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**University of Cape Town**

**Department of Mechanical Engineering**

**Management Requirements for Coordinating the  
Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Program (SKEP)**

**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Philosophy**

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**HRTDAP001**

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Thank you to my family for encouraging me to further my studies and for your sacrifices that have helped me to get this far.

To Thabo, thank you for inspiring me and encouraging me, especially when the emotional will was lacking.

## **Abstract**

This dissertation takes its lead from the need to add to the debate issues of institutional arrangements when evaluating the effectiveness of biodiversity conservation programs. The particular case in point is the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Program (SKEP), which was initially set up by a NGO, Conservation International (CI), and thereafter transferred to another host institution, a national parastatal called the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI).

This dissertation set out to investigate the optimal institutional mechanism for coordinating SKEP, in light of its transition from CI to SANBI. This was done by evaluating the current coordination mechanism. A systems theory approach guided the research. An action research approach ensured that the results would be practical to the coordination unit of the SKEP program. Grounded theory analysis was used to analyze and make sense of the data and provide guidance on the functions and structure of the coordination unit and its supporting structures.

The results of the investigation revealed that capacity in the coordination unit was lacking; the unit was successful in raising awareness about the program but there was little support for project development and a lack of clarity about the criteria for funding; tighter management of the coordination unit was required; stronger support for project implementation was required; and the advisory and steering structures created to support the coordination unit needed more formalized agreements and stronger accountability in both directions.

This dissertation makes various recommendations for improving the management of the coordination unit in the five areas mentioned above. It also discusses actions taken to implement the results of the evaluation.

## **Abbreviations**

BotSoc	Botanical Society of South Africa
CAPE	Cape Action for People and the Environment
CI-SA	Conservation International, South Africa
CU	Coordination Unit
CEPF	Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund
NNF	Namibia Nature Foundation
NGO	Non-Government Organization
TWG	Technical Working Group
SAIC	South African Implementation Committee
SANBI	South African National Biodiversity Institute
SKEP	Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Plan
STEP	Subtropical Thicket Ecosystem Program

## Definitions

**Biodiversity:**

The variety of life on earth, comprising genetic, species and ecosystem diversity.

**Biome:**

A large climatic region classified according to the predominant plants and animals that inhabit it

**Coordination Unit:**

The entity responsible for bringing together organizations, institutions and interest groups for the purpose of realizing the SKEP vision.

**Endemic:**

A species that is unique to a particular area – not found naturally anywhere else.

**Hotspot:**

An area with high numbers of endemic plant and / or animal species, where many of these species are threatened.

**Partner:**

A person or agency that is involved in creating an environment that supports and assists the coordination unit and SKEP stakeholders in achieving the aims of the program.

**Stakeholder:**

Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the SKEP vision.

**Sustainability:**

Approaches that aim to ensure that resources used today will continue to be available in the future.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Brief overview

The aim of this dissertation is to gather lessons about the coordination of a large-scale conservation program, the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Program (SKEP), and to recommend how best to improve its management. The central paradigm guiding the research is systems theory.

The need for an integrated approach to conserving natural resources has been widely recognized around the world. It is no longer sufficient for social and natural scientists to conduct research and grow knowledge about their subject matter in isolation of those individuals who can gain direct benefit from it in their everyday lives and those institutions or organizations that can utilize it for the enhancement of their actions on the ground or at policy level. Participatory methods of natural resource research and program action are needed, and openness to adjusting to the needs of the natural resource end-user is required. SKEP aspires towards such an ideal where the people of the succulent karoo take ownership of the conservation of their lands. For this to happen, the biodiversity knowledge acquired by researchers has to be integrated into local practices of development planning and economic development. These are some characteristics of an ideal picture of a systematically coordinated conservation program. How does one achieve such an ideal? An evaluation of the SKEP coordination unit was conducted in order to assess to what extent it had achieved this ideal of a systematically coordinated program and to assess what adjustments needed to be made to the structures of the coordination unit to enable and support such an ideal.

What follows is an overview of the chapters of the dissertation. The rest of the dissertation provides an account of the philosophies, opinions, actions and historical

reports that influenced the final outcomes of the dissertation as well as the final outcomes themselves.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Program. It also explains the purpose of the dissertation, which is to provide lessons for coordinating conservation programs at the ecosystem level as well as recommend actions to improve the management of the coordination unit.

Chapter 3 is a literature review which seeks to explore some of the current thinking about coordination and management of bioregional or ecosystem programs and some of the theory around general management. Firstly, it discusses the uncertainties around natural resource management and the need to acknowledge this and test various options in order to arrive at a best option. Secondly, it takes a look at the institutional challenges facing the implementation of bioregional programs. It discusses the need for more flexible institutions that are open to learning and adapting to changes. Thirdly, it provides insights into the CAPE bioregional program which was implemented before SKEP, highlighting some of the challenges around planning. Lastly, it looks at some of the principles of cybernetics that help to address management concerns.

Chapter 4 provides the research framework for the dissertation. I argue for a philosophical approach with a constructionist epistemology, an interpretivist theoretical perspective and a systems thinking paradigm. An action research and action learning approach is followed, with a methodology of grounded theory and an ethnographic approach to data gathering.

Chapter 5 describes the application of the research framework which was to gather data by means of observation, convergent interviewing, workshops and document analysis. Data collection was participatory in that it included coordination unit staff and members of the program's steering structures.

Chapter 5 provides an explanation of how the data was analyzed using grounded theory methodology. The grounded theory analysis is a detailed process that systematically breaks down the interview transcripts into a language that is common between all interviews and develops a theory of SKEP coordination. The grounded theory helped to better understand the sub-systems that make up the coordination unit.

In chapter 6 the results of the grounded theory analysis are presented. They are discussed as meaningful narratives that describe the essence of the issues being investigated.

Chapter 7 provides recommendations for rethinking the roles and functions of the various parts of the coordination unit. It also indicates what actions were taken to address the recommendations. A recommendation is made for future research that could be conducted to build on the results of this research. It recommends that an evaluation be done of the program and that it be linked to the evaluation of the coordination unit.

Chapter 8 is a critical reflection of the research that was conducted. It provides insights of what was learnt and experienced during the research process and after it was completed. It also concludes the dissertation, reminding the reader of the purpose of the dissertation and the outcomes of trying to reach that purpose.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Overview of SKEP and Problem Formulation**

#### **2.1 An Overview of the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Program (SKEP)**

The Succulent Karoo biome is one of 34 internationally recognized biodiversity hotspots, and is one of the world's two arid biodiversity hotspots. Of the 116 000 km<sup>2</sup> of Succulent Karoo, only 3.5% of the biome is formally protected. The biodiversity of the Succulent Karoo is under considerable pressure from human impacts such as mining, agriculture, illegal collection of flora and fauna, and anthropogenic climate change (Driver et al. 2003). These pressures are further exacerbated by ineffective planning and decision making by municipalities and government departments where biodiversity considerations are inadequately incorporated, or not at all. While the Succulent Karoo is rich in biological diversity, its people are disadvantaged by poverty, limited livelihood opportunities and widespread unemployment (Conservation International - South Africa 2002). A map of the Succulent Karoo biome and the sub-regional planning domains can be found in Appendix 1.

Conservation International (CI), an international USA-based NGO, along with key partner organizations, set out on a process to develop a plan to conserve the Succulent Karoo biome. It set out to reach agreement among stakeholders as to what the vision, goals and actions should be for protecting this unique landscape. This culminated in the development of an ecosystem profile, a motivation for the needs and explanation of the constraints surrounding the protection of the biome.

The Critical Ecosystems Partnership Fund (CEPF) funded the process of developing the ecosystem profile for the Succulent Karoo. The profile is a five-year strategy for carrying out conservation and sustainable land-use activities in the biome. It was developed over a nine-month period. CEPF endorsed the profile and agreed to fund the implementation

thereof over the following five-year period. A twenty-year strategy was also developed within this period with the understanding that conservation activities will need to continue beyond the CEPF-funded phase. The ecosystem profile therefore outlined the strategic activities to be implemented in the first five years of the 20-year program.

During the first phase of SKEP, CI facilitated the development of the 20-year program strategy and 5-year ecosystem profile through numerous workshops. Stakeholders involved in this process included government departments, research organizations, community-based groups, consultants and NGO's. One of the recurring questions that arose during this phase was "who will coordinate the implementation of all the activities that were being identified?" It was at one of the action planning workshops that stakeholders identified CI as the appropriate organization to take the responsibility until such time that the appropriate institutional arrangements be put in place for a South African organization to take over coordination. Nearly two years into implementation of the SKEP strategy, the issue of institutional arrangements was still being debated. There was a growing need to clarify who would take over the coordination of the program and what the institutional structure should look like.

Despite uncertainty around the institutional structure of SKEP, the five-year strategy came into effect, with a series of project ideas that would address the needs and constraints identified during the planning phase and a range of stakeholders and partners starting to take ownership of the vision of the program. The vision states that "The people of the Succulent Karoo take ownership of and enjoy their unique living landscape in a way that maintains biodiversity and improves livelihoods, now and into perpetuity".

The coordination structure that CI - SA put in place in 2003 is illustrated in Figure 1.

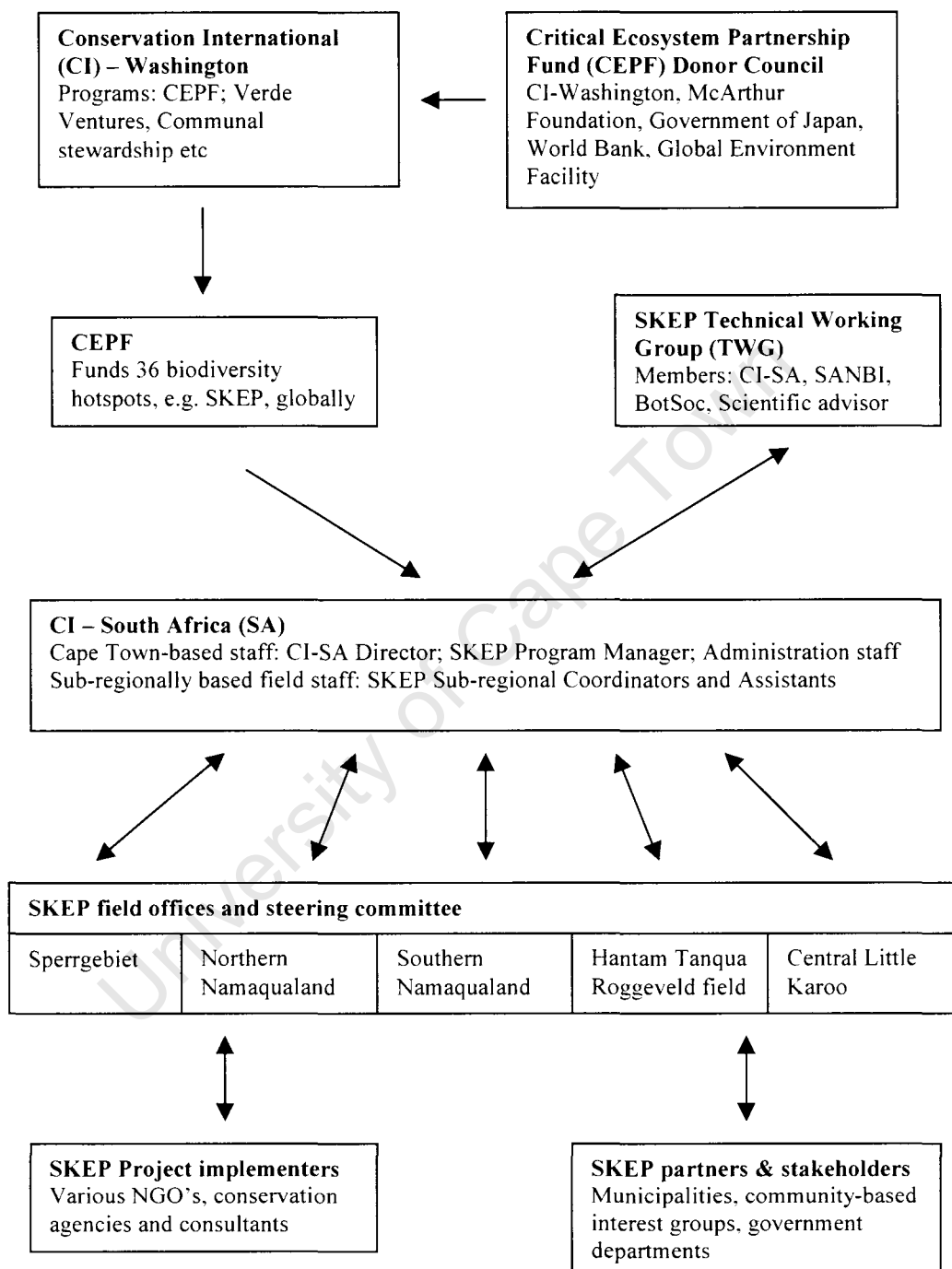


Figure 1: Initial SKEP Structure (2003)

Conservation International's mission is to conserve the earth's living natural heritage, global biodiversity and to demonstrate that human societies are able to live harmoniously with nature. CI's headquarters is in Washington DC but it concentrates its efforts globally, working in more than forty countries, mostly in Africa, Asia Pacific and the Neo-Tropics. CI acknowledges that no single organization can safeguard the earth's biologically richest places and it therefore, enables its partners to do this. CI is an international organization that catalyzes programs and assists local institutions in carrying out those programs. In order for there to be continuity, SKEP envisaged a twenty-year program, which was to be implemented by a local (South African and/or Namibian) organization.

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is led by a donor council as indicated in figure 1. The fund is managed by CI headquarters in Washington and CI is one of the contributing donors. CI, through its offices in various parts of the world, receives the CEPF funds to carry out its biodiversity conservation objectives. CEPF is just one of CI's programs. Some others are listed in figure 1.

A Technical Working Group (TWG) consisting of representatives from the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), the Botanical Society of South Africa's (BotSoc's) Conservation Unit and an independent scientific expert was set up to guide CI on particular matters relating to coordination of the program.

SANBI is a parastatal agency of the national Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT). SANBI was established by the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004 and has as one of its responsibilities to ensure the implementation of bioregional programs (ecosystem level programs). Its mission is to promote sustainable use, conservation, appreciation and enjoyment of the exceptionally rich biodiversity of South Africa, for the benefit of all people (National Biodiversity Institute, 2006).

The goal of BotSoc's Conservation Unit is to contribute to the long-term conservation and sustainable use of important biodiversity areas such as the Cape Floristic Region and the Succulent Karoo. They implement strategic conservation projects, often in partnership with other organizations, in order to achieve this goal.

The scientific expert was part of the SKEP planning phase and is highly respected for his knowledge in Succulent Karoo ecology and conservation.

The CI-SA staff in Cape Town worked mostly on SKEP, although they also implemented other non-SKEP projects. The SKEP Coordination Unit (CU) comprised 15 staff, ten of whom were field staff (coordinators and assistants) and five were based in the Cape Town office (the CI director, the SKEP manager, a SKEP administrator, a CI administrator and a communications manager). Staff in the CI-SA office in Cape Town provided administrative and capacity building support to field staff. The function of the CU is to ensure that the relevant partner organizations are aligned to the program and that their expertise is brought into the program to address the conservation and development needs of the biome as identified in the SKEP strategy. Together the SKEP CU and its partners ensure that the stakeholders, those affected in some way by the program, are informed of developments in the program and CU and that their evolving needs and concerns regarding conservation and development are filtered into the program. The SKEP partners and stakeholders consist of NGO's; local, provincial and national government departments; government departments of the environment, tourism, planning, agriculture and mining; private sectors such as mining companies and farmers; conservation agencies; donor organizations and community-based groups. They all play a role in implementing the SKEP strategy.

Some of the project implementers are also partners and stakeholders in SKEP. While they receive funding to implement projects, they are also part of the steering committees that guide the program locally.

The SKEP stakeholders provided input into the program through five steering committee structures, one in each sub-region. These structures provided direction and support locally to the coordinators and reviewed project proposals. Members of these structures are representatives of the stakeholder and partner entities listed above.

In 2003 the dynamics between the donors and the South African stakeholders and partners were still evolving and the relationships were still being clarified. CEPF was a newly established fund and was not as prepared, administratively and logistically, to deal with the challenges that came along as a more established fund might have been. Even with the support of highly established entities such as the World Bank, it could not predict the types of challenges that were experienced as a result of the CEPF investment. Because of this newness they were fairly flexible in their roll-out of the strategy. However, there were key aspects that were non-negotiable since those ultimately defined the essence of the fund.

## **2.2 Research Concern**

It was always the intention of CI to shift the coordination of the SKEP program to the most appropriate institutions in South Africa and Namibia. In Namibia this was a fairly quick and smooth transition as Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF), a conservation agency under the National Department of the Environment and Tourism, was the most obvious choice. There were not many institutional options in Namibia and NNF was ready and willing to take over the coordination of SKEP in Namibia. NNF put their own systems of coordination in place and operate fairly independently, according to the five-year strategy and action plans. While the sustainability of SKEP in Namibia had been clarified, the sustainability of the program in SA was still of concern. The research concern was therefore around what new information needed to be learned in order for decisions to be made about the future of the program's coordination. There were also some practical considerations to be taken into account.

### **2.2.1 Choice of Location**

Because the geographic area of the Succulent Karoo and hence the stakeholder base in South Africa is much larger than in Namibia, there were more considerations to take into account before deciding what the new institutional home should be and what the structure of coordination should look like. Location was a significant consideration. Ideally, the coordination unit should have at least been based within the geographic bounds of the biome, and the Northern Cape Province would have been the best option since it forms the largest part of the biome. However, the institutional capacity to run such a program was lacking in the province and the National Biodiversity Act, which at the time was in the process of being promulgated, makes provision for all bioregional programs to be the responsibility of SANBI. Although coordination need not have been housed at SANBI physically – it needed at least institutional accountability - the Act made it simpler and more justifiable to transfer coordination to SANBI, given the difficulty of housing it within the biome. In addition, the investment of time, expertise and money that would have been required to support a coordination unit within the biome was too great for the coordination unit or CEPF to respond to. It appeared from the onset that the key decision makers were leaning towards it being hosted by SANBI in Cape Town.

### **2.2.2 Financial Limitations**

The coordination model that CI-SA used to run the unit was expensive in terms of training costs and staff salaries. The CEPF fund was not designed to meet such financial demands through one institution. There is a restriction on the amount of funds that any one institution can receive from CEPF for any number of projects. CI-SA was close to reaching this restriction.

### **2.2.3 Structural Adjustments**

Making coordination more cost effective and shifting it to a different institution would require a restructuring of the CU staff and possibly the SKEP committees. The study therefore had to identify lessons from coordinating the SKEP program thus far and use those lessons to adjust the functioning and coordination mechanisms in SKEP. It sought to establish what the implications of transferring the coordination unit would be for the program and what the shift would entail in terms of restructuring the staff and SKEP structures. The transfer and restructuring would need to take place with minimal interference to the program and coordination unit. It was therefore necessary to find out what aspects of coordination under CI worked well and ensure that they are maintained in some form. It was also necessary to establish what did not work well and how those aspects could be improved with the new institution.

### **2.3 Research Questions**

The purpose of this dissertation was to establish what institutional arrangements would be required to coordinate SKEP effectively in the context of its new location and restructured staffing and committee structures. The study therefore took the form of an evaluation, which assessed the range of perceptions of coordination unit staff as well as members of the various committee structures. Their responses formed the basis of the recommendations for a restructured CU.

The research questions are therefore stated as:

1. What were the perceptions of stakeholders and staff of the functioning of the coordination unit?
2. What aspects of the functioning of the coordination unit required improvement?
3. What systematic changes could serve the coordination unit structure best and ensure its sustainability?

## 2.4 Conclusion

The SKEP program had always been highly dynamic. The process and methods used to develop the program were sometimes unconventional and throughout the development and implementation of the program, the boundaries of participatory conservation planning were tested. There was widespread public engagement and application of sound conservation planning methods. However, the planning phase put little emphasis on developing an institutional framework that would ensure the long term sustainability of the program. Implementation of the program had already begun. Staff had been employed and trained and various field offices were established. Momentum was created and considerable funding utilized, but with no clarity on what the future structure of the CU looked like. With mounting pressure from the donor and stakeholders, it was eventually decided that a review of the existing institutional structure be conducted and recommendations be made for its long-term sustainability.

The next chapter provides a review of literature that helps to unpack the research concerns and research questions. It provides insights into these matters by highlighting approaches and methods that deal with the practical problems of management.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Management Implications for Program Coordination**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Considerable literature on organizational management and the functioning of institutions exists. There are also vast amounts of literature that describe the bioregional approach to conservation and the rationale behind it. However, such literature usually does not interrogate specific concerns relating to coordination structures for biodiversity conservation programs at the geographical scale of biodiversity hotspots (also called bioregions or ecosystems). Coordination is usually discussed at the scale of administrative boundaries such as municipalities and tends to focus on a particular natural resource such as water or forestry. The preferred term in such literature is ‘management’ and here institutions are directly responsible for delivering a conservation outcome. As for the SKEP CU however, the preferred term is ‘coordination’ because the unit does not take sole responsibility for delivering the host of programmatic actions but rather coordinates partnerships with various institutions to take on those responsibilities.

The bioregional approach is a framework for integrated management of land, water and living resources. It provides a more natural reflection of the boundaries of the particular bioregion in that it does not limit the area of focus to administrative boundaries, which can result in crucial parts of the area of focus being excluded. The bioregional or ecosystem approach is based on the application of scientific methodologies, focusing on the interactions between organisms and their environment. It recognizes that humans, with their cultural and political influences, are an integral component to ecosystems.

According to Brunckhorst (2000) bioregions are not only defined by their biological resources in a certain geographical area but also by the political, societal, cultural and

institutional elements found there. It can therefore be said that this is a systematic way of approaching natural resource management.

The bioregional approach therefore promotes working with and through other organizations to implement the objectives of a particular program. This is a decentralized approach where the numerous organizations working in a bioregion take responsibility for identifying and implementing a series of actions. It would typically be the role of a coordination unit like SKEP to coordinate the various partner institutions to align to the vision of the program.

This chapter discusses four aspects of management. The first three are related to ecosystem management and the fourth is about general management. They highlight the following key aspects:

- Effective management requires the acknowledgement that there is uncertainty in natural resource management and so an experimental approach is proposed.
- Institutions responsible for ecosystem management need to practice adaptive management if they are to effectively manage under unpredictable circumstances.
- Lessons from planning an ecosystem program can be learnt from the CAPE program.
- Cybernetic principles, with particular reference to the viable systems model (VSM), can be applied to the management of processes involved in coordinating a large-scale conservation program.

### **3.2 Uncertainty in Natural Resource Management**

For decades scientists have made considerable attempts to counteract the negative impacts of human behaviour on ecological systems and tried to enhance their stability in order to secure it into perpetuity. Donors invest millions of US dollars into research

institutions, state departments and NGO's and other implementing agents, with the hope that they will meet the desperate need to sustain the earth's natural resources in whatever way possible.

Walters and Holling (1990) note that the great dilemma that natural resource managers are left with is that it cannot be predicted with certainty whether their activities will have the desired impact or any impact on the ecological systems. No matter how thoroughly the activity is researched and the preparation carried out beforehand, the process in the end becomes an experiment with very uncertain outcomes, no matter how skillfully the process is carried out. According to Walters and Holling, practitioners are aware of this uncertainty and mitigate it by implementing monitoring and evaluation programs, still with a fair amount of certainty and confidence in their predictions. Practitioners have recently started admitting their ignorance to some degree and tend to label substantial management initiatives as experiments, even when they tend to be a lot less rigorous than pure scientists would like. This provides a major opportunity; add Walters and Holling, for the relevant scientists and experts (ecologists, sociologists, economists, etc) to become involved in the design and implementation of such experiments, much to the benefit of scientists, managers and end-users. Admission of uncertainty provides all parties with the opportunity to influence and shape the outcomes.

There is a need for a greater acknowledgement that natural resources and related social issues are highly complex and have little certainty, note Walters and Holling (1990). They add that adopting a learn-by-doing approach and following an adaptive management style can support such environments of uncertainty. New lessons provide opportunities for new ways of doing things. Flexible institutions can find common values with their partner organizations.

Similarly Brunckhorst (2000) supports this type of experimental approach being applied to natural resource management. He notes that traditional forms of managing natural

resources are very compartmentalized, whereas the bioregional approach allows for cross-pollination between disciplines. There is a need for more flexible, open approaches amongst natural resource managers that will encourage public discourse and demystify the notion of a single, best unchallenged approach. By not providing a platform for public debate, he adds, the opinions of the traditionally accepted experts are usually taken as most accurate, yet other opinions could have provided richer answers. Brunckhorst notes that experiments need to be monitored and the lessons learnt need to be carried through to future implementation.

Walters and Holling (1990) highlight two key challenges that managers will face if they are to try and convince their counterparts that admission of uncertainty would actually better serve their cause in the long term than trying to fit inevitable changes in processes into a well-designed and well-intended predetermined model. Firstly, managers will need to demonstrate that the option of deliberate change in policy should even be considered, given the alternative of pretending certainty and waiting for nature to reveal gaps in understanding. A second challenge is to reveal the uncertainties that actually do exist (in the form of alternative working hypotheses) in a manner that will promote intelligent choice and a search for creative and safe experimental options. In this environment of uncertainty, certain skills are required by managers. If managers are to deal with these challenges, then they need to have the skills to do so.

### **3.3 Institutional Impediments and Enablers of Natural Resource Management**

Institutions that set policies for natural resource management as well as those that implement it need to be sufficiently prepared and empowered to be able to respond to the relevant management requirements.

Meidinger (1997) notes that environmental legislation is not sufficient to ensure effective management of natural resources. Management and control of natural resources takes place amongst a variety of organizations. Land is owned by an array of actors such as individuals, families, corporations, communities, etc. Various regulations and policies exist that govern the use of land, adds Meidinger, particularly in ecologically significant landscapes where sustainable use of natural resources is enforced by authorities. Enforcement of natural resource laws (water, air, fisheries, etc) takes place at various levels (local, provincial, national) and each is enforced by a different set of agencies. This makes it difficult to enforce resources management at the level of an ecosystem or bioregion, adds Meidinger. Also, the issues surrounding each resource type is quite complex in itself and the ecosystem management principle is too broad to translate into enforceable law. Therefore, says Meidinger, to achieve ecosystem management, it must be done at the level of institutional context. "How well is our society organized to facilitate the development of ecosystem management?" (Meidinger 1997, p. 363). In other words, we are faced with the challenge of empowering institutions that represent various interest groups to enforce natural resource management at the level of the ecosystem, rather than simply leaving it up to those who are more suited to managing natural resources at the scale of administrative boundaries. Meidinger brings legal issues into the discussion, because that is often the basis upon which institutions are structured. Meidinger makes quite a significant observation, that laws are often constraints on human behaviour and consequently on their ability to create new forms of social organization. Legal requirements can therefore, act as constraints on ecosystem management, notwithstanding their role as enablers of ecosystem management.

There are two main points to note from this discussion. The first is that in order to manage resources at the ecosystem level, the level that takes into account the interactions amongst resources, the situation needs to be viewed and managed from a bird's eye view and not simply per resource. The second point is that while legislation is necessary for regulating resource consumption and over-exploitation, it is not sufficient to managing the situation at the ecosystem level. Instead, institutions need to be empowered to interact with these various laws and their implementing agencies to ensure that the ecosystem as a

whole is being taken care of. The components of ecosystems are interrelated and an impact on one part affects a component elsewhere – they are systemic. These institutions also need to be flexible and more able to change according to needs.

Meidinger (1997) highlights some of the characteristics of successful ecosystem institutions as being:

- Coordination of ecological and social information at various levels (genetic, landscape, national and global)
- The ability to spot surprises in ecological and social processes
- Institutional adaptations to changes in knowledge and social values

In identifying the need for coordinated information gathering and analysis at a variety of levels, Meidinger (1997) makes reference to the works of Grumbine (1994). Grumbine conducted a literature search to establish the most common themes used to describe 'ecosystem management'. Meidinger denotes 'hierarchical context' as the more significant one, probably because it underpins all the other themes. Hierarchical context, as defined by Grumbine, means that it is insufficient to focus on any one level of the biodiversity hierarchy. When working at any one level or scale, biodiversity managers must make connections between all levels. The other themes identified by Grumbine, which could be seen as underpinning hierarchical context are: ecological boundaries, ecological integrity, data collection, monitoring, adaptive management, interagency cooperation, organizational change, humans embedded in nature, and values.

In highlighting another characteristic of successful ecosystem institutions Meidinger refers to the work of Lee (1993) and Franklin (1994). A key characteristic highlighted by Lee (1993) is that successful ecosystem institutions must be able to spot surprises (external events and consequences that are unexpected) in ecological and social processes. He says that one needs to be prudent where there is uncertainty. This means

that one must firstly recognize the possibility of surprise and secondly, plan to act, detect and correct error that can be avoided. Lee bases his sociological approach to environmental management on the more technical works of Holling (1978) around the aspect of adaptive management. Lee notes that in deliberate experimentation, all possibilities surrounding effective ecosystem management are addressed and not just the ones that are known. He adds that humans have limited information-processing capabilities, and so we select from what we know (a restricted set) rather than from all possible alternatives. This results in inconsistencies about what is possible and what we know. Lee surmises that by adopting an experimental approach, one can distinguish between genuine surprise and avoidable error. Lee guards against a trial and error approach because it is less rigorous and the learning is not as intentional as with experimentation.

Another characteristic highlighted by Meidinger (1997) relates to the notion of adaptive management. Here Lee (1993; 1999), Walters (1986) and Walters and Holling (1990) see experimentation as a learning process that informs the development of policies. The aim of conducting these experiments is to learn something about the ecosystem's structures and processes. This helps to design better policies and to contrive better experiments. Lee (1999) adds that experiments can reveal surprises and it is up to the manager or scientist to pursue this further. This comes back to the previous notion that all possibilities need to be investigated so that changes in knowledge or social values can be detected beforehand. The experiment and policy developments can then be adapted accordingly. Whatever surprises that occur thereafter are either indicative of flaws in the experiment or are genuine surprises in the environment. Lee notes that the possibility of surprise must be recognized from the outset.

Meidinger (1997) therefore cautions that it is important for organizations to adopt these characteristics if they want to be successful natural resource management entities. No matter how good the legislation and policies may be, it will not be effectively implemented if the implementing organizations do not function as flexible and adaptable

entities. The institutional arrangements for implementing natural resource legislation and policy are therefore highly influential in determining whether or not natural resource management is effective. Meidinger (1997) and Lee (1993; 1999) argue that for institutions to manage their resources, they need to consider all the different levels and not just the level at which they are working. They also argue that learning from experiments is critical to understanding changes in the environment and being able to adapt accordingly.

### **3.4 Lessons for Bioregional Conservation Planning**

The Cape Action for People and the Environment (CAPE) Program is a South African bioregional program that was developed for the Cape Floristic biome, also an internationally recognized biodiversity hotspot. This program laid the foundation for applying a dedicated bioregional approach to large-scale conservation planning in South Africa. In highlighting the approaches taken to developing the CAPE Program, Younge and Fowkes (2003) use CAPE as a case study to reflect on some of the lessons that were learnt.

Younge and Fowkes (2003) note that the development of bioregional strategies at the scale of the bioregion (as opposed to the scale of political boundaries such as municipalities) poses several challenges for conservation planning. While it enables integrated, comprehensive planning, it also makes the process more complicated. It requires a rigorous process of setting conservation targets and identifying ways of achieving this. They add that the boundaries of bioregional domains do not strictly fit political ones and instead are defined according to natural boundaries such as vegetation type. Political boundaries overlap and this requires that conservation planners develop a broad understanding of a range of political, legal and socio-economic issues that they find themselves enmeshed in. Stakeholder engagement is also significantly more complex at this scale as equal representation needs to be secured for each political area.

Indeed, nothing is cut and dried when it comes to using integrated approaches. The whole purpose of integration is to remove boundaries that hinder cross pollination of ideas, plans and resources and instead follow processes that allow for natural integration and overlap. Without this, projects would not run as optimally as they could. This fundamental systems principle runs along the lines of ecology, where all parts of, e.g. a living cell are needed in working order for the cell to function as it should. If one part of the cell was not operational, the whole cell would either cease to operate or operate inefficiently, and that in turn would affect the larger system of the living body. Therefore, when it comes to bioregional planning and implementation, the idea is to do away with the notion that boundaries should be either natural or political and to instead integrate them in a way that acknowledges the influence of both socio-political and natural phenomena in defining landscapes.

Younge and Fowkes (2003) recommend that the following principles be adhered to in order to successfully achieve bioregional conservation planning. Conservation planning should:

- Be strategic and pragmatic
- Facilitate open communication
- Premise that stakeholders are not homogenous
- Encourage stakeholder involvement in project governance
- Provide direction and build relationships

In advocating a strategic and pragmatic approach to conducting bioregional planning, Younge and Fowkes suggest that planners get on with the work, despite budgetary and time constraints. The planning needs to be streamlined as far as possible and only capture the most necessary detail that will take the planning process into implementation.

Younge and Fowkes highlight the importance of providing frequent and open communication during a planning process as this eliminates misunderstandings and allows for consensus building amongst stakeholders. Transparent and unambiguous communication is very important to the success of such a process.

Younge and Fowkes note that working from the premise that stakeholders are not homogeneous adds tremendous value to the program. There were various groups of stakeholders involved in the planning of CAPE. Each had different needs and expectations which had to be addressed at different levels and from different angles. A one size fits all was not going to work, note Younge and Fowkes. Different roles therefore need to be defined for each group of stakeholders so as to prevent confusion and disappointment.

Stakeholder involvement in project governance at the planning phase is important to ensure commitment during the implementation phase as indicated by Younge and Fowkes. Stakeholders should be involved in developing the implementation strategy, they should be members of steering committees and take part in various decision making processes. Younge and Fowkes note that not only does this ensure their commitment to the program's implementation, but it ensures that if certain systems in the program coordination cease to exist, there are longer term structures or organizations to carry on the tasks.

Lastly, a very challenging balancing act to perform, note Younge and Fowkes (2003), whether planning or implementing a program, is between providing direction and building relationships. This is a fine balance where too much directing can make stakeholders feel that they are being coerced, and too little directing results in nobody taking responsibility and the job not getting done.

While the lessons described above refer to the conservation planning phase, there is equally significant value in applying them to the conservation implementation phase as well as any monitoring processes that may follow. These are lessons for institutions to take into account in order to build their organizational capacity to run bioregional programs.

Because bioregional planning has only begun to be used in recent years, there are very few examples to draw on. It is therefore important for programs such as CAPE to share their lessons and methodologies with other programs, rather than those programs making the same mistakes or recreating methods that CAPE has already developed. While one size does not fit all, it would be foolish to ignore methods that have been tried and tested. These already scrutinized methods would be applied in new contexts and tried and tested yet again. One case study builds on top of another, thereby expanding the body of knowledge on the subject.

### **3.5 Cybernetic Principles for Understanding Management Problems**

Espejo and Schwaninger (1993) note that the problems managers face in running organizations are changing. Environments are more complex, and so there is a greater need for constant adaptation, forward thinking and learning new attributes. Attempts to control organizations for the purpose of reducing complexity are no longer sufficient. In fact there can be even greater value in allowing and even increasing complexity.

Espejo and Schwaninger (1993) add that the field of cybernetics provides useful models with which to master the challenges of management. Cybernetic law states that systems are self-organising. They regulate themselves, addressing instability by creating a stable environment that brings the system back to some sort of equilibrium. Systems also provide feedback, creating a constant loop of inputs and outputs.

Espejo and Harnden (1989) make reference to another element of cybernetic law which is requisite variety. This is the capacity of a system to produce a number of responses to disturbances that will bring the situation out of its undesirable state back into a desirable one. This is in line with Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety which states that there needs to be a sufficient variety of responses stored up in the system that can be used to provide feedback when the system becomes unstable, thereby bringing it back to a stable situation.

The viable system model (VSM) seeks to highlight those attributes of an organization that make it effective. The literature refers to this as "organizational fitness" (Espejo and Schwaninger 1993, p. 39). The VSM is primarily concerned with structure and function. It looks at how the functions should regulate the enterprise to ensure long term survival. Espejo and Schwaninger highlight three ways in which the model achieves its aim. The model achieves its aim by, firstly, replacing hierarchies in an organization with networks. That is, it builds on the relationships between elements of an organization rather than its discrete parts. Secondly, the organizational structure ensures that the system is viable, that it has an independent existence and can maintain its own identity. This is achieved by first diagnosing the organizational structure (in order to understand it). New structures are then designed, and thereafter structural weaknesses underlying the problem situation are assessed. Thirdly, the model deals fundamentally with variety and complexity. Here complexity refers to having sufficient detailed information and not complexity in terms of the level of difficulty in understanding the information.

According to Espejo and Harnden (1989), the success of VSM and cybernetics cannot be dependent on a manager's variety because his environment has far more variety than him alone. A manager's variety can account for as little as 10% and the remaining variety required by the system is carried out through self-regulation. Recursion comes into play where the supra-system replicates itself into smaller sub-systems.

Flood and Jackson (1991) describe the interaction between VSM structures broadly as taking place at 3 levels as shown in table 1 below. The operative level takes care of the

day-to-day running of the organization. This is made up of system one and two. The strategic or intelligence level interacts with the outside environment to understand changes outside the organization and passes that on to the rest of the organization. This is made up of system three and four. The third level is the policy level which looks at the legitimacy of the outside environment and management, and it is referred to as system 5. While these levels are evident in the organization as a whole, they are also replicated in the different departments or units of the organization.

Operative level		Strategic level		Policy level
System 1	System 2	System 3	System 4	System 5
Directly concerned with implementation	Coordinates the parts that make up system 1	Control function that maintains internal stability	Intelligence gathering about total system	Responsible for policy

**Table 1: Viable Systems Model (from Flood and Jackson, 1991)**

The VSM can be used to diagnose problems of an organization, particularly those that have organized parts and are open to a changing environment and where there is reasonable agreement about the goals the system pursues. According to Flood and Jackson (1991), the philosophy behind Viable Systems Diagnosis (VSD) addresses these management challenges as follows:

- Social problems of organizations are characterized by interdependency. These problems are the result of new degrees of complexity.
- Traditional approaches to addressing management problems are too trivial to deal with the complexities that exist. Therefore, what is needed is a scientific model that is based on cybernetic principles and that encompasses the fundamentals of management science.
- Since a viable system is concerned with control, the best approach is to reproduce a control system (model) that has already been tested.

- Organizations are designed to achieve effective and efficient realization of goals. However, these goals need to be continually re-evaluated in response to a rapidly changing environment.

Clemson (1984) notes that systems fail because they violate one or several cybernetics principles. Three common violations are:

- A system is assigned a task for which it has little requisite variety to address it.  
This sometimes occurs where the task is assigned to the inappropriate system. For example, a function which, according to cybernetics principles, falls within system 5 is being carried out by system 3. In other words, the more information at the system's disposal, with the relevant support structures in place, the greater the variety of options it has to deal with the specific problem.
- Organizations do not have sufficient feedback loops to achieve their goal.  
Sometimes the objectives of an organisation are in conflict with the feedback loops in the organisation. Organizations will achieve those ends that have sufficient feedback loops and will not achieve the ends that lack sufficient feedback loops.
- Relevant changes occur more often than committees or task teams meet to deal with issues.

Committees or task teams are set up as formal structures to address a situation. However, changes happen more often than they meet to address the situation. This makes it impossible for the structure to discharge its assigned responsibility. In such a situation where the formal arrangement is not working, people usually work out informal arrangements to make things work. Informal arrangements usually arise where people respond to a particular need to solve a problem. Informal arrangements are always necessary, says Clemson (1984), because formal arrangements seldom have requisite variety.

In the conservation sector, organizational management issues are seldom investigated to the same degree as natural resource management issues. This literature review shows just how intertwined the two are.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The way in which conservation programs are managed can have a considerable impact on the outcomes of the program as a whole. Conservation outcomes of the program should therefore be given as much attention as management considerations. This chapter suggests that operations of conservation organizations be carried out in a manner that promotes flexible decision making and that acknowledges that science cannot predict all ecosystem behaviour. It also notes that because of the way institutions are organized and depending on how open they are to learning by experimentation, these can either impede or promote effective natural resource management. There exist guiding principles that have been tested by other conservation programs that can be used to guide future conservation efforts. There are also cybernetic principles that can assist organizations to become more systemic and adaptive in their management approach.

This literature review will be revisited in chapter 6 in relation to results of the grounded theory analysis.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Research Framework**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the conceptual framework within which the research is located. It provides the rationale (philosophical defence) for the philosophical underpinnings, approach, methodology and methods that were used to develop a framework that ultimately guided the research process for this dissertation. Chapter 5 describes the application of the research framework.

Research was conducted as management research. The framework described in this chapter facilitates a deeper understanding of the management situation in the SKEP CU and provides tools for understanding the complexities and challenges surrounding management of the program. The research was conducted in order to learn about management challenges, and where possible, facilitate change in management. This required that research be participatory and that it involve those in management as well as those at the receiving end of management decision making.

According to Midgley (2000), philosophy provides a foundation to engage with methodology. Philosophy offers the “why?” and hence greater understanding. It offers not only a defence of arguments against opponents, but also throws light on practice and methodologies. Midgley argues strongly that there is a need for philosophy because it provides a foundation for engaging with methodology and practice. Philosophy strengthens one’s own argument and the implementation thereof. It is therefore important to have a strong grasp of the language of philosophy in order to carry out the research.

Similarly, when it comes to the design of a research framework (see figure 2), the researcher must be able to justify the use of particular methodologies and methods. Crotty

(1998) notes that to provide such justification reaches to the assumptions we make about reality. To question our reality is to question our theoretical perspective. It also leads us to questions about how we understand human knowledge. The researcher therefore needs to establish what kind of knowledge will be attained by the research. The philosophical underpinnings therefore automatically relate to the methodologies and methods employed. The research framework is further explained below.

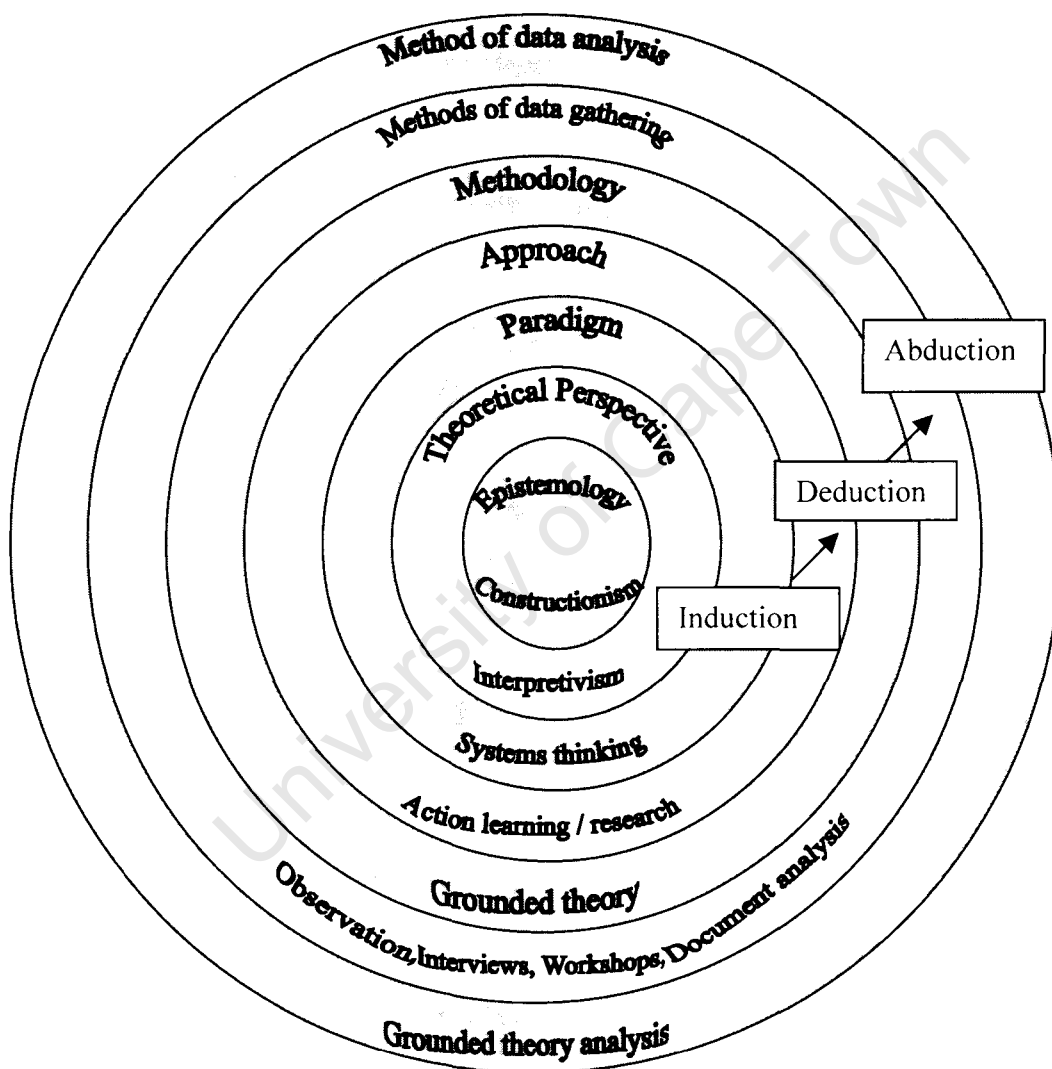


Figure 2: Research framework

## 4.2 Explanation of Research Framework

The research carried out in this dissertation is qualitative. A qualitative approach was most appropriate for the research question as it sought to uncover people's thoughts and feelings, that is, their perceptions of the functioning of SKEP. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.10) describe qualitative research as "...any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification." Strauss and Corbin add that it can refer to behaviours, people's lives, emotions, cultural phenomena and organisational functioning. He adds that some of the data may actually be quantitative, such as census data, but the bulk of the analysis is interpretive or explanatory. Qualitative methods of research enable one to gather intricate details such as emotions and expression that are difficult to extract with quantitative research methods.

In defining epistemology, Crotty (1998) notes that it tells us what kinds of knowledge are possible and what the nature of knowledge is. Epistemology is "a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know" (Crotty 1998, p. 3). Epistemology provides a philosophical grounding for deciding what types of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure their adequacy and legitimacy. It is therefore important to define epistemology at the core of the research framework. For example, a reader of this dissertation would be asking epistemological questions if they were to question the outcomes presented in this dissertation and whether the outcomes can be taken seriously.

Following from the epistemology that informs the research is a particular type of theoretical perspective. A theoretical perspective is one of many theoretical stances that provide a philosophical argument for the chosen methodology by stating the assumptions we bring to the research task. For example, the use of ethnographic methodology brings certain assumptions about language and communication when focussing on participant observation as a data gathering method (Crotty, 1998).

In the research framework systems thinking is considered a paradigm situated between the philosophical approaches towards the inner circles and the more practical approaches in the outer circles. Having argued for an epistemology and theoretical perspective that acknowledges the experiences and realities of individual people, we now ask in what paradigm is the research situated that will deliver research results - the paradigm being an idea or concept. The research approach defines the line of thinking or intention that the research follows. In the case of action research, the intention is to learn and intervene in real world situations.

A methodology is the strategy or action plan used to conduct the research. It gives shape to the methods that are applied and links them to the desired outcomes. The methodology section should therefore provide a rationale for the choice of methods (Crotty, 1998).

“Methods are the techniques or procedure used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis” (Crotty 1998, p. 3). They are the specific activities we engage in so as to gather and analyse our data. Here the justification for the research process adopted becomes quite detailed. Description is given, for example, of the kind of interviews carried out and the techniques applied.

Effective managers are concerned with effective action (Yu, 1994). They are unconcerned with simply developing theory and more concerned with the practical consequences of their choices, adds Yu. There are certain steps along the investigation continuum that a researcher follows in order to discover a truth. Yu goes on to explain that the truth that holds at a particular time is not necessarily the truth that holds for all times to follow. After testing the truth the researcher may discover that the conclusion drawn previously is no longer the truth and therefore repeats the process of investigation in order to reach a new truth. That truth works at that time until again doubt leads to further investigation and reformulation of the truth and so on. It should be noted that at each point, truth is truth, and an iterative process is required to arrive at the truth.

Yu (1994) notes that this process of settling doubt needs to have a structured method of investigation or inquiry. This process of inquiry usually starts at the point of abduction, where one explores the data in search of possible patterns. He says that this requires critical thinking which is described as an informal type of logic, as opposed to symbolic reasoning which is a more formal type of logic. It is an exploratory form of data analysis that neither exhausts all possibilities nor makes hasty decisions. While there may be many convincing patterns, the researcher abducts only the more plausible one. This is not hasty judgement but requires proper categorisation for data sorting.

Yu (1994) highlights that the next step is to refine the data by means of logical deduction. Deduction is inferring logical results from premises. One cannot logically prove all the premises are true, making deduction an inadequate point of conclusion in the search for truth. Instead a higher order premise is needed to substantiate the claim.

Because deduction is self-referent, i.e. it builds knowledge from within itself; it needs a process of self-correction to give adequate support to assertions. Induction does just this by providing empirical substantiation of the claim, notes Yu (1994). Occurrences are inconclusive in infinite time. This is because there will always be new cases and new evidence. Induction is therefore indefinable in a single case. Induction, therefore, generates empirical laws and not theoretical laws. Yu notes that empirical laws are based on generality and the law of large numbers. Empirical reasoning makes inferences from a large number of cases. Probability is not true certainty. We do not know real probability due to our finite existence, but given a large number of cases, one can approximate the actual probability. This is sufficient to fix our beliefs until we are led to further inquiry.

### **4.3 A Constructionist Epistemology**

Constructionism refers to the type of knowledge one seeks to acquire in order to define how people know what they know. It holds that all meaningful reality is constructed

through interactions with the world. To understand constructionism requires a brief explanation of constructivism. According to Crotty (1998), constructivism is the individual's sense-making of objects in the world. Spivey (1997) adds that building knowledge through individual sense-making means that the individual's way of perceiving the world influences the knowledge produced. This study sought not to focus on an individual's perceptions of the SKEP coordination unit but rather to understand the range of perceptions amongst people.

Constructionism however, according to Crotty, is the view that "...all knowledge and therefore all meaningful reality as such is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty 1998, p. 8). It refers to the meanings constructed through social interactions. In a particular culture, for example, interactions amongst people would have particular meanings which are understood by all who are part of that culture. Crotty goes on to note that there is no objective truth waiting to be uncovered. "There is no meaning without mind" (Crotty 1998, p. 8). Objects in the world are filled with potential meaning, but the meaning only appears when consciousness engages with and interprets it. Meaning comes from our engagement with the world.

This research study sought to understand the range of perspectives of people involved in SKEP in order to gain an in-depth understanding of their perceptions of the program. This stems from the perspective that each person has a unique understanding of the unfolding of events in the program. To understand what worked about the program and what did not, it was necessary to understand as many individual perspectives / realities as possible. In addition, the philosophical approach allows for identifying the interconnectedness between variables in the research, thereby allowing for a rich understanding of the information gathered. The research epistemology is therefore a constructionist one and the theoretical perspective, research methodologies and methods that follow on from that are consistent with this philosophy.

#### **4.4 An Interpretivist Theoretical Perspective**

If the type of knowledge this study seeks to attain (epistemology) is concerned with the meaning people assign to events or phenomena (constructionism), then the theoretical perspective adopted must clarify the assumptions being made about the realities brought into this study. According to Cohen et al (2000) positivism and anti-positivism are the two dominant theoretical perspectives. Cohen et al go on to say that positivism finds answers to a research problem in the external world by means of observation, experimentation and replication. Its analysis is expressed in laws or law-like generalizations and has been established in natural phenomena. Positivism is less successful in its application to the study of human behaviour, where there is immense complexity of human nature.

Interpretivism, however, notes Crotty (1998), has a variety of different schools of thought with their own different epistemological viewpoints. He goes on to say that it rejects the belief that universal general laws govern human behaviour and are characterized by underlying regularities. The assumption made about reality is therefore that individual behaviour can only be understood by the researcher sharing and understanding the frame of reference of the individual being studied. Constructionism, which seeks out unique experiences, is therefore in stark contrast to positivist epistemologies. I adopted an interpretivist stance in my research using in-depth interview techniques to understand people's personal perspectives.

In aiming to uncover the meaning of interpretivism, Cohen et al (2000) describe it as the search to understand the subjective world of human experience. It seeks to get into the person's thinking and view a situation from her perspective. Ideally, it seeks to discover exactly what one believes and desires, thereby retaining the integrity of the phenomena being investigated. The contrast to this is a normative paradigm, continues Cohen. Normative behaviour is a response to external, environmental stimuli. It forms overarching rules and theories to predict behaviour, based on natural science.

Two sub-components of interpretivism that help define the theoretical perspective are symbolic interactionism and phenomenology.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) describe symbolic interactionism in terms of its origins which are in the works of George Herbert Mead. Mead's work, note Babbie and Mouton, recognizes the role that inner mental processes, like the mind and self, play in people's subjective experiences. To understand the individual's mental processes, one needs to understand the link between individuals and the society to which they belong. In Mead's view, according to Babbie and Mouton, "...individual and society are inextricably linked" (Babbie and Mouton 2001, p. 31).

Babbie and Mouton (2001) expand the notion of interpretivism by describing its links to phenomenology. They describe phenomenology as the processes which human beings are constantly engaged with to make sense of their life or worlds. "We continuously interpret, create, and give meaning to, define, justify and rationalize our actions" (Babbie and Mouton 2001, p. 28).

The philosophical approach described thus far is one of understanding how the individual understands the world in which she lives and how she interprets it, given the myriad of potential meanings that can be ascribed to objects and events.

#### **4.5 Systems Thinking Paradigm**

Jackson (2000) describes three core notions of systems thinking that help to understand this concept. The first relates to systems theory as holism, the second relates to cognitive models of understanding the world and the third relates to systems theory as solving real world problems.

### 4.5.1 Holism

Reductionist thinking defines a system as nothing more than the sum of its parts. This type of theorising can be applied relatively successfully to the disciplines of physics or biology but such an application has its limitations. The system of the earth for example is more than just a series of elements, namely ecosystems, economies, cells, etc. Systems theory challenges reductionism, arguing that patterns within, between and beyond the system also need to be taken into account. Kauffman (1980) has termed this approach “general systems theory”. It is one of several approaches to systems thinking. In short it argues that a system is a collection of parts that interact with each other to function as a whole. The key difference is that systems theory takes into account linkages and relationships whereas reductionism examines the system’s elements in isolation.

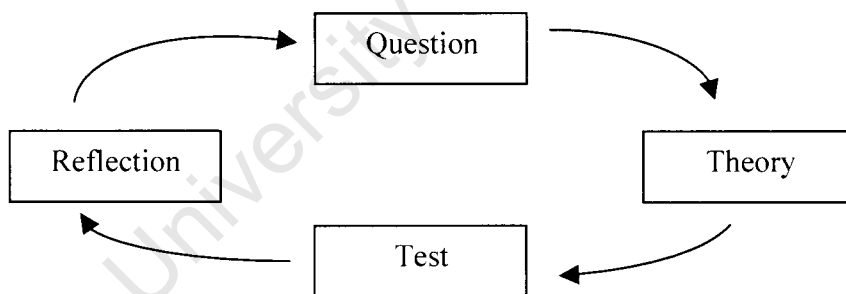
Diederick Aerts et al (1994) attribute most of the macro and micro problems experienced today to this fragmentation. He refers to the fragmentation illustrated in the North-South divide – the economically developed and underdeveloped, the know’s and the know not’s, the have’s and the have not’s, opposing cultures.

Focusing on just one aspect of a problem in order to solve it provides a narrow perspective, an incomplete understanding of the bigger picture. We cannot just look at means of economic development in order to achieve economic development. A person feeling ill may go to a general practitioner in the hope of getting pills to feel better whereas the real need may be psychological treatment or a vacation from work. There must be a way to identify and illustrate a more holistic view of the world in the workplace. Even though specialists are needed in society to provide the intricate details of particular concerns, they too form part of a larger system and need to engage with it. Along with this holistic perspective goes attributes like well-managed projects, high quality work, and good support structures.

### 4.5.2 Cognitive Systems

Cognitive systems refer to the structured frameworks that human beings use to organize their knowledge. These are certain intellectual norms that people find comfortable in using to express their thoughts about and actions in the world (Jackson, 2000). To fully embrace the concept of systems thinking is to engage with one's epistemological constructs. Jackson adds that this would require a fundamental re-ordering of one's cognitive processes that align to systems ways of thinking. This can only be achieved through learning.

Charles Handy's theory of learning supports systems theory in that it acknowledges continuous learning, which takes place in real life, and not just in the classroom. Handy (1989) describes learning as a wheel divided into four parts as in figure 3 below. As the processes of learning unfold in our lives, questions are asked and theories are developed and tested. When we reflect on these, we make certain adjustments to our original thinking and the questioning, theorizing and testing processes are repeated.



**Figure 3: Learning cycle (from Handy, 1989)**

Systems theory calls for an understanding of the relationships between variables. The learning process helps one understand those relationships and gain a deeper understanding of the system as a whole. The researcher should therefore be open to learning new research methods and information about the research subject and even about her own way of interpreting information and situations during the research process. This

will enhance her understanding of the research topic. The researcher should also be open to being critiqued and challenged and use that to strengthen the research argument.

### **4.5.3 Systems Practice**

According to Jackson (2000), the most attractive aspect of systems theory for the researcher is that systems theory offers more than just scholarly theories for addressing a concern. There is a dominant type of research that is concerned with the production of theories for the sake of scholarly advancement. The systems approach, however, is a research mechanism for taking the theoretical discipline to the outside world, where it provides a set of tools for addressing the concern within that discipline. Jackson notes that the social sciences tend to be strong on theory but relatively weak on practice. Rarely do they develop methodologies that have everyday, practical use for practitioners or problem solvers that face real-world difficulties. The big difference thus lies in the degree of support that methodology provides to practice. While systems thinkers are engaged in theory building, this is not their main focus. Therefore, in systems thinking, the term methodology describes "...an organised set of methods and techniques employed to intervene in and change real-world problem situations" (Jackson 2000, p. 16).

The motivation for conducting the research process is to deal with the concerns of the client or problem owner. The benefits of the social sciences for everyday use can be significantly strengthened if it went beyond the theoretical towards the pragmatic. Systems theory offers just that approach. The systems approach can be seen as a generic approach to understanding the operations of a particular problem in the world and finding the most appropriate tools to solve the problem.

The advantage of systems approaches, says Jackson (2000), is that they need not be limited to a particular discipline. There is plenty of room for trans-disciplinary systems thinking, given the variety of perspectives, methodologies and methods that exist under its banner. This gives the systems thinker an opportunity to work in a wider range of problem situations.

Perhaps the most developed argument in favour of systems approaches, adds Jackson (2000), lies in the diversity, range, effectiveness and efficiency of approaches available to real-world problem management. The systems thinker therefore has a variety of options to use in her toolkit thereby increasing her capability to engage, in a theoretically informed way, with the real-world concerns.

Waring (1996) notes that there are two ways of characterising systems, namely hard and soft. Hard systems are more well-defined than soft systems. Hard systems have definite solutions and definable goals. Soft systems on the other hand look at the why and how to solve a problem, which seldom have clear cut, black and white answers. Soft issues often have a large social and political component.

#### **4.6 Action Learning / Action Research Approach**

Dick (1997a) describes action learning as a process whereby a group of people come together regularly to help each other learn from their experiences. He adds that in the past participants came from different organisations, were involved in different activities and were faced with individual problems. What is unique about action learning is that it is based on action in the workplace and not just on theory.

The purpose of action research on the other hand is to establish ways of applying the information yielded by the research to real life situations (Dick, 2000). As with conventional research, he adds, questions are developed and data is collected which answers the question. Action research however, takes it one step further in that the research results are applied in the real world in order to effect a change in the problem situation. Action research is designed for a dual purpose: to yield change (the “action”) and understanding (the “research”) at the same time, adds Dick.

While action research and action learning are two closely related processes, there is a distinction between them. Zuber-Skerrit and Perry (1994) note that action research focuses on group learning while action learning focuses on individual learning. Although

the colleagues in action learning are a group, the individuals in the group learn from separate experiences that do not necessarily involve the group or other colleagues. Action research involves action learning but not the other way around. This is because action research is more deliberate, systematic and rigorous, and involves a public documentation of the experience such as a dissertation.

Zuber-Skerrit and Perry describe action research as involving 3 key aspects. These are a) a group of people working together; b) applying a cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting more deliberately and systematically than usual; and c) a public report of the experience.

Zuber-Skerrit and Perry (1994) describe the action learning process as follows. The action learning approach is facilitated through discussions amongst members of the group. Insights and practical lessons are shared. Challenges that individuals experienced are put to the group and possible solutions are discussed based on various experiences. Members of the group receive feedback from each other and provide constructive criticism of each others research approaches, methods and practical applications. The group sessions provide members with an opportunity to draw from a range of experiences, thereby strengthening their own case. The collective learning is more enriching than each person working on her own.

Action learning holds that one needs to learn something new in order to respond to new challenges. Yesterday's solutions may not help to solve today's problems. The theory of learning is also the theory of change, as described by Handy (1989). When one set of questions is dealt with, it leads to new questions. When these questions are answered, new information is learned which ultimately improves ones thinking about the subject. Rigour is therefore achieved through a systematic, cyclical process.

Marquardt (1999) notes that the action learning approach makes provision for a facilitator whose role it is to help action learning participants reflect on what is happening and how a solution can be formed. The facilitator aids the group in going through the cycle or

cycles of action learning. The facilitator acts as a learning coach. Her role is to help participants in the group to treat their experiences as sources of learning and assisting them in taking responsibility for their own learning and development.

The sections that follow bring us closer to the more practical approach to conducting research that is informed by the more philosophical underpinnings described above.

#### **4.7 Grounded Theory Methodology**

Grounded theory can be viewed as a specific form of ethnographic enquiry where through a series of carefully planned steps, theoretical ideas are developed (Crotty, 1998). However, it offers more than just a set of procedures for analyzing data. For one to be able to use the tools, one needs to understand the principles upon which this form of analysis is based and the characteristics that the researcher needs to adopt and enhance within her.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) highlight that while the systematic techniques and procedures are designed to provide analytical precision and rigour; creativity is also an important element. It is the researcher's creativity that enables her to ask pertinent questions of the data and to make the kind of comparisons that elicit from the data new insights into the phenomena. The grounded theory analysis of the research findings constitutes a theoretical formulation of the reality under investigation, rather than a set of numbers or a group of loosely related themes. Researchers in grounded theory aim for their theories to be related to other theories within their disciplines and that it will have useful application.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) are confident that this qualitative form of analysis is able to stand on its own in producing theory. The grounded theorist tends to be sceptical of established theories unless the theory has been grounded through interplay with the data. This grounding of the theory would test for appropriateness, authenticity and credibility, and it would require of the researcher intuitiveness, receptivity, reciprocity and

sensitivity. These are the attributes that distinguish the use of grounded theory from the use of established theory.

Grounded theory researchers, add Strauss and Corbin (1990), tend to be flexible, open to criticism, are appreciative of group discussion, and value the interplay of ideas. While this may prolong the process of pinning down things analytically, the benefit is that it allows for the complexity of meaning to be discovered – a process that cannot be rushed.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) highlight that most researchers using grounded theory would like their work to have relevance for both academic and non-academic audiences. This is because tremendous value is placed on the words, actions and data of the people and situations studied. Grounded theory researchers take a deep interest in the lives of people they study unlike some other research methodologies that view people as subjects to be studied. In this regard, grounded theory is quite similar to ethnography.

Strauss and Corbin note the following requisite skills for becoming a grounded theorist:

- The ability to step back and critically analyse the situation
- The ability to recognize the tendency towards bias
- The ability to think abstractly
- The ability to be flexible and open to helpful criticism
- Sensitivity to the words and actions of respondents
- A sense of absorption and devotion to the work process

Grounded theory methodology enables researchers to develop the skills that Strauss and Corbin refer to above, thereby giving them greater personal insight and sensitivity when applying the associated methods and procedures. The methodology allows them to move from what they see and hear to the level of abstract thinking and then back to the data again. Researchers, add Strauss and Corbin, need to be able to think comparatively and in terms of properties and dimensions so that they can see what is different and what is the same. The methodology therefore not only produces theory but also grounds theory in

data. While theory and data analysis require interpretation, it is interpretation based on systematically carried out inquiry.

## **4.8 Methods of Data Gathering**

Four methods were applied to gather data, namely observation, convergent interviewing, workshops and document analysis. Each method produced a different level of understanding of the research problem, thereby strengthening the overall outcome of the results. The theoretical underpinning of each method is described in Appendix 2 and the application of each method is described in chapter 5. The remainder of this section describes the ethnographic approach underlying data gathering during fieldwork.

### **4.8.1 Ethnographic Approach to Fieldwork**

While this is not an ethnographic study, an ethnographic approach was taken to gathering data in the field by applying the general principles of ethnography. Spradley (1979) describes ethnography as the study of culture and the acknowledgement that the people we study have their own way of life, a culture of their own. It is a useful means by which to understand ourselves and the multicultural societies of the world. "Instead of collecting 'data' about people, the ethnographer seeks to learn from people, to be taught by them" (Spradley 1979, p. 4). The researcher, adds Spradley, essentially becomes a student in order to discover the hidden principles of another way of life. The ethnographer becomes concerned with the meanings that the people we seek to understand place on actions and events.

Spradley notes that a large part of any culture is tacit knowledge. People are so deeply entrenched in their culture that they take their knowledge for granted. He adds that the ethnographer cannot rely on an informant but must draw conclusions himself and formulate it into abstract statements. The learning experience of the ethnographer relates

to Handy's theory of learning where one must be able to ask the right questions in order to acquire the desired answers. This is particularly important when one is trying to retrieve tacit or unspoken knowledge (Spradley 1979).

Spradley (1979) further describes ethnography as a reminder of the complexities of societies, and that even in one society there is no homogenous culture. People living in a society live by different cultural codes. Even at the level of an organisation people have different understandings of a situation. Spradley notes that by using ethnography as a research methodology the researcher is able to understand human behaviour and use the empirical data to develop theories about how people behave in a specific situation. It allows the researcher to uncover alternative realities and modify her understanding of a situation.

Spradley highlights that grounded theory has become a commonly preferred method in ethnographic research. Rather than testing formal theories, grounded theory develops theories that are grounded in empirical data of the cultural experience, thereby illuminating the ethnocentrism.

## **4.9 Method of Data Analysis**

### **4.9.1 Why Theory that is Grounded?**

Strauss and Corbin (1990) note that if theory is faithful to everyday reality of the substantive area of study and carefully induced from diverse data, then it should fit that substantive area. The theory would represent reality and therefore should be comprehensible and make sense to both the people who were studied and those practicing in that area. If the data that led to the building of the theory is comprehensible and the interpretations conceptual and broad, then the theory should be abstract enough and contain enough variety to make it applicable to a variety of situations related to that phenomenon. The theory should provide control when it comes to actions towards the

phenomenon. This is because the hypotheses proposing relationships among concepts are derived directly from data pertaining to that phenomenon. Because the theory will be used to inform some sort of action, it is necessary to spell this out and to indicate the conditions under which this phenomenon takes place. The conditions should therefore apply to a specific situation.

#### **4.9.2 Theoretical Sensitivity**

“Theoretical sensitivity refers to the personal quality of the researcher. It indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data” (Strauss and Corbin 1990, pp. 41). The sort of sensitivity with which a researcher comes to the research situation is dependent on previous reading and experience with the area of research or areas related to it. Theoretical sensitivity is the attribute of having insight, the ability to provide meaning to data, the capacity to understand and the capability to separate the pertinent from that which is not.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) highlight some sources of theoretical sensitivity:

1. Literature: Readings and documents provide a rich background of information that sensitizes one to what is happening with the phenomenon one is studying.
2. Professional experience: Years of experience in a particular field provides one with an understanding of how things work in that field, what will happen under certain conditions and why. Taking this knowledge into the research situation helps to understand the events and actions seen and heard more quickly than if one did not have that background. However, having this background can also prevent one from seeing things that have become routine and obvious.
3. Personal experience: Having gone through a life experience, for example divorce or death, can stimulate the generation of relevant concepts in the research situation and the relationships between concepts that pertain to loss.

The process of analysis itself provides an additional source for theoretical sensitivity. One gains new insights and understanding of a phenomenon as one interacts with the data

through asking questions, making comparisons, making hypotheses and developing mini frameworks about the concepts and their relationships.

Theoretical sensitivity enables one to see the research situation and data in new ways.

### **4.9.3 Reviewing Literature**

Strauss and Corbin (1990) guard against becoming too steeped in literature before the analysis as this can constrain creative efforts during the analysis. Developing a grounded theory is a process of analysis. The researcher should therefore not have prior knowledge of the categories relevant to the theory. It is only after a category has emerged as pertinent that one may want to return to the technical literature to determine if the category is discussed there and what other researchers have said about it.

Non-technical literature is also important, such as letters, diaries, newspaper articles, and memos. This can tell a lot about an organization, its structures and how it functions (which may not be visible in observation or interviews).

The researcher's improved understanding of the situation, notes Dick (2000), is largely driven by data gathered during the research process rather than by literature sources. This reduces the researcher's bias in not selecting what issues to address within the research topic but rather allowing the data coming through the research methods to direct it. General literature around the research topic is read throughout the process but the more focussed issues are only read about when the data reveals what those issues are.

### **4.9.4 Coding Data**

Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe coding as the process by which data is broken down, conceptualised and put back together again in new ways. This is the core process by which theories are built from data. It labels or codes the data according to certain

concepts, and groups these concepts into more overarching themes. The coding process produces a few key themes that can succinctly describe what the data is essentially about. However, coding goes beyond enabling the researcher to pull out a few themes or develop a descriptive theoretical framework. Strauss and Corbin highlight the purpose of applying analytical procedures of grounded theory as follows:

1. To build theory rather than just test it.
2. To provide rigor to the research process to make it scientifically valid.
3. To assist the analyst in breaking through biases and assumptions that can emanate from the research process.
4. To generate a theory that is based on enough density and richness of data that can represent the reality as closely as possible.

The process of coding asks various questions pertaining to key terms that help to unpack the data namely concepts, categories, properties, dimensions, phenomena, causal conditions, context, action / interaction, intervening conditions and consequences.

Applying these terms to the data leads to the development of a story (mini theory) for each category which described the conditions under which certain phenomena occur, the context in which they occur, the strategies people use to deal with them, those things that prevent the desired action from occurring and the consequences of the actions taken (Strauss and Corbin 1990). This then leads to the development of the grounded theory.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

The research framework described in this chapter is what informed the philosophical and pragmatic approach to my research. A Constructionist epistemology maintains that people construct meaning in their lives through their interactions with other beings or environments.

Interpretivism states that there is no set formula for understanding human experience. Although there are certain behaviour patterns one can draw from human experience, these do not apply to all people and in all cases. One has to understand the experience of the individual in order to understand their situation.

While positivist research aims to analyse as large a sample as possible in order to show scientific rigor through the *number* of times an experiment is replicated, the research methodology and methods I have used that are based on an interpretivist perspective would rather aim for a smaller, manageable sample that can be used to extract as much *depth* of information as possible. The key attribute of this type of methodology is the richness of the data collected. This makes allowance for one set of questions to lead to another and yet another, until the researcher is satisfied with the quality and depth (richness) of data collected.

Therefore, in order to understand a problem one must develop a better understanding of the relationships between the variables of the problem. The way to understand the situation is to learn more about it. This chapter described the philosophical reasoning, methods and methodologies used to further understand the situation, and chapter 5 takes an in-depth look at how this research framework is applied in the research study.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Application of Research Framework**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In order to answer the research questions, an evaluation was conducted of the SKEP CU. Various methods were applied in response to the different methodologies. The data gathering methods provided a range of views on the effectiveness and impacts of coordination. Data gathering was participatory in that program staff and stakeholders were involved in designing the research questions, they all contributed information and their feedback from the research process was integrated into the writing up of the results.

Individual interviews were held with Technical Working Group (TWG) members and sub-regional coordinators. Small workshops were held in each sub-region with the sub-regional coordinator, advisory committee members, and at least one project proponent per sub-region. The review of documents provided background information on how the program was established and the ins and outs of how it was being run. In addition to the document review, a series of questions were directed at the program manager and CI-SA director to help acquire background information on SKEP – both formally and informally. A list of questions was also directed at the CEPF Africa grants director via email, since she was based in Washington DC. See Appendix 3 for the lists of questions.

Grounded theory methodology informed the data analysis. Grounded theory holds that one does not begin with a theory or hypothesis and then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and matters relevant to that area are allowed to emerge. The emergent information is in accordance with the perspective of the people or organization in the situation and is developed into a theory.

## **5.2 Data gathering**

Fieldwork was conducted over a period of three months. During this time all field offices were visited where data was gathered both formally, as described below, and informally, through ad hoc discussions. Refer to appendix 2 for the theoretical underpinnings of the data gathering methods.

### **5.2.1 Observation**

The ethnographic inquiry made during the data gathering process looked mainly at issues of language and anything that was seen or sensed that could add meaning to the spoken words. Observation data was used to develop and test theories about issues that arose from the evaluation process.

Observations were made about the language that people used. Jargon and acronyms were commonly used. I was fortunate in that I had a good grasp of the language since I work in the conservation sector. The language tended to centre on matters such as conservation principles, project development, capacity building, socio-economic development and municipalities.

A diary was kept during the fieldwork and notes were made during the interviews about those issues that stood out most. After each interview a quiet space was found to look over the notes again and make additional comments on what was seen, experienced and what was said.

### **5.2.2 Convergent Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with, per sub-region, the coordinator, at least one sub-regional advisory committee member, at least one project proponent as well as three members of the TWG. The interviews were unstructured and open-ended. Each one was recorded on audio cassette and additional notes were made by hand. It was agreed with the

interviewees that the interviews would remain confidential and that they would speak openly and frankly. Interviews were conducted by interviewees being asked a very broad question: “Tell me about your experiences of being part of the SKEP Program?” People were kept talking for anywhere between 30 and 90 minutes by being asked follow-up questions, depending on how much information they could provide. Two interviews with the Namibian coordinator and assistant were done telephonically because it was too expensive to meet them in person. The results were recorded by hand. Other interviews were transcribed from the audio tapes.

By using this method, stakeholders were able to raise the issues themselves, rather than me presuming what issues to raise. Subsequent interviews were compared to highlight recurring themes. Through this process I became more and more familiar with the issues and was able to probe for more follow-up questions in the interviews that followed. Where similar views were raised, disconfirming evidence was sought in subsequent interviews as a means of verifying the information. Where dissimilar views were raised, I probed for explanations in subsequent interviews.

### **5.2.3 Workshops**

The Snyder evaluation process was used to gather information in a workshop setting. It also helped to structure the actions that were recommended to the client as a result of the evaluation. The Snyder process was used during the stakeholder workshops to evaluate the SKEP coordination functions. The model was adapted to suit the time and resource limitations of conducting the evaluation.

I only used the process evaluation. I did not use the other two because of time and financial constraints and because it puts in place processes prematurely, namely performance indicators and feedback loops for the system to become self-improving. This was considered premature because the structure and staffing of the SKEP CU was about to change, meaning that the process would need to be redone to suit the new set up.

The process evaluation, as described by Dick (2006; 1997b), seeks to analyse the project and help participants understand how their activities contribute towards their goals. This is done by defining the elements of the Snyder model as it pertains to the project and examining how they are linked to each other. The eight steps to conducting the evaluation are as follows:

- develop ideals,
- define targets,
- compare ideals and targets,
- define activities and immediate effects,
- compare targets and immediate effects,
- define resources,
- compare activities and resources, and
- plan new or changed activities.

Workshops were held for about half a day in each of the sub-regions. I facilitated the workshops using a questioning technique that was developed from the Snyder evaluation methodology. The workshops were attended by the sub-regional coordinators, their assistants, either the program manager or the CI-SA director, at least three members of the local advisory committees and at least one project proponent. The questions put to the workshop participants are listed in Appendix 4. The workshop participants were asked to reveal what they initially thought the sub-regional coordination teams (sub-regional coordinator and assistant) were supposed to do on a daily basis to fulfill their role as coordinators and assistants. They then indicated what they actually saw them doing to achieve coordination and the mismatches between expectations and on-the-ground actions were noted and discussed. Recommendations were made on how to improve problem areas. The Participlan© facilitation technique and materials were used to facilitate the workshops.

At each workshop participants sat around a table and each were given a sheet of flipchart paper, blank cards and kokis. In developing the *ideals* element of the Snyder model, people were asked to draw on the flipchart paper what they think the ideal situation is – what the coordination unit ideally should be doing. Thereafter, each person explained their drawing and summarized its central theme in writing. All the written cards were put onto a sheet of paper that was stuck to the wall.

In defining the *activities*, participants were asked to write on cards what they actually saw the coordinators and assistants do on a daily basis. One activity was listed per card. I collected the cards and put them up on a large sheet against the wall, with the group calling out whether each card was a new idea or part of an emerging theme or cluster. The method of each person writing on a card, rather than calling out answers, ensures their anonymity. In addition, I collected all the cards and shuffled them before putting them up on the sheet. It allows those who normally do not speak in workshops to get their thoughts across by writing them down. In the workshop, activities were called objectives. This is because the way in which local participants use the term activities implies finer detail (e.g. writing reports, driving to meetings) which was less relevant to my data gathering needs. Although they still provided this level of detail, most answers were at a higher level of objectives and both proved to be useful.

Activities and ideals were matched up to indicate which activities contribute towards which ideals, which activities do not match up to any ideals and which ideals are not linked to activities. Although matches were regarded as successes, discussion was had about further considerations. The mismatches were discussed in more detail and solutions were derived for addressing them. It was also discussed whether those mismatched ideals and activities were still important. Argyris and Schon (1996) note that mismatches between outcomes and expectations triggers an awareness of the problematic situation and sets in motion a process to address it. Calling the situation a problem implies that it is a mistake. The problem itself is not a mistake, rather it signals the presence of a mistake.

#### **5.2.4 Document Analysis**

Relevant SKEP documents were collected and read through. They included the CEPF Coordination and Awareness Raising project proposal (the funding proposal and work plan for SKEP coordination), meeting minutes, staff terms of references, and strategy documents. The South African Biodiversity legislation was consulted. Internet and library searches were conducted to find models for coordinating conservation programs, but few revealed the detail required to draw a comparison with the SKEP model. Where the information required was not documented, the questions to acquire that information were directed at the CI staff. Because I was working from the organization's office most of the time, it gave me first-hand insights into the organization and how it goes about coordinating SKEP on a daily basis.

#### **5.3 Grounded theory analysis**

The responses of workshop participants were bundled into themes to reveal a set of central ideas. During the analysis process the central ideas or themes of each workshop were further bundled to form a single set of themes for all the workshops. Those that were too unique to be bundled were left on their own. A similar process of generating central themes was undertaken for the interviews and both workshop and interview themes were combined to form one data set. Pseudonyms have been used to maintain the confidentiality of interviewees.

The section that follows describes the process for conducting the grounded theory analysis and is based on the works of Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Glaser (1992).

### 5.3.1 Concepts and Categories

Concepts are defined as the conceptual labels placed on discrete happenings, events and other instances of phenomena. Categories are defined as the grouping together of the concepts under a higher order, more abstract concept, i.e. a category. To start the grounded theory analysis process, the concepts were drawn out from the interview results and highlighted, as shown in box 1 below.

*“...And the main thing I really enjoy has been the freedom to use my brain and have to try and come up with solutions for concepts and strategic thinking. Our training sessions have been invaluable. Some of the training sessions I thought...some of the days were wasteful. I felt like we could have fit that into two days instead of four days but then the positive of that time together was the team camaraderie...”*

**Box 1. Excerpt from an interview transcript with underlined concepts**

The concepts were compared to one another and those that appeared to be similar were grouped into categories. After various iterations, a set of categories each with its own set of defining concepts was developed per sub-region. In box 2 is an example of a category, “working with coordinators”, that was identified to describe a set of similar concepts that were drawn from an interview and workshop in one of the SKEP sub-regions. Each sub-region had an average of about 15 categories.

### **Working with Coordinators**

- Little communication with other coordinators
- Talk about the program
- Offload frustrations
- Closest to Bonita – relational
- Talks to Cheryl about issues similar to their regions
- Uses Cheryl networks
- Tests ideas with coordinators
- Makes mistakes with them
- Vulnerable with them
- Feels safe to express herself in that environment
- I don't think we've been driven enough to make things happen on the ground
- Team spirit amongst coordinators

### **Box 2. A category with defining concepts**

At this point it became apparent that the categories for the various sub-regions were more or less similar. Because the dissertation aims to provide a biome-wide perspective of SKEP coordination, the categories amongst the sub-regions were combined to form a list of 20 biome-wide categories, which are listed in box 3. The concepts of each category were reviewed in order to remove duplicates between the sub-regions.

Ability to coordinate sub-region
Project development and delivery support
Local capacity to run projects
Awareness raising responses
Coordination of program
Communication with head office
Letter of inquiry reviews
Advisory committees
Capacity building
Support from head office
CEPF and CI Washington
Funding for SKEP
Project implementation support
Staff human resources
Future of SKEP
Overseeing day-to-day operations
TWG
Biome-wide steering structure
Anchor projects

**Box 3. Initial list of biome-wide categories**

While the categories amongst the sub-regions were more or less similar, their defining concepts were not always the same. For example, all the sub-regions had a category labeled coordinator's *ability to coordinate a sub-region*. The category had some underpinning concepts that were similar across all the sub-regions, for example all highlighted *fear of doing the wrong thing*, and *learnt by doing*, while it also had dissimilar concepts where, for example one highlighted *lack of confidence*, and three highlighted *no conservation background*. The advantage of having similar categories is that one can compare 'apples with apples and not apples with oranges'. The advantage of having the underlying mix of concepts is that it enables one to understand the variety of issues underpinning those broad categories. See appendix 5 for the concepts underlying the biome-wide categories.

Analyzing data from a list of 20 categories would have been far too cumbersome and complicated. That is why Strauss and Corbin (1990) recommend having about five to eight categories. I therefore refined the list even further, the result being five categories, as shown in box 4.

Coordinators capacity
Awareness raising and consequences
Program coordination
Project implementation support / anchor projects
Steering structures

#### **Box 4. Refined list of biome-wide categories**

Having defined all the categories, concepts and phenomena, more questions started to emerge: Why is there a fear of doing the wrong thing; why are some coordinators more confident in their abilities than others? In answering these questions, I had to rely on the insight I gathered from all the background documentation, observations, informal conversations with staff and stakeholders, relating back to the workshops and interviews and from my experience of working in the Succulent Karoo region, on various projects, over a period of 4 years. I also took into account the conditions under which the phenomenon occurred in order to answer questions about the data.

### **5.3.2 Causal Conditions**

A phenomenon is the central idea, event or happening that a set of actions or interactions is trying to manage, handle or to which the set of actions is directed. Causal conditions are the events that lead to the development of the phenomenon. From the example in box 5 the central idea around the category, *coordinator's capacity*, is the coordinator's lack of capacity to provide certain coordination services to their sub-region. The phenomenon could therefore be called *coordinator's inabilities*. The event that led to their inabilities, the causal condition, is *insufficient background*. One now has to clarify and be more specific about the coordinators lack of background by identifying its properties and dimensions.

Properties refer to the frequency, extent and intensity of a phenomenon. Dimensions are the location of properties along a continuum. The continuum could relate to the

frequency, extent, intensity or duration of a property. In box 5 for example, one of the factors leading to the coordinators' insufficient background is the little past work experience they have in coordinating conservation programs. Another factor is the low prevalence of appropriate academic qualifications amongst the coordinators to do the work that was required. The third one is about their struggle to understand what SKEP is actually about.

<i>Category: Coordinator's capacity</i>		
<i>Causal Condition</i>	→	<i>Phenomenon</i>
Insufficient background		Coordinators' inabilities
<i>Properties of causal condition</i>		<i>Dimensions of causal condition</i>
Past work experience	Amount	Little
Academic qualifications	Prevalence	Few
	Appropriateness	Little
Understanding of the program	Variability	High

**Box 5. Description of causal conditions and associated factors**

**5.3.3 Context**

The context is the conditions or environment within which the action or interaction takes place. It also represents the specific set of properties pertaining to a phenomenon along a dimensional range. One is given the context when saying “*Under conditions of...*”

<i>Context of understanding Coordinators' inabilities</i>
Under conditions where coordinators' have:
little past working experience, few and inappropriate academic qualifications and a fluctuating understanding of the program, then:

**Box 6. Description of context**

### 5.3.4 Intervening Conditions

Intervening conditions are the conditions that facilitate or constrain the strategies taken within a specific context. They are the broad and general conditions impacting upon action / interaction strategies. Conditions include aspects like time, space, culture, technology and history. Not all conditions will apply to every situation. Box 7 lists the intervening conditions of the category “coordinator’s capacity”.

#### *Intervening conditions*

Distances between coordinators and between coordinators and managers

Poor and infrequent communication with Managers

Not enough time for coordinators to learn tacit skills, e.g. objective analysis

Unrealistic expectations of what coordinators can achieve

#### **Box 7. Description of intervening conditions**

### 5.3.5 Action / Interaction Strategies

Actions / interactions are the strategies people devise to manage or respond to a phenomenon. Strauss and Corbin (1990) note that grounded theory is an action / interaction oriented method of theory building. There is always an action / interaction, which is directed at managing, dealing with, carrying out or responding to a phenomenon as it exists under specific conditions.

Action / interactions also have certain properties. Firstly, it is process-related, evolving in sequence, movement or over time. Secondly, it is purposeful, goal oriented – done for a reason. Thirdly, failed action / interaction is just as important to look at as action / interaction that has occurred. Fourthly, one must also take into account intervening conditions that either constrain or facilitate action / interaction. Box 8 illustrates the strategies for dealing with the phenomenon of coordinators’ inabilities.

*Strategies for strengthening Coordinators capacity*

Coordinators are trained and exposed to conservation industry

Managers assist coordinators with whatever queries they have

Coordinators seek guidance from each other or partner organizations

**Box 8. Illustration of action / interaction strategies**

### **5.3.6 Consequences**

Consequences are the results of an action and interaction. Action and interaction taken to manage or in response to a phenomenon as well as the failure to act, has certain outcomes or consequences. There may be consequences to people, places or things. Consequences may be actual or potential or happen in the present or in the future. Box 9 illustrates this for the coordinators inabilities action / interaction.

*Consequences*

Frustrated staff feeling incapable of doing their jobs

Staff relying on each other when managers are unavailable

Improvement in staff capacity

Greater confidence amongst staff to work in conservation and development sectors

Lessons learnt about the limitations of employing insufficiently skilled staff

**Box 9. Illustration of consequences**

### **5.3.7 The Completed Application of Grounded Theory Analysis**

The complete picture of analyzing the category of *coordinator's capacity* is depicted below. This process of analysis, relating categories to subcategories and finding relationships between variables, was used for each of the five categories that were drawn from the analysis – coordinator's capacity, awareness raising and consequences, program

coordination, project implementation support and steering structures. It was on the basis of this analysis that a story line was developed to provide a narrative of the results of the evaluation. These results are provided in the following chapter.

University of Cape Town

*Category: Coordinator's capacity*

*Causal Condition*

→

*Phenomenon*

Insufficient background

Coordinators' inabilities

*Properties of causal condition*

*Dimensions of causal condition*

Past work experience

Amount

Little

Academic qualifications

Prevalence

Few

Appropriateness

Little

Understanding of the program

Fluctuates

Often

*Context of understanding coordinators' inabilities*

Under conditions where Coordinators' have:

little past working experience, few and inappropriate academic qualifications and highly variable understanding of the program, then:

*Strategies for strengthening coordinators' capacity*

Coordinators are trained and exposed to conservation industry

Managers assist coordinators with whatever queries they have

Coordinators seek guidance from each other or partner organizations

*Intervening conditions*

Distances between coordinators and between coordinators and managers

Poor and infrequent communication with Managers

Not enough time for coordinators to learn tacit skills, e.g. objective analysis

Unrealistic expectations of what coordinators can achieve

*Consequences*

Frustrated staff feeling incapable of doing their jobs

Staff relying on each other when managers are unavailable

Improvement in staff capacity

Greater confidence amongst staff to work in conservation and development sectors

Lessons learnt about the limitations of employing insufficiently skilled staff

**Box 10. Description of the complete grounded theory analysis**

## 5.4 Conclusion

The various methods of data gathering strengthened the validity of the results. The results of the interviews, for example, were compared to the results of the workshops and these in turn were compared with the observations made throughout the research process.

In most cases the interviews with individuals provided richer information than the workshops. This is because the workshops had boundaries of time limits and the presence of other people, while the interviews were almost boundless.

The workshops provided a space for stakeholders and partners to debate and challenge each other's thinking about issues. This allowed for interactive engagement, thereby balancing the straightforward question-and-answer nature of the workshop.

Data was gathered from various sources and it only really made sense when it was brought together and analyzed. The method of grounded theory analysis first breaks down the data and then builds it up again so that it is not just seen as pieces of data or a range of opinions and insights. It displays the data as useful information. It helped to tease out the relationships between people, between people and their work environment and between people and partner or stakeholder organizations.

Chapter 6 describes these relationships, what was useful and what was constraining about them. It provides the results of the grounded theory analysis looking at each of the five categories identified in the analysis.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Presentation and Discussion of Findings**

This chapter reveals the results of the grounded theory analysis. It provides a narrative of the analysis of each of the categories. See appendix 6 for a summary of each category. It also refers back to the literature review to link some of the research findings to the theory.

#### **6.1 Coordination Capacity**

Under conditions where coordinators have little past experience, few and inappropriate academic qualifications, and low levels of confidence, they initially tended to feel frustrated and incapable of doing their work and this impacted the overall program in various ways. The positive impacts are that they brought fresh ideas, untarnished by traditional ways of facilitating conservation action, and that they brought new skills to the areas where they live. The negative impact was that they could not effectively respond to all the requirements of the job. However, as they received training and exposure to the conservation and development sector, their confidence and abilities grew. They became better capacitated individuals who have an improved understanding of integrated conservation and development, stronger administration skills, better communication skills and exposure to global conservation issues.

The Program Manager had no conservation experience and no background of the Succulent Karoo region but had experience in doing community work and is a professional facilitator and trainer. However, because he was mentored by the CI-SA director and because of his dynamic personality, his skills and confidence as a conservation practitioner improved significantly as well.

To strengthen the capacity of the coordination unit, field staff received regular training, a career development plan was developed for each staff member and they were supported

by the central Cape Town office. Despite these efforts, the distance between the field offices and the Cape Town office hindered communication and prevented the kind of regular contact that was required. The communication was sometimes not effective (too little time to have meaningful engagement, for example.) and not frequent enough. Because of the lack of capacity, poor communication and the newness of the program, there were negative implications for the coordination of the program, inadequate follow-ups on the awareness raising component of the program, lack of critical analysis of projects, and uncertainty about the functions of the anchor projects and the steering structures.

## **6.2 Awareness Raising and Consequences**

The awareness raising activities were carried out exceptionally well and this is perhaps the greatest success of the program. People were informed of what SKEP is about and how to apply for funding. However, the support and follow-up activities that stakeholders required were not adequate in that the CU did not have all the skills to address them. That is, people submitted project proposals after they learnt about the program. However, the coordinators lacked the skills to assist people in developing projects, particularly un- or semi-skilled local community members. Sub-regional coordinators were still learning how to develop projects but they also needed to assist people to do so. At the same time, the kinds of proposals coming in were often not in line with the donor criteria. Some stakeholders, and coordinators, had misunderstood what was meant by *conservation and development* and failed to demonstrate how their project would help either conserve biodiversity or provide significant local economic development. Instead, their proposals were often too focused on one or the other aspect. The proposals of local community groups focused too much on socio-economic issues. Because they were more skilled, researchers and scientists were usually more successful in their applications. The program was unclear on what *conservation and development* actually entailed and different stakeholders interpreted it differently.

There are very few conservation and land-use-related organizations in the Succulent Karoo biome and some of the local socio-economic organizations that could have implemented SKEP projects lacked the resources (money, time of staff, etc) to do so. Even the more capacitated organizations struggled because of the seemingly complicated application format and because of confusion about the funding requirements. Some organizations took a year to write their proposals. As a result, very few proposals from or for the benefit of communities were successful yet the funding targeted civil society as the main beneficiaries of the funding. This led to frustration amongst stakeholders, particularly those living in the biome. Some became sceptical of the program, saying that it did not live up to its promises, that it focussed more on biodiversity conservation and had no part for economic development. Part of the role of the coordination unit was to review proposals; however, some coordinators and review committee members lacked the accuracy of information and the analytical skills to review the projects. As a result, the donor spent more time on SKEP than on their other programs to verify information and obtain critical analyses.

The reality is that the time was too short to expect coordinators to have developed their capacity sufficiently to do all the tasks that the job required. Time was too short to expect less capacitated reviewers to know how to do reviews with enough analytical input. The program manager and CI-SA director could not always support the coordinators at the times they were needed due to lack of time and vast distances. The nature of civil society is to expect actions after expectations are created but the lag between planning and implementation appeared to be too long for them. It appeared that way because of the low number of community-based SKEP projects being implemented. In other instances scientists and more capacitated organizations were putting in successful applications because they had the capacity to interpret the criteria and write good proposals.

The stakeholders responded very positively to the awareness raising and the enthusiasm of the coordination staff rubbed off on them. However, the enthusiasm was not followed by enough action. The donor representative became frustrated by the amount of time the program required of her and that she was not getting the kind of reviews and facts she

needed to evaluate project proposals. The coordinators were frustrated because they struggled to help project proponents deliver projects. However, the coordinators eventually felt a lot more confident to work in the conservation and development sector because the experience and training built their capacity greatly.

### **6.3 Management within the Coordination Unit**

There were many challenges that came with coordinating the program and managing the unit. This was largely due to the limited experience of the coordination team, the newness of a decentralised model of coordination in the conservation sector and because the program had just been initiated. There were no case studies from the sector that were known to the coordination team where such a model of decentralised coordination and limited capacity had been implemented. They were therefore largely operating on a trial and error basis but also taking lessons from other existing conservation programs such as the Cape Action for People and the Environment (CAPE) Program and the Sub-tropical Thicket Ecosystem Program (STEP).

The program tended to operate in an environment of uncertainty. The planning and management of SKEP was flexible but it needed more firmness and stability. Advance planning was lacking and things often happened at the last minute with decisions changing at the drop of a hat. This gave stakeholders and staff an impression of uncertainty. Communication was sometimes unclear and confusing. Processes sometimes moved too quickly for people to understand what was happening but in other instances too slowly to the point where people thought the program came to a stop. Overall, the management of the program lacked stability and changes to plans were too frequent.

Expectations regarding what the coordination unit could achieve were sometimes unrealistic. The coordinators were given a great deal of freedom to coordinate the program in their sub-region as they saw fit but they struggled to do this in the beginning and stakeholders tended to be confused about their (the stakeholders') role.

The CI-SA head office and coordinators were not coordinating the program alone. They set up committees to help guide them. There was a Technical Working Group (TWG) to provide strategic guidance and advice to CI-SA on how to coordinate the program. They focused primarily on matters pertaining to institutional structures and issues of partner organizations, donor relations, political dynamics in the program and how to manage crises that arose.

The expectations and constraints of CEPF and CI-SA's Cape Town office sometimes resulted in stakeholder decisions being overruled, however CI-SA sometimes failed to communicate these clearly and to deal with the institutional issues in time to prevent them from negatively impacting programmatic outcomes.

Sub-regional advisory committees were established in each of the sub-regions consisting of stakeholder representatives from the region. They provided local strategic advice and reviewed project proposals. A scientific review committee also reviewed proposals and gave more in-depth scientific advice. The local coordinators from each of the sub-regions coordinated reviews and other activities locally.

The decentralised model gave stakeholders and partners a platform to raise concerns and provide input into the program. There were feelings of ownership of the program amongst some of the stakeholders and partners because of the degree to which they were involved and because of their improved understanding of biodiversity conservation. The sub-regional offices were local nodes for anybody to find out about the program and how to apply for funds. The program improved local capacity for conservation coordination and implementation.

Although there was frustration amongst stakeholders and partners around the lack of capacity in certain aspects of coordination, the global conservation community has learnt that coordination at a decentralised level can generate local support more effectively than centralised coordination.

## 6.4 Project Implementation Support

The structures for implementation of the program strategy lacked clarity and there was uncertainty amongst stakeholders about how this would roll out. It appeared that the coordination unit had no clearly defined strategy for setting up and implementing anchor projects or for supporting proponents in project implementation.

This was also the case under conditions where the criteria of CEPF for approving funds was not clearly or accurately communicated to stakeholders and project proponents by CI-SA, who acted as mediator between the stakeholders and CEPF. Some project implementers had a very good experience of receiving support from the CU and the donor. Their questions were answered promptly because of the accessibility of the coordinators and assistants.

The anchor project that was most advanced felt that their expectations of receiving support from the coordination unit were not always met. When support was received, communication was not clear enough as it came from both the Cape Town office and the sub-regional coordinator, sometimes clashing.

To get around these problems, the sub-regional coordinator and the anchor project coordinator tried to work things out by having regular meetings to streamline communication. However, when that did not work, they eventually resorted to working separately on their own. The program manager and CI-SA director agreed not to confuse communication and decided to channel communication through the anchor project coordinator. However, they failed to adequately inform the sub-regional coordinator of this new arrangement, causing further tensions.

Poor communication between the program manager and CI-SA director and between the anchor project coordinator and sub-regional coordinator continued to confuse things for the anchor project. Personality clashes between the sub-regional coordinator and anchor project coordinator in this sub-region and another caused further tensions.

As a result, the anchor project coordinators were frustrated as they could not get proper information from the CU staff. There were also frustrated sub-regional staff who struggled to maintain proper communications and a good working relationship with the anchor project coordinators.

## **6.5 Steering Structures**

The challenges around the advisory structures related largely to the CU's lack of providing clear direction and guidance as to how the program should unfold. There was a lack of assimilating advice from steering structures and using that to take the program and CU to the next level.

This was under conditions where advice given to the CU by the TWG members was seldom implemented or sufficiently explored due to the CU constantly coming up with new ideas. The CU did not stick to a plan long enough to test whether it could work. The TWG meetings were not formal enough and not representative enough of the institutions that should have been involved at that level. The CU members on the TWG tended not to follow up on tasks agreed upon at the TWG meetings.

The sub-regional advisory committees were not all being used to their full capacity in terms of advising the CU on how to move forward. However, some members of the committees were engaged extremely well in terms of guiding the program locally. Most committee members were dedicated to their role in the process and wanted to make meaningful contributions. Traditionally anti-conservation sectors like mining were working with the SKEP program because of the successful awareness raising achieved through local committees.

The committees were not formally reporting to higher level structures that could hold them accountable and the program was not properly embedded politically to give it a strong enough political footing in South Africa, which was necessary because bioregional conservation programs are a national priority under the Biodiversity Act.

The sub-regional coordinators continued to deal with their advisory committees in the manner they thought to be most appropriate and were fairly successful in doing so. The CU, on the other hand, failed to adequately deal with the problems raised by the TWG, namely tightening up the systems and procedures in running the program, engaging provincial and national government more and planning for future changes such as finding an institutional home for SKEP and giving staff advance notice as to their job stability (all were on short-term renewable contracts).

However, the program manager and CI-SA director in the CU are naturally creative people who are very innovative and therefore are prone to changing decisions. Provincial and national government are also slow in moving into action and this has caused delays in formally securing their support for the program. Greater efforts were put into securing local government support since municipalities were much more accessible than higher level government structures.

The consequences of this were insecurity amongst staff about whether their contracts would be renewed and what other employment options were available within the program. The TWG members were frustrated because they could not see the results of their inputs into the program due to the lack of upholding decisions. The members struggled to keep up to date with program developments because of its constant evolution. TWG meetings were irregular and minutes were not properly kept, and so decisions taken at previous meetings could not effectively be tracked.

## **6.6 Reflection on the Results in Light of the Literature**

Walters and Holling (1990), Lee (1993, 1999) and Brunckhorst (2000) support and encourage the practice of learning by doing for the reasons highlighted in chapter 3 as did the SKEP CU. The CU acknowledged their uncertainty from the onset. The authors also note that one of the biggest challenges with this approach is to communicate uncertainties in a manner that will enable people to make informed choices and seek out creative solutions. The authors also note that the trial and error approach (which the CU used) is

not deliberate enough in terms of planning what to learn about. Also, trial and error does not necessarily seek out all options before deciding which one to test. This observation is perhaps at the core of why staff struggled to understand and engage effectively with what they were expected to do. The processes of testing and changing to new methods when others did not work, as creative as they were, did very little to empower those who were still trying to establish why the prior methods were abandoned. It also did not reveal what exactly was being tested and how the results would be dealt with. A framework for learning was lacking.

According to Day (1999), people need to be made intelligent in order for them to make decisions. The coordinators, and to some degree, the program manager, were not made intelligent enough to meaningfully contribute towards the discussions about testing different coordination methods and management styles. One could therefore say that they lacked requisite variety as described by Ashby's Law of Requisite Variety in Espejo and Harnden (1989). Because they lacked requisite variety, namely sufficient intelligence to respond to disturbances in the system or sufficient information to direct the system, they were not able to define a space for experimentation that was conducive enough to their level of understanding at that time. The boundaries for the testing grounds were blurred, which is why they often felt out of their depth. There appeared to be no limit to the amount of new information they needed to acquire in order to meaningfully engage – an overwhelming thought that can easily lead to feelings of disempowerment and inadequacy. While those who had greater requisite variety had a better understanding of what were more strategic routes to explore and what were not.

Who decided when something was not working adequately and what were the criteria for making such decisions? Those who were intelligent enough (mostly through their formal education and work experience) were those who sat on the highest level of decision making, the TWG, even though that process of decision making was not formalised in that the SKEP managers were not bound to it. Nonetheless this is where intelligence was concentrated.

Apart from the coordinators and assistants lacking requisite variety, the constituencies they were tasked to engage with for the purposes of informing them about developments in the program and assisting them in developing proposals also lacked requisite variety and were counting on the coordinators and assistants to keep them informed and provide technical assistance. Because the staff struggled to understand all of this, so too did the stakeholders.

Younge and Fowkes (2003), in describing the lessons gathered from developing the CAPE, talk about the leadership of such programs needing to be strategic and providing direction. Stakeholders and staff wanted strong direction from the program leadership because of their unfamiliarity with this new program. However, the program leaders wanted information and guidance from the staff and stakeholder forums so as to operate from accurate information and to follow a participatory process. All parties wanted to contribute towards making the program a success but the ones with the most requisite variety to operate were not providing strong enough direction to all concerned.

The CU was made up of a large number of staff (ten in the field and four in Cape Town), so there was no lack of staffing. However, the field staff were not able to keep up with the demands placed on them for reasons mentioned above, leaving the managers to react to situations where gaps in field staff's work needed to be filled. This resulted in some of the core functions of the managers falling behind. The donors wanted to see the results of their investment in the form of appropriate projects being developed and so this took precedence over longer term tasks that management needed to fill, most notably building partnerships with government agencies and putting in place systems for long term hosting of the SKEP CU. The managers therefore made a strategic choice to spend more time supporting field staff but this led to institutional developments and partnership building falling behind and poor handling of staff contracts.

If there had been more requisite variety, responsibilities could have been more widely shared and the managers would not have been burdened with extra work. Staff, partners

and stakeholders would have known what role they could play and feel confident enough to do so.

There was inadequate strategic planning before the program moved from the planning to the implementation phase. Greater efforts should have gone into preparing a strategy for coordinating SKEP (i.e. managing the program through relevant staff and committees) that all parties could have referred to. Strategic changes that were made would have been recorded and ratified by the relevant committees so that all parties could know about the latest developments. This would largely have improved communication.

Clemson (1984) notes that changes occur more often than formal structures such as committees or task teams meet to address issues. The coordinators and their assistants were dealing with challenges on a daily basis but only had access to support structures, namely their steering committees as well as training and mentoring sessions, on a quarterly basis. Most coordinators developed informal methods, such as phoning their fellow coordinators, committee members, or emailing a scientific advisor, when they struggled to manage things by themselves. They also had ad hoc access to their Cape Town colleagues, depending on their availability. This links to Clemson's point which states that organizations will not achieve those goals that have insufficient feedback loops. An example of this from the research results is where coordinators sometimes struggled to assist organizations to develop project proposals. The feedback they received from their more experienced colleagues was at times not enough for them to understand the situation, because information would have been specific to the request and not taking into account the broader issues around that particular situation. So when the donor received the proposal reviews they were not necessarily up to standard. This led to proposals either being rejected or to numerous changes being made.

## **6.7 Grounded Theory: Impact of Management Capacity on Program Delivery**

The final step of grounded theory analysis is to put all the results together and develop a theory that describes the essence of the research results. The theory is written in such a way that it tells a story of what happened.

The limited capacity of individuals coordinating the program and the lack of administrative systems in place led to the coordination unit lacking in certain critical management and coordination skills. As a result, although sub-regional coordinators created wide-spread awareness about SKEP, the CU was ill-prepared to manage the expectations of stakeholders and partners that resulted from the awareness raising activities. Staff members were trained in order to boost their capacity but the time they needed to respond to requests was too short, given that they were still learning, and some of the skills required cannot be taught just through a training course. Thus the capacity of coordinators to respond effectively and rapidly was lacking. Appendix 7 lists important skills that the study revealed a coordinator should have.

Gaps in management from within the CU led to confusion about the kinds of support that projects could expect to receive from the unit. The CU struggled to effectively communicate what sort of support it was able to provide and what not. This lack of clarity that existed in the CU filtered through to the steering structures. The manner in which steering structures were meant to function and the role of the members was unclear and changed frequently. The structures were therefore unable to provide the effective support to the unit that it greatly needed.

See figure 4 for an influence diagram of the Coordination Unit's grounded theory. It shows the relationships between the various categories that emerged from the grounded theory analysis.

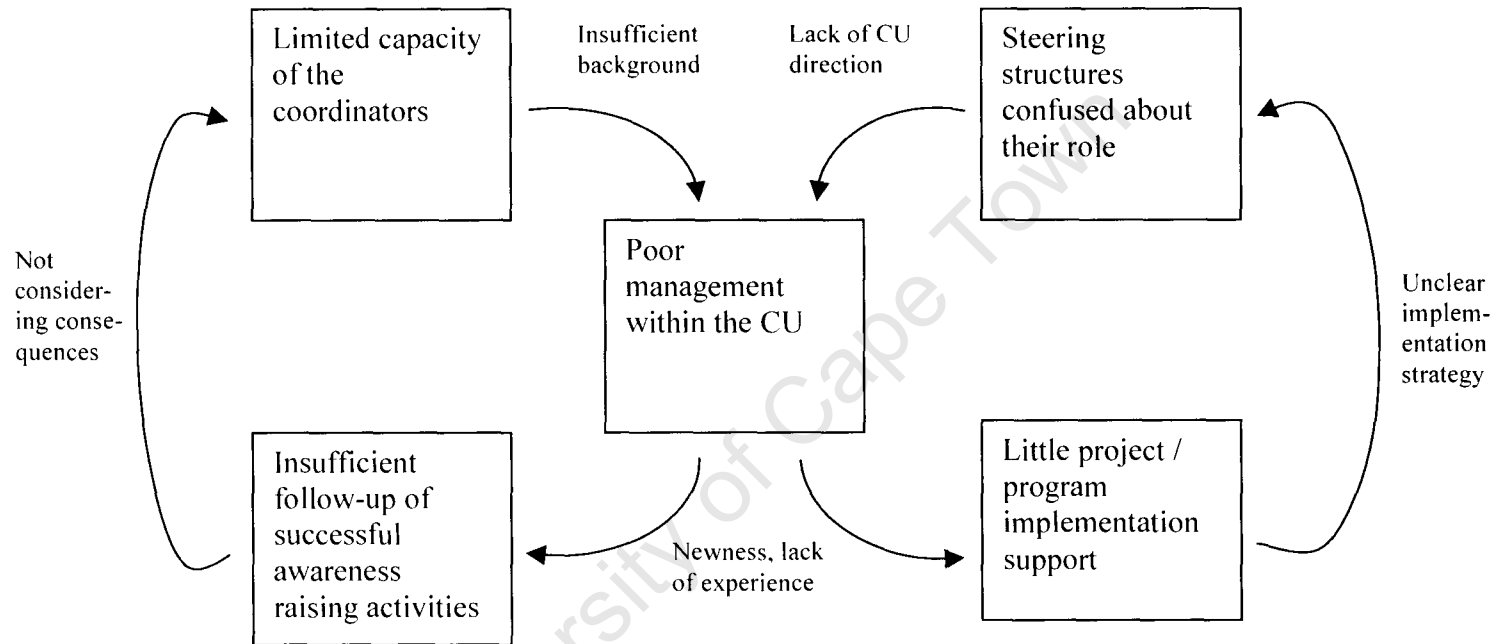


Figure 4: Influence diagram of grounded theory

## 6.8 Conclusion

People involved in the program may have been somewhat aware of the gaps raised in the study but uncertain of how to articulate them or afraid to speak about them. The grounded theory analysis provided evidence or “facts” about the issues. In this way it substantiated the claims that needed to be made. It also revealed that the issues some people might have considered extremely crucial, were not actually hampering the program that negatively and that other more significant issues needed to be addressed more aggressively.

The study revealed that the imbalance of capacity amongst staff was the biggest limiting factor in coordinating the program. There were significantly skewed levels of capacity in terms of skills and abilities and in terms of understanding the way in which donors and the conservation sector operate. This imbalance in information and experience resulted in an uneven balance of power – power not for the sake of dominating but for the purpose of being confident and prepared enough to deliver on expectations raised.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Recommendations for Action**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides recommendations for improving the structure and functioning of the SKEP program. The recommendations are based on a combination of the grounded theory analysis, the application of cybernetic principles as described in chapter 3 and my experience of working in the conservation sector. This chapter also describes actions taken by the client, based on the recommendations made in this dissertation and the evaluation report that was submitted to them. Recommendations for improving a critical part of the program, the project development process, can be found in Appendix 8 as well as some considerations that were suggested to the client for the transition of the host organization from CI to SANBI.

#### **7.2 Recommendations on the Structure and Functions of the SKEP CU**

My presentation of the results to the client was not well received initially. The managers are highly optimistic and enthusiastic people, and the realization that all was not as well as they thought was a great personal disappointment to them. However, upon the presentation of the results to a wider audience of partners and stakeholders, who did not contest the results, the managers came to the realization that significant changes needed to be made in order to save the reputation of the program and do justice to the efforts that hundreds of people have put into it, including CI. It was, therefore, important for the CU to take the recommendations of the evaluation very seriously and actively work towards improving coordination. See table 2 for a summary of the recommendations.

Coordination Capacity	Awareness Raising and Consequences	Program Coordination	Project Implementation Support	Steering Structures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employ a full-time project developer dedicated to supporting people to develop new projects – given that the Coordinator’s contracts will not be renewed</li> <li>• Rely on the wide range of expertise available in order to address technical issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopt a clearer definition of ‘conservation and development’ or ‘sustainable development’ through consensus building with stakeholders and partners</li> <li>• Communicate the funding criteria and its restrictions more clearly to people</li> <li>• Separate the CEPF funding objectives from the 20 year objectives of SKEP</li> <li>• Investigate mechanisms for the SKEP CU to strengthen the capacity of community-based organizations to implement projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More forward planning is needed to anticipate changes in the external environment that can affect the CU and the program</li> <li>• Greater attention should be given to managing expectations and guiding stakeholders and partners as to what they should be doing to support implementation of the program</li> <li>• Communicate changes initiated by the CU more clearly to those impacted by it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and communicate a clear strategy for how the CU will support organizations in implementing SKEP projects</li> <li>• Clarify the differences in coordination responsibilities between the CU and anchor projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The CU is not formally accountable to any representative structure or organization. Structures of accountability must be put in place</li> <li>• Clarity needs to be provided on how the sub-regional advisory committees will be utilized once the anchor projects take over the role of the coordinators.</li> <li>• Greater accountability is needed between the sub-regional advisory committees and the CU</li> <li>• The TWG needs to be more representative of the program &amp; its relationship to the CU must be formalized</li> </ul>

**Table 2: Recommendations made to the coordination unit**

### **7.2.1 Coordination Capacity and Program Coordination**

Before the evaluation was completed, the CU managers had decided not to renew the coordinator's contracts. The current and projected costs of training staff were astronomical and unsustainable and the time it would take them to reach the level of comfortable competence did not meet the needs of the program. Listening to the responses of workshop participants when the evaluation results were presented, but also knowing in hindsight how the coordinators struggled to fulfill the more analytical job requirements, made the managers realize how significant this gap in the unit was. Also, research on systematic conservation planning has shown that operating at a priority area level is the best level for achieving biodiversity conservation targets. (Coordinators were working at a broader sub-regional level.) The boundaries of the sub-regions are broader than the Succulent Karoo biome's boundaries. However the priority area boundaries match those of the biodiversity target areas and hence are more focused.

The sub-regional coordinators and assistants achieved what was perhaps the most valuable action in getting the SKEP program started. That was to increase people's awareness about the biome and its value locally and internationally. It would have been unfair to keep them on in jobs that often made them feel inadequate. It was apparent that one does not learn how to provide a critical analysis of a project proposal or how to systematically engage a project development process by attending a few courses and sitting in on a few workshops. Most importantly, it would also not have been fair to the donors, program partners and stakeholders to provide them with inadequate program support services.

None of the coordinators and assistants contracts were renewed with CI. Individual organizations are now responsible for the implementation of different anchor projects and they have employed their own staff to work on the projects. Anchor projects now operate at the priority area level. Appendix 9 shows the new geographic priorities for implementing SKEP projects. Coordinators and assistants were offered jobs within the new implementing agencies and two of the coordinators accepted. With all the

uncertainty emanating from the CU as to whether the coordinators and assistants would still have jobs after the transition as well as the instability projected by the CU in general, some of them lost interest and sought employment elsewhere.

Letting go of the coordinators and assistants was a huge loss to the program and it appeared from the evaluation that nobody wanted it to come to that, especially people working in the sub-regions. The value that each coordinator and assistant brought to the program is undisputed. Only local people like themselves who knew the SKEP area would have been able to spread such vast awareness and bring to the program the links to organizations that needed to come on board. However, it was evident from the start that they did not have the analytical skills which were perhaps less important at that stage, since the managers possessed those skills and could support their staff in those areas, but were a growing need later on.

The structure of new organizations being responsible for implementing anchor projects is a better one because the burden of employing staff across the entire biome is no longer on the CU. However, arrangements should have been made much sooner for the coordinators and assistants to be employed by the anchor projects so that their invaluable knowledge and insight remained in the program. The CU management failed to plan for the future and rushed decisions were made shortly before the coordinators and assistant's contracts expired. In addition, not all anchor projects were up and running yet and so not all of them could be offered jobs. If the CU had done reasonable forward planning, the disruption that the transition brought to people's lives would not have occurred and the genuine local community involvement that local people once saw through the coordinators and assistants would not now be questioned.

A big part of the reason for slow delivery of project proposals was the inability of the CU to cope with the overwhelming number and nature of tasks they had to fulfil as well as their lack of capacity and manpower to support project development, largely in terms of the donor's requirements. Where proposals were to the satisfaction of local structures, they were not always to the satisfaction of CEPF. The coordination unit, therefore,

employed a project developer under the new SANBI structure who would support the program manager in high level programmatic activities as well as various organizations in developing project proposals. The results have been a reduced workload on the CU, and more strategic liaison with CEPF. CEPF now only has to work through the project developer and program manager around project development and monitoring, making for more streamlined communication. However, some stakeholders are still unhappy that there are no longer the same local offices for quick access to information on SKEP. They now have to forward all their queries to the Cape Town office but can also work through the anchor projects that play a significant role in representing SKEP locally.

The CU manager who worked for CI was transferred to SANBI in the same position, but with more responsibility to the donor and as the person responsible for delivering a successful CU to the host institution, SANBI. CI is no longer responsible for coordination. They now manage one of the anchor projects. The CU manager's biggest task is to conduct future planning for the CU and the program, making sure he keeps in touch with the funding and strategic needs in order to ensure a smooth running program.

The role that partner organizations are expected to play is being redefined and clarified within the SKEP South African Implementation Committee (SAIC). Here all partner organisations are expected to formalise their commitment to the program by signing a Memorandum of Understanding, whereby they agree to work together to fulfil the objectives of the program.

### **7.2.2 Awareness Raising and Consequences**

Poor communication was highlighted as having a significantly negative impact on the program. A plan was therefore developed with the program manager to address this and to put in place a set of policies and activities for communication. An intern was employed to fulfil this task and a CI staff member was sub-contracted to manage and work with the intern to develop a SKEP communications strategy and implement it. The CI staff member has been part of the program since its inception and coordinated its

communications when the program was being coordinated by CI. Her role was to put in place more effective systems for communicating about the program, coordinate the production of new communication materials and train an intern to eventually take over her function. The immediate results so far have been a well-defined communication strategy, an updated website and up-to-date documentation for distribution. The strategy highlights things such as updating the SKEP website, reworking the SKEP brand, hosting a conference for all partners and stakeholders to showcase their contributions towards the program, deadlines for distributing minutes of meetings and protocol for keeping up-to-date with the Namibian SKEP CU.

### **7.2.3 Project Implementation Support**

Project implementation support improved after the program shifted to its new host, SANBI. The responsibility of supporting field staff was no longer there and so the program manager could focus more attention on getting political / institutional support for SKEP from key government agencies and other organizations. Political support was a key factor missing that could better be sought by the program manager who had more political clout to deal with politicians than anchor project implementers. A SKEP conference was held a year later where some of the various politicians and leaders of SKEP partner organizations signed a memorandum of understanding to confirm that they would support SKEP projects in unblocking deadlocks that arise at the higher levels.

Lower level support to projects is received from the program manager and project developer who have quick and streamlined access to CEPF staff in Washington. CEPF has improved their online project management system, making it easier for CU staff to monitor and retrieve data about project progress. The project developer also reviews all project reports and in so doing is able to have regular updates on project progress and knowledge of problems that projects are experiencing. The system raises warning flags so that the unit can detect problems that need to be addressed.

#### **7.2.4 Steering Structures**

The various committees have all evaluated their purpose as part of the program and in some cases, redefined their structure. The sub-regional advisory committees have changed to information sharing forums and are now chaired by the anchor project coordinators. They felt that because they are more of advisory structures than decision making bodies, they would rather not be called committees. The information sharing forums are now a platform for keeping stakeholders up to date on SKEP and a place for project implementers to share information about the progress of their projects to local audiences.

A highly significant change in SKEP structures has been the establishment of the SKEP South African Implementation Committee (SAIC). The program now has a stronger, more legitimate line of accountability than before. The most senior member of each of the partner organizations, such as government departments, conservation agencies, district municipalities and anchor project organizations sits on this committee. This is the highest level of decision making in the program. The Namibian SKEP coordination unit sits on this committee as a non-voting member. The SAIC does not have an executive committee and members need to be elected once there are enough signatories to the memorandum of understanding. The TWG still plays an advisory role to the CU. The anchor project coordinators who are also the chairpersons of the local information sharing forums are meant to represent the local information sharing forums on the SKEP SAIC.

Figure 5 depicts the new structure of SKEP.

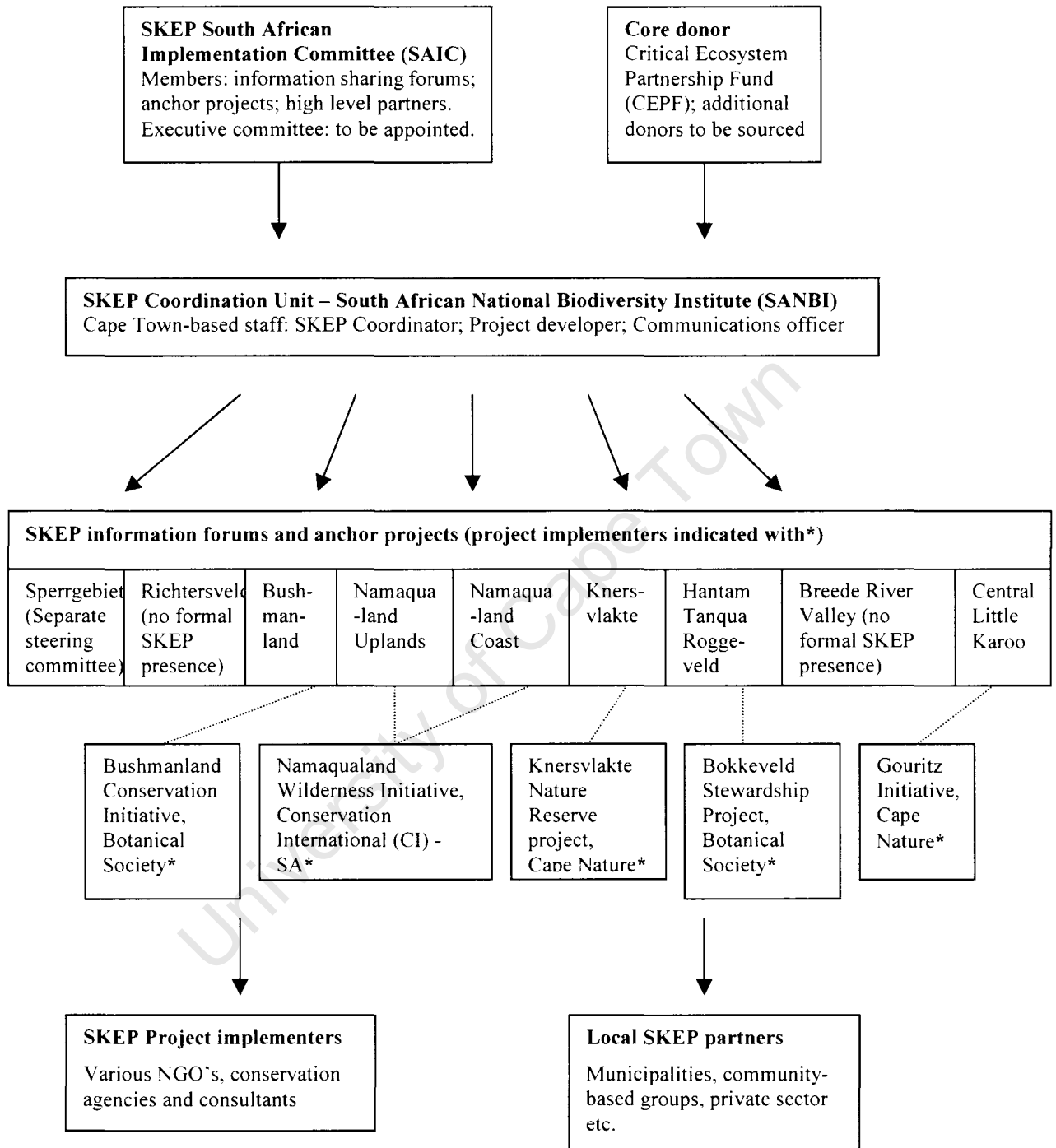


Figure 5: New SKEP structure

### **7.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

A significant amount of qualitative data has been gathered to support the results of the CU evaluation. Insights have been provided on how the management of the CU can be adjusted so that its core function of coordination can be improved. The next step would be to conduct an evaluation of the program and establish links to the results of the coordination unit's evaluation. This is because success of the coordination unit's activities would be reflected in the outputs of the program. The results of SKEP projects would need to be assessed for whether they are on track towards addressing the core issues as identified in the SKEP strategy. It is the responsibility of the SKEP CU to uphold the vision of SKEP by ensuring that the activities of the program are in line with the vision of the program.

Once this has been completed, a monitoring and evaluation system should be put in place for the program. Current monitoring of the program is limited to the donor's requirements; however, there are targets specific to the biome that also need to be developed. This will serve as a reminder that no matter what other donors come along to fund the program, it will not be steered in a different direction that narrowly meets just the targets of the donor. The monitoring and evaluation system should be developed along with the CAPE program and other South African bioregional programs to avoid duplication of resources.

### **7.4 Conclusion**

Recommendations were made about the structure and functions of the CU and its broader support structures. The changes that were needed in functions determined the changes that needed to be made to the structures. In essence, recommendations were made that would improve the relationships within and between different entities within and outside the CU. The start of the CU implementing some of the recommendations was at a biome-

wide workshop where all stakeholders were invited to listen to and provide inputs into the results of the evaluation and where the CU explained what will happen when it moves from CI to SANBI. Here people reflected their willingness and commitment to maintaining and improving the coordination of the program.

It was inspiring to see some of the recommendations implemented and to be part of that process. It was equally disheartening to see some of them fall by the wayside, particularly during the transition phase. I have, however, since joined the CU as the project developer and am making some headway in supporting them to gradually increase the effectiveness of coordination. The unit was in great need of additional capacity and having conducted the evaluation, the issues that needed to be addressed were foremost on my mind. So, while the rest of the unit needed to carry on running the program on a daily basis, I was able to come in from a bird's view, highlight gaps in activities and objectives and provide overall support for improving coordination.

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## **Chapter 8**

### **Critical Reflections and Conclusion**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides some of my insights into the research that was done for this dissertation. It reflects on the research questions and various stages of the research process – what did and did not work and how people responded to my engagement with them. It also discusses the content of the research topic, highlighting new insights and questions that came to bear. It concludes with a final conclusion to the dissertation and revisits some of the research questions.

#### **8.2 Reflection on Data Gathering Processes**

It was interesting to note the different points that people raised during the interviews – the issues that they chose to highlight. Some spoke very critically about the program and linked the program objectives to the role of the CU. For example, people noted that there was insufficient emphasis on meeting people's socio-economic needs within the framework of conservation than was initially purported during the SKEP planning phase. As a result, local stakeholders were losing favour with the program since many such project proposals (with strong socio-economic objectives) were rejected. People felt that they had been misled, that they were made to believe that their welfare needs would be met so that CI could acquire the local support it needed for the program in order to acquire the funding for it.

Other people that were interviewed spoke less critically about the program itself and emphasized the administrative and management issues of the CU. Coordinators felt that they were not getting enough moral support at times from the CU and that

communication amongst them was sometimes confusing. They kept their concerns to internal issues and did not make strong links to programmatic needs. A few people placed more emphasis on the conservation imperatives of the program and did not link it to the socio-economic needs.

These distinctions can be related to the different backgrounds of people, those that were more in touch with and exposed to the hardships of previously disadvantaged communities and those who were not. They, therefore, view the world through different lenses and place importance on different things insofar as life experiences have taught them.

As for the workshops, some groups provided more depth of information and got into discussions about the program's shortfalls, particularly around the lack of integrating with socio-economic issues. Others stopped at what they saw the coordinators doing in the region and where the gaps in their activities were. This was partly related to the nature of the work people were doing. Those who were just implementing a project had less knowledge of the broader program, while some municipal officials for example who were concerned about the broader development needs of their municipal areas were more critical of the program.

The program and the CU could not be completely separated from each other, even though the evaluation focused on the CU. The impact of the program is in many ways a reflection of the work of the CU. The CU's prerogative is to ensure that the program strategy is implemented.

### **8.3 Reflection on Systems Theory and Action Learning**

The paradigm that informed my research is systems theory. The application of systems theory is demonstrated throughout the dissertation – in the philosophical approach, research methodology and in the data gathering and analysis methods. The key element

demonstrating systems theory is the interrelationships between variables of the systems discussed. It was insufficient to simply understand what the variables were and what the problems were with each. It was more important to understand how the different variables were supporting or constraining one another because processes cannot move forward if they happen in isolation of those things that can or do impact it. They need to interact with each other and hence the focus on interrelatedness.

Action learning allowed for a systematic approach to conducting the research. After each set of actions I paused to reflect on what I had just discovered or done (e.g. facilitating a workshop) and noted what was good and unsuccessful about it. This provided new information which led me to adjust my thinking around a particular issue or my approach to interacting with a situation. With this enhanced understanding I would then engage the situation again, reflect and adjust my thinking and actions. This is a cyclic process that follows a deliberate pattern, thereby making it systematic.

I ensured that all stakeholders were included in the action learning process. Both research colleagues and staff of the CU were invited to provide insights to the research methodology and outcomes.

Adopting a learning approach was critical to my understanding of the research situation because it is only when I was open to learning that I discovered new information and only new information can solve a problem, not old. The action research approach was useful in facilitating my learning about the research situation. My understanding improved after each cycle and each cycle led to new questions to uncover and thus grew my desire to know more and my ability to uncover more. Asking the right questions was also very important. My growing understanding of the program helped me in this regard but my experience of working in the conservation sector and with local communities provided additional hindsight.

Smith, Thorpe and Low (1991) highlight two drawbacks of action research, which could also be applied to action learning. The first is the difficulty of coming to a clear end-point to the research. I found that as I investigated through convergent interviewing and grounded theory analysis, more issues were revealed and new angles came to light on issues already revealed. This was extremely exciting in terms of developing a deeper understanding and in terms of my learning. However, it was virtually impossible to stop the information from flowing. I was in the client's office each day or in the field, talking to their staff. I was so engaged that I wanted to learn and grapple with issues more and more. Now that I am working for the client, it is even more difficult to stop doing and thinking in terms of action research. However, for purposes of writing up the research, I had to draw the line somewhere and work out the rest of my learning and actions purely for the organization.

This brings me to the second limitation defined by Smith, Thorpe and Low (1991), the difficulty of drawing out the full experience when writing up the research. Having been so engaged with the research domain, the knowledge I gained had started becoming tacit. I was taking certain information for granted, rather than seeing it as new knowledge. There was a need to make the research results more explicit in the write-up. What helped me remember that there is a distinction was my engagement with SKEP stakeholders outside the client's inner circle and peers who were not involved in SKEP in any way.

#### **8.4 Reflection on Action Research as a Methodology**

The intention was for the research to take on an action research methodology. However, the opportunity to influence change in the organization only came about months later – when the CU was transferred from CI to SANBI. In addition, I was not in a position of authority to enforce such changes since that was the job of the coordinator. When I became an employee of SANBI, my role changed and so did my level of influence. I was no longer as directly involved in management issues at the coordination level but focused mainly on projects being implemented under the program. Another consideration of not

employing an action research approach is that once the transition took place, management issues were no longer as complex. SANBI had its own management systems that the SKEP CU staff adapted to. These were mainly pertaining to administrative management. Although strategic links between SANBI and the CU were still weak, it was the role of the coordinator to strengthen those links. My influence went as far as providing advice while the coordinator had access to and influence at the executive board of the institution.

### **8.5 Reflection on Institutional Issues**

The benefits of the CU moving from CI-SA to SANBI and NNF lie mostly in the institutional differences between the two entities. When CI-SA was hosting SKEP, local coordination fell directly under CI-SA – they employed the coordinators and assistants. CI-SA, therefore, had an enormous responsibility to manage more than ten staff and ensure that they deliver. With the shift to SANBI and NNF, that responsibility has been shared with a group of organizations working in the biome, thereby alleviating the pressure of one institution taking responsibility and producing a wider sense of ownership of the program.

When SKEP started being implemented by CI-SA, the NGO was still putting administration and financial management systems in place. The Cape Town office took a knock when their staff contingent suddenly increased by ten. Between struggling to get their management systems in place and testing new ground in coordination, CI-SA had more than its fair share to deal with. These organizational setbacks played quite a big role in some of the negative perceptions that stakeholders and partners may have had about the program, although they probably would not have classified the problems as organizational. People responded merely to what they saw and perceived.

This is where communication from the CU became pivotal, whether verbal, through actions or through lack of actions. Their espoused theories differed significantly from

their theories in action and this is where the management of expectations became critical. By the CU espousing certain commitments that they were not sure they could deliver on, they took the risk of losing favour with people should they not be able to deliver, and this was the case on several occasions. Even though the CU may have been doing well in other aspects, people identify most with what they as people from the Succulent Karoo region feel is important. Yet the unit management often acted on what they thought was important for the region. The key reason for this gap in understanding was that processes were moved too quickly. The CU felt rushed to produce certain outputs in a particular time. Stakeholders and partners were expected to indicate their commitment to and needs of SKEP, yet many of them did not have sufficient understanding of the program or of biodiversity conservation in general to provide adequate responses – to coherently indicate how SKEP could be of value to them. Nor was the CU articulating how biodiversity conservation could meet the needs of partner organizations, particularly those whose core business was not conservation.

A great deal of the initial, teething problems that were experienced in getting the program started related to a lack of standard policy around administrative issues and around committee structures. What was needed were more deeply entrenched systems so that staff could carry on with their core work and not have to continuously revisit or rebuild these emerging systems. SANBI, being a much larger organization, has provided systems and boundaries for administering the CU. The new CU staff can now focus on the core work such as future planning, strategies for field visits and developing knowledge communities around key themes. The ethic of openness to change and learning has remained in new the unit. With the steering committees having changed to information sharing forums, it remains to be seen how stakeholders adjust to the new set up.

The CEPF funding currently available for SKEP activities is largely limited to biodiversity-based activities. Any proposal submitted to them must show how it contributes towards that objective. To show how it links to economic development has proven to be challenging and a lot more needs to be done to demonstrate that civil society

can benefit from biodiversity conservation through this program. There is pressure on the CU to find additional sources of funding that can broaden the scope of the program. Moreover, there is a need for SANBI to source annual budget from treasury to fund the SKEP CU's core activities. Programmatic funding should support projects that can meet local needs in the biome, which align more closely to the vision of a national entity like SANBI. Currently the program's alignment is mostly towards the donor, CEPF. Fitting local needs of the biome into international donor restrictions has placed considerable limitations on the program in terms of the type of projects people can request funds for, application procedures, reporting, and accountability. SKEP promised to fulfill more needs than its funding conditions could allow. A key lesson is that there should be clear and open communication about the conditions and restrictions of such funding and it should be communicated to the potential recipients very clearly from the onset.

It became evident during the research process how different the overseas donor reality is from local realities experienced by the various recipients of donor funds. This is largely due to the different interests of each and the different pressures that each experiences. The obvious characteristics of these interests and pressures are usually clearly spelled out, while the underlying ones are seldom easy to identify and often emerge quite subtly. The underlying matters require one to read between the lines and look deeper than what the surface reveals. There was a fair amount of such subtlety in SKEP – intentional and unintentional. These were the more interesting issues that were investigated and highlighted in order to holistically understand SKEP, what it lacked, and what would strengthen it.

A big challenge the CU is faced with lies in ownership of the program. SKEP was brought in from outside, a foreign organization from a foreign country. Since the idea of the program was conceived, the CU has been struggling to place ownership within community-based organizations, local NGO's, government structures and so on. The planning phase of the program happened very quickly and there was little time for these entities and even other donors to fully understand SKEP and their role in it. Yes, people

were involved from the very beginning, but to what degree? Were they given enough time and adequate information to sufficiently comprehend what they were agreeing to? One might argue that more time would have meant more money, which was not available, but is this a good enough argument given that people's hopes were raised and that they were led to expect certain outcomes? The donor funds need to be spent within a particular timeframe and there are specific objectives they want to achieve. These were not entirely inline with the local needs because civil society needed a great deal more capacity building in order to be expected to engage with such a complex process. For such a large-scale initiative to be successful in broadly meeting both the donor and stakeholder expectations, a lot more effort and funds needs to go into preparing the ground - helping people understand what they are engaging with and putting the administrative and management systems in place to coordinate such a large number of people and organizations and so much money (US\$ 8 million over five years).

It seems that a great deal of my bias is revealed in this dissertation – my passion for facilitating the development of underprivileged communities through long and short term conservation actions and my experience of how easily uninformed communities are misguided by more powerful institutions. Throughout the research process there were moments of heightened criticism and moments of great admiration. My skepticism has not waned. In fact my ability to think more critically has increased. I can therefore conclude that all those who implemented the program had good intentions, but the realities of the hardships experienced by the rural poor will remain an enigma to the more privileged outsiders, no matter how well we think we understand or how good our intentions to make things better for them.

## **8.6 Concluding Remarks**

This dissertation began with an overview of SKEP and some of the current literature on ecosystem-level program coordination. A research framework was provided, with a constructionist epistemology and an interpretivist theoretical perspective. Grounded

theory methodology was used to analyze the data and facilitate an action learning / action research approach. The methods of data gathering are described in some detail. The method of analyzing the data through a grounded theory approach was explained in a step-wise manner. The results of the analysis and recommendations that stem from it are provided. The dissertation concludes with some reflection and critique of the outcomes of the research.

The aim of this dissertation was to learn valuable lessons about coordinating a large conservation program like SKEP. The SKEP program aims to integrate socio-economic and biodiversity conservation needs through participatory methods of research and implementation of priority actions on the ground. It could therefore be said that in trying to address these socio-economic needs as part of its biodiversity conservation objective, the program aspired to be integrative, and in some ways systemic. In addressing the aims of the dissertation, the research uncovered a range of perceptions that stakeholders and staff had of the program and coordination unit, it assessed what aspects of coordination and management needed improvement, and it searched for ways to make the coordination unit more systematic. As an external evaluator of the coordination unit, I was not in a position to implement the changes. This is something to consider for future action research projects.

The research took place in the context of the coordination unit moving out of CI and into SANBI. It therefore assessed the implications and requirements for transferring the SKEP coordination unit structures and functions from one organization to the other. Five matters were highlighted that the CU needed to take into account during the transition: maintaining momentum of the program; effectively transferring information; clearer communication to staff, partners and stakeholders about the transition; making provision for lag phases during the actual transfer; and re-establishing what they would like the role of the SKEP steering structures, including the Namibian CU, to be.

I undertook to understand the current functions of the CU and the structures that were set up to fulfill these functions. The data analysis arrived at five elements of the CU system that encapsulate the results of the evaluation. These are described in detail and pooled together into a grounded theory and illustrated as an influence diagram. The five elements are: coordination capacity, awareness raising and consequences, program coordination, program implementation support, and steering structures.

The results revealed that much tighter systems needed to be put in place that would improve management of the program in order to balance out the trial and error, learning approach with the necessity of running the program and delivering results. The unit needed to rethink and redesign its approach to building the capacity of staff where they were expected to operate in a complex environment of prompt decision making backed by critical analysis. On the basis of this I was able to provide recommendations for improving and adjusting the functions of the CU to bring about longer term sustainability of the program.

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## **APPENDICES**

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## **APPENDIX 2: Theory of data gathering**

### **i. Observation**

A large part of what a researcher does involves integrating oneself into the systems of the subject matter. According to Alasuutari (1998) observation is not something that is just taken at face-value. Instead, it is something that is actively sought out. Observation arises from the analysis one produces from observing a scenario. He makes an interesting analogy to detective stories like Sherlock Holmes. One has to actively seek out the clues that give rise to particular conclusions.

There is indeed a difference between a participant in a particular scenario and a trained observer. Observation is a science, which requires intense training and rigorous preparation. Patton (1980, p. 124) notes that evaluators should be able to “move beyond ordinary looking to scientific seeing”.

### **ii. Convergent Interviewing**

Convergent interviewing is described here according to Dick (1998). He notes that it is a useful technique to use when one is doubtful of the information to be collected. It allows the interviewees to bring out the issues rather than the interviewer making assumptions about what the issues are.

According to Dick (1998), the process of conducting an interview starts by the interviewer making the person feel at ease and establishing a rapport with her. The interviewer then asks a very broad question and keeps the person talking for about an hour or more – asking follow-up questions based on the information she provides.

A second interview is then conducted with another person and the results of the two interviews are compared. Where there are similar themes raised, the interviewer probes for disconfirming evidence in subsequent interviews. Where there are dissimilar views, the interviewer probes for explanations in subsequent interviews.

This method, adds Dick, combines the benefits of unstructured and structured interviewing. The unstructured interviews collect broad information, but it is difficult to interpret. The structured method allows for efficient data collection. The process is quite structured. The information is systematically analysed. Only relevant information from the previous stages is used in the subsequent stages.

The systematic approach extends to sampling, data collection, and particularly interpretation. This helps to improve efficiency and reduce bias.

### **iii. Workshops**

Workshops were chosen as the means to apply the Snyder evaluation methodology (Dick 2006; 1997b). The workshop method is a quick and simplified way to retrieve a fairly large amount of information from a range of people in one sitting. It brings people together in a room to discuss a particular topic and the session is usually facilitated by a central person. The Snyder evaluation process supports an action research approach. It is primarily a qualitative approach with quantitative measures where appropriate. The basis of the Snyder model is as follows (Dick, 2006):

resources → activities → immediate effects → targets → ideals

Dick's explanation of the model is that: "Resources are consumed by activities which produce immediate effects in the pursuit of targets which are intended to contribute to eventual ideals. The ideals provide the criteria by which the other elements are evaluated prior to improvement (Dick 1997b, p. 2)."

The model seeks to analyse the operations of the project in terms of the 5 elements of the model. There are three phases of the Snyder Model. The first is the process evaluation and it aims to understand how the project operates in order to improve its operation. The second is the outcome evaluation and its aim is to understand how well the project operates in order to communicate it to those who commissioned the study and others. The

third phase is the short-cycle evaluation and it aims to build in processes for ongoing monitoring in order to improve the functioning of the project. The process therefore facilitates a better understanding of how the project functions and how it can be improved (Dick, 2006).

Facilitation plays a key role in a workshop situation. The facilitator maintains order and keeps the group focussed on the topic at hand. The facilitator maintains a fair amount of impartiality so as to allow for the range of perspectives amongst the group to be voiced during the deliberations. It is not for the facilitator to decide which points are worth listening to and which not, or what the group's opinion should be. Rather, it is the workshop facilitator's role to help the group arrive at a conclusion that is desirable to the group or at least its majority. To enable this, the facilitator must pay careful attention to the power dynamics in the group and balance it out during the workshop. Perhaps the most common power dynamic is that some people speak more than others and some say nothing at all. This results in a few people dominating the discussion and the silent voices going unheard. Some of the reasons for the quieter voices are that people are shy to speak in public, some feel overwhelmed by the topic or audience, others feel intimidated by those in the room and others fear being judged or scorned for the opinions they hold.

#### **iv. Document Analysis**

Documents of various types can be analyzed with different emphasis and methods, but there are some basic methods common to all. Dickinson College (2006) highlights fundamental information to look out for when doing a document analysis. These include:

- Why the document was composed (to inform, convince, entertain, etc.)
- What the context of the document is
- Who wrote the document
- Who the intended audience is
- What type of document it is (formal or spontaneous)
- The assumptions and values that permeate the document
- Whether the document is believable
- What can be learnt from the document

### **APPENDIX 3: Questions directed at the client to get background information before doing interviews and workshops**

#### **Questions to CI-SA Director:**

1. What was the role of Ryan<sup>1</sup>, Anthea and Bianca in SKEP?
2. What were the impacts of awareness raising?
3. Do you think the program lived up to the expectation of being one that would implement ICD projects?
4. Around mid-2004, how were stakeholders feeling about the program?
5. In what ways has each coordinator grown since you first started working with them?
6. Having worked with the coordinators during the SKEP process, would you employ people with little conservation and coordination capacity again to do this job?
7. What is your response when coordinators and BCI say they don't get a quick enough response from you on their requests?
8. Are comments valid that SKEP CT too often changes things (operationally and strategically), leaves certain decision making till the last minute and don't stick to decisions? Why so?

#### **Questions to SKEP Program Coordinator:**

1. Who is served by the program?
2. How do they come to participate?
3. Do they differ in systematic ways from non-participants?
4. What is the program intended to accomplish?
5. How were objectives arrived at?
6. Where are the services provided?
7. Are there important differences among the sites?
8. Who provides the services?

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<sup>1</sup> The names of all people involved in this study have been changed to protect their confidentiality.

9. How large is the staff?
10. How is the program funded?
11. How is the program administered?
12. Which programs compete with it for funding?
13. How long has the program been implemented?
14. Have any significant changes occurred in the program recently?
15. Who is the evaluation for?
16. Why is the program to be evaluated?
17. How could the evaluation be most valuable to the primary client?
18. How would you describe previous evaluations of the program?

**Questions to CEPF Grants Manager:**

1. As a donor representative of SKEP, what for you have been the most positive outcomes of the coordination unit thus far?
2. What are the key lessons you have learnt about SKEP in comparison to other coordination units, globally?
3. The times that you came to South Africa and in your other interactions with SA, what were the encouraging and less encouraging aspects of SKEP coordination that you experienced?
4. What aspects of coordination have you found to be less positive?
5. In what ways do you think the donor requirements have enabled and inhibited coordination?
6. What do you think could be improved upon?  
What other points would you like to raise about the coordination unit?

#### **APPENDIX 4: Evaluation workshop questions**

What do you think the sub-regional offices are ideally supposed to achieve?

What have you seen the sub-regional coordination offices doing on the ground?

Which objectives contribute towards which ideals?

Where ideals have no objectives, what should those objectives have been or is the ideal no longer important?

Where objectives are not linked to ideals, what should the ideals have been or is the objective no longer important?

Rate how well the objectives have been achieved so far.

Which are the most important ideals?

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## **APPENDIX 5: Concepts underlying biome-wide categories**

### **1. Local capacity to run projects**

#### *Organisational capacity*

- Starting point – help communities form a legal entity or link them to an NGO
- Namaqualand doesn't have sufficient NGO capacity, only SPP
- Fear that projects will go to big outside NGO's and nothing will be done by locals. Lack of local organizational capacity was identified early in process and should have been addressed then – should have spent more money & time capacitating local NGO's.
- Its elderly and illiterate people that apply.
- Telling them all the ifs and buts in criteria confuses applicants
- Communities loose interest when they see how difficult application process is.
- Communities don't have a track record
- Application process is so difficult even experts struggle to put the LOI together
- Communities are excluded from SKEP process b/c of criteria – application process is difficult
- Are there not existing institutions that we need to be strengthening rather than creating a new one
- CI might say they have capacitated local people and refer to the few coordinators and assistants, which is not accurate.
- Expecting SPP to invest 2 or 3 months of someone's time in developing a project and not really having anyone to hold their hand is not really a valid expectation
- Projects take lots of money and time to develop – people don't get this.

### **2. Awareness raising responses**

#### *Delivering on promises*

- Creating expectations with awareness and then not being able to deliver, e.g. telling farmers they'll benefit but then their ideas get shut down.
- She has a soft spot for the farmers but is level with them, careful not to create false expectations.
- Unrealistic promises were made to locals that couldn't be met – made program negative to farmers.
- Too much enthusiasm in beginning and not enough strategic thinking.
- Big bang
- There's been lots of awareness raising but no economic development
- Went to the many people to assess their response to SKEP – want to conserve but have other needs;

- Locals saw SKEP as just throwing away lots of money – having meetings and meetings and nothing happens.
- Show the people actions and then they will start to get interested.
- Don't have buy-in from civil society
- Participation has been scaled down to experts

#### *Awareness created*

- People quickly took note of SKEP
- Local people were feeling that conservation was becoming accessible to them too.
- Lots of awareness was created about SKEP
- Biodiversity day for local community with SANParks.
- Praise for what SKEP is doing
- Lots of visits from local people and tourists to sub-regional office
- People now want to do conservation, they are starting to listen and work together but the actions still need to be seen.
- Show the people actions and then they will start to get interested.
- People know about SKEP and people want to be part of it
- From an awareness point of view its been very successful so far
- On-the-ground presence of the SKEP staff and offices has really helped to generate support for continued awareness of conservation issues
- While they have been great on outreach and stakeholder awareness
- Rietpoort incident of fraud gave program bad name in S Namaqua.
- People have the wrong assumption of what SKEP is about. They think it's just a project that's running its course.

### **3. Coordination of program**

#### *Cost of coordination*

- There's been a huge investment in coordination and I don't feel its paid off - We needed to be tightening up as we went along
- Coordination Unit should be leaner.
- Fewer people on board who are more capacitated, not people whose capacity still needs to be built.
- This would make the CU less expensive.
- Current set up has a very large staff with lots of human resources issues
- It should be something between CAPE, which is highly centralised, and SKEP, which is highly decentralised. It should be more task-focussed, rather than capacity building focussed.
- There are lots of places to get socio-economic funds but there's only a little money for conservation. We must use it responsibly.

### *Analytical thought*

- Coordinators provide solutions
- My strategic thoughts change
- Strategic thoughts change as you get more information - not helpful in taking it forward
- Needs help making strategic decisions
- Difficult to connect with Anthea – sees Catherine as shallow. Catherine avoids her b/c she doesn't know what to say to her. Catherine feels Anthea sees her as a failure b/c she hasn't delivered on certain areas but those areas aren't her strong points. Not her fault b/c they weren't told from the start what was expected of them. Feels particularly bad b/c Anthea asked her to do the job.
- Anthea gave strategic inputs mostly at quarterly training sessions.
- Anthea feels she wanted to spend more time with each coordinator but she was limited in time available (50% of her time)
- SKEP CU local offices do not have the capacity that other CU's do
- Despite the massive amount of training and inputs that has gone in the SKEP staff, that even several years of training still has not resulted in the type of analytical and evaluation skills that are necessary to perform the coordination function.
- What it shows is that analysis, writing, diplomacy, scientific knowledge, etc. are skills that do take more time to develop - and that although so much progress was achieved, there is still a very great need for better skills in these aspects of the job.

### *Freedom to coordinate*

- Range to do stuff
- Freedom to use my brain
- Pursue my strengths
- Not worry about my weaknesses
- Having ideas
- Freedom to do things my way here
- Recognising the uniqueness of the area
- Went to meetings that were not strategic enough
- I thought it was the right thing to do and realised afterwards that it wasn't
- Want a bit more accountability
- Could have saved a bit of money and time
- Phone call from Ryan to tell him this is what I'm doing
- Challenging her (whether what she does is right or wrong)
- CEPF has really provided a very long leash to the SKEP CU and supported a really innovative structure that has as a result, produced some truly amazing work and results for the Succulent Karoo.

### *Sub-regional importance*

- Without the sub-regional offices there would be nothing, no sub-regional SKEP
- Biggest success was at local level not higher levels, e.g. provincial.
- Some coordinators feel they've been making progress and now they're being cut off – their hard work will be lost.
- Networking and interacting – using Cheryl's contacts too
- Now seeing the fruits of having such a participatory, decentralized planning process
- Network that's been established through the coordinators is really great
- extremely well-positioned to dialog with applicants and grantees
- conduct the essential groundwork amongst stakeholders to generate an appropriate local strategy and buy-in for it
- local presence has been invaluable
- long-term approach to working with the stakeholders in an area
- The on-the-ground presence by staff that people can relate to cannot be underestimated
- On-the-ground presence of the SKEP staff and offices has really helped to generate support for the program
- Other CU's don't have the same presence/communication with their vast regions
- People from the region can communicate very well with the neighbours, and often this helps when people do not trust a new idea or initiative.

### *Advance planning*

- SKEP is not proactive enough – they don't let you know the situation upfront.
- She would have liked to have seen more continuity – not losing the current coordination set up and momentum.
- Plans should have been made sooner to continue coordination, not rush now to save staff jobs and risk damaging relationships that were built with stakeholders.
- Fear that momentum will be lost if staff go and offices close down.

### *Task management*

- It's a very yellow organisation, very
- just more rigorous planning and implementation of the management of the program
- Because Anthea and Ryan are yellow, they find it hard to take decisions and they don't like detail.
- Poor planning
- N Namaqualand Sub-regional office will be more effective if it operated from Springbok – many institutions you can put your fingers on
- Being in Steinkopf, people think they're doing Steinkopf work
- SKEP doesn't follow up on things e.g. Stewardship meeting in Kammieskroon – no clarity on where to from here.
- Land up taking on too much and not delivering
- Letting a lot of people down, b/c basically those coordinators have been strung along

- Anthea's very disappointed that Dorothy's not very supportive but I think Dorothy is asking some NB questions and it does pertain to the management of the program
- They need to add to their team more systematic rigorous management skills
- Because of the types of managers Anthea and Ryan are, they avoid facing the drama until it's so late and then absolute panic stations at the last minute and people's jobs are on the line.
- It would have been great to have communicated better or more regularly with stakeholders in written form so that they could have something to refer to when confusion arose, but we did what we could.
- Anthea's role: linking SKEP Programme to national Initiatives and organizations; keeping the team motivated and headed in the right direction; allowing flexibility for each office to choose its way toward a common objective
- Anthea: Supporting the programme coordinators to also be flexible at the higher and local level was incredibly valuable for such a new type of structure as it allowed us to adapt to the needs
- I don't think we did very well at engaging provincial level authorities in the Northern Cape, but we completely underestimated the time and cost of that task and so it wasn't possible to go to Kimberly as often as we should have

#### *Changes*

- Cutting edge
- Had to reschedule her program to suddenly go to Kimberley
- Changes don't help to get things done
- SKEP says things then changes what they say – they change plans that were accepted in a meeting.
- Chaos that goes with the program
- A lot of energy but its not being channelled so we land up not following through on ideas that are being given on how to go fwd
- SKEP is chaotic because of the frequent changes
- Difficult to assess the program's influence because an idea isn't implemented far enough to see how it works in practise
- Due to lack of good communication, stakeholders and even the Coordinators were often confused with all of the shifts

#### *Response to SKEP*

- The idea around SKEP is quite brilliant
- There are problems, will always be when a program is starting off, but it's good that they [SKEP] came here.
- Too early to say there's evidence that office has made a major impact on region

### *Response to SKEP in Calvinia*

- Program didn't start off well in Calvinia
- Coordination didn't assess how people feel about conservation
- Locals like to see actions which weren't coming forth.
- SKEP came in with a big bang and did nothing for 2 years
- People told coordination they were on the wrong way but they just continued as normal
- Monica picked up the process again after Paul finished off.
- People thought SKEP was a joke and therefore didn't attend meetings. They would have taken it seriously if projects were started.
- Not having had an office in Calvinia at first was a problem - if people want to know something they want to know it.
- Continuity is important – see what happened when Paul and Monica swapped.
- Spent lots of time stamping out fires in the start because she was new to region. She now understands connections and disconnections between people and understands the region better.
- Nobody believes in conservation here and they don't really like conservationists.
- The farmers they must use every cm of their land to be able to make a living.
- Conservation hasn't shown them in the past that there can be benefits from conservation.
- Conservation in Calvinia is about farmers.
- Conservation stood outside these boundaries for many years in a very NB area.
- We're going to have to figure out a way to support the farmers that can sustainably look after the land, especially in drought times.
- Everything is going backwards as a result of those funding shortages.
- Relationships among stakeholders have been built for the first time by Monica

### *Institutional changes*

- Fear that SANBI hasn't bought into working at local level, and won't continue doing local coordination the way coordinators and AC members have. They'll drop the local momentum.
- The way SKEP and SANBI do coordination is very different.
- Operating outside an organization, e.g. WCNCB, gave them neutrality and choice which they won't have once inside a SA organization. They were trusted to make decisions. They won't have this freedom in an anchor project.
- Local momentum may be lost if program goes to entity that is not independent
- Planning of institutional mechanism must be efficient and roles must be clear
- Decide on a institutional option for SKEP and work systematically to implement it
- SKEP coordination structures need to be well thought through and stick to the plan for implementing it
- Clarity on the roles that are required in the overall directing of the program and staff requirements
- Oversight of strategy is needed to be updated & ensure projects stay on track

- 18 months ago asking these questions and now its total panic station and I don't think that's an acceptable way to run a program.
- SANBI wont it wont take scientific inputs because that's the way SANBI programs have been set up
- Committees always marginalize scientists, E.g. CAPE.
- Agrees implementation is not always about achieving targets but one needs to check the trade off and who is going to check it? Scientific community must be there to provide guidance
- Who's representing biodiversity?
- SKEP is the only sub-regional program that has a scientific committee
- What SKEP needs now is to maintain the outreach that has been established through their network, but build up the scientific part (and the other necessary tech skills - such as range mgmt), so that the unit is more rigorous from an academic point of view.
- It is not enough to be able to find it somewhere (noting that only part of the time did the SKEP team get the necessary academic background to make good decisions); it is also essential to be able to understand it and communicate it.
- Great ingredients for a long-term conservation program - local presence, grass-roots approach, and the investment of staff from the region to work in their own region.

#### 4. **Communication with head office**

##### *Staff relations*

- Reporting the same thing to 2 or 3 different people
- Bronwyn has made communication with Ryan easier
- Incident of unhelpful Zinzi. Anthea said she could help with research but she didn't follow through. Kaitlin would have been more helpful.
- Anthea's not always available – frustrating. Therefore now goes through Ryan only. Doesn't talk much to Anthea.
- Works well with Kaitlin and Zinzi
- Likes working with Peter because he sets deadlines and sticks to it.
- Good relations with all support staff
- With Kaitlin there, communication with Ryan has improved

##### *Clarity on Bianca's role*

- Not always clear of who has what role in head office
- Frustrated with Bianca – not knowing what her role was. Knows now and talks to her only about those specific things.
- Doesn't know how Bianca fits in SKEP and how to make use of her
- Bianca denied having taken on a job to support RARE and left them to do it

### *Timing of requests & constant changes*

- Unrealistic deadlines from CT
- Last minute requests from CT
- Last minute requests
- Plans always change
- Difficult for coordinators and others to adapt to changes all the time.
- Impacts of head office's constant changing trickles down to AC and stakeholders (e.g. waiting for strategies; biome-wide vs. sub-regional small grants fund; no answer on municipalities training).
- Communication was good overall

### *Information*

- Don't communicate properly with field staff – piecemeal information
- People sometimes didn't come back to her on things
- Gets frustrated when website isn't updated and she refers people to it.
- Better admin systems in place now.

### *Support with strategic matters*

- Would help if coordinators could see Ryan and Anthea's 2-week planning for the week to be able to do their planning better.
- Will help if they can have bigger picture of what CI-SA is doing
- Management was not always sure where coordination was heading.
- Coordinators need more regular contact with Ryan
- Ryan needs to pay coordinators their full attention when he meets with them

### *Anthea's nature*

- Anthea creates an expectation and then forgets about it – in the meantime one explores her idea then she scraps it.
- Yellow people don't like confrontation but sometimes that's what Cheryl needs to thrash out an issue.

## **5. LOI Reviews**

### *Coordinators*

- Enjoys reviewing LOIs
- Put a system in place for LOI reviews when in Oudtshoorn
- Didn't make it a priority to follow up on a LOI review so review didn't get done.
- LOI review follow ups take a lot of time.
- Difficult to synthesise all inputs.

- CU should provide CEPF with a recommendation that can be moved upon immediately, rather than questioned – lack of analytical insight in reviews.
- SKEP staff have felt nervous about providing definitive recommendations - not surprisingly this is an incredibly difficult task and it requires lots of in depth knowledge - about lots of rigorous topics, many of which people spend years studying.
- Recommendations that were received were often incomplete, incorrect, indecisive, and so on
- The task was too much for people so new to the field of conservation.

#### *Advisory Committee members*

- People have fear of reviewing because they haven't been trained in it. Paul had his own system.
- They don't know how to review the LOI's
- AC members never return LOI reviews on time – excuses
- AC feared reviewing LOI's of people they didn't know
- AC fear of being biased in reviews
- She wishes she had provided training for AC members on how to review LOI's.
- AC members won't review projects outside their area of expertise, even just from a logical point of view.
- Would have recruited more people from different sectors and split them into sectoral review panels, so agricultural LOI goes to agricultural AC.

#### *Process*

- projects review in a process is actually working quite well
- many people get involved in the process
- decentralized approach again
- Have a trustworthy core they send reviews to
- Thandi is very prompt – she implements a project.
- Wishes she had done reviews the way Catherine does it where projects only get reviewed four times of year and AC members get together and discuss LOI's. That way opposing ideas can be dealt with and Dorothy gets a consolidated review.

### **6. Advisory committees**

#### *Nature of AC's*

- Difficulty of telling Advisory Committee I don't know if I have a job next year. Writing other projects so people can trust the process and support SKEP.
- Frustrated with Advisory Committee – non-interactive. Solution is to have one-on-one meetings with them; get them involved by giving them a role to play.
- Just gives information to AC presently
- Usually does her own thing

### *Activities*

- She gives them her work plan periodically but most don't read it so she elaborates
- Catherine doesn't really ask their advice, she just gives them info. She just does what her office wants to do.
- She sees it as optional to ask AC's advice but - if she doesn't know how to do something
- AC meets twice a month – they go thro strategy, discuss projects and ask questions

### *Dedication & influence*

- Dedicated to attending meetings regularly
- Some members are dedicated and they rely strongly on them
- Thandi is Monica's support base
- AC members take their role seriously and show commitment
- AC member glad that what locals want can get into strategy through AC structure
- Doesn't get enough advice from AC
- People come up with good suggestions
- Conrad feels compelled to criticize the current project i.o.t. highlight areas for improvement.
- But Thandi doesn't criticise enough.
- AC member feels he is limited in advice he can give b/c Cheryl is not responsible to AC
- It is not in their terms of reference to review strategy documents
- AC member is glad they can influence processes through contributing to strategy

### *SKEP Influence*

- Having traditionally anti-conservation sector like mining (De Beers) on AC turned it into positive relationship with SKEP where they also promote SKEP.

## **7. Capacity building**

### *Nature of training*

- Training sessions
- Fit into 2 days instead of 4 (because of pressure to do other work)
- Skills
- Capacity
- Management training course
- SKEP experience
- Doesn't like being isolated in a room for a week doing training – gets boring and tiring
- Not always good to just train, sometimes better to expose people to see if training is valuable
- Not always time to test if training is valuable practically

- Training could have been more practical rather than just sitting in a room
- The capacity training Ryan did i.t.o personal skills a lot of personal development skills and presentation skills and very good basic skills that you need in a job but the more specific development stuff is what's going to make this program move ahead.

### *Exposure*

- World conservation
- Global perspective
- Read
- America experience
- Bangkok experience
- World Bank
- High level
- Talk to the Minister in Kimberley

### *Confusion*

- Took Catherine a year and a half to understand what they were trying to do
- She allowed herself to get into a confusing process without clear direction
- Now the pieces are coming together – she understands what they're trying to achieve – this is what Anthea meant. Anthea was communicating clearly but Catherine didn't understand it
- Cheryl was also confused – what the hell are we doing
- Catherine now knows what SKEP is about – establishing protected areas is foremost NB and everything else fits under that. She didn't see that at first

### *Results*

- Boosted confidence
- Exposed to Cheryl's opinion
- Listen to how she'd formulate an opinion
- Catherine's understanding of environmental issues has been broadened
- Better facilitators
- Team camaraderie was built
- Can state my opinion
- capacity of the coordinators has worked quite well
- expectation that all the sub-regional coordinators would be project developers was maybe a bit ambitious
- Ito of project development capabilities that hasn't been all that successful
- It's a mixed success from capacity building side of things – worked for awareness raising and building networks but not project development support.
- What is the outcome of the capacity investment that we made in this phase? Various capacity's been built and to do what?

## **8. Support from head office**

### *Positive feedback*

- Confidence in her to take on high level negotiations
- She knew she wasn't alone in dealing with the Wilma problem. When she felt scared or uncertain she knew she had a security net.

### *Negative feedback*

- Ryan and Anthea and others don't criticise enough. Monica needs more negative criticism.
- Ryan and Anthea are good at giving positive feedback.

### *Support staff*

- Wants to retain link to CI head office if she works for another organisation – new project for e.g. like Paul
- Amazing support from Kaitlin
- Good that Peter is quite strict
- Gets frustrated when website isn't updated and she refers people to it.
- Better admin systems in place now.

## **9. CEPF and CI Washington**

- She doesn't understand Dorothy's position well enough – how much pressure does she get to take certain decisions re: proposal approval.
- She sees lots of pressure from CI Washington
- CI and CEPF are pure conservation organizations
- Why don't they bring in the human factor – CI has such programs

## **10. Funding for SKEP**

- Would have helped if SKEP had a more diverse funding base, so that they're not confined to CEPF funding
- It was Anthea's responsibility to raise money but she left it for too late.
- Must investigate other sources of funding
- People writing LOI's should try to access other funds as well
- Local people need help accessing other funding sources. They need to link to a local organisation like SPP to help them get funds.

## 11. Project implementation support

- It's nice to have that sort of relationship with someone in the project, from where you get the funding.
- Dorothy is very prompt, especially since she has an assistant.
- Its easy to load stuff off their CEPF web
- Thandi doesn't see it as CU's responsibility to check up on her work. She must take responsibility for delivery.
- Thandi knows CU is a phone call away.

### *Implementation support expectations*

- Expected sub-regional office to be involved in implementation, i.t.o e.g. facilitating action planning workshop for e.g. which they did help with.
- Sub-regional offices didn't introduce them to local stakeholders – this was an expectation.
- Catherine feels CU should support anchor projects through regular visits to projects
- SKEP's role in project implementation has not been realised well.
- Delay in getting memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed – didn't happen fast enough b/c of delays on Ryan's side on N C govt.
- BCI had hoped that Ryan would push harder for MoU to be signed with NC govt.
- BCI was expecting a service from SKEP offices which is not available
- SKEP did not react when BCI raised critical nature of awareness program running with theirs
- Ryan did not give BCI feedback on how far Stabilis awareness plan is
- CU should oversee that projects remain on track
- HQ wasn't always available or very clear when BCI called on their assistance with strategic matters that could help them move the project forward.
- Catherine didn't know in what direction project implementation / anchor project was going and how to prepare herself for it
- Anthea gave no indication as to how Catherine should support BCI

### *Remedial action*

- BCI suggested monthly meetings between the 2 entities which is in place
- Because of poor support, BCI has resorted to doing their own thing and put distance with Catherine's office.
- BCI and sub-regional SKEP staff identified amongst themselves what they thought each one's role is.
- Because of poor communication, BCI has resorted to doing their own thing and put distance with Catherine's office.
- Need a regular forum where the major projects can come together and report on what they've been up to and have some kind of forum where they can collectively troubleshoot and share lessons
- Sub-regional events for the smaller projects

### *Support received*

- Uncertain of what support they could expect from sub-regional office and how anchor project should work with sub-regional office
- Ryan said they didn't interfere much with BCI project b/c BCI is more capacitated than other projects which needed his help more.
- It appears that Ryan and Anthea are aware of the issues and that their role needs to change from planning to strategy to implementation to M&E but that hasn't happened.
- Many times BCI gets different stories from Catherine and Ryan around various issues – e.g. awareness project
- Sub-regional office doesn't keep BCI updated on relevant things
- No clear line of communication between BCI, Ryan and BCI project partners
- Ryan and Anthea talking to Tanya even though they said they'll go through Catherine for all correspondence

### *Working with Anchor project coordinators*

- Seems she thinks she doesn't need Catherine's support – what does Catherine know
- Tanya treats Catherine like a child who doesn't know better
- Catherine decided she doesn't want to work with Tanya
- Tanya doesn't accommodate other people's opinions
- Tanya is manipulative
- Cheryl and the 2 Paul's struggle to get along

## **12. Staff human resources**

- Staff were paid good salaries
- Offices were well equipped
- Good staff set up
- Some staff got and still may get scared and leave – skills and training lost; Rosaline for e.g. isn't going to use her SKEP skills in municipality, she's doing something different.
- Has all the equipment she needs; never has to worry about money

## **13. Future of SKEP**

- So many suggestions have been made
- Catherine unsure if she wants to continue doing what she's doing b/c of uncertainty and lack of structure in SKEP
- AC members will be disgusted to know CU set up is going to change – Catherine doesn't want to tell them that her office will close and she won't be working there any longer.
- Fear of local people pointing fingers at Catherine. Regardless of what happens in the process, people will point fingers at her.

#### 14. Overseeing day-to-day operations

- System in place where I do my admin in half a day
- Nervous about stewardship project b/c will have to take full responsibility for all admin as coordinator.
- Admin is a hard discipline
- Learnt a lot
- Putting up a wall when systems change
- Every change has a new system and structure
- Tries to be disciplined about admin but struggles
- Doesn't get to writing trip reports – motivation and structural
- Divided attention
- Would like dedicated time to do admin and trip reports
- Does easy things first, then the bigger strategic stuff b/c its easier to do
- Mixed feelings about whether its really necessary to have an administrator
- She coped without Wilma but she sees the benefits of having Jolene who is taking a lot of strain off her.
- Travel time requires planning
- Doesn't make best use of her productive time
- When she doesn't balance work with rest she becomes unbalanced and exhausted and does little work – unproductive.
- Admits she needs to take responsibility for how much she works and rests.

#### 15. TWG

- Gives lots of advice
- Constant evolution of plan
- Don't hold to a direction long enough to test the institutional model or flesh out
- Lack of sticking to decisions
- Still no detailed plan of institutional options and the roles and functions
- TWG not structured as a formal decision making body – take it or leave it
- Lack of biome-wide structure leaves program open to criticism
- You drag a lot of people with you when you constantly changing the goal posts
- Changes and uncertainty have serious implications for people's jobs and etc
- Advice given to Anthea wasn't being embedded into explicit plans & actions
- 2 months later we were going with something quite different
- Lack of sticking to meeting dates, producing minutes
- Needs tighter systems, more blue energy
- TWG meetings could be run in a more formal way
- Decisions should be minuted
- Accountability for people to follow up on minuted decisions
- TWG needs to be a sub-group of a biome wide committee
- I'm quite frustrated with the level of input I've put into it and I don't feel that its really been that worth while b/c it doesn't seem to have gone anywhere

- SKEP could have had more benefit from having a TWG that was more broad and representative of different stakeholders – like the sub-region Advisory Committees but at a Biome-wide level
- People are currently on TWG in personal capacity rather than organisational capacity
- There should be a biome-wide stakeholder forum that TWG reports to
- TWG dealt with strategic and technical issues relating to SKEP, even though its a technical working group
- Were supposed to meet once a month but dates were often changed and ended up meeting months apart
- There wasn't enough time to discuss all issues that needed attention
- Some things were therefore not properly addressed
- Things happened in a haphazard manner and informally
- Lack of discipline in sticking to dates
- TWG gives guidance more at the organisational and institutional level than at the technical level. Richard largely gives technical advice.
- Discussions take place amongst people outside TWG and she gets confused as to which is the actual way to go
- lots of changing ideas; difficult to keep up with – Anthea & Ryan come with new ideas all the time
- Time-consuming because they don't then get to the other meeting points
- Get piles of documents that they must read the day before the meeting
- There is no time to read it so they attend the meeting uninformed and unable to reflect on the issues at hand.
- Half the time you don't know what's happening.
- I don't get much communication from Ryan and Anthea, just lots of documents which are confusing
- He cant see how his role has contributed to SKEP

## 16. Biome-wide steering structure

- A high level steering committee is needed
- Program needs to be bedded down politically – regional MoU with provincial government departments. – agriculture, environment – SANParks, the key big institutions that need to be cooperating to help implement this vision and strategy.
- Having had that in place earlier on would have facilitated participation of the officials closer to the ground – is still needed
- Biome-wide steering committee I would see more as a political steering structure
- MoU as a commitment to support the program and that they'd be giving advice and guidance to the program but not making actual decisions. Definitely for info sharing and giving guidance and as a political structure.
- I thought a lot of Anthea's effort was going to be this year – looking at those structures – but it wasn't

- I would love to have a joint session to look at what role coordinators have played and where are the gaps - are there any ways we could play that role more efficiently, maybe fewer offices; merging committees.

#### **17. Anchor projects**

- We're exploring this whole idea of anchor projects being the eyes and ears of SKEP on the ground and doing away with the coordination offices but we don't have enough anchor projects at this stage to do that
- Not so much coordination but more if you're in a project you're more likely to see there's a need for a neat awareness project or a neat vetkoek paleis project on the edge of the park, instead of someone 200km away
- Eyes and ears on the ground
- Looking for opportunities to give money to projects
- A point where you can go to find out more about the program
- Not going on their own but having program responsibilities, then there would be a need for the CT office to provide overall support in that.

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## APPENDIX 6: Summary of grounded theory data analysis

### Summary analysis: Coordination capacity

*Category: Coordinator's capacity*

*Causal Condition*

→

*Phenomenon*

Insufficient background

Coordinator's inabilities

*Properties of causal condition*

*Dimensions of causal condition*

Past work experience

Amount

Little

Academic qualifications

Prevalence

Few

Appropriateness

Little

Understanding of the program

Fluctuates

Often

*Context of understanding Coordinator's inabilities*

Under conditions where Coordinator's have:

little past working experience, few and inappropriate academic qualifications and highly variable understanding of the program, then:

*Strategies for strengthening Coordinators capacity*

Coordinators are trained and exposed to conservation industry

Managers assist Coordinators with whatever queries they have

Coordinators seek guidance from each other or partner organizations

*Intervening conditions*

Distances between Coordinators and between Coordinators and Managers

Poor and infrequent communication with Managers

Not enough time for Coordinators to learn tacit skills, e.g. objective analysis

Unrealistic expectations of what Coordinators can achieve

*Consequences*

Frustrated staff feeling incapable of doing their jobs

Staff relying on each other when Managers are unavailable

Improvement in staff capacity

Greater confidence amongst staff to work in conservation and development sectors

Lessons learnt about the limitations of employing insufficiently skilled staff

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## Summary analysis: Awareness raising and consequences

*Category: Awareness raising and consequences*

<i>Causal Condition</i>	→	<i>Phenomenon</i>	
Not contemplating consequences		Problems responding to awareness	
<i>Properties of causal condition</i>		<i>Dimensions of causal condition</i>	
Few project proposals coming in		Occurrence	Medium
Difficulty developing projects		Occurrence	High
Coordinators struggle to provide project development & analysis support		Occurrence	High
		Intensity	Medium
Proposals not in line with CEPF criteria		Occurrence	High
		Intensity	Low
Rejected proposals lack biodiversity or socio-economic focus		Occurrence	High
		Intensity	Medium
Need for monitoring & evaluation system		Priority	Low
Low organizational capacity to run projects		Acknowledgement	Low
		Location	Namaqualand, Hantam
Reviews lacked accuracy & analysis		Extent	High
Decentralized review approach		Extent	High
Delivering projects after awareness		Occurrence	Low
Awareness created		Extent	High

*Context of responding to awareness raising activities*

Under conditions where:

Few projects are coming in, people experience difficulty developing projects, coordinators struggle to provide project development and critical analysis support many proposals are not in line with CEPF criteria, proposals are rejected because they lack biodiversity or socio-economic focus, there is no monitoring and evaluation system, there is low organizational capacity to run projects, reviews lack accuracy and analytical insights, there is a decentralized approach to reviewing LOI's, few projects have been developed since awareness raising activities and vast awareness has been created, then:

*Strategies for improving awareness raising*

Local people from the region are employed to do awareness raising and project development.

The leadership is enthusiastic and excited.

Training and support is provided for coordinators to improve project development.

Training is provided on how to review LOI's.

Program managers provide project development support where coordinators struggle.

*Intervening conditions*

Time was too short to expect coordinators to have developed their capacity sufficiently.

Time was too short to expect less capacitated reviewers to know how to do reviews with enough analytical input.

Managers could not support all coordinators at the time they needed it due to lack of time and vast distances.

Nature of communities is to expect action after expectations are created.

*Consequences*

Stakeholders responded positively to awareness raising because they trusted local coordinators more than if awareness was done by outsiders.

The enthusiasm was not followed by enough action.

CEPF was frustrated because they were not getting reviews with enough depth of information and facts on which to base decisions.

Coordinators were frustrated because they struggled to help proponents deliver projects that met CEPF requirements.

Coordinators later felt more confident to work on conservation projects because their capacity was greatly built.

### Summary analysis: Program coordination

*Category:* Management within the CU

*Causal Condition* → *Phenomenon*  
 New process/insufficient experience → Program coordination capacity

<i>Properties of causal condition</i>	<i>Dimensions of causal condition</i>	
Few/no case studies to learn from	Occurrence	High
Poor planning & management	Occurrence	Medium
Creating unrealistic expectations	Intensity	Low
	Occurrence	High
Poor communication	Intensity	Medium
	Occurrence	High
Doing things at the last minute	Intensity	Medium
	Occurrence	High
Moving processes too quickly	Intensity	Medium
	Occurrence	High
Model of coordination expensive	Intensity	High
Analytical thought (coordinators)	Intensity	Medium
Freedom to coordinate	Occurrence	High
	Intensity	High
Sub-regional importance	Intensity	High
Lack of advance planning	Occurrence	Medium
Rigor in management	Intensity	Low
	Occurrence	Medium
Changes to plans	Occurrence	High
Response to SKEP	Variability	Medium
Organizational changes to SKEP	Concerns	High
CI and CEPF	Influence	High
Additional funding for SKEP	Intensity	Low
Staff human resources	Cared for	Well

### *Context of coordination capacity*

Under conditions where:

There were few case studies to learn from, poor planning and management, unrealistic expectations were created, communication was poor, things were done at the last minute and processes moved too quickly, the model of coordination was expensive, the coordinators struggled with analytical thinking, coordinators have the freedom to coordinate their sub-regions as they saw fit, the importance of sub-regional coordination was emphasized by stakeholders, there was a lack of advance planning, management was not rigorous enough, changes often occurred, stakeholders responded both positively and negatively to SKEP, stakeholders were concerned about the proposed institutional changes to SKEP, CI and CEPF influenced the program in various ways, additional funding for SKEP was limited and staff were well taken care of, then:

### *Strategies for achieving program coordination*

Set up a Technical Working Group (TWG)

Set up local advisory committees set up project review committee

Employed local coordinators

### *Intervening conditions*

Skepticism and lack of support from many conservation academics and practitioners, initially.

Lack of capacity amongst some reviewers and advisory committee members.

Lack of capacity amongst coordinators.

No model or experience of decentralized coordination for CU or advisors to learn from

### *Consequences*

Stakeholder and partner awareness of program's activities and developments.

Platform for stakeholders and partners to raise concerns and provide inputs into the program.

Sense of ownership of the program amongst stakeholders and partners.

Local nodes for anybody to find out about the program and how to apply for funds.

Frustration amongst stakeholders and partners around lack of capacity in certain areas of coordination.

CEPF spending more time on SKEP than other programs due to evolving capacity (poor reviews, providing guidance to the CU).

Global community has learnt that coordination at a decentralized level can generate local support more effectively than centralized coordination.

## Summary analysis: Project implementation support

*Category:* Project implementation support / anchor projects

*Causal Condition* → *Phenomenon*  
 Unclear strategy → Project implementation capacity

<i>Properties of causal condition</i>	<i>Dimensions of causal condition</i>	
Assistance interpreting donor criteria	Occurrence	Medium
Support for anchor project expectations	Occurrence	Medium
Suggestions to projects for remedial action	Occurrence	Medium
Support from CU to projects	Communication	Unclear
Relationship between coordinators and anchor project coordinators	Nature	Poor

*Context of project implementation capacity*

Under conditions where:

There is assistance in interpreting the donor's requirements, expectations for anchor project support, remedial actions being suggested, support is received by projects, a poor relationship exists between coordinators and projects, then:

*Strategies for developing project implementation capacity*

Managers agree not to confuse communication by interfering - communicating different messages to each party.

Coordinators resorted to doing things their own way most of the time.

Suggested a forum for all projects to share lessons and experiences.

Coordinators and anchor project coordinators agreed on communication strategy amongst themselves.

*Intervening conditions*

Poor communication between managers, anchor project coordinator and sub-regional coordinator continued to confuse things for BCI project.

Personal clashes / differences between sub-regional coordinator and anchor project coordinator for Knersvlakte caused further tensions

*Consequences*

Frustrated BCI coordinator who could not get proper information out of any of the CU staff.

Frustrated sub-regional coordinators who struggled to get proper communication and good working relationship with anchor project coordinators.

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**Summary analysis: Steering structures**

*Category: Steering structures*

*Causal Condition* → *Phenomenon*  
 Lack of direction from CU Challenges regarding advisory structures

<i>Properties of causal condition</i>	<i>Dimensions of causal condition</i>	
TWG advice given to CU not used	Frequency	Often
CU does not keep to a plan long enough to test it	Frequency	Often
TWG meetings not formal enough	Frequency	Often
TWG not representative of stakeholders and partners	Intensity	High
Lack of sticking to TWG decisions	Occurrence	High
Lack of CU following up on TWG tasks	Occurrence	High
Advisory committees not all used effectively by coordinators	Occurrence	Low
Most advisory committee members are dedicated	Intensity	Medium
Traditionally anti-conservation sectors working with SKEP	Occurrence	High
High level steering committee needed	Intensity	High
Have not embedded SKEP politically	Intensity	High

*Context of advisory structures*

Under conditions where:

The CU did not use advice given by the TWG, where the CU did not stick to plans long enough to test them, where TWG meetings were not run formally enough, where the TWG was not representative enough, the managers lacked sticking to decisions, lack of CU following up on TWG tasks, some advisory committees were not used very effectively by coordinators, most advisory committee members were committed to their role traditionally anti-conservation sectors working with SKEP (e.g. mining), where a high level steering committee is needed and where the program is still not politically strong enough, then:

*Strategies for dealing with challenges regarding advisory structures*

Lack of tightening up TWG systems and procedures.  
 Failed to engage more with provincial and national government.

*Intervening conditions*

The managers were naturally creative and flexible and therefore there were often changes. Provincial and national government moved too slowly. It was easier to influence local activities.

*Consequences*

Frustrated TWG who could not see the results of their inputs into the program because of continuous changes.

TWG struggled to keep up-to-date with program developments because of its fast evolution.

Irregular meetings and no proper minutes being kept resulted in people forgetting what was agreed to at previous meetings.

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## **APPENDIX 7: Important skills and attributes that a coordinator should ideally have**

- A general conservation background.
- Be able to work with a range of people from academic experts to local community members to government officials
- Be able to switch between being a strategic thinker and doing operational day-to-day office management
- Be able to facilitate meetings and workshops
- An ability to facilitate processes and discussions for multiple views to come to the fore
- Not be too technically inclined and passionate about a particular aspect of conservation because that may lead to neglect of the other elements of conservation, such as economic
- Have good social skills and able to interact with all kinds of people.
- Be able to write project proposals
- Be a motivated, driven person
- Someone who knows what it takes to get projects off the ground
- Someone who can mediate in conflicting situations
- Be able to balance social needs with biodiversity conservation needs

## APPENDIX 8: Additional matters for the coordination unit to consider

### A perspective on the system of CEPF proposal reviews

It is necessary to provide some insights into the CEPF proposal review process and make recommendations for improving it, because this forms the core work of the CU.

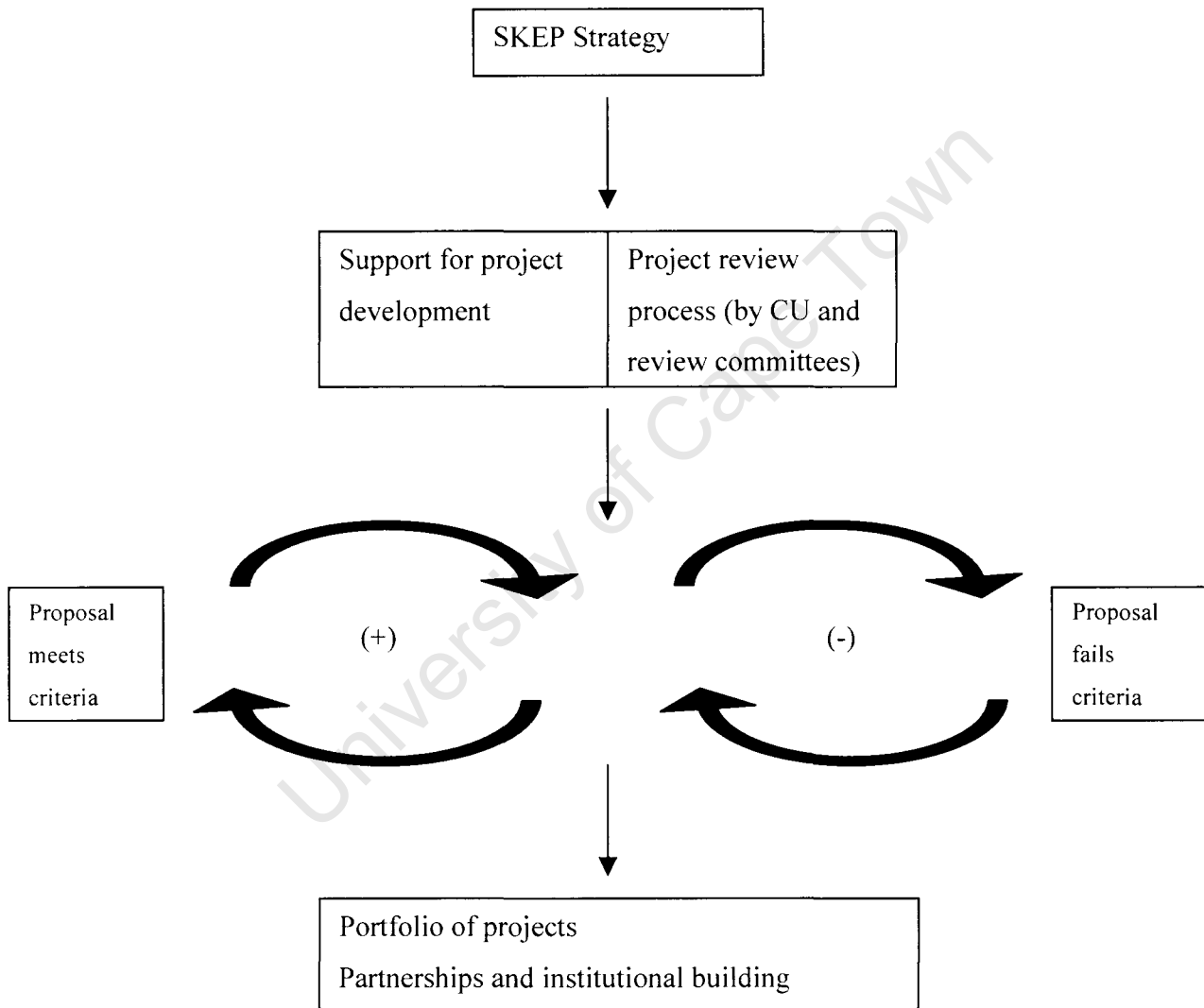


Figure 6. LOI review system

Figure 6 provides an illustration of the mechanisms in place to generate projects and to check that the right kinds of projects are being accepted. The diagram was intended to remind the CU staff of the purpose of the relationships between these elements of the system.

A significant role of the coordination unit is to facilitate the procurement of projects and there is a tendency to want to generate as many projects as possible. So the aim is for the project development system to grow quickly and effectively. Kauffman (1980) calls this positive feedback, not as in well or praise, but to amplify and add to change so that there can be growth. To achieve this, the coordination unit provides support to the elements of the system that realize the implementation of projects, as indicated in the diagram. Project proposals are developed with the assistance of the coordination unit, so that they will meet the CEPF criteria in order for the project to hopefully be accepted. This cycle is repeated so that projects are continuously being generated.

Caution should be given to the tendency to base success of the program on the number of projects being generated. This is a tendency in most organizations, particularly in businesses where the goal is the generation of profits. Other factors to keep a firm handle on are that the right kind of projects are being generated, that they are benefiting those aims they are intended for, that stakeholders and the donor are satisfied with progress, and that SKEP staff morale is high. These are also indicators of success. The program has done well in ensuring most of these. If growth becomes too rapid, these aspects can be negatively affected and result in destructive consequences for the program (Flood and Jackson, 1991).

On the other end of the double loop is the negative feedback loop, not as in bad or critical, but to negate change and to create stability. CEPF is currently the only formalized negative feedback element in the system. It uses the SKEP-CEPF profile as a means of checking whether proposals are in line with the SKEP strategy, it checks the organization's capacity to implement the project as well as the way in which the proposal is articulated from a logical framework approach. CEPF is supported by the project

review process where a variety of stakeholders review projects and recommend whether they should be accepted or rejected. As the donor, CEPF needs to protect its investment, image and its moral obligation to conservation and development by ensuring that the funds are spent wisely. So from the point of view of generating projects, there should be sufficient positive and negative feedback loops to ensure a fairly balanced system for generating projects.

### **Considerations during the transition**

Since the purpose of this research centers on the transition of the SKEP CU from CI to SANBI, some issues were highlighted for consideration during the transition.

The transition will require a large amount of planning and transferring of information and responsibilities. The challenge here is to ensure that the momentum of the program is maintained and that organizations at all levels of the program are not sidelined along the way. Particular attention should be paid to ensuring that local interaction is not lost as this has been the hallmark of the program.

There needs to be effective transfer of sub-regional information to the anchor project coordinators such as: stakeholder databases, awareness materials, steering committee meeting minutes, processes that were engaged to bring on board stakeholders, etc.

The CU needs to communicate to stakeholders a clear and unambiguous message of what the new CU setup will be, what changes will take place and how it will affect the SKEP stakeholders.

The CU also needs to develop a plan for the lag phase when there will be no physical presence of coordinators in the sub-regions to coordinate reviews, respond to stakeholder queries, keep steering committees up-to-date, assist potential grant applicants, conduct awareness raising activities, etc.

A clearer role needs to be defined for the Scientific Advisory Committee in the new SKEP set up as well as how the sub-regional advisory committees and TWG will be reorganized.

The CU also needs to be sensitive to the SKEP program in Namibia regarding the setting of policies that affect the program in both countries.

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## APPENDIX 9: SKEP Geographic Priorities

