

Partnerships for Urban Development: A Capital Collective Case Study

By Morris Mthombeni

(Written for use in the National Treasury City Support Programme, Executive Leadership Programme at the Gordon Institute of Business Science)

Capital Collective is registered as a public benefit organisation established in January 2014 with the aim of enhancing collaboration between the public and private sectors as partners in the rejuvenation of Tshwane's Inner City. Against the context of a vibrant but strained City of Tshwane, Capital Collective was established as a civic action platform aimed at giving business and community leaders a mechanism to influence the service delivery agenda of, and to help in addressing intractable social problems to the City. However, Capital Collective recognises that its initiatives are very different from many other civic actions that appear to get the attention of City officials throughout the country.

While it has demonstrated success in market-based civic activities, Capital Collective yearned for the opportunity to implement a non-market and an apolitical civic project. While there continues to be difficulties in getting the Walkerspruit project off the ground, this project continues to present an opportunity for Capital Collective to straddle market-based and social-based civic activities.

Capital Collective works in association with various initiatives and organisations to revitalize and restore the inner-city. Examples of its initiatives are Market @TheSheds, which "is an art, design, food and music market that involves a number of different Pretoria based groups such as Pretoria Street Photography, Capital Arts Revolution, Cool Capital, the department of Arts and Culture, and the City of Tshwane,"¹ walking and cycling events around the City, urban farming programs, an inner-city newspaper, urban art projects and cleaning and safety programmes. Beneficiaries of its initiatives include inner-city artists and unemployed persons.

An important prospective project, that is awaiting sign-off from the City officials, is about the rejuvenation of the Walkerspruit, which is believed to be an ideal route for walking, cycling, recycling, and recreation. The Walkerspruit will benefit the City and its residents. It will provide an open space for residents to enjoy for a variety of recreational activities like cycling, walking and picnics. It will also expand the City's tourism portfolio.

Private sector entities have committed over R 1 million towards the Walkerspruit project. However, to raise additional funding they need commitment from the City that it will maintain the Walkerspruit once rejuvenated. Capital Collective proposed that the City demonstrate its commitment by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to this effect. The process towards concluding the MoU has been supported in October 2015 by the then Mayor Kgosi Sputla Ramokgopa of the African National Congress (ANC), and in April 2017 by Mayor Msimanga of the Democratic Alliance.

Civic activism comes in different forms. Some civic activism evolve bottom up from the community. Others develop around an issue and involves members of the community, businesses, and government officials. Still others are driven by commercially minded individuals who are keen to solve a social problem that simultaneously benefits society and their commercial interests. The wicked problem in this case is that it straddles all these types of civic activism. Therefore, the wicked problem is the extent to which City officials recognised, and are responsive to the, diverse types of civic activism. The 'wicked problem' engaging Capital Collective is the extent to which it can persuade City officials to be as responsive to market-based civic activities as they are to social-based activities.

Question: How can this 'wicked problem' be better understood and better addressed in the context of South African cities of the future?

¹ Bhengu, L (June 2015). How Public Art is Reshaping Tshwane retrieved on 13 March 2018 from <https://www.urbanafrica.net/urban-voices/how-public-art-is-reshaping-tshwane/>