“The Conflict and Governance Facility (CAGE)-An evolving model\(^1\) for productive dialogue”

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Abstract:

Research and practice are different activities, yet a productive dialogue should form a bridge between the two. The paper intends to explore one of the spaces where such productive dialogue could happen. It sets out a model that is currently operating in South Africa within the field of policy research. The model brings government, a donor community, higher education institutions, non-governmental organisations and “communities” together over the key issues of conflict and governance.

Located within this macro framework of Official Development Assistance is the Conflict and Governance Facility of South Africa. The Facility is a partnership project of the National Treasury of South Africa and the European Union and is part of the European Union Programme of Reconstruction and Development (EPRD) for South Africa.

However, the challenge with models always lies with attempting to get the “mix of ingredients” right and to combine those elements into a 21st century vision of models for foundations based on their true potential for innovation and creativity. As with all other organisations, at the heart of CAGE, lies an intangible web of nuances and competencies that are indeed difficult to articulate and replicate. This paper has tried to make some of the elements of this indigenous grant maker visible for potential future projects of this nature.

It has therefore set out a pragmatic case study of certain criteria which might make those intending to explore models of deepening democracy through research, more insightful.
Synopsis:

The paper's scope is to explore the Conflict & Governance Facility, an indigenous grant maker of South Africa, as a case study for the “Theories, Concepts, Models” session of the International Third Sector Research International Conference of July 2006. It is presented to show an interface between policy makers, practitioners, researchers and communities. The purpose of this paper is to consolidate some of the initial work of the Conflict and Governance Facility and review it as an evolving model within the field of policy research in the conflict and governance arena.

In this paper, I therefore discuss the inception and identity-formation of the Conflict & Governance Facility. Using a qualitative approach, I then assess the Facility as an evolving model that facilitates productive dialogue in the arena of policy research. I also explore the “organisational development” of the model and offer practical recommendations with regard to such pilot models.

1. Introduction:

Take for example “bio-fuel technology” as a policy issue—"For instance should a crop such as peanuts be used to make fuel, or would the villages be better off eating the peanuts? Or selling them? Or should they press them to make oil, for cooking or for selling, and feed the high-protein residue ‘cake’ to livestock, which in turn they can either eat or sell, while using the livestock wastes (and the crop wastes) to make compost to renew the soil, or to generate biogas for cooking and heating? Or should they grow a different crop altogether? Should a grain crop be distilled to make ethanol fuel or should villages eat the grain? If they use the grain for livestock feed, it can be used for ethanol and still feed the livestock: the distillation process to produce ethanol converts the carbohydrates in the grain while leaving the protein. The protein residue is excellent stock feed, which can be supplemented by forage crops which humans can’t eat. This could mean improved utilization of resources."6

The above anecdotal extract from a Special Feature on Bio-fuels captures the nature of the multi-faceted debate around real life and, of course, policy issues. It highlights the trade-off, the concerns, and the need for quality information. It shows potential and actual stakeholders and the complexity of the issue. At the heart of the debate, there are decisions to be made.

How are these decisions to be made and what fora could bring people together to explore questions such as these?

Policy research and dialogues around issues of existence are but some of the mechanisms that could be used to reach such decisions and to guide people including the policy makers towards an optimum choice of action.
Certainly, productive dialogues could go some lengths to producing better informed decisions which will lead to more inclusive, legitimised policies. A plethora of fora exists and work with greater or lesser degrees of success. In mature democracies, these fora often have established track records and work with high levels of confidence in taking such debates forward. In younger democracies, we are still searching, exploring and questioning through fora and organisations that might be said to be on the “cusp”.

CAGE is one such “cusp” organisation. It intersects research, theories, practice, policy, communities, government, and donors and absorbs some of the complexities of these many actors at a common point.

Stated differently, it has been said that research wants to explain and understand the world by adding to the body of knowledge: on the other hand, development practice and policy wants to hurry up and make things happen. A fundamental tension therefore exists between practitioners and theoreticians when “the lofty world” of academia comes into contact with the busy world of service delivery. Research and practice are different activities, yet a productive dialogue should form a bridge between the two.  

The paper will now explore, on a practical level, one of the spaces where such productive dialogue could happen. It sets out an approach that is currently operating in South Africa within an arena linked to policy research. This approach brings government, a donor community, higher education institutions, non-governmental organisations and communities together over issues of conflict and governance through a project called The Conflict & Governance Facility (CAGE).

2. **Background: Inception and Identity - Formation of the Conflict & Governance Facility:**

2.1 **Problem Statement - Towards Inception of the Conflict & Governance Facility:**

In the post-1994 period South Africa had to set itself on a path of (re)construction in almost all aspects of its domestic and foreign policy. It was felt however that policy-making and policy implementation on issues that mitigate or cause conflict could be strengthened through the promotion of a wider and deeper debate between government and civil society. This engagement could be facilitated through a more effective contribution by South African policy research and other institutions, both government and non-governmental, working in the area of conflict and good governance.

In addition, the new imperatives resulting from globalisation and the international pressure on South Africa to take up a continental leadership role require that the South Africans have the capacity to embark on a large number of policy analysis, debates and formulations in all of the above areas. Further, there are regional and sub-regional misunderstandings, conflicts and tensions, which are being addressed without in-depth research.  


It is self evident, therefore, that there is insufficient analytical research undertaken on conflict and governance-related policy issues. Yet, the outputs of this research could guide decision-making.

To this end, the Conflict and Governance Facility was formed with an overall objective of improving national policy, decision-making and implementation on issues related to foreign and domestic policy that either mitigate or cause conflict, thus contributing to good governance and the deepening of democracy in South and Southern Africa.\(^8\)

The Facility came into being in 2004 through the signing of a Financing Agreement between the Government of South Africa and the European Union. The Government of South Africa, through its National Treasury, is the Implementing Agency for this grant making project and the European Programme for Reconstruction and Development is the core funder of the project. Described, to the best of knowledge, as a “first”\(^9\) of its kind, in terms of the combination of elements, namely sector (conflict and governance), location (South Africa—“emerging democracy”, yet with a SADC\(^10\) and African reach), funding model (Government and EU), the Conflict and Governance Facility’s development has been followed with interest.

### 2.2 Identity Formation of the Conflict & Governance Facility:

Given that there was no precedent to this project, an important part of setting it up was to establish an identity in a field that has established players. CAGE therefore strove to develop a vibrant, accessible and relevant image that would build CAGE as a “brand”. This image is but one dimension of an overall communication strategy that enables CAGE to be positioned as part of the South African conflict prevention, human rights and governance landscape.

Visibility of CAGE was also crucial considering its link to “Super-brands” such as democratic South Africa and the European Union.

CAGE therefore attempted to build an identity that would spark interest, give clear identification and provide a solid African image. Thus an exploratory metaphor, the “Isivivane”, was launched.

The concept of “Isivivane” is drawn from African tradition. It refers to a pile of stones that are collected together in one place. Integral to the Isivivane is the ritual where every passer-by or traveller who passes the pile would add a stone to the formation. In doing this, every traveller, it is said, becomes part of a common purpose and identifies with a certain good cause. A further dimension is that by adding a stone to the pile, you gain guidance and protection on your journey.\(^11\) In archetypal terms, stones also contain ancient and fundamental knowledge.

Given the connotations of the term, the concept was ideally suited to CAGE. The two conceptual entities are linked in the vision to build a unified purpose, including the documenting of and adding to knowledge, creating conditions for
safety and greater protection and honouring those who have already fallen to conflict.\textsuperscript{12}

With Isivivane and the CAGE Facility, the following rich duality is posited:

“We see, for example, that a stick is a tool, and we see the effects of how to use it. The club that kills can drive a stake into the ground to hold a shelter. The spear that takes a life can be used as a lever to ease life’s burdens. The knife that cuts flesh can be used to cut cloth. The hands that build bombs can be used to build schools. The minds that coordinate the activities of violence can coordinate the activities of cooperation”\textsuperscript{13}

Awareness and interest in CAGE, as a model, was demonstrated when unsolicited consultations were held with CAGE for it to share learning from this model with the United Nations “Dialogue with the Global South: Building UN Capacity through University Partnerships” in 2004; a potentially similar project considered for Vietnam in 2005, and in 2006, other similar projects under the EU banner as well as the Southern African Trust, a Trust that sets out to widen participation in policies to overcome poverty in Southern Africa.

The Isivivane metaphor was given substance through the incremental processes that set up CAGE as a grant maker in the field. This included the creation of sound governance structures which includes a multi-sectoral Programme Steering Committee, extensive Terms of Reference to guide implementation and the roll out of Calls for Proposals for research. Naturally, the essence of the metaphor lies in the “CAGE community” of grant recipients who were contracted to undertake the very research activities conceived under the model.

Through these modalities, the CAGE identity was fleshed out and through this Paper, the findings of its evolution as a model are presented.

3. Methodology:

The findings of this paper are based on a qualitative methodological approach, drawing from the insiders’ perspective and adopting a case study design. Data was collected through literature review, personal documents, unstructured interviews and participant observation.\textsuperscript{14}

This paper has also drawn on organisational development paradigms, given the zero-base start of CAGE as an organisation.

4. Assessment of CAGE as an evolving model:

4.1 Perspectives of the CAGE Model:

The Conflict and Governance Facility, like many models has stretch! Like many models, it may be described from different perspectives, depending on the stake that you hold in the model. If you view it from the European Union point of view, then it is seen as donor official development assistance; if seen
from the recipient’s point of view, then it is part of the recipient’s country official development assistance. As development assistance, it also targets a number of beneficiaries that might be seen as different layers: the primary layer would be the research organisations that receive the grant from CAGE. A further and more distance layer is the policy maker, who might receive the findings of the policy research and choose how, when, where to use or not to use it in the policy framework. A final layer might be described as the citizen who is the ultimate beneficiary who is meant to have a better life as a result of more efficient and effective policy implementation.

Notwithstanding the above, the Conflict and Governance Facility is also a model that operates in a dynamic and fluctuating environment i.e. governance on the African continent, peace building, knowledge management and capacity building.

Given that CAGE straddles these “worlds”, how indeed has it performed within an emerging democracy such as South Africa?

4.2 Search to Fit: Multiple Identities:

From the outset, the Facility adopted in its implementation phase a search to fit as opposed to “a search for fit”. It is felt that CAGE was required to do this as it entered as “an actor in a relatively new and complex field” of very different professional cultures. These include the policy field, the research world including emerging research competence and the arena of development. Each of these has a distinct culture, different ways of thinking and methods of working and each tends to be tentative to accepting new players in the sector.

The searching approach is well aligned with South Africa’s own development. As a young democracy, but with “great expectations” of it from the world and the continent to which it belongs, it is itself seeking for credible nationhood and a true niche. As such, its approach is often tentative as it explores organically, experiments and searches for what works, amidst the many challenges that face it as diverse and complex country with a multiplicity of needs.

In line with its searching approach, CAGE explores multiple identities. These include:

- An administrator and grant maker
- An actor in the political field
- A developmental actor
- Interface or resource within the sector it services

What then has CAGE achieved within this multiplicity of roles?

Given that CAGE is an organisation that falls under the strict ambit of the European Union, it has had to be mindful of the overarching global frameworks in which it is positioned.
The context of this will be explored briefly. The Contonou Agreement is the overarching agreement which frames the partnership between Africa (and Caribbean-Pacific) and the European Union. South Africa indeed has a bilateral agreement with the EU in terms of the EU-SA Trade, Development and Co-operation agreement which specifies the unique nature of South Africa’s engagement with the EU, but also embraces the guiding principles of the Contonou Agreement.

These pillars of the agreement are as follows and are the basis, to a greater/lesser extent, for the grant making undertaken by CAGE:
- Political dimensions of relations between ACP counties and the European Union
- Involvement of civil society, the private sector and other non-state players
- Poverty reduction
- Innovative economic and trade co-operation framework
- Rationalisation of financial instruments and rolling programming

Development co-operation is to be pursued with local ownership as a defining factor. Co-operation is intended to be an enabling framework of support to the beneficiary country’s “own development strategies” (Contonou: 2000:18).

Therefore, while the fiscal disbursement is laid down by the Practical Rules and Guidelines of the European Union, the substantive nature of the grant making is shaped by the South African stakeholders. For aid to be effective, developing countries must be “in the driving seat” and “lead a nationally-determined development strategy”.

South Africa accepts full ownership of its ODA flows and drives these flows from a policy position of a strong South African driven ODA strategy, management and procedures. This ensures that South Africa utilizes its limited ODA resources (between 1 and 1.3 % of its annual budget and 0.3% of GDP), optimally.

However, it is to be acknowledged that despite these high-minded principles of high level agreements, CAGE is still a grant maker operating within a specific context with South African beneficiaries. As such, “funders and funded alike are engaged in a complex dance in which the agenda of those wishing to make grants be reconciled with the agenda of those applying for them”. Further there is also the acknowledgment that “power is a hidden force within donor-grantee-beneficiary relationships” which indeed does well affect stakeholders from engaging in meaningful learning. Indeed, there are pressures and expectations on either side of the scale that together shape the funding context.
5. Findings

Within this “complex dance”...

5.1 How has CAGE evolved as a grant maker/administrator?

It has been found that CAGE has been very efficient in implementing grant making\(^6\). This has been achieved through a number of factors:

- Creating an identity with a vision, mission and set of values-using that identity to enter the field and to build the emergence and profile of the organisation;\(^7\)
- Constantly questioning how we engage with role players: a self conscious testing and re-testing of the “why’s and wherefore’s” of how to engage with stakeholders;
- And yet on the other hand, working within a defined set of rules which provide a set of standard operating procedures to safeguard fiscal responsibility-but being aware of these and the ideologies inherent in them;\(^8\)
- Intellectual capital that is able to take those “rules” and interpret them so as to further the aims of the project and sector, while still retaining compliance-this creates flexibility and responsiveness to stakeholders;
- Imbuing the organisation with a sense of being a high performance team;\(^9\)
- Good systems enabled both by Information Technology and Human Resources;
- High levels of corporate governance embodied in a multi-sectoral steering committees and transparent systems;
- Explicit stating of both the legal and psychological contracts within the grant making relationship: this entails the use of legal principles but also the fostering of good human relations;
- Transparency and responsiveness: stating the case of CAGE and the case for CAGE openly and showing the willingness to be creative within the rules;
- Excellent and regular consultation\(^10\) and communication, both informal, formal and face-to-face

The creation of CAGE enabled the realisation of a re-granting strategy from the principle Grant Maker, the European Union, on a number of levels. These include the flexibility to handle smaller grants, allowing for an intermediary to target in-country grantees, technical support as part of the grant-making process and to increase reach.\(^11\) Indeed, local grant-makers bring “networks, experience, clarity, credibility and sustainability to the grant-making experience.” External agencies are offered “an insight into complex grant-making contexts”\(^12\)
5.2 How has CAGE evolved as an actor in the political field?

It is within this arena that CAGE, understandably, has had uneven results.

As political forces are really decisive in policy agendas, it is highly unlikely that a partnership project such as CAGE would have a high level impact in policy circles. Given the context-dependent role of policy, any organisation external to the political process would need to fulfill, amongst others, the following core conditions:

- Reputation and credibility;\(^{33}\)
- Ease of access into or part of high profile policy networks or "inner circles";
- Legitimate credentials: "links, influence and legitimacy";\(^{34}\)
- Ability to prove validity and reliability over a period of time: longitudinal testing;
- Relevance: an established acceptance of research being a fundamental to policy making (a mindset that is open to research and a diversity of opinion);
- Wide reach;
- Funding-bringing money into a not for profit, largely donor-dependant sector (caveat: funding needs to be linked to above);
- Timing and presentation.\(^{35}\)

Just to achieve some level at “pitching” at the policy space, CAGE has had to work at aligning itself to the leverage points into “the space”. Van Dyk\(^{36}\) (1999: 17) highlights the two main groupings who are the “players” in that space namely “policy communities” and “issue networks”.

“Policy communities” – In South Africa, these are generally small, closed circles that are made up of politicians, technocrats, “inner-circle” think tanks with the right political credentials. They have collective interests in a specific set of policy issues and are in agreement about the broad direction that the policy should take.

CAGE built in eligibility criteria for its funding that would draw those “inner circle” think tanks into its grant portfolio. This has had success in that, after 12 short months (“short” in research circles), CAGE-funded research has been cited in the President’s State of the Nation address\(^{37}\), influenced the President to call for a regulatory review on start up for small businesses\(^{38}\), contributed to a government-endorsed set of guidelines for local government practitioners\(^{39}\). Research on “Developmental Peace Keeping” has been heard and read at a number of parliamentary and government briefings, both in South Africa and at the African Union. It has also contributed to conceptualizing the South African White Paper of a similar theme. Further significant funding has been committed to taking this pilot study forward and there exists the possibility of a dedicated post conflict capacity being created within the South African government structures.\(^{40}\)
However CAGE works through an open Call for Proposals and therefore does not only support the "inner circle". It is also aligned with the need for more independent forms of policy research, and therefore consulted very widely to set broad enough themes that would attract the community networks. As such it also funds research that falls within the “issue networks”- these are more open fora which include a broad continuum of people and organisations. The issues are subject to more debate and discussion and less agreement about the preferred policy direction.

As CAGE’s grantees\textsuperscript{41} are the intellectual property holders of the research supported by the grant, both those in the policy community and those in the issue networks are free to use the research for their chosen agenda’s. Hence, CAGE’s support of research around participatory democracy\textsuperscript{42} is being used in the issues network. It is anticipated that more of the research, currently being undertaken will also be used in this domain. Straddling somewhere between is research done by the South African Human Sciences Research Council on Black Economic Empowerment\textsuperscript{43}

Needless to say, these two dimensions are not mutually exclusive and CAGE has found in dialogue sessions, that there may be a healthy cross over between the two. It has been suggested indeed that “policy networks usually share some common values and outlooks and consciously work together to take advantage of policy ‘spaces’ and ‘windows’\textsuperscript{44}. What is important is for any role player who aims to impact on policy to “map out their legitimacy chains through systems of accountability (building structures that are representative of local constituencies where necessary) or relevant experience.”\textsuperscript{45}

To this end, CAGE has held and holds numerous rounds of consultations, attends many networking functions and profiles CAGE, has a media strategy and targets key role-players. It has grown a data base of close to a thousand registered stakeholders, from whom it invites feedback and encourages networking.

Thus, as a model, CAGE has aimed for a better understanding of the “landscapes” of policy and sought to work within that continuum. Whilst this might seem to be a middle of the road policy, or a betrayal of either agenda’s, CAGE has approximated delivery of results against the public sector funds that pinpointed its mandate.

The success of CAGE as political player is also too difficult to judge in the short space of its life time- as a project of 54 months- and given the “slippery” nature of tracking impact on policy research. At best, CAGE can mechanistically point to citations of its research. It is noted from the review that informed this paper, that “specific lessons about how policy areas are influenced by research are yet to be learned” (Crewe & Young: 2002: no page number) and that this might only be usefully tested if one is able to piece together a historical narrative of policy change which would involve the creation of a time line of key policy impacts along with important documents and events, and identifying key actors.\textsuperscript{46} CAGE has attempted this in terms of tracking the policy dialogue that is coming out of its supported research. It is
obviously limited by a small sample size, the case study approach and transferability concerns, and the lack of longitudinal time.

However, the point must be made that such a model, if replicated, must take care to “read the landscape” and try to pinpoint eligibility criteria for the recipient of funds that can optimize its ability to provide policy inputs. CAGE indeed communicates these kinds of eligibility criteria very strongly and up front and its assessment of proposals weights these criteria as critical for the receipt of funds.

Soundly in the favour of CAGE as an emerging model is that it appears to be delivering on the credibility/reputation factors within the research world. It is found that it is funding high quality research across the dimensions of: rigour of working methods, relevance for the political agenda, reputation and credibility of lead researchers and accessibility of the selected research projects to reach diverse audiences, including policy makers.47

At best, the preceding discussion skims the surface of a subject that deserves deepened commentary, but which stretches beyond the scope of this paper.

5.3 How has CAGE evolved as a development actor?

This is indeed a contested terrain and deserves the most sensitive of treatments, acknowledged, but not explored in this paper. CAGE indeed has been attributed with this label, based on the fact that it is a model within the developmental sector, within a South Africa as a developmental state48 and that part of its mandate is to develop capacity of emerging research competence. Needless to say in this short paragraph, there are a host of terms that deserve too a far richer interrogation. It is CAGE’s mandate to build capacity which this paper will take further in terms of CAGE as a “developmental actor”.

Capacity building in itself means different things to different people. Whilst it might well be captured as increasing knowledge and skills so that people are better able to solve problems and make decisions (Senge et al 1999; Mc Allister and Vernooy, 1999; Boal, 1995; Eade, 1997), the situational reality of South Africa has capacity building “equated with providing opportunities for individuals from previously marginalized sectors, especially given the pressures of past inequities”.49 CAGE indeed expressed this nuance in its log-frame through an activity expressed as “Twinning and collaboration between entrenched and emerging institutions/individuals is encouraged” and “research capacity strengthened” (2002). The terms “entrenched” and “emerging” were not conveniently defined anywhere and CAGE therefore risked an “as-of-now” unchallenged definition of “emerging” as “…defined according the number of years in operation: 0-5 years and verified as such, and 60% of management and staff must be black as per the Employment Equity Act of South Africa of 1998”.

What steps did CAGE, itself an emerging model, do to realize this goal?
CAGE built in an eligibility criterion that projects should have a capacity building element, through the inclusion of either emerging researchers/research organisations as integral to the proposed projects. CAGE reinforced this by publishing a stand alone Call that ring-fenced funding for emerging institutions, or entrenched organisations twinned with emerging institutions. An in-depth analysis of capacity building elements in the proposals was undertaken as was an in-depth literature review and concept paper around what constituted capacity building in the CAGE context. CAGE also used the media and requested a call for expression of interest so that organisations which deemed themselves to having emerging research competence registered with CAGE, either through hand written notification or web-based registration. These actions have gone someway to providing CAGE with a base-line of what capacity to build and with whom.

CAGE followed this up by awarding grants that scored strongly on the capacity building criterion and, by implementing with a small budget, its own project-driven capacity building events as additional to the capacity building mainstreamed in the grant process. Thus far, sets of events have happened: for example: a lecture series on research methodology for 100 previously disadvantaged students and an in-depth workshop for 30 organisations who seek to build research capacity. CAGE has also provided technical assistance to an NGO coalition around surveys as well as done staff exchanges with emerging organisations. It has also helped, in a decentralized model, a number of NGO’s with capacity building activities in their particular research strategies, including workshops on participatory action research and the Freire model. These activities are done in the full knowledge that capacity building should not be done or measured as events, but rather as continuous processes. CAGE has therefore fallen short of meaningful process-based capacity building, owing to its own limited project-specific life-span.

With regard to the model of twinning organisations around a grant, CAGE has had a very limited uptake. Reasons provided for this include

- No matching emerging institutions could be found to partner with against the proposed project;
- Research and capacity building are difficult to combine and are two different objectives;
- Time and budget constraints.

Further, it is essential that certain pre-conditions such as mutual trust and shared understanding have to be built for meaningful collaboration. With the pressures of short-term research projects and the realities of the “harsh competition” between organisations competing for funds, its is suggested that “collaboration is not as productive as it might be.”

Therefore, CAGE has played a limited role in terms of what might be ventured as a “development actor”. Should a model such as this be replicated, the recommendation is that a detailed feasibility study be undertaken to understand the specific objectives and outcomes that are sought from development actors. Clearly there is much room for enhancing the skills of young organisations around the intricacies of research and policy research,
through a variety of approaches such as research methodology, advocacy, lobbying, networking and a host of other competencies inherent in organisational development. Further, it is often the unique combination of elements, context-specific and generic, that cannot be easily replicated that would deem a “development actor” to be a success. CAGE has laid certain foundations to approximate this combination, but further reflection and investigation are needed.

5.4 How has CAGE evolved as an “Interface or resource within the sector it services”?

This role is perhaps the most exciting for the roles because it encompasses the key elements of the three areas already cited. At the time of CAGE’s mid-term review, it was felt that CAGE has begun this process quite successfully, but should take up this role more fully.

In terms of the mid term review, this area in particular was noted as a dimension for “added value and a niche for CAGE”. In the competitive environment both between NGO’s and research institutes, CAGE is positioned and perceived as a safer place. It was stated that “it is this somewhat arms-length position that enables it to cause authoritative and independent research on critical policy issues relating to governance to be done. It is less likely for (SA) government departments to commission open ended research into their own governance—however necessary that might be.”

To consolidate this safer place, CAGE has embarked on an inclusive stakeholder engagement process dubbed the “CAGE community”. This young initiative is to foster CAGE stakeholders, in the main the grantees, to “co-operate and work synergistically within a community”, so that a knowledge-network in the sector is realized. The idea is to develop an “identity” for co-operation which would help to balance the competing and often conflicting interests of the stakeholders.

Further to this, “CAGE’s advantage is its active effort to place independent policy research in the public policy arena and in a form that is useful to those active in implementing it” This axiomatically stimulates debate.

Certainly for a young democracy such as South Africa, but where the independent “space” is closely watched and guarded, and the civil society movement is organized and strong, CAGE’s relationship with its grantees is watched carefully. The fact that the intellectual property is vested in the beneficiary organisation is valued. Organisations have felt confident about the dissemination of research within the democratic “space”. This is done in the knowledge that civil society is aware of their needs to be an additional “research voice” that is not directly commissioned by Government, with Government as the client and the option to “shelve” the research. As CAGE’s research reaches further and wider into the public domain, this independence of view will be reinforced.
In the current funding environment in South Africa in terms of investment into research, the grants that CAGE provides to both higher education institutions and NGO’s is realistically seen as the single most valuable resource. This is in a field where the funding margins are low and precarious (research, being seen as a “luxury” for funding where real social and immediate social needs are very evident). Clearly the success of a re-granting organisation is to “get the money out” and to do so in a manner that is both cost effective and responsible to both fiscal and research stakeholders. This goal has been achieved through CAGE’s unqualified audit reports and grant making systems.

It is therefore about the balancing of interests and expectations and while Unwin (2004) might well call it a “dance”, for others the metaphor of the “tightrope” must seem more apt. Therefore, in terms of the monitoring relationship that CAGE has in order to account to the Delegation of the European Union, CAGE has really found that it is about the nuances of the approach. It is also about the honesty. CAGE gives high levels of detail at each stage of the funding process, and shows that it too is subject to the same fiscal discipline, given the re-granting relationship. For many South African NGO’s, working with funders is often a “faceless and bureaucratic” process. Yet the need for funding is high and competitive. Many of the interviews and discussions around CAGE have shown that it is the “personal” and the quick response that has made it a “donor with a difference”. As Unwin states, “Funders are able to assert that they both contribute and derive significant value from the grants they make” (Unwin: 2004: 17).

So, it is hoped that CAGE has gone a little further to providing “added value” with its grants. The CAGE grant recipients have also found that being part of the CAGE community has provided them with a “package of support” that is offered. This includes individual, personalized response around CAGE issues, access to networks, technical assistance, platforms for peer review, a focal point for research dissemination, access to other funders as well as the rigorous due diligence and other reports that provide the recipient organisation with a verifiable, well documented “track record” to apply for funding from other sources.

A further tangible output around offering resources is the database on research institutes and organisations that are working in the field of conflict and governance and the accessibility of the database through the website.

Certainly as a resource/interface, CAGE is moving incrementally towards the key ingredients that are posited as vital if one wishes to bring about productive dialogue in the policy domain, namely:

- “Interactions between different groups with difference political interests;
- Actor-oriented approaches such as policy communities and networks;
- Discourse-an ensemble of ideas communicated”

6. Towards Recommendations:
It is apparent from this paper, that CAGE has indeed a long way to go and is at best, a pilot of what could be a more deepened and effective model of grant making within its particular mix of characteristics.

However, it does provide some evidence of being an approach that can indeed be used in young democracies that are exploring multiple approaches to make democracy work. This paper has not delved into many contested terrains around ideologies of official development assistance, power relations, political agenda’s and the like. It has instead aimed to be a pragmatic case study of certain criteria which might make those intending to explore models of deepening democracy through research, more insightful.

Further, the challenge always lies with attempting to get the “mix of ingredients” right and to combine those elements into a 21st century vision of models for foundations based on their true potential for innovation and creativity. As with all other organisations, at the heart of CAGE, lies an intangible web of nuances and competencies that are indeed difficult to articulate and replicate. Itami endorses this in his research by stating that it is “the intangible assets, such as accumulated information, brand name, reputation and corporate culture…are invaluable” to any organisation.

Certainly, as Hamel and Prahalad have asserted: “The most powerful way to prevail in global competition is still invisible to many”. This paper has tried to make some of the elements of this indigenous grant maker visible for potential future projects of this nature.

Based on this paper, certain recommendations have emerged for the organisational development of pilot models:

- Know your context;
- Embrace a multi-faced approach that allows for exploration of where the “value added niche” may lie and then harness resources, especially human resources, to pursue this niche. Put differently, CAGE opened itself to pursuing a “dynamic resource fit”, a process through which strategy is pursued using available resources, but augmenting them through the creation of skills and knowledge that are the products of experience;
- To this end, it is useful to have a set of super-ordinate goals that are known to all stakeholders and that transcend pettier issues and rivalries that might develop within the sector that you operate;
- Build credibility around the core business of the model through good governance, transparency and legitimate linkages;
- Be practical and realistic in your undertakings;
- Use intellectual capital and build institutional memory through good knowledge management;
- Ensure accountability to fiscal and project stakeholders so that they trust the model;
- Be aware of the risk inherent in the sector and manage risk;
- Build an inspiring organisational metaphor and use it in all “corporate communication” to differentiate your model from others;
• For start up organisations, implement your core business as quickly as is feasible-show concrete results and deliver on your undertakings;
• Learn as much about the sector. This may be done by “saturating” the organisation with sector-specific knowledge. It is about unlocking the “language” of the sector so that your discussions show your active learning of and engagement with the sector;
• Work unceasingly at building relationships, networks and communicating regularly;
• Operate as much as possible as a high performance team in the management of the organisation;
• Have a communication strategy that targets different stakeholders differently;
• Be mindful of the learning of your organisation and seek to assess it strategically and on a regular basis, keep the model “searching to and for fit” so that it remains relevant to its stakeholders.

Conclusion:

The Conflict & Governance Facility remains a young model that is mindful of the contested terrain in which it has offered itself as a resource. It moves in a world where the balance of resources is uneven, ideologically charged and vigorously challenged. As can be seen from this review, it has attempted to pragmatically fulfill its role as a grant maker pivoting on the afore-mentioned cusp.

As stated at the outset, it is evident that research and practice are different activities and that there will always be a tension between the two. Yet a helpful tension, as each makes attempts to contribute to bringing about positive change in the world.

CAGE is one of the models that has moved to bridge that tension by being a “safer place”. It allows for independent research on important policy issues, therefore, as an emerging model for productive dialogue.

Building peace through knowledge, a tall order indeed-one stone, two and then many stones that create a cairn seen by many on the pathway…the Conflict and Governance Facility tentatively treads a pathway of measured, incremental steps of building a space for peace through knowledge.
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1 The term “model” is used with regard to its contested connotations: “Model” might assume a developed and tested approach with set standards/indicators that can be replicated with contextual adjustments. The Conflict and Governance Facility set out within a prescribed logical framework to explore possibilities within the complex dynamics of a developmental sector. Some might assume this to be, in the words of Senge, a “learning organisation” approach, others might use Itami’s view of searching for a “dynamic resource fit”.
3 “Communities” is used in quotations marks to signal that these are not homogenous entities and are varied, widespread and diverse. CAGE certainly might only reach a very limited portion of a community/communities
4 Anheier H& Leat D: From Charity to Creativity as quoted in Alliance, Vol 8. No 2: June 2003:10
5 Autoinsight: Special Edition: Biofuels-has its time come?: March 2006
7 Delegation of the European Union of South Africa: Succinct Information on Conflict and Governance Project: (Pretoria: 20-09-02)
8 Conflict and Governance Facility: Logical Framework: 2002
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10 Southern African Development Community: 14 countries in the Southern African region linked as a regional economic community
Such heaps are also found in South Sea Islands and amongst the Bedouins. Generally, there appears to be an archetypal use of cairns of stones.
12 In South Africa, the Isivivane is used at South Africa’s Freedom Park in the most sacred part which honours those who fell in conflict in South Africa.
15 This is stated with due consideration that the entire policy system, which also includes policy research is highly complex. Policy is made through political processes, not research and is contextual. To track the influence and impact of research on policy is a difficult and “slippery” task, fraught with difficulties of verification.
19 ACP-EU Partnership Agreement: Cotonou: June 2000
23 The term “re-granting” is used in some sectors and specifically describes what CAGE does namely a process through which a fund is provided to an intermediary organisation for onward grant-making, often in the form of smaller grants: Kingman A: "What Role for Intermediaries? Alliance: Vol 8. Number 2: June 2003": 17
27 The Isivivane and a mission statement of “Building peace through Knowledge”. This was used to “build the brand”.
28 Hyatt J & Kaplan A in “Donors as Learning Organisations: Space for Learning”: Ibid refer to a “schizophrenia” of the funding intermediary.
29 Transtec Consortium: Herman A & Mbokota G: Report of the Mid-Term Review for the Conflict and Governance Facility: 2006: "vii it is a small high performing team, making the best use of available human resources…”
31 Kingman A: “What Role for Intermediaries?”. Grantmaking at a Distance Feature Alliance: Vol 8. Number 2: June 2003: 17
32 Adekeye-Fayemi B: "Why we need local grantmakers": Grantmaking at a Distance Feature Alliance: Vol 8. Number 2: June 2003: 21
41 Annexure A & B: List of CAGE Research Grants
44 CAGE’s support of the revamping of the Institute for Security Studies web-site supports a highly utilized information network: There are an average of 1.3 million hits per month on this web-site: CAGE web-site: www.cage.org.za
The concept of “developmental state” is said to be associated with Chalmers Johnson and his analysis of the rapid (re-)industrialization of Japan post World War 2. Chalmers also uses the term “plan rational state” which is synonymous with influencing the direction and pace of economic development by directly intervening in the developmental process. Although a contested term in terms of what it means in relation to South Africa, it is widely used to describe the more conscious gearing of South Africa towards enhanced development.


51 € 24 000

52 This might be achieved through research interns, field workers and community driven research work

53 Previously disadvantaged: Black students from rural areas of South Africa


58 www.cage.org.za: organisations provide up-front consent for their details to be provided on the web-site


60 Anheier H& Leat D: From Charity to Creativity as quoted in Alliance, Vol 8. No 2: June 2003: 10
