Peer review history for:

HOW TO CITE:

Reviewer A: Round 1
Date completed: 03 April 2024
Recommendation: Accept / Revisions required / Resubmit for review / Decline
Conflicts of interest: None

Does the manuscript fall within the scope of SAJS?
Yes/No
Is the manuscript written in a style suitable for a non-specialist and is it of wider interest than to specialists alone?
Yes/No
Does the manuscript contain sufficient novel and significant information to justify publication?
Yes/No
Do the Title and Abstract clearly and accurately reflect the content of the manuscript?
Yes/No
Is the research problem significant and concisely stated?
Yes/No
Are the methods described comprehensively?
Yes/No
Is the statistical treatment appropriate?
Yes/No/**Not applicable**/Not qualified to judge
Are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the research results?
Yes/Partly/No
Please rate the manuscript on overall contribution to the field
Excellent/**Good**/Average/Below average/Poor
Please rate the manuscript on language, grammar and tone
Excellent/**Good**/Average/Below average/Poor
Is the manuscript succinct and free of repetition and redundancies?
Yes/No
Are the results and discussion confined to relevance to the objective(s)?
Yes/No
The number of tables in the manuscript is
Too few/Adequate/Too many/**Not applicable**
The number of figures in the manuscript is
Too few/**Adequate**/Too many/Not applicable
Is the supplementary material relevant and separated appropriately from the main document?
Yes/No/Not applicable
Please rate the manuscript on overall quality
Excellent/**Good**/Average/Below average/Poor

Is appropriate and adequate reference made to other work in the field?
Yes/No
Is it stated that ethical approval was granted by an institutional ethics committee for studies involving human subjects and non-human vertebrates?
Yes/No/Not applicable
If accepted, would you recommend that the article receives priority publication?
Yes/No
Are you willing to review a revision of this manuscript?
Yes/No
Select a recommendation:
Accept / Revisions required / Resubmit for review / Decline
With regard to our policy on 'Publishing peer review reports', do you give us permission to publish your anonymised peer review report alongside the authors' response, as a supplementary file to the published article? Publication is voluntary and only with permission from both yourself and the author.
Yes/No
Comments to the Author: The study / research is well organised and logically structured. Many concepts and constructs are highlighted in the preamble and introductory discussion. I am missing a deeper explication / presentation of some underpinning "theoretical position" or process in/on which the research can be located / premised. Maybe discuss collaboration and partnerships in relation to the development of multi stakeholder platforms and make a link between your data and the potential for developing such structures in the conclusion.

Author response to Reviewer A: Round 1

Missing a deeper explication of some underpinning theoretical position or process in which the research can be located. Maybe discuss partnerships in relation to the development of multistakeholder platforms and make a link between your data and the potential for developing such structures in the conclusion.
AUTHOR: We have brought in some reference to the nature of third spaces in the introduction but have limited space to go into detail. We have also done quite a bit of reorganisation of the introduction to fit with other reviewers comments, and focused the paper much more on the idea of a third space.

Reviewer O: Round 1
Date completed: 18 July 2024
Recommendation: Accept / **Revisions required** / Resubmit for review / Decline
Conflicts of interest: None

Does the manuscript fall within the scope of SAJS?
Yes/No
Is the manuscript written in a style suitable for a non-specialist and is it of wider interest than to specialists alone?
Yes/No
Does the manuscript contain sufficient novel and significant information to justify publication?
Yes/No
Do the Title and Abstract clearly and accurately reflect the content of the manuscript?
Yes/No
Is the research problem significant and concisely stated?
Yes/No
Are the methods described comprehensively?
Yes/No
Is the statistical treatment appropriate?

Yes/No/**Not applicable**/Not qualified to judge
Are the interpretations and conclusions justified by the research results?
Yes/Partly/No
Please rate the manuscript on overall contribution to the field
Excellent/**Good**/Average/Below average/Poor
Please rate the manuscript on language, grammar and tone
Excellent/**Good**/Average/Below average/Poor
Is the manuscript succinct and free of repetition and redundancies?
Yes/No
Are the results and discussion confined to relevance to the objective(s)?
Yes/No
The number of tables in the manuscript is
Too few/Adequate/Too many/**Not applicable**
The number of figures in the manuscript is
Too few/Adequate/Too many/**Not applicable**
Is the supplementary material relevant and separated appropriately from the main document?
Yes/No/Not applicable
Please rate the manuscript on overall quality
Excellent/**Good**/Average/Below average/Poor
Is appropriate and adequate reference made to other work in the field?
Yes/No
Is it stated that ethical approval was granted by an institutional ethics committee for studies involving human subjects and non-human vertebrates?
Yes/No/Not applicable
If accepted, would you recommend that the article receives priority publication?
Yes/**No**
Are you willing to review a revision of this manuscript?
Yes/No
Select a recommendation:
Accept / **Revisions required** / Resubmit for review / Decline
With regard to our policy on 'Publishing peer review reports', do you give us permission to publish your anonymised peer review report alongside the authors' response, as a supplementary file to the published article? Publication is voluntary and only with permission from both yourself and the author.
Yes/No

Comments to the Author:
Co-creating enduring practitioner-researcher collaborations in multi-functional landscapes

General Comments

Introduction
The paper integrates learnings and reflections from workshops and interviews conducted in the Berg-Breede landscape, exploring the challenges and enablers of long-term, researcher-practitioner partnerships. The authors argued that from the reflections on solutions to the identified challenges, they were able to distil potential seven enablers of enduring collaboration between science and practice actors. The author(s) believes that the insights from the paper bridge the research-implementation gap. This notwithstanding, it is hoped that the contributions from this critical review will improve the paper further if adopted.

Specific comments
Lines 41-44, where the author(s) defined collaboration is appreciated but there is a need to note that collaboration with science and practice actors only as often done in some transdisciplinary research (TDR) is insufficient to "…find mutually agreed solutions to pressing societal concerns that can be integrated into policy and…" The author(s) should highlight the inadequacy of this definition of collaboration by stating

that for agreed solutions to be integrated into policy, there is a need for policy-makers to be integrated into such TDR but then how many TDR can get policymakers to sit and be part of such research or multi-stakeholders forums? Recall the central argument in this paper is derived from insights drawn from collaborations between science and practice with policy excluded. So how do the author(s) intend to achieve the integration of the "agreed solutions from researchers and practitioners" without policy actors? Achieving sustainability requires holism and not partial collaboration. Except they are interested ONLY in promoting and supporting RESEARCHER-PRACTITIONER collaboration WITHOUT THE NEED TO INTEGRATE INTO POLICY. The author(s) should revisit the central arguments of this paper in line with the above observation.

In the introductory section line 71, the claim that "Such continuous communication and knowledge co-production can be facilitated through multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) or communities of practice (CoPs),…" needs a second look. For me, YES MSP can facilitate continuous communication and knowledge but I doubt if communities of practice only can do the same. This is because they are homogenous communities involving only practitioners. A more diverse group engenders better knowledge co-production.

Methodology
In line 128, the authors need to be specific on the number of study participants for each of the 7 online and one in-person workshops and the recruitment criteria or strategy to educate newbie TD researchers who may want to learn from reading this paper. From what is written in the methodology section, it seems the data was obtained from the practitioners alone and not a synthesis of the outcome of the interaction from both actors – researchers-practitioners. The method of analysis used in distilling the key messages is missing.

Findings
In lines 147-148, titled Learnings and Reflections: What is needed for effective long-term collaboration? What is the essence of that subtitle with nothing written under it? The author(s) should first report the challenges/barriers before proceeding to the enablers and finally the reflections. From lines 153-167, is a report of varied complaints about researchers and educational actors by practitioners thereby buttressing my earlier observation that the data is from the practitioners alone. What about what the researchers find as barriers to collaborating with practitioners? Since the author(s) claims the report is a synthesis. I expected a synthesis of the outcome of the collaboration between the science and practice actors and NOT A ONE-SIDED report of the numerous complaints of one actor about the other. Revisit the section on challenges.

Lines 221-222, "an NGO or government department were shared as an excellent way to enhance collaboration and reduce the science-policy-practice gap." Again, this assertion shows the inadequacy of this paper in attaining the desire for 'integrating findings into policy' because the author(s) did not engage policy actors as only science and practice actors were engaged.

Lines, 284-285, I agree that the practitioner's complaints about time constraints can be mediated through technological or internet-mediated platforms to some extent but practitioners can still abscond from online meetings. Also, with the anonymity provided by the use of such platforms, some actors/stakeholder may come on board to merely signify attendance whereas, they are not there or they are doing other things or even distracted. A way to checkmate this should be stated by the authors. To some extent, the in-person meetings remain relevant.

Lines 314-323, this is why this TDR was grossly inadequate for not involving policy actors. The author(s) should concentrate on collaborations alone and not on integrating into policy for the purpose of meeting the central arguments of this paper.

Author response to Reviewer O: Round 1

Lines 41-44, where the author(s) defined collaboration is appreciated but there is a need to note that collaboration with science and practice actors only as often done in some transdisciplinary research (TDR) is insufficient to "…find mutually agreed solutions to pressing societal concerns that can be integrated into policy and..." The author(s) should highlight the inadequacy of this definition of collaboration by stating that for agreed solutions to be integrated into policy, there is a need for policymakers to be integrated into such TDR but then how many TDR can get policymakers to sit and be part of such research or multi-stakeholder forums? Recall the central argument in this paper is derived from insights drawn from collaborations between science and practice with policy excluded. So how do the author(s) intend to achieve the integration of the "agreed solutions from researchers and practitioners" without policy actors? Achieving sustainability requires holism and not partial collaboration. Except they are interested ONLY in promoting and supporting RESEARCHER-PRACTITIONER collaboration WITHOUT THE NEED TO INTEGRATE INTO POLICY.

AUTHOR: We agree with the reviewer's comment, and so have worked to reframe the argument slightly to explain why we focused, in this case, on practitioner-researcher collaboration and the research-implementation gap by situating the introduction more in the context of the Berg-Breede Catchment; the space in which we were working. It should be noted that several of the practitioners who participated in our social learning process are also linked into local and provincial policy processes. We explain more about who these participants are in the supplementary materials.

In the introductory section line 71, the claim that "Such continuous communication and knowledge co-production can be facilitated through multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) or communities of practice (CoPs),…" needs a second look. For me, YES MSP can facilitate continuous communication and knowledge but I doubt if communities of practice only can do the same. This is because they are homogenous communities involving only practitioners. A more diverse group engenders better knowledge co-production.

AUTHOR: This was the original meaning of communities of practice, but now we see many COPs that involve actors from different sectors working together towards a common goal or interest. The difference is that COPs are informal, whereas MSP are more formal and may include agreements, operational guidelines, etc. However, we decided to use the term third space throughout to leave the nature of the collaboration more open. There are different ways to collaborate and also different disciplines tend to use particular terms - but they are very similar entities.

In line 128, the authors need to be specific on the number of study participants for each of the 7 online and one in-person workshops and the recruitment criteria or strategy to educate newbie TD researchers who may want to learn from reading this paper. From what is written in the methodology section, it seems the data was obtained from the practitioners alone and not a synthesis of the outcome of the interaction from both actors – researchers-practitioners. The method of analysis used in distilling the key messages is missing.

AUTHOR: We have added a table to the supplementary materials to show the no. of participants in each workshop.

We have also added how the social learning process participants were recruited (during COVID). The participants were (other than our team) basically self-selected. We shared our invites widely with appropriate stakeholders in the catchment through a list we generated as researchers and practitioners working in (or who had worked) in that space, and then asked them to share with others as well as with the various networks that exist in the wider Berg-Breede landscape.

Insights were obtained from both sets of stakeholders. The barriers that researchers identified were linked mainly to institutional and funding constraints (published elsewhere). Here we wanted to focus on the barriers in the actual collaboration space from both researcher and practitioner perspectives - we have made this clearer - although the section does refer to both. The follow-up interviews were with practitioners as we felt that in the published literature there are more papers where researcher rather than practitioner perspectives and voices are featured and we believed this was a gap this paper was able to respond to. In addition, we felt we needed to understand more about the logistical barriers that practitioners experienced.

We added an explanation of how the key messages were distilled out in the methodology section. We did this as a group in a workshop/brainstorming setting using the transcripts, notes and summaries we created from the various workshops as a starting point.

Most of these details have been added to the supplementary materials due to the word restrictions of the journal (6000 words including abstract, significance and references).

In lines 147-148, titled Learnings and Reflections: What is needed for effective long-term collaboration? What is the essence of that subtitle with nothing written under it?

AUTHOR: This is the main results subheading - the others are subheadings below this. Our results are effectively the learnings from and our reflections on the outcomes from the social learning process, i.e. what is needed for longer term researcher-practitioner collaboration.

The author(s) should first report the challenges/barriers before proceeding to the enablers and finally the reflections.

AUTHOR: We do report the challenges barriers before the enablers. We do this through reflecting as a team on what emerged from the social learning process and that is why we use reflections as part of the main heading for both the barriers and enablers.

From lines 153-167, is a report of varied complaints about researchers and educational actors by practitioners thereby buttressing my earlier observation that the data is from the practitioners alone. What about what the researchers find as barriers to collaborating with practitioners? Since the author(s) claims the report is a synthesis. I expected a synthesis of the outcome of the collaboration between the science and practice actors and NOT A ONE-SIDED report of the numerous complaints of one actor about the other. Revisit the section on challenges.

AUTHOR: All perspectives have been included. Conversations with researchers pointed mainly to institutional barriers and lack of funding and to some of these same issues highlighted in the section. Furthermore, researchers observed that not all researchers worked in the same way and so raised some of the same issues as practitioners. We do attribute the barriers mentioned to both researchers and practitioners in the section, but we have now highlighted this more.

Lines 221-222, "an NGO or government department were shared as an excellent way to enhance collaboration and reduce the science-policy-practice gap." Again, this assertion shows the inadequacy of this paper in attaining the desire for 'integrating findings into policy' because the author(s) did not engage policy actors as only science and practice actors were engaged.

AUTHOR: See the previous point re how we have reframed the introduction to highlight our focus. However, several of the practitioners are from the government and are partially responsible for how the department works in the catchment - so they are able to influence local policy and strategies. This is now mentioned in the methodology section.

Lines, 284-285, I agree that the practitioner's complaints about time constraints can be mediated through technological or internet-mediated platforms to some extent, but practitioners can still abscond from online meetings. Also, with the anonymity provided by the use of such platforms, some actors/stakeholders may come on board to merely signify attendance whereas, they are not there, or they are doing other things or even distracted. A way to checkmate this should be stated by the authors. To some extent, the in-person meetings remain relevant.

AUTHOR: We believe if the third space does not provide the kind of value that makes people want to attend then it is not worth much. We do make some points about what participants saw as the value of such platforms. But agree, yes – in person meetings are very critical and must be mixed with digital ones. We mention this in the text.

Lines 314-323, this is why this TDR was grossly inadequate for not involving policy actors. The author(s) should concentrate on collaborations alone and not on integrating into policy for the purpose of meeting the central arguments of this paper.

AUTHOR: As mentioned above we reframed our introduction to highlight more 'why we did what we did'. Also, we used a social learning process (rather than TD research) to discuss and then try to understand why researchers and practitioners did not seem to be connecting in a way that would be good for the landscape and future relationships. And there is always the question of who are the policy makers? For a local focus

like in our work, it would be impossible to get national level policy makers involved, but we did have participants in our process who work for local and provincial governments and who have some say in how their departments work on sustainability issues in the catchment. We have added in the methodology section and linked supplementary materials a brief description of who the practitioners in our process were without revealing too much about their identity.

Reviewer R: Round 1

Not openly accessible under our Publishing peer review reports policy.