The Cross Sector Social Interactions (CSSI) Symposium series hosts biannual conferences that foster collaboration and exchange among diverse scholars and practitioners working on cross sector collaboration. The purpose is to advance and exchange knowledge on how to effectively partner for sustainable development.

Both scholars and policy makers are calling for a shift in the development paradigm, for theory and practice of development to become more inclusive of local actors and intellectual traditions from the Global South. CSSI 2024 aims to contribute to this objective and for the first time will be hosted on the African continent at the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business.

Symposium Theme: "Power and inclusion in cross-sector social interactions"

The ideal is for cross-sector collaboration to advance the Sustainable Development Goals and foster inclusive social innovation. Despite some important successes, this ambition often remains elusive. Societal exclusion and power imbalances often shape who participates in cross-sector initiatives, what such initiatives focus on, and how they unfold. These patterns of exclusion include local manifestations of class, racial, and gender inequality, as well as global inequalities between the Global North and the Global South. Due to institutionalized privilege and routinized ways of working, both researchers and practitioners of cross sector partnerships risk perpetuating such power imbalances and exclusionary practices.

In the literature on cross-sector collaboration, such concerns surrounding the role of power imbalances have been noted for a long time, both among scholars and practitioners. Some 20 years ago, a coalition of civil society organizations criticized "the myth that there is a collective endeavour, and that all players are equal and conflicts of interest can be resolved by roundtables seeking consensus" (Third World Network et al., 2002). Cross-sector partnerships may be a means for powerful actors to extract benefits and to co-opt or exclude critical or marginalized actors (Dixon et al., 2004; Gray et al., 2022; Hamann & Acutt, 2003; Lister, 2000; Selsky & Parker, 2005). Critics have been especially concerned about the nature of the relationship between corporations and less powerful actors (Banerjee, 2010; Whelan, 2012), arguing that partnership processes can produce a kind of "fabricated consent" (Ehrnström-Fuentes, 2016, p. 435) that masks (Fougère & Solitander, 2019) or even exacerbates (Maher, 2019) adversarial relations and social fragmentation.

On the other hand, proponents of cross-sector partnership acknowledge that there are important power imbalances between possible partners but argue that such imbalances need not prevent fair, inclusive, and effective collaboration. For example, Covey and Brown (2001, p. 8) suggest that "the parties do not have to be equal in power – but they do have to recognise each other as capable of imposing significant costs or providing valuable benefits" (see also Waddell, 2000). Partnerships may even act as important vehicles to facilitate inclusion of marginalized interests and voices (Gray, 1989).

Even so, when power differences are large, attempts to collaborate are unlikely to be fair and effective, as demonstrated in partnerships that have entrenched existing power disparities and even worsened outcomes for marginalized actors (Gray et al., 2022; Reinecke & Ansari, 2015). In such circumstances, a strategy of contention is likely necessary, including for instance social movement activism or litigation, so as to increase marginalized actors' negotiating power (Covey & Brown, 2001; Hamann & Acutt, 2003). Surfacing latent conflict can become – somewhat surprisingly, perhaps – an important precursor for fair and effective cross-sector collaboration

(Powell et al., 2018). More broadly, power imbalances in partnerships are not contextually fixed, but can be shaped by partners' interactions (Nguyen & Janssens, 2019).

We might thus agree with Whelan (2012) and others that a "shallow" conception of dialogue focused on consensus-seeking indeed deserves critical treatment. A "deeper" view of dialogue that surfaces and contends with both the material and ideological conflicts between different groups is often called for, especially in deeply unequal and historically traumatized societies such as South Africa's (Powell et al., 2018). This "deep" conception of dialogue has profound implications and challenges for practice. Such dialogue is not achieved by inviting people to a workshop and hoping that they find agreement. Participants and their interactions need sufficient time and support in fostering the necessary will, knowledge, and inquiry-based relational resources. It is little wonder that this potential for generative dialogue is not easily or often achieved.

There are also open questions around the context and circumstances that are conducive to this kind of "deep" dialogue underpinning fair, inclusive, and effective partnerships. The participants will likely need certain skills and dispositions, and trusted and capable facilitators may be necessary in particularly challenging situations (Gray, 1989; Gray et al., 2022; Hamann & April, 2013; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Sonday & Wilson-Prangley, 2016; Stadtler & Karakulak, 2020; Waddock, 1989). Even though partnerships are often especially important in contexts where the state struggles to provide public goods and services, the absence of a capable state might make fair and accountable partnerships between unequal partners less likely (Hamann, 2014).

In this conference, we seek to explore and discuss these themes in more detail, making good use of our context characterized by severe inequality and historical injustice, but also by far-reaching and ongoing attempts to respond to such inequality and exclusion through cross-sector collaboration (Drimie et al., 2018; Powell et al., 2018; Rein & Stott, 2009; Sonday & Wilson-Prangley, 2016). Some of the questions we seek to explore include the following:

- What are the "dynamics of managing power" (Gray et al., 2022, p. 16) in cross-sector social interactions? How do convenors, funders, participants, and outsiders respond to power imbalances among participants, as well as power imbalances in the broader issue field? Are specific measures necessary to include and empower the marginalized actors, what might such efforts look like, and what are their intended and unintended effects?

- What are the effects of power imbalances and diverse forms of exclusion – both within and beyond a partnership – on the conception, establishment, and institutionalization of cross-sector collaboration? How do power imbalances and systemic, historical injustices shape how different actors see each other and the potential for collaboration, or how they "show up" as actors (Hwang & Colyvas, 2020)?

- How do contextual, field-level characteristics, such as levels of statehood and historical collective traumas, combine with social inequality and power asymmetries to shape how cross-sector social interactions emerge and unfold?

- What are the effects of cross-sector social interactions on power imbalances among participants and in the issue field? Can partnerships enhance fairness and inclusion not just within the collaboration, but also in the broader field? If so, how?

- How do and how should researchers respond to power imbalances and exclusion in cross-sector social interactions? How can they make sure they do not exacerbate such imbalances at local and global levels, including North-South tensions in scholarship (Banerjee, 2022; Bothello et al., 2019; Hamann et al., 2020)?

- What is the nature of the relationship between corporations or philanthropists (often framed as powerful actors) and other actors in the context of cross-sector social interactions? How can research support companies and philanthropists in becoming better partners?

- What is the role of researchers in not only studying but helping to convene or facilitate

cross-sector social interactions in contexts of social inequality and power asymmetries? On the one hand, they likely lack the training and skills for such mediation (Gray et al., 2022). On the other, they may offer a relatively neutral platform that is not directly vested in the social issue at hand, and they may be well placed to engage in proactive efforts to foster inclusion of marginalized actors and voices (Drimie et al., 2018; Freeth & Drimie, 2016).

· What can be learned from efforts to bridge research and practice in the study of cross-sector social interactions?

PRACTICE CONVERSATIONS AND PRACTITIONER SUBMISSIONS

In keeping with CSSI tradition, we will use the symposium to actively bridge research and practice and to foreground implications for policy and practice in business, government, and civil society. There will be a prominent role for "knowledge practice conversations" in the symposium programme. This will also include proactive efforts to include practitioners and policymakers in the programme and in symposium events, including the learning journeys outlined below.

Practice conversations will include discussions hosted in partnership with the Embedding Project, exploring and highlighting the practical challenges and approaches to cross-sector social interactions and in particular, what companies can be doing to be effective participants in cross-sector social interactions.

We encourage submissions from practitioners on issues such as the following:

· Practitioners' experiences of how power asymmetries and social inequalities affect the design, facilitation, and outcomes of cross-sector collaboration.

· Examples of proactive efforts to enhance inclusion in partnerships and their respective outcomes.

· Experience of how different contexts (in space or time) shape the role of inequality and power imbalances in cross-sector partnerships.

· Examples of how cross-sector collaboration can directly or indirectly address inequality and exclusion in their context.

FOREGROUNDING AFRICA

Bringing CSSI to Africa is particularly appropriate for this symposium theme. Africa will have the most rapid population growth of all continents this century. This brings remarkable opportunities and risks for sustainable development. Much will depend on whether cross-sector collaboration can foster policies and practices that realize the opportunities – and mitigate the risks – of this remarkable demographic, social, and economic transition, in sectors such as education, health, urban development, clean energy, and many others.

Through CSSI 2024, we seek to connect the CSSI community to this "African century." We will ensure that the local context is foregrounded in symposium discussions through field trips, plenaries, and research-practice conversations. We will ensure that African researchers and practitioners are prominent participants in the event, with the broader intention of expanding the CSSI community's African membership. And we will encourage and enable the CSSI community to give more systematic attention to Africa in its work.

LEARNING JOURNEYS

We will ensure the symposium is grounded in the practical realities of partnerships in the Global South. This will include a series of "learning journeys" for symposium participants to explore opportunities and challenges for cross-social interactions in the Cape Town context. These learning journeys will play a prominent role in the symposium programme to ensure they infuse

local realities into symposium conversations. The following learning journeys are currently under consideration and are mentioned here for illustration only:

- Cross-sector collaboration in the food system: Learning about the Western Cape Food Forum, its response to Covid-19, and the contest and dialogue around the Philippi Horticultural Area.

- Collaborating for childhood development: Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centres play a crucial and multifaceted role in resource-constrained neighbourhoods. In this journey, we will explore diverse actors' efforts to work together in supporting ECD centres with a focus on Langa township.

- Collaboration for more inclusive supply chains: The Victoria and Alfred Waterfront is a famous tourism attraction. It is also engaged in innovative efforts to develop inclusive supply chains for local artisans and creatives, working together with diverse other organisations.

- Universities and collaboration in informal settlements: This learning journey will focus on the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business' hub in Philippi, an informal settlement, and specifically its efforts to develop collaborative approaches to providing relevant entrepreneurship training and to being a good neighbour.

- From conflict to collaboration in human-wildlife interactions: Table Mountain is one of the Seven Wonders of the World, and one of its attractions – and challenges – is the interface between wildlife and humans, especially with baboons. In this journey, we will explore this interface and how multi-actor interactions have sought to respond.

DOCTORAL CONSORTIUM

In line with CSSI tradition, we will be hosting a doctoral consortium on the first day of the conference. This will be advertised separately. For updates, see our website.

CONFERENCE VENUE

The conference will be hosted by the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business (GSB) in collaboration with The Partnering Initiative (TPI), PRME Chapter Africa, and the Embedding Project. The GSB is a PRME Champion and has a tradition of research and practice on cross-sector collaboration. The CSSI 2024 conference will be held at the GSB's main campus in the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, one of Africa's premium tourist destinations. Unusual for a business school, the GSB also has a hub in Philippi, an informal settlement. We aim to host parts of the conference at our Philippi hub.

ONLINE PARTICIPATION

To enhance inclusivity, some parts of the conference will be open for online participation. This includes the doctoral consortium, keynotes, and some paper sessions. Please be sure to indicate in your submission if you intend to participate online.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

We invite submission of extended abstracts of no more than 1000 words (excluding references), by 31 October 2023. The abstract should clearly describe the research rationale and purpose, research question, methods, findings, and contributions. Please be sure to include all author names and a corresponding email address, and whether you intend to present your paper in person or online.

We particularly invite submissions from practitioners, also in the form of a short description of no more than 1000 words. Please indicate if yours is a practice-oriented submission, and highlight the context and rationale of the partnership, your role in the initiative, and the lessons learnt.

While we are especially interested in submissions with some explicit links to the conference theme, as per usual we also invite submissions on other, diverse aspects of cross-sector social interactions.

Submissions are open from 1 August to 31 October. All submission will be via an online platform – details will be available on the symposium website. We will notify regarding acceptance by 30 November 2023.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

In keeping with the conference theme, we seek to make it as inclusive as possible. We will promote participation from the Global South and particularly from Africa. This includes a progressive fee structure to keep fees as low as possible for African and Global South participants and for students.

In addition, we will offer a limited number of bursaries to deserving applicants. If you would like to apply for such a bursary, please add a motivation letter to your submission.

KEY DATES

31 October 2023: Registration system opens

31 October 2023: Deadline for submission of extended abstracts

30 November 2023: Notification of acceptance

29 February 2024: Registration closes

3-6 April 2024: CSSI 2024 takes place in Cape Town, South Africa

3 April 2024: PRME Africa Annual Meeting; Doctoral Consortium

4 April 2024: Learning journeys

5-6 April 2024: Panels, paper sessions, practitioner conversations; plenaries

Please reach out with any comments or questions. We look forward to seeing you in Cape Town in April 2024!

CONFERENCE ORGANISERS

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CONFERENCE SPONSORS

Financial support is provided by:

- Porticus Foundation
- The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada through the Embedding Project partnership grant
- Villanova School of Business
- Wageningen University and Research

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