



Growing our web

Creating and nurturing a network of partnerships

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe. The sun shines not on us, but in us; the rivers flow not past, but through us...

John Muir, American conservationist (1838-1914)

In the forest all the trees are interlinked so there is really only one system, only one network, and the trees nourish each other through this network of roots.

Fritjof Capra¹

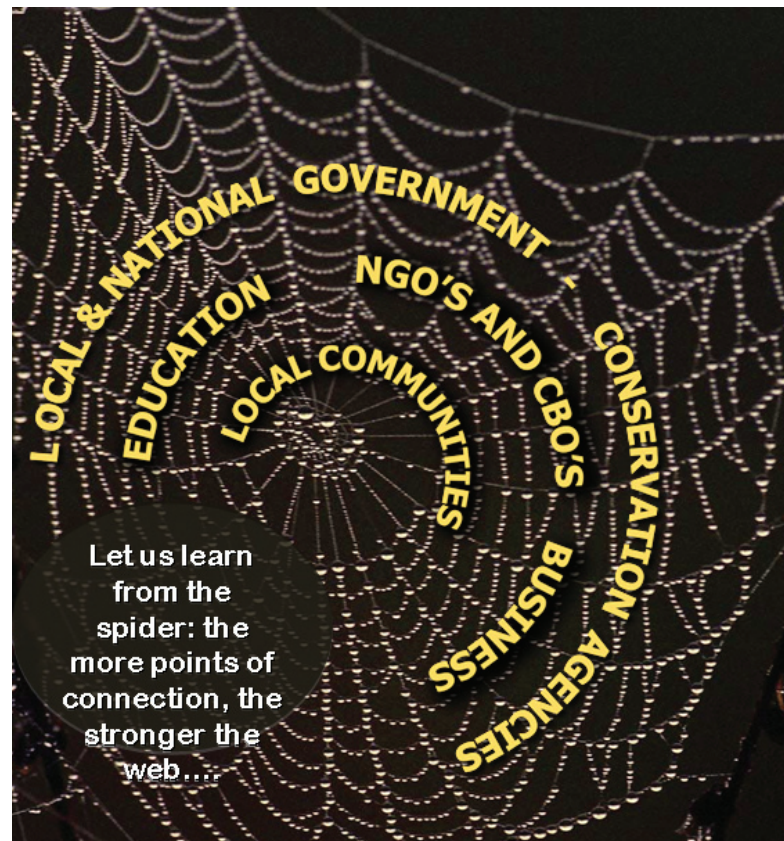
Life, from its beginning, more than three billion years ago, did not take over the planet by combat but by cooperation, partnership and networking.

Fritjof Capra²

In nature, nothing grows in isolation. Species that are cut off from each other and from a healthy and biodiverse ecosystem almost invariably die. The same is true of communities. Enabling **connectivity** is one of our most important priorities in promoting thriving social ecological systems in and around our site.

We have explored different forms of connectivity in earlier chapters, such as connecting our sites with natural systems through corridors and a more conservation-oriented urban landscape, and connecting with surrounding communities and other spheres through partnerships.

In this chapter we look at growing the web of connectivity more broadly. We look at the value of creating networks that connect us to a diverse range of organisations and agencies, and explore ways to spread the message of the value of our sites and of urban conservation in general.



1. Networking

One of the most important insights of the systemic understanding of life is that living systems are networks.

Fritjof Capra³

Networking is a key element of the process we use to grow our web. Networking involves going out, looking and listening; it involves scanning the world through the lens of our vision for the site and finding contacts that can help us grow it. It is meeting people and discovering what they do and how it may link with our work. It's about really listening – head, heart and feet – to their needs and dreams and finding ways that we can bring their dreams and ours together. It might mean interacting with individuals, or building relationships with small local community structures, with big NGOs, private businesses and government departments. It might involve attending a mayoral dinner or chatting over a cup of coffee at the local police station. It may sometimes feel far removed from nature conservation, however, it is just as important as pulling out invasive species or putting out a fire.

Tanya explores this in the following case study:

Fishing for opportunities

An important element of our work in Cape Flats Nature is... building bridges between the sites and the people living around them, giving more and more people a direct experience of the benefits these sites offer.

Our capacity to do different things is limited both by our time and our expertise. For example, we're not the best people to do creative, cultural activities or deep youth development work at our sites. That's part of why we work in partnership, and also because we want to expand the range of people and interest groups who appreciate the value of nature sites in the city. Even though it can be time consuming and may seem a waste of time, fishing for opportunities is part of the process – we don't know what will be a real gem and what will turn out to go nowhere.

We are always on the lookout (fishing) for opportunities to bring in energy and expertise from different fields. When it seems like an idea may fly, we connect the potential partner with the manager of the appropriate site(s).

Tanya raises two important reasons for networking:

- To extend our capacity for community development projects by enlisting organisations that can provide specialised expertise and resources;
- To expand the range of individuals, organisations and institutions who are aware of the value offered by urban nature conservation sites.

Networking can also:

- Help to establish links with experts and service providers in all fields related to our work, from botanists to fire fighters. These links are invaluable in creating a bedrock of support for meeting the myriad of challenges we face;
- Help us identify gaps and weaknesses in our own capacity and give us the means to fill these gaps;
- Stop us from getting into a rut of doing things the way they have always been done. Encountering new ideas and ways of seeing things helps us break down the fences in our minds, and encourages ingenuity and creativity. New ideas keep us alive and stimulated;

For example, I'd heard about murals that were being painted in partnership with an organisation in Aachen, Germany. It seemed like a great idea for involving people from the surrounding communities in livening up the buildings at Edith Stephens. Late last year I met someone from the Aachen NGO, and arranged for the artist involved in the murals to come to Edith Stephens.

In the meeting the artist explained the process and what resources we would need. It appeared that the buildings were not suitable but, as a result of the interaction, in 2009 the Aachen NGO ran mural workshops and painted bus shelters with a school in Manenberg and used ESWP as a base. The two bus shelters in Lansdowne Road next to ESWP have a nature theme and Aachen also donated playground equipment to the reserve. ESWP has continued to work with the local artist and the school students who were drawn into the project.

- Tanya Layne, Urban Nature Programme Developer, SANBI, case study, February 2008



Bus stop painted in partnership with a project in Aachen, Germany



Networking helps to create an awareness of urban conservation issues to become entrenched in a culture

- Help to create a collective eco-literacy and awareness of urban conservation so that, in Senza Kula's words, "it becomes part of our culture or a habit. We will start to talk as if it is a lifestyle... it becomes part of life and not just a series of projects." (See page 67)

1.1 Networking principles

As with other aspects of our work, networking can benefit from three guiding principles:

- Holding the vision;
- 'No fences' in our minds;
- Keeping a light touch.

Holding the vision

Our vision keeps our networking focussed, so that we do not:

- Waste time and energy developing relationships that do not serve our site or the cause of urban conservation;
- Enter into partnerships that do not advance our vision or objectives;
- Overlook opportunities for creative and fruitful partnerships that will advance our vision.

When we first start working in the field, it can be difficult to know what relationships to build up. With experience we develop more of an instinct. But in the beginning, we need to be open to conversations and connections, and be guided by the following questions:

- *Does this contact offer expertise or resources that might help to grow the value of the site for the people who use it or the nature that thrives on it?*
- *Does it offer skills and strengths that we do not have, or that complement ours?*
- *What benefits can we offer that are relevant to their work?*
- *Might it offer opportunities for projects or partnerships that we could engage in now, or do we just keep the contact alive until there is a better time to develop it?*
- *Is it best for us to pursue and develop this relationship ourselves, or do we put this contact in touch with one of our other partner organisations and encourage them to develop the project with minimal input from us?*

No fences

While we need to be guided by our vision, fruitful networking also demands that we look beyond stereotypes and keep an open mind. We may find support, ideas, resources or expertise from politicians, domestic workers, industrialists, the unemployed, university professors, school children... Carry a notebook, and every time someone mentions an interesting idea or contact, make a note of it. A casual conversation in a bus queue might yield a great contact. And even if these conversations do not yield anything directly useful, the more widely we speak about our work, the more we create a culture of awareness around the site and urban conservation.

Light touch

As with all aspects of adaptive co-management, from community partnerships to sustaining natural systems, networking benefits from a light touch. This is about not trying to hold and control everything, but still nurturing, supporting and protecting. Having a light touch means having the sensitivity and patience to let partnerships and projects develop when the time is right and being proactive without forcing the pace. Sometimes it's about putting



It's about laying the groundwork, planting the seeds, then standing back to let the sun in so that the plants can grow

contacts in touch with each other and trusting that they will find the road ahead together without you backseat driving. It's about laying the groundwork, planting the seeds, then standing back to let the sun in so that the plants can grow. At the same time, we need to check that our contact people are reporting back to their organisations and following through on discussions.

Sometimes we come across a good opportunity, but the timing is wrong. In this case, we need to keep the connection ticking until the conditions are right. And sometimes, as illustrated in Tanya's experience with the mural, the connection does not work out exactly as anticipated, but brings other benefits.

These points are illustrated in Luzann's description of networking at Edith Stephens:



The communities around ESWP face many social challenges



Conservation sites can offer safe beautiful refuges in urban areas

Networking opens up opportunities

I'm always looking out for forums or someone who knows someone who can address my needs at the site or provide me with resources. I used to network very broadly but I am more focussed on my needs and resources now. So within the City, I have learnt which departments to tap for which resources and where ESWP fits into the bigger picture, the broader City strategy.

Networking can be unproductive, that's why it is so important always to hold your vision. Sometimes you stumble over something unexpected which expands your ideas and may shift your direction slightly, but it is still important for you to have clear direction. If your manager asks what you were doing yesterday, you cannot say: "I was out networking". You need to motivate why it was helpful to meet with the contacts, and how they might benefit your work.

One experience of networking which has proved most beneficial was with the issue of drug abuse. Drug abuse is widespread among the youth of our surrounding communities, and as part of our drive to increase the value of Edith Stephens, we decided to find out what was being done and how we might be able to contribute. We found a community

forum through which we could make contact with relevant NGOs and the Drug Action Committee.

These discussions led us to explore the possibilities that the open space of the nature reserve provides. The importance of the space is that it is safe – the open spaces in our communities are usually avoided because most are unsafe and the domain of gangs. We considered how our open spaces may help with rehabilitation and help to keep the youth off drugs.

We now have a support group which meets at Edith Stephens every fortnight. While the adults meet, their children are involved in a youth nature education programme.

This project has opened up many possibilities and we are now working with researchers at University of Western Cape to consider how natural open spaces can benefit our communities.

Within the narrow conservation field, we don't always consider all the possibilities, yet if we open up and network with others, then the opportunities seem enormous. We, as conservationists, conventionally don't consider the spiritual aspects, recreation and healing potential. This is not our expertise and we don't know how to use this resource to its full potential. Networking opens up this potential.

- Luzann Isaacs, Reserve Manager, City of Cape Town



We can see how Luzann followed these principles of networking. She was guided by the vision of empowering local communities and adding value to the site by addressing a pressing issue in the community such as drug abuse. Through networking, she was able to bring together what ESWP could offer – a safe open space – with the expertise and psycho-social services needed for drug counselling offered by the Drug Action Committee and other NGOs.

This project, implemented with relatively few resources from the reserve staff, has huge spin-offs for the site and for urban conservation:

- Community members come to the site, and directly benefit from what it has to offer – a beautiful, peaceful safe open space;
- Their children benefit from the nature education classes and the experience of being in a natural environment. This may help them break the negative cycle in which their parents have been stuck;
- Urban nature conservation benefits because community members see its value, the children are learning about it, and there is potential for university research into the benefits it offers. This will further its cause in the longer term;
- The site is networked into the everyday life of

local people, who in turn can bring their first-hand experiences of the site to others in the community.

1.2 Networking and capacity building

Networking is most beneficial if the opportunities to make connections are offered to all team members, not only the site manager. Team members, including volunteers, can benefit from networking and will all offer connections with different groups. If the manager has all the contacts, then those relationships fall away if he or she leaves suddenly. Try to make a regular slot at meetings where all team members share valuable networking experiences and contacts, and allow different team members to engage with partner organisations. Discussing possible partnerships is also a valuable way to debate and deepen the team's vision for the site. This will help team members to communicate a common message when engaging with partners.

1.3 Networking and community partnerships

Networking is critical for community partnerships for two reasons. Firstly, as shown in Luzann's case study and many of the case studies in Chapter Four, networking with specialist organisations greatly extends the range of benefits and types of community partnerships the site can offer.

We are well placed to play a bridging role



Secondly, the conservation site can become a node of networking that benefits community organisations and members, and helps to build a more cohesive, sustainable and resilient community. We are well placed to play a bridging role: our work on the site makes us aware of the needs of the communities. At the same time, our networking connects us with a range of individuals, organisations and institutions. We can play a valuable role in bringing these together, and connecting community groups with others who can assist with resources, building capacity, or sharing experiences. (See page 74 on the role of the Champs' Forum in creating networks for community volunteers and partners.)



The community exchanges have enabled a strong network of contacts to be formed by community volunteers



While we benefit community partners by building their networks, these partners also greatly assist us in building our networks and help us extend our networks beyond our traditional supportive stakeholder base. The diagram above shows how we reach out from the site to a range of organisations, individuals and institutions at a local, national and even international level. In this way, networking brings to life our dream of growing a city of conservators.

However, networking on behalf of community partners can have its pitfalls. The following case study explores some of these.



Partnerships require clear roles and responsibilities

During a Champs' Forum meeting, one of the participating organisations, Youth Against Crime (YAC) came up with the idea of creating a waste management project on the borders of the reserve in their community. In further discussions with YAC, the reserve manager and a potential funder, it was suggested that YAC could benefit from a community exchange with Baakens River in Nelson Mandela Bay, in order to:

- Bring together representatives from similar initiatives to discuss, learn and brainstorm ideas and experiences in community based conservation projects;
- Assist YAC with developing a sustainable and effective plan for developing projects in the reserve.

YAC asked Cape Flats Nature to help find a service provider to facilitate the exchange, which would be funded by the Table Mountain Fund (TMF). The exchange was held and led to a fruitful sharing of ideas, although it may take some time before the organisation can act on these.

However, there was a major problem in that one service provider was not fully paid. This situation was complicated by the fact that the liaison person within YAC, *John, went away shortly after the exchange.

When he returned, he was furious to discover that his organisation had not paid out the service provider and had spent the allocated money on other things, and he resigned.

This experience holds the following lessons for facilitating networking with community partners:

- Insist on making sure that roles are clearly defined, that it's clear who's taking responsibility for what and that people are accountable;
- Make sure there are formal written agreements about who is responsible for payments;
- Make sure that everyone supports the project. Afterwards, some YAC members said that they felt that they were "being forced to lead and participate" in a project they had not requested funding for. Although they did not express these feelings in the early meetings, perhaps if we had 'listened to the feet' we would have realised that there were reservations;
- Follow your instinct: I had felt that all providers should be paid direct by TMF. This was not because I did not trust YAC, but their governance structures were flawed and that worried me. However, it was decided that YAC should pay the providers as this was more empowering for them. In the end, this actually weakened the organisation.

- Ntsiki Mlotywa, Practice Development and Communications Manager, Cape Flats Nature, case study, November 2009

*Names in this case study have been changed

This case study illustrates the importance of a light touch and of ensuring that all members of an organisation fully support the initiative – listening with head, heart and feet to gauge people's feelings. We also need to be sure that the organisation is ready to accept the responsibility that an initiative brings. And finally, playing a bridging role means supporting people to become clear about their roles, responsibilities and commitments.

Mapping networks

The following exercise helps to create a graphic reference of networks. This is very useful in evaluating existing networks, and in identifying new opportunities. It may be undertaken with team members or with community partners.



ESWP has helped put community organisations such as the Mannenberg People's Centre in touch with organisations in neighbouring communities

- In the centre of a large sheet of paper, write a list of community needs and the site's needs, as identified during stakeholder workshops and during your landscape mapping processes. Underline those that you have earmarked as priorities for your site.
- On circles of paper, write the names of local organisations, NGOs, conservation agencies, institutions, other government departments and private sector companies that have had contact with, or know of the site. Use different colour circles or symbols to group these.
- Stick these around the needs list, and discuss how these organisations or agencies connect to the needs. Think about whether they can offer anything to help address the need, whether it is resources, expertise or logistical support. Show this on your map with connecting lines and notes. Add arrows to show any services or value the site might bring to them.
- Discuss:
 1. Are there needs which we could address more effectively through developing a relationship with other contacts? Who are they? How can we deepen

this relationship? What spin-offs or other projects might arise from addressing these needs?

2. How do we see ourselves interacting with these needs or projects?
 - As an active partner – we get involved in initiating and driving the project;
 - As a passive partner – we set up the contacts and offer the site as a venue;
 - As a broker – this work is not really a priority in terms of achieving our vision, so we just put organisations in touch with each other and let them get on with it.
3. Are there needs that we would like to address, but do not presently have the contacts or networks to help us? If so, how could we possibly develop these networks?

Keep the chart on your office wall, or reduce it and file it somewhere accessible. This is an invaluable resource for all team members. Add to it as you go and repeat the exercise at least every year.



Networking can help put community members in touch with a range of organisations – here a new local bird club is supported by established bird clubs

The second aspect of building up a web of connectivity is growing an awareness of issues around nature conservation and of the benefits offered by conservation sites. We explore this in the next section.

2. Spreading the message

2.1 Lobbying

It is vital to lobby local government in order to cultivate a culture of biodiversity stewardship and to deal with trashed ecosystems within the city.

- George Davis, Biodiversity Planning and Mainstreaming Communications, SANBI



Conferences are a good place to showcase the work of conservation sites and to lobby support

You need an ongoing dialogue with decision makers – e.g. councillors who decide on projects – on what needs to happen.... If you do not get them thinking green, green, green; you will never win the people on the ground. But also the people on the ground need to put pressure on their councillors.

- Zwai Peter, ex Cape Flats Nature Communications Manager

Right now the language that I speak is foreign to the City. They do not understand the development character that we are talking about.

- Senza Kula, Co-ordinator, Ilitha Lomso

Lobbying is an important aspect of networking and enables us to make policy makers and decision makers aware of our concerns, and to take these into account when making decisions. It may involve engaging with local ward councillors, with other City officials and departments, with provincial and national government officials or any other individuals with influence.



Murals such as these help create an awareness of conservation issues

We need to make sure our message reaches people who can make a difference



There are a number of reasons why it is important to do this. Some of these will relate to a specific conservation site, and may be firstly in order to protect the site from immediate pressures. For example, we may want to lobby to change the legal status of the site to a more protected status to prevent damaging activity such as mining on the site or to protect it from damaging infrastructure development.

Secondly, we may wish to obtain extra resources for the site, for example staff, funding for projects, equipment or infrastructure such as an environmental education centre or tourism visitor centre.

Thirdly, as urban conservators, we have an important role to play in lobbying around the cause of urban conservation, and the vital need to:

- Maintain open spaces so that natural systems and biodiversity can flourish and communities can have access to natural landscapes;
- Preserve remnants of functioning representative natural systems;
- Ensure that buildings or infrastructure are developed with minimal environmental damage and interference with biodiversity and local ecosystems;
- Manage and plan the city in a way that protects and sustains natural systems;
- Create a policy and legislative framework that is effective in protecting environmental concerns.

This last reason is critical for the future of nature conservation in the cities, and indeed anywhere. Nature conservation has been ghetto-ised and isolated for too long. This has led to the assumption by many city planners that a piece of ground without a building on it is 'unused', as there is a very limited understanding of the financial and social value 'undeveloped' ground may bring. Nature conservation is left to environmental departments, when in fact it is central to every aspect of human existence and should loom large in the departments of health, social welfare, the treasury, trade and industry, economic development, sport and recreation, transport, housing, tourism and agriculture. No human activity can be sustained without a healthy environment and we need an urgent change in mindset that acknowledges that

while in the long run, nature is likely to continue into infinity without us, we depend on it for every breath we take.

Urban conservationists have an important role to play in bringing this awareness into the consciousness of decision makers. This is beyond the scope of this book, but a couple of guidelines may be helpful:

Be specific

There are two levels of lobbying. Some lobbying may be part of general public relations exercise. But if we want something in particular from a politician, we need to be very clear as to what it is we want.

Develop our arguments

Our arguments need to be clear, logical and, most importantly, they need to address the specific interests and concerns of the person we are trying to lobby. Present the argument in terms that the person being lobbied will recognise and understand.

Target whom we are lobbying

Decide which decision makers are the most important to lobby around a particular issue. This will depend partly on how much power or influence they have or can access around that issue and, partly, on how open or opposed they may be to our point of view.

Showcase our work

A good dynamic programme around a site is the best ambassador for that site, but we need to make sure that influential decision makers are aware of what is going on there and the value it brings to surrounding communities. Some ways to do this are:

- Document all activities with photographs, stories and videos;
- Make the best possible use of mass media (see below);



This incredible area is not only rich in cultural and historical heritage but has a wonderful and interesting biological heritage as well. The major attraction is the wealth of spring flowers that burst into colour during August and September. Masses of bulbs and annuals can be seen brightening up the road verges and open spaces in the town. Look out for gorgeous blue flowers of *Gladiolus corinthus*, a common geophyte found in this area, and smell the heavenly sweet scent emitted by the flowers.

There are over 250 plant species recorded from the area, of which more than 50 are threatened with extinction. The Mamre Nature Garden is the core of the natural vegetation that can be explored. A fair portion of the commonage land is invaded by woody Port Jackson trees (*Acacia saligna* – originally brought from Australia as a dune stabilizer) but the patches of natural veld between the dense thickets of Port Jackson are absolutely exquisite.

Four main vegetation types can be found in this area

Atlantis Sand Fynbos: Moderately undulating and flat sandy plains with amazing and proteas being the dominant species. This vegetation type is listed as vulnerable as 40% has been transformed and a fair proportion of that which remains is degraded by overgrazing and alien invasive plants.

Swartland Granite Renosterveld: The coarse loamy soil is home to an amazing array of geophytic plants that flower predominantly in spring. This Critically Endangered vegetation type is in urgent need of conservation because less than 20% still remains.

Swartland Shale Renosterveld: This is one of the most threatened vegetation types in the country. It occurs on nutrient rich clay soils dominated by renosterbos (an asteraceous shrub) and has a rich diversity of geophytes and succulents. Listed as Critically Endangered, less than 10% remains.

Cape Flats Dune Strandveld: Found on the coastal area this vegetation type is dominated by tall, hardy evergreen shrubs. One of the flagship species is the protected Milkwood tree (*Sideroxylon inerme*) which is a very long lived species. This vegetation type is listed as Endangered and only about 6% of this vegetation is formally conserved

The natural veld has provided the local with valuable resources throughout the history of the area. The area is used by small scale stock farmers and historically the roof thatchers of Mamre were well known as the best in the business. Apart from the wonderful floral heritage there is a wealth of fauna that still inhabit the area. Grysbok, Duiker, bat-eared foxes, etc can still be found in the Mamre Nature garden and the adjacent commonage land.



Mamre Moravian Church

Moravian Church

The building was completed in 1818 and is the 5th oldest church building in South Africa. One of the most striking features of the church is the old church bell. It weighs 250 kg and is decorated with a beautiful flower and leaf motif

The Long House

As the name suggests this house has six doors and six windows with a classic Cape Dutch Gable in the centre of the building. This building served as barracks for the garrison between 1701 and 1791.

Parsonage

According to the date on the gable, 1697, it is the oldest building in Mamre. This also served as the home of the sergeant in charge but today it serves as the home of the minister of the church.

The Old Shop/ Restaurant

This building was first used as a general dealer and many of the local west coast treats could be found on sale at the old shop. Although the Shop is not operational at the moment it is still used for private family functions.

The Cook House

It was previously used as a jail and police station. Inside the building some of the old tools can still be found but unfortunately the oven has been broken out. It is still used today as a kitchen during Church celebrations.

The School

The first classes were held at the Parsonage and the Long House. When the "old school building" was constructed it was used for this purpose. As the number of pupils grew there was a need to build a bigger school. The Old school building is no longer in use.

The Tollhouse

Travellers using the route through Mamre to Cape Town had to stop at the Toll House to pay a Toll fee. This used to be the only way to Cape Town from the West Coast and this is the where Cape Road got its name.

The Water Mill

This is one of the main attractions at the werf. In 1830 the original horse mill was built but in 1938 it was replaced by the water mill. The mill is currently not operational but there is a project underway to restore the mill and reopen the water channels that lead water to the

Contact Details:

CREW: (021) 799-8751

Mamre Info: (021) 576 0514

Mamre Nature Garden: (021) 576 0514 Tourism: (021) 576 1266

Moravian Church: (021) 576 4444

Heritage: (021) 576 5555

Mamre

Mamre was first established in 1701 when Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel sent a group of soldiers to set up a military post, mainly because of stock thefts that was threatening the meat supply to Cape Town. The area was then known as Groenekloof. In 1808 the Moravian mission was established and the first sermons were held under

the poplar trees at Louwskloof, which is at the base of the Dassenberg hills. The Mamre community has always had a close connection to the environment. The commonage areas are used by local farmers, flower pickers and herders. There are many fantastic historical sites in Mamre and this compliments the rich and spectacular biodiversity of the area

This Project is proudly supported by the following organizations:



- Invite local councillors and other relevant political and administrative decision makers to open days and events, or organise a tour of the site in which you show them well presented displays or albums reflecting the programmes;
- Introduce them to their constituent community volunteers and champions, who can promote our cause.

2.2 Publicity and marketing

Publicity is essential for showcasing our sites as well as for bringing an awareness of the site and conservation issues to everyday consciousness. It also helps to keep communities informed about what is going on at the site and to publicise open events. Generating publicity can be quite difficult, especially in a large urban context where items of news jostle for space, but with some creativity it can be done. Newspapers – particularly the free community papers – radio, billboards, community notice boards and TV all provide opportunities for publicity. IT media such as websites, social networking sites such as Facebook, twitter and emails offer a way to reach out without large cost implications, although setting up a website can be costly, and

not everyone we wish to reach is connected to the internet.

Luzann offers some insights into working with the media:

We think about publicity all the time. We establish and nurture relationships with journalists at the freebie newspapers and the local radio stations and make sure they are the first to be informed of any events or activities.

We are also going beyond the formal media and starting an Edith Stephens newsletter this week. So many different people come to the reserve for so many different things. We want to show what is going on here and how they might get involved. We will start by sending this out to key community partners and to the big industrial companies neighbouring the site.

Right now, we are publicising the next stargazing event with media releases, radio slots and faxed invitations. We have dropped off flyers at public meeting points such as the library and the clinics. The Observatory has taken on some of the publicity with articles in the Argus and Cape Times.

- Luzann Isaacs, Reserve Manager, City of Cape Town





Below are some guidelines:

- Use networking to build up connections with members of the media. Get to know journalists who work on environmental issues so that you can contact them directly;
- Inform media well in advance of events;
- Prepare a media package for each event which can be handed out to journalists, giving background information and relevant facts and figures about the event, the site, and the community you serve, as well as contact details of a spokesperson from the site;
- Identify community members, volunteers and champions for the media to interview;
- Think about creating visually striking images for the cameras. For example, at each event, try to arrange banners or posters, which will make a good photograph, and get your message across well. Painting these can be delegated to a youth or school group;
- Think about what you want to convey with images. For example, if you want people to think of nature serving people, create images that reflect people with nature, rather than a lone flower or tortoise;
- Think creatively about how to motivate mainstream media to cover events and activities. For example through competitions or awards such as nominating community champions or site staff as local heroes, nominating the site or a specific project at the site for environmental awards or for youth development awards.
- Take high resolution pictures to submit with an article to your local community newspaper, which will often be too short-staffed to attend events.

Radio provides a powerful medium for publicity. There are an estimated ten million radio sets in South Africa with listenership way in excess of this number. There are more than 100 community radio stations which broadcast in urban and rural areas. Local community radio stations are keen to engage on local issues, raising discussions and debates. Local television stations are also emerging as an option, but this requires creative partnerships with film makers and/or students.

An example of an organisation that uses the internet most effectively is Avaaz, which has managed to capture the attention of the world with a host of creative activities, harnessing the basic technologies of email and cellphone. A recent campaign aimed at pressurising governments to take effective action on climate change led to 5200 actions in 181 countries. Avaaz has been able to take this to the highest level, lobbying at key summits on the environment. This creates the momentum to continue as participants know that their efforts are reaching key decision makers.

The Princess and the press

The Princessvlei is a historical open space and wetland in Cape Town that is currently threatened by development. Individuals and organisations from the local community have come together in a campaign to save the vlei and restore the natural systems. This is a fine example of the use of networking, media and lobbying, but it is also an example of a community spontaneously and vigorously defending a natural space from interference.





Networking for Princessvlei

The fate of Princessvlei is hanging precariously in the balance. Developers are poised to put up a shopping mall with an adjacent taxi rank on this beautiful piece of wetland that was once known as Galaland – the prize of the Cape Flats. The developers' plans were provisionally approved by the provincial MEC for Environment Affairs and Development Planning in 2004. However, sustained pressure by the local community has delayed the finalisation of the re-zoning application and the date by which building was to have started has passed. The developers now have to re-apply for permission to build and reopen the process to public participation.

Princessvlei lies in the heart of the Cape Flats, bringing together the suburbs of Grassy Park, Lotus River and Southfield. A wetland with a rich cultural heritage, the vlei tells a story that can be traced back 500 years to the time of a powerful Khoisan princess who lived on the Constantiaberg Mountain, in the cave known as Elephant's Eye. She moved between the mountain and the vlei, following the Princess Kasteel River which fed the vlei. In 1510, whilst bathing at the vlei, she was abducted and then murdered by a band of Portuguese sailors. Legend has it that her tears gave rise to the adjacent Little Princessvlei.

Princessvlei's tragic history continued into the apartheid years when the Cape Flats became subject to the policies of racial segregation and the vlei was sorely neglected, leading to degradation of the land. Now, years later, because of its limited biodiversity appeal, the City council resolved to approve the subdivision of the land, allowing for the shopping centre development.

"It was the sustained pressure of our community members, our organisations and the media that have made the council and the province think again on Princessvlei. We need to keep up this pressure," says Kelvin Cochrane, a local community member. "We have a real glimmer of hope now."

Kelvin has the benefit of knowing Princessvlei in its Galaland days. He knows of families coming to picnic alongside the vlei, youth revelling in its beauty and of local communities gathering on its banks – and he has the passion to restore the Princess to its one-time glory.

Local community organisations have been quick to back the call to stop the shopping mall development in the interests of the community. The Greater Cape Town Civic Association, Lotus River, Ottery and Grassy Park Residents Association (LOGRA), the Zandvlei Trust and the Cape Wetlands Forum have come together to protest the development. Local residents have lodged their objections with the City.

Currently, seven local schools are contributing to a programme initiated by Cochrane and SANBI to "dress the Princess". Each school has been allocated a plot to nurture. Parents accompany their children on weekends to tend the plots and grow new fynbos.

"It's the youth we must reach, they are our future, and they need to participate in our growing environment. They become our greatest advocates for the environment and have really championed the cause of the Princess," says Kelvin.

The campaign has made extensive use of the press. The mainstream and community newspapers have kept a vigilant eye on developments and published over 80 articles in the past year. A petition was launched which was published in the *People's Post*, a free local community newspaper. Within a very short space of time, 1 533 signatures had been collected.

"Local radio stations have also been supportive. We've had airtime and loads of people have phoned in asking questions and pledging their support. We have also been able to deal with concerns that we are turning down economic development. We are able to show that we are definitely not opposed to economic development. In fact we see huge opportunity with our proposal for different tourist and eco-friendly linked opportunity," Kelvin explained.

"This sustained passage of information serves to ensure that everyone is aware of and knows the issues relating to Princessvlei. No one can say they don't know. There is enough information out there for people to make informed and considered choices."

A leader page opinion piece arguing the case for restoration of the vlei in the *Cape Times* yielded vigorous response. Letters to the press, municipal officials discussing and debating their previous decisions and the general public were stirred to remember. It served to "trigger memories, open wounds and motivate others to get involved," Kelvin explained. People responded with letters to the press and made contact with campaign organisers.

The pressure prompted a delegation from the municipality, including the Mayor of Cape Town, to visit Princessvlei to see the vlei and hear for themselves the wishes of the local community.

While the final outcome of the vlei is still pending, the sustained pressure brought about by community organisation, networking and media coverage won a significant victory in delaying the approval and has inspired Kelvin and others to launch a longer term campaign to protect Cape Town's natural areas.

"Had we not mounted this pressure, the development would have gone ahead. This was a process which started many years ago and was seemingly sneaked in the back door. We will fight it till we have liberated the Princess from this tyranny."

"Greening and conservation have the potential to nurture the development of local communities – where members take responsibility and interact with one another. I believe that in this way people will be able to break down their high walls and other claustrophobic ideas," Kelvin says.



*Fynbos planted to restore *Princessolei**

3. Fundraising

Fundraising is a complex area, and it is beyond the scope of this book to go into it in detail.

The scope for fundraising, and the legal and policy restrictions around it, varies substantially from site to site, depending on which authority owns or manages it. Obviously, if we are fundraising for a site, we need to be familiar with these parameters and work within them. Whatever form the fundraising takes, it is important that it complies with the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) and the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA). Conservators need to familiarise themselves with both and ensure that they are always compliant, transparent in dealing with funds and scrupulously honest. Often it is easier for NGOs or community partners to receive funds for partnership projects than for the conservation site management to receive funds directly. Our role then is to provide support in the fundraising efforts if their proposals are in line with our vision for the site.

While we will not go into fundraising in detail, funds are always needed to enable projects that can grow the value of the site, we explore three examples of the work that has been done in Cape Town.

The Cape Town Environmental Education Trust (CTEET) is a trust fund set up by a local conservation manager in response to the need to employ more conservators on urban sites and to provide education. Mark Ogilvie, CEO of CTEET explains:

CTEET was set up nine years ago. It includes the Friends groups, conservation user groups and JAG Foundation, a sports development body. It has signed an memorandum of understanding with the City of Cape Town to provide environmental education in line with City policy. CTEET's primary role is to provide education to school learners and it currently conducts 60 % of the City's environmental education camps. In the past six months, the volunteers and CTEET have put in 833 hours of work into conservation in the city.

The second component of CTEET is the Nature Care Fund (NCF). It has a separate bank account which puts conservators on the ground. NCF funds the conservator at Kenilworth Race Course but Golden Circle – an entertainment company – pays for it, while the City gets recognition for it. Other major funders include Grand West Casino and SA Breweries. Muizenberg East Company pays for 33 staff, who are deployed by the City. Companies contributing to the fund qualify for a tax rebate.

Sterling work is done by volunteer groups who raise funds for conservation and community related projects. However, as with all our endeavours, we need to ensure that any efforts are in line with our vision for the site and our way of working. One site manager found herself with a difficult situation:

A community partner raised funds to build a bird hide on the site. It was agreed that a bird hide would be a wonderful addition to the site and volunteers were engaged to build it. The site manager drafted an MOU and requested regular reports. The MOU was signed but not adhered to and no reports were forthcoming. The bird hide was poorly constructed and never completed. In the end the hide was taken down because it was not made with appropriate materials.

- Name withheld, case study



Do it day volunteers at Edith Stephens Wetland Park organised through Greater Good South Africa



This experience points to the need for clear guidelines and transparency regarding any funds raised and projects undertaken on the site, or in the name of the management of the site. They should be approved by the relevant forums or management committees and any guidelines, such as a memorandum of understanding (MOU), must be strictly followed. Sometimes our willingness to appreciate and support community efforts can land us in an awkward situation.

In her efforts to maximise the resources available to Edith Stephens Wetland Park, Luzann decided to approach local businesses:

Edith Stephens is surrounded by a huge industrial area with very large industrial companies. We are keen for them to see how the reserve benefits local communities and to contribute to its development, so we thought it a good idea to tap into their corporate social investment programmes. We have found, however, that many have their head offices based in Gauteng, and so we have to make arrangements to meet with them there.

We've also worked with Greater Good South Africa (GGSA) – which links local organisations with potential local business funders. They try to match both parties' needs.

Through this we were linked with a company who were willing to fund designing and building a concert platform for Edith. We now have a building contractor coming in next week to start to build the outdoor stage.

- Luzann Isaacs, Reserve Manager, City of Cape Town



Staff employed by the Nature Care Fund

¹ Capra, F., "An Interview with Fritjof Capra by Barbara Vogl", in *Ecoliteracy: A Path with a Heart*, <http://www.haven.net/patterns/capra.html>

² Capra, F., "Ecoliteracy: The Challenge for Education in the Next Century", Liverpool Schumacher Lectures, Centre for Ecoliteracy, March 20, 1999, Berkley California

³ Ibid.