BREAKING THE LINE:

INTEGRATING POETRY, POLYPHONY, & PLANNING PRACTICE

by

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Abstract

Languages currently used by planners to conceptualize, document, and present projects lack expansive imagination and polyphonic literacy. Planning demands new languages to address social and environmental challenges within our increasingly cross-cultural urban environments. Although storytelling theory in planning has expanded contemporary understanding of what constitutes method and practice within the discipline of planning, there has been little work to date explicating what poetry offers to planning education and practice.

This thesis examines several opportunities and challenges in adopting poetry into contemporary practice in Vancouver, British Columbia using a multi-method approach. Methods include: a literature review on planning projects collaborating with artists; an ethnomethodological analysis of interviews with four Vancouver poets; a constructionist analysis of a planning text and a re/formation experiment with poetry; and finally, autoethnographic 'poetry as inquiry'. Learnings suggest that a critical approach to poetry offers an alternative language to connect to both 'self as planner' and to the multitude of overlapping voices of 'publics' in process, document, and presentation.

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Dedication

Sylvia Hurford

To her heart:
(da DAH
da DAH
da DAH) beat

I first
formed:

counterpoint.

Betsy Warland

Awake

to

: counterpoint.

Jonathan H. Wolferstan

The da DAH
da DAH
da DAH

of my

every day.

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Members of em dash writers collective and *The Writer's Studio* for ever-inspiring writing and critique.

And finally, my Wolferstan and Gillespie families for inevitable late night dinner conversation, tendency towards art-making, and ongoing commitment for true camaraderie. Special thanks to Jon for sharing in this intense living; it keeps me alive in all realms.

Preface: Awake Self in the Research

The integration of poetry and planning in a postmodern context is not only a concept I believe to be important to planning—what became apparent as I began this work is that integrating poetry in planning processes has also been a 'self project' for over ten years. Formally, it began with aligning English Literature and Political Science as my two majors in my undergraduate degree. In 2001, I moved to Vancouver to begin work in the field of social policy.

Focused on issues of housing and homelessness in Vancouver, I quickly understood the socio-political context of a new provincial government. Decreasing funding for social programs and emphasis on the generation of 'empirical evidence' created an immediate hunger in the social-service and housing community for numbers: number of homelessness, number of at risk, number of seniors, Aboriginals, lone-parent families, immigrants

etcetera. etcetera.

Although I understood and continue to understand the significance and importance for statistical context in housing and planning-related decisions, I felt the negation of story and inclusion came at the expense of this particular turn in BC's political history when research, documents, and presentations were being formalized and shiny-packaged as the objective belongings of truth.

For myself and many marginal members of the community, this created feelings of:

Room /closed door.
No pictures.
Bird Cage. Wing Clip.

I worked in the field of affordable housing for six years, researching issues, analysing statistics, constructing tables, charts, and policy recommendations, continuously encouraged by external funders to be more positivistic in my approach to methodology and documentation. By then, something in me had gone into remission.

Stopped
(dead)
mid-flight.

In 2005, I had attempted resuscitation with an intensive year at Simon Fraser University's, *The Writer's Studio (TWS)*, where I worked on my first poetry manuscript under the mentorship of Vancouver poets, Miranda Pearson and Betsy Warland. Practicing and writing poetry as 'work' in addition to identifying myself as 'writer' or 'poet' was the breath that brought me back to questioning and rethinking the function of poetry. The urgency of poetry.

I realized how important it was, not just for myself, but also for a variety of people in communities, to have

voice, especially those with no voice in traditional planning processes.

To have stories during week days.
Meanings. Music.

Arriving at my decision to pursue a Masters of Arts in Planning indicated a commitment to creatively working for greater inclusion within the complexity of local contexts.

To pick-up and stand language in the local.

The seeking behind this research has been to investigate through my own poetry and the poetry of others, what poets and poetry have to offer planning practices in Vancouver. In particular, ways in which poets and poetry uniquely operate to understand social, political, and cultural context within the blurred lines of individual, neighbourhood, community, nature, city.

The planning theorists, practitioners, and poets acknowledged in this thesis for their polyphonic and musical approach to people, places, and communities have played an essential role in getting me here. To the place of necessity—I believe for all of us at some or all times. This thesis is: sustainability.
survival.
whole self.
(alarm ringing) awake.

Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION: (QUICK) BREAK THE LINE

A homophonic universe seems as likely as a forest with only one tree, one species of grass, one bird, one beast — and just as self-sustaining as a fishbowl with one fish.

Bringhurst 2007:24

Redefining the role of planner outside of the Enlightenment school of thought provides new opportunities in understanding and exploring contemporary planning research and practice. In cross-cultural urban contexts, Leonie Sandercock (2003) challenges planners to gain literacy in artistic expression in order to both acknowledge power dynamics implicit in any community and also to acknowledge the planner as a political figure. Gaining literacy in the recovery of a post-positivist context involves not only learning to read artistic expression in both traditional and contemporary forms of poetry, visual art, music, and theatre, but also learning to speak and act these languages within the planning field itself (Sandercock 2003:79). This thesis explores how the integration of poetry in postmodern planning practices could work to re-imagine and thereby reform a variety of planning processes, documents, and presentations through polyphonic practice.

invitation:break the line

poet|planner|urban|speak

While constructing the ideas underlying this research, I was drawn to the concept of polyphony in music, meaning music written "in the style of two or more relatively independent parts" (Oxford 1995). I became interested in what this largely dormant tradition would

surface to the diverse discipline of planning, especially as western cities are becoming more 'musically' diverse, with languages, cultures, and histories that increase with immigration and growth. Adapting polyphony as metaphor for planning in diverse contexts allows an important shift in western thinking, a way of thinking in dominant or monophonic voices that are featured in 'trade off' or competitive theory where someone or something 'wins' in any given decision (Bringhurst 2007).

Adapting polyphonic principles to planning practices also assist in determining how planners recognize and continue to address current and future inequities within the simultaneously existing levels of individual, community, and environment. Decisions made by planners and communities will inevitably affect the success of our cities as places of hope, health, and creative productivity. Recent complexities surfacing in cities indicate a sense of urgency for re-examining current practice. We live in a "world in which a crisis somewhere is necessarily a crisis elsewhere and, sometimes everywhere" (Somerville:2), including recent global awareness of our current environmental crisis.

New thinking at the local level needs to identify theories and practices to reshape not only land-use practice but also social and economic practices. Neither isolating ourselves within our same culture, race, gender, age nor discriminating against those we

In polyphonic music, and in polyphonic speech, the lines are independent.

The voices watch out for one another and give each other room, but each one moves through the acoustic space at its own speed on its own path.

Each, it seems, is doing its own thinking.

-Robert Bringhurst, from *Everywhere Being is Dancing*

view as different should be the norm, but rather learning more about the intimate intersections of commonality and difference, hope and fear, desire and despair (Sandercock 2003).

The work of various ethicists, theorists, and practitioners has summoned poetry as the language to disrupt the domination of positivist thought and rethink both the direction and capability for transformative change within urban environments. In this thesis, I examine the points of intersection between poetry and planning through four main aspects. First, I explore planning practices that have successfully integrated artists or art to enhance contemporary planning practice. Second, I examine the distinctions, opportunities and implications of using poetry in planning. Third, I define and discuss what poetry entails within the planning context, both from a theoretical perspective and an ethnomethodological perspective and apply a constructionist textual and feminist analysis to 'poetry as knowledge'. Finally, I identify potential barriers to literacy and propose some foundations for re-thinking methods for teaching and practicing poetry literacy in planning, including information gathering, analysis, representation, writing and presentation.

Definitions

Similar to planning, poetry has a variety of definitions and boundaries corresponding to the cultural and

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political body that defines it. From poetry published as text sometimes associated with the elite and national identity to poetry as spoken word typically performed in artsy, 'hip' neighbourhood cafes and/or associated with minority youth, poetry works in unique ways to observe, respond, and engage within emotional, social, political and built environments. Definitions of poetry are discussed at length alongside the distinctiveness and function of poetry in Chapter 3.

Research Assumptions

My work makes the following assumptions:

- Contemporary trends such as global migration and climate change will require new types of planning responses in urban environments.
- Communities will require both local and global responses; however, local actions will be most effective.
- Poetry has a unique and urgent role to play in enhancing and reforming current practices through the contribution of multiple voices, meanings, and interpretations.
- Poetry is expressed in a multitude of media, including but not limited to text, spoken word, hip hop, and graffiti.
- Poetry can work simultaneously or independently to disrupt and/or work within planning practices.
- Poetry is an expansive practice but, at the same time, may offer a 'common language' within its established locality.
- Poetry constructs self and/or idea within community and/or place.

interface|preface

Poetry is urgent and difficult.

Although the process of writing poetry necessitates word !play! it can be an intellectually emotional creature.

Hard to get a sure handle on.

Sometimes we may want to leave the room. Nurture our faux comforts. Find some escape literature or sit asleep with the TV. Something seemingly easy and frivolous. Not too demanding after a hard workday.

- Poetry may be used in existing and modified planning practices to enhance reflection, engagement, inclusion, and thereby effectiveness.

- Poetry does not replace methods of scientific inquiry, but acts as a necessary complement to planning education, practice, and presentation.

- Poetry is not apolitical.

But the poetself asks us (as planners) to not leave the room.

And some of us dare not leave. Because poetry is persistently tapping our collective shoulder with sharp language hands.

Asking us to acknowledge the flight rhythms into which we were born.[1]

Showing us its magical biology.

Research Questions

This thesis attempts to address four main questions:

Question 1: *How are planners currently working with community artists; and, in what ways does this work enhance practices in cross-cultural contexts?*

The approach is literature review-based, descriptive and explanatory. Searches were conducted in English-speaking planning journals and examples were documented and analysed in terms of purpose and effect in each particular instance.

Question 2: *What specifically do poets and poetry bring to planning in terms of process, documentation, and presentation?*

Question 2 employed two types of analysis: examination and expression. I began by discussing what the definition, distinctiveness, and function of poetry is within a cross-cultural context. Because poetry is currently not discussed in the planning field, I relied extensively on texts in the field of poetry and literature to get a sense of recent thinking on poetry, cities, place, planning and community development.

I also interviewed four poets working and writing in Vancouver to begin exploring the role of the poet and poetic works. I reviewed the work of poets interviewed and the work of other poets writing on locality, place, and community within an urban context.

My own poetry is expressed as autoethnography on the right margin of this document. This method of inquiry plays a significant role in exploring contemporary issues in planning. Writing poetry allows for multi-layered self-reflection in the context of my work and also for new angles of analysis and insight to emerge in surprising ways on the page. Never a solitary act, I believe that poetry communes with many existing voices, both inside ourselves and inside our communities.

Question 3: *Why is the practice of poetry important in a feminist context?*

Feminist theorists have been instrumental in debating the rationalist claim to objectivity (Code 1991 & 1995 Sandercock 2003). Feminist approaches to the construction of knowledge are essential in determining how planners gather, analyse, write, and present information to represent aspects of a community. This is especially of interest in a constructionist or postmodernist approach, when certain members of a community are understood as more marginalized than others. I have used a feminist analysis to examine how female resident experiences are represented in two

We are beckoned to re-examine language in city planning for the sake of our animal selves.

And for the sake of the margins.[2]

So we don't discover we've forgotten the story of anyone. Or worse, be found guilty of erasure.

The margin beckons us to self-reflect in the spirit of critical play.

To arrange poetic involved research.

To locate creative spaces of light.

types of documents in the Downtown Eastside— the 2005 City of Vancouver housing plan and the Carnegie Centre newsletter. To address this research question, I experiment with form and content seeking ways to enhance the inclusion of Downtown female resident voices in existing city documents by including poetry.

Question 4:
What is required to gain literacy, integrate, and transform contemporary planning practices to include the practice of poetry?

In the conclusion of my thesis, I layer findings from the various methodologies employed by this thesis research, discuss some of the challenges, barriers, and opportunities for considering various uses of poetry in planning practices, and make a series of recommendations for integrating poetry in planning education, processes, documents, and presentations.

Methodology

Four methodologies were used to examine poetry and planning in this thesis, including a literature review, interviews, constructionist textual analysis, and poetry as autoethnographic inquiry.

Literature Review

I began the research for this thesis through a directed study with Leonie Sandercock in Spring 2007. Examples of planning or community development projects collaborating with poets and other artists were

In the spirit of polyphony, the poems found in these margins attempt multiplicity creating compositions in an acrobatic ecological type sense.

They converse relationally and musically (but not linearly) with the facing academic text.

They pick it up in their child-like hands and examine it at intersecting points.

Add soil water sparkle glue.

sought in online journals and books. In particular, online planning journals were scanned for examples of the words: 'poetry', 'poet', 'art', 'artist', and 'creative approach'. Online planning journals I specifically searched included: *Planning Theory & Practice; Journal of Planning Education and Research; Journal of Planning Literature; Planning Theory; Planning Perspectives;* and, the *Journal of the American Planning Association.*

Because no specific examples of planner/poet or planning/poetry practices were found in the literature, I began to explore examples of practitioners in other fields (e.g. social work and nursing) using poetry in research and practice. I also began to review and analyse the work of various poets engaged in writing on the local/urban, primarily poets associated with the Kootenay School of Writers (KSW) located in Vancouver, BC.

Interviews

Ethnomethodological Approach

In determining my interview methodology, I recognized two things: a) I would be interviewing poets as a poet and, b) that this did not absolve me from challenges of objectivity and power. Not only do I reside in both the fields of poetry and planning, but also I would be initiating and framing the interview and analysing the findings. In light of these considerations, I have adopted an ethnomethodological approach to the interview process and analyses as outlined by Carolyn

Poems will appear on every page.

When actual text does not construct lines in the margin, the empty margin itself offers a silent roompoem for the imagination to sit in.[3] To rest and reflect.

To self-create.

D. Baker (2001). I express a primary interest in how poets "accomplish their identities, their activities, their settings, and their sense of social order" (Baker 2001: 777). As I am interested in what aspects poets and poetry may bring to the field of planning through thinking and practice, I am interested in how poets "make sense of each other, how they build a 'corpus of interview knowledge,' how they negotiate identities, and how they characterize and connect the worlds they talk about" (Baker 2001: 777).

As the interviewer (and as a poet), I am neither passive in the interview nor 'stranger' to the topic of poetry. An ethnomethodological approach allows me to situate myself deeply *inside* the conversation and allows the synergistic exchange of ideas, while simultaneously acknowledging how I initiated and shaped the beginning of the interview, transcription and analyses, acting as 'witness' to the work (Baker 2001).

> Interviews, then, are seen as a particular subset of interactional settings and as events that members make happen thoroughly inside an interview as part of the social worlds being talked about, rather than as "outside" or "time out" from those social worlds (Baker 2001: 177).

In particular, I use Baker's following guidelines to the ethnomethodological approach:

a) Study the interview as conversational interaction
b) Treat interview materials as accounts, with the addition of their work

Notes found at the end of the poems are alternative maps to the margin text.

Mostly, they offer acknowledgements and entrance signs.

They are the scaffolding the poetplanner self has used to stand on and listen.

Then compose.

c) Look for categorization within the interaction, membership, and accounts
d) Find the production of identities within the interaction; and
e) Find versions of the worlds talked about in the interaction, in the accounts, and in the membership categorization work.

I have understood membership as subjects 'interviewed *as members* of some category, or population', for example: 'Vancouver poet', 'Vancouver female poet', 'Vancouver lyric poet', 'Vancouver language poet'.

Accounts are understood as the:

> [S]ense-making work through which participants engage in explaining, attributing, justifying, describing, and otherwise finding possible sense or orderliness in the various events, people, places, and courses of action they talk about (Baker 2001: 781).

Courses of action where poets focused their comments generally included the following research questions: *What do poets and poetry bring to planning? What is required to gain literacy, integration, and transformation to contemporary planning practices in order to include the practice of poetry? Why is a feminist analysis important?*

Poets/ Interviewees

Four individual interviews were conducted between February 15 and March 3, 2008 at various locations determined by the subjects. Poet interviewees include:

practice is sensuous activity[4]

1.

as planners we have become all types

theatre performer, math teacher, artist, cartographer, chiropractor, acrobat, celebrity chef, designer, photographer, policy drafter,

aromatherapist

we impose: smell
c?o?l?o?u?r texture

scratch & sniff
the neighbourhood

Oana Avasilichioaei is a poet and translator (French and Romanian). Born in Romania, Oana moved to the West Coast of British Columbia at age 10. She has published a collection of poems (*Abandon*) and a translation of work by Romanian poet Nichita Stanescu (*Occupational Sickness*) and has recently completed new work soon to be published, entitled: *feria: a poempark*. Oana was in Montreal at the time of interviewing, and her interview was conducted by email.

Kate Braid is a poet and has just retired as a (commuting) creative writing instructor at Malaspina University-College in Nanaimo. In her 30's and 40's, Kate worked as a qualified journeywoman carpenter on buildings, bridges, and transit systems in Vancouver and throughout the Lower Mainland and eventually started her own company. She is the author of *To This Cedar Fountain, Inward to the Bones: Georgia O'Keefe, Emily Carr: Rebel Artist* and co-editor of *In Fine Form*, an anthology of form poetry, with Sandy Shreve. Two additional poetry manuscripts— one based on the life of Glenn Gould and another featuring unpublished work from her time as a carpenter—will be published in 2008. I interviewed Kate in her living room.

Wayde Compton is the author of *49th Parallel Psalm, Performance Bond, Bluesprint: Black British Columbian Literature and Orature*. Together with

hold poems on tongues to taste
as we walk down autumn street

leaves wreath heads of publics
absorb colour memory

mud root rain

nature barks geometry
an orchestra of polysound

Jason de Couto, Wayde forms 'The Contact Zone Crew,' a duo constructing turntable-based sound poetry. Wayde is also a co-founder of the Hogan's Alley Memorial Project; and lastly, he teaches and mentors creative writing at *The Writer's Studio* and English at Coquitlam College. I interviewed Wayde outside a Blenz coffee shop in the atrium of Vancouver Public Library, Central Branch.

Graham McGarva is a poet and principal of VIA Architecture with over 25 years of experience in urban planning and architecture. He was born in the UK and is the author of multiple works of poetry embedded in the conceptual design and presentation of various architectural projects, including *3 Poems for the Millennium Line*, written during the design process for the Commercial, Rupert, and Renfrew Skytrain stations. I interviewed him at his office in Yaletown.

Recruiting Process

Interviewees were recruited using the snowball sampling method—two known subjects were contacted by email through their affinity with the Simon Fraser University (SFU) creative writing program, *The Writer's Studio (TWS)*. An interview was requested with these two contacts and, in addition, I requested recommendations for other potential interviewees. In the end, I interviewed one known subject (Wayde Compton) and the other known subject (Betsy Warland) arranged four additional contacts; three of the four contacts agreed to be interviewed.

dear street: rise (text-made) please

not as:
monument on hilltop

but rather:
cartography of arrivals

series of earthen footprints

a legend of edge feeling where
ever moving river beckons slowly
to awaken municipal landing
sometimes

painfully together

Interview Procedure

In early February 2008, I received formal behaviour and human subjects ethics review approval from the University and began contacting my known subjects to arrange interview dates, times, and places. At the beginning of each interview conversation, I suggested that the interview would be largely conversational in nature. Although no formal questions were prepared in advance, I did begin with an introduction of my research interest, my own location in the work as poet and researcher, a short interpretation of the poet's work, and a 'lead-in' question. Poets were invited to speak on the relationship and interface of planning (or the city) and poetry in Vancouver at any time throughout the conversation. Interviews were approximately 60 to 85 minutes in length.

Three of these interviews were conducted face-to-face and audio-taped. One poet (Oana Avasilichioaei) chose to conduct the interview by email for two reasons: she was not in Vancouver at the time of the interviews and she believed it would give her an opportunity to reflect more mindfully on the topic. Interviews were transcribed (to a total of 41 single-spaced pages) and emailed to respective interviewees for potential changes and final approval.

Interviews were coded for the following general themes: definition (Poetry is...); reflection and conceptual processes; community or public engagement; urban

2.

we rarely fill the consultation
rooms

(have we become empty?)

buildings stuck in first stage
permit unformed wings
fossilize glass

sometimes i worry
we have drugged ourselves out

of our flight sense

too scheduled to remember
the dream we had when
we were soft and naked

(a people prayer)

design and development; presentation; emotion; music; and place. Using an ethnomethodological analysis also emphasizes knowledge generated by the interaction of the conversation:

> Such analyses attend to *how* participants do the work of conversational interaction, including how they make sense of each other, how they build a "corpus of interview knowledge," how they negotiate identities, and how they characterize and connect the worlds they talk about (Baker 2001: 777, author's emphasis).

This methodology allowed a certain type of exploration—in particular, how each of the poets understood her or himself as a poet in relation to other poets, language, and local environment; and, how thinking and speaking about this relationship generated transferable learnings to planning. As the research is exploratory in nature, findings were never intended for deduction or generalization; data generated by the four poets were not intended to be understood as representative of the views of Vancouver poets or poets in general. That said, I am mindful that the subject sample includes poets of varying genders, ages, socio-economic classes, and cultural backgrounds.

Constructionist Textual Analysis

For the textual analysis (included as Appendix A), I have adapted the *explanation as inquiry* model— one of two paths of storytelling as inquiry developed by Reason and Hawkins (1988)— to include a constructionist approach (Linders 2008). A constructionist approach involves understanding:

!remember! our shapes the colours of finger paint

sea horse

flexible juxtaposition between alternative range of category

constituted of multiple identities[5] camouflaged

mesmerized by liberated statistician revealing with her most clever presentation hand

numbers no longer dividable by one

> [...] how some aspect of reality is constructed through the efforts of social actors; that is, to trace the process whereby some element of social life—meanings, institutions, identities, norms, problems, routines, and all other conceivable aspects of social reality—comes into being, emerges, takes shape, becomes understandable, acquires visible and meaningful boundaries, and takes on constraining and/or facilitating characteristics (Linders 2008:468).

Constructionist projects involving document analysis also consider the methodology of selecting and using documents (Linders 2008). Considerations for the decision-making process include: ensuring the texts are related to the research question and understanding researchers do not control the purpose, conditions, audience, and methodology of the production of existing texts; considering, of the documents available, who has participated in the writing/editing of them and how these relate to the research questions; examining the 'truth' of documents, in terms of inherent biases and how "they push reality constructions in distinct directions"; and, understanding "documents don't speak for themselves", or in other words, the researcher surfaces the text through reading and rewriting in a new document or context (Linders 2008:468-469).

To discuss textual representation of neighbourhood planning issues in Vancouver, I have selected the October 2005 *City of Vancouver Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* and *The Carnegie Newsletter* (2007 editions) as examples. Based on Linders' (2008) criteria for the selection of documents, I identified that these two documents were related to research questions

a grape ripens in our mouths

the taste multiplies
across zone & grid

2, 3, and 4 in my thesis. I am aware of the 'sites of production' and the implicit multitude of biases within each of these agencies and discuss them in detail; however, I felt it important to begin exploring options to include poetry in planning documents as a source of relevant information about a community, much in the same way Census data is currently collected.

For this method, I have also applied a feminist lens to examine and compare how female experiences are presented and represented in Vancouver's particularly marginalized neighbourhood, the Downtown Eastside. Using the *Housing Plan* as an example, I have outlined challenges and imagined opportunities for revisualizing an official planning document to include poetic expressions of female residents in the Downtown Eastside.

Poetry as Autoethnographic Inquiry

Adapting Reason and Hawkins' (1988) second path of inquiry, *expression*, I allow "the meaning of experience to become manifest" in my writing process (80). I have written and studied poetry for over 15 years and have a double major in English Literature and Political Science. In 2005, I received training and mentorship with my first poetry manuscript through the Simon Fraser University creative writing program, *The Writer's Studio (TWS)*. This program was created by writer and poet Betsy Warland, as a 'community/education space' for writers to better

connect to their own writing, the community of others' writing, and the greater community in which they write.

My poetry is a source of reflection, analysis, and expression that I have relied on extensively in all forms of my work. I currently belong to *em dash collective* — a seven-member writing group in Vancouver, whose members support and critique writing and share public reading events — and I am currently completing a poetry manuscript.

Although the creative process of any research process is often hidden, it is also an important "mode of inquiry, a form of meaning—making, and a way of knowing" (Reason and Hawkins 1988:81). The poetry enters this research using different languages, "languages that are analogical and symbolic; they do not point out meaning directly; they demonstrate it by re-creating pattern in a metaphorical shape and form" (Reason and Hawkins 1988:81).

Recent work in the field of qualitative research defines autoethnography within a constuctionalist context. As Ellingson and Ellis remind us:

> Authoethnography is research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political. It is the study of a culture of which one is a part, integrated with one's relational and inward experiences. The author incorporates the "I" into research and writing, yet analyzes self as if studying the other. Autoethnography displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural (Ellingson & Ellis 2008: 448).

work day rhythms ~~at the office~~

a.m.

a sharp wake in the dark hours.
body's ongoing protest. slight
movements around the house.
ancient pose of stretching breathing
stretching breathing.

if lucky, a brief return to sleep.

Autoethnography— as a social constructionist approach— understands expressions such as poetry in research as a unique contribution to relationships with the self and others within society:

> Autoethnography becomes a space in which an individual's passion can bridge individual and collective experience to enable richness of representation, complexity of understanding, and inspiration for activism (Ellingson & Ellis 2008: 448).

Authoethnographers seek to intentionally trouble dichotomies of researcher-researched, objectivity-subjectivity, process-product, self-others, art-science, and personal-political, and "instead choose to engage in productive play with social science writing and research conventions, shedding light on the constructed nature of the art-science writing and research conventions" (Ellingson & Ellis 2008:456).

Along the right hand side of this document, I use poetry as inquiry through a social constructionist autoethnographic approach. This poetry offers a different type of analysis, accompanying other research findings of this thesis. In this initial exploration between poetry and planning, the poetry maintains its own agenda and forms a parallel manuscript that is both part and apart from the main thesis body. This form or structure in itself offers a polyphonic reading of the text.

another wake up. slow. radio. circuit ideas. dream worlds blurring edge into worlds awakening. imposition of thoughts. their polysymbolic realities. curious dialogues. various brevities and emergencies.

receive fair-trade coffee. grains.

water rituals.

The Argument of the Thesis

Languages currently used to conceptualize, write, and present planning projects are insufficient to deal with the contemporary challenges of cross-cultural environments. Although technical and scientific methods serve specific and useful functions within the discipline of planning, they lack the qualities of expansive imagination and polyphonic literacy required to listen and to react to the experiences and meanings communities give to the places they live, work, and dream.

Within a Canadian postmodern context that no longer (in principle) acknowledges planning as an apolitical profession, poetry offers a distinct and alternative language to connect to both 'self as planner' and to the multitude of overlapping voices of 'publics'. This language challenges the ways in which planners think, emote, act, and interact with individuals, communities, and natural and urban environments that are constantly shifting within multiple social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental contexts.

Literacy and skills acquired in the learning and practice of poetry and polyphony will serve to reform and enhance planners and their processes, texts, and performances.

~~conformities of office day~~ still
washing from skin. eyelash.
sudden rush in bloodstream.

turn off radio. assort colour and
textile to body. turn on symphony.
open curtain. observe changes in
weather. the position of birds on
wire. season of song. instinct flood.

go out door.

Communities of the postmodern world are understood to be in varying states of inequality and crisis. Whether it be environmental crisis, socio-economic crisis, or crisis brought on by gang, tribal or government or rebel warfare, globalization has made visible the interconnectivity of our individual lives with others across the globe. Cities like Vancouver now strategize how to better welcome and support immigrant populations in housing and employment and encourage existing households and businesses to cut greenhouse gases; tomorrow it is likely Vancouver will be struggling with more effects of our global state—refugees and migrants fleeing life-threatening circumstances such as water shortage, continued warfare, and food insecurity for example.

Philosophical and theoretical work debating Enlightenment claims that science, reason and rationality will independently solve the world's ills have occurred in various fields and contexts. Recent work in the fields of ethics, architecture, and planning has revealed a range of problems associated with evoking scientific reason and rationality as the dominant lens for understanding the world (Code 1991 & 1995, Sommerville 2006, Sandercock 2003, Sarkissian 2005). This work argues for alternative approaches reflecting the sensitivity to power and class a postmodernism lens allows.

Within the contemporary postmodern context, the planning profession is experiencing an additional

breathe botany of air. walk. hold thoughts in sacred internal geometry. seek ocean. sea creatures. bend to meet them. translate salty calls.

return home. return calls. receive calls. electronic mail. electronic mail. email. vertebrae compacting. curling. quickly seek out meaning. engage. reflect.

arrange music
for pick-up.

ancient breathing.

crisis— one of identity. Extended definitions and alternate histories of planning have resulted in debates within academic and professional circles between planning as art/science, stressing the importance of reason/emotion, technical/social, the approach of singularity/multiplicity (Beauregard 2001; Birch 2001; Dalton 2001; Hopkins 2001; Sandercock 2003; Myers and Banerjee 2005; Pinson 2004; Stiftel, Rukmana, and Alam 2004; Goldstein and Carmen 2006). Questions concerning for whom planners are planning, types of methods accepted in planning, and epistemological underpinnings have all been raised. Planning's identity crisis can be understood "as a product of the tension among planning as an academic field, planning as a social practice, and planning as a profession or guild" (Myers and Banerjee 2005, as quoted in Goldstein and Carmin 2006:66), or perhaps more thematically as the classification of social reform, policy analysis, social learning, and social mobilization (Friedmann 1987).

The identity debate tends to focus on establishing a cohesive identity (Pinson 2004) rather than interpreting diverse ideologies and multiplicity of method as signs of intellectual advancement within the discipline of planning (Hopkins 2001). The current authoritative voice in planning is a rational one, first established post-World War II. Emerging social science methods "could be viewed as attempts by planners to use and legitimate rigourous social science research in design and policy-intervention processes. During this era, architects and designers, engineers, sociologists,

arrive in story. listen. write. listen. write. arrive in conversations. listen. write. in the quiet write. the library. the art gallery. create. walk it through. welcome it. pass out invitations.

a helium balloon.

a new hope.

a rope swing.

political scientists, economists, and natural scientists came together to use their knowledge and expertise toward resolving social problems" (Goldstein and Carmin 2006:67).

Several prominent ethicists and planning theorists have 'summoned' poetry as the language to seduce science, reason, and rationality away from possessive claims to epistemology, truth and objectivity. Poet and farmer, Wendell Berry, raises the point that science or scientific inquiry is no longer believed to provide us with complete knowledge about who we are as a species and the land we inhabit (Berry 2001). Working with poetry or poetic approaches and language offers a unique kind of knowledge, encouraging diverse perspectives or multiple, simultaneous and sometimes contradictory meanings (Sandercock, 2003; Berry 2005). Poetry is the language in which to dream of something different, a language in which, "the poetic image, in its newness, opens a future to language" (Bachelard 1971:3).

Following in the tradition of planning theorists writing on storytelling and 'placemaking', I believe that poetry— through its distinct lineage to music, community, and polyphonic or multiple meanings uninterested in a single dominant voice— will also play a distinct and important role in opening a future to planning education and practices. In light of the "bankruptcy of modernist planning theory" (Beauregard 1998), poetry offers a postmodernist approach to self-realization, leading to the disruption of monophony, as

p.m.

body rhythm tires. arrange texture and colour of vegetation, grain, cheese. sound of water in a wine glass. sit. nurture. arrange thoughts. rush outside. turn left and then left again. receive delight resuscitation from red cedar. garden of fern. child play. bicycle traffic.

meet-up with kindreds. take comfort. bergamot. local honey. thank-you, bees. wild flowers. forests. language sweetened by morning now woolly. afternoon dreams. a long slow inhale. pull of accordion.

well as to social inclusion, hope, and, ultimately, transformative change.

~~minutes from our last meeting~~.
~~spine falling welding forward.~~

!open up! (sound of :wall blast)

meeting place: market place. week days. cafés. community acts. spoken words. poetry speak a new shape. a new stage. a dance hall. a lantern parade.

bridging forward. forward. forward relationships with the past.

Issues addressed and not addressed

This thesis does not draw 'conclusions from evidence'; rather, the work of this research develops transferable learnings for enhancement of planning practice. Research was conducted in an exploratory and expressive manner and focuses on Vancouver as a case study for both existing intersections of poetry and planning and potential opportunities for imagining, thinking, speaking and writing on urban issues. The work in the thesis also reflects on why including a diversity of perspectives is integral to addressing our past current and future planning woes, and why poetry has something important and unique to contribute.

This thesis does not dichotomize poetry and science. It does not argue that poetry should take the place of scientific and technical methods in planning (including but not limited to statistical, quantitative, and qualitative methods of analysis), thereby continuing the discourse on art and science as polar opposite. Rather, in the spirit of multiplicity (which this thesis implicitly and explicitly supports) the argument is made that poetry offers complementary knowledge and disruption to scientific inquiry in a planning context. Although I do challenge the notion that scientific inquiry is the only 'legitimate' or dominant epistemology in planning. Writings in this thesis argue that significant harm has

been done to individuals and communities by neglecting to question positivist claims.

Admittedly, skills obtained through learning, practicing, and reading poetry lie largely dormant in North America outside of a small community of artists, musicians, poets and readers. This thesis argues that the resurrection or crafting of these skills offers a distinct and important role in thinking and acting in contemporary urban contexts.

Limitations

I acknowledge several limitations in this research:

1. Previous Work

Through my systematic review of the relevant literatures, I could find no other research examining the integration of poetry in planning; therefore, my literature review was limited in terms of previous research.

2. Bias

By some research standards, this work is a heavily biased research project; I am a poet and social policy researcher currently attending a planning school and conducting research on poets and poetry in planning (amongst other multiple identities). However, in my approach I have attempted to challenge these positivistic claims to objectivity in research in order to look at what poetry has to offer planning education,

return to home fold. unfold. into official 'breathing' clothes. bicycle. run. speed. oxygen.

observe the light changing. the lowing light. crows in a blur of home flight.

music. more water ritual. a dinner chime. radio. a bookend. a call from the dream. poetry arrives. a cinema. a late night of thinking and discussion and literature.

research, and practice. This research is a 'practice of undoing'.

a flurry of work.

one desk collapses

(discussion entails)

3. Interviews

The sample size (four interviews) and number of interviews were small. I could have increased the number of interviewees and followed up with a second interview with each. However, this would have extended the time and intimacy involved in collecting and analyzing this primary data. Furthermore, the thesis research focused on Vancouver and acknowledges the 'locality of findings'; therefore, interviews were not necessarily intended to be applied generally to other cities.

4. Textual Analysis

The textual analysis was used as a beginning place to look at how planners might use additional *secondary sources* as 'data' and how official planning documents might be written and considered differently. I am aware of the complex power dynamics in attempting such an analysis and that the intentions to displace stereotypes of Downtown Eastside female residents might in fact, work to the opposite if not considered carefully by someone who understands both poetry and constructionist research.

I also acknowledge my own bias in assuming that the *City of Vancouver Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* would benefit from greater representation of Downtown Eastside voices, and that female resident

poets would not react negatively to being published (sensitively and with sought permission) within a state text.

Organization of this thesis

In the structure of this paper, I attempt to physically reflect a contemporary interface of urban planning and poetry. The left side column critiques the use of scientific inquiry to address current and future planning challenges and offers examples and alternatives to rethinking methods and practices.

The right side column of the thesis engages my 'poet voice' to express. In short, the academic essay of this paper briefly holds a looking glass to instances and rationales for planners to converse with artists and poets (and, eventually, who knows! to become poet.) Poetry faces left, from the margin, to explore the subject with its own eye, as stand alone and interface throughout the subject matter discussed in the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction: (Quick) Break the Line

Introduces the work with a summary of definitions, research assumptions and questions, methodology, and limitations. Also outlines and contextualizes the argument of the thesis argument and limitations.

Chapter 2: Working with Art/ists: A Review of the Literature

Summarizes and discusses various examples of artist/planner collaboration projects found in conducting the literature review research process.

Chapter 3: Poetry in Urban Contexts: A Discussion of Definition, Distinctiveness & Function

Introduces the concept of poetic polyphony within planning and the philosophical framework of the thesis. Also explores the existing work of four poets writing as 'critic' to the relationships between local and global planning contexts.

Chapter 4: Poetry as Planning Practice?: Insights into Source, Analysis, Representation, and Presentation

Using an ethnomethodological approach, summarizes and analyses interviews with four Vancouver poets, exploring a range of functions poetry might have in planning processes, documents, and presentations.

Chapter 5: Line Break: Opportunities and Barriers for Increasing Literacy, Poetry and Polyphony in Planning

Concludes the thesis and develops a typology for poetry in planning through the analysis of transferable learnings generated by this thesis research.

Appendix A:

Textually analyses the City of Vancouver *Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* (October 2005) and *Carnegie Newsletter* using a feminist perspective. Also includes an experiment with text, incorporating design concepts and female residents' poetry as 'data'.

poetry|planning code-filter: all[6]
HU: (Kate Braid)

File: [C:\Scientific Software\]
Edited by: Super
Date: 03/03/08

1.

construction 1977:
the only woman
no other women
no one

fatigue in the body: pressure cooker

body falls to page
:resembles poetry
constructed text

gendered architecture
curve insert: birth building
good bone structure
invisible beauty
small hand materials

figures of isolation arrive
enchant me
:Emily Carr
:Georgia O'Keefe
:Glenn Gould

a woman body building bridge
a woman revolution tool

Chapter 2:
WORKING WITH ART/ISTS: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Although I could not locate planning literature specifically identifying the use of poetry in planning, several academics and practitioners have written on the integration of visual or other community artists in planning practice (Al-Kodmany 2000; Dang 2005; Gordon 2005; Sandercock 2003 and 2005; Sarkissian 2005; Finney & Rishbeth 2006). My initial exploration involved not only examining a variety of applications of poetry to planning practice, but also the ideologies underlying these instances.

Planners Collaborating with Artists: Magic, Meaning, Cohesion

Collaboration with artists is one way planners have entered into a variety of new conversations with neighbourhoods, community groups, and themselves—conversations with new languages, new ears, and new outcomes. Calling on artists to conduct a planning function inside the planning field is a fairly recent endeavor.[1] Justification has largely centered on the unique approach art has in exploring and communicating various types of community knowledge (Dang 2005; Finney & Rishbeth 2006; Sandercock 2003 and 2005; Sarkissian 2005). Using creative language, process, and action provides an opportunity

[1] Although I recognize the arts have been widely used in popular education and community arts development processes through the pedagogy of Paulo Freire and traditionally in verbal and non-verbal storytelling amongst Aboriginal communities.

2.

time to sit aside to write to
gaze back: think

meditation

dialogue
- musical vocabularies
- people living knowing (structure)

critique
- wide empty cold streets
- ugly box houses ~~(trim) (shape)~~

play
- light! creative! laughter!

oh illogical and confident heart
!delight in physicality of feeling

to acknowledge and challenge the power dynamics inherent in a planner's relationship with members of a community who may be intimidated by formal expressions such as city council or academic meetings and official documents.

Art offers an entry point or 'doorway' into planning processes that say at once, 'tell me what you see and feel and experience' and, 'tell me what it means in your voice, in your language' (Dang 2005). Art in the planning context works to create a safe and open space for dialogue, escaping the 'secret language' of more formal and top-down planning practices (Dang 2005; Sarkissian 2005). Art also offers a vehicle for questioning or disrupting normative planning patterns and processes.

Contemporary examples of artist/planner collaboration vary in the literature. For instance, artists may be brought in to enhance existing planning practices with therapeutic qualities. Unlike traditional practice, which often attempts to avoid or filter out emotions in favour of attaining logical and concrete outcomes, artists may help to understand or draw out underlying conflicts and feelings about identity and place (Sandercock 2005; Sarkissian 2005). The Seattle Arts Commission, for example, places artists in communities in order to evoke feeling and emotion. The artist facilitates this emotion into artistic expression, which acts as a unique vehicle for self and community awareness, cohesion, and identity (Sandercock 2003).

3.

mother heart own body rhythm
womb structure

(claim the ultra sound)

transformation polyphone

mystical metamorphosis
every moment everything
each moment vertical

each movement building
from: either/or
to: both/and

Artists can act as 'co-creators' of a planning practice. A community development artist and friend of the planning consultant, Wendy Sarkissian, had the idea to work with a low-income housing community in Eagleby, Australia using a layering of creative approaches (Sarkissian 2005). During one resident consultation process, the artist heard the community expressing an underlying feeling of oppression and stigma. The artist created a visual representation of the metaphor expressed, in this case an eagle held down by an oppressive thumb, and the representation was burned in a special ceremony with the community. This process evoked a type of catharsis, a space for healing (Sandercock 2005). Residents and planners felt this contributed to a profound social transformation and identity shift; more emphasis was placed on the internal change that occurred in thinking about community, self, and place than the eventual physical design changes of the neighbourhood.

Artists may also technologically enhance planning processes. In Chicago's Pilsen area, a visual artist acted as a kind of third 'technology' in a neighbourhood re-visualization project (Al-Kodmany 2000). GIS and Trispectives 3-D modeling software were used to create images of streets and affordable housing in the area. These images were presented to resident participants for verbal comment in a workshop setting, with the notion that the artist would translate resident ideas visually onto the models or separate canvases.

In this case, the artist was to surface an immediate 'magic' or 'humanness' to existing streets through the eyes of the residents, something GIS and other software were not able to do 'on the spot' (Al-Kodmany 2000:10). The planner provided the assistance of alternative technology to "keep the artist and the residents in check with reality, to ensure that the emerging drawings were practical and relevant" (Al-Kodmany 2000:15).

In the evaluation stage of the design project, the public consultation process was understood as a success; useful community expertise regarding safety and crime issues and aesthetic preference was extracted, communicated, and agreed upon. However, limiting artistic expression within the constraints of the technological planner 'neighbourhood reality' was emphasized in the success of this method of public consultation.

Regulating artistic expression as a 'planning form' may have unexpected consequences between state 'regulators' and what have been largely understood as 'vandal artists'. Graffiti artists provide a variety of visual commentary throughout the public and private landscape. Planning processes designed to collaborate with young graffiti artists in the realm of place-making acknowledge the conversation graffiti presents in the city.

on transfer: photo city text[7]

Through the initiative of Constable Tom Woods, the Rock Solid Foundation in Victoria, Canada, developed an outdoor art gallery project for youth. The Trackside Art Gallery was opened up along an industrial section of railway just outside the city centre where young graffiti artists were invited to create murals and express views and perspectives (Sandercock 2003). Moving from a "Cavalcade of No's" to interactive places designated for youth to express themselves is integral to surfacing creativity in urban areas (Gordon 2005). In Vancouver, the City's anti-graffiti programme was re-conceptualized as the Graffiti Management programme (going from a 'No' to a 'No but, right here, okay, this space is yours' message). In the re-conceptualization process, graffiti as artistic expression is legitimized by the designation (and regulation) of place, a space created for the display or 'gallerization' of graffiti as an art form.

Artists are involved in planning practice as partners in capacity-building. The Viewfinder project in Sheffield, UK used photography as a qualitative, participatory, and reflexive research method in order to explore how recent refugees viewed public open space (Finney and Rishbeth 2006). The University of Sheffield's Department of Landscape partnered with a community arts group to deliver a three-month photography course to refugees with the objective of developing and evaluating "ways to engage with marginalized groups in landscape and planning research" (Finney and Rishbeth 2006:27).

parkette: design series[8]

1. administrative signs

wrong way wrong way bike only bike only black diagonal yellow diagonal black yellow black yellow

no vending

yield yield yield sit down sit sit sit sit sit

drink
water moving

sit down sit sit sit

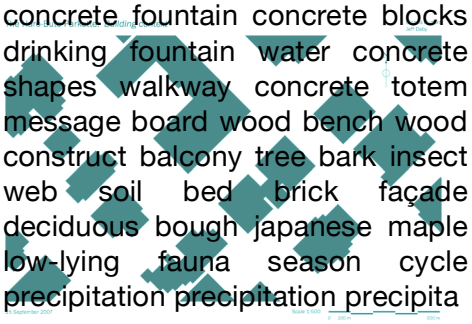
do not enter do not enter do not enter adjacent building adjacent building

wrong way bike only black diagonal yellow black yellow

Refugee photography, taken while on site visits, was complemented with group discussions. Through a reflexive inquiry process facilitated by the researchers, the refugees explored and expressed the meaning and significance of the photos. "[Researchers] found memory and nostalgia to be very important in participants' experiences, and this was combined with cultural surprise and the novelty of visiting new forms of urban green space" (Finney and Rishbeth 2006:35). Interestingly, the exercise did not necessarily allow for participants to feel comfortable revisiting the public space independently unless for a certain type of activity such as sport or volunteer work. Overall the authors felt that skills in photography and expression on the design and use of public open space were enhanced because of the exercise.

As the Viewfinder project was a reflexive exercise on behalf of both the participants and the researchers, power dynamics between the three parties were explored and documented. The relationship between the community arts group and the academic research was most explicitly stated. Researchers acknowledged that without the community group, the benefits of mutual, onsite, creative/visual learning and skill development would have failed to come to fruition. The arts group worked with unpredictable operating funds and a different work culture than the academic norm; these factors were expressed as unexpected challenges

2. materiality



and power-related tensions in the community artist/planner collaboration approach.

Questions Brought Forward

In all of these examples of artist/planner I found in the literature, not only are the roles of 'planner' challenged, but also the roles of 'artist'. Artists are not 'sole creators' in a room, but rather one imagination, one brush, one voice, evoking and communicating with multiple imaginations, brushes, and voices. Artists present a new language that emerges in terms of function. Artist as: therapist, community capacity builder, disrupter, technologist, as political activist, magician. And art as the cohesive (albeit regulated) ingredient rising within a new form of cross-cultural planning.

From another perspective, 'Official Urban Planners' collaborating with 'Professional Artists' for the purpose of community engagement or social inclusion is perhaps conceptually different from 'Planner as Artist'. Does collaboration also result in a Cartesian-like dichotomy between the planner and the artist, the art and the institution? If so, where is the interface? What types of power relationships govern or regulate the boundaries between art and planning as definite activities? If planners regulate or facilitate the part for artist involvement, does this not imply the dilemma of 'expert' planning?

3. behaviour traces

cigarette butts a paper cup empty sugar packet plastic bag wiener package black leggings wet foam mat a syringe another syringe bus tickets bottle cap ear plugs banana peel apple core a scooter a motorbike driving up locking up cigarette butts paper cups an empty bourbon bottle a slowly rising sun fog

a young girl hopping on the fountain ledge

a leaf falling a small water memory a disappointed decay concrete television chanting from the window wooden bench cigarette butts a constellated arrangement

a group of purple violets

Chapter 3

POETRY IN URBAN CONTEXTS: A DISCUSSION OF DEFINITION, DISTINCTIVENESS & FUNCTION

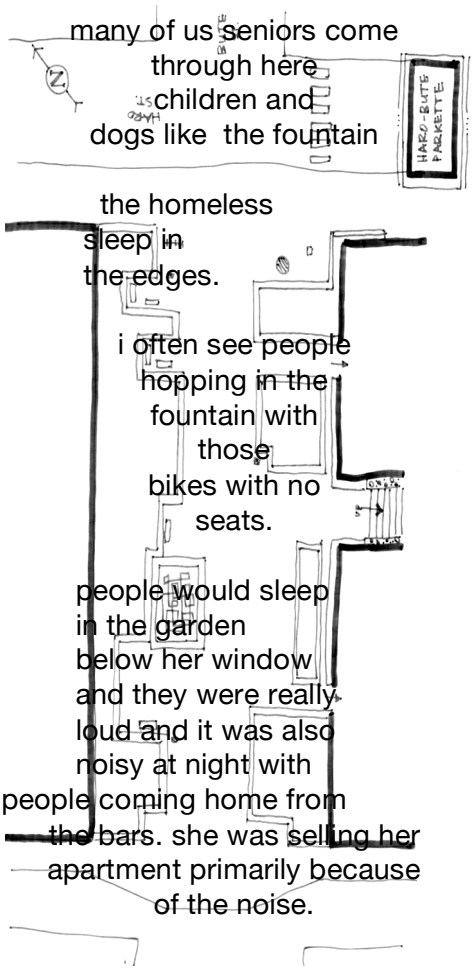
> *Rigidity is the enemy of poetry*.
> (Furman 2006: 38)

This chapter begins by discussing definitions of poetry within the context of expression made diverse by lineages and localities, 'natures' and forms. The narrative of poetry is then distinguished from the narrative of other forms of storytelling such as plays, novels, and films that typically follow traditional narrative arc structures. I conclude with speculations about whether poetry has a role inside or/and outside planning practice, and if inside, how to nourish and apply poetry in our places of work.

Poetry: Polyphonic in Definition?

Defining poetry requires much attention to lineage and localities; poetry reflects locality, identifiable by form and language. The layering of poetic traditions and the social, political, economic, environmental, and cultural contexts of poetry direct venue, form, and representation. For the most part, my research is centered on the formal sense of poetry as determined by communities of poets in Vancouver, rather than the more general recognition of the *poeticness* of the everyday. In Heidegger's essay "The Origin of the Work of Art," this difference is discussed as a potential form

4. interviews: 3 parkette users



of lineage—from *poesy* to the formal understanding or occurrence of poetry. As Heidegger explained:

> The nature of poetry, which has now been ascertained very broadly—but not on that account vaguely, may here be kept firmly in mind as something worthy of questioning, something that still has to be thought through.
>
> If all art is in essence poetry, then the arts of architecture, painting, sculpture, and music must be traced back to poesy. That is pure arbitrariness. It certainly is, as long as we mean that those arts are varieties of the art of language, if it is permissible to characterize poesy by that easily misinterpretable title, i.e., of poetic composition in this wider sense. Nevertheless, the linguistic work, the poem in the narrower sense, has a privileged position in the domain of arts (Heidegger 1971: 73).

Although I am primarily interested in how aspects of writing, performing, or reading forms understood formally as 'poetry' may work to enhance planning practice in Vancouver, I also consider poetry as poetic thinking or *poesy*, particularly in discussing with poets how the nature of poetry and planning intersect.

Exploring how poets understand the 'nature' of poetry acts as a window to understanding how the poet constructs poetry for an audience within a social context. The act of understanding and writing poetry forms a way of knowing, an 'appreciative knowledge' (Sandercock 1998). For example, a poet may acknowledge the nature of poetry as a way of 'being' in ourselves, a form of knowing we are born into, as familiar as heartbeat. As Bringhurst explains:

> I would rather say that poetry is one among the many forms of knowing, and maybe it is knowing in the purest form we know. I would rather say that knowing freed from the agenda of possession and control—knowing in the sense of

5. subjective appraisal 27.09.2007 7:30pm

Evening. It's already dark and I'm wearing a light jacket zipped up. The air smells damp and a light wind releases the odd deciduous leaf from the five trees canopied above. The leaves, still intact on their branches, shimmy like skirts at a dinner party.

I am drawn to a bench by the fountain. One of the designer's intentions may have been to draw me here, especially as the fountain is placed more in the 'streetline' than the other concrete designations. Such as the basins holding soil for vegetation along the borders of the adjacent residential buildings.

The fountain is mildly disturbing. Perplexing. On the previous site visit water gurgled up through the middle of the small concrete blocks. These blocks stand at various heights in the central square of the fountain. A 'gutter' seems to separate the concrete blocks from the concrete ledge bordering the fountain.

The flow of the water is largely unseen. I assume it eventually slips down to a gutter and disappears forever, down metal vent and pipe. Lost to an unknown faraway point.

> stepping in tune with being, hearing and echoing the music and heartbeat of being—is what we mean by poetry (Bringhurst 2007:15).

Or as orchestrated, rhythmic, and journeyed, as Warland writes:

> Poem is wave.
>
> At poem's base is the depth of our unknowing. At its crest our knowing. In the movement between – poem's urgent momentum.
>
> —from "Nose to Nose", *Only this Blue* (Warland 2005)

From a way of being and knowing to the lineage of rhythm, locality, and culture, understanding the diversity of 'natures' in poetry allows for a wide range of forms and definitions. Understood as such, a polyphony of texts and sounds, pages and microphones, heartbeats and DJ beats are working both independently and communally to form an interconnected relationship with the city. In this section, I argue that these interpretations also allow for a diversity of applications within various planning contexts.

Storytelling Theory in Planning & the Distinctiveness of Poetry

The critical approach to storytelling as method in planning, as outlined by Sandercock (2003) and Eckstein and Throgmorton (2003), suggests that form, use, and delivery are essential elements to master. Planners are cautioned about the "need to be attentive to how power shapes which stories get told, get heard,

A body of research exists in the design field that explores theories of water levels and flows in urban fountains. One of the basic premises is that water should come to the highest surface height before flowing to a drain to prevent overflow.

To me, this suggests something instinctual. Perhaps because we want to be close to water. A shallow section safe to wade. More river or lake than pond. More entry point than ornament. Or mythic home to monster.

You must walk to the edge if you want to see water in this fountain. The gutter is empty of everything but an expired bus pass, cigarette butts, and an accumulating mass of gold leaves.

Light from the street lamps glare from the moist concrete.

Water stuck in dysfunctional flow I begin to feel the breathing of the constricted foliage held in hard right angles. Concrete breaths.

A car honks. Another car honks back. It looks like the headlights will drive right in. Park on my shoulder. But they don't.

carry weight" (Sandercock 2003: 182). I believe these also apply to the use of poetry in planning. Similar to stories, poetry "can sometimes provide a far richer understanding of the human condition, and thus of the urban condition, than traditional social science, and for that reason alone, deserve more attention" (Sandercock: 182). Poetry acts as a form of story; however, there are some important distinctions between how 'stories' and 'poetry' construct narrative and thus, how the function and role of poetry shifts subtly from story.

The Distinctiveness of Narrative in Poetry

In Betsy Warland's essay poem "Nose to Nose", she meditates on the distinctiveness of poetry. Each stanza or line (or word) in the poem arrives and lands within itself and within the poem.

> Although poetry has narrative elements, its instincts
> and lineage are distinct from prose narrative's
> instincts and lineage.
>
> Prose takes us on a journey.
>
> Poetry may be the journey.
>
> —from "Nose to Nose" Only This Blue (Warland 2005)

Although many of these characteristics of story may be found in certain types of poetry (particularly 'narrative' poetry), the narrative arc of poetry typically follows several different lines, depending on the social and cultural identity of the poet.

When speaking with Kate Braid about Bach's influence on Glenn Gould, I was reminded of one of the particular distinctions between narrative in poetry and other forms of story:

> We see these four separate tunes that [Bach] manages to overlay to come out with a whole other fantastic piece of music. And one of the beautiful things is the relationship, the intricacy of their relationship is one of the keys to the structure. So each single voice by itself isn't that exciting, well, they're capable and efficient, but when you work two or three or four of these all at once into a new song, each piece is beautiful. But the magic of it is in the relationship in all the voices. And how extraordinary everything is in that structure.
>
> That was just me personally how I learned to understand Bach. [...] I used to hate Bach. I used to find Bach boring! Because I couldn't understand. It all seemed to just teeter up and down and all around and go nowhere. And Gould, at one point said, you know in the 19th century world we're all taught to look for narrative line. It was all narrative arc, so Wagner, Beethoven, it was all about...the music would begin sweetly and quietly and it would build to a crescendo and then it would resolve itself. And that was the story.
>
> But Bach was a mystic and an intentionally spiritual man, so for Bach, he was really quite Buddhist, every moment was everything. Instead of listening horizontally, he listened vertically so each moment is exquisite and complex and colourful in itself and then in the next moment, another moment is exquisite and colourful in itself, so it could go on forever. Each moment is unique and narrative almost except that it's not narrative. Once I learned that from reading him, to listen vertically, it completely changed Bach for me.

The distinction Kate makes between the Wagner/Beethoven approach to narrative and the Bach approach to narrative bring up two important points. Firstly, her story is a story about gaining literacy, an awakening to a different way of experiencing music and

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1.

pre-existent city poem
oral root

communal
space dialogue

poetcitizen a locale lock
soft written environments

poet as :present translator
seeker of past invention
fluid landscape

practitioner of change

thinking. Understanding how polyphony works—what it does to form relationships through independence and interconnectedness—allows a shift in the more traditional way of understanding narrative.

Secondly, I understood why I was also (coincidentally) enthralled with Glenn Gould's *The Solitude Trilogy* (CBC 2007) when I first began this research. Gould's fascination with Bach eventually led to his experiments in contrapuntal radio in the late 60's and 70's, where human voices layer in-and-out and on-top of each other, a manifestation of relationship and interconnectedness. I saw a parallel to contemporary understandings of planning, where insurgent histories are being 'layered into' the dominant historical voice of planning and the role storytelling plays in including these voices (Sandercock 2003). Introducing a new language for story, through poetry, invites us to explore multiplicity in new and distinct ways.

Although not all poetry is polyphonic, a certain kind of practice and reading of poetry can enhance and promote this type of narrative. For me, practicing and reading poetry lives in this altered state of the vertical moment. I am interested in how planners may apply poetry and polyphonic narrative approaches to the field of planning in a broad sense, from urban design and environmental planning where the voices of nature are often silent to social planning and community engagement where multiplicity of publics gather.

2.

poetry : an architecture

local language material
physical construction place
literary built

thought core multiplies
expansive enactments

The Functions: Practicing Polyphony, Poetry, & Planning

The concept of poetry/planning integration has existed since ancient times. The Greek god, Apollo, was the god of music, poetry, prophecy as well as a city planner (while condemned to work amongst mortals, Apollo built Troy together with Poisedon). Some nations and cities pursue their identity through the work of a poet; Canadian cities have recently adopted motions to elect poet laureates to act, remark, interact, and write on behalf of the city's citizens. The City of Vancouver accepted a motion to follow suite to Toronto nominating a poet laureate. George McWhirter, Vancouver's first poet laureate, is currently organizing a Vancouver anthology of place and neighbourhood. He has invited people in Vancouver to submit a poem about a particular street corner, or building, or park, to be anthologized with other pieces by other residents.

However there was a point in history when the practice of poetry, formally speaking, became less of a mainstream language, even amongst artists. Poetry in the contemporary eye is more art for leisure, culture, and entertainment for certain types of people, rather than art for work and function.

Examining the Language: Poets (Re)Planning

The language, forms, and ideologies of four poets, John Betjeman, Fred Wah, Jeff Derksen, and Wayde Compton, offer some unique critiques of planning

3.

poet puts poem in public
a civic act
a blood vein

watch civic space architects work

:Robert Kroetsch
:Lisa Robertson
:Erin Moure
:Michael Turner
:Daphne Marlatt
:John Steffler
:Anne Carson
:Jean-Marc Desgent

discovery of:
newly angled equation
cross/crisscross border
overlapping surface

(harmful possibility)

poem speaks
citizen see world

initiatives in the genres of poetry, hip hop, literature, film, radio, and academic essay. The work of these poets is preoccupied with local responses and the built environment. This type of poetry speaks more to the politicized space within the urban context, forming a discourse on the ongoing power relationships and ideological conflicts between the variety of 'publics' (some marginalized) and 'the regulation' or 'bylawing' of space by the planning profession.

John Betjeman was a revered British poet in the late 1920's and 30's and an architect with a passion for Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian architecture. Along with other British literati such as George Orwell, Betjeman began to publicly critique specific developments that sprawled into the countryside, modernist architecture, and the increasing dislocation of communities. He also wrote reviews, articles, poems and periodical columns published in *The Spectator, The Daily Herald, Punch* and *The Times Literary Supplement*. His second book, *Ghastly Good Taste* (1933), was a response to the despair of contemporary planning practices and rural degradation. These writings and reflections were both an intellectual and poetic statement on the ideology of progress and 'Planner as Expert'.

Betjeman also played a key role in developing broadcasts on planning and development (Tewdwr-Jones 2005). These radio broadcasts and film productions raised planning and development concerns

within the realms of public discourse. Building public awareness about architecture, public space, and urban sprawl was intended to influence government decisions by challenging their authority and exclusive practice.

Radio and film became Betjeman's vehicles for examining power relations in the design of cities:

> By utilizing literature, radio and television films to question the accepted wisdom, these individuals became prominent public figures in their own right, but their writings and broadcasts also had the effect of opening up the planning and development debate to a much larger audience than government officials, landowners, and local councils (Tewdwr-Jones 2005:407).

It could be argued that Betjeman, as a poet, practiced a more inclusive or collaborative approach because of the broadcasting or production mechanisms of radio and television; "Betjeman thought that the most successful approach in making interesting arts-related films in a popular genre, that captured public attention, was through collaborative effort between the film crew and artist" (Tewdwr-Jones 2005:400). If this was the case, it was not because of poetry being lost in the process. He recognized "at an early stage the advantages television offered for transposing prose and poetry into a filmic format" (Tewdwr-Jones 2005:400). Images and scripts formed a narrative of the city, an accessible and engaging narrative encouraging citizens to question the expert eye.

Language Writers in British Columbia

Several contemporary poets in British Columbia are also committed to the public and poetic questioning of

anti-nomadic: housing policy

1.

the young guy with the long dark
braid is smiling with few teeth as
i pass him the tongs for the salad

one hundred or so behind him
for an evening of dinner and
sleep

tonight we are separated by table
a collapsible line

good day?

: the question, he says

: suggests days are either
good or bad.

: i do not believe in this
question.

a dialogical friendship ensues

power, place, and knowledge in the political/planning field. Jeff Derksen and Fred Wah are culturally associated with the 'language writers' through the Kootenay School of Writing (KSW), the 'institution' of the West Coast avant-garde. These poets are primarily concerned with global/capital movement and the effects or pressures on local urban policy.

Derksen writes prolifically on urban regeneration and gentrification as methods for displacing the working class and the marginalized. Using a Marxist perspective, Derksen examines how the recent period of globalization fostered exponential growth in Vancouver (post-Expo 86) and the shift in production (including cultural production):

> Language writing could be seen as a partial continuation of the problematic of poetry and the social sphere, poetry and the institution, and of poetry's address to the nation at a time of national and international shifts in the production of meaning brought on by new relations of production and technological change (Derksen 2007: 43).

Patterns of globalization are understood as priority movements national governments and corporations produce in order to maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace at the expense of local (marginal) residents. With fiscal restraint and neo-liberal circumstances, cultural communities tend to become 'ethnic fictions', isolated from other groups and characterized by a homogenous set of values (Derksen 2006). This in turn creates racialized space, territory to be understood under certain cultural (mis)understandings and marketable concepts in a

a renaming
a contemplation on soil
what languages knowledges
histories grow these selves of
place

musical lines of family from
urban to rural to urban to
suburban to

this place here

no fixed address

one night he brings me a canvas
the height of a pine
the figure of an artist working in a
nearby public park an eagle
grasping arms

never good at acceptance i turn
away think of it as ownership
worry about how to get it

home:

rental unit basement
apartment mortgage helper legal
secondary suite

realize i am anti-nomadic wonder
what other languages i'm missing

booming real estate instead of serving to draw out the underlying complexities. In Derksen's analysis, labour, production, and racialized space are reflected by the built environment and encouraged by the underpinnings of a neo-liberalist capitalism (Derksen 2006).

Derksen's poetry juxtaposes economic metaphors with social effects, examining how the local is tied to the global in thinking about today's cities:

> Linear tankers lie
> on the harbour's horizon.
>
> The speed of globalization.
>
> "Community-based
> crystal-meth focus groups."
> Jog by.
>
> "China Shipping Lines."
> Rusty. Nature
> metabolized in the city. More or less
> separate under capital
>
> then laboured or louvred
> together.

from *The Vestiges (or, Creative Destruction)* (Derksen 2006)

In a recent lecture at Simon Fraser University entitled, "Space Agent Wah", Derksen explored the spatial relationship in the work of (Chinese-Canadian) poet Fred Wah, whose work examines the construction of

2.

in samois-sur-seine nomads
have designated space by the
river

amongst antique chateau glassy
restaurant red bistro in the
district of paris there is a green
field with wild herbs and a pretty
community hall

legally set aside
awaiting occasional arrivals

'racialized space'. Writing on race and discrimination in the interior of BC, Wah creates an alternative geography, attempting to intervene in the process of displacement. 'Place' surfaces through labour history, settlement, and the question of 'neighbourhood ownership'. The Diamond Grill, a Chinese restaurant in the Kootenays, becomes a metaphoric site for the internal struggles the poet experiences, of trying map out identity and belonging:

> Maps don't have beginnings, just edges. Some frayed and hazy margin of possibility, absence, gap. Shouts in the kitchen. Fish an! Side a fries! Over easy! On brown! I pick up an order and turn, back through the doors, whap! My foot registers more than its own imprint, starts to read the stain of memory (Wah 1996:53).

In this piece, language swings through the kitchen doors to the white restaurant guests, from the mouths ordering to the order window.

Moving from a cultural into a planning context involves understanding the significance of this site. What happens to the physical site of Diamond Grill happens to the psyche of Fred Wah. Through poetry, Wah contributes a unique understanding and record in regards to significance of language, identity, culture, and place.

Poetry, hip hop, oral history, graffiti: these are the vehicles of discourse with the City, vehicles to avoid what poet Wayde Compton refers to as "blankness' or cultural invisibility:

3.

at the eco-density forum the City is showcasing neighbourhood density and the brochures are blue green and glossy and i feel i could eat one of them they are so stunning like under water algae or fancy birthday cake

after the presentations the program method is all coloured pens and bullet points big paper newsletter one person stand and share to assembled crowd drifting off some leave early

we are dressed up students urban planners policy makers and

: one woman listening

at our small table debating opportunity for family housing

to me on the side the woman listening:

: we have not spoken of places that move like us

we move from time to time

: receiving family in our homes

: non-profits evict us we have

: no place to arrive.

(Grandkids of the bluesmen)

s p r a y paint on trains, then

on windows of trains and then

walls and walls and walls round cities and cities and cities

making nonblankness, signing, singing, singeing

from *"Wild Style"* Wayde Compton (2004)

These are the conversations people are having with the City and with each other. Poetry on the walls of the city reclaims public space from the (legal) faces of advertising. Graffiti artists argue these advertisements neglect to speak meaning to their lives and identities, in effect replacing the meaning of their existing landscape with a form of aggressive commercialism with no way to respond back (Banksy 2006; Houpt 2007).

Understanding graffiti as undesirable or illegal poses an interesting dilemma for the city. Peter Vallone Jr., City Council member in Queens, New York, is currently on a rampage to 'erase' graffiti from the cityscape. In the mind of Vallone, graffiti is associated with crime and blight. Graffiti artists serve jail time with murderers although art galleries are eager to show their art on canvas panels, off the streets.

In relation to planning, these spaces created by poetic mediums such as graffiti, film and television, experimental poetry, and literary essays, overlay

4.

policy as prophesy?

long red strings where there could be ribbons

decisions lay like mats

(welcome?)

dah Dah
DAH

wire hammock song wire rope us in to : listening

to this our dream carousel
choose your favourite animal
forgive us we have become used to selecting from what has been provided we have long been

struck

by the position of doors

our alphabet not sufficient even for these sounds we do not have

the shape of house

to change with the season with the same smell of sacred smoke offering

our fire bylaws
our housing words
our structures

a circus of order and all our administration signs implicit

in present walls.

various types of meaning. This meaning is implicit in the history of particular spaces created through language, entering the discourse of ownership, gentrification and displacement. The poet builds spaces of identity and representation within the contours of existing cultural, social, political, and economic structures. This meaning is used to confront local governments and planners, to say: 'Stop. Consider this history. My history. Don't erase us. Include us in a collective vision of the City.' Poetry is the communicative medium these examples use to converse their desires for the city.

The Voices Have Always Been There: Coming Out from the Margins & Knowing What to Do

Although I believe the marginalization of poetry has produced important work, a potential consequence of the shift away from poetry within the rationalist mainstream imagination has been the disappearance of a distinctive language. Varied and unique approaches to analyses, communication, and interconnection with past, present, and future within practices such as planning have been erased. With this erasure, comes the disappearance of voices expressed best through poetry, and the disappearance of skills planners could utilize to engage with both themselves and communities more fully.

Kate Braid's story of her struggle to understand and appreciate the work of Bach provides an example of

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1.

nativelanguage
mathematicpoetry
ideagraph

value spirit words
with a third eye on the street
the community feels landscape

pre-cognitive thought
stops circling bird fright
notices the poetic everyday
in circumstance

an architectural tightrope
:mass light
:private open windows
:paradox spectrum

jumbled specifics of form

how poetry might come to be understood; establishing a literacy of polyphony as a concept will assist in establishing a literacy of poetry. I wonder if these literacies will enable planners to utilize the functions of poetry, gaining a language that will offer alternative methods to increase and enhance social, political, and cultural inclusion and a literacy of multiple publics. Arguably, poetry has a specific intention to converse in multiple meanings with readers through form and context. Compared with prose, more of the 'narrative' in poetry is left unspoken, thereby allowing the active engagement and interpretations of the reader (Hitchcock 2005). Practices such as 'polyphonic' translation offer an alternative to the authoritative monophonic culture with a repeating chorus, one which implicitly encourages isolation and competition. Polyphonic traditions provide opportunities to stand alongside and make multiple offerings to a city narrative without having to hear or adhere to a dominant voice or melody (Bringhurst 2007).

Reflecting on the *poesy* of planning, polyphonic thinking seems implicitly present in the planning field, where the planner acts within a multitude of voices, relationships, and priorities. However, I wonder if the languages used to communicate with communities are capable of effectively reflecting these multiplicities of voice, place, and history? Contemporary soundscapes and landscapes in Vancouver demand a unique and enhanced set of creativity and skills.

2.

lost in detail
building code separates

what's the poem?

metaphoric viewpoint
poemproject literalist

we are talking glaciers here

informing horizontals straitens
edge 2000 tides rounding form
reaching past future change tense

design moves suggest
themselves

Words of Caution

I have made strong suggestions to imply that planning is lacking in diverse languages. However, the intent of this thesis is not to suggest that poetry is 'The Answer' to every problem. As with every method, I believe it's important to consider the context of learning, and the learning of context. Different types of poetry may be considered inaccessible or not favourable for some. The question then is: Is poetry also a form of exclusion, elitism, not for everyone, and privy to power itself?

Just as with any art, there is no 'one form, one style' of poetry. Using poetry as a reflective tool to explore these types of forms, expressions, and styles in addition to working with different poets from different backgrounds and cultures offers another 'set of headphones' to listen to the polyphony of local sounds and languages within a community.

As with other planning methods, using poetry to reflect, listen, and engage with communities should also involve a critical component. The critical study and practice of poetry requires an understanding of the underlying power dynamics and stereotypes within every relationship. Using poetry as a tool to deconstruct power relationships and reconstruct or build more meaningful relationships is interesting with a planning context. I believe that having a wide array or diversity of approaches to poetry would assist in maintaining a critical discourse— an engaged conversation with different entry points—within planning.

3.

fine-art bi-product
communicatory show up
visual sketch story poems

inaccessible code self-
conscious interpretation what is
the right meaning?!

unintended meanings inform
refinement

Chapter 4

POETRY AS PLANNING PRACTICE?: INSIGHTS INTO SOURCE, ANALYSIS, REPRESENTATION, AND PRESENTATION

Part of my research in this thesis is to evoke tools that enable further learning of the methods of poetry and its existing and potential relationships to planning. In this chapter, I explore these relationships and opportunities and implications for research, analysis, and presentation using a constructionist approach. Constructionism, in this context, is concerned with the learning of poets and their practice as actors within a cultural and social context.

Using a constructionist ethnomethodological approach (Baker 2001), I discuss definitions of poetry within the context of my interactive interviews with other Vancouver poets. I pursue how these poets discuss poetry, community, and environment within the context of our conversation. Learnings from the four conversations are summarized and situated within the context of a broad range of planning processes and outcomes.

In Conversation with Vancouver Poets: Ethnomethodological Perspectives

In the months of February and March 2008, I interviewed four poets writing on Vancouver, British Columbia. Although my ethnomethodological approach would not lead to prescriptive or generalizable findings, I sought to identify what poets and poetry might bring

4.

culture embeds aesthetic

in Yaletown brick represents
[...]

smart intelligent people
on totally different tracts
reinventing foreign landscapes

in vein of understanding
see You-to-I

to planning through respective social and cultural contexts (Baker 2001). Poetry was discussed within the context of planning. An ethnomethodological approach understands these definitions as constructed 'on-site' or within the conversation (Baker 2001); definitions of what 'poetry is' in relation to 'planning' were often revealed by how the poet spoke of poetry and how the poet identified her or himself.

In using an ethnomethodological approach, I have also highlighted *identification* as other poets/writers/artists that the interviewee or poet identified within the context of our conversation on poetry and planning. These individuals are treated as part of our conversation, a link to further expand a point or extend a lineage. Thus, the *identified* poets/artists are understood as having more 'to say' on the subject in relation to our conversation. Other work mentioned also serves to contextualize the discourse or body of work within which the interviewee situates herself or himself. *Accounts* or selections of the interviewees' own work is also included in this section to provide insight into the poet's use of language, especially as it relates to our discussion on planning. In some of the conversations discussed in this section, the poet's *accounts* are threaded throughout the analysis, and in others, the poetry begins the sub-section. Some of these accounts I have selected, while others were highlighted by the poets in our conversation and were forwarded to me by email.

5.

open definition: liveability

not inches but line of sight
third spirit dimension
another place to go

edge of Still Creek community centre
dragonfly angles skytrain
twins play on treehouse platform

:Allen Story repairs public
art fabric psychological
perceptual messaging

relatable ideas connect

"little old lady" buys flowers
at Commercial Station

we hear songs

feel light

Graham McGarva

In conversation with Graham McGarva, principal of VIA Architecture, we spoke of how he used poetry in various aspects of his work as an architect. While conducting the literature review in the Spring of 2007, I heard of an architect in Vancouver whose proposal submitted to City Hall involved poetry.

Graham also received mentorship through Vancouver's Simon Fraser University (SFU) Writing & Publishing Program; luckily I was put in touch with him through the interviewee recruitment process with SFU contacts.

Identification

Although we never spoke in reference to other writers (with the exception of our mentor-in-common at SFU, Betsy Warland), we did speak about his visual poems/architectural drawings as art — fine art that could just as easily hang in galleries as in PowerPoint presentations and file folders.

Graham also referred to a visual artist named Allen Story, who had conceived of a public art installation for the Commercial Skytrain station. This installation was to involve an electronic projection of footsteps from one part of the Skytrain terminal to another; however, the project never materialized.

I began the conversation at his firm in Yaletown by inquiring about this 'rumour' I heard about an architect

who presented poetry to City Council. He spoke about how poetry works to engage and interest people, and to provide clarification and context for the numbers necessary to architecture:

> Graham: In our work we use poetry a lot because we use mathematics a lot. And then you sometimes get into the perverse — the poetry of mathematics.
>
> And then I often use words as graphics and even sometimes spreadsheets in a Council presentation. [I] put down a complex spreadsheet but have people understand it as a graphic that represents an idea as opposed to someone saying, 'What is that number?' Is that 4650 or 5640?'

An example of this was a presentation Graham gave at the Vancouver Urban Design Forum in December 2007; he used image and poetry to establish metaphor at the beginning and thread it through to the end of his presentation. The poetry and image illustrates, textually and visually, Graham's reflective pause before 'imposing' a project on the existing environment.

Figure 1 below shows one of the first slides of the presentation:

Figure 1: *The Territory I Claim*, Graham McGarva

The 'No U-turn' sign on the highway taken from the driver's perspective, acts as metaphor for what the architect will design onto the existing environment. This emphasizes what the architect feels are important considerations for both himself and his audience; these considerations provide a context for viewers to engage in a fresh way.

Poetry used in this way offers pause — a disruption from getting distracted by the details, our own personal

gains, or the complexity of numbers without the context of community.

> Graham: [We want] to know what's in our paycheque, how much does our house cost, what's the tax revenue or what's the development profits [...] But if that's not couched in terms of how we feel about our community, the sense of view to a landscape beyond, you know, those poetic things, then the math isn't doing anything.

On the other hand, Graham clarifies the interdependency of math and poetry in architecture:

> Graham: If it's all poetry, then it's just bullshit.

Poetry then, in this context, works within the math and the design of a project to access the poetic circumstances of our lives, elevating the mundane to the transcendent, and reflecting on what motivates the flurry of fear and desire. Graham referred to the unique access to 'pre-cognitive' thought that poetry allows:

> Graham: And hopefully to respect those pre-cognitive thoughts. To say, well wait a minute, why do we feel good about a certain thing or threatened about a certain thing?

In this way, Graham uses poetry and metaphor as a reflective tool to understand thoughts and feelings of a particular project or site on a variety of levels: individually, together with the community, and with the project's design team. Graham talks about the transition into the process of using poetry in his workplace:

> Graham: I've been writing in the last few years less poems in general but more poems around architectural and planning themes which is a place I never used to go

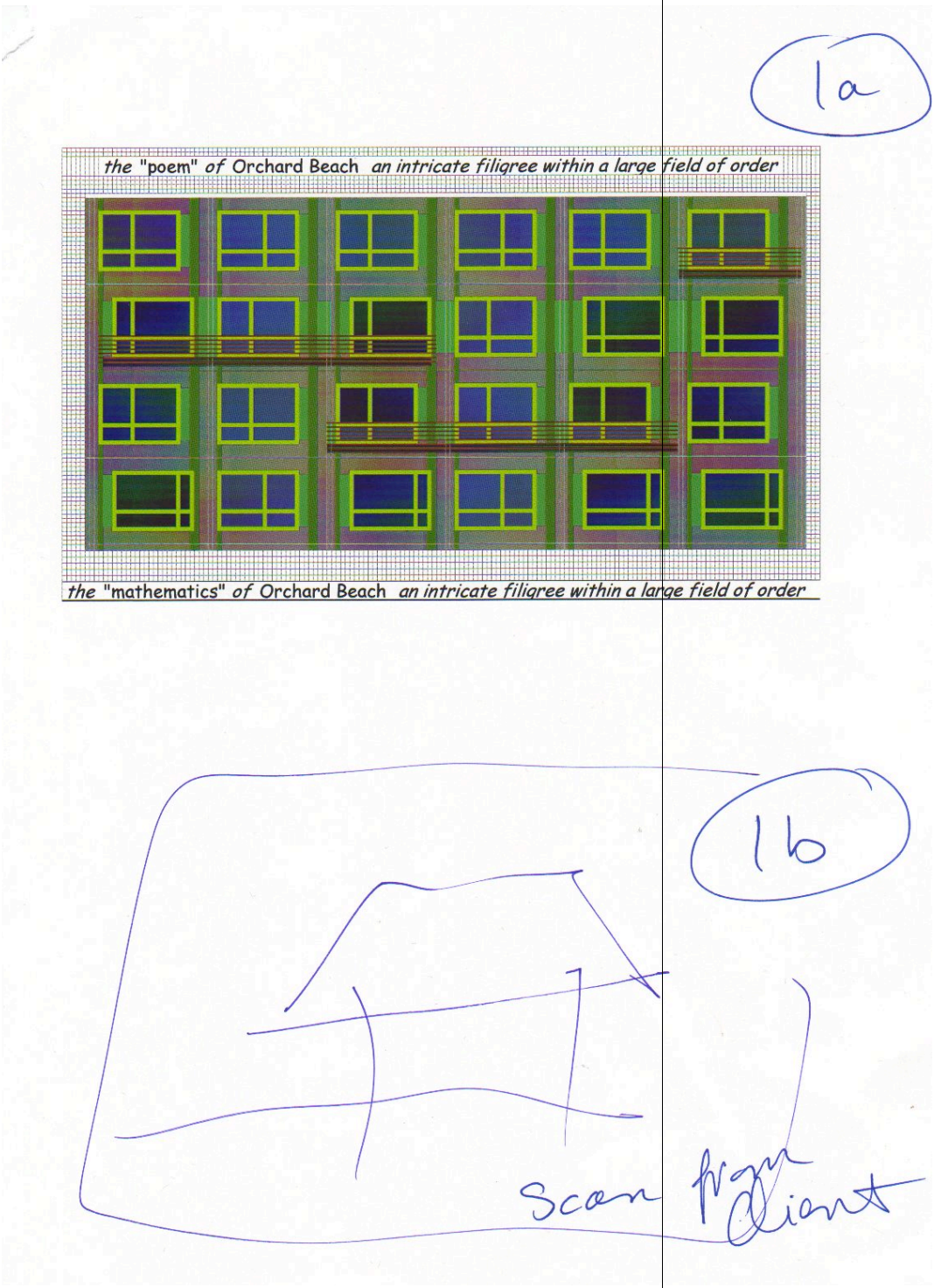
> to. Poems just started life as personal expressions and then I would have these thoughts on architectural things and then I'd rather have these little things written down.

Poems become part of the 'work language', part of the urban conversation, the design imagination:

> Graham: It really got going a few years ago when there was a project that [my partner] was getting involved in that I'd been involved in. He was getting all jumbled up with the specifics of the form with this building. And he was like:
>
> 'Graham...Graham, I'm not understanding any of this...Graham, what's the poem?'
>
> I went, 'Oh! Well, it's the enclosed garden, the duh de duh...'
>
> He says, 'Oh, I get it.'
>
> Now he can carry on and design. Whereas if we're talking about, you know, the yield over here and the building code separation, and this is too high...it's like you're lost in the details, you can't continue on with someone else's imagining.

An example of a current project is the conceptualization and drawings for 'Orchard Beach', a residential multi-unit project Graham was submitting to a client on the afternoon of our interview (see Figure 2). We spoke about Orchard Beach when returning to our initial conversation on mathematics and poetry. The design of the project is embodied in the title and the constructed meaning of the poem, or as Graham says, "the poem and the math are literally connected."

Figure 2: *Orchard Beach*, Graham McGarva



The design and symmetry of Orchard Beach reflect the 'intricate filigree' of both 'orchard' and 'beach' within the larger context or 'field' of order. However, in this instance, the poetry is not attempting to 'escape' order; the poetry defines the order:

> Dianna: ...it's not the poem fighting the math; it's really that they are communicating within each other. Which is interesting, because often, in contemporary society, it seems it's something fighting for space — it seems poetry is fighting over something more practical — whereas in what you're talking about, it's like you're making room for a greater understanding for the practical. Or what's going on with the math is informing or looking at the poetry. And I think also your idea of nature is really key to that.
>
> Graham : Yeah. Well that's right. It emerged for a while, then getting into having a duality of poetry and mathematics and putting architecture in the middle. And then saying, actually it's a circular connection...that poetry is connected to architecture. People say:
>
> > 'Oh I see. You have some idea about a building and then you draw some things that visualize that, and oh, the building must not fall down so therefore there's mathematics, the engineering aspects that underwrite it, the building code, all sorts of dimensions'...

So it appears that leading members of a community, city council, or development company through the design process *to poetry* allows each to arrive at an understanding of how and why poetry exists within the project; it allows each person *to experience* the project via the poem. As Graham notes, sometimes the 'formal'

poem materializes or 'is written' and sometimes it exists in the idea:

> Graham: It can be a crafted poem, or sometimes just letting you go to an expressive place. So we now then consciously move into more of our projects with a poem. Some poems never got written. Some projects have a poem. Sometimes we never actually got around to writing the poem but the whole design team knows the poem.

Although Graham uses poetry to conceptualize, communicate, and connect the meanings behind particular projects, this does not imply that poetry simplifies meaning. Rather, as Graham explains, poetry generates more meanings, more 'sites' for others to connect to with their own imaginations:

> Graham: So it's like you've got a 8-line poem, but I can probably talk for close to half an hour on what's behind each word in there. Which is the other thing, it means you can write things in 8-lines and that's it, you don't need to write 10-pages where people fall asleep by the third paragraph**.**

In this way, poetry works to engage people in the process of planning or architecture in a way they were not engaged before; poetry has been 'made visible' in the 'official project documents':

> Graham: We're working on the Whitecaps Soccer Stadium and there are actually a series in the planning reports that we've issued, and the project is very complex and it's taking a long time to get going.
>
> But there are about half a dozen poems that have just shown up in various design presentations. Some of which being just listings of buzz words or whatever - attributes.

new public space:
!let the children decide!

~a realistic local fantasy poem

eloise bore the weight of this city
like a shepherd.
every morning she opened the small paned window in her apartment overlooking a heavily treed street in the east end. out of her (mostly underground) apartment she gathered the pedestrians in with her eyes. between the hours of 8:00 and 9:00 she would peer at heeled women on their way to city jobs and soft-souled children dodging their way to school between speeding car and sandwich board.
somedays it was all too much. on these days, small straight-backed little eloise knew something was to be born of her despair. these feelings would most often come from watching the even gentlest of people being pulled about by their vicious dogs on shortened strings the drivers honking the children crying in protest. the tension between the animals was growing by the day and soon there wasn't a morning that went by without dogs

> And a couple are stories just trying to get at the metaphor that underlie this thing. And so as we issue those documents with our visual images and technical stuff and traffic counts and so on, in between is Poem 4 and Poem 5 as it shows up in the process. It's another sketch. There's the visual sketches and this is a word sketch — don't ignore it, don't hold onto it for too long. It's just there as part of the continuum.

When speaking of metaphor in his work, Graham emphasizes two significant uses or functions as an architect. The first is as a sort of ceremonial recognition between poet and land. In Graham's poetry, the poet as architect is listening to the desires of the land, both reflecting and imagining the history and future of the site. "Tidal Flats" — written in December 2007 for the Olympic Village site in South False Creek, Vancouver, Canada — and the three poems written during the design process of the Commercial Drive, Rupert, and Renfrew Skytrain stations provide examples of this type of relationship. "Tidal Flats" leads us through the poet's reflections, questions, and conflicting feelings on the changes imposed on the site. A memory is recalled, when the poet arrived at the site as a hitchhiker, and this idea acts as metaphor to understand the underlying histories of the place:

> [...] But the truth is
> We are all hitchhikers,
> And this is all leased land,
> Even for those whose
> Origins and myths
> Predate my presumption
> Of being from that golden
> Generation of creators
> Whose palimpsests
> Have made this

and owners and drivers and children jeering at one another with murderous measures of seductive antagonism.

eloise grew gravely concerned. not only because of shrill barking followed by police sirens and shot guns and brakes screeching but also because of the effect on the children. more and more of the mothers and fathers kept the children inside and while their fingers grew nimble and quick with electronic equipment, the air on the inside was raging their lungs, blazing with the gases of plastic and curtains and chemicaled rugs.

allons y, there is absolutely no time to waste, eloise said to herself and she knew it was the last straw the final straw.

she gathered a young steering committee to generate ideas. then called the rolly little man at the local garden nursery who promptly delivered five rolls of organic turf. after tucking in the grass corners in her apartment lobby and surrounding sidewalk, she and the committee took an express train out to the valley and bought a fleet of sheep of the gentlest and most

> Multi tongued place
> The story that it is.
>
> —from "Tidal Flats" by Graham McGarva

By acknowledging the location as 'place', the poet's imagination converses with what is already there in terms of the natural and built environment, acknowledging the great impact architectural decisions will have on the site. The poem is written from the poet's experience of various metaphors, which in turn work to embody the ongoing architectural vision for the site.

In our conversation, Graham spoke of uncovering the metaphor through various processes; poetry is used as a method of analysis and discovery:

> Graham: We're working on the Whitecaps Soccer Stadium and there are actually a series in the planning reports that we've issued, and the project is very complex and it's taking a long time to get going.
>
> But there are about half a dozen poems that have just shown up in various design presentations. Some of which being just listings of buzzwords or whatever — attributes. And a couple are stories just trying to get at the metaphor that underlie this thing.

In another example, Graham spoke about being involved in the design team trying to identify problems they were having with a site in Kamloops (in the Interior, British Columbia):

> Graham: [...] the technical problems we're having on the site are because it was silt that was dumped by a glacial...can't remember if it was an advance or a retreat so...it's hilly. All this sand is unstable and so you have to dig it out and put it back in. And so out of that

curious of natures.
we will smooth this city out like a quilt, thought eloise, gently but with force. the activism took some time, but once she had the sheep grazing out in the open the media were quick to come on side and as official spokesperson she was interviewed by all of the starlet news reporters wanting to get some truth.
eloise shone brightly next to the reporters and she was considerate and careful to relay their message in the simplest and most flattering of terms so people would not think the initiative was at all strange. in actual fact, most of the neighbourhood was happy to see an end to the days and nights of violence.
and it wasn't long before the children were out picking long green beans and swinging in hammocks from apple trees to pines making up songs and rhymes and chasing games in all their different languages.
soon the City was convinced by their own children and the parks board ordered all road crews to stop paving. summer schedules

> circumstance of the site, came the idea: Oh, this site is about geology. It's also the one with the First Nations band. So these allusions to time are not just ahistorical...let's recreate a 1905 farmhouse. No. We're talking glaciers here. We're talking before humankind...
>
> In architecture [the glacier as metaphor is] informing the moves in that particular project, telling us a lot about horizontals that get expressed as straitens, about edges...there's also wind, so it's about edges that get bent, as it were, and blunted, so it's like a really sharp oblique that gets the edges smoothed off of it and it tilts a bit over the years. Like a pebble in water, is a jagged rock and after 2000 tides it becomes a rounded form. And so, that project is into construction documents, the whole team knows the poem and the poem doesn't exist.
>
> But the metaphorical references, when we're looking at...'Oh no. I've got a problem. How do we do this? Well, we want to express this, if this structure is bigger than that, oh we can make...'
>
> And design moves just suggest themselves.

The second function of metaphor, again, whether or not it's expressed formally as a poem, is to allow for cross-cultural understandings of an idea or project. Graham spoke of his first discussions with Concord Pacific, a Hong Kong based-development company headed by Victor Lee, holding ownership of much of the land around North False Creek and Coal Harbour (both waterfront, post-industrial areas in downtown Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada):

> Graham: I mean, one example of a non-poem, poem was at the very beginning of Concord Pacific and I was taking Victor Lee [...] around Vancouver to show him some of the things that we like to do 'cause we had these Styrofoam blocks and we're talking towers, doing lots of math and I went past one project, I remember, the Lagoons down by Granville Island— nice, interesting four-storey brick buildings, it was pretty new at the time—and I was saying 'that's the kind of integration with water' and all that. And he just was really stone cold to it.

were changed and road by road was unpaved and wild native grass seed and crinkle heads of kale were planted free of charge. small meadow flowers shot up through the lanes carefree and full to the brim with their own hopefulness. even the most frightened of parents abandoned their worries and pushed their soft children out to play in the evenings. after dinner. in the fresh open air.

> And not too far away was a rather ghastly kind of bright white stucco apartment that he really liked.
>
> And I was like 'Whoa! What's with that?' Then I realized. Okay. Now let's see. I'm Caucasian. British origin, I can afford to be nostalgic about the industrial revolution, it's sufficiently far behind. Brick represents stability, security and so on to me back home because I can relate to brick stuff in England. And the white stuff you know, Miami Vice, you know it was the 80's, right, kind of superficial resort, Hawaii, Maui, French Riviera kind of thing doesn't belong in the Pacific Northwest.
>
> Now he's saying: I'm Chinese. Brick represents 'coolies', tumbled down, poverty stricken, getting out of the thumb of the colonial oppressor, the building of the railroads. You know, no wonder they sort of tacitly expunged the history of the railway from the Concord Pacific site because there's kind of a cultural embeddedness, and the white bright represents new wealth being created, rising into opportunity new fresh bright clean all of those things that underlie the tension between the Asian aesthetic and the Caucasian aesthetic, in the history of the city since then.
>
> And we were just— let's call ourselves us two smart intelligent people on just two totally different cultural tracks. Luckily I quickly understood in the course of the afternoon of sightseeing, learned what to fight and what not to fight [...] But, this being about 1988, was about understanding the nuances. Because I was an immigrant too. I'm a British immigrant living in Vancouver and he was a Hong Kong immigrant (at that time) living in Vancouver. So we're both—because he's in charge—reinventing the cultural landscape of this place that neither of us belong to. So we're both bringing our own histories and meanings. There isn't a poem there. But if you're thinking in terms of this vein of understanding the metaphors that are operating, it's like the poetic way is the way I understand that.

In other words, cultivating the sensitivity to metaphor through the practice of poetry contributed to a greater understanding of past and present relationships; a particular 'way of knowing' was used to analyze and interpret the materiality of buildings as a form of cultural lineage. It also worked to acknowledge an

implicit decision-making 'power' that would affect the future of the local cultural landscape. In this reflexivity, Graham shows important underlying functions, both in terms of the relationships he forms and the conversations he has with his clients, and the thinking and reflecting that goes into the architectural design and consultation process.

I also mentioned themes of light, community, and nature in Graham's '3 Poems for the Millennium Line', leading to a discussion on the strong role poetry played in working with the community to understand the history of the areas where the Commercial, Rupert, and Renfrew Skytrain stations were to be built. The poetry of the project grew multiple connections to place:

> Dianna: That's such an interesting thing about poetry making places. This idea you were talking about with light on the street. And how to negotiate different fears, and turn them into a hope or kind of like a poetic literacy on the street. It's very interesting...
>
> Graham: Yeah, because it's easy, we hear the songs...I go to poetry slams, which I really enjoy, but it's too easy to be in the 'angry young person, nothing's going to work out' because to a certain extent, well, nothing will. We're all going to end up dead. So what's the mystery here?!
>
> Let's accept that and move forward to the light. We know that there's dark all around so in the meantime, let's make things as wonderful as possible and get in tune with the spirits as we see them.

I felt that this was an interesting place to close our conversation; we had come full circle from Graham's first few words about connecting people to place, focusing the attention to how the light falls on the street in front of or beside a building. I thought that 'light', as

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Date: 29/02/08

1.

turntable poetry orality
music (drive)
the blues (drive)
hip hop (drive)

intellectual hip hop
experimental spoken word
:the Tall Horsemen
:bp nichol
:Peter Caffrey
:Kamau Brathwaite

inform formal interest
play visual word play
(play performance)

hip hop culture
local hip hop
local social context
hybridized forms
emerging from street

metaphor, illustrated what Graham felt his role was as an architect. He brought layers of history, self-reflection, metaphor, accessible analytical techniques, and sensitivity to the inevitable change any planning or architectural decision makes on the existing environment 'to light' in the imaginations of community members, designers, and political decision-makers. For Graham, poetry was a way to both enter into his work with a greater sense of engagement and also to share this engagement within the multiple imaginations and interpretations of others.

2.

Vancouver
a City of isolation
by the Rockies cut
by the US border

Photo conceptualists
:Stan Douglas
:Jeff Wallace

compose distinct art connection
independence a product of neglect
a tradition of muddle

multiculturalism crucial as
healthcare
perpetual discussion

Oana Avasilichioaei

In her initial thoughts on the relationship between poetry and planning, poet Oana Avasilichioaei identified another interesting parallel between poetry and architecture:

> Oana: [A]s much as poetry is dialogue and thought, it is also an architecture, a physical construction on the page, one that is literally built; language after all is the raw material with which one constructs. Perhaps because poets are used to thinking of architectures on the page, they might have some thoughts on architectures in their environments as well.

Oana and I spoke briefly on the telephone before entering into a back-and-forth email correspondence over the course of approximately 10 days. I was put in touch with Oana initially, because of her most recent writing on the Vancouver Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) grounds, found in her soon to be published

poetry manuscript: *feria: a poempark*. Oana emailed this most recent manuscript to me, to refer to as part of our conversation.

Accounts

In *feria: a poempark*, a series of long poems form a narrative of a place layered with histories, land-uses, and characters. The prologue offers an intersection of definitions of what the 'poempark' is conceptually:

> The poempark is domestic.
> Words carefully placed and arranged assemble.
> A wilderness.
> At night, the howl of beasts imagined
> keeps us awake.©
>
> from "Prologue", *feria: a poempark* (Avasilichioaei, Wolsak & Wynn, 2008). Copied under licence from Access Copyright. Further reproduction prohibited.

It is both 'domestic' and 'wilderness', controlled and wild. A place or a state that doesn't let us slip comfortably into sleep. On the following page, poempark maintains its fluidity, its contradictions:

> The poempark has no river running through it
> for at times the poempark is itself
> a river.©
>
> from "Prologue", *feria: a poempark* (Avasilichioaei, Wolsak & Wynn, 2008). Copied under licence from Access Copyright. Further reproduction prohibited.

The narrator herself is one half 'poet' and one half 'architect'. Her mind and imagination is transfixed here, for as long as a century, in this place:

> The poetarchitect considers the poempark. In the mind's eye
> this lasts seconds or a century.
> Then, in a sudden furious burst always unexpected

3.

black residential pioneer poem
30-year integration zone

advisement:
give unique response

Hogan's Alley
: Lauren Marsden
: Bob Sharon
: Joy Russell
: "Opening Doors"

memorializing possibility month
community speak
language literatures history as
resource chronicle

palpable hunger
represents

(variety
:George Bowering
:Daphne Marlatt
:Roy Niki
:Pauline Johnson)

the poetarchitect draws the poem. A schema
of geese, word-drops and birches. Into a park.
Writes the park. Into a poem.

Branch, a footpath and stanza model its nature.©

from "Prologue", *feria: a poempark* (Avasilichioaei, Wolsak & Wynn, 2008). Copied under licence from Access Copyright. Further reproduction prohibited.

The poetarchitect seeks to imagine the 'what once was' to the 'what is now' through the layering of official document, the layering of claiming, naming. This gives us clues into the past, a colonial past obsessed with naming, renaming, erasing:

A word can travel back in time, invent its origin, its muse.

Hastings Mills, Hastings Street, Hastings Park, Hastings Hotel, Hastings Townsite, Rear Admiral George Fowler Hastings, Khanamoot.©

from "Origins or The Book of Questions", *feria: a poempark* (Avasilichioaei Wolsak & Wynn, 2008). Copied under licence from Access Copyright. Further reproduction prohibited.

Understands the ancestry of land back as far as the imagination will go, as far as the feeling of ancestry or sense of history will allow, through record or memory or question:

Ancestry a footpath in the park
barely visible torn loose
wolf driven.

Along the path a long list of firsts settled: the first
the first the first
At the closing of a century
each first obsesses a first
civilizing a land into the worshiped other.

What was lost? What was found?

4.

written City claimed by art
reals place

a first introduction
a literal map
a warm arrival

(LL Cool Jay) Farmer's Boulevard
(KS1) South Bronx
(Run DMC) Hollis
(Wordsworth) Lake District
(Mordechai Richler) Montreal
(Daphne Marlatt) Steveston
(Malcolm Lawry) North Shore
(Skinny Puppy) Vancouver

different city version
imagine interest
own marginal locality

take familiar and defamiliarize

bottom-up minutia
geography root
regional voice district

no dreams to speak of

Where language was languages. In things
grown, things care about.
Words are meagre these days
hungered
words wake into wakefulness reluctantly.©

from “Origins or The Book of Questions”, *feria: a poempark* (Avasilichioaei, Wolsak & Wynn, 2008). Copied under licence from Access Copyright. Further reproduction prohibited.

Again the theme of a past or an ancestry no longer visible, chased by 'wolves'; the poet is bringing the readers' attention to the dark undertones of this place, where something important has been lost, is no longer spoken in words that imply meaning, insight, or acknowledgement — words that continue to mouth the oppressive languages.

In the spirit of translation, Oana breathes poetry into the archives of the document: "Vancouver Exhibition Association Replies to Resolutions and Questions Submitted by the Civic Committee to the Vancouver Exhibition Association, 1925":

“ fine arts ,
horticulture, women’s work, cattle, sheep and swine
cage birds, , , ,minerals
school
the Exhibition.
depart the great number exhibits come
. citizen is hobbies, interests, business.
the other fellow
anxious where he stands,
held separate
so
shown
held.

industrial exhibitor can be summed up in a few words
: space
space

5.

romantic movement

poetry planning mates
what's possible could be isn't born
right now but could be

imagined

space
space every year from the very first, we think
we say all that is necessary."©

from "Spirit of the West!", *feria: a poempark*
(Avasilichioaei Wolsak & Wynn, 2008). Copied under licence from Access Copyright. Further reproduction prohibited.

Blank space allows the words present to be read musically, and to emphasize words. For the reader's mind to pick up new thread to thinking about the new arrangement of words. In this particular suite of poems, other archival documents are 'reordered', allowing several different 'voices' to speak within one manuscript about events and decisions happening on the site over time. These words also converse with other words in the manuscript, allowing the reader to connect meanings and interpretations of that place through various voices.

Identification

Oana mentioned several other poets within the context of our conversation — poets whom she felt were working on similar projects of civility, citizen, city. These included Canadian poets such as Robert Kroetsch, Lisa Robertson, Erín Moure, Michael Turner, Daphne Marlatt, John Steffler, Anne Carson, Jean-Marc Desgent. These examples include the Canadian avant-garde, poets and writers who are active in exploring the boundaries between history, body, character, self.

Poetry & Planning

Oana's initial thoughts on poetry in the context of planning considered the historical link between the two:

> Oana: I think there is potential in poetry and in poets to have important input in city planning for several reasons. Firstly, the relationship between poetry and the city is pre-existent, or at least concurrent, to city planning itself. Poetry, at its root is an oral art, one that necessarily implies both poet and audience and thus community. Poetry does not get made in a vacuum but in a community of listeners and speakers, it is a give and take, a dialogue. With the lyric's strong emphasis on the singular, individual speaking voice, some poetry may have lost some of this emphasis, but I think it is important to remember this communal aspect of poetry, especially given the "global" type of environment we live in today.

Oana emphasises to her method of 'communing' with different voices in poetry, an aspect of its lineage from an oral art. This distinguishes certain kinds of poetry as method (in relation to poetry) — from the singular voice to the voice interspersed with many. Oana also highlights a certain kind of sensitivity cultivated by the poet in relationship to the local community:

> Oana: [P]oetry which responds and is created out of a community has a special relationship with and awareness of that community. In fact the poet/citizen in this case might be said to have a particular sensitivity to that environment, because they cannot write out of it unless they spend a great deal of time trying to sense, understand and interact with it in every way that they can.
>
> Thus the poetry (and the poet) is localized; poetry both affects and is physically shaped by the urban environment out of which it is written.

Therefore, the poet is not 'outside' of community, or city; the poet is writing from a place 'as citizen', as community. As I read, I noted the overlays of person,

place, and past/future in *feria: a poempark*, and wondered if the poet's role was to sink into this locality as translator of the past:

> Dianna: It's interesting because in your manuscript, *feria:a poempark*, there is a lot of layering of history and event, people and land shifting in use and culture with time. And there is a sense that the poet is rooted there... has looked hard into the past and heard multiple voices within a community context. It feels as if the poet is a translator of a past to present.
>
> Oana: [I]n relation to *feria: a poempark* and the idea of a poet acting as a translator of the past to the present, I like to think of it more as poet acting as a translator of the present, a present which necessarily implicates the past, a past that is partly knowable, but mostly unknowable and invented.
>
> Further, this present not only holds within it the ways in which its past has been historicized, (which largely affect what is possible to know of that past), but also what is possible in the future (and what we know or don't know of the past partly affects what we can make possible in the future). Land/landscape/environment is fluid, always holds within it possibilities of what is has been and not been and what it could be.

I found the idea of 'fluidity' interesting to consider in terms of planning, especially in terms of the ways in which we understand our environments as planners. I wondered in what ways we 'imagine' the history of places, even though it may remain 'unknowable and invented', and what sources we look to in order to understand these pasts and possible futures. I wondered if looking to other sources, outside the culture of 'historicized' planning documents would lead us as planners into expanded imaginings of what was possible in the future.

contrapuntal landscape architecture: a sounds project[8]

young wisteria ivy pine bough lodge pole pine wild blackberry black ant yellow jacket huckleberry tree frog wild sage onion

bracken fern fiddlehead rhizome roots

pteridium aquilinium (Latin)
sagw'ams (Likwala)
Ši λ mapt (Nootka)

Also, considering Oana's idea of a particular sensitivity poets have in understanding poetry as a communal process, I was interested in whether or not poets who were not currently formally engaged in planning activities considered poetry as a specialization. I wondered if poetry could only be practiced and understood through the 'person born as poet', an activity or skill planners could not necessarily cultivate themselves. I inquired:

> Dianna: Do you think this specialization of poets to be 'present' in the local and the community is a specialized way of knowing (rather than, say, a practiced way of being?) Are we born poets, and therefore have a distinct roles to play in the community, or do you think planners have more than literacy to gain from poets? Is learning/practicing poetry important for planners?
>
> Oana: Poetry is both a practiced way of being and of knowing; it is not a "natural" state of being, but literally a practice and a practice of learning, constantly evolving and demanding energy, consciousness, change.
>
> When a poet puts a poem into the public and thus enters in dialogue with the community, they are in that moment enacting a civic act. And because poets enter into such acts constantly they potentially (and I say potentially here because I do not believe that all poets or all types of poetry have this potential) have an understanding of that civic space in which they act, and they have a sense of responsibility of what does it means to act, to be citizen. This potential perhaps is like a vein that flows between the poet and community, a vein that senses the fluidity, needs, struggles, desires of that community and reacts or is altered by that fluidity. The understanding of one's surroundings as a "community" made of people and land, and the sense of responsibility within this community, could be useful to city planners.

black bear grizzly red cedar straw berry rainbow trout rock dove wild rose

high-bush cranberry

T'elxwmes
T'ísay
Mumukwaqλ

Again, this theme of 'poetry as engagement' emerged, in Oana's description, a certain kind of poetry, that which was willingly and intentionally engaged in poetry as 'civic act'. And again, Oana's notion of wakefulness to the sense of fluidity, the sense of ever-constant change, the sense of responsibility implicit in this civic act.

As I was interested in how poetry can be used as dialogue, especially from a poet who was writing from 'the outside', I pressed further:

> Dianna: And re: this idea that a civic act is when a poet puts poetry in public for dialogue with the community and the responsibility implied in this act...interesting... can you talk more about this? What does the community dialogue look like? Where? Who?
>
> Oana: How to enter in dialogue with a community? Who is that community? What are the responsibilities involved in this dialogue? What does this dialogue look like? I think these are questions that I am constantly asking myself, and questions that many poets ask themselves, and I think the answers are varied, and different things are possible at different times.
>
> Though one writes out of a community and in response to their environment, that does not mean that one can necessarily predict who the exact audience of that writing will be. I think ultimately I write for my “ideal” audience, which would change with each book/project. Though that “ideal” audience could be part of the community out of which the project came, they could also not be. What would make them “ideal” would be that they are thinking and engaging with the work, and are being engaged by the work. Also after putting the book down they are able to think about certain things in different ways; they are able to look at something in the world and perhaps see it in a new way than they would have been able to before.
>
> Let me give you a small anecdote, which my friend and poet Erín Moure told me. She was at a PEN dinner just after her book *O Cidadán* came out and she ended up talking with a plumber and an engineer who had read

echinacea chinook oolachon salal berry skunk cabbage

red elderberry	Ts’íxmes
	Th’íw k’ay
	Ćiwi·pt
Labrador tea	Pu’yasmes
X wap’á ń ay	Ti·mapt

her book. The plumber thought that it was a lot like plumbing while the engineer thought it was constructed a lot like engineering, and through the conversation they came to the conclusion that plumbing, and engineering were a lot alike. In a sense her book made them see plumbing and engineering (and poetry) in new ways. And the book isn't specifically about either *per se*, but its environment expands outward so that varied people can enter it and respond to it in varied ways, and can find that it does have something to tell them about their own contexts.

And because I brought it up, in *O Cidadán*, which is composed of expansive architectures on what it means to be citizen, Moure writes the following:

> "To realize the body spatializes the city, is to admit the citizen-body is (possibly) a repository of harm. Your joke: coinage. Is citizenship, really, the willingness to 'defend' a territory? or an ideal? Or is it an acting across a surface. A tilt in the mechanism, when the mechanism is itself hurt" (Moure 2002: 94).

I find the idea that the citizen holds within them the possibility of doing harm most compelling and also that the citizen acts across a surface, perhaps surfaces that cross/crisscross borders: linguistic borders, cultural borders, architectural borders, land borders, etc (for the city is composed of such surfaces that overlap one another). And I think this is what I was thinking of when I mentioned responsibility earlier, because there is this sense of responsibility in how the book object will crisscross with the environment once in public, and what ripples might it make in that environment.

Here Oana identifies with Moure in her questioning of harm, both in the purpose or intent of that harm and the consequential harm. And the pinpricks the work makes as it intersects with the different cultures of readership.

Similar to Graham's application, Oana also spoke of the expansive distinction of poetry. The objective is not to

form cohesion, but rather to allow multiplicity and participation in a planning project or initiative:

> Oana: On the one hand, poetry, like philosophy, can show/expand ways of thinking, because at its core it is thought, and because it is an expansive enactment of a moment and an expansive practice. Developing expansive ways of thinking, thinking that is multiple, diverse, perhaps at time contradictory, can help planners conceive of spaces, or understand needs and situations and create solutions, in multiple ways, can help them "think outside the box" in a sense. On the other hand, poetry can also reflect (reflect it through its architectures on the page, through its handling of subjects or languages) ways of being as citizen or member of a community within the architecture of a place. It can in fact reflect the architectures of a part or a whole community.

I wondered then if poetry could be used as data, as a source for collecting information and including various 'ways of knowing' in planning research projects from people in the community, people writing poetry in the community:

> Oana: In relation to your 'poetry as research' question, when one researches qualitative data one is able to ask specific questions and expect to find specific answers within that research. I don't believe poetry can work this way; it cannot be "researched" in the same way, for the purpose of yielding specific results.
>
> I think if one approaches poetry more openly with questions such as: How does this work help me think in a different way? Or, What can this work show me about a specific context, or show me about thought in that specific context? Then one is more likely to approach poetry with no expectations, and instead to enter its environment, experience that environment and have that environment show one which ways of thinking are possible within that environment.
>
> And at times perhaps it's simply that act itself of asking questions that is important, and not necessarily what types of answers one may find to those questions.

to dialogue: verbal behaviour provides no clues[9]

I choose myself; I am chosen.
(I discover) in reciprocity

poetry

a language to pause & refute

:reflex template thought
:fixed urban map
:intersection road security

We choose each other.

Oana speaks of moving the function of poetry as an information gathering process away from providing answers to asking important self-reflexive questions, to listen more carefully to the languages and environments of a community, and to enter into the environment by allowing a certain kind of openness. This openness allows the environment to teach the planner or the poet different ways of thinking and to teach the value of asking questions. I think this idea has important implications for understanding and including poets and what is understood as 'resistance' poets; asking questions and being active within the critical discourse. Resistance discourse, the questions themselves, are part of the communal discourse of planning.

The specificity of approach in using poetry as an engagement tool for understanding community and place echoes Graham's use of poetry in architectural projects — engagement to ask questions, to understand potential harm. However, Oana discusses the role of a citizen, one not necessarily involved formally in planning processes:

> Oana: I think that this would be a poetry that has a willingness to explore (even if perhaps ultimately not understand) the "civic space," poetry that in some way addresses notions of "public" vs. "individual," and perhaps is even in dialogue with other poetries, that address or comes out of a particular context of "the public space," a poetry that opens to the idea of multiple (in voice or action or language), a poetry that though it may come out of a singular lyrical voice, is not limited to that singularity, a poetry that tries to look at the world through that civic eye/I, through that lens of what it means to be "citizen," and not only through the individualistic/personal eye/I, a poetry that asks more

we begin
by turning on stereo speaker
in municipal mountainvalley
gymnasium

stumble toward and away toward
and away
toward each other

in this
fluid dance proposal

We become our separate
biographies.

> questions than is able to provide answers. So it is in part context, but also intention, for I do believe such a poet intends from the start to engage in some way with a "civic space."
>
> Ultimately, I guess I would say that any work which makes me re-think something, engages my mind in new ways, is work that speaks outwards and is in some way engaging with this civic space.

The citizen is active in thinking and engaging in the local environment and the decisions made about that environment through the discourse of poetry, the process and action of poetry.

Imperfection is a condition of my freedom.

spot light voices
settle violent on tracks already
calendar coded with varied
name rituals

(a place song underneath)

i lay awake
search repeatedly for reflections

careful digging tools

Wayde Compton

Wayde Compton experiments on and writes about the lineages and hybridizations of self and language in Vancouver. He is the author of two books of poetry (*49th Parallel* and *Performance Bond)* and is the editor of *Bluesprint: British Columbian Literature and Orature*. He is also a self-taught DJ and teaches English Literature at Coquitlam College and Creative Writing at *The Writer's Studio* at Simon Fraser University (SFU).

Identification

Much of Wayde Compton's work reflects on black diaspora and displacement, and visibility and invisibility imposed by urban policy and politic. Oral traditions of Black Diaspora are hybridized to explore lineage, locality, and space with a mix of sound poetry fiction, poetry, and anthology. Imagining oral narratives of Black women and men who lived in the cross-street area of Prior and Union Streets (in Vancouver, British

Columbia, Canada) once known as Hogan's Alley, Compton uses poetry and fiction to identify the City's role in preserving, displacing, and 'commodifying' culture and identity.

Hogan's Alley was an unpaved, African-Canadian settlement located between Union and Prior Street in East Vancouver near to the railway tracks, inhaling and exhaling in population numbers as post-war labour rode by train throughout BC and the States. Hogan's Alley was 'erased' when the City of Vancouver planned, designed, and built the Georgia Viaduct. When the community was displaced, most of the residents migrated to other cities.

Accounts

In the poem, "Lost-Found Landmarks of Black Vancouver," in *Performance Bond*, photographs of signed doors form a sort of gallery in the text, 'making and marking' the presence of community: Strathcona Coloured People's Benevolent Society of Vancouver, 227 Union Street; False Creek Moslem Temple, 315 Prior Street; The Far Cry Weekly: Voice of the Negro Northwest (Since 1957), 618 Main Street; Pacific Negro Working Men's Association, 221 East Georgia Street.

Wayde's work focuses on the history and language of black peoples in British Columbia. His accounts of other black communities, in New York City, and in Eastern Canada, are spoken of within their local context. He understands the creation of poetry and

Dialogue rests on an acceptance of self and other in their radical difference from each other.

so many people i am
stuck
to these margins

so many passing policies
consequential-action-hurricanes
breaking glass lives with political
ghost speak

language gloss

we turn lovingly

to haunt each other

specific expressions such as hip hop, rap, graffiti, as a result of the artists' environments and histories. Wayde's mentor and friend, George Bowering, emphasizes the importance of 'sitting in' the local, writing from 'this place'.

When we began our conversation, I asked Wayde specifically about his practice of 'turntable poetry'. I was interested in understanding how different forms of poetry could be used in a Vancouver planning context:

> Dianna: Ok. Do you want to talk a little bit more about that...Was *The Reinventing Wheel* the first project. Yeah?
>
> Wayde: Umhmm.
>
> Dianna: Why did that come about?
>
> Wayde: Well I think in my first book I was playing around with orality and that tradition of orality in black diasporic writing, those same rhythms and you know, music. Music drive, the blues drive, the hip hop drive of poetry. So, before I published *49th Parallel Psalm* and I was doing readings around some people were referring to me as a spoken word artist, and then I noticed when the moment the book got published people stopped using that word for me, and I know it's because they realized that the book was full of writing that was written for the page and then some writing that was written for sort of oral performance, or with that in mind so, it was a combination of the two.
>
> And that got me thinking about the difference between those kind of two strains in my writing. You know, that book included some fiction and some concrete poetry, so it's kind of a mismatch. And that's kind of what I was shooting for all along. But the public face of what I was doing was sort of my spoken performance of it and so I didn't really resist that idea of being a spoken word poet. But I was pretty critical of it as a movement. I don't like slam poetry. The popularization of poetry that way is probably a good thing, but formally I find a lot of it not that interesting. And I think that's connected to, you know, the problem slam has set up, which is, you know,

Joined in dialogue, we build a common ground between us, a new reality, for which we are responsible.

This ground we hold in common trust.

there is a place for you in
soft cloud living room
already set-up
outdoors

people beginning conversation
daydreaming decades like
Herzog photographs
a city's memory scrawl[10] beautiful
melancholic alley games child's
play in tree boughs

streets we have not yet seen
grass and root breaking
through the surprising flexibility
the complexity of concrete

exchanging machine-pressed
impermanence

for organic breaking
ground

(listen to the sweet hum)

> trying to do three minute poems that are entertaining to a crowd in a bar who is there for a good time. So it ends up being pop music lyrics or stand-up comedy or those entertaining genres. I think it ends up sounding a lot like that.

Through this thinking, Wayde's emphasis is on the local as the place of lineage and tradition as an important part of the work he is doing as a sound poet or DJ. And this he distinguishes from the work of spoken poets.

Wayde spoke a lot about language and locality; Vancouver is formed by geography and culture, again a concept expressed by Wayde's mentorship under the poet George Bowering:

> Wayde: You [...] can't capture that in anything but creative language, I think. Like when George says something like— he's played with this line in various ways in different places but this idea that Ontario has all the history but BC has all the geography. You know things like that, that sort of line expresses a certain difference that's hard to put in other words. [...] It's hard to express anything in any other place in but that intuitive language. That's just one little example. There's all different ways you can use that.
>
> I mean, in some people refer to the idea of Vancouver being a postmodern city. In such a young city, we have an opportunity to create it as we go and decide it as we go, and who better to go to than the creators for that kind of thing?

Similar to Oana and Graham, Wayde speaks of an engagement to place. Wayde's listening is also rooted in engaging in the history of that place, in the layers that he finds there. Although, he also suggests we are a 'young city' and have the opportunity to include a range of voices to create a strong identity. He compares Vancouver's identity to a small 'city state', suggesting that perhaps the

Accept as possibility

planner as polyglot
dialogic dialogue

the act of scraping chalk
from our tongues

peering out from behind
big box text wall
at something of substance

the subtext
the pretext

the writing
on the wall not so clear
at first the understanding not
so clear at first

a different language
proposes new shapes
for mouth sound

poets and the other arts provide an essential starting place to gather information about who we are, and what we want to be in the future:

> [The Vancouver as a model...] *de facto* operates on the *polis*, the Greek City, Vancouver feels to me like a city state whose influence ranges throughout British Columbia. You know what I mean? It's more like that than any other city in Canada. And then, you know, if that's true if the local art scene would be the place you would look to try and understand the place socially. So that would make sense. I mean it's not like there's a complete disconnect to what's happening, not at all. I mean we are in the Canadian state, we're aware of that. But on a ground level, you know...

One's difference the more important part of dialogue.

poet (still) warring against homogenization

:a field of poplars privatized a row farm

sun's light delivery now forced to precise calculation

If we are truly to focus on the local, as we arguably do in planning, it could be possible that engaging in the language and conversing with those studying and experimenting with the poetic language will surface new insights about the many identities forming Vancouver as a city, and the nuances and trajectories of these identities. Wayde spoke about the types of forms and lineages he has been interested in examining with his work:

> Dianna: ...Thinking too about poetry and planning, I'm interested to think about what role hip hop and alternative forms of poetry have in thinking about planning and how planning documents work and planning documents as text work. I've started trying to think about this idea of stories within stories, and different languages for different types of stories and then I was sort of thinking, well what kind of impact would looking to various forms of language and different lineages of language have for a city like Vancouver. You know, what do you think it has to offer in a city like Vancouver?
>
> Wayde: Well. I mean to segue from that question of hip hop into Vancouver, I mean that's been a lot of my investigation into hip hop, has been about how does it fit into a city like Vancouver. And mainly that question comes about because I don't think it does fit that well. I

> was thinking about why that is and I think there's something to be said for local conditions creating a form and hip hop was created in what, the Bronx, so it was created in New York, and you know, I haven't really analyzed this extensively, I'm sure there's people out there who have, I think that, I know socially there are elements of hip hop as a form that come out of the social conditions of Northern American Eastern cities and black neighbourhoods, so that's where the anger comes from, that's where the certain tone in hip hop, the sort of declamatory tone that I think emerges out of those traditions, or DJ culture is very urban response or all different elements of hip hop like graffiti art that has to exist in the densely populated urban city. So hip hop would have been a different thing if it had been developed in LA or the American south or Canada. It wouldn't have been the hip hop we know it as, that's kind of a leap to think well, you know, but I think it's true.
>
> I'm more interested in some response, a hybridization of the form. I hope that's what we're doing. I don't know, but I hope that's what we're doing. But yeah, I think about that all the time in terms of Vancouver, what's a form that emerges from these streets, or these or this town. I think this is a problem across the board in Vancouver. In all the arts, Vancouver has a real inferiority complex about really letting itself be itself. And just honestly express some version of its identity in whatever form. That's why there aren't that many unique forms to emerge out of Vancouver, which makes no sense because there should be, because we're such an isolated city we're cut off from the rest of Canada by the Rockies, we're cut of from the US by the border sort of figuratively but literally in some ways, keeps a certain amount of culture out. And I think the tyranny of distance from here to Ontario keeps quite a lot of stuff from quite getting here. That should produce some really unique things, but not if people here don't have the confidence to do it. So.

UP SHOOTS A POPPY

I think Wayde's thoughts on hybridization also extends another layer of connection, another layer of self-reflection in terms of understanding who we are in relation to the diversity of backgrounds we bring to the City of Vancouver.

This interest in identity extends to how the city responds to different types of cultural lineages:

> Wayde: Vancouver is such a multicultural city, such a strange demographic in North American terms. There's no city like it really. In terms of the black community, you've got a black community that integrated thirty years ago and stayed integrated and you've got a racial politic where Asians have took the brunt of racist policy. And that's different from most cities in North America. You've got a city with a large Native population, and in North American terms, it's got to be one of the largest numbers in population, Native presence, right? All these things are really unique [and we] should be advised to give unique responses.

In regards to history, Wayde highlights the important role of literature as a historical source both for past and future readers:

> Wayde: Maybe I'll just say one word about *Bluesprint* and the way that project came about actually was looking at the historians who had used the writing that black pioneers had published as historical sources and so you're reading the history and realize there is writing by black folks in BC and there was this moment where I sort of realized this is being used as historical material, because some of it's poetry.
>
> The first written work from black pioneers was a poem, you know, when they left San Francisco and they actually wrote a poem about it, before they even arrived here, in anticipating it. So there is something about that...often I think that stuff is looked at—because it's under 50 years old—as a historical source, as a creative product. And that shows. I mean, that poem in particular is a good example because there is no other way to express the anticipation of what it would be like to go to this place, other than poetry really, I mean an emotional and kind of speculative right, that's what poetry can do.
>
> So in a city, actually this is maybe where poetry and planning are maybe doing the same thing. I mean, they're talking about what's possible. What could be. What isn't right now, but what could be in a creative way.

with openness to surprise
our language turns

as varied as global
handwriting

new calligraphies
delivered by night centuries
attracting new shapes
to our emerging
lamp bodies

we become playful

light

> Dianna: And taking what's there in a physical sense or landscape...poetry as physical text...
>
> Wayde: Yeah. It's imagination. It's a process of imagining possibilities.

Wayde's thoughts on language offer some important insights into cross-cultural planning, through his interest in how Vancouver is already a rich 'source' for diversity, but perhaps we are not yet letting that diversity 'show us' what's here. My thinking is that we are just starting to understand other languages in planning that will assist in establishing this identity; we haven't yet connected poetry to the planning. Wayde, like Oana and Graham, spoke of the past and the future in our conversations on planning and poetry. There is a commitment to the process of imagination, to the present work of engagement in communities.

In laughter we liberate each other.

Kate Braid

Kate Braid has a diverse portfolio of occupations. She worked in a few office jobs before becoming a carpenter, constructing transit lines and high-rise buildings in Vancouver, British Columbia. She published her first book of poetry, *Covering Rough Ground* in 1991, about her experiences as a female carpenter. She has also written two other books of poetry, *To This Cedar Fountain* (1995) and *Inward to the Bones: Georgia O'Keefe's Journey with Emily Carr* (1998), with an additional two collections to be published in 2008.

In conversation with Kate, retired female carpenter and creative writing instructor, we began talking about

getting into writing. As with Graham McGarva, I was interested in how her occupation (as a carpenter) linked built form with poetry.

> Kate: Appropriately enough, I got into it when I was a carpenter and I was the only woman. I started in 1977 and there were no other women doing this work and so I loved it passionately but there was no one to talk to and there was no one who understood what it was like because I was always the only woman. No one had ever heard of another woman in construction so I started...I always kept journals...so I started keeping very detailed journals just as a way of talking to myself, trying to figure it out.
>
> But I was very tired, because the work was so physically tiring especially some of the time — sometimes I'd work on my own doing little renovation jobs and stuff. So I realized that what was happening over time was that my lines were getting shorter and everything was getting pithier and pithier because I could hardly wait to get to bed. And then I realized I was writing one day what looked a lot like poetry. And when I read it to other people they thought it was poetry too. So it was really sort of the pressure cooker of construction that got me writing poetry.

This process Kate spoke about, from personal 'journaling' to poetry was an attempt to understand the new language within her new context. And I think additionally, there was an engagement or an openness to what emerged out of this process — poetry as form, in part determined by the physical and emotional demands of her new environment.

In particular, Kate expressed her engagement in attempting to understand how to work within the culture of construction, a culture that was entrenched in gendered language and constructs. She says,

Accept the possibility of continuous, unlimited transformation.

placing ear phone under ground
we feel for root eye
chrysalid text

any hopeful remains

evidence of old growth
regenerates soil of city language
with our own breath

as circle of archaeologists we
begin with art's spontaneous
tools

discover

stations of selves

standing ready

to embark

> I was trying to figure out what was going on in construction. And most of that was about gender, trying to figure out why my gender was making such a huge difference in what should be a very impersonal...you know, building a building: there is nothing gendered, you'd think, about it. In fact, there is a lot of gender involved in architecture.

Poetry is spoken of as a kind of emergence on the page, a new form emerging because of circumstance or willingness to understand gendered language, workplace culture, and personal fatigue. I wondered what Kate's observations also said about the language and workplace of planning — a field initiated and predominantly occupied by men.

In her poem, "The Feeling of an Angle", Kate notes the change in her thinking, imposed by the rationality, the certainty of the right angle. She writes:

> When the direction is forward,
> no questions are asked.
>
> My eye measures in straight lines now. Anything less
> is suspect. Round, unthinkable.

Her process of thinking differently, her playful approach to questioning, is 're-angled', reshaped. She is attempting to understand how this language, these shapes, fit with her female body. She speaks of order, compromise, and escape:

> Four corners of a room, edges of a two-by-four, the rise of steps –
> all tyrants of the ninety.
>
> After a while, the way the foreman likes it –
> *ninety degrees and nice and tight!* –
> fits, awkward but feels
> almost normal in the bowl of my hips.

There's no room for play when you're trapped by tradition
in the geometry of man, making more.

I cut another straight line, only pause
to glance at the clouds now and then
when just for a moment, I yearn for curves.

For Kate, practicing and mastering poetry enabled her to take a 'fresh look' at the language men use to communicate in the construction world, how this 'culture' necessitates or develops a kind of language. Kate 'decodes' this language, using it as a tool to enter more fully into her occupation. She says:

> Kate: Well the point of the poetry is to have a fresh look, right, that's what Ezra Pound says. And that's how I used it. I was trying to...because what I was seeing made no sense to me. The guys would have conversation and I would have no idea what they said. You know, they'd talk in these half sentences and joking and I just didn't even know what they were talking about, it was like I was in a different culture and I've written a lot about it as another culture because I think that helped me. Once I figured that out, which took about ten years, then I realized much more of what was going on.
>
> And then I could identify for other women, what the culture of construction is. The way you talk, the values...I mean we don't have much say, I mean as carpenters we don't have much say how we build it, except when you do renovations and you're running your own jobs [...] That was my favourite part was having my own company, but...just in terms of the process of getting it built and kind of going along with all the established way of doing things, it was like trying to figure it out without having any teachers.

At the end of our conversation, Kate returned to this discussion on understanding culture and language, clarifying that she did not become literate in the language of construction through poetry in order *to*

1. In *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), the son of Jeannette Winterson's protagonist falls in love with Fortuna, a dancer he meets at a dinner party. The hosts of the dinner party live in a house with no floors and the family and guests move about by tightrope. The protagonist is obsessively infatuated by Fortuna's ability to move about so gracefully and when she departs from the party out a window in the night he travels the world single-handedly by sailboat to find her.

At last he comes upon a strange island and sees she is a dance-instructor who "teaches her pupils to become points of light" (Winterson 1989:72). The idea that we are born with 'flight rhythms' comes from Fortuna's belief: "that we are all fallen creatures who once knew how to fly" and that those of us who have grown bent over and numb must be reworked under furnace fire to revive and reform our free-born -winged selves (Winterson 1989:72).

change it, but rather to understand it—find her own language within it.

The theme of architecture and built form emerged in another context when Kate voiced her thinking on the similarities of poetry and planning. I understood the physical building of sites and writing poetry as text on the page as a parallel construction:

> Dianna: It's interesting this idea of parallel construction. The construction of text and the construction of building. Which is really interesting when you talk about the birthing of buildings; that's a very interesting, very fresh way to see it. Can you talk a little bit about that time, and what you think about that parallel?
>
> Kate: Well I was thinking, and this might not exactly answer your question, so if not, come back to it. I was thinking earlier about — because I never thought before about a similarity between poetry and planning or poetry and construction even — I thought so what are the similarities? And one of the big ones is structure. That both poetry and buildings, which I know best, rather than just city planning as a whole, but architecture, construction and poetry are based on good structure.
>
> And also beauty.
>
> So a good poem, or a good building is a beautiful one, but the beauty is not separate from its structure; the structure has to work. So there's a deeply pragmatic part, you know it has to be efficient and keep the house dry or not fall down or you know, public transit has to work efficiently or whatever, and part of that is that it's visual and beautiful.
>
> And then there's a mixing — what I loved doing about construction is how beautiful a building is inherently in itself, when something is so efficient in its practicalness, in accomplishing something. Or sometimes in even looking at something. I just love being able to rejoice in the building you know, or a post-and-beam building where you can see the structure. Because really a beautiful structure is usually invisible and it's so beautiful to be able to see it— to make it visible but mostly we work at making it invisible. And in some ways it's good that it's invisible. I

2. The margin poems were originally influenced by the work of Lisa Robertson, Daphne Marlatt, Wayde Compton and Jeff Derksen. Speaking with Kate Braid, Oana Avasilichioaei, and Graham McGarva and reading their work has also greatly influenced these poems. These writers have suggested that poetry has a distinctive place in thinking, speaking and critiquing planning in the City of Vancouver.

mean you don't want to see how the sewers work or look particularly but you're sure glad they do.

In speaking on the practicality and beauty of poetry, Kate speaks to the function of poetry as both something that gives great joy. This joy stems not just from the idea of a beautiful building or a beautiful poem, but rather from the way it works — the way it's put together, its action or outcome. To my understanding, appreciation plays an important part in both finding meaning in our work and the work of other people.

In a story Kate told of teaching traditional form in poetry, she notes how the process of sharing work has the potential to transform us — a transformation we feel physically within our body.

Kate: This whole idea of form poetry is just emerging in Canada although it's been in the States for quite a long time, returning to rhyme and rhythm. The first time I taught how to write in form at Malaspina, I was sort of loose, I wasn't sure how tough to be on the rules of form, like it must follow this pattern, it must be this meter, it must rhyme, you know whatever the form was, it must have meter, you know dah dah dah dah dah dah.

And the first time I didn't think the class was all that successful, because every time it got a little bit hard, the students would go: 'Oh well this is so hard. And I would say, well okay, just do your best.

And then the second time I taught form poetry I was just a tyrant. I mean, speaking of structure, I said you have to follow the rules of form and meter. There is no exception, except when you write sonnets, exceptions are built into the form. But basically, they had to learn meter, they had to learn rhyme, they had to learn repeating — all the different aspects of the form. And they worked really hard and they did it.

And at the end of the term, we had a reading, and I always finish a course with a reading. So the last class you don't

3. In this margin, poetry is where actual text appears and where there is 'white space'. Together they form a kind of musical score sheet, empty space remaining just as active and meaningful as texted space (Warland.2005).

> workshop, you just enjoy each other's work. You get up and you read whatever you've written that term in five minutes. So everyone gets up and does their reading, and I realized about half way through that something was happening to me physically, and at the end, we all felt it. It was like magic, it was some kind of magic. And we all felt...it was like we were all stoned or something. And later on, several students came up to me and talked to me about how powerful it had been and what I realized later was that it was the rhythm, they were reading rhyme repetition and regular meter beat and those things affect you physically.

Kate attributes these feelings of transformation to the beginning of our existence as human beings — the sound of our mother's heartbeat, and our own heartbeat as counterpoint. She says,

> Some people say that 80% of people's language is iambic meter which is dah DA...it's your heartbeat right...dah DA dah Da dah Da. And you hear that from conception, you're hearing your mother's heartbeat. Then you're hearing your own little baby heartbeat in counterpoint, so you're born into rhythm [...] it's built into the human body, that's what music is.
>
> So good poetry, we talk about the music of poetry, we talk about the lyrics, a poem is a lyric, like the lyrics of a song, it's all the same. So you're physically changed by listening to good poetry. Even if it doesn't have outstanding rhyme or a regular meter, it will have music. And that moves you.

Kate's thoughts on planning and poetry therefore suggested that we are connected to each other through music and our innate 'knowing' of music — by our shared beginnings in heartbeat and counterpoint. Just as the physical demands of her job in construction 'formed' poetry, what might be understood as her intuition and interest in music and rhythm led her to an openness to experiential transformation.

4. "Practice is sensuous activity" is a quotation from John Friedmann's experimental planning text: *The Good Society* (1979).

The full quotation reads:

> Practice is sensuous activity. Transcending mere thought it mingles with the world and so creates the possibility of changing those upon whose lives we touch. Thinking by itself makes nothing happen; only practice can bring the world we want into a living presence.

The Good Society includes poems composed by Friedmann and others such as Sylvia Plath, Shakespeare, and T.S. Eliot. These poems ornament and anchor musings on the direction of social planning, social action, and the role of self/community dialogue.

Summary of the Function of Poetry in a Planning Context

In conversing with poets, I was inquiring into the question: *What do poets and poetry bring to planning in terms of process, documentation, and presentation?* Following the accounts, poetry, and conversations with poets Graham McGarva, Oana Avasilichioaei, Wayde Compton, and Kate Braid offered a hyper-polyphony of insight into the relationship between urban planning and poetry. From Kate Braid's suggestion that poetry musically and biologically connects us to ourselves and each other to Oana Avasilichioaei's idea that we (as poets) place a poem in public as a 'civic act' (with a possibility to do harm), poetry offers us (as planners) many applications. As 'heartbeat', poetry offers the function of 'common meeting ground.' Sometimes we as planners may need a point of commonality to begin the discussion with a community, to commit to the music of our own humanity and let the music of language transform our way of thinking. Poetry then acts as a catalyst for both self and community transformation with a function for healing.

Poetry can also be used to draw people with different cultural backgrounds into design decisions. Graham McGarva uses poetry to understand the voices that lay beneath the design landscape, the historical and ecological voices that then rise into the new structure imposed. And Wayde Compton reminds us that poetry has a function to deconstruct and resist some of these new structures because of the harm they may do to

5. In the poem, "practice is sensuous activity," the footnoted quotation comes from "Voices from the Borderlands: A Meditation on a Metaphor".

Leonie Sandercock wrote this article in 1995, examining work by bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldua, Cornel West, and Guillermo Gomez-Pena. As planning educator and theorist, Leonie invites us to consider these writers and others to diversify planning theory. She argues,

> We are being challenged in the city and in the academy by frontiers of difference. We must listen to these voices, for they are not only telling us what is wrong with our cities, but also what is wrong with our way of looking at the world, and providing clues as to what might be better ways of dealing with them both (79).

This article summarizes and underpins and inspires the reasoning for writing this thesis. In this form. In this way.

those with 'quieter' voice, margins with histories vulnerable to erasure. All of these suggested functions have great implications for planners in terms of conceptualizing projects together in 'cross-culture' community, analyzing the land with sensitivity to the ecological history, and communicating design ideas in an interesting and fresh language.

Chapter 5
Line Breaks: Opportunities and Barriers to Increase Literacy, Poetry & Polyphony in Planning

Evoking poetry as a language to reorder our current thinking within diverse environments invites several interesting opportunities. In the context of multiplying cultures and languages, we are invited to experience a 'polyphony of sounds' in our constantly changing urban environments. This thesis makes the argument that current planning education and practice do not provide the literacy required to access and practice poetry—as a form of expression, 'knowing', communication, and engagement.

I argue that establishing literacy and skills acquired through the practice of poetry allows planners to establish a language and venue for the exploration of personal relationships with land, people, nature, art, buildings, histories, materials, cultures, etc. Further, I contend that adapting the metaphor of polyphony allows planners to explore, cultivate, and nourish these skills without having to negate other 'technical' skills accepted as necessary in the field. My research has convinced me that poetry offers to expand existing languages, enhance analytical processes, emphasize sustainable and effective practice, and engage communities in conversations that are meaningful, interesting, and transformative.

In speaking with Vancouver poets, I was interested in how the poet constructed the world she or he practiced

6. The poet|planning code-filter:all poems are a play on form with Atlas-ti and interview data. Atlas-ti is a qualitative research software program designed primarily for coding and analyzing interview data. In a past coding exercise, I found the results could be particularly poetic and was encouraged by Penny Gurstein to incorporate the form and exercise into my poetplanner research.

For the interviews I conducted with Vancouver poets—Kate Braid, Oana Avasilichioaei, Graham McGarva, and Wayde Compton— I first coded each interview using only the interviewees' own language. I then rearranged and played with the formation of these words to accent one of the many themes or messages we spoke of in conversation.

Using the ethnomethodological research technique of learning from 'accounts', I also listed the authors or artists the interviewee mentioned in our conversation together. These names stand in the poems like actual places on the poemmap. I have gone to them to expand knowledge as I would a new city. Or a naturopath. Or a shaman.

within and what this world and practice could offer to planners. In our conversations together, we explored existing and potential relationships among poetry/poets and planning/planners. These interviews sought to build on some parallel learnings found within the literature about: planners collaborating with artists; and, the work of other poets engaged in 'place'. I then examined opportunities and barriers to gathering poetry as information (just as statistics are gathered as information) for planning affordable housing in the Downtown Eastside.

These conversations and writings on poetry and planning revealed intersection and divergence in subject and approach. Therefore, I believe it is important to continue exploring the ways we currently use language in planning processes, documents, and presentations, how we may use poetry in the future within these forms and realms to practice and write with elements of music and heart, and what needs to change in order to invite poetry into our places of training and practicing as planners and planning educators.

Regarding Education: Transitioning the Line to Literacy

When I first started pulling together thoughts for this research, my supervisor, Wendy Sarkissian (who holds a M.A. in English poetry), warned that I was going to have to think about how to introduce poetry into the field of planning. Advising students experiencing difficulties in

7. "on transfer: photo city text" is a detail of a photograph series I took of a graffiti wall in Paris' Belleville neighbourhood in 2007 (artist unknown). I happened upon the urban calligraphy while working on this thesis, when it was being born as a directed study.

walk walk. click* walk. click* click*

organizing thesis work allowed a number of suggestions, but 'I can't very well advise they go and take a poetry class!' she said. In conducting the research, I have come to the realization that although advising a student to drop all planning courses and enroll in an English Literature course on poetry might not be received well by most planning students (although would be favourably received by others), there is without question a need to incorporate poetry into the curriculum of planning.

Examining the many roles of poetry in the contemporary Vancouver planning climate and examining the work of poets in Vancouver indicate a locality of language essential to the work of planners. From increasing connection and connectivity to self, other, nature, and place, poetry is able to work in layers of multiplicity—in margins and intersections. Poetry is a language of discourse that intensifies and expands, surfaces and embeds aspects of our practice through reflection to action. It is the ultimate tool of the reflective practitioner and critical thinker. This research has convinced me that literacy in the language of poetry must involve a literacy in the social construction of language, how it is used for different functions for different circumstances, and the power implicit in using any form of language, including poetry.

Establishing literacy (or literacies) of poetry will also require additional writing on the subject—new research, texts, new courses, and new guest speakers. Although this thesis, as a first attempt at marrying poetry and planning,

8. The poems in "parkette: design series" were created from work done in an urban design studio project I did with fellow-student Jeff Deby. Special thanks to him for the graphic in "materiality" and all collective data/ observations these poems have absorbed.

did not explicitly focus on suggesting reforms for education, I did begin to explore areas where training would be necessary. This discussion included education on the functions and 'natures' of poetry, the 'mechanics' of form, the practicality of use (in reflection/analysis, project design, community engagement, reporting, and presentation), and the consideration and inclusion of various 'localities of 'language' in communities.

Regarding Work/Place/ (Emotion?)

> Desks are undoing us, he thought.
> Or, more rightly, deskism.
> They are writing us out of this part of the City.
> They are reporting us away; they are bylawing us to blank.
>
> —from "To the Egress", by Wayde Compton

Wayde Compton's poem, "To the Egress", speaks to the isolation individuals feel when trying to share their concerns with government officials and planners. Too few opportunities for interaction— too many opportunities for disconnection and misinterpretation. Planners confined to regulating neighbourhoods from their desks form a systemic barrier to social inclusion and community engagement. If the planning profession is to take on a deeper understanding of how poetry might be positively integrated, a re-evaluation of the workplace may be required. We may be required to seek out places to write and reflect, to listen differently to place, language, history. And we need to be *awake* as planners to do this.

9. In thinking about interconnected processes, climate change, land-use and landscape design, I began to think of all the native food sources invisible to us urban dwellers. This poem re-discovers various plants, animals, and insects in the Vancouver region. Words became sensuous in sound, smell and taste.

Names of edible native plants on the British Columbia West Coast came from the Campbell River Museum Native Plant Walk. The three different non-English names for high-bush cranberry, red elderberry, and Labrador tea are (chronologically listed) from the Kwakwala, Comox, and Nootka nations.

Some of the other selected local BC/ Pacific Northwest species were influenced by eco-poet Gary Snyder's poetry in *Myths & Texts* (1978).

David Whyte, an English poet living in the United States, writes and lectures on both the necessity of poetry in the corporate environment and the need for poets to engage in mainstream society. The poet knows, "we live in an unfathomable, shape shifting world that must be lived and experienced rather than controlled and solved" (Whyte: 10). The idea of poetic qualities offers a way for planners to experience emotions without necessarily accomplishing solid outcomes. A value shift occurs in this process, a de-isolation from other people. Whyte and others argue that if emotions remain unacknowledged and oppressed, the employee and the organization become ineffective, burnt out, and depressed; negating the 'dark' half of ourselves, directly impacts our actions and relationships.

In the city of Nezahualcoytl, Mexico, police officers are trained in literature studies, including poetry (Watson 2007). This is a strategized response by head of security for the police, Jose Jorge Amador, a philosopher, sociologist, and lawyer, to the high levels of crime in the area and the ongoing corruption in the police department. Literature is taught in the belief that police officers will become more sensitive to the people they serve, more sensitive to other perspectives and ways of living.

In another case, James Throgmorton examines two examples in planning where the separation or isolation of the planner from the community resulted in racialized metaphors in the built-environment. The two

10. "to dialogue: verbal behaviour provides no clues" is a conversation with John Friedmann's "Images of the Good Society," in *The Good Society* (1979). The title "verbal behaviour provides no clues" is a direct quotation, as are all other quotations resting on the left margin of this poem.

walls—between the 'free world West' and the 'evil empire East' in Berlin, and the 1950's 'wall' between the blacks and the whites in Louisville Kentucky—are compared. During the mid-1950s, Harland Bartholomew and Associates created a plan to disaggregate housing in Louisville. However, as Throgmorton explains,

> Bartholomew's ostensibly apolitical technical approach to planning reinforced the wall separating blacks from whites in Louisville by focusing far too narrowly on physical planning, by not discussing the extent to which black presence and 'white flight' contributed to the suburbanization of Louisville's population, and by woefully understating the extent to which suburban whites would use their political power to block Louisville's ability to annex land in its suburbanizing periphery (Throgmorton 2004).

By neither acknowledging nor challenging the existing 'racialization' of space in the planning department, the metaphoric wall was accentuated and cultured.

It appears that by valuing and examining emotions, ideas, and feelings, the planning field transforms itself into a more effective, creative, and vibrant space and can work to decrease the number of 'harmful' civic acts perpetrated by planners. Organizational management techniques are exploring the positive effects of emotional intelligence in increasingly diverse work environments (Ashkanasy 2002). I believe that poetry offers a medium through which to apply innovation, metaphor, and emotional intelligence to the workplace.

11. "a city's memory scrawl" is a quotation from Daphne Marlatt's book, *The Given.* This work includes an examination of the cultural/ historical juxtaposition of 'homelessness' and 'homebuying' in the Vancouver Area over the past few decades.

However, just as planning is political, poetry is political. This research supports the view that planners must learn the locality of languages in the community and the conflicts implicit in these languages while constructing and gathering poetry as textual information—as infrastructure, architecture, heartbeat. In other words, the practice of poetry in planning requires a strong sense of sensitivity to place, people, and nature and the power implicit at every point of intersection. Poetry can ground people to place, through senses and memory, text and sound, a pen sword held to detachment and objectivity.

Poetry & Planning: Summary of Transferable Learning

Although the intention of this research was to explore the intersection and integration of poetry and planning in Vancouver, British Columbia—without generalizing or deducting from any of the findings—there are some transferable learnings I wish to bring forward to planners and some ideas for future research:

1. Language is local.

Planners would benefit from acquainting themselves with the work of local poets, as it acts as a unique information source for understanding place, forms of language, histories, and cultures. Poets are engaged in practicing a deep sense of self-awareness, an expansive thinking process, and a unique sensitivity to place—all within the context of the local. Poets Wayde Compton and Oana Avasilichioaei give direct examples in their

work on how 'lineage of the locality' works to create our identities within our contexts.

2. Poetry may allow for universal understanding and active interpretation.

If poetry is indeed the rhythm of our hearts that both comforts and warns us of dangers, then our cities demand poetry in our increasingly challenging environments. This also suggests that poetry is not simply for one type of planning. Graham McGarva provides examples of using poetry to self-reflect on a project, imagine the project together in community, visualize the project, and present to clients or city councils. The potential for poetry as our social and environmental crises deepen is strong and immediate, if certain types of poetry can bring us to together to (as Oana states) engage as 'citizen' and ask more questions.

3. Poetry offers a parallel construction of text to the built environment and a way of knowing that offers planners a unique opportunity to reflect on the permanence/ impermanence of decisions.

Planners, like architects, are involved in many decisions that will not only affect the current social world and landscape, but will also affect the future. Poetry is a language that not only allows planners to reflect on current decision-making, but also comes to their aid at a time when the entire context of planning has changed. Increasing effects of climate change, Peak Oil, the complexities of inclusion with increased immigration, social polarization and the failure of modernist planning

approaches to address these issues demand that planners acquire new skills to make decisions both sensitively and effectively, together with their communities.

4. Poetry works to bring intimacy to place.

Although not all poetry may be intentionally engaged in a 'civic act' or project, all types of poetry work for the transformation of the whole self and are situated in the context of a wider community. In their intimate and self-reflexive relationship with place, poets use various approaches, forms, and lineages to 'construct' place with text and sound, to place intimacy in event, relationship, and environment.

5. Poetry is a critic.

The work of 'resistance poets' such as Jeff Derksen, Fred Wah, and the Kootenay School of Writers (KSW), offer a critical discourse to engage with in terms of issues such as: displacement, gentrification, and power. Other forms of poetry, such as graffiti and spoken word, are 'texts' that offer commentary and insight into who is excluded from current planning practices and processes.

Planners could engage more fully with these texts as a form of global/local discourse, one that offers viewpoints to climb and survey the interconnected landscape of even the minutest of planning decision detail. This discourse also provides clues for engaging directly with

citizens most impacted by transnationalism, in effect mapping areas most in need of support and protection.

6. Planners require a critical approach to poetry.

Just as we as planners require a reflexive and critical approach to planning (Sandercock 2003), we also require a critical approach to poetry. What are we using it for? How do planners enter the conversations already occurring in the 'local' or 'locals' of a community without attempting to control or synthesize 'a vision' for community? Who is it excluding? What is it resisting? Where is it moving us? How do we feel it in our minds, in our bodies, in our selves? How are the many experiences of a community made visible in text? In presentation? I believe that to keep asking questions is to remain reflexive and critical in approach, leading us into greater insight, opportunities, as well as limitations for the use of poetry.

7. Poetry is practical and playful.

Not only is poetry practical in terms of how it allows us to experience ourselves, figure out 'other languages' and arrive at problems at different angles, but poetry can be playful. Planners would benefit from more playfulness, as many critics have observed (Sandercock 2003; Sarkissian 2005). Lightening the mood of planning processes— when appropriate— can work to surface new ideas and generally make engaging in planning practice a pleasurable experience. As Kate Braid suggests in her story of students reading their work out loud at the end

of the semester, people leaving public workshops and forums should *feel* transformed by the process. Poetry offers planning opportunities for the intimacy required for such transformative processes through engaged listening and music.

8. Poetry is a layering of multiple interactions—multiple multiples.

I adapted the word 'polyphony' for this thesis to emphasize the re-thinking required for planners to incorporate planning into their work. At first, planners may react to poetry similarly to the way Kate Braid reacted to Bach—'hating' poetry, finding poetry boring, wondering what the point of it is when there are so many other deadlines and tasks to complete. However, just as Kate responded to Glenn Gould, finding the beauty in the relationships and the layerings of language, culture, sound, nature, and the built environment is part of understanding poetry's place in planning. Poetry does not seek to displace other planning approaches, but to expand, enhance and beautify them, and relieve them from the urge to dominate other community narratives. Using this layered approach can help planners and planning documents communicate the true complexity and multiplicity of voices in any planning discourse.

9. Poetry requires practice; practice requires poetry.

Poetry is one of the languages to understand struggle and solidarity across localities, but “it is increasingly difficult [...] to imagine poetry and politics (or a politics

of poetry) in poetry alone" (Derksen 2006:45). As we begin to cultivate this practice, I believe our practice will expand and connect into other arts, fields, and languages. Poetry, as other art, offers multiple points of intersection, interaction, and interconnectivity. These points are the veins we connect to each other.

Conclusion

In closing, I want to return to the idea that poetry connects us through our stories and our life rhythms. Poetry translates us into something we can innately understand about each other. Poets Betsy Warland and Kate Braid both speak about poetry as the familiar music we are born into:

> With the iambs of our infant breathing, rhythmic cycles of our bodily functions, patterns of sound and motion within our domestic surroundings, repetitive song of our distinctive crying, and comforting melodies of our parents' voices, poetry embraces us into our being here.
>
> (Warland 2005: 105)

Poetry is the beat that connects our lives, the rhythms of days and weeks and months, centering us through change, comforting us through change, and growing us through change. Graham McGarva also uses poetry to communicate common understanding through metaphor and poetry; however, this understanding is not based on understanding *his own specific* idea of an architectural project, but rather arriving at another designer's or city council member's *interpretation* of the metaphor of the project. There is therefore an

essential interaction that takes place in this process of understanding, an active interaction of imagination, personalized meaning, and connective reaction.

However, the findings in this research do not suggest that poetry is the language 'everyone can understand.' Although in speaking with poets and examining the literature, poetry was identified as a language that connects us — with ourselves, with nature, and with each other — poetry, just as any language, can work to exclude. The readership and practice of poetry outside of planning suggests that poetry is not a mainstream language. The 'specialization' or distinctiveness of reading and practicing poetry requires planners to cultivate a deep awareness and a strong commitment to engage in the localities of languages—to seek out points of intersection and to note and connect what remains in the margins (Sandercock 1995).

Inviting poetry into planning practice does not require qualifying different types of poetry as more or less applicable to the planning context. Poetry understood as 'oppositional' or 'resistance' poetry, which tends to experiment with form using a more openly political and intellectual approach rather than a lyrical or emotional approach, offers a different line of engagement. Resistance poetry is poetry as critic, as an offer of discourse to maintain focus on planning and poetry as political. It is the 'beat' resisting change, the change that erases and displaces the places and networks of communities.

I argue that the functions of poetry and planning offer several intersections for further exploration and consideration. Whether it is continuing to question the power relationships of a city situated within a global system or working to cultivate a working place that cultivates creativity, intelligence, and understanding, poetry offers planning a distinct and essential language to map and connect self, communities, neighbourhoods, cities, bioregions, cultures, languages, and nature. Poetry also offers another form of expression in practice. Poetry is an offering—an immediate offering.

> Poetry is change in the act of. Like beauty, its fluidity surprises and transforms us. As with species' survival, poem embodies resilient inventiveness.
>
> from, "Nose to Nose", *Only This Blue* (Warland 2005)

I open the great wide door and put on my metaphor shoes to walk the river path of inventiveness for myself, for the species, for the margins.

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Appendix A:
A Portrait of the People Revised:
A Textual Experiment & Notes for Further Research

THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE: A PORTRAIT OF THE PEOPLE

I can introduce you to a hundred
People
Who saved themselves (with help)
From a gruesome death on the streets
And nothing makes me happier
Than to look into their eyes
Without contempt
And say,
"I'm so glad that you are here
Alive
Writing poetry
Working
And sharing what you have learned.
I am so glad you are here
To remind us
That no-one is nothing."
It's so real,
I don't even need to take a picture.

from *"Is it nothing to you?" by Gena Thompson*

The Downtown Eastside is vibrant home to 16,000 people, including single women and men, couples, children and families.

Residents have historically included people from a diverse set of cultural, social, and economic backgrounds.

This diversity fosters neighbourhoods with active art scenes, small local businesses, creative housing responses, and a network of health support agencies.

We are working with groups within the community to consider making policy recommendations that reflect the needs of residents within the context of a changing city.

Our goal is to work together to provide opportunity for increased diversity and sustainability of affordable homes for residents in the Downtown Eastside.

Part II
Downtown Eastside Women Living in Community

Women living in the Downtown Eastside are active members of their community. Many of these women speak of their involvement in activities such as volunteering at the Carnegie Centre, working in community agencies, gathering in women's centres, writing and producing art, leading emotional and physical healing initiatives, gathering in community kitchens, caring for partners and children, and promoting social justice.

There are three social housing projects in the Downtown Eastside specifically for women:

- Mavis McMullen, 430 E. Cordova: 34 homes (for women over 45 and women with children)
- Bridge Housing, 100 E. Cordova: 48 homes (all singles)
- Crabtree Corner, 533 E. Hastings: 12 homes (transitional housing for pregnant women and new mothers)

how do you do?
what do you do?
to live
like this
in a world where money
is not food!

by beth buchaanan

We believe women are more at risk to homelessness than men due to a lack of affordable places to live.

In speaking with agencies representing women, it is our view that an increased number of homes for women, especially those with addictions, medical conditions, mental illnesses and physical disabilities should be provided both inside and outside the community.

According to some 2001 Census statistics for the area, the median income for women is $12,058 (higher than men in the same area.) However female SRO residents have a lower monthly income ($639/month).

Women between the ages of 55 and 64 have the lowest incomes of all, partly due to ineligibility for pension benefits.

A significant number of children living in the area are parented by a single mother (24%). Incidence of HIV among injection drug uses is 40% higher among women than men in the area.

A Portrait of the People: A Textual Analysis of the October 2005 *Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside & Carnegie Newsletter*

At a 2002 research panel on homelessness research conducted in what is now called Metro Vancouver,[2] a young First Nations woman stood up after the presentations and asked: 'Is there a way you could translate this information into something we could all understand? Because I work at a community agency, and I don't even understand what you are talking about.' I realized at this moment (and for years afterwards) that something was not right in the field of housing research. I believe that this young woman's question summarizes how many people feel about official research both in document and presentation forms. People in the community who are 'represented' in the research feel they are alienated by the way information is gathered, in the language of data and policy reports, and in the presentation style and venue.

Leonie Sandercock writes:

> Policy reports produced by government planning agencies, and also by consultants for those agencies, are cut from the same clichéd cloth. They are dry as dust. Life's juices have been squeezed from them. Emotion has been rigorously purged, as if there were no such things as joy, tranquility, anger, resentment, fear, hope, memory and forgetting at stake in these analyses (Sandercock (2003:196).

Perhaps then the question is: If the meaning and colour and emotion are no longer part of research reports, how can they be about the lives of people? Language and form has become meaningless, lacking the basic connections that bring us together in community.

When I began to consider how a report might be 'translated' into a language or format that was more accessible (and interesting) for people outside the professional context, I had several key questions: Who requires translation? Who should do the 'translating?' Why do we, as professionals, perpetuate privilege both in our language and in how we conduct and report research? The young woman's question also brought me to a common response to research: Why do we need

[2] The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) was renamed 'Metro Vancouver' in 2007.

more research that's just going to collect dust on the shelf? In my professional work as a planner, I began to hear from various members of the community working in community agencies that research processes and documents had lost meaning to the very people they were meant to assist in their work. We as researchers needed to ask people in communities how they could see themselves better in reporting process. Acknowledging different sources of 'data' as information would also permit us as planners and researchers to learn more about diverse life experiences, places of importance, conflicts, and dreams.

I returned to the memory of the homelessness forum when I began reflecting on how poetry could enhance social inclusion, and how poetry could potentially be treated as information or 'data' in a community like the Downtown Eastside. Expanding the sources of knowledge that portray aspects of a particular community might offer clues to how greater meaning might be constructed for members in a particular community. I am aware of the limitations of my approach. I feel it is important to emphasize here, as I do elsewhere, that analysing these sources within this context cannot take the place of *beginning* with discussions within the community on how they wish to be represented in planning documents. In this particular analysis, I am considering what alternative secondary information planners might gather (just as statistics or Census data is gathered as secondary information) to enhance the accessibility, creativity, and 'life' of public and official planning documents.

This section begins by describing aspects of the feminist constructionist approach to understanding research and 'data' as outlined in Code, (1991 & 1995) and Linders, (2008). Secondly, I explicate how this approach was employed as a way to examine and evaluate 'modes of expression' within the documents I have chosen to analyze: the October 2005 *Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* and the October 1, 2005 and October 15, 2005 issues of the *Carnegie Newsletter,* in terms of female resident experiences in the Downtown Eastside. Finally, I explore potential opportunities and barriers to integrating additional forms of expression

to illustrate women's lived experience of the Downtown Eastside within official city planning documents.

Textual Analysis – A Feminist Constructionist Approach

I believe that understanding what planners currently include and exclude as secondary information or data in planning reports is directly related to what planners value as 'true' and 'objective' knowledge. Although some planners may have begun to realize they are not value-neutral actors outside a process, the discipline of planning has not necessarily broken with the tradition of value-neutrality imposed in the social sciences (Beauregard 1998 and 2001; Sandercock 1995, 1998 and 2003; Sarkissian 2005). Planners are still expected to remain objective, present cohesion, and 'give the facts.' For many planners and researchers working in the planning field, the limited forms of drafting reports and presentations offer nothing but paralysis. A sheepish shuttle to the Census file and the composition of a table or two.

The discussion on the inclusion and exclusion of knowledge is a well-tilled one (Sandercock 1998 and 2003). In Lorraine Code's work, *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge* (1991), the social construction of knowledge in social science research is traced back to the traditions of physics:

> Theorists who accord scientific knowledge paradigm status maintain that other kinds of knowledge, in other domains, are—and should be—modeled on scientific knowledge in their sources, their methodology, the subject-object relation they assume, and their criteria of truth, evidence, and verification. It is doubtful that scientific knowledge has ever deserved that status; yet in historical periods when it is thus venerated, other kinds of knowledge are denigrated in consequence (Code 1991:33).

Code argues that other kinds of knowledge will also be socially constructed, but unlike positivist approaches to research, these other languages do not make epistemological claims to 'the truth' as a scientific approach dictates. Code claims that: "knowledge is, necessarily and inescapably, the product of an intermingling of

subjective and objective elements" (Code 1991:30). Furthermore, she maintains that:

> [S]pecific instances of knowledge fall along a continuum, where some are more purely objective; others manifest a greater interplay of subjectivity and objectivity; others again are more purely subjective. A viable theory of knowledge that is in touch with the diversity of cognitive experiences has no place for the standard objective/subjective dichotomy, nor for any other dichotomy according to which knowledge is *better* to the extent that it is purely rational, theoretical, abstract, or universal (Code 1991:30).

The further work of Lorraine Code (and Sandra Burt), (1995) challenges feminist researchers to transform their practice by closely examining the power dynamics at play in determining any so-called truths or privileging one epistemology over another.

I wanted to conduct a textual analysis in order to explore two very different texts, one municipal government and one community newsletter, in an attempt to locate a diversity of secondary information (including poetry). I wondered if examining these two types of texts simultaneously would offer more meaningful and inclusionary 'data' that related to local women's voices in planning documents that refer both directly and abstractly to their homes as 'housing' and 'homelessness'. To conduct this textual analysis, I accept the premise that multiple power dynamics are at play in constructing knowledge and that different types of knowledge are located at various locations on a subjective/objective continuum. However, I do not attempt to locate the various types of information along the spectrum. Instead I seek understanding through the actors involved in presenting 'learnings' from their experiences of the Downtown Eastside.

A feminist constructionist approach allowed me to examine how each document was made up of social actors and how their experiences were 'documented' through various "constraining and/or facilitating characteristics" (Linders 2008: 468). Using a feminist lens, I was interested in how female residents' lives were depicted in each planning document, what types of inherent biases were revealed by the

textual representation, and how poetry could be used to re-surface these texts to enhance meaning in the official planning document.

Document Selection: Criteria & Profile

I selected an official planning document which would allow me to address my research question on how planning documents currently express information and ways in which they may be enhanced. The *October 2005 Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* was selected because it became the official planning document 'representing' housing needs for residents in the Downtown Eastside within the greater context of housing and development pressures in Vancouver's downtown area.

The *Carnegie Newsletter* was selected for three reasons. Firstly, the *Newsletter*'s self-proclaimed purpose is to advocate a social justice perspective, acting as one of many voices for the most marginalized of Downtown Eastside residents; secondly, because several residents write and publish in every issue; and thirdly, submissions indicate a consciousness of gender issues.

The documents were chosen to answer the following research questions:

- What specifically do poets and poetry bring to planning in terms of documentation?
- Why is the practice of poetry important in a feminist context?
- What is required to gain literacy, integrate, and transform planning documents to include the practice of poetry?

The Housing Plan

The City of Vancouver *Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* was finalized in October 2005, summarizing past, current, and future plans for housing in the area. For the purposes of this plan, the Downtown Eastside (DTES) includes the sub-areas of Victory Square, Gastown, Chinatown, DTES Oppenheimer, Thornton Park,

Strathcona, Industrial, and Hastings Corridor. These sub-areas have traditionally housed low-income residents in Single Room Occupancy hotels (SROs), non-market housing (such as non-profit or public housing), or low-cost market housing.

Between 1996 and 1998, the City was engaged in the following processes: 1) planning for affordable housing provision in Vancouver's low-income area; 2) engaging community groups, residents and businesses in the DTES in the planning-for-planning process; 3) getting a sense of who was living in the DTES and where they lived (by sub-area and housing type); 4) exploring the possibilities for increasing the quality of housing and the economic efficiency of the area; 5) identifying the key options to carry out the task; 6) assessing the options; and 7) putting forward a set of actions for Council approval (City of Vancouver 2005).

This process created the first draft of the Housing Plan for the DTES and initiated social learning, ideas and outcomes. More than twenty meetings were held with community groups and individuals in SROs in order to identify and frame the housing issues, followed by discussions with the greater community on the City's "Housing Plan Issues" brochure and a display of small suites (max. 320 square feet) at Four Corners Community Savings located on Hastings Street. However, the information gathered in this part of the process is not explicitly stated in the 2005 Housing Plan. Rather it stated that the learnings, objectives, ideas, and feelings from the 1998 process have been incorporated into the final (2005) Plan.

My general understanding conveyed in City of Vancouver literature is that the past 10 years have presented new complexities and challenges in terms of current and future housing needs. Many of these complexities and challenges—including provincial changes to Income Assistance eligibility and the deinstitutionalization of mental health facilities—have affected the City of Vancouver directly. Not only are there more people in the DTES requiring affordable housing (with supports), but also the traditional rental non-market housing stock for many who only receive the $325 (per month) is aging and often under poor management. Currently, there is

inadequate non-market housing to replace this stock. At the same time, a boom in condominium development in the Downtown and False Creek/Yaletown areas has contributed to fewer market housing development opportunities. The City of Vancouver *Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside* was finalized in October 2005, outlining a set of actions for addressing these prevailing issues.

'Housing' in this plan is spoken of separate from 'home'. Although the plan indicates conflicts between separate interests (local businesses are demanding a diversity of incomes, developers are running out of land in the downtown area, homeowners seek new housing, and the existing residents require affordable housing), these conflicts are not 'alive' on the pages of the plan. Sections of the housing plan are framed under the sub-headings: 'facts', 'existing policy', 'discussion', and 'actions'. Photographs of building details and colour columned into bar graphs mimic the constrained, glossy, untouchable style and structure of the report.

Carnegie Newsletter

I wish that I could make you see
that there's another side of me.
from "We're Only Homeless" by Sarah Hughes (15/11/96)

My second example is the Carnegie Newsletter, published by the Carnegie Centre. The Carnegie Centre was established as a community centre on January 20, 1980 through the efforts of the Downtown Eastside Residents' Association (DERA), the Carnegie Community Centre Association (CCCA), the Carnegie Centre, and the Vancouver Social Planning Department. In 1987, positive relationships between these agencies are attributed to:

> [...] financial solvency for the CCCA, major renovations to the building, and the growth of a powerful Carnegie voice through the Carnegie Community Centre Association, the Downtown Eastside poets, and the *Carnegie Newsletter* (Cameron 1996).

The *Carnegie Newsletter* continues to be published by volunteers of the Carnegie Centre, a community centre servicing residents in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside community. The first issue was produced by Al Mettrick through the Carnegie Centre on August 15, 1986; subsequent issues have been published on the 1st and 15th of every month. In 1986, the area and its residents were experiencing significant policy and infrastructure changes in the area as a result of development in preparation for Expo '86, resulting in a loss of 'home' for many low income people because of gentrification and displacement (Taylor 2003).

The *Newsletter* was a forum for residents to gather and 'fight' gentrification and displacement through writing and collaboration, formalizing the community as a vibrant and diverse entity. The language and politics of the Newsletter continue to enforce a strong and insistent voice centered on the principles of social justice — the presence of the community remains contextualized as marginalized because of market forces and other external social and political factors. The back cover of every issue has a definition defying charity:

> *Definition of* "**charity**"
> (pre-socialist usage) <in an exploitative society>
> [a well-to-do person or institution] which gives donations to selected 'poor people in a humiliating manner while using philanthropic and religious slogans in order to conceal the necessity of radical social changes (Carnegie Newsletter, October 1 & October 15, 2005).

The purpose of the Newsletter is to allow Downtown Eastside residents "to let all manner of physical, mental and spiritual creativity have expression" (Carnegie 2008). The Newsletter is bulletin in form, collage in content, including a mix of poetry, community events, book reviews, policy discussion essays, art, health and housing information, and other forms of commentary.

A Portrait of the People: Further Discussion

For the purpose of the final stage of my 'constructionist project', I reconceptualized and redesigned two pages of the "Portrait of the People" section of the October

Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside, incorporating images and texts from both the housing plan and the October 1, 2005 and October 15, 2005 *Carnegie Newsletter*.

This 'experiment' was conducted in full realization of my own implicit biases, and that "documents don't speak for themselves". As Linders remarks, the researcher presents the text through her reading and rewriting of material into a new context (Linders 2008: 469). My attempt at this experiment is included as a Portrait of the People Revised. It was reconstructed as a process of analysis into how other types of secondary 'data' such as poetry and image could be incorporated to strengthen the feminist voice using 'localized language' in the Downtown Eastside housing plan.

In the process of rewriting a section of the housing plan, I experienced a sense of 'paralysis' several times. I had given myself the freedom to rearrange, orchestrate, and integrate materials from the three selected documents—the housing plan and the two issues of the newsletter—using a constructionist methodology. However, I soon realized just how much power I was assuming. I asked myself, would the female poets and artists abhor the fact that I was 're-publishing' their work in a city document? Would the revised document be more meaningful than the current document? Would it acknowledge the lives and voices of women outside of the statistics? Were these poems and images acting as 'representations' of the lives and voices of the female residents? These questions hung in me like rocks.

These feelings lead me to words of caution in terms of using poetry as secondary data. However, the process of re-visioning a section of the housing plan also reaffirmed my sense of caution against using statistics to describe 'a portrait of the people.' Taking into account Code's feminist framework for understanding how knowledge is created, and how subjective and objective 'data' intermingle, allows different types of knowledge to exist interdependently on the page. This feminist understanding combined with a constructionist approach also allows for different

'social actors' with inherent biases and constructed cultures to exist together on the page (Linders 2008). I discovered that a polyphony of 'data' expands our knowledge by not falling into claims for truth and privileged knowledge of place.

The Process of Revision: Challenges & Opportunities

While engaged in reconstructing two pages of the Housing Plan for the Downtown Eastside, several things came to light for me. First of all, this approach did not answer the question: Does the inclusion of poetry and art by female poets and artists create more meaning for female residents of the Downtown Eastside? But perhaps it moves closer to: Does the inclusion of art and poetry by female residents of the Downtown Eastside create greater representation or presence of their experiences within the City of Vancouver's housing plan? Just as the 'tools' of a female construction worker must change to reflect the appropriate dimensions of her body and design, so must the 'tools' of a poet find their appropriate design and dimension within the text.

The textual analysis and 'experiment' has left me primarily with a sense of the challenges and the need for a more thorough examination. An examination is needed that would include the voices of female poets living and writing in the Downtown Eastside, discussing text that is meaningful to them, representative of the spectrum and complexity of their everyday lives within their 'multiple identities'. If we, as planners, are to be in the same room when this happens, revisiting the words and work of poet and instructor Kate Braid will allow us to hear our common heartbeats while remaining ever aware of the ripples of harm poetry can cause, the harm poets Erin Moure and Oana Avasiliochioaei have spoken about. But perhaps the greatest harm is to neglect the emotions, thoughts, and music in these poems, see them as outside the context of planning and research documents. In excluding poetry, in favouring statistic over poem, I feel we may be excluding multiple opportunities for beautiful occasions, artful engagements, and meaningful community actions we don't even know exist.

Appendix B:
Consent Form

"Consent Form"
Breaking the Line: Integrating Poetry in Planning Practice

Principal Investigator: Leonie Sandercock, Professor, School of Community and Regional Planning, UBC. [Phone number removed for publication]

Co-Investigator(s): Dianna Hurford, Master of Arts in Planning Candidate, School of Community and Regional Planning, UBC. [Phone number removed for publication]

Purpose:

The thesis research — Breaking the Line: Integrating Poetry in Planning Practice — examines ways in which poetry may enhance traditional urban planning practice. You have been invited to take part in this research study as a poet writing in Vancouver. Your responses will contribute to exploring and identifying the potential roles of poets, poetry, and poetic consciousness in urban planning processes and documents. You have been identified through contacts at the Simon Fraser University The Writer's Studio (TWS) and Simon Fraser University English Department.

The research is for a graduate degree through the School of Community and Regional Planning, and the interview transcripts will be examined within a thesis. The Co-Investigator will use findings to explore and identify opportunities for enhancing planning practice with poetry. Quotations from interviews and findings will be published in the thesis and will be made available to the public through the UBC library.

There is a possibility that there may be further publications of the findings in other public documents such as books and/or academic journals.

Study Procedures:

If you decide to participate in this study, a 45-60 minute interview will commence with the Co-Investigator (Dianna Hurford). The full interview will be audio-taped and electronically transcribed by the Co-Investigator, unless: a) you indicate any part/words to be excluded from the interview, b) you have requested that the interview or any parts of the interview not be taped.

Interview transcripts will be forwarded to you for your final comments, approval, and release, by e-mail. Confidentiality will be maintained by the co-investigator through locked password files until your approval has been given, thereby allowing the co-investigator to quote interview material in her published thesis unless otherwise explicitly stated in the final transcript approval and release email that you would not like your name to be identified and published alongside the findings.

The total amount of time required will be between 60 and 90 minutes (including review of the transcripts.)

Potential Risks:
There is minimal risk that you may experience risks to your privacy and confidentiality but considerable safeguards have been put in place to prevent this (see under Confidentiality). If you have chosen to be interviewed in a public place, there is a higher risk of a breach to your confidentiality and privacy.

Potential Benefits:
You may be provided with the findings and results of the study. If you wish to receive copies, please indicate 'yes' and provide your e-mail address at the bottom of this consent form.

Confidentiality:
Your identity will be kept strictly confidential until your written approval and release is given (via e-mail) to publish interview quotations with your name in the Co-Investigator's thesis. Prior to your final approval and release of the transcripts, the Co-investigator will ensure confidentiality through an established code for all documents. In addition, electronic transcripts will be locked in password files until your written approval and release has been given to the Co-Investigator. The material generated in the interviews will not be confidential once published in the thesis. Your name will remain confidential if you so choose; please indicate that you do not want your name to be published in your email approving and releasing the final transcript.

Contact for information about the study:
If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Dianna Hurford, Co-Investigator [personal information removed for publication].

Contact for concerns about the rights of research subjects:
If you have any concerns about your treatment or rights as a research subject, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail to RSIL@ors.ubc.ca.

Consent:
Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy.

Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

_____
Subject Signature Date

_____
Printed Name of the Subject

I would like to receive a copy of the research findings and final publication:
No ☐ Yes ☐ If yes, please include your e-mail address: _____

Appendix C:
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Approval Form

The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - MINIMAL RISK

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT:	UBC BREB NUMBER:
Leonie Sandercock	UBC/College for Interdisciplinary Studies/Community & Regional Planning	H08-00002

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:

Institution	Site
N/A	N/A

Other locations where the research will be conducted:
Subjects will be asked where he or she prefers to be interviewed, and if he or she would like to be interviewed in private or public. It is likely that the interviews will be conducted in cafes or suitable public spaces, such as the downtown Simon Fraser University campus. Private classrooms can be arranged at this campus if the subject wishes to be interviewed in private.

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):

Dianna Hurford

SPONSORING AGENCIES:

N/A

PROJECT TITLE:
Breaking the Line: Integrating Poetry in Planning Practice

CERTIFICATE EXPIRY DATE: February 4, 2009

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:

DATE APPROVED:
February 4, 2008

Document Name	Version	Date
Protocol:		
Draft Research Outline	1	January 1, 2008
Consent Forms:		
Consent Form	1	January 2, 2008
Letter of Initial Contact:		
Email sent by Known Subjects to Potential Subjects	1	January 1, 2008
Email sent by Co-Investigator to Known Subjects	1	January 1, 2008

The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:

Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair
Dr. Ken Craig, Chair
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair
Dr. Daniel Salhani, Associate Chair