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## Efficiency or Fairness? Strategies, Conflicts, and Dynamics in the Commons as Reaction Towards Increasing Pressure from Globalisation

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### Abstract

Globalisation has been accompanied by an equally global tendency towards devolution of authority and resources from nation-states to regions and communities. Decentralisation and devolution in developing countries is said to enhance efficiency, equity and conservation of natural resources if accompanied by a broad-based participation in local public decision-making processes. Communities are consequently confronted with the ability to adopt their traditional strategies and to prevent emerging conflicts.

Investigations looking at the emergence of collective action for biodiversity conservation were carried out in selected communities of Namibia and South Africa within the scope of the BIOTA Southern Africa project. This paper outlines the importance of different forms of social capital, individual strategies and different community characteristics, which might help in absorbing shocks from globalisation. A quantitative analysis based on a socio-ecological framework encompassing multiple links between resource users, natural resources, public infrastructure providers and public infrastructure, shows how the outcomes of the different interactions arising from the framework depend on the amount of structural and cognitive social capital present and the resulting ability to form collective action. Cognitive social capital refers to shared norms, values, trust, and beliefs whereas structural social capital consists of social networks and groups supplemented by rules and procedures.

The results indicate that communities might benefit from globalisation, and generate new income possibilities through successful collective actions (e.g. community conservancies). In the post-apartheid era, local governments established sectoral committees in every village to boost decentralisation and participation. This was, however, done without having the resources for a long term commitment that rewards reciprocity and allows for the formation of trust or to change people's behaviour according to norms of fairness and solidarity. It is hypothesised that only the complementarity of structural and cognitive social capital explains a wide range of the observed variations in village performances. It is further explained how the path of institutional change is nested in the dynamic interactions of cognitive and structural social capital. In conclusion: Besides efficiency, fairness is needed to cope with the challenges arising from globalisation.

**Keywords:** Collective action, globalisation, institutional change, social capital, Southern Africa