason that organisations need to actively seek mutual understanding around the meaning of words in order to achieve a more harmonious flow of decision-making and cooperation.

FIGURE 5: KATSE DAM (PHOTO BY SUZAN OELOFSE, 2008)

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

WHAT IS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

Public participation is the involvement of all parties who are either potentially interested or affected by a proposed action or intervention. The principle objective of public participation is to inform and enrich decision-making.

WHY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION?

The practice of public participation facilitates many of the processes and underpinnings already discussed in this document. Integrating stakeholder involvement and public participation in an effective manner creates wider ownership of the decision-making process, promotes greater cooperation and commitment to the eventual decision, and contributes to a stronger society in the face of rapid change.

WHO ARE STAKEHOLDERS?

Stakeholders are often people who:

- Will be impacted by the strategic plan
- Have information, experience, or insight that will be helpful in developing the plan
- May be in a position to either support or block progress of a plan
- Have a vested interest in the work
- Are final decision-makers or people who must approve the plan
- Will implement any aspect of the plan
- Need to be informed of the plan
- Have been champions or critics of such plans in the past (or perhaps both)
- Are visionary thinkers interested in exploring bold, new opportunities

The International Association for Public Participation has developed a set of *core values* that can be instrumental in managing a successful public participation process (IAP2, 2009).

These core values are:

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.

6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

CASE EXAMPLE: A ROADMAP FOR WATER-USER DIALOGUE ON ORANGE-SENQU RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT

The Orange–Senqu River Commission (ORASECOM), established in 2000, functions as the umbrella multi-lateral river basin institution in the Orange-Senqu River basin (comprising of Lesotho, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia). ORASECOM has developed a 'roadmap for stakeholder participation' that provides guidelines as to how stakeholders in the Orange–Senqu River basin will participate in dialogues with ORASECOM on the co-management and sustainable development of the Basin and its resources to enhance livelihoods. The objectives of the roadmap are to:

- develop and strengthen institutional mechanisms for effective stakeholder participation in the management of the Orange–Senqu River basin;
- build and strengthen capacity in basin forums to effectively participate in decision-making, planning and sustainable co-management of the Orange–Senqu River basin; and
- develop and maintain open and effective communication between and among the structures of ORASECOM and basin stakeholders by developing accessible, timely and good quality information and dissemination mechanisms to build trust, and improve participation and decision-making in the basin.

(Source: Global Water Partnership, A Handbook for Integrated Water Resources Management in Basin, 2009)

Useful Web Links:

- Orange-Senqu River Awareness Kit: Stakeholder Involvement - - http://www.orangesenqurak.com/governance/integrated+water+resource+management/stakeholder+involvement.aspx
- The International Association for Public Participation - http://www.iap2.org/

CRITIQUES AGAINST PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

Public participation have become a catchphrase in the arena of development and have too often been used by many projects as a 'legitimising' brand name instead of achieving the original goal of these public participation practices, namely empowerment of the poor and marginalised . A number of critiques of the process have emerged and among the issues raised by the critics, the following are particularly salient:

1. **Failure to reverse top-down power hierarchies:** Critics assert that the ultimate power and decision-making lies with the donor agency (Moser, 2001; Kothari, 2001) Rather than empowering people, 'participatory' approaches are often used as a legitimising labels and mechanisms that "serve[s] to represent external interests as local needs, dominant interests as community concerns" (Moser, 2001: 22).

   Suggestion to counteract this criticism: Reflexivity is needed on the part of implementing agencies regarding their organisational procedures, ideologies and culture.

2. **Reinforcing already existing power relationships**: Critics argue that many participatory approaches tend to homogenise communities into 'cultural wholes' and thus fail to take account of inequalities within communities. As such instead of empowering poor communities they reinforce or strengthen already exiting power relationships (Kothari, 2001:140, Mohan, 2001:159) for example: existing privileges which can discourage an articulation of subordinate perspectives, group dynamics that are likely to lead to 'dysfunctional group consensus', and the creation of group identities that may themselves be exclusive (Williams, 2004).

   Suggestion to counteract this criticism: Recognition and awareness of existing structures of power and inequality at local level, as well as targeted research specifically dealing with this issue.

3. **Over-emphasising of formulas and techniques:** The critique here is that**,** by public participation practitioners' over-emphasis on formulas and techniques they might not be open to recognise the unacknowledged dynamics of participation and exclusion, which may shape the outcomes of 'participation' (Williams, 2004).

   Suggestion to counteract this criticism: Innovation should always be a part of the public participation repertoire of a project and while guidelines do exist, one should be open to their drawbacks as well. For example, include representatives of the community in drawing up plans for the public participation process; that way you avoid "applying a formula". Experts can guide the planning but through collaboration with the community it is made context specific before the process actually engages with public.

J.N. Pretty's Typology of Participation

Pretty (1995: 1252), makes a distinction between the different kinds of public participation interventions. The diagram above shows these interventions. The types first mentioned (left) are the least participatory, where the most extreme cases are where participation is manipulative and only as a facade. To the right, self mobilisation is presented as 'total participation' through an enabling framework of support

SOCIAL AND INTER-CULTURAL LEARNING

In transboundary water governance, social learning is crucial to operational processes as it challenges traditional hierarchical systems geared to control, by participatory and flexible systems based on experimenting and social learning between multiple actors (Craps, 2003). It therefore requires dialogue between stakeholders instead of just allowing 'experts' to define both the problem and the solution. Moreover, as alluded to in an earlier section of this guideline, the degree to which the unwritten norms that influence local behaviour affect the practices of formal institutions and are incorporated within operational processes (i.e. internal cultural diversity mainstreaming) and the management and provision of water resources (i.e. external cultural diversity mainstreaming), is a good indicator of how responsive governance is to water management.

A significant characteristic of social learning, and the potential added value of the social learning concept for transboundary river basin management, in comparison to participation, lies in its focus on social process aspects since it not only addresses social actors structurally being involved in decision-making but also addresses the quality of the relationships that they can establish (Craps, 2003).

Social Learning:

According to Checkel (2001: 561), (complex) social learning is a process whereby agent interests and identities are shaped through and during interaction.

This idea resonates with Adler's (2005: 176) understanding of institutionalisation, which is based on 'cognitive evolution,' defined as a:

"collective learning process that consists in the expansion in time and space of the background knowledge that constitutes practices and, thus, also in the expansion of 'communities of practice' – the material representation of background knowledge in like-minded groups of individuals who practice the same practice."

According to the HarmoniCOP WP2 Reference Document entitled "Social Learning in River Basin Management" (Craps, 2003) this approach therefore addresses limits to classical participation approaches, that is, the interface between the initial social structure and power distribution and its outcomes. Such an approach can generate new options for intervention and support: "The crystallization point of participation is when the group transforms from a collection of individuals pursuing their private interests to a collectivity which defines and is oriented toward shared interests" (Webler et al., 1995: 460).

CASE EXAMPLE: SOCIAL LEARNING IN THE TRANSBOUNDARY WATER OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS (TWO)

Social learning is inspired by an experiential learning approach. A collaborative team of researchers from the CSIR, Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) and Phillips Robinson and Associates (PRA) have produced a practical methodology as to how benefit-sharing can be achieved called the Transboundary Waters Opportunity (TWO) Analysis (Phillips *et al.*, 2008) that incorporates principles of social learning. The conceptual framework of the TWO Analysis comprises of a matrix with four key development opportunities (hydropower production and power trading, primary production, urban and industrial development, and environment and ecosystem services), and two main categories of sources of water to realise those opportunities (New Water, defined as the potential for new water to be developed through water demand management strategies, or supply-driven infrastructure; and the efficient use and management of water, i.e. institutional strengthening, joint management regimes, etc.). Moreover, the conceptual framework can be used by stakeholders in a wide range of different circumstances to aid their own decision-making (Phillips *et al.*, 2008). The method through which these new water sources and development factors are created and the development opportunities identified is an iterative process that incorporates social learning by allowing for multiple voices to be heard on development opportunities. Jointly stakeholders compile a basket of development opportunities for the basin. Multiple layers exist to identifying development opportunities (biophysical, social and political, in addition to modifier layers such as climate change, etc.). These different layers call for different responses to questions regarding development options by encouraging stakeholders to look at potential development from a different perspective (local community level perspectives, political, etc.). This allow stakeholders to learn about their own and other people's and groups' interests; to foster a sense of responsibility for oneself and others and also develops a sense of group solidarity; social learning enables different groups and organisations to realise more and better joint interventions in river basins (Craps, 2003).

Useful Web Links:

- Transboundary Waters Opportunity Analysis Methodology - http://www.siwi.org/documents/Resources/Reports/Report23_TWO_Analysis.pdf

KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

In simple terms knowledge dissemination is the spreading or dispersal of that which we know or produce. Within the context of the RBO this implies:

- Sharing knowledge with people within the organisation;
- Sharing knowledge with stakeholders (this includes engaging NGOs, governments, individuals, communities and so on).

Knowledge dissemination is important for at least two obvious reasons:

- Knowledge can only be of use and have impact if it is dispersed, gains widespread consensus, and use of the knowledge occurs.
- There is a growing trend that encourages transparency within organisations. This demands that the products, processes and thinking of an organisation need to be made accessible and available to the stakeholders on whom it directly or indirectly impacts.

However, when considering the complex and subjective nature of knowledge in itself the whole concept of knowledge dissemination becomes more complex. In light of the nuanced nature of knowledge some important questions need to be asked.

- In terms of the knowledge that we produce – what are the different ways it can be understood?
- If there are differences in the interpretation of knowledge, why are they occurring?
- How does a different language orientation, difference in culture, or difference in paradigms impact on our capacity to share understanding of knowledge?
- How can we share our knowledge with others in such a way that they will glean a similar interpretation of the knowledge to what we do?

WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE?

Defining knowledge is a highly controversial exercise, yet no conversation about knowledge would be complete without, at least in some way, considering this issue.

For example:

Polanyi (1967) suggests that there are two kinds of knowledge. "… Tacit knowledge is what is in our heads and explicit knowledge is what we have codified".

Molapo (2007: 1) suggests that knowledge is "information that is acceptable about a subject". As such "as long as the information that you have conforms to an established and acceptable social norm, it is knowledge. It does not have to be true. If it conforms to a norm it will always be believed. As soon as the norm changes, what you know becomes information. When people do not believe you, it is simply because what you say to them is not acceptable to their norm".

Whilst there is variety of contradiction or overlap between these definitions, one issue is clear: there is no one correct definition of knowledge. Fundamentally, the definition of knowledge is a context bound and subjective phenomenon. This subjective nature of the definition of knowledge is rooted in the reality that knowledge itself (or at very least, human interpretation thereof) is a subjective phenomenon.

Fundamentally knowledge dissemination is about spreading information in a culturally and context-relevant manner. This may demand that one idea, concept, or piece of knowledge be packaged in multiple different ways so that it is tailored to suit the paradigm of the various stakeholders on whom impact is desired.

Failing to tailor knowledge in a culturally-relevant manner is to risk:

- Whether or not your knowledge will be accepted, useful or have impact
- Whether or not your knowledge will be interpreted in the way you intended it or not.

A NOTE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING

To teach is 'to impart knowledge', 'to cause to know something', 'to accustom to some action or attitude'. It is however critical to recognise that by virtue of the subjective nature of the interpretation of knowledge, teaching is not a unidirectional process. Rather, it is circular-knowledge is imparted, received, interpreted and of then re-imparted by virtue of personal interpretation of received knowledge.

Fundamentally the notion of disseminating knowledge is tied up with teaching and learning.

A committed teacher is continuously faced with the question: "How do I teach in such a way that my student will learn best?" Will my student learn best through practical application of knowledge or through extensive exposure to literature and theory? Will my student learn best through an auditory process of conversation and song and music or will my student learn best in a quiet and calm environment? Does my student respond well to colour or does my student respond better to an orderly, logical, left-brain presentation? What happens when each of the students in my class respond to a different kind of teaching technique and learning process? The answer for a teacher is usually differentiation - different teaching styles need to be alternated and often simultaneously juggled in order to reach as many of the students as possible (Tomlinson 2000).

In many ways RBOs are faced with similar concerns when it comes to imparting the knowledge, expertise and recommendations they generate. How does this organisation make its knowledge and learning about the river basin it researches real to the people it aims to impact on? How do you share knowledge across literacy spectrums, language spectrums, culture spectrums, geographic spectrums? The answer is to learn how specific groups (and perhaps even individuals) learn best and present your knowledge through this medium. Some communities may learn best from audio-visual or written material. Others may learn best from a community meeting. Some may learn from a dramatised story integrating song and dance to convey a message. Ultimately knowledge dissemination is about being CREATIVE, INTERESTED AND WILLING TO COMMIT TIME to the pursuit of sharing learning.

SECTION THREE:

A CULTURALLY EMBEDDED APPROACH: APPLYING THE THINKING

APPLYING THE THINKING

This guideline proposes that a culturally embedded approach is an important way in which to refine the management of RBOs. The underlying assumptions of this proposal are that:

- Firstly, culture and values have an impact on how individuals think and feel; have an impact on what people consider important; on how people make decisions, behave and negotiate; and have an impact on what people will view as useful or acceptable solutions to a challenge.

- Secondly, culture is time, space and context specific. This means that the cultural dynamics, both internally (between members) and externally (in terms of the local or regional context within which the organisation has a mandate to act), will differ from organisation to organisation. Thus culture cannot be assumed to be a homogenous reality, but rather needs to be addressed as a unique dynamic from organisation to organisation.

In light of these assumptions, this guideline provides a theoretical grounding and suggests ways of how to begin to understand and consider the many nuances, facets and eccentricities of the cultural dynamics at play within an organisation, and within the context an RBO.

Using the theoretical grounding established in prior sections, the following section aims to translate this somewhat abstract and intangible talk into several real steps to pursue that will enable RBOs to:

- Construct a poly-vocal identity;
- Function in a more harmonious and effective manner; and
- Produce more locally and/or regionally relevant actions and recommendations.

LINKING THE CULTURALLY EMBEDDED APPROACH WITH OTHER SUGGESTED RBO OPERATIONAL TOOLS

This section is about making concrete links between the Culturally Embedded Approach and the other tools that have been suggested by the CSIR for RBO operations. The first outer layer of Figure 6 illustrates the inter-connected contexts in which RBOs exist i.e. the biophysical, political, economic, as well as the socio-cultural context. This emphasises the need to understand the various contexts in which RBOs operate. Secondly, RBOs need a mandate to authorise action. Thirdly, once RBOs are equipped with a mandate, there is a need to find ways to organise to best deliver on this mandate. A key approach to achieving this would be to develop/review the business model. Fourthly, once RBOs have a business model, they have to design and implement processes that helps enable them to go about their business.

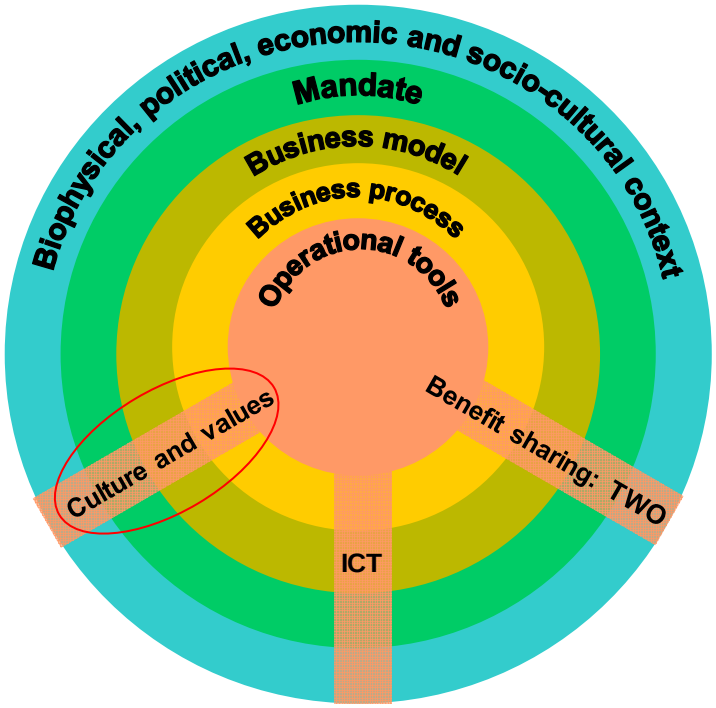


FIGURE 6: CONCEPTUALISATION OF TOOLS AND APPROACHES TO HELP STRENGTHEN RBOS

The generic business process is an iterative cycle that starts with a vision, which is supported by a strategy. The strategy is pursued through an operational plan, which directs decisions and actions. The efficacy of these actions in relation to the vision and strategy is then assessed through a monitoring and review process. Within the business process there

could be a multitude of operational tools to help run the business. A few operational tools with relevance for RBOs include: a Culturally Embedded Approach, the opportunities within ICT, and the Trans-boundary Waters Opportunity (TWO) Analysis.

These tools have 'weaving' value at all layers throughout the concentric circles, implying that they could assist with institutional processes to develop an understanding of all layers (the outer context, the mandate, the business model as well as various business processes).

The significance of the Culturally Embedded Approach is therefore twofold. Firstly, as indicated in the diagram, it enhances our understanding of the context within which an RBO operates. A holistic and integrated understanding of the biophysical, political, economic as well as socio-cultural context enables RBOs to design its roles and responsibilities in a context-specific manner, conduct culturally sanctioned projects that have credibility and legitimacy by local and external stakeholders. Secondly, a Culturally Embedded Approach necessitates that culturally embedded and context specific approaches are integrated into all RBO operations (i.e. its mandate, business model, business processes, and operational tools). This is a form of internal cultural diversity mainstreaming and is a critical component to strengthening RBO processes and going beyond the mere rhetoric of public participation and stakeholder involvement because it shows that local cultures and values are being taken seriously at the institutional level.

TWO ANALYSIS

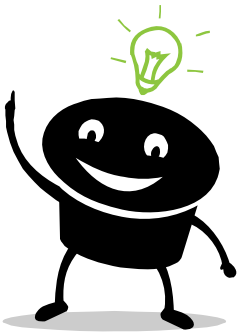
The TWO Analysis outlines an approach by which transboundary water stakeholders can collaborate on the equitable and sustainable use of their jointly held freshwater resources. It sets out a methodology for optimising benefits for development and economic growth and clarifies tradeoffs in developing transboundary water resources.

The TWO framework helps stakeholders understand both opportunities and tradeoffs in four key areas including hydropower and power trading, primary water use in agriculture, urban growth and industry, and environmental and ecosystem services. Water sources include development of potential "new water" from such sources as desalination or waste water reuse, as well as more efficient use of existing water sources.

The "2Tool", builds on the TWO approach by providing stakeholders an opportunity to explore development options in a non-threatening environment through the use of scenarios with the help of computer based software

I know that depending on my cultural grounding I will view questions pertaining to social and political life, as well as issues related to the biophysical landscape, in different ways.

I also know that different cultures contribute to the production of different (but equally useful and valid) truths!



Stakeholders using the "2Tool" can benefit from asking the following questions:

- Have I consciously sought out different cultural groups representative of the region/basin/sub-basin/nation to participate in my analysis? In other words, "Have I ensured that my TWO Analysis is consciously poly-vocal?

- If, for whatever reason my study is not adequately poly-vocal, have I made this limitation explicit in my analysis of the data I collect?

Questions in practise:

When conducting the TWO Analysis I will need to communicate (both in terms of explaining how my tool works and why it is important; as well as in terms of receiving feedback from participants) with a large spectrum of people across various cultural, class, gender and race spectrums.

People with different backgrounds and experiences will receive information and offer feedback most effectively in different ways. Thus, I need to seriously consider issues of knowledge dissemination in a context specific manner.

Stakeholders using the "2Tool" can benefit from asking the following questions:

- What is the most accessible way that I can explain my TWO tool to this group of people? ✓
- Will they learn best through a written or audio or visual presentation? ✓
- In which language(s) will the participants be best able to express themselves ? ✓
- Do I know some of the etiquette of this community which may be important to establishing good, comfortable and open channels of communication? ✓

THE MULTIPLICITY OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE ORANGE-SENQU RIVER BASIN

The Orange-Senqu River basin is a culturally and economically diverse area with many languages and cultural groups coinciding with a range of industries. The 2Tool was piloted with a sample of stakeholders from the Orange-Senqu River Basin at a workshop (25-26 June 2009) hosted by the CSIR made possible by the GTZ-funded project on the development of tools and approaches to facilitate RBO strengthening. Learning outcomes included the following:

- Participants who were initially apprehensive about the process expressed their interest, curiosity and enthusiasm for the process citing that its inclusive engagement and identification of development 'preferences' by everyone involved had much merit.

- While there are limitations to the tool (i.e. unclear definition of terms and values in the process), it must be stressed that the process is more important than the answer. The process encouraged interaction between various stakeholders in a non-threatening manner where individuals were freed from the responsibility of representing a particular interest group. As such, they were free to 'play development games' and in so doing, discuss and identify options that they may never have considered.

- The primary strength of the TWO Analysis lies in its inclusive characteristics.

- The TWO Analysis defined *development preferences* for various groups and individuals and this is important information when choosing development options for implementation as it projects the degree of buy-in/ownership that can be attained from different cultural groups and local residents.

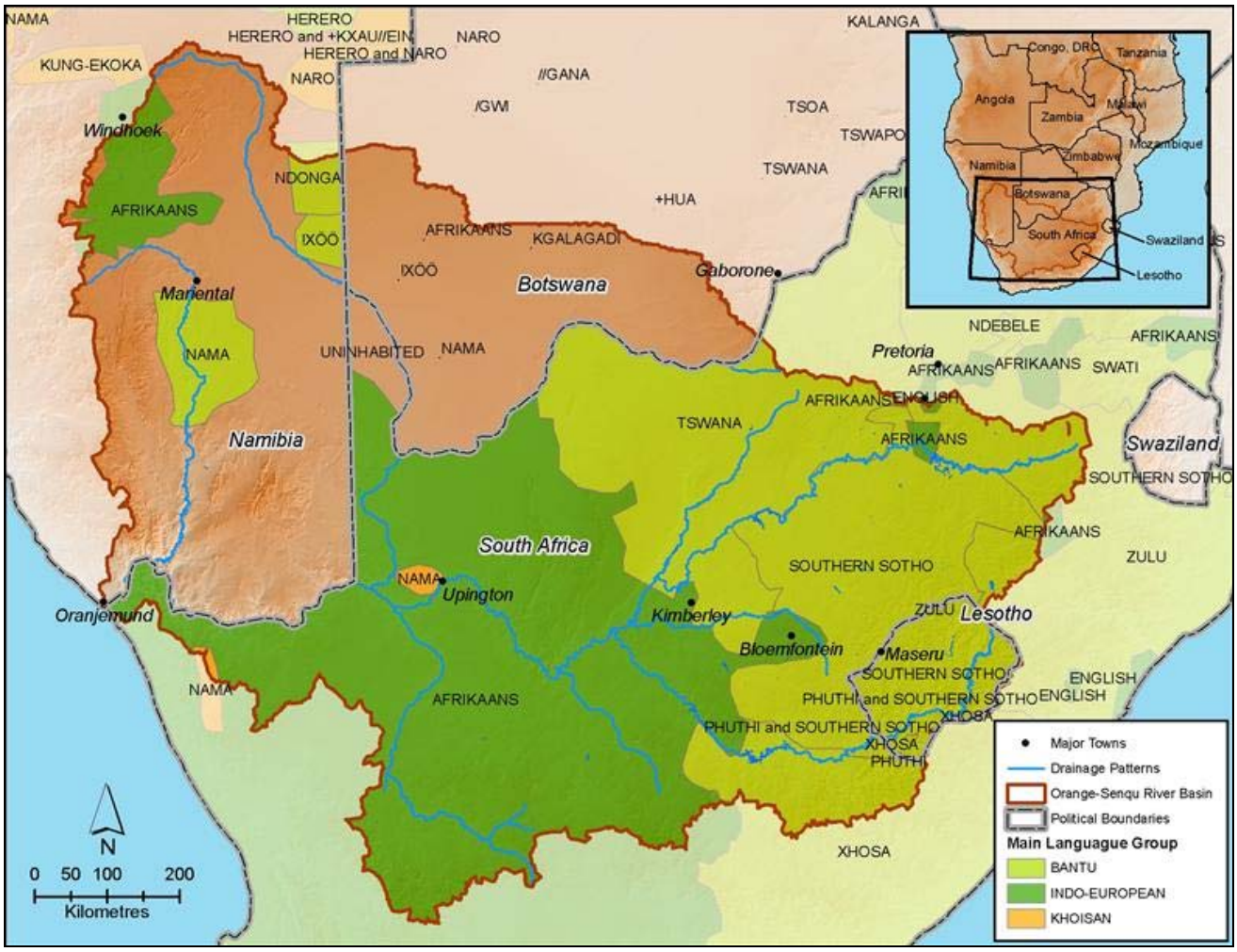


FIGURE 7: DISTRIBUTION OF CULTURAL GROUPS AND LANGUAGES ACROSS THE ORANGE-SENQU RIVER BASIN (SOURCE: HATFIELD CONSULTANTS, 2009: AFTER ETHNOLOGUE)

BUSINESS PROCESS

FIGURE 8: GENERIC BUSINESS PLAN PROCESS

The business process involves a number of steps which operate in an iterative cycle (see Figure 8).

The visioning process is about asking people "What do you dream/hope for this specific part of your future to look like?" The notion of visioning takes into account the fact that a process can only be successfully implemented if there is general support for the endeavour.

FIGURE 8: GENERIC BUSINESS PROCESS

For example, an RBO and its employees may think it very exciting to envision a world-class hydro-political development in a specific region of a basin. On engaging with the community of people living in the region it may be revealed that the vision of the community is to have an aesthetically natural looking environment which would be ideal to promote a form of river adventure tourism. Unless these two contesting visions can be reconciled it is impossible to effectively implement any kind of process.

I need to understand how I can make (and keep) the business cycle relevant to those people it aims to serve! This means that that the visioning and the review stages of the business cycle are (at very least) crucial for establishing and maintaining relevance and credibility of processes within communities.

A Visioning Checklist:

- Have I engaged broadly with the stakeholders that fall directly and indirectly into the ambit of the potential process? ☑
- Have I created an arena where communities feel secure enough to express their dreams, hopes or ambitions and criticise existing initiatives? ☑
- Have I allowed the vision to emerge within a poly-vocal setting where no one set of ideals or opinions is being sidelined? ☑

The review process (see Figure) involves asking whether the vision that has been developed (and the resultant process and action that been triggered by this) has been useful or served its purpose, and is still relevant, given that life is dynamic and is likely to change over time which may render previous desires and needs irrelevant.

A Review Checklist:

- Are the people who have been affected by this process satisfied with this impact? ☑
- Has this process remained focussed on the original 'dream' of the stakeholders or has it become skewed towards serving certain interests over time? ☑
- Has this process consciously worked towards incorporating practises of gender and cultural diversity mainstreaming? ☑
- Have the decisions made during the flow of this process been made in such a way that has been acceptable to all stakeholders impacted by the process? ☑
- Does the process (and the original vision on which it rests) remain helpful, useful and relevant or should it be re-worked to adapt to a dynamic social context? ☑

APPLICABILITY OF BUSINESS PROCESSES TO RBOs IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

At the CSIR-hosted two-day workshop at which the tools and approaches for this project were reviewed, participants were divided into four breakaway groups to discuss the applicability of the tools and approaches to a given context, or to elaborate on the applicability of a particular tool/approach. Feedback from the group discussing the business process and its applicability to RBOs in southern Africa revealed that the terminology within the business process needs to be clarified ('vision'; 'strategy'; 'plan', etc.). Additionally, the critical nature of the vision was emphasised. The complexity of the business process was noted, e.g. an individual representing a State in an RBO, trying to reflect business needs, community views. The paucity of national (consensual) strategies in African countries was also noted, thus creating difficulties for individuals to represent their national positions.[4]

The conclusion drawn from the ORASECOM working group at the two-day CSIR-hosted workshop was that the evolution of a shared vision is most important. Similarly, ORASECOM and its accompanying business processes, needs to develop and evolve at a pace that the organisation is comfortable with (as opposed to externally induced and driven). Any forced adjustments and changes to operational functions could have negative repercussions for growth and development.

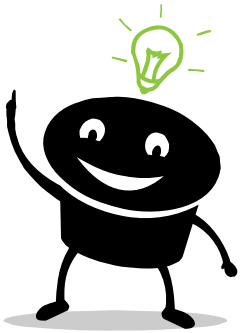
4 For workshop proceedings, refer to: Jacobs, I., Funke, N., Phillips, D., Chikozho, C., Nienaber, S., and Said, M. 2009. Workshop Proceedings: Day 1. Tools and Approaches to Strengthen Transboundary River Basin Organisations in SADC. 25-26 June 2009, CSIR: Pretoria.

FULFILLING THE MANDATE

Mandates are often (and mistakenly) viewed as objective statements. They are seen as neutral statements which outline the parameters in which action and process can take place. To view mandates in this light is to fail to take into account the socio-political context out of which a mandate emerges. Mandates are interesting in that in order for them to be effective they need to emerge from 'within' and 'without'. This means that they need to come from and be supported by states themselves (within), but are usually formally generated in external or regional forums or contexts (without). A mandate, specifically in the context of a SWI, has a somewhat different socio-cultural context to the other applications discussed in this document. The players or stakeholders in this context tend to be states interacting with each other in the international community or arena.

From a culture and values approach therefore there is not much that can be done to influence the mandate as it emerges through these state processes. This is so except at the instant where it has to be implemented into projects and strategies in order for it to be internalised and legitimised, not just by those state officials who deal with such things, but by individuals at community level who are supposed to benefit from the mandate.

For an effective mandate I need to understand to what extend the mandate can contend with contextual diversity. Will different political standpoints, opposing historical narratives, and gender, race or religious prejudices influence the way in which the mandate will be conceptualised and understood, internalised and implemented?



Important questions to consider when evaluating what impact one can hope to achieve with a mandate:

- Who has signed onto the mandate?
- What are the relative power relations between actors who have signed onto a mandate?
- Who has noticeable abstained from supporting a mandate?
- How specific is the mandate and what was the context that resulted in this outcome?

Mandate Checklist:

- Am I aware of the contextual diversity of my partners in the emergent process of the mandate? 
- Can I think of ways to ensure that the mandate is implemented into project plans in such a way that it promotes sensitivity to different contexts? 
- Have I made sure that the implementation of the mandate happens in an inclusive manner that incorporates poly-vocality? 

ORASECOM'S ADVISORY MANDATE

The ORASECOM mandate is advisory. Regarding the way in which this advisory role is implemented RBOs such as ORASECOM can benefit from compartmentalising or unpacking this advisory role. By clearly defining how this mandate will be implemented into projects and strategies, this will facilitate the incremental development of an RBOs business model. The RBO can, for example, move from being an advisory body to one that operates and manages joint infrastructure and the integration of indigenous knowledge systems of governance that could help foster a sense of local ownership

BUSINESS MODELS

Business Models are about making a clear choice about what one wants to do with an institution. Choosing a Business Model is about asking the questions "What should I make my RBO look like (in terms of structure, size and functions) in order to make it do its job in the most effective way possible?" In other words "Do I want my institution to have a strategic character backed up by a small organisation, or should it have a more operational character backed up by a larger management organisation?" Also, a consideration of business models requires a consideration of risk, that is, "Am I willing to live with the higher level of risk and consequences that come from choosing a more complex business model?"

The culture and values approach requires us to recognise that when we are considering what an institution will look like or try to achieve; it is critical to recognise that people are involved with this process, both in terms of serving the institutions and in terms of being impacted by the institutions.

When designing/reviewing my business model I need to realise that the complexity of a basin is also defined by the context. The more complex a basin is and the more complex the chosen business model is, the larger the consequences and risks will be. As the complexity grows, so do expectations. The sovereignty that is given up also increases as does accountability, responsibilities, risks and costs of the SWI. A review of the context reveals what functions are suitable for an RBO to undertake that are locally sanctioned.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONTEXT TO BUSINESS MODELS

The context of the business model for an RBO needs to be closely defined, prior to determining the business process. The complexity of the basin should therefore not only be defined by the number of countries, management and development issues, the in-country organisational capacity, in-country institutional organisation and cooperative financing capacity, but the degree to which the socio-cultural, political, biophysical and economic

contexts can help define what roles and responsibilities are suitable for the RBO to undertake. In the Orange-Senqu River basin, for example, a review of the political and institutional context reveals that the existence of pre-existing bilateral institutions in the basin, discourages (but does not prohibit) ORASECOM from taking on infrastructural responsibilities, and encourages its coordinative role as the umbrella SWI in the basin. Moreover, business models need to be flexible enough to adapt to changing needs, demands and capabilities both within the organisations and in impacted communities.

As summarised in the Hatfield River Awareness Kit for the Orange-Senqu River, mechanisms that advance the incorporation of flexibility into international agreements include (McCaffrey 2003; Hatfield, 2006):

- Allocation strategies
- Drought response provisions
- Amendment and review processes
- Revocation clauses
- Institutional responsibilities

Allocation strategies involve dividing the resource according to alternative measures, e.g. the percentage of flow from each riparian or the timing of river flows (Hatfield, 2006). Drought response provisions speak to the flexibility to adapt to specific extreme events, such as reduced water flow, whilst still adhering to the guidelines of existing agreements (McCaffrey 2003; Hatfield, 2006). Amendment and review processes enable parties to adequately deal with sudden and unforeseen circumstances as they arise and adjust to new information that may be required (Hatfield, 2006). Revocation clauses grant riparians the flexibility to opt out of an agreement after it has been signed to renegotiate their position (Kistin and Ashton 2008). And finally, institutional responsibilities stipulate what jurisdiction institutions have to operate and adjust management practices as required (Feitelson and Haddad 1999; Hatfield, 2006).

Business models Checklist:

- Have I clearly considered my organisational capability? For example:
  - How many people are working in my organisation?
  - What are their levels of experience?
  - In other words, what is my organisation realistically capable of in a given place and time?

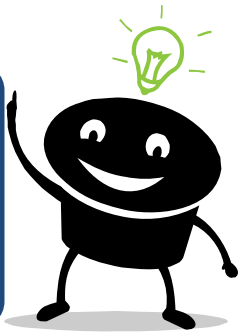
- Have I considered what services the community which my organisation serves most urgently needs? For example:
  - Will the community benefit from an organisation that provides a forum of negotiation of issues related to water at state level?
  - Will the community benefit from an organisation that provides specific development opportunity advice and support?
  - Will the community benefit from an organisation that protects the environment for future generations?

- Is the chosen business model of my organisation flexible enough to adapt to changing needs, demands and capabilities both within the organisations and in impacted communities?

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The ICT is about recognising the need to find ways of funnelling masses of information in such a way that it becomes more accessible and digestible to a particular audience, such as the SADC Water Sector or a specific RBO. It is also about considering ways to empower basin communities with knowledge that will allow them to have more assertive voices in terms of what is happening in and around them in terms of their basin. Thus, in simple terms, the ICT asks: "How can we use technology to empower actors within a basin with knowledge to make informed choices and demands?"

For electronic communication I need to think 'out-of-the-box'! I need to keep in mind that electronic communication methods are best at reaching out across distances thus making different kinds of information more accessible! I also need to understand that there are limits to this form of communication, especially when working with poor or rural communities.



The culture and values approach raises a number of important questions related to the ICT:

- Have I considered the kind of technology we already have available within our organisation and impacted communities ☑
- Have I checked what resources we have available in order to train people to use and maintain technology? ☑
- Do I know what kind of technology (e.g. Internet, radios, cell phones, satellite television) are people most likely to be comfortable utilising? ☑
- Do I know to what extent people from this basin trust information that they receive through a technological device or are they likely to respond better to human interaction? ☑
- Do we have a system in place to ascertain what information people are likely to find most helpful in their daily lives and work? ☑

ICT AND ORASECOM: THE ORANGE-SENQU RIVER AWARENESS KIT (RAK)

Another initiative implemented by GTZ, the Orange-Senqu River Awareness Kit (Orange-Senqu RAK), designed by Hatfield Consultants, and funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID), is an on-line and CD-ROM-based tool designed to support capacity development in ORASECOM and raise awareness for transboundary water issues in southern Africa. According to the RAK, it provides a central focal point for knowledge related to the Orange-Senqu River basin and serves as a hub for information management and dissemination for ORASECOM. The structure of the Orange-Senqu RAK (themes and chapters) was defined through participatory processes involving stakeholders from all four basin states of the Orange-Senqu River basin.

The Orange-Senqu River Awareness Kit therefore introduces users to the fundamentals of geography, socio-economics, water governance and water management in the Orange-Senqu River basin.

The RAK is also not a static store for information, but rather, project outputs from ongoing programmes of technical activities managed by ORASECOM will be integrated as they become available along with the results of other relevant studies. It is housed on the newly launched ORASECOM website.

Useful Links:
Orange-Senqu River Awareness Kit: http://www.orangesenqurak.com/
ORASECOM Website: http://www.orasecom.org/

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RBOs:

ONE: ACKNOWLEDGE THE PRIMACY OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN YOUR ORGANISATION

RBOs need to acknowledge that internal and external cultural diversity is a reality in any organisation in southern Africa.

TWO: CREATE SPACE FOR INTER-CULTURAL DIALOGUE

Conversation within the members of the organisation itself is critical. Here, questions of structural ethnocentricity (e.g. the impact of a western organisational model) and individual differences and values, need to be addressed. As such space needs to be created for inter-cultural dialogue in order for multiple voices to be heard.

THREE: ENGAGE THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

RBO engagement with local and regional communities and stakeholders is critical. Without an understanding of the uniqueness of the people and context that an organisation serves, the production of relevant solutions and advice is unlikely.

FOUR: MAKE THE PROCESS OF DISSEMINATION AND TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE A PRIORITY

RBOs should consider the process of dissemination and transmission of knowledge. Knowledge dissemination should be multi-faceted to address the difference in the capacity of the audience to internalise the information; the variation in purpose of the knowledge as well as the legitimacy assigned by the audience to the information. Without this consideration knowledge that is produced will lose its efficacy.

FIVE: DO NOT IGNORE THE OF IMPACT EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS

Ordinarily the scientific process within RBOs would take no heed of the impact of emotions and feelings. These are however imperative when trying to understand the construction and resultant consequences of the collective imagination at work in and around river basins. Without acknowledging the uncertainty that emotions and feelings bring as part of the collective imagination RBOs will struggle to create space for inclusivity and trust building within the organisation's identity.

SIX: BE AWARE OF PERSONAL AND PUBLIC NARRATIVES AT WORK

RBOs must take cognition of and negotiate the intersection of personal and public narratives at work in the river basin. This involves the way in which collective representations of 'other' and 'self' emerge and manifest in these narratives.

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