



THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS & NETWORKS (THROUGH TRANSDISCIPLINARY CO-PRODUCTION)

Addressing the cross-cutting problems associated with climate variability and change in southern African cities requires significant action, investment and collaboration to connect often 'siloed' departments and organisations.

Building strong relationships and networks of stakeholders within and across cities is essential for a coordinated approach. It inspires and supports stakeholders in the cities.

Relationships and networks are strengthened by social learning, group reflections, knowledge sharing and co-production.

This story highlights the role of social learning activities (e.g. city exchanges, collaborative research) in developing the relationships and networks needed to deal with the impacts of climate change in FRACTAL city-regions.

THE CHANGE STORY

Relationships between city councils and research institutions in FRACTAL cities were historically weak. In many cases, organisations had never worked together. Sharing of best practice related to resilience was also limited between the cities. As a result, representatives in these cities felt isolated when faced with climate challenges. The Mayor of Blantyre said, "It is good to hear of the similar challenges both cities [Harare and Blantyre] face and now we do not feel so alone in tackling these issues". Engagements in cities typically followed meeting and workshop-like formats, rarely allowing for transdisciplinary engagement, co-production, learning and reflection. FRACTAL engagements were more participatory, as one participant highlighted, "This format of creating knowledge together and asking how things can be done differently is what is needed and is very new to us".

FRACTAL activities aimed to foster collaboration within and between cities, thereby helping to build regional awareness of climate information and empower decision-makers to manage climate risks in their cities. City exchange visits occurred within and between multiple FRACTAL cities including Harare and Windhoek, Lusaka and Blantyre, Lusaka, Durban and Maputo. Mechanisms for exchanges encouraged city partners to develop joint proposals, and priority was given to those proposals that included both researchers and city practitioners in activities. At other FRACTAL engagements and learning webinars, the exchange of knowledge was encouraged. For example, at the final annual meeting, representatives from different cities shared their perspectives on the most notable project benefit within their local contexts. Within cities, FRACTAL's transdisciplinary learning processes aimed to equally value all knowledge types and to support collaboration across sectors affected by climate impacts, mainly through joint problem and solution framing.



RELATED IMPACT STORIES (IS) | Developing receptivity through transdisciplinary co-production (IS7); Working across knowledge types to integrate climate and biodiversity planning in Durban (IS8); Building relations and receptivity in Harare (IS10); Development of policy briefs in Lusaka through transdisciplinary co-production (IS11); Co-developing an early-warning tool for climate-induced, vector- and water-borne diseases within Maputo City Municipality (IS13).

The Future Resilience for African Cities and Lands (FRACTAL) project aims to address the challenge of providing accessible, timely, applicable and defensible climate information that is needed by decision-makers operating at the city-region scale in southern Africa. FRACTAL impact stories have been collaboratively developed by various research teams. They highlight key methods, engagements and research findings from the FRACTAL project.



UNPACKING THIS STORY

Through building networks and relationships within and across cities, practitioners and decision makers have been exposed to innovative and alternative ways of thinking about urban and climate challenges. They have also considered a more proactive planning approach. Researchers have been exposed to ways of conducting research that contribute directly to decision-making. These networks have mobilised resources for collaborative projects in the climate change field - for example, FRACTAL partners are involved in the Improved Municipal Planning in African CiTies (IMPACT) initiative. They have

also improved how information is shared between city officials and in-country meteorological offices. These ongoing discussions within and across cities have increased awareness about climate change and the importance of climate information in decision-making. For example, Lusaka has signed the Durban Adaptation Charter (DAC) and several other FRACTAL cities are considering this course of action. The development paths of southern African cities are not yet 'locked in', which leaves local stakeholders in a strong position to lead innovations for climate resilient development.

The types of transdisciplinary

learning engagements that have been prioritised within FRACTAL are key to building the much-needed relationships and networks within and across cities. An external learning observer noted that these engagements, as well as the interactive facilitation styles adopted, help to build conceptual development and social cohesion, saying, "[FRACTAL] has developed a lattice of robust and collegial relationships across participating cities and universities, generating FRACTAL material, affecting decision-making and leaving a social/relational legacy that provides the basis for future decision and knowledge making".

LEARNINGS

Transdisciplinary co-productive learning processes, especially between different groups of people, are effective models for knowledge sharing and strengthening networks. The types of activities that have been prioritised within FRACTAL - across different organisations and cities - as well as the mechanisms for implementing these, have contributed to strong relationships and networks.

These networks have enabled decision makers and researchers in southern African cities to broaden their perspectives and learn from best practice, especially from cities facing similar challenges in the same regional context. Learning processes within and across cities that support joint exploration of issues, as well as knowledge sharing and co-production, provide inspiration and support for stakeholders who are tasked with dealing with climate change.

A sense of 'togetherness' has been developed between city stakeholders, which has also contributed to developing receptivity across different sectors. Building trust is crucial, and this trust has benefits beyond the project.



Interactive activities build trust and networks



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