

Copyright for all works completed by Ivory Research Co Ltd remains with Ivory Research Co Ltd. You may not copy, modify, publish, transmit, transfer or sell, reproduce, create derivative works from, distribute, perform, display, or in any way exploit any of the content, in whole or in part, save as hereinafter provided.

You may download or copy one copy of the work you have purchased only for your own personal use; however, you may not submit this document under your name. The statements contained herein are statements of opinion of the writer only and not the statements of Ivory Research Co Ltd, its officers, employees or agents. To the fullest extent permissible by law Ivory Research Co Ltd hereby excludes liability for the truth or accuracy of any information provided herein, provided that nothing shall affect your statutory rights where you deal as consumer.

Discussion – Social capital in relation to the NGO approach

The previous chapter has shown the ways social capital influences the NGO in its work. Social capital can be seen to generate efficiency and impact work through building social connections and networks. In turn, this supports the scalability of the work undertaken. However, the relevance of social capital as a concept is often challenged, raising doubts as to how it supports the NGO's approach. A particular way to evaluate social capital is through the lens of current development thinking, especially the "Doing Development Differently" (DDD) agenda. The DDD is an approach to development work that recognises the complexity of the local context, highlighting "politically smart, locally led development" (Booth and Unsworth, 2014., Andrews et al, 2013). However, the application of the approach has not been widely successful. Utilising the concept of social capital, that embraces ideas of connectivity and strengthening local capacity, into the DDD approach may emphasise new interactions and further the agenda. The NGO's working approach in this analysis embodies multiple aspects of the DDD agenda, and thus becomes a pertinent frame for discussion of the analysis.

Firstly, the analysis shows that the NGO's approach is result-orientated, focusing on small, achievable targets, rather than a traditional centralised approach to budgeting, planning and execution. Its work also gives opportunity to experiment, learn, and adapt. Further, the NGO integrates aspects of "positive-deviance", "a growing approach in international development that identifies those within a population who are outperforming" (Albanna et al, 2019), and is able to learn and incorporate these small successes on a wider scale. In this way, the NGO is able to improve its efficiency. The open approach taken by the NGO allows grassroots work to utilise local potential through opportunities from local collaborations and actors. Social capital can arguably be influential to the DDD agenda, which emphasises and seeks the potential that exists within the social context. Social capital, in particular the building of rapport and trust, enables access to social networks that in return offers opportunity for partnership, and encourages local leadership. As seen from the study, this in turn enables the mobilising of other forms of capital to reach the NGO objectives. It also provides multiple benefits in overcoming local problems that can arise on the ground. Importantly, social capital aids scalability through two differing routes. First, whereby grassroots networking leads to opportunities, which in turn leads to more connections and diversification of activities in a defined area. Secondly, through a process of establishing social connections and networks enabling geographic expansion and diversification of work. The building of social capital has been strengthened by the flexible and adaptable approach taken by the NGO, an approach which is closely aligned to the DDD agenda, and has ultimately allowed for scalable opportunities.

The NGO also focuses on a pragmatic approach, as it looks to associate with and benefit from different stakeholders, including the public and private sector and local grassroots organisations. Further, a clear non-adversarial stance is taken, as it is critical to

achieving NGO objectives that work is politically neutral and seen by the government as in line with its own agenda and willing to collaborate. One area that it has been key, has been to overcome local challenges, where the engagement of different stakeholders has been key. Arguably, the results-driven stance taken by the NGO also drives work that is politically-smart. Here, social capital has played an important role in aiding the NGO's approach to being "politically-smart". For example, working with the private sector is a pragmatic step looking to utilise of the growth in corporate social responsibility, enabling reach for projects as well as outreach. As the divisions between environmental actors are becoming more blurred and complex, social capital can arguably be advantageous, supporting new forms of collaboration and partnership. Achieving the outcomes through this method depends on the engagement of stakeholders; such as civil society organisations, public and private institutions, and the country's citizens. Arguably, it is social capital that can be instrumental in bringing actors together, directing resources towards achieving the desired environmental outcomes. This study has shown how the NGO understands the importance of harnessing the potential from an active civil society and fast growing environmental interests from more financially influential actors. Mobilising this potential for the NGO calls for strong outreach and the establishment of influential social connections and networks.

While social capital has been discussed as a largely positive concept when viewed in relation to the wider NGO approach, one of the large criticisms of social capital that should be discussed comes from the relatively limited success in achieving evidenced outcomes in the wider development sphere. While it once was hailed as a new era in development thinking which was characterised by the recognition of the "social" element, it has been heavily criticised as becoming just a new "language for talking about participation, civil society and local organizations" (Bebbington, 2004) put forward by the World Bank (Defilippis, 2001; O'Donovan, 2017). It is argued that in reality, social capital has not changed the way development has been undertaken in practice, and instead acts as a "barrier to social inclusion and social mobility, dividing rather than uniting communities or societies" (Claridge, 2004). Considering this, by integrating social capital into the DDD approach, an alternative way to conceptualise social capital can be presented, that goes beyond the traditional "capital" concept. Situated within a working approach that emphasises aspects of the DDD including thinking collaboratively, locally, and politically-smart, social capital becomes more than useful connections, it becomes an enabling factor for an encompassing development approach that can impact and strengthen NGO strategies.

REFERENCES

Albanna, B. and Heeks, R., 2019. Positive deviance, big data, and development: A systematic literature review. *The Electronic Journal of Information Systems in Developing Countries*, 85(1), p.e12063.

Andrews, M., Pritchett, L. and Woolcock, M., 2013. Escaping capability traps through problem driven iterative adaptation (PDIA). *World Development*, 51, pp.234-244.

Bebbington, A., 2004. Social capital and development studies 1: critique, debate, progress?. *Progress in Development Studies*, 4(4), pp.343-349.

Booth, D. and Unsworth, S., 2014. *Politically smart, locally led development*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Claridge, T., 2004. Social Capital and Natural Resource Management: An important role for social capital? *Unpublished Thesis, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia*.

DeFilippis, J., 2001. The myth of social capital in community development. *Housing policy debate*, 12(4), pp.781-806.

O'Donovan, E., 2017. "Missing link" or missed opportunity? Bourdieu, agency and the political economy of the social capital initiative. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 3(1), p.1308993.