Experts and Amateurs in the Development of Integrated Community Sustainability Plans: Linking Culture and Sustainability

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Abstract

In 2005, the federal government introduced a requirement that Canadian communities develop Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs) in order to access Gas Tax money. These plans were to be based on a four-pillar model of sustainability that included not only environmental responsibility, but also economic health, social equity, and cultural vitality. As communities set out to fulfill this requirement, it became evident that they would have to adopt techniques not only to envision and describe relationships among the four pillars but also to engage a wide variety of stakeholders in the development of a long-term vision of community sustainability. This article explores how ideas about culture and sustainability circulated and developed among both 'experts' (planners) and 'non-experts' (citizens, artists, and other members of the cultural community), including the part played by new technologies in the exchange of ideas among stakeholders. It explores how the public was involved in determining the 'public interest' in these areas and considers the contributions of both experts and non-experts to articulating visions for culture within the four-pillar model of sustainability.

Keywords: Culture, sustainability, experts, amateurs, citizen engagement.

Introduction

In 2005, the federal government introduced a requirement that Canadian communities develop Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs) in order to access Gas Tax money. These plans were to be based on a four-pillar model of sustainability that included not only environmental responsibility, but also economic health, social equity, and cultural vitality. As communities set out to fulfill this requirement, it became evident that they would have to adopt techniques not only to envision and describe relationships among the four pillars but also to engage a wide variety of stakeholders in the development of a long-term vision of community sustainability.

This article explores how ideas about culture and sustainability circulated and developed among both 'experts' (planners) and 'non-experts' (citizens, artists, and other members of the cultural community), including the part played by new technologies in the exchange of ideas among stakeholders. It explores how the public was involved in determining the 'public interest' in these areas and considers the contributions of both experts and non-experts to articulating visions for culture within the four-pillar model of sustainability.

We begin with a general discussion of expert versus lay or amateur expertise in the field of sustainable development and, more specifically, in the context of community sustainability planning. We then examine how culture has been brought into sustainability planning discussions, with a particular focus on Canada's Integrated Community Sustainability Planning initiative and its stated intentions with regard to citizen engagement and participation in the process. Next, we present four case studies of Canadian communities that have undertaken ICSP exercises – Kingston, Ontario; Antigonish, Nova Scotia; Williams Lake, British Columbia; and Campbell River, British Columbia – to test how these intentions translated into reality. Finally, we make some general observations and attempt to draw conclusions about how the expert–amateur interactions occurred in those communities and whether these interactions were effective in

articulating the linkages between culture and the other three pillars of sustainability.

Experts and amateurs in sustainable development

In their article on "The Third Wave of Science Studies: Studies of Expertise and Experience," Collins and Evans (2002) ponder the role of expertise in a world where scientific problems have become both more complex and more uncertain. In the *first wave* of studies, sociologists of scientific knowledge (SSK) focused on understanding how decision-making in science filtered down from experts to the public: essentially a top-down process. By the late 1970s, in the face of widespread questioning of and resistance to expert opinion, a *second wave* of studies began which examined the social construction and application of scientific knowledge through such instruments as courts, schools, and policy processes. This wave demonstrated that knowledge transfer and development was not a uni-directional process, but did not explore the role of expertise or the definition of 'expert'. The current *third wave* of SSK studies recognizes that decisions on many scientific issues, such as climate change, must be made within the political sphere before a scientific consensus has been reached. If decisions on such issues are to be made in the public sphere, they should ideally be based on democratic processes. This situation raises multiple questions of legitimacy: In such cases, who is the expert? Whose expertise should be privileged? How can different types of expertise be integrated to reach a democratic consensus without risking consultation paralysis?

As Collins and Evans (2002) observe, "The emergence of ideas such as 'sustainable development' and the 'precautionary principle', which are central to new policy discourses, shows that the problems exemplified by 'the environment' have crossed traditional boundaries to become, simultaneously, social, cultural, economic, ethical and scientific problems" (275). Sustainable development deals with complex, interrelated issues of the type that characterize the *reflexive historical sciences* where long-term outcomes are affected by the actions of humans and "futures must be based not just on permanent social institutions for the regulation of science, but on the

development and maintenance of new social institutions for the regulation of social life" (269). The success of these processes and institutions relies on the participation of the lay public – at least a large proportion of it (Collins and Evans 2002).

Many seminal documents on sustainable development have recognized the need for public participation in the development of such 'new social institutions' (e.g. *Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987; Principle 10 of the 1992 *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*; and the 1998 UNECE *Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters*). However, early attempts to engage citizens in democratic dialogues had mixed results due to the lack of mechanisms to incorporate these deliberations into policy decision-making (Street 1997) and industry and government experts often discouraging citizen groups from disagreeing with authority. Since then, much attention has been given to improving the mechanisms and dynamics of participatory processes (e.g., Barnes et al. 2008; Delli Carpini et al. 2004), but as Keskitalo (2004) observes "there is no established methodology … for accessing local knowledge or the political framework and informal as well as formal decision-making systems at the local or regional level" (427). More recently, Wuelser et al. (2011) have examined how different forms of knowledge can be integrated with sustainable development policy processes that are characterized by entrenched interests, power relations and expertise, and have concluded that joint learning is required to address complex sustainability issues.

Experts and amateurs in community sustainability planning

In contemporary planning, "the involvement of the public as experts is 'integral' to the science itself" (Collins and Evans 2002, 267). The rise in citizen participation in the 1970s and 1980s was one of the most influential contributions to a new paradigm of community planning in Canada. Building public participation into the planning process fundamentally changed the role of planners, moving them out of the traditional, closed technocratic arena and into a more open facilitation and enabling role (Jamieson 1994).

In planning processes, residents' local knowledge is viewed as a kind of experience-based expertise based on close and sustained (sometimes long-term) experience with the local environment and the local community. Local residents are 'lay experts', with expertise resulting, in part, from "successful socialisation within a particular community" (Evans 2008, 283). Lay expertise is usually not institutionalized, but is embedded in the local environment where "knowledge is shared, developed and cascaded informally within social groups and communities" and where "the power of narrative [is] as important as that of print" (Petts and Brooks 2006, 1047). In local planning processes, this experience-based expertise is viewed as complementary to that of technical experts.

In a context of 'democratizing expertise' and promoting citizen participation in planning processes, there is an understanding that "decisions need to be taken by accountable decision-makers, but the quality and legitimacy of these decisions are enhanced if they are seen to take the full range of views into account" (Collins and Evans 2002, 280). Seeking the views of lay citizens is increasingly seen as an important and legitimate part of public decision-making – and has been elevated to a core dimension of local sustainable community planning processes (Canada 2005). As Evans and Plows (2007) note, in matters of resource allocation, social justice, and future possibilities – all matters integral to community sustainability planning – the "appropriate participants in such decisions are no longer the experts but the non-expert citizens in the society who will be effected by them" (840).

Public participatory processes have therefore become central to democratic debates about sustainability planning at the local level, and are employed both to raise awareness and to explore uncertainties. But can joint, participatory learning fill the knowledge gap? As Collins and Evans (2002) point out, "what is needed is a process that will enable the new network of knowledge to be developed in a context in which it is unclear who knows what and what, if anything, needs to be learned" (279). Someone has to develop "a means of identifying potential participants, processes for

orchestrating the interaction between different parties, and a purpose to motivate their interaction" (279). At the local level, this role usually falls to the local planner.

Furthermore, sustainability narratives are often rife with conflict among protagonists and, as Healey (2004) points out, "the management of conflict toward successful outcomes requires a 'restless, dialectical process' of open discussion and negotiation" (qtd. in Brand and Karvonen 2007, 6). The facilitation of such consultations and dialogues among stakeholders is becoming an important role in sustainability planning, but may require an augmentation of the planner's traditional skill set. Brand and Karvonen (2007) suggest that four types of expertise are required to manage the deliberative model of sustainability: outreach, interdisciplinarity, civic expertise, and meta-expertise (7). *Outreach* is defined as "the provision of information or services to groups in society who might otherwise be neglected" (7), and *interdisciplinarity* aims "to increase the permeability of disciplinary boundaries" (8), roles which planners are accustomed to playing. They also suggest that planners should act as *civic experts*, "listening to and engaging with citizens to take advantage of their experiential knowledge" (10), and as *meta-experts* juggling "the sundries of multiple technical knowledges" and acting "as a broker of expert knowledge" (9). The fulfillment of these latter roles may depend on the degree to which they are able to connect the knowledge networks of experts and amateurs – a necessary step in developing a holistic perspective on a community.

Selman (2000) describes several types of knowledge networks that operate at the local level: policy networks, professional networks, intergovernmental networks, producer networks, social networks, and issue networks. He also observes that while horizontal connections among these networks sometimes exist, they are heavily dependent on 'key actors' who act as brokers and gatekeepers. In the context of community sustainability planning, planners may or may not play this interconnective or brokerage role and must increasingly rely upon various community actors and types of expertise, including lay expertise, to build a complete picture.

Overarching these interactional issues and challenges, the role of communication technology must also be mentioned. Rapidly advancing electronic media tools have dramatically influenced and democratized many fields of expertise, and the planning world is no exception. They play important roles in both publishing information and sharing it. For example, new media technologies and tools have been integrated into planning processes to broaden access to information and proceedings, to encourage input from certain 'plugged in' groups in society such as youth, and to facilitate networked communications and exchanges. More broadly, electronic communication media tools can 'level the field' enabling diverse voices to find or establish communication platforms, reach out to others, and build recognition and audiences. This process is also contributing to the blurring of boundaries between 'expert' and 'non-expert', necessitating a critical perspective on the relative values of the information received. As we describe below, in the context of soliciting input and facilitating dialogue and decision-making about local community sustainability and future options, communication technologies serve to involve a broad spectrum of voices in discussions and to provide venues where knowledge can be discovered and 'tapped' as input into planning processes. But have the capabilities of these new tools been fully realized?

Bringing culture into the planning process

While cultural considerations have never been fully absent from planning processes, their importance has fluctuated, as have their associations with various types of expertise.

During the first half of the twentieth century, preservationist planners formulated an 'aesthetic geography' based on a definition of harmony that "derived its cultural weight not from proof, but from lending a geographer's authority to a principle which the preservation movement was ready to embrace" (Matless 1996, 426). In the 1940s, town and country planners in the United Kingdom took up this aesthetic principle. W.F. Morris, writing in 1942 for the Council for Visual Education, a body that represented the

architectural, planning, design, and educational establishment, described its mission as raising "the uneducated taste of the great majority" (qtd. in Matless 1996, 433). This was a *moral* geography that should be understood "not only in relation to the claiming of an expert political power but as part of a cultural movement seeking a design for modern life" (Matless 1996, 436).

In another branch of the town planning movement, culture also played a major role through the ideas of Scottish town planner Patrick Geddes. In addition to his planning work, Geddes was also a botanist, biologist, and sociologist, and brought a keen appreciation of the role of the environment to his planning theories and practices. Geddes pioneered such standard planning practices as the survey and the concept of *regionalism*, and was particularly insistent about the need to "excavate the layers of our cities downwards … and thence … read them upwards, visualising them as we go" (qtd. in Mercer 1997, 223). Geddes' holistic perspective on planning fell out of fashion after the 1940s, to be replaced by the more technocratic model of the *masterplan,* dominated by architects and focused on a zoned system of urban planning (Rubin 2009). While such masterplans are useful as strategic tools to understand the 'big picture', they are not able to represent or address what Geddes viewed as vital to the civic domain – "the sociological, anthropological, cultural and economic patterns, contingencies and realities of urban life transacted below the purview of the masterplan" (Mercer 1997, 225).

Since the 1970s, there has been a revival of Geddes' ideas, particularly as they pertain to public participation in the planning process and the linking of culture to environmental and sustainability concerns. Contemporary evaluations of his 1915 book, *Cities in Evolution*, focus on the prominence he gave to the relationship between planner and community and his emphasis on the need to involve as many people as possible in decision-making (Rubin 2009).

Since the 1970s, cultural planning has emerged as a discipline that borrows heavily from the ideas of Geddes as well as the practices and philosophies of sustainable development. It has been defined as "a process of inclusive community consultation and decision-making

that helps local government identify cultural resources and think strategically about how these resources can help a community to achieve its civic goals" (Russo and Butler 2007, 1). One of its key characteristics is "a process of broadly-based community involvement and collaboration that includes a representation of the community and its cultural sectors, neighbourhood citizens, elected officials and other community officials" with a focus on "building networks, relationships and partnerships rather than facilities" (4). The cultural planner, therefore, is vitally concerned with seeking out and strategically coordinating various forms of expertise. Cultural planners are also often charged with developing a system of notation that, as Mercer (1997) puts it, "will enable us to make culture thinkable in governmental, planning and policy fields" (226). These efforts are often complementary to those of sustainability planners, who also seek to access local knowledge and integrate it into governance practices and structures.

Expert and amateur interaction in the development of Integrated Community Sustainability Plans

In 2006, the federal government's External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities brought culture explicitly into sustainability planning in Canada by putting forward a broad vision of sustainable development for cities and communities based on a four-pillar model of sustainability.[1] This model is rooted in ideas from a range of international agencies and researchers and incorporates four interlinked dimensions: environmental responsibility, economic health, social equity, and cultural vitality (Hawkes 2001).

The federal policy incentivizing municipalities to develop long-term Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (ICSPs) based on this model was tied to Gas Tax Fund (GTF) Agreements signed in 2005-06

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[1] The External Advisory Committee was established within the political context of developing a New Deal for Cities and Communities in Canada. By the time it delivered its final report, the federal ruling party had changed, and the New Deal policy context was no longer in force. However, the ICSP requirement was set into programs developed under the previous government, and continues in force.

with each province and territory. In a background paper intended to furnish both provinces and municipalities with information on ICSPs, the federal government clearly stated its intentions with regard to this process:

> The requirement for municipalities to develop ICSPs was designed to accelerate the shift in local planning and decision making toward a more **long-term, coherent and participatory approach to achieve sustainable communities.** ICSPs have been identified as a means to help cities, communities and First Nations … to effectively plan and manage their resources to achieve identifiable outcomes, deliver services and address priorities within an integrated framework encompassing the economic, environmental, social and cultural dimensions of community sustainability. (Canada 2005, 4; bold in original).

The paper emphasized the participatory element, stressing that "it is essential that respective stakeholders from different sectors of society actively participate in reaching a basic consensus on the path to take towards sustainability" (19). Further, while the government acknowledged that the cultural dimension of sustainability was not well-defined or understood, it nevertheless articulated its importance:

> as Canadian communities become increasingly diverse, culture plays an important role in building social cohesion, a sense of community and a shared value set that is rooted in local diversity. Cultural investments can reinforce place-based community development objectives related to employment and innovation, neighbourhood revitalization and environmental sustainability. (12)

Having placed culture firmly within the sustainability paradigm and given clear marching orders with regard to stakeholder consultation and engagement, the federal government then turned to the provinces and the municipalities to determine how these elements would be integrated into the ICSPs.

Our broader research project examines provincial and local efforts to conceptualize and integrate cultural considerations within local sustainability planning processes (Duxbury and Jeannotte 2010). For this article, we focused on the interaction of professional and amateur expertise within the type of complex and uncertain situation highlighted in *third wave* SSK studies. From this perspective, we concentrated on the public consultation processes and the interplay between experts and amateurs as the ICSP process unfolded, utilizing a case study approach to examine the planning initiatives within the specificities of the local contexts. Through Internet searches and queries to Infrastructure Canada and to municipalities in the Creative City Network of Canada, we initially identified over 60 ICSPs or closely related sustainability plans in draft form, fully approved, or under development. We selected four communities of varying sizes in which the public participation process appeared to be particularly interesting: Kingston, Ontario; Antigonish, Nova Scotia; Williams Lake, British Columbia; and Campbell River, British Columbia.

Through document analysis and an informal survey of key informants in each community, we explored three aspects of these consultations. First, from the perspective of *third wave* SSK studies, we were interested in how they were organized: Were they democratic exercises that fully engaged the citizenry or were they perfunctory consultations merely designed to 'rubber stamp' sustainability plans already drafted by experts? Second, we examined how members of the public and the local cultural and artistic community participated: How extensive were efforts to engage these segments of the population? What techniques and technologies, including various forms of media, were used in these efforts? To what extent was culture brought into the planning process, and how successful were planners, in Geddes' terms, in 'excavating' the layers of the community's history and life and factoring them into the sustainability plan? Third, we analyzed the plans and other documentation to determine how 'official' (documented) perceptions of culture's role in the community's sustainability evolved within the consultation process: Was it made 'thinkable', in Mercer's terms, to consider culture as a central element in the community's

sustainability planning? Was local cultural knowledge effectively integrated into sustainability governance structures and practices?

Case study 1:
Kingston, Ontario (2006 population - 117,207)[2]

Organization

The City of Kingston, recognizing that a "community-built/community-owned plan would better inspire sustainability plans and actions" (Sustainable Kingston 2010a, 4), created the FOCUS Kingston Steering Committee to manage the overall ICSP development process, assisted by an ICSP project team that included consultants specializing in sustainability planning, communications, and events management (Sustainable Kingston 2010b, 44). An extensive ICSP consultation process was developed, consisting of:

- A Community Sustainability Charrette (May 2008) involving about 80 key stakeholders from the public, academic, and private sectors.

- The first Community Conversation (April 2009), open to the public, attracting 1,300 attendees.

- A Sustainability Summit (May 2009) involving 330 key stakeholders, pillar organizations (environmental, cultural, economic, and social), and members of the public.

- Twenty-four stakeholder meetings (Summer 2009).

- An online survey (Summer 2009).

- Four public Open Houses (November-December 2009) soliciting comments on a draft ICSP tabled with Kingston City Council in October 2009, attracting 78 participants overall.

- Another public Open House (March 2010) seeking comments on the second draft of the ICSP (delivered to Council in

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[2] All population figures are from the 2006 Census.

January 2010), attracting 37 people (Sustainable Kingston 2010a).

The initial Charrette was by invitation only, but the Sustainability Summit and community consultations were open to all residents and were considered broadly inclusive and representative of the community by key informants.

A variety of digital media tools were used to obtain and organize public input. *Doodle*, a free web-based tool, was used to schedule meetings, conference calls, and events as well as to locate venues. *Survey Monkey*, a free online questionnaire tool, was used to collect input before the Sustainability Summit (200 comments) and after the Summit report was released (40 comments). Other supporting software used during the consultation process included *Basecamp*, a web-based project management and collaboration tool for storing files, schedules, and lists and for tracking milestones; *Google Docs*, a free web-based word processor and data storage application that allows multiple users to create and edit documents online; and a *wiki website*, accessible to community partners, where they could contribute, edit, and provide feedback on drafts of the ICSP. Social media such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* were not used because of internal restrictions of City departments (Sustainable Kingston 2010a, 9-11).

The City of Kingston is unique in documenting 'lessons learned' from the collaborative consultation process, particularly with regard to power relations and trust between experts and amateurs. It notes that "project teams must take the time to build relationships with partners and volunteers, consider questions, concerns and input from the community, and create opportunities for partners and volunteer(s) to contribute" (Sustainable Kingston 2010a, 7). It advises municipalities to work as one partner among many and to encourage the active partnership of those who "may be hesitant to sign onto a plan until it is complete and they understand who the implementing body will be and what resources will be available to implement it" (7). It also observes that "the real work starts when the plan moves from development to implementation" (8).

On the *Sustainable Kingston* website*,* community partners and citizens can describe the actions they are taking to move Kingston toward a sustainable future. An ongoing inventory of community partner actions is featured in sections of the website devoted to each of the four pillars of sustainability. However, it is difficult to judge from the materials posted on the website whether this represents the level of community 'buy-in' originally sought.

Public and cultural community participation

Public participation was extensive at the beginning of the process, although it appeared to drop off toward the end. According to key informants, cultural community participants were involved throughout, although only a few individuals from the cultural community played an active role in shaping the final ICSP. Of the 128 organizations that participated in the development process, 18 were broadly 'cultural': two arts organizations, six heritage organizations (including federal and provincial organizations responsible for historic sites), four organizations representing linguistic or ethnic minorities, and six cultural industry organizations (radio and television stations, magazines) (Sustainable Kingston 2010b, 42-43).

Key informants noted that difficulties in engaging the cultural community may have been due to historical 'baggage' from previous unsuccessful attempts to develop a cultural plan. In addition, the City was developing a Master Cultural Plan concurrently with the ICSP process, which seems to have caused some confusion within the cultural community. Artists considered the working definition of culture used for the Master Cultural Plan consultations – "Values, vibe and virtuosity" – to be nebulous and were sceptical about how the cultural plan would be integrated within the ICSP.

Some members of the cultural community were also proprietorial about their role and uncertain about the benefits of the ICSP for their day-to-day activities. As one informant observed, there are limited resources in the community and cultural stakeholders may not have

had the time or energy to devote to a process focusing on the longer-term with no immediate impact on current operations.

Despite these difficulties, informants described the interactions between the cultural community and the planners and other stakeholders as good and effective, partly because the City is small enough for everyone to be fairly well acquainted. Despite the variety of digital technologies used, cultural community informants felt that the face-to-face consultations elicited the most useful input about the contribution of culture to sustainability. As one noted, many community insights were often "outside the box" and contributed to the process of building a broadly based consensus on values. Each community consultation involved new participants, and the process of "slowing down" to take in new ideas and develop a more refined consensus was valuable for both experts and non-experts. One key informant noted the contributions made by thoughtful individuals who were engaged with arts or heritage but were not themselves cultural creators. Overall, the primary contributions of the cultural community were: providing information on cultural activities and infrastructure within the community; showing how the cultural pillar interacts with the other three pillars of sustainability and how activities within the arts and heritage communities have economic, social, and environmental impacts; and explaining how the other pillars have unrecognized cultural aspects.

Perceptions about culture's role in sustainability

According to key informants, the United Nations Environment Programme's *Melbourne Principles* were a major starting point for cultural pillar discussions.[3] Some felt that initial ideas about culture as an important factor in city sustainability were largely confirmed. One informant observed that many artists started out with the idea that the arts were the culture, but gradually came around to a

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[3] The Melbourne Principles aim to assist cities wishing to achieve sustainable development objectives. They are meant to guide strategic thinking, rather than to provide a prescriptive formula (United Nations Environment Programme 2002).

broader view of community culture and its contributions to community quality of life and sustainability.

Key informants had differing opinions on the degree to which interactions with a broad array of citizens during the consultation process changed ideas about the role of culture in sustainability. Some thought the consultations brought about a heightened awareness of the public interest in culture, but only for those who attended the community conversations. For the rest of the community, culture is still 'off the radar' insofar as sustainability is concerned. Others believed that the public consultations had a positive effect on perceptions of culture because it allowed people to articulate and share ideas that they had not discussed before. It brought artists and creators into the public sphere in a positive manner, heightening their engagement with the broader community and increasing public recognition of the role culture plays in community life.

The ICSP community dialogues seemed to enhance culture's position in the community, but some informants were not sure this can occur until there is a clear and consistent definition of what 'culture' means in Kingston. Further, there is uncertainty about how the City's new Cultural Plan will mesh with the implementation of the ICSP.

Case study 2:
Antigonish, Nova Scotia (2006 population - 4,236)

Organization

Antigonish began a community-driven visioning process called the "Antigonish 2020 Foresight Project" in September 2006. The process was designed to be inclusive and widely consultative, and involved both paid staff and volunteers. The Antigonish Sustainable Development Steering Committee was established with 36 volunteer members: the town councillors and 12 community members

representing the four pillars[4], including community organizations, business leaders, academics, and grassroots groups (Malhotra 2007). A local external consultant was hired to develop the ICSP and two subsequent reports. Although the project was led by a paid project manager, the Steering Committee members played a key role in the initial consultations.

While the relative influence of local experts and amateurs appears to have been fairly balanced, the Antigonish ICSP process was also motivated and influenced by broader regional and local priorities. For instance, the *Framework for Antigonish as a Leading Sustainable Community,* which emerged from a 2007 consultation process, encompassed both the County of Antigonish and the Town. Provincial priorities also played a prominent role: the Town signed the Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative Charter in May 2007. As a result, stakeholders from outside the community, such as the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour, also attended a February 2007 meeting of community interest groups (Malhotra 2007).

A second Sustainability Committee was established in February 2008 to oversee the preparation of the ICSP, which was completed in 2009. No information on the composition of this committee is included in the ICSP.

Public and cultural community participation

According to the Town's ICSP, "over 500 people representing the community, public, private and non-profit sectors were engaged in the public input process" of the Antigonish 2020 Foresight Project (Antigonish 2009, 8). Two community conferences held in 2006-2007 identified six topic areas relevant to sustainability and the community's future: economy, environment, governance, infrastructure, services, and quality of life (8). These topic areas were later re-aligned to correspond with the mandated ICSP four-pillar framework (9).

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[4] Two individuals – one from Festival Antigonish and a visual artist/educator – represented the cultural pillar.

These public consultations served as "the main information source for the ICSP" (9). As a result, community engagement during the 2008-2009 ICSP development period was limited to: consultations with the Sustainability Committee and Town Council to identify issues, goals, and priorities; a public meeting to obtain confirmation and feedback from the community that the goals, priorities, and timelines reflected their interests; and the establishment of a sustainability webpage on the Town website to report progress on the ICSP (Antigonish 2009).

The Antigonish Area Partnership, developed with stakeholders after initial consultations, established roundtables related to each pillar of sustainability, but was dissolved in 2010. However, a group of grassroots community organizations united under the banner of 'Antigonish Sustainable Development' has established the Anthill Group website, dedicated to "helping Antigonish and its surrounding communities become more sustainable." Through this website, the group aims to foster continuing community engagement with sustainability issues "in order to help support the town and county's integrated community sustainability plans and to create a more resilient, vibrant and healthy community" (Antigonish Sustainable Development 2010, 2).

Cultural community participation in the public consultation process is difficult to gauge based on published materials and publicly available sources. According to key informants, the cultural and artistic community was invited to be part of the consultations in 2006-2007, but was not involved in planning these consultations. Key informants consider the primary contribution of cultural participants to be the sharing of their perspectives on cultural sustainability.

Perceptions about culture's role in sustainability

The vision for culture that emerges from the ICSP features youth advancement and profiles the region's ethnic diversity. An action item on sustainable tourism includes raising awareness and support for current festivals and events. New and improved infrastructure,

specifically the enhancement of heritage buildings and the construction of a new library and cultural centre, are also included in the plan. According to key informants, a broader understanding of culture, the arts, and diversity as elements of community sustainability did not emerge from the ICSP consultation process. The Town of Antigonish continues to struggle to understand the linkages between culture and the other pillars of sustainability.

Overall, the cultural and artistic community in Antigonish is reported to feel marginalized by the ICSP planning process, which focused primarily on the environmental and economic pillars. This may have been due to a lack of understanding about linkages between culture and sustainability, but also reflects a more widespread tendency for communities to concentrate on these two areas. What appears to have occurred subsequently is a form of fatigue. Key informants indicate that the cultural community perceives little momentum to implement even the limited cultural priorities cited in the ICSP. Scarce resources appear to have pitted various groups in the community against each other and most of the partnerships that emerged from the consultation process have collapsed. Limited human and financial resources have led to a sense of disillusionment about the prospects for change, despite a strong community engagement process and a vision for sustainability that was broadly supported.

Case study 3:
Williams Lake, British Columbia (2006 population - 10,744)

Organization

The City of Williams Lake began its ICSP process, "Imagine Williams Lake," in 2008. Two consultant groups were hired to guide staff in the consultation process and in the development of the ICSP. The small city relied upon the consultants to provide leadership and to facilitate meetings and events. Key informants indicate that while the consultants designed and led the consultation process, city staff actively provided information and feedback. In addition, elected officials participated in many public consultation events.

The Williams Lake ICSP was intended to provide an overarching policy for the subsequent development of an Official Community Plan (OCP), which was released in draft form in January 2011 (Williams Lake 2010, 7). While the OCP traditionally focused on land use plans and policies, the City decided to integrate it with "social, culture, economic and environmental sustainability objectives" to create "a strategy for directing growth and development while protecting and enhancing the community's quality of life" (Williams Lake 2011, 1-1). Because the ICSP requires an extensive public consultation process, the Williams Lake OCP has benefited from a greater degree of public input than is the norm.

Public and cultural community participation

Beginning in spring 2009, public consultations on the "Imagine our Future" ICSP for Williams Lake were varied and extensive, featuring several methods to elicit public input:[5]

- "Kitchen Table" meetings (Spring/Summer 2009) with hosts facilitating gatherings and discussions with neighbours in their homes.

- Community "hot spots" (Spring/Summer 2009) set up in places such as coffee shops to obtain input from people who don't normally attend events.

- Performance in the Park (June 2009), a partnership between the City of Williams Lake and the Community Arts Council, featuring local acts.

- Community partner cafés – At the first two cafés (June and November 2009), participants discussed and recorded their thoughts on priority areas. At the third (May 2010), the ICSP was launched.

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[5] Compiled from: *Creating Our Future!* (Williams Lake 2011); *What You've Said So Far* (Williams Lake Planning Department, no date); the *Imagine our Future* website; and the *Imagine our Future* ICSP framework document (Williams Lake 2010).

- At a Sustainability Fair (June 2009) visitors were asked to record their thoughts on each priority area.

- During Aboriginal Day celebrations (June 21, 2009) visitors and participants were asked to record their thoughts on each priority area.

- The *Imagine our Future* website and online survey (March-October 2009) solicited the public to provide input on each priority area.

- In Great Adventure Williams Lake (an *Amazing Race*-style event in October 2009) citizens visited landmarks in the community to provide input on social, economic, cultural, and environmental topics.

- The Youth Digital Story Telling Workshop and Video Project (October 2009) gathered ideas and input from young people using various media.

- Meetings with City Standing Committees and community groups (September-October 2009) sought ideas about the transition to a desired future.

City staff attended over 50 events and about 1,200 people participated in these consultations overall. In terms of attendance, the most popular events were Performance in the Park and National Aboriginal Day (300 participants), the meetings with the Standing Committees (250 participants), and the Youth Digital Story Telling and Video Project (125 participants). The three Community Partners Cafés attracted about 200 people in total (*Imagine Our Future* website).

Key informants indicate that a variety of methods were needed to reach people who were not already involved in environmental or conservation groups. While digital technologies were successful in engaging youth, only about 50 people filled in the online survey. According to key informants, the community appeared to be most engaged at the open events, such as Performance in the Park, rather

than at the more conventional consultation meetings facilitated by consultants.

The City of Williams Lake is located within the traditional territories of the T'exelcemc and the Xat'súll First Nations. The City serves as the commercial, educational, and service centre for both groups, but informants indicate that only urban First Nation residents were involved in the consultations. Due to unsettled treaty negotiations and ongoing development pressures on or near First Nation territories, engaging First Nations leaders and residents of nearby reserves was difficult. Despite this problem, comments at events such as the community cafés consistently raised cultural issues, such as the need for more awareness and understanding of First Nations history.

The arts and heritage communities in Williams Lake were actively involved in organizing only one consultation event – Performance in the Park – but are seen by key informants as being fully engaged due to the fact that in a small community there is significant cross-membership between various groups. The primary contribution of the arts and heritage communities in the ICSP process is considered to be the insight they provided on the role of arts and culture in the local economy.

Perceptions about culture's role in sustainability

Comments from the public consultations[6] confirm that arts, culture, and heritage are considered an important part of community life. Perhaps the most significant development regarding arts and culture's role in the sustainability of Williams Lake is the fact that it is being included in the Official Community Plan for the first time as one of ten strategic policy areas, along with related initiatives regarding partnering with First Nations and developing a lively downtown (Williams Lake 2011, 3-3, 3-4). While the draft OCP was structured to address only social, economic, and environmental sustainability, with

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[6] Extensive comments were accessed from the *Imagine the Future* website (now offline).

culture being considered primarily in the economic category, key informants thought that the next version may include culture as a separate theme or pillar. This suggests that the input of resident lay experts is having some impact on future planning directions for the city.

However, key informants also observe that there are still significant barriers to the full integration of culture into the City's sustainability plans. Chief among these is the question of funding: as a small community with a limited tax base, Williams Lake is unlikely to find additional money for arts grants, heritage restoration, or public art. In addition, most of the artistic community lives outside the City but within the region, making it difficult to access the resources needed to deliver on the three objectives included in the OCP: "promoting and supporting arts and culture programs within the City of Williams Lake; encouraging continued heritage awareness; and continuing the preservation of the unique heritage resource and landscape vistas in the City of Williams Lake" (Williams Lake 2011, 4.7-2).

Case study 4:
Campbell River, British Columbia (2006 population - 29,572)

Organization

As of summer 2011, Campbell River was still in the process of developing its Sustainable Official Community Plan (SOCP). It had completed a well-documented and extensive public consultation which began with a community forum on September 25, 2010 featuring a speech by the mayor, a presentation on sustainability, and group discussions about "preservation of the environment, economic development, land-use planning, growth, housing, infrastructure, transportation, energy and key social aspects of our community, such as health, arts, and culture" (Zirnhelt 2010).[7] While key informants did not wish to comment about the success of these consultations with the process still underway, the case study is interesting because

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[7] A video overview of the public consultations is available online: http://sustainablecampbellriver.ca/?p=528.

of its extensive use of digital media, particularly the Sustainable Campbell River website and interactive techniques used to elicit public input.

With the help of a sustainability consulting firm, the City and its Sustainability Manager organized a number of events and initiatives intended "to develop a better understanding of community hopes, concerns and desires for the future" (Sustainable Campbell River 2011, 5). These consultations employed both *broad engagement* and *deep engagement* techniques. *Broad engagement* techniques were designed to reach the "hard to engage" through frequent communications supported by public outreach efforts. *Deep engagement* techniques provided opportunities for meaningful involvement, learning, and collaboration through public forums and workshops that gather more detailed input (5).

Public and cultural community participation

Broad public engagement events and activities involved:

- Canada Day soft launch (July 1, 2010), mainly an awareness-building exercise (participation was not measured).

- Youth Consultation Activities (September-November 2010) including a photo contest, school workshops, class visioning exercises, and interventions at a 'youth in politics' event and a career fair, with approximately 120 participants overall.

- A Community Event Outreach booth with mapping and feedback activities, located at public events such as Waterfest, Movies under the Stars, the Haig-Brown Festival (to celebrate World Rivers Day), the Homeshow, and the Craft Fair, reaching about 500 people overall.

- The Sustainable Campbell River Scoping Survey (October-November 2010), available in both electronic and printed formats, with survey booths located at local stores and events such as the Craft Fair. Over 500 completed and partially completed surveys were returned.

- The Sustainable Campbell River website (September 2010-summer 2011), used to provide regular updates on SOCP consultations (including background documents and videos) and to elicit e-mail subscriptions to a newsletter (over 300 e-mail addresses registered).

- The Sustainable Campbell River Facebook Page (October 2010-summer 2011), featuring e-posts and group discussions involving about 140 user-participants (Sustainable Campbell River 2010).

Deep public engagement events and activities were:

- Community Sustainability Forum (September 25, 2010), employing a number of interactive stations focused on a downtown "SimCity," community-mapping, and neighbourhood descriptions, as well as presentations, videos, and discussion groups. Over 140 people attended.[8]

- Public and Stakeholder Workshops (October-December 2010), held on nine topics including "Arts, Culture, Heritage and the Creative Community," followed by a General Public Workshop and an Open House (December 8, 2010). The main techniques employed were large and small group discussions, with more than 300 attendees overall.

- The Elder and Youth Storytelling Event (December 6, 2010) with performances and storytelling by First Nations youth and elders to showcase concerns and goals and to show both 'where we have come from' and 'where we are going'. About 100 people attended.[9]

- A Directions and Choices Public Forum (February 12, 2011), to review input from previous consultations, was organized into 12 general themes, including "Creative Community." Participants used voting dots and sticky notes to give feedback on these themes. (HB Lanarc 2011, 1)

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[8] Video of this event: http://sustainablecampbellriver.ca/?p=361.
[9] Video of this event: http://sustainablecampbellriver.ca/?p=523.

Three First Nations groups are located near Campbell River: the Wei Wai Kum Nation, the Homalco First Nation, and the We Wai Kai Nation, and Aboriginal peoples comprise about 10% of the area population (Sustainable Campbell River 2010). According to the City's website, cultural development with a strong First Nations component is one of the 12 strategy areas addressed by the SOCP. One of the featured activities, the Elder and Youth Storytelling Event, was intended primarily to gain input from these communities. Members of the First Nations communities are also featured prominently in videos posted on the Sustainable Campbell River website. However, participation by First Nations residents was not measured.

Similarly, it is difficult to determine the level of participation by members of the arts and heritage communities, but two aspects of the process suggest that participation was fairly high. First, many consultation events were held in conjunction with cultural events, such as festivals and crafts fairs, which would attract community members involved in local cultural activities. Second, many of these events had a creative component, such as storytelling and photo contests, which encourage individuals to provide knowledge in 'alternative' ways. Furthermore, a local artist provided graphic facilitation at the Community Sustainability Forum (Sustainable Campbell River 2011, 16) and a few artists have posted on the Sustainable Campbell River Facebook Page.

Perceptions about culture's role in sustainability

Campbell River residents have high aspirations for social and cultural development in the community. They want it to be respectful, inclusive, and socially aware; to be diverse; and to support arts, culture, and heritage (Sustainable Campbell River 2011, 14-15). When asked to vote at the Directions and Choices Forum, more than half the participants expressed strong support for six questions relating to the use of planning tools to develop artist live-work spaces; incentives and policies to encourage public art; partnerships with other levels of government to augment support for local arts,

entertainment, heritage, and cultural sectors; development of stronger protective measures to maintain and improve heritage assets; development of a new art facility; and strengthening of Downtown's Creative Culture Precinct.

When respondents were asked to rank 14 priorities for economic development in the community, 'arts and culture' came third, after energy and agriculture/food (HB Lanarc 2011, n.pag.). Since the final SOCP will have to make choices about priorities, it will be interesting to see to what degree public aspirations and priorities for arts, culture, and heritage are integrated into the Plan.

Concluding observations

We began this article by discussing the *third wave* of science studies on expertise and experience, and we return to that topic to try to make sense of the complex picture emerging from the case studies on expert-amateur interactions in the development of Integrated Community Sustainability Plans.

First, we observe that within the ICSP processes citizens have become widely accepted as legitimate experts and partners in community sustainability planning. The participation of members of cultural communities as *subject* experts, whether defined as members of ethnic groups or as artists, creators, and heritage practitioners, also appears to be widely accepted and expected. The *process* experts in this context, whether they are hired consultants or municipal planners, appear to be eager to solicit and listen to citizen and cultural community opinions and ideas. In the communities studied, they went to great lengths to gather information about community values, practices, and priorities using a wide variety of community engagement techniques.

Our second observation is less positive insofar as it concerns the integration of the cultural pillar into the ICSP framework. While planners and consultants in the communities seem to possess three of the types of expertise that Brand and Karvonen say are needed to manage the deliberative model of sustainability – *outreach*,

interdisciplinarity, and *civic* expertise – the case studies suggest that they have been challenged in their role as *meta-experts* – namely, "to juggle the sundries of multiple technical knowledges and, in effect, to act as a broker of expert knowledge" (Brand and Karvonen 2007, 9). This is not surprising given the contested nature of sustainable development and the lack of consensus on culture's role in sustainability. In this regard, it may be that one of the new skills that planners will require is meta-expertise, enabling them to better act as interpreter and assembler of cultural expertise that is widely dispersed in the community.

Third, the communities studied, in general, lacked formal cultural planning expertise in identifying cultural resources and thinking strategically about how they fit within planning frameworks. At a practical level, this seems to have had two consequences. First, city planners and hired consultants made admirable efforts to guide communities through the process of identifying their cultural values and assets, but many comments by key informants suggest that culture remained on the periphery of the sustainability consultations. Second, in some communities, planners and consultants appeared to be heavily reliant on 'key actors', those individuals who act as brokers and gatekeepers between the various interconnected networks of the community. This put a heavy burden on a few people (often volunteers) to try to translate the vague conceptualization of culture's role in sustainability into concrete ICSP priorities and actions. Both situations are troubling, as ongoing implementation of the ICSP may risk 'burning out' those key actors who understand and are committed to including culture in sustainability initiatives. At a conceptual level, the challenge is, as Collins and Evans (2002) observed, to assemble a new network of knowledge from a diverse array of expertise. We are far from understanding 'who knows what', especially in the cultural domain, and attention may need to be paid in future *third wave* studies to bringing more precision to the definitions of expertise, especially as they pertain to culture and its role in sustainability.

Fourth, both experts and ordinary citizens struggled to identify the public interest in including culture as a pillar of sustainability.

Culture was sometimes slotted under social or economic sustainability in the final community sustainability plan, rather than as a separate pillar. Further, even if citizens were clear about their aspirations and priorities for culture within the overall framework of sustainability, these were not always translated into concrete actions due to financial or human resource limitations or political priorities. In some communities, this situation has led to mistrust, confusion, and even exhaustion, as citizens see little being done following the consultation process. In this instance, it is not a lack of expert understanding that acts as a barrier to implementation, but rather a lack of political will to act upon the public interest in culture expressed by community residents.

A final observation concerns the role of new media and digital technologies in public consultations on sustainability. Judging from the case studies, both citizens and cultural communities are using these technologies to make their voices heard. In the age of Facebook and YouTube, it is possible for even the 'hard to reach' to express an opinion about sustainability in their communities. Conversely, experts are using the same technologies to increase the transparency of the public engagement process, to encourage input from youth, and, in some instances, to provide virtually real-time accounts of progress and participation. Paradoxically, despite the extensive use of digital technologies to facilitate consultations, key informants tend to regard face-to-face community conversations as the most effective means of encouraging a dialogue about culture and sustainability.

The power of narrative – whether oral, written, electronic, performance, visual, audiovisual, or historic – may be the main way that culture at the local level is having an impact on community sustainability policies. One of the artists posting on the Campbell River Facebook page observed that "we live in an age that finds itself standing in the middle of broken pieces of story, like a museum with thousands of fragments of pottery shards. We no longer have a cohesive story or stories that carry deep meaning for us, that encode our values and beliefs and histories, that give us a ground on which to stand" (Robertson 2011, n.pag.). A member of the Wei Wai Kum First Nation in Campbell River was quoted as saying, "Storytelling is the

key to our future ... Our people have always been oral educators and learners and we are following the paths of our ancestors" (Campbell River 2010).

Benedict Anderson (1991), writing about the growth of nationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, observed that "What, in a positive sense, made the new communities imaginable was a half-fortuitous, but explosive interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communications (print) and the fatality of human linguistic diversity" (43). In the twenty-first century, systems of production are challenged by the limited capacity of the biosphere, digital and information technologies saturate cyberspace and 'livingspace', and human linguistic and cultural diversity have ceased to be barriers to global communications. Dialogue and local cultural narratives may turn out to be where the twenty-first century's "broken pieces of story" are reunited and where the seeds of community resiliency and sustainability are planted.

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