

PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE, SPRAWL AND SUSTAINABILITY
IN GATINEAU, QUEBEC

by

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Abstract

Rooted in overwhelming evidence that our societies are not sustainable, this thesis explores the potential for participatory governance to improve the sustainability of land-use planning and decision-making. Participation is argued to be a critical component of governance for sustainability, for at least two reasons: (1) that to sustainably manage the incredibly complex interactions between human society and the environment requires profound understanding of those interactions; and (2) that to implement sustainability-oriented policies requires the consent and effort of those people that interacts with the environment.

Focusing on urban sprawl as one facet of poor land-use governance for sustainability, this research took the form of a case study of urban sprawl in the City of Gatineau, Quebec, Canada. I explored the processes that facilitate and obstruct the participation of various people, groups and institutions in land-use governance, and analysed the likely impact of this governance structure on land-use sustainability.

I employed policy analysis and 22 ethnographic interviews with local citizens, members of civil society groups, journalists, municipal councillors and public servants. I analysed these data within a framework of “goods” of participatory governance, namely: (1) inclusiveness; (2) popular control; (3) considered judgement; (4) transparency; and (5) efficiency.

I concluded that land-use governance in Gatineau generally fails to foster meaningful civic participation: residents are not systematically included or represented, and have little control over governance processes; current processes and institutions do not foster considered judgement on land-use issues; while efforts have been made to improve transparency, this is still very lacking; and, what citizen-engagement exists is inefficient, time-intensive and emotionally demanding.

I further concluded that: Land-use governance does not systematically ensure that complete and complex information is considered in decision-making; and Current governance processes are not adequate to build or maintain trust, buy-in and perceived legitimacy with citizens. As such, the current approach to land-use governance, and in particular the failure to foster meaningful civic participation, means that land-use governance in Gatineau is unlikely to produce sustainable outcomes.

I end with a set of recommendations, for both the City government and civil society in Gatineau.

Preface

This thesis is based on research conducted with the approval of the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board, under the certificate number H10-01128.

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Lists of abbreviations

BAPE: The Office for Public Hearings on the Environment of the Province of Quebec; in French, the “*Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement*.”

CCU: The Planning Advisory Committee of the City of Gatineau; in French, the “*Comité consultatif d'urbanisme*.” The CCU is more fully described in section 4.3.1 (page 65).

CPTAQ: The Commission for the Protection of Agricultural Land of the Province of Quebec; in French, the “*Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec*.” The CPTAQ is more fully described in section 4.3.4 (page 69).

DAD: Environmental management approach described by Mitchell (2005, p.2) as “decide, announce, defend.”

MTQ: The Ministry of Transportation of the Province of Quebec; in French, the “*Ministère des Transports du Québec*.”

NCC: The National Capital Commission, a crown corporation controlled by the Canadian federal government with a mandate that includes the stewardship of federal lands and buildings in the National Capital Region. The NCC is more fully described in section 4.3.4 (page 69).

NIMBY: Acronym for “Not In My Back Yard,” used to describe an interpretation of citizen/resident concerns and protestations about proposed developments or land-use changes. I explore some of the uses, interpretations and repercussions of this concept in section 2.3.4 (page 33).

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Dedication

This is, above all else, for the forests and streams, wetlands and escarpments, treetops and rapids, soils and skies of the Outaouais, Quebec, and for the people who care about them.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. A walk in the woods: situating myself in this research project

Late in 2008, I met a neighbour while walking in a forest near my childhood home, on the outskirts of Gatineau, Quebec. We had never met, though I discovered that we had both walked these woods frequently over the past 20 years. Maybe because meeting other people in these woods has always been so rare, we spoke comfortably, drawn into conversation by a shared admiration for these woods, and by the creeping recognition of how little was left of this once vast-seeming stand of cedars, maples, beech and white pines, interspersed with small bogs, wetland and creeks. Now, the sounds of the urban periphery were close: vehicles passing on surrounding roads, large trucks backing up, hammers on wood. And even from this relatively densely forested areas, the roofs of skeletal, half-built houses could be seen in the distance. Winding asphalt roads, lined with evenly spaced, single-family homes surrounded by grass or, at the forest edges, soil, rocks, and fill, increasingly claimed spaces in which I had previously explored. In these spaces, I had once seen deer, bears, foxes, porcupines and snowy owls, a wide diversity of mushrooms that would appear in particularly rainy seasons after years of absence, fascinating insectivorous wetland plants, as well as the more mundane species of trees, shrubs, field and wetland species that define large swaths of Eastern Canada. These had been beautiful open spaces in which awe, respect, imagination and creativity could and did grow.

My neighbour and I calmly lamented this loss, standing in the shade of dense cedars. While we both felt the loss as personal, it struck me that this space – locally mundane, globally tiny – would be a loss far beyond our own. The species that lived here, the air and water that was purified and stored, and the ways that this space had shaped the understandings of the people that experienced it, were in no way isolated from the wider problems of the loss of biological diversity, the degradation of ecosystem services, or the fading cultural understanding of “wilderness.” Rather, locally mundane wild spaces are the front lines of these global concerns, and their loss is increasingly seen as part of the threat to the stability and survival of human societies.

On one hand, these transformations of the landscape represent an expanding need for human habitation, coupled with an expression of the balance of our society’s values: farms and forests losing ground to the suburban dream. However, beyond shelter and beyond consumer

preference, the form that urban development takes is a manifestation of biases in the way we make decisions about our landscapes. As with many questions of governance (from environment to development), the recognition that many of the transformations of these landscapes are inherently unsustainable now challenges us to reconsider these governance processes. This challenge, and the potential of democracies and societies to meet it, comes down to a question of our capacity (the ability and the will) to deliberate, communicate and come to wise decisions that reflect the long-term, common interests of society.

My neighbour talked about having gone to the consultation processes that the municipality had set up when these forests were to be re-zoned for residential development. These consultation processes are intended as tools for deliberating, communicating and coming to wise decisions around land use. However, my neighbour instead told me that it was useless, that consultations weren't designed to incorporate the considered opinions of residents, but were treated as legally required, tedious processes of telling opposing residents that they were wrong, that they should leave these issues to the professionals. My neighbour had stopped going.

1.2. Overview of research objectives, design and audience

This project engages citizens, civil society groups, elected representatives and public administrators of Gatineau, Quebec in participatory research, employing depth interviews, field ethnography and components of institutional ethnography to inform an understanding of how citizen participation in land-use governance interacts with sustainability around issues of urban development and sprawl.

Amidst the paving over of intricate ecosystems and the protestations of residents, the City of Gatineau has recently, and encouragingly, specified participatory governance as a core “strategic direction” in its Strategic Plan, 2009-2014 (Ville de Gatineau, 2009a). This Strategic Plan strongly incorporates sustainability into the official objectives of the City, which include: to tackle urban sprawl, to direct urban growth in a coherent manner, to promote sustainable transportation, to integrate natural and built environments, and to serve as an example of sustainable development (especially with regards to climate change). Despite its objectives of participatory governance and sustainability (and maybe explaining the impetus for these objectives), Gatineau is criticised by many of its most “civically engaged” citizens for having a poor approach to both of these. This perceived lack of either institutionalised participatory

governance or demonstrably sustainable land-use trends motivates my examination of this city, in which I hope to analyse institutions and procedures of land-use governance and citizen participation that are at work in reproducing urban sprawl. In light of the City's commitments, I hope that my project might be seen as a tool to help achieve and strategically implement the City's objectives.

My goal was to see the City's land-use governance processes and institutions through the eyes of residents, public service employees and municipal councillor, to build an analysis to bridge official policy (the way things *are said to* work) with actual practice (the way things *really* work; how people actually use and interact with these processes). As such, my project consisted largely of ethnographic interviews with councillors, urban planners and public administrators, local political commentators and journalists, and residents. This thesis analyses the systems of people and institutions that shape land-use governance in Gatineau, and some of the processes through which peoples' concerns and interests flow among these people, groups and institutions to eventually influence decisions, or to fail to do so.

I premise this work on widely recognised benefits of citizen participation in governance for environmental and land use sustainability. My analysis relies heavily on Graham Smith's (2009) theoretical framework of participatory governance in assessing the current state, limitations and possibilities of participation in Gatineau. As such, I attempt to recognise obstacles to resident participation in the current processes, and what these mean in terms of the voices, perspectives and ideas that are empowered to shape physical outcomes on the landscape.

This case study of Gatineau, Quebec, connects with the literature of participatory governance especially in two ways. For one, I assess issues of public "buy-in" for land-use decisions and policies. Second, I assess issues of institutional capacity to consider and integrate diversity of perspective, knowledge and values in managing systems as complex as cities, their surroundings and the environments that support them. I must be clear that, far from proposing that participation is a panacea for the problem of urban sprawl (or sustainability generally), this project explores participation in governance as a potentially critical tool for improving the sustainability problems of land use in Gatineau, and perhaps beyond. I undertake this project as an exploration, recognising that this type of research does not lend itself to hypothesis testing, but rather to deep, multi-perspectival observation, description and analysis. I hope that this analysis can help to address the apparent gap between normative theories of governance and

descriptions of actual dynamics of governance, as I accept that “speculation about what ought to be is likely to be more useful when informed by relevant knowledge of what is feasible” (Shapiro, 2003; as cited in Smith, 2009, p. 9).

Finally, I am motivated to study participation and sustainability specifically in this city of Gatineau, Quebec, because it is the community in which I was raised and in which I intend to live in the coming years. As such, I have approached this research project recognising my role as both a resident of Gatineau, and as an environmentally-concerned scholar. I hope that my research might be seen as a work of community-engaged scholarship, in the sense captured by the words of Daniel Kemmis (1990):

The strengthening of political culture, and the reclaiming of a vital and effective sense of what it is to be public, must take place and must be studied in the context of very specific places and of the people who struggle to live well in such places.

Chapter 2. Literature review

2.1. The case for rethinking environmental governance

The next few decades are crucial. The time has come to break out of past patterns. Attempts to maintain social and ecological stability through old approaches to development and environmental protection will increase instability. Security must be sought through change. The Commission has noted a number of actions that must be taken to reduce risks to survival and to put future development on paths that are sustainable. Yet we are aware that such a reorientation on a continuing basis is simply beyond the reach of present decision-making structures and institutional arrangements, both national and international.

– World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (1987)

2.1.1. The imperatives of sustainability

This work builds off the recognition of overwhelming evidence that we, humanity, are depleting, polluting and degrading many of the environmental systems on which we depend for our continued existence.¹ What's more, it seems that many of these systems are approaching or have reached critical limits, suggesting that an immediate response is necessary to – at best – avoid potentially permanent changes to the structure and dynamics of these systems (Rees, 2008; Goodwin, 2008). However, despite growing realisations of the severity of our collective (though unevenly distributed) impacts on the Earth's environmental systems, we, and our governance structures, have been slow and ineffective at finding, proposing and implementing solutions.

The emerging concern for sustainability represents a growing recognition of the interdependence between the natural world (e.g., ecosystems, natural resources, climate, biodiversity), human societies (e.g., food security, economic dependence on ecosystem services) and social justice (e.g., social equity, democracy). Sustainability implores us to think about the long-term impacts of our individual and collective actions on our society and the environment, on whose health our society necessarily depends. It would almost certainly require an enormous restructuring of our economies, our means and methods of generating energy, food and fibre, our lifestyles, perhaps our birthrates and probably many of our cultural foundations (for example, see Weizsäcker, Hargroves, Smith, Desha, & Stasinopoulos, 2009). Unfortunately, the current widespread economic paradigms of globalisation and free-trade have largely failed to recognise

¹ For overviews of this literature, see World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), Vitousek (1997), Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (Program) (2005), Dobson, Lodge, Alder, Cumming, Keymer, McGlade, et al. (2006).

or address many aspects of ecological sustainability, either theoretically or in practice (Costanza, 1995).

However, sustainability is not solely a question of *what world is possible* to maintain in relative perpetuity; a question of technical and economic feasibility. Rather, since its introduction at the Brundtland Commission (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), sustainability has been crucially seen as a social and political question of *what world we want* to sustain, and how we can build it efficiently and justly. Sustainability is a question of how we can succeed in developing, deciding upon and implementing an enormously complex change to stabilize an enormously complex system (Agyeman & Evans, 2003; Prugh, 2000). Framed this way, sustainability has come to be seen as a societal good, perhaps *as* important as questions of justice and liberty (and arguably more important, or inextricable) (Dobson, 1998; Langhelle, 2000).

The prospects of global sustainability now seem so challenging that some people are beginning to question whether or not our governance models are up to the task. For instance, Rees argues that few if any of the governance programs that claim to promote sustainability have had any significant impact, “apart from fostering the illusion of progress” (2010, p. 14). This is consistent with the Brundtland Commission’s recognition that a sufficient “reorientation on a continuing basis is simply beyond the reach of present decision-making structures and institutional arrangements” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). In this context, I approach the question of sustainability by assuming that a key process in building a more sustainable society is the reconsideration of the governance systems through which issues are deliberated, decisions are made and their implementation planned and monitored.

2.1.2. Sustainability as a challenge for governance institutions

In assessing the governance requirements of human interactions with their surrounding environments, Liu, Dietz, Carpenter, Folke, Alberti, Redman, et al. (2010) consider human societies and the environment as complex, profoundly interdependent systems. Sustainability, currently, functions as a goal of managing such human-environmental systems such that their structure and integrity persist indefinitely (Costanza, Low, Ostrom, & Wilson, 2001). As such, sustainability can be seen as a systems-management problem, asking us to manage a system in

which we (humanity, collectively and individually) are equally components. Cybernetics² pioneer William Ross Ashby's *law of requisite variety* says that for a system to be stable, its control mechanisms must address the complete variety of that system (Ashby, 1960). Considering sustainability as a question of complex systems-analysis, Ashby's law would suggest that, to intentionally and actively sustain human-environmental systems, our control mechanisms must address the full complexity of those systems: the management of humanity's interactions with the environment requires as holistic a system of governance as the human-environmental system is complex. Similarly, Ostrom stresses that "complex, polycentric, multilayered governance systems," are required in order to address the complexity of these human-environmental systems (Ostrom, 1995).

These analyses seem to correspond well with critiques, such as that of Ludwig et al. (1993), who, in recognition of the historical precedent of unsustainability in human-environmental systems, suggest that the complex nature of biological and physical systems precludes a reductionist approach to governance. Similarly, from the study of environmental management, Bruce Mitchell notes that the greatest challenges for environmental management are not lacking technical expertise. Rather, he argues, environmental management is often more critically a question of rapidly changing conditions in the interactions between natural and human systems (including changing needs and expectations), high systems complexity, high uncertainty, and frequent conflict due to legitimate differences in needs, interests and values (Mitchell, 2005).

In this context, participatory approaches have gained prominence, aiming to attain more complete knowledge, creativity and cooperation in problem resolution. Elinor Ostrom (1990), assessing criteria of governance institutions that might sustainably manage complex human-environmental systems, suggests the need for "collective-choice arrangements": governance institutions whose rules and decisions are crafted, and then monitored, by and with the participation of those who will thereby be governed. These suggestions intersect with the concerns of participatory democratic scholars Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright, who have suggested that:

² Cybernetics: the study of complex systems.

as the tasks of the state have become more complex and the size of polities larger and more heterogeneous, the institutional forms of liberal democracy developed in the nineteenth century – representative democracy plus techno-bureaucratic administration – seems increasingly ill suited to the novel problems we face in the twenty-first century. (Fung & Wright, 2003, p. 3)

I will briefly review the participatory governance literature in section 2.3, but turn first to a more detailed analysis of the sustainability challenges posed by urban development, specifically “urban sprawl.”

2.2. Urban development and sprawl

In the 1870s, less than 20% of Canadians lived in urban areas. By 2006, 80% lived in cities (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, n.d.), with growth rates of “peripheral municipalities” or “edge cities” doubling the national average growth rate between 2001 and 2006 (The National Post, 2007). Since the 1940s, the form and scale of urban areas throughout North America has changed dramatically, driven by changes in cultures, economies, technologies, policies and regulations. Today, North American cities are defined by vast expanses of “urban sprawl”: low density housing, commerce and industry, characteristically segregated by “use” and connected by expansive road networks and parking accommodation. With the rise of concerns for human-environmental sustainability, urban sprawl is becoming a classic example of environmental mismanagement on local and regional scales, though with drivers and implications that span the globe.

This section reviews urban sprawl, the reasons for its historical and continuing prominence in North America, and the challenge that it poses for sustainability and for governance.

2.2.1. Urban sprawl, defined

Sprawl, *v.* To move the limbs in a convulsive effort or struggle; to toss about or spread oneself out; in later use, to be stretched out on the ground, etc., in an ungainly or awkward manner. (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.)

Uncoordinated and graceless expansion was obviously in the mind of William H. Whyte when he wrote an article titled “Urban Sprawl” for the issue of *Fortune* magazine, developing both the early concept and critique of this form of human settlement (Whyte, 2000). Whyte was responding to the objectives of the 1956 U.S. *Federal Highway Act*, “to disperse our factories,

our stores, our people; in short, to create a revolution in living habits.” Whyte’s concept of “urban sprawl” is now common language in describing and understanding the form and challenges of urban growth in North America.

However, the term “urban sprawl” is somewhat vague. Researchers of sprawl note that the lack of clear metrics or definitions of “sprawl” is a challenge for empirical research on its dynamics and impacts (Johnson, 2001; Lopez & Hynes, 2003; Turcotte, 2008). And yet, “sprawl” has resonance with critics, effectively communicating physical characteristics and design elements, as well as value judgements.

In physical terms, “sprawl” describes low-density urban areas, landscapes with low diversity of human activity and socio-economic demographics, minimal diversity of building types and architecture, and large areas zoned for single purposes. Sprawl is characterised by convoluted road systems and by the car-dependence of people who choose to (or must) use these landscapes. Duany, Plater-Zyberk & Speck (2000) define sprawl as consisting of five related components: *Residential* subdivisions in which housing is the exclusive function; *Commercially* zoned Shopping centres and *Industrially* zoned office parks, both of which are typically designed almost exclusively for access by automobile and which are often surrounded by parking-lots and highways; *Civic institutions*, exclusively public spaces, often large, isolated and nondescript; and *Roadways*, transportation-exclusive components connecting and allowing the necessary interactions between these other four.

Sprawl is often defined by what it is not: for residents, sprawl characteristically lacks nearby centres of community, commerce, culture and governance. Sprawl describes landscapes in which residents cannot reasonably be expected to regularly walk to meet many ordinary needs of daily life. Sprawl lacks the grid-like arrangement of streets (common in many older neighbourhoods), lacks particularity from one site to another, and lacks prominence and charisma in important monuments of civic life (schools, city halls, places of worship, etc.). Sprawl lacks efficient public transit and has a low potential to ever have efficient public transit due to low densities and the lack of pedestrian-accessible through-roads (Duany et al., 2000; Condon, 2010).

Beyond physical metrics, sprawl implies a value judgement, qualifying forms of urban development and the principles on which they are based as problematic. Sprawl has come to mean quickly and cheaply-built houses, and architectural monotony (Frumkin, 2004),

stereotypically involving ubiquitous “beige siding.” Duany et al. (2000) describe the aesthetic distaste for sprawl as an unrelenting progression of:

cookie-cutter houses, wide, treeless, sidewalk-free roadways, mindlessly curving cul-de-sacs, a streetscape of garage doors [...] a national landscape that is largely devoid of places worth caring about. Soulless subdivisions, residential “communities” utterly lacking in communal life... (Duany et al., 2000, p. x)

Environmentally, sprawl has come to represent the human domination of landscapes: areas in which human planning, politics and market forces determine the form and function of the environment (Radeloff, Hammer, & Stewart, 2005; Vitousek, 1997; Hobbs & Mooney, 1998; Liu, Daily, Ehrlich, & Luck, 2003).

Sprawl is also often defined in time, as a phenomenon of human settlements developed since the end of the Second World War, mostly in North America (Duany et al., 2000). This definition is, to some, arbitrary. Critics suggest that opposition to sprawl is rooted in an opposition to change, perhaps to progress. In light of such debates about the value of sprawl – socially, economically and ecologically – I will briefly explore two opposing understandings of what drives sprawl and what these mean for potential solutions to the problems that sprawl causes, in section 2.2.3. However, I will first review the growing body of research on the environmental, health, social and civic problems associated with urban sprawl.

2.2.2. Environmental, health, social and civic impacts of sprawl

The environmental, social and economic sustainability of urban sprawl are increasingly concerning. Many of these concerns are deeply interrelated: for instance, issues such as greenhouse gases emissions, climate change, food security and political stability cannot be adequately addressed independently. My goal here is to provide a brief overview of some of the complex and critical impacts of the widespread conversion of terrestrial landscapes to urban sprawl.

Greenhouse gases and air pollution

Human greenhouse gas emissions are now widely accepted to be changing the Earth’s climate, with impacts which are potentially beyond our ability to predict and mitigate.³ Urban

³ For overviews of this literature, see Hansen, Ruedy, Sato and Lo (2010), Goodwin (2008), Solomon, Plattner, Knutti and Friedlingstein (2009). For overviews of research on climate change and human health, see McMichael, Woodruff and Hales (2006) and Patz, Campbell-Lendrum, Holloway and Foley (2005).

sprawl at least indirectly contributes to greenhouse gas emissions due to the high rates of per capita vehicle use (which are virtually required for suburban residence, employment in office parks and all forms of suburban commerce, from grocery shopping to recreation and entertainment). The energy-intensive per capita heating and cooling requirements of “single-detached” suburban homes also contribute to greenhouse gas emissions (though specific impacts depend on energy sources for heating and cooling) (Norman, MacLean, & Kennedy, 2006; Gonzalez, 2005). Furthermore, the large per capita asphalted road networks increase local temperatures, potentially contributing to global climate change and at least exacerbating the local impacts thereof (Patz et al., 2005). As such, the impacts of urban sprawl must be seen as contributing to climate change and, thus, as involved in the largely unpredictable future changes in weather patterns, agricultural productive capacity and political stability. Condon (2010) notes that street patterns have conclusively been tied to urban greenhouse gas emissions, where interconnected (i.e., grid) street networks can dramatically reduce car use.

The role of urban sprawl in increased automobile use is also tied to increased air pollution, though these impacts may be felt strongest in denser sectors (i.e., urban centres) to which commuters travel. As such, the air pollution impacts of sprawl, as well as the impacts of the “heat island effect,” are more likely to severely impact the health of urban residents, especially in poorer inner-city neighbourhoods (Frumkin, 2002).

Ecosystem appropriation and fragmentation

The functioning of the Earth’s ecosystems is of critical importance to human society and quality of life, and is increasingly threatened by human activity.⁴ While the current ecological crisis is not uniquely the result of urban sprawl (dense urban areas are not without impact (Folke, Jansson, Larsson, & Costanza, 1997)), it is clear that low density human habitation has widespread impacts on critical ecosystem functions: often on functions that are important for human health and food production. Liu et al. (2003) have demonstrated that reductions in housing density over the latter half of the 20th century have disproportionately increased the impacts of the overall increasing human population on biodiversity and resource use. Sprawl represents a per capita increase in the area of land occupied by housing and urban infrastructure, and in the material and resources used in the construction and maintenance of housing and

⁴ For a review of this literature, see Vitousek (1997), Costanza, d’Arge, de Groot, Farber, Grasso, Hannon, et al. (1998), and Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (Program) (2005).

related urban infrastructure. Housing is especially critical in habitat destruction and fragmentation, impacting wildlife movement and threatening both species biodiversity and ecosystem function (Radeloff et al., 2005; Hobbs et al., 1998). Furthermore, Frumkin (2002) argues that sprawl jeopardises the security of water quantity and quality related to increased non-point source pollution.

Loss of agricultural land and food security

Agriculture is a critical intersection between social and environmental concerns of sustainability. Even without considering the loss of physical agricultural land to urban development and other uses, the question of whether food production can keep pace with the growth of the global population is a critical component of sustainability, and is by no means guaranteed (Ehrlich, Ehrlich, & Daily, 1993). However, addressing these concerns, Lal (2001) claims that current and future food needs can be met through careful agricultural management, in which he notably includes the preservation of farmland.

Tweeten (1998) has indicated that current market mechanisms influencing land use do not function to efficiently preserve farm land from suburban development. Indeed, Imhoff et al. (1997) have demonstrated that U.S. urban development has largely occurred in areas classified as among the best agricultural soils, while urban encroachment into agricultural communities impacts the allocation of land between urban and agricultural uses, generally raising the price of peri-urban agricultural land and impacts the practices of agriculturalists. Boone (2006) thus argues that the sprawl of urban development onto agricultural (and potentially agriculturally valuable) land further reduces regional food security and fragments agricultural communities.

Other health impacts of sprawl

Frumkin (2002) has argued that land-use patterns themselves (and sprawl in particular) have indirect but clear effects on public health, citing studies relating sedentary lifestyles to urban sprawl (relating increased vehicle use to decreases in bicycle and pedestrian mobility). He then refers to widely accepted evidence linking sedentary lifestyles to increased health risks (i.e., increased risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, hypertension, high cholesterol, etc.). In contrast, Statistics Canada has reported that, while Canadian suburbanites are less likely to commute in a physically active way, there was not a significant difference in physical activity between suburban and urban residents (Turcotte, 2009).

Additionally, despite the ideal of low density living, urban sprawl is increasingly related to problems with mental health. Frumkin points to increased stress of commuting and incidents of road rage, though he recognises that sprawling land use patterns are difficult to connect implicate directly. Furthermore, Frumkin suggests that suburban life is associated with increased time spent commuting,⁵ and thus less time spent with friends and family. Urban sprawl is also characterised by decreased access to public spaces in which community might be formed. Regardless, urban sprawl is often associated with increased social isolation and reduced social capital, which Frumkin relates to increases in morbidity and mortality.

Frumkin (2002) has also shown that sprawl is associated with higher rates of vehicle (and pedestrian) related injuries and fatalities than denser urban areas, showing that denser cities with more extensive public transit have lower automobile fatality rates. Furthermore, Duany et al. (2000) cite that “suburban cities” make up the top ten American metropolitan areas for aggressive driving deaths.

Interestingly, Frumkin argues that, while sprawl emerged in some part in response to health concerns due to the proximity of residential and industrial areas in the 19th century, the broad issue of urban and land-use planning are seen today as the purview of trained planners and engineers, with little policy guidance from public health experts.

Social and civic impacts

Duany et al. (2000) argue that typical urban sprawl zoning patterns, by codifying that large areas of residential development contain only similarly sized lots and similarly designed homes, serves to segregate residents based on relatively minute gradations of income. Over regional scales, this can allow large areas of socio-economic homogeneity. In some cases, this has allowed some suburban areas to reduce their contribution of taxes toward improving social conditions and public infrastructure in other zones (for example, often in the inner cities that are the centres of sprawling metropolitan areas). Robert Reich (1991) calls this the “secession of the successful”, a form of segregation based on housing monocultures of building form and function. In this vein, Frumkin (2002) has argued that sprawl may be involved in socially unjust distributions of environmental, social and economic impacts – especially due to the association between sprawl and the disinvestment in urban cores. Frumkin argues that the impacts of sprawl

⁵ The average Canadian commuter spent 63 minutes in their travel to and from work in 2005, up from 54 minutes in 1992 (Turcotte, 2005).

are most strongly felt in these urban cores, thus often disproportionately impacting poorer people and people of colour.

In economic terms, evidence suggests that urban sprawl is economically inefficient relative to higher density urban forms, certainly in the medium-to-long term, for developers, City governments and residents alike. While infrastructure costs for the construction of road networks, pipes and electricity are now often paid for by developers (thus incorporated into the cost of new houses) cities' maintenance costs alone suggest that new suburban growth fails to pay for itself at "acceptable levels of taxation" (Duany et al., 2000, p. 7). In one economic analysis of urban sprawl, reduced housing density and increased per-capita scale of road infrastructure correlated with increases in public costs on the whole (Carruthers & Ulfarsson, 2003).⁶ Similarly, Condon and Teeds (1998) calculated that, in Vancouver, homes built according to sustainable principles could be built with lower per capita costs for land, home and infrastructure construction.⁷ Hulsey (1996) reports that sprawling communities can cost municipalities twice as much in services as is generated by increased tax revenue. Similarly, Deal and Schunk (2004), attempting to model differences in economic impacts between low-density and high-density urban land use, have noted that over the medium and long term communal and social costs are clearly higher for sprawl. However, these authors note that:

"Even if parts of the social costs are ultimately paid for by the individual [residents], the individual's perception may be that low-density development is cheaper than high-density development due to the short time horizons generally associated with individual decisions." (Deal et al., 2004, p. 91)

Furthermore, while urban sprawl has long been criticised for its lack of vibrant civic life, Duany et al. (2000) argue that the focus that sprawl places on private as opposed to public space, and private as opposed to public lives, reduces the potential for the formation of communities, vibrancy and even democracy. These authors recognise that sprawl has increased the accessible comforts of the private sphere, "the number of square feet per person, the number of baths per bedroom, the number of appliances in the kitchen, the quality of the climate control, and the

6 Carruthers and Ulfarsson (2003) calculated this in consideration of capital facilities, roadways, police protection, education, other transportation costs, sewerage, trash collection, housing and community development, fire protection, parks, education and libraries.

7 Based on "seven basic principles for liveable and sustainable communities," including: higher densities, walkability, interconnected street systems and narrower street design; mixed-use neighbourhoods; the use of rear lanes for parking, leaving the front of homes for more community-oriented facades and pedestrian access; and the use of natural drainage systems (Condon et al., 1998).

convenience of the garage” (Duany et al., 2000, p. 41). However, they also note that this has come at the expense of the public sphere such that, they suggest, the role of the citizen is reduced to that of “a motorist competing for asphalt” (Duany et al., 2000, p. 41). They argue that this focus on the private to the exclusion of the public has led to a degradation of society’s capacity to consider “common” goods and interests, and thus a degradation of capacity to engage deliberately in democracy. However, the relationship between urban form and civic engagement are difficult to demonstrate empirically. Williamson (2002) and Hopkins and Williamson (2010) note that increased commuting time and decreased urban density are likely predictors of decreased political engagement (either in political activities or, less strongly, in electoral turnout). Similarly, Putnam cites urban sprawl as a contributing factor in the declining civic engagement of the American population, related to increases in commuting time, increased social segregation and “disrupted community ‘boundedness’” (the geographic dispersal and fragmentation of peoples activities) (Putnam, 2000, p. 214).

In sum, urban sprawl is certainly a pressing social, environmental and economic issue. The approaches that nations, regions, cities and residents take toward managing and retro-fitting sprawl will determine important elements of the sustainability and health of our people and society.

2.2.3. Drivers

To assess possible catalysts and levers in managing urban growth and developing alternatives to sprawl, I first review two somewhat competing narratives about the factors that “drive” urban sprawl. The first describes sprawl as emerging from the freedom and liberty of individual home-owners, that sprawl is the expression of these liberties through the mechanisms of a free and open market and, thus, an emergent phenomenon of democratic freedom. The second describes sprawl as the outcome of an approach to urban planning that has considered “urban form” as a technical issue, to be managed by professionals according to ideal, objective principles and standards.

Sprawl as an expression of freedom and liberty

In relation to common definitions of sprawl, Robert Bruegmann (2005) argues that to define “sprawl” as urban and peri-urban growth *only* after the Second World War is arbitrary. He suggests that sprawl is nothing but a new permutation of an old phenomenon: that people have

always sought the urban edge, ostensibly for the goals of increased mobility, privacy, choice and affordability. As such, Bruegmann suggests that “urban sprawl” is a rhetorical term, “not so much an objective reality” (Bruegmann, 2005, p. 3). Highlighting what he claims are social-justice benefits of the suburban form – unprecedented mobility, privacy and choice – Bruegmann attempts to re-cast “urban sprawl” as a manifestation of democratic liberties and freedoms. Bruegmann’s analysis suggests that the environmental, civic and health concerns of sprawl are kinks in the model, rather than systemic problems.

Indeed, this definition of sprawl – as a manifestation of the liberties and freedoms of a population – has rhetorical and political force. The fact remains that “folks still like living in suburbs with big yards and big garages” (Briggs, 2008, p. 75), which is a central challenge of mitigating urban sprawl: sprawl has become central to a powerful North-American ideal of the “good life,” and is defended as a cultural good. As Briggs recognised in his case study of efforts to manage urban growth in Salt Lake City, Utah, sprawl “is not a simple by-product of market demand [...] Sprawl is part of our culture” (Briggs, 2008, pp. 51-2).

Indeed, urban sprawl seems strongly supported by home-buyers’ preferences for suburban homes: North-Americans continue to choose to buy into suburbia, and single-family homes and large lots are still recognised as a hallmark of the American dream (Briggs, 2008). In this way, sprawl might represent the value that individual consumers in North America have placed on “privacy, mobility and choice” (Bruegmann, 2005, p. 13).

But the question of demand for private ownership of homes and land is complicated. As Bruegmann contends that to seek, where possible, lower human density is essentially a component of human nature, he argues that sprawl is a logical consequence of economic growth and the market-based “democratization” of society. On the other hand, Duany et al. (2000) and Briggs (2008) have suggested that urban sprawl intersects with cultural shifts toward “smaller government” and the ideal of individualism, and is not a revelation of human nature. Harris (2004) supports this view of urban sprawl (at least in its current scale, and cultural character of conformity and conservatism) as resulting from a directed cultural shift. Harris argues that the North American suburban ideal has been normalised, largely through entertainment media (i.e., sitcoms like *I Love Lucy* and *Leave it to Beaver*, and *Time* magazine’s naming of suburban developer William Levitt as “Man of the Year” in 1950).

Viewing the problem of urban sprawl from a similar perspective, Jan K. Brueckner argues that urban sprawl can be seen as the result of economic drivers of “growing population, rising incomes, and falling commuting costs” (Brueckner, 2000, p. 1). Recognising the failure of market mechanisms to systematically address environmental, health and civic concerns, Brueckner suggests that sprawl might be seen as the result of simple market failure. Brueckner argues that the failure to make new development pay for increased costs, and the failure to make commuters pay the costs of increased transportation infrastructure have resulted in the low-density form of sprawl. He suggests that these market failures should be the foci of our efforts to mitigate the problems of sprawl. Similarly, Tweeten (1998) argues that the loss of agricultural land to urban sprawl indicates a failure of market mechanisms to accurately reflect relevant “value to society” in the trade-off between urban and agricultural land. Tweeten argues that the public goods that farmland generates (i.e., food security, ecosystem services, cultural and aesthetic amenities), and the high transaction cost of farmland preservation, are inefficiently expressed through the current form of market-based governance. On a broader scale, the field of ecological economics (i.e., Daly, 2004) has emerged in recognition of the failure of markets to reflect the full value of ecosystems and the environment.

Deal and Schunk (2004) note that low-density development is more costly than it is beneficial over time, but that the standard solution to increased municipal costs has been to continually expand residential development as a way of generating tax revenue. Obviously, this solution is unsustainable, requiring indefinite areas of undeveloped land, but the authors note that this functions as an inherent feedback loop, constantly favouring “fringe development.” As such, this self-reinforcing municipal fiscal necessity might itself be considered a driver of development in some instances. Interestingly, these authors note that alternative approaches to managing rising maintenance costs of older subdivisions – for example, increased tax rates, or pre-emptively switching to “compact and sustainable development patterns” – are rarely considered (Deal et al., 2004, p. 92).

As such, it appears that, through perhaps-imperfect market mechanisms, the expression of North American cultural preferences has certainly played a critical role in the expansion and continued importance of urban sprawl throughout North America. This suggests that any change to our models of urban development should focus on the efficiency of market mechanisms, and

especially on promoting understanding among consumers and potential consumers: the North American populations.

Planning and policy

While urban sprawl is argued to have originated in the expression of individual freedoms and liberties, an alternative perspective sees this urban form as rooted in changing technologies, government policy and incentives, the structures and requirements of financial systems, and the ideological and technical paradigms of certain schools of professional urban planning and engineering.

In the past few decades, critics have often framed sprawl as a manifestation of short-term, fragmented planning (e.g., Sierra Club, 1998). Certainly, Duany et al. argue that sprawl represents *poor* planning, and “is not functional: it simply does not efficiently serve society or preserve the environment” (Duany et al., 2000, p. 14). However, suggesting that sprawl has arisen through a *lack* of planning – through the unbridled interactions of free individuals in the market – is misleading. Rather, it seems that urban sprawl was quite explicitly planned, the product of an intentional and idealistic vision of society, as Le Corbusier’s 1935 vision for urbanism in the “machine-age civilisation” demonstrates:

The cities will be part of the country; I shall live 30 miles from my office in one direction, under a pine tree; my secretary will live 30 miles away from it too, in the other direction, under another pine tree. We both shall have our own car.

We shall use up tires, wear out road surfaces and gears, consume oil and gasoline. All of which will necessitate a great deal of work... enough for all. (Le Corbusier, 1967; as cited in Duany et al., 2000, p. 3)

Sprawl, while perhaps partially resulting from the expression of preferences in a “free” market, was also envisioned by professional planners and intellectuals as a path forward for our society. From this vision, sprawl was designed and supported by a multiple-layered policy framework. Indeed, Duany et al. claim that planning has been central in defining the nature of our suburban landscapes, suggesting that: “The atomization of our society into suburban clusters was the result of specific government and industry policies rather than some popular mandate” (Duany et al., 2000, p. 63). Sprawl is now so entrenched in planning practices that to build cities that do not conform to the urban sprawl “form” has become illegal in many American regions. Hillier shows that planning practise, in the latter 20th century, assumed the goal of “rational

mastery of the irrational” (Mannheim, 1940; as cited in Hillier, 2002, p. 6): Cities were to be planned according to functionalist and modernist principles, based on an assumption of intellectual objectivity and enlightenment, as a way of reining in the otherwise irrational patterns of urban development. Meanwhile, the receiving publics were viewed as uninformed and irrational (Hillier, 2002).

The sprawling form of suburban housing emerged in the United States following the Second World War, owing to a confluence of production and management strategies,⁸ a new federal mortgage system that favoured new constructions of single-family dwellings and discouraged mixed-use and row housing, and federal policies and funding promoting huge expansion of interstate highways and road networks. Alongside increasing availability of cars, these institutions shifted the balance of what constituted an “economically rational choice” for individual Americans, initiating a demographic shift from the city centres to the suburbs, and a corresponding expansion in the land-area occupied by these suburbs (See Nechyba & Walsh, 2004 for an analysis of this demographic shift). However, the federal financial incentives that fuelled suburban housing construction applied only to areas designated exclusively for housing, so merchants, seeking to follow their clients to the urban periphery, needed to seek out both distinct financial structures and distinct locations for their commerce. The result was the emergence of large suburban commercial zones, strip malls and shopping centres: zones exclusive to commercial purposes. Office and business parks similarly had their origins in the reduced tax burdens of the peripheries and increased proximity to suburban workforces. Overall, this had the result of draining economic activity and wealthier residents from the City centres (Duany et al., 2000).

Roads and transportation infrastructure have been, and continue to be critical elements in the “designed” sprawl of urban areas. Condon (2008, 2010) and Duany et al. (2000) note that the “dendritic” design of road networks – the branching hierarchies of roads that define sprawl, as opposed to the grid road networks of more traditional cities – are inherently inefficient and unsustainable. This is not least because hierarchical road design is specifically designed with the assumption that users *will* be in cars, and that they *will* be travelling between major “nodes” of activity: shopping malls, office parks, residential subdivision. While this might theoretically serve to calm traffic in residential areas, limiting traffic almost exclusively to local residents, at

⁸ i.e., “production line” strategies of simplification, specialisation and achieving economies of scale.

also requires that each resident use their vehicle each time they need to do anything away from their home. Moreover, these drivers will then be required to drive through traffic “nodes,” and onto “collector” roads, through which all traffic from large regions must pass: “Every single trip from one component to another, no matter how short, must enter the collector” (Duany et al., 2000, p. 23). Especially as cities grow, this leads to inevitable congestion and much less flexibility in urban design.

However, hierarchical road systems are more than “part of the problem.” Instead, hierarchical road systems actually beget certain kinds of growth and certain kinds of behaviour (i.e., car use, as I have described) and thus beget certain kinds of growth. For instance, Duany et al. (2000) clearly describe the difference between urban sprawl and interconnected, vibrant urban areas as being deeply intertwined with the distinction between non-interconnected, segregated zones of human land use, and integrated, multiple-purpose and thus flexible urban designs. Thus, with regards to the design of road and transportation infrastructure, the hierarchical approach to land-use planning is a somewhat *causal* factor in the qualities and sustainability of the resulting urban growth. This raises the issue of regional planning, which Calthorpe and Fulton (2001) recognise as a crucial, overarching concern to the more local scale of urban planning. In a nutshell, this is the argument that the planning and design of large-scale infrastructure (by regional, state or provincial planning authorities) is critical in directing, allowing or limiting the potential for sustainable urban design at the scale of cities and municipalities.

As sprawl emerged as the new norm, a planning profession emerged to support the paradigms of separation of land-uses, the desirability of low-density housing and of personal automobile use. Planning norms shifted toward zoning bylaws that separated the landscape into distinct categories (separating industry from commerce, commerce from residential), spatially segregating housing by density (separating low density housing from medium, and medium from high). These ideas emerged as intentional efforts to improve the health and communities of residents, especially in separating peoples’ homes from the pollution of industrial areas. Engineering standards, design regulations and development practise emerged to further entrench this paradigm of the ideal modern landscape, such that technical manuals became central in governing the legitimacy of urban form and design.

Harris (2004), describing the Canadian experience of urban sprawl, suggests that the definition of urban sprawl as a post-war phenomenon is perhaps misleading, but that the pace and form of “post-war” sprawl arose from specific policy decisions. Supporting Bruegmann’s (2005) claim that sprawl is best seen as an historical continuum, Harris describes waves of urban expansion since the 1850s but notes that, due to the limitations of mobility (that most people had to remain within walking distance of their workplaces), the first major bout of urban sprawl occurred in the early 20th century. These resulted, in part, due to the country’s largest period of immigration, between 1901 and 1911, and due to the adoption of the streetcar by every major Canadian city by the late 1890s, greatly increasing the distances that people could live from their places of work. The shift to personal car ownership in the 1920s and 1930s exacerbated this accessible distance while, Harris notes, the 1935 creation of the *Dominion Housing Act* greatly facilitated and promoted the trend of building or buying homes based on long-term mortgages. By the 1960s, he claims, the core elements of Canadian urban sprawl were in place. These elements continue to characterise sprawl today: designed according to the general requirements of the automobile, entrenched in national building codes, zoning and subdivision requirements, and financed through “highly leveraged debt” (Harris, 2004).

As suburbia became a national (perhaps North-American) ideal, Duany et al. (2000) claim that planning professionals began treating their task as one of interpreting planning codes and zoning regulations, no longer having the mandate to produce detailed plans beyond a somewhat narrow set of technical concerns. Duany et al. (2000) suggest that this process allows a large amount of flexibility to developers, though within the limits of a rigid set of rules about specific physical and technical requirements which developers must adhere to within those zones. Duany et al. suggest that professional urban planners have seen their role reduced to that of ensuring that new developments have “no mixed uses, no slow-moving cars, no parking shortages, no overcrowding” (Duany et al., 2000, p. 19). These have become translated into technical criteria, often quantitative specifics such as the amount of parking per square foot of retail space, the set-back of housing from the road, the construction of walls between zones and between land uses, the amount of “green space” per building, and the hierarchies of streets: from highway-like “collectors” to curvilinear branch streets, to “cul de sacs.”

For example, Condon (2010) describes how the opinions of fire chiefs (having decided that larger trucks are superior tools for saving the lives of residents during fires) help shape

decisions for road width. As wider roads are required for the turning radii of larger trucks, lanes and roads in new U.S. developments have been up to double the widths of roads in more traditionally built neighbourhoods. However, wider roads result in both long crossing times for pedestrians, and higher vehicle speeds. As such, suburban neighbourhoods have been associated with a four-fold increase in pedestrian deaths as compared to narrower, traditional roads (Swift, 1998; cited in Condon, 2010). Meanwhile, it seems that deaths due to fire have unfortunately not dropped, due in part to decreased fire response times: decreased housing density having decreased tax revenue per unit area, and having thus increased distances between fire stations. Condon concludes that:

Fire officials are typically called on to speak only to issues of road width and design. Seldom, if ever, are they asked to speak to the larger issues of density and interconnectivity – issues that seem more significant to their mission when the operation of the entire system is examined. (Condon, 2008, pp. 56-57)

In terms of the physical environment which will be built within a zone, Duany et al. consider this an “abrogation of responsibility for community-making [from the public sector] to the private sector” (2000, p. 19).

This “abrogation of responsibility” is often cited by activists opposing urban sprawl, and has led to outrage being directed at the developers that exploit and work within the technical planning framework. In the eyes of such activists, developers are seen as drivers of urban sprawl while politicians are either perceived as complicit or silent. However, these complaints are perhaps misdirected, as it is fully expected that private developers will develop their individual residential areas based on market demand and profit margins, it seems that the responsibility for managing the larger-scale concerns of environmental quality, quality of life, and the overall efficiency of the system – more-so the sustainability of the system – fell to the wayside. However, Duany et al. argue that developers are themselves trapped by both market forces and government policies:

As long as the conventions of real estate development effectively outlaw the construction of mixed-use neighbourhoods, developers will find it very difficult to build anything that provides residents with a sense of community. Similarly, as long as zoning codes favour low-density development over the creation of compact communities, developers will not be able to shake their reputation as land rapists, as they turn farm after farm into cookie-cutter sprawl. (Duany et al., 2000, p. 100)

Planning codes and zones do not specify the desired livability and qualities of the lives of future residents, and these seem beyond the mandate of planners. However, though ostensibly empirically and objectively based, these codes are not apolitical. Instead, it places the power and legitimacy for decision-making in the realm of the technical, and thus somewhat out of the realm of formal political processes. The modern process of city-building posits that the most legitimate perspectives, in deciding everything from what the landscape should look like to the specific designs of houses in which people will live, are the perspectives of technical experts, traffic engineers and planners. Of course, these professional perspectives are embedded in a matrix of other drivers, including market demand for safe and spacious housing, and interpretations and biases of market analysts and financing bodies. However, this description of the drivers of sprawl suggests that to reconsider the ways that communities are built, our focus should be a reconsideration of the processes through which planning is done, an analysis of the processes of governance and of the completeness and representativeness of the perspectives and information which support governance processes.

2.2.4. The governance challenge of sprawl

My brief overview of urban sprawl, its definitions, impacts and drivers, places urban sprawl as a legitimate concern for the sustainability of our societies and, thus, as a critical concern for our governance institutions and processes. Clearly, there are some processes, incentives and drivers involved in sprawl that can be modified to improve the social and environmental impacts of both existing and future urban developments. These might include rethinking the value placed upon ecological services, or more broadly assessing land-use decisions based on quality-of-life indices. Legislation could be designed such that mortgages and financial incentives would promote the construction of structures that will be long-lasting and energy-efficient, or such that zoning processes would promote density, diversity of uses and more vibrant communities. Policies can promote public transit, dissuade single-occupancy vehicle use, protect sensitive ecological areas and regulate to minimize urban impacts on watersheds. These tenets can be found in a number of promising approaches to the sustainable planning of urban areas, such as “Smart Growth” (“Urban Land Institute,” n.d.), New Urbanism, or “Retrofitting Suburbia” (Dunham-Jones, 2009). Fortunately, these tenets seem to be gaining some traction with municipalities and developers across North America.

These solutions to sprawl often focus on policy-sets aimed at improving the impact of our urban areas and residences. “Smart Growth,” for instance, refers to a number of principles of urban development, including “integrating urban development into ecosystems” (i.e., protecting environmentally sensitive areas, monitoring quality-of-life indicators), creating neighbourhoods that are appealing, livable and sustainable (i.e., promoting “diversity in housing size, type and age”) and minimizing water use and runoff (Curran & Leung, 2000; “Urban Land Institute,” n.d.). However, despite the demonstrated economic and social benefits and the elegance of these design principles, Dunham-Jones (2010) admits that the results of decades of policy-development aimed at stopping urban sprawl was almost imperceptible compared to the impacts of the recent American mortgage crisis and recession. Optimists (including Dunham-Jones) suggest that this might mark a turning point for sprawl: an opportunity for promoters of forward-thinking design principles.

However, following from my earlier discussion on sustainability and governance (section 2.1.2), I suggest that for projects as complex as the re-invention of urban development, sustainable outcomes will require a deeper level of analysis than these inspired policy-sets. While, surely, urban development could be transformed by basing our planning criteria on principles of ecological integrity and quality of life, I suggest that this path of transformation in urban planning runs the risk of, in some ways, paralleling the well-intentioned myopia of the planners that first proposed the suburban ideal. Condon’s *Seven Rules for Sustainable Communities* describes “how intricately nested all of the elements are that conspire to make our new communities unhealthy” (2008, p. 60). He notes that sprawl has emerged from the confluence of a number of well-meaning technical and policy approaches to the task of land-use planning. However, this combination of financial incentives, planning policies, institutional designs and shifting consumer preferences have produced an entirely unprecedented form and scale of urban growth. The overall outcome of this combination – in terms of aesthetics, scale, civic engagement, lifestyles and quality of life of residents, etc. – were likely unknown and unintended in the design of these policies or in the promotion of cultural ideals. The resulting unsustainability of this urban form was probably even more unintended.

This strikes me as the most glaring and interesting problem of urban sprawl, and of sustainability in general: it has emerged from the individual actions and impacts of countless, often well-intentioned people and policies. Yet the intricate weave of these uncoordinated efforts

now poses a profound risk to the continued well-being of our society and the environment of which it is part. This perspective sees urban sprawl is the result of a reductionist approach to land-use governance: an approach that assumed that decisions made by specialised but narrow bodies of knowledge (often embodied by specialised expertises, technical manuals and planning codes) were sufficiently complex to manage the problems of a hugely diverse and expansive population, society and environment.

This is where my project re-connects to the concerns of sustainability as a challenge for governance (section 2.1.2). It seems that urban sprawl is a case in which sustainability will *require* well thought out, carefully developed and technically astute ideas and policy-sets (again, examples such as New Regionalism and Smart Growth). However, the complexity of sustainability may require a level of information, governance complexity and decision-making competence that far-exceeds conventional state and market actors and their interactions (Lemos & Agrawal, 2006). It is in this sense that I frame the problem of urban sprawl alongside the more general concerns of environmental and sustainability governance: efforts to understand, decide upon and act to improve the sustainability of our land use and urban form will likely require *as holistic* a system of governance *as urban sprawl is complex*.

In an important example of this need, Rast (2006) describes that, while prominent anti-sprawl approaches often criticise sprawl for its impacts on low-income and inner-city people, some anti-sprawl alternatives (i.e., Smart Growth, New Urbanism and New Regionalism) hold their own middle-class biases. These approaches focus on the ecological and social concerns of middle-class people (especially issues of traffic congestion and the preservation of green spaces on the urban fringe), while issues that are most pressing for low-income people have largely been left unaddressed. Rast argues that the values of the environmental justice movement (especially fairness, social equity and inclusion) must be incorporated into planning schemes that suggest alternatives to urban sprawl, at least if proponents of these alternatives seek to address the concerns of urban poverty that are often cited as undesirable consequences of sprawl. As Rast points out, the current foci of anti-sprawl schemes are on economic competitiveness and quality-of-life concerns. These do not address the social justice issues that founded the civil rights movement and, more recently, the environmental justice movements. Thus, as the anti-sprawl perspectives have strategically focused on some of the glaring impacts of sprawl, the solutions that they propose do not address the concerns of those who are often disproportionately

affected by the externalities of sprawl. Without the perspectives of inner-city, low-income people, it seems unlikely that the resulting approach to urban and regional planning will be defensible as “just” or “fair” according to environmental justice proponents. Similarly, it seems difficult to see how any urban and regional planning efforts will be ultimately sustainable if the urban, low-income perspectives (or those of any other group affected by planning) are omitted.

This concern is certainly not lost on the central proponents of these anti-sprawl programs. Duany et al. recognise that an effective plan “must be created through a public process in which citizens participate with the understanding that the outcome will become the law” (Duany et al., 2000, p. 179). These authors clarify that these processes should be fully open and interactive. In this way, the anti-sprawl literature intersects importantly with the literature on inclusiveness in democratic governance.

2.3. Participation in land-use governance

2.3.1. Why urban sprawl reflects a challenge for democracy

Even without considering sustainability as the expressed goal, the challenge of governing urban and peri-urban land use involves an important conflict of perspectives: the liberties of individuals to lead lives and impact the landscape as they see fit, versus the best landscape for the common good. These perspectives are presented oppositionally in the context of sprawl. On the one hand, sprawl is seen as a natural result of the freedoms of individuals to make decisions through their engagement with the market. Bruegmann thus considers that sprawl is a manifestation of a just approach to governance, respecting “the choices of millions of individuals and families about where and how they [want] to live,” and that sprawl, while problematic in some details, is just (Bruegmann, 2005, p. 224). On the other hand, sprawl is seen as the result of economic, political and social systems beyond the control of individuals, and fundamentally decided without sufficient democratic input of citizens. Duany et al. thus argue that “we live today in cities and suburbs whose form and character we did not choose” (Duany et al., 2000, p. xiii).

In the last section, I showed that urban sprawl can be seen as arising both from the social behaviours and preferences of individuals, and from the biases, capabilities and limitations of our governance structures. My concern is that, while urban sprawl does result from a system in which individuals make choices in a market, the sum of these choices is unsustainable and

undesirable for the vast majority of humanity in the long run. Sprawl therefore presents a tension in the way that our societies plan and use landscapes, between democratic legitimacy on the one hand, and the competence and sustainability of these outcomes on the other.

Theories of participatory governance have been gaining prominence in recent years, and research is emerging that has begun to demonstrate, empirically, that participatory governance can be practical and can yield competent and broadly supported environmental decisions.⁹ Environmental approaches to participatory governance see the potential for more broadly inclusive, participatory and consensus-based approaches to deliberation, decision-making and implementation to create “a situation in which interests other than one’s own are called to mind, including the interests of nature and of future generations” (Goodin, 1996; as cited in Baber, 2004, p. 332). Participatory governance suggests that institutions can be designed to bridge the apparent tension between democratic legitimacy and competent governance. Participation in governance is argued for both instrumental and normative reasons. Normatively, participatory governance is argued to be necessary for justice and equity in governance. Instrumentally, participatory governance is argued to be capable of making better, more stable and better-supported decisions. I would venture that both instrumental and normative approaches are important in the conversation of governance for sustainability.

2.3.2. Definitions of participatory governance

The idea of citizen-engaged governance has roots as deep as the concept of democracy, but has been largely absent from North-American democratic structures. Interest in participatory democracy was reignited in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a backlash to the dominant theory of competitive elite democracy (Smith, 2009). A number of theories of participatory democracy have since emerged, though the central claims are generally similar, emphasising the goals of direct popular accountability and legitimacy, and as a tool to define the common good through popular deliberation. Participatory democratic theorists often link their arguments to the dramatic declines in political engagement that are currently being felt throughout Western democracies (i.e., chronically low voter turnout, low participation in political parties and labour unions, low trust and support for politicians and governance institutions). Iris Marion Young describes this as a “paradoxical historical moment when nearly

⁹ For examples and overviews of this literature and research, see Ostrom (1990, 2000), Dietz, Ostrom and Stern (2003) and Coenen (2009).

everyone favours democracy, but apparently few believe that democratic governance can *do anything*” (Young, 2000, p. 4). Dalton (2004) thus argues further, that disillusionment and cynicism with the current process of governance, rather than lack of support for the democratic ideals, are to blame.

A number of participatory governance models exist, each focusing on slightly different concerns. *Direct democracy* focuses on direct, instrumental arguments for participation, arguing that individuals are the best judges of their own interests and thus calling for a maximum of inclusiveness in decision-making. Similarly, *deliberative democracy* (Bohman, 1997) focuses on participatory processes that ensure the thoughtful consideration of decisions by a maximum of affected parties. Other theorists have focused more pointedly on the inclusion of normally excluded voices (Young, 2000). Graham Smith (2009) approaches these various theories of participatory democracy as largely reconcilable. While differing in their foci and details, Smith argues that these all recognise a core set of “goods of democracy” that is important to each of these conceptions of governance. Smith describes a set of four core goods that participatory democracy aims to achieve: (1) inclusiveness, (2) popular control, (3) considered judgement, and (4) transparency; as well as two “institutional goods,” which he argues are important to the real-world applicability of theories of democracy: (5) efficiency and (6) transferability. I review these “goods” as components of my analytical framework (section 2.4), though I omit “transferability,” as it is less relevant for this project. Summarising common principles of these different schools of participatory governance, Smith (2009) suggests that the proposed instrumental and normative benefits of participation require both the direct engagement of citizens (not representatives) in decision-making, and the institutionalisation of citizen participation in policy and legislation: that processes and institutions be created to allow binding citizen influence on political outcomes.

I consider the intersection between participatory governance and sustainability for two key reasons. The first is the suggestion that public participation in governance promotes the “buy-in” of the public. As such, participation is argued to be necessary for democracies to make decisions which will be lasting and binding, and that will be able to meaningfully challenge the status quo. This is especially true with regards to decisions involving strong interests, and/or concerns of justice and equity (both of which are surely concerns with regards to urban sprawl). In such cases, the active participation of citizens is expected to produce both a deeper popular

understanding of the reasons for a decision (thus perhaps facilitating behavioural changes involved in collective action problems like, for example, waste reduction), and a greater acceptance and willingness to monitor and defend both the decision and its implementation (Coenen, 2009). Furthermore, theorists of participatory democracy argue that individuals' behaviour and values are given shape and clarity by their interactions in meaningful political fora. Participation thus serves both to clarify peoples' values and to prompt people to shape more coherent and defensible positions and opinions. Thus, by serving as an educational incentive, constantly asking that people formulate and inform their positions, participation is argued to improve the competence and vitality of democracy. Mitchell, similarly, advocates that participatory governance promotes more effective and complete problem definition, and promote public ownership and responsibility of both problems and solutions, thus facilitating and sustaining the implementation of decisions (Mitchell, 2005).

The second theoretical link between sustainability and participatory governance is that the competence of complex decisions (for example, decisions dealing with sustainability of land use) requires an approximation of completeness of information and perspective. Participation is argued to be a critical tool for approaching these goals on complex issues. Essentially, this is again the argument that full, subtle, realistic and appropriate options, analyses and perspectives for the governance of complex human-environmental systems requires the meaningful engagement of the knowledge, experience and creativity of the people that (1) directly experience the problems being addressed, and (2) will be involved and affected by attempts to solve these problems (Coenen, 2009). Completeness of information in complex problem solving is especially salient to theorists of environmental governance, who argue that participation broadens the forms of information and understanding that contribute to decisions, moving discussions beyond the scientific realm and helping to identify socially acceptable (thus politically realistic) solutions to environmental problems (Mitchell, 2005). Beierle and Konisky (2000) present the goals of participatory environmental governance by contrasting it against what they consider the dominant approach to environmental problems, "expert managerialism": the use of reductionist science as the primary tool for approaching complex human-environmental system problems. Beierle and Konisky judge that expert managerialism is inappropriate for managing problems that have only temporary and imperfect solutions, with no simple technical definitions or solutions, and no simple criteria to judge resolution, arguing that

“such problems are ill-suited to a managerial approach and rife with the politics that participation can address” (Beierle et al., 2000, p. 5). In the context of urban sprawl, complex systems theory again suggests that to govern for the sustainability of a city and its surrounding landscape would require as complete of information as that system is complex. Thus, the knowledge and perspectives of all those people that interact with and depend on that landscape would be important in the crafting of land-use decisions. This last reason relates strongly to Ostrom’s analyses of sustainable resource-use communities, suggesting the need for governance institutions whose rules and decisions are crafted and then monitored *by and with* the participation of those who will thereby be governed. She calls such arrangements “complex, polycentric, multilayered governance systems” (Ostrom, 1995).

Participatory governance models propose that the educational potential of participation is critical for maintaining such an informed and vital democratic culture; that informed and thoughtful populations are arguably pre-requisite to the realisation of ideal complex-systems governance through participation. This argument sees participation as an intrinsic good, promoting the self-education and development of citizens, and producing an increase in the political capacity of citizens as they are asked to formulate, defend and take responsibility for their own positions. Pateman thus argues that “participation develops and fosters the very qualities necessary for [democracy]” (Pateman, 1970, pp. 42-43; as cited in Smith, 2009). This suggestion proposes that competent governance requires more than a procedural change, that the barriers to both legitimacy and “wisdom” of governance are deeper than biases in the procedural distribution of resources, influence and decision-making power. Briggs (2008) thus argues that the scale and complexity of the problems facing modern democracies require changes in the mental models that shape civic interactions, suggesting that we attempt to actively equip ourselves with the tools for complex problem analysis, discussion and deliberation: building a culture of inclusion of diversity, compromise and consensus among a plurality of perspectives, and the acceptance of adversity, conflict and strategic political sensibilities (Briggs, 2008; Young, 2000).

2.3.3. Distinction from other forms of multi-stakeholder governance

In participatory governance models, legitimacy rests in the principle of equality of citizenship, rather than in the expertise of those citizens.¹⁰ This separates participatory governance from theories of “competitive elite democracy,” where representatives compete in elections on the basis of their expertise as political representatives and decision-makers.

Moreover, this separates participatory governance from other models that similarly argue for increased inclusion in governance, such as “multi-stakeholder” and “collaborative” approaches. Models that propose the collaboration of stakeholders have been the subject of much scholarship and practical efforts at dispute resolution in the past few decades and are especially promoted in cases of “actual or latent conflict and competing interests,” aiming to improve equity and sustainability (Chevalier, 2001, p. 2). These models are noted to have facilitated important advances in environmental governance, facilitating the “development of relationships, long-term interaction, adaptability, and fundamental improvements in the law and the law-making process” (Schuckman, 2001, p. 365; also see Mitchell, 2005). Collaborative and multi-stakeholder models are similar to participatory models in that they recognise similar challenges in conventional governance models: that decisions can be made with greater legitimacy and with greater competence if they are made more inclusively. Collaborative and multi-stakeholder models attempt to improve governance by including people and groups that are recognised to have particular interests in a given decision, or on the recognition of that stakeholder’s expertise and knowledge about an issue. While similar to participatory models in their proposed gains in legitimacy and increased capacity to make competent, holistic decisions, there is an important distinction to be made: collaborative models primarily advocate for the inclusion of relevant private and public “stakeholders,” and not on the inclusion of residents and citizens (Ansell & Gash, 2007).

¹⁰ Note that I often use the terms “citizen,” throughout this thesis – not without hesitation. The concept of “citizenship” is problematic, unfortunately glossing over the recognition that formal, legal citizenship within a polity’s borders often fails to include many people who are affected by the decisions and actions made in the name of that polity – thus, by promoting the idea of “citizen participation,” I fail to enter into the critical debate (and thus might be accused as legitimating the status quo) about criteria governing who has the legal right to be included or represented in governance. As such, allow me to clarify that my personal theoretical approach to “citizenship” is not completely elaborated, but gives significant weight to Goodin’s (2007) solution, as described by Smith: “For Goodin, the democratic solution is enfranchising all affected interests rather than simply abiding by existing political boundaries” (Smith, 2009, p. 21). Certainly, that the concept of citizenship extends only to some residents within existing political boundaries fails to recognise the interconnectivity of human actions and institutional decisions, which are known to be deeply interconnected in terms of social and environmental justice, and sustainability.

While shown to be effective in conflict resolution between stakeholders, critics suggest that collaborative models can entrench existing power dynamics and potentially serve to further silence excluded voices. Fung and Wright argue that:

“Where countervailing power is weak or nonexistent, the rules of collaboration are likely to favour entrenched, previously organized or concentrated interests. [...] Collaboration, under these conditions, is much more likely to become top-down collaborative governance involving experts and powerful interests, even if its impulse originated from bottom-up initiatives.” (Fung et al., 2003, pp. 263-4; cited in Hickey & Mohan, 2004, pp. 37-8)

Even in less polarised circumstances, a governance process which identifies and includes the voices of key stakeholders (even if there is an effort to include marginalised voices) relies on the pre-existing recognition of these parties as “people who matter in a system” (Mayers, 2005, p. 2). The rise of stakeholder-centred collaborative governance might reflect what Cooper et al. suggest is “a preference among administrators for separating the ordinary citizen from the knowledgeable citizen,” which they suggest as contributing to a failure of accurately assessing the needs and interests of many citizens, thus failing to build trust (Cooper, Bryer, & Meek, 2006, p. 83). As such, collaborative governance risks reproducing exclusionary criteria of legitimacy. These processes are very likely to actively seek the participation of heavily economically-invested parties, or to engage technical expert that are conventionally seen as holding key perspectives and information. Well-designed collaborative processes will also likely actively engage marginalised groups and alternative perspectives; however, this inclusion of marginalised groups relies on these groups having been recognised as “marginalised,” and as having a particular “stake” or as having “relevant” knowledge or perspectives on a given issue.

As an example, a collaborative governance approach to urban sprawl would definitely focus on the inclusion of municipal council and government planners, would almost certainly include real-estate interests, developers and builders, and would likely involve residents associations and interest groups such as heritage and farmland conservation associations. However, this collaboration might not actively seek the inclusion of relatively transient populations, renters and low-income residents, or people residing in city-centres. However, as I have described, urban sprawl has certain impacts which might disproportionately affect economically marginalised and urban populations. As such, a collaborative process might result in a decision which would be less representative of these populations than the decision of a more conventional municipal governance process.

Power differentials are an important field of academic enquiry and are critical in the design of collaborative processes, which often recognise this challenge to stakeholder-centred approaches to governance (Chevalier, 2001; Mayers, 2005). This concern for citizen-centred governance (inclusiveness framed primarily around equality of citizenship), as opposed to stakeholder-centred (framed around recognition of “expertise” or “interest”), supports Smith’s focus on the institutionalisation of participation: the creation of institutions and processes which attempt to equalise access to governance in policy and legislation (Smith, 2009).

2.3.4. Participation in the reality of urban development

As the importance of public participation in environmental governance is increasingly being recognised by governments, agencies and academics (Papadakis, 2006; Coenen, 2009), so have urban and regional planning practitioners and scholars recognised the importance of citizen engagement and participation in planning. Planning scholars are increasingly reconsidering the traditional, reductionistic approaches to planning, and are advocating for and implementing more inclusive approaches (Baum, 1996; Curran et al., 2000; Duany et al., 2000; Hillier, 2002; Condon, 2008). However, as Hillier (2002) notes, participatory principles are approached inconsistently by planners, who must often respond to the seemingly whimsical and rushed demands of elected representatives. Furthermore, as my own research explores, at the local level there are vast differences in the interpretations of “participatory planning,” and important variation from person to person (and from institution to institution) in the value placed on participation. Consequently, citizens often describe participation exercises as tools for diverting responsibility for decisions, as public pacifiers, or as tools to legitimize decisions made elsewhere. Thus, to many citizens, land-use planning still appears to be a closed system, with “seemingly inevitable results” (Turner, 2006).

The representativeness and participatory nature of institutions and processes of North American land-use governance have been assessed in a number of interesting ways. While Duany et al. (2000) have reviewed the role of an entrenched planning paradigm and institutional approach to planning, they suggest that certain voices and perspectives are under-represented in planning. The planning approaches that have generally resulted in urban sprawl, they suggest, are the result of land-use governance that is highly codified, placing priority on the perspectives and knowledge of “apolitical” and “objective” technical criteria (as expressed through planning

codes and economic models) and experts (planners, engineers and real-estate accountants). In their assessment, Duany et al. suggest that the experiences and concerns of residents have been largely ignored. These authors recommend that citizens be actively engaged in planning processes, and go so far as to suggest that the decisions of citizens be binding with regards to legislative policies.

Cooper, Bryer and Meek (2006) have written that public participation, even when legally required as components of various programs and policies, often takes the form of “consultations,” often without holistic plans or adequate financing, and is often criticised as having minimal influence on outcomes. Mitchell similarly suggests that the common decision-making style, what he terms “DAD (decide, announce, defend),” should be replaced by more consultative and participatory approaches to environmental management (Mitchell, 2005, p. 2). Cooper et al. argue that public consultations should be deliberative in approach, distinguishing between deliberation and the “adversarial” approach, which these authors describe as the difference between “active listening by bureaucrats rather than a biased response to a squeaky wheel” (Cooper et al., 2006, p. 5).

However, Duany et al. concede that, when consulted:

People have trouble recognizing the profound effect that our physical surroundings have on daily life. When the topic of physical planning does surface, it is usually in the form of bitter citizen outcry over something gone wrong or about to go wrong, almost always perceived to be perpetrated from above. (Duany et al., 2000, pp. 220-221)

Duany et al. argue that this relates to the technical dissociation of planning procedure from the tangible reality or lived experiences of citizens: that citizens are inhibited from engaging with the processes of land-use planning. Perhaps obviously, Cooper et al. (2006) have shown that the active engagement of citizens in deliberative planning processes demonstrably builds the capacity of citizens to take more sophisticated and integrative positions, and generally results in participants taking more moderate and measured approaches to policy decisions (ostensibly because they have seen more sides of an issue, thus being less likely to make aggressive claims about alternative perspectives). Indeed, perhaps reflecting the “adversarial” nature of many discussions of sprawl, Duany et al. (2000) claim that local opponents of sprawl are often driven by very local, emotive and aesthetic concerns. These authors note that while local activists do present environmental, economic or sociological arguments, these are rarely their primary

concerns. Rather, local activists against sprawl are more fervently motivated by what are seen as quickly diminishing returns for suburban home-owners:

All they need to know is that new development, with its wide streets and vast parking lots, will be boring and unpleasant to visit and will, of course, generate more traffic. The exchange of a woodland or farm for a new subdivision is, in terms of the public realm, an uncompensated loss. (Duany et al., 2000, p. 42)

These analyses of the primary concerns of local activists have led to the characterisation of these “engaged” citizens as irrational and over-reactive, or as individualistic and selfish private-interest groups. These characterisations are summarised in the term “NIMBY,” denoting a resident whose main concern is that a proposed development or change be “Not In My Back Yard” (Burningham, 2000). Outcries of “NIMBYs” – often concerned primarily with very local, isolated land-use decisions – have developed into stereotypes, easily disparaged as unrealistic, naïve, selfish and hypocritical, seen as emerging from groups of residents who have often benefited from the very process that they now argue against: suburbanites become anti-sprawl activists. However, Burningham (2000) has argued that this characterisation of locally focused activism as “NIMBYism” is often misleading and fails to recognise the diversity and complexity of local concerns and interests. Burningham argues that the label “NIMBY” is generally misused, and that its widespread acceptance both demonstrates and perpetuates a logic that very local concerns should be considered less legitimate than development-oriented interests in land-use decisions. She suggests that “NIMBYism” is employed in three ways. The first is to use the “NIMBY” label as a pejorative, rhetorical tool, to claim that local or “lay” knowledge (i.e., of planning, or of the potential risks of a development) is inadequate or not rationally formed, and is thus irrelevant in land-use decision-making. Burningham calls this the “deficit model of public knowledge and understanding” (2000, p. 57). This usage carries an inherent suggestion that public concerns are “wrong,” and that they need to be either re-educated or overruled. A second use of the concept of NIMBY is to criticise locally-specific activists’ concerns as selfish, arguing that these local concerns are petty and not relevant in the context of the wider social and environmental problems that are often referred to in local activists’ own arguments.

A third use of NIMBY is a (still largely academic) counter-movement, trying to recharacterise NIMBYism in light of studies demonstrating that local concerns often prove to be correct and relevant. Burningham cites a number of works that suggest that NIMBY efforts can actively and accurately engage with relevant and useful scientific information, “if they can see

the practical gains from doing so,” and notes that publics may choose to ignore information presented as technical and scientific when it is presented by parties that they do not trust (Burningham, 2000, p. 57). Burningham argues that this body of literature, refuting aspects of the “deficit model of public knowledge and understanding,” should similarly refute the relevance and utility of the term “NIMBY” itself. Regardless of the empirical accuracy of NIMBYs’ claims, the power of the concept of “NIMBYism” and the variety of issues that it encompasses (and thus obscures) suggests a prioritisation of development-oriented logics and voices over a variety of other logics, voices and concerns.

Both the analyses of Duany et al. (2000) and Burningham (2000) indicate the prioritisation of certain logics over others and, thus, the failure of land-use governance to adequately engage with oppositional approaches to the problems and complaints around urban development. Susan M. Turner’s (2001, 2003) study of the institutional processes through which forested land is zoned and approved for residential development in Ontario adds an important clarification to these assessments. Turner contests the approach of ascribing “agency to political ideologies” (Turner, 2001, p. 299). Instead, she suggests that the legal procedures and formulaic processes of land-use planning (at least in terms of standard zoning changes) function as a type of institutional momentum, defining and constraining the logics and language of planning processes, including citizen participation processes. Turner suggests that texts – physical documents such as forms, public notices and staff reports – constitute physical processes of land-use governance. The structure and sequence of these texts is powerful, shaping the limits of what is included or excluded. Turner identifies these texts as “acts” of the institutions of land-use governance, involved in creating and defining the concepts of “local politics” and “the planning process.” Texts and standardized processes are equally involved in creating the appearance that activists opposed to development are simple and compulsively single-issue in their efforts, thus perhaps in the moniker of “NIMBY,” as they choose whether they are “for” or “against” a development before “depositing” their “comment” to a registrar. She provides a number of examples of incidents in which citizens, wishing to participate in what are termed “public processes,” are required to assimilate specific forms of language and work according to rationality frameworks that are particular to these planning processes. Through the form and language of these texts, Turner suggests that land-use governance processes create the

impression of procedural neutrality and objectivity, while “the production of land development for profit and “systematic” destruction of the environment goes on” (Turner, 2003, p. iii).

2.4. Analytical framework

In investigating the intersection between citizen engagement and land-use governance in Gatineau, I use a framework largely drawn from Smith’s (2009) categorization of “goods” of participatory democracy.¹¹ This framework consists of: *inclusiveness*, *popular control*, *considered judgement*, *transparency*, and *efficiency*. I use these as “indices” of participation in governance, as a framework for assessing the degree to which participation is being realised, currently, both by Gatineau’s governance institutions and civil society.

I also briefly discuss Smith’s (2009) treatment of “mini-publics,” which he uses to consider ways in which small groups of citizens might legitimately be integrated into participatory governance arrangements.

2.4.1. Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness describes the ways in which governance structures allow and ensure that different voices and perspectives are heard and considered. Inclusiveness asks, first, who has the right to be seen as citizen of a political jurisdiction (Smith, 2009). For instance, Goodin (2007; as cited in Smith, 2009) argues that the right to participate should be extended to “all affected interests” rather than simply those recognised as citizens within existing political boundaries. This is, of course, a critical problem for environmental and sustainability concerns for which jurisdictional boundaries are often irrelevant. Second, inclusiveness considers the participant-selection mechanisms (intentional and systematic) of governance institutions, in considering “inclusiveness of presence.” Inclusiveness of presence considers the informal mechanisms by which groups might be motivated to participate, as well as the barriers and systematic marginalisation and exclusion involved in governance institutions. Third, inclusiveness must also consider “inclusiveness of voice,” the degree to which institutions provide opportunities for citizens to express themselves and how equally these voices are considered in final outcomes. Inclusiveness of voice extends to considerations of the differences in political skill, confidence and linguistic capacity and style, and to differences in forms of rationality, from dispassionate

¹¹ My use of Smith’s framework is strongly influenced by my earlier reading and analyses based on Fung and Wright’s (2003) concept of “empowered participatory democracy” and Briggs’ (2008) concept of “civic capacity.”

instrumental rationality to aesthetic/emotive rationalities (i.e., Satterfield, 2001; Elling, 2008). For instance, Jane Mansbridge (2003) considers that participatory governance processes should actively recognise the legitimacy of different forms of communication, including explicitly self-interested, emotional and conflictual forms.

2.4.2. Popular control

Popular control is a somewhat under-represented concern of participatory governance. Popular control reflects the degree to which citizens can influence and control the *processes* of governance – not the outcomes themselves, but the methods by which outcomes are reached. Thus, popular control considers the ability of people and institutions to set the agendas for governance processes, the degree to which these governance actors can prevent the “capture” of institutions (i.e., advantageous problem-definition or agenda-setting) by political elites and more powerful actors. This reflects the criticism that “participation is often limited to ‘safe’ issues in order to suppress conflict” (Smith, 2009, p. 23). Popular control also reflects the degree to which a participatory process has control over the “reach” of the output of that process (e.g., the degree to which decisions can be imposed and ensured in outcomes).

2.4.3. Considered judgement

Considered judgement considers “the capacity of citizens to make thoughtful and reflective judgement” (Smith, 2009, p. 24), and often refers to the degree to which institutional designs promote individual consideration of “common” goods and interests and the perspectives of others, as opposed to basing positions on raw preferences. Considered judgement reflects more than how factually informed are citizens, but how reflective is their judgement. This is the central concern of deliberative democracy, which advocates processes which actively ask citizens to express and refine their own interests, while being prompted to engage thoughtfully with the interests and perspectives of others.

2.4.4. Transparency

Transparency refers to the ability of citizens to scrutinize and understand the activities of governance institutions. This refers equally to transparency about the conditions under which a decision is being made, the clarity and predictability of processes through which decisions are

made and implemented. This is a crucial factor for building trust and for allowing effective, meaningful public engagement.

2.4.5. Efficiency

Efficiency considers the costs and benefits of participatory processes, in terms of the demands on participants and governance institutions, and the benefits that might result from their efforts. The costs of participation are often cited as barriers to the realistic adoption of participatory governance models, although Smith (2009) (and, specifically with regards to urban planning, Curran and Leung (2000)) consider that these costs must be compared with the costs of not engaging in participatory governance.

2.4.6. Smith's treatment of "mini-publics" and representation

In many instances, my research had to assess the impact of governance arrangements and institutions that were distinctly not designed or supported to be "participatory," at least as "participation" is idealised by participatory governance scholars. For instance, the routine decisions of municipal council are distinctly not "participatory," in that they include only a tiny fraction of the citizens of Gatineau. However, Smith (2009) does discuss instances in which representation is potentially legitimate, or at least more legitimate and perhaps strikes an important balance between democratic legitimacy and realism.

Smith discusses these issues especially in the context of the selection of citizen-representatives from popular assemblies (specifically in the context of participatory budgeting arrangements in Brazil) and "mini-publics," small groups of citizens that are typically set up with the goal of representing a wider populations' interests, concerns and values in a given decision-making area.

In both of these instances, in which small subsets of the population are being asked to decide on behalf of larger populations (sometimes much larger), Smith considers a number of critical components that go beyond his discussion of "goods" of participatory governance (summarised above). One key aspect that Smith pays special attention to is the processes by which citizens are selected to participate in these fora. Specifically, Smith considers criteria of "representativeness," accountability to the wider population.

In his discussion of "representativeness," Smith evaluates participatory legitimacy on the basis of how well a representative body "mirrors" the demographics of the populations that they

are elected or selected to speak “for.” This is to say, Smith considers how well various groups are represented. The major categories which we might thereby consider would be sex and gender, race and ethnicity, and income or class. Other categories might include the proportionality by which representative groups include participants which reflect the living conditions of the population (i.e., to what degree are residents from suburbs, social housing, apartment buildings and heritage homes represented?), and this analysis could go as far as to consider the representativeness of the perspectives and “policy positions” that exist in the wider population. I was of course unable to adequately assess all of these criteria, as I lacked the required data, but this serves as a basis of discussion and analysis of the processes by which representatives and group-members are selected and elected.

Furthermore, in terms of both “popular control” and “transparency,” representative bodies present extra considerations. One is the degree to which representative bodies can be “controlled” by the populations they represent, requiring me to analyse the mechanisms by which populations can hold their representatives accountable. Similarly, we must consider the degree to which the decisions (and rationales for those decisions) of representatives are known and *can* be known by the populations that these people represent.

Chapter 3. Research design

3.1. Objectives and questions of this research

3.1.1. Objectives

This research project explores issues of urban development and citizen engagement in land-use governance in the city of Gatineau, Quebec.

The impetus for this project doubtless emerged from my position as an environmentally-concerned resident of this region. From my perspective, the institutions and processes of land-use governance seemed to unwaveringly allow the continued urban development of forested and agricultural lands. As such, my interest in this project was to understand why land-use governance processes are continuing to favour urban development on forested and agricultural land, when critiques of urban sprawl seemed so pervasive and well-founded – both locally (through local organisation and efforts of residents) and in wider discussions of global land use and sustainability.

As is clear, a central impetus of this research project comes from my personal connection to this area. I have been a resident of Gatineau's Aylmer sector for most of my life. I am very familiar with the area's forests, waterways and wild spaces, and with both the agricultural and urban areas. While I have been interested in questions of the sustainability of land use in this area for a long time, I have not previously been professionally or academically engaged with these issues in this region. I cannot say that I am an impartial voice on this issue. I care about this area, plan on living in and engaging with it for many years to come, and am deeply concerned about its sustained economic, social and environmental health. These concerns are explicitly central to the long-term objectives of this research project.

The proximal objective of this project is to build understanding of the "networks" of people, institutions and processes that shape Gatineau's land-use governance system: to explore the processes (formal and otherwise) that are available, accessible and effective for the various people and institutions in affecting the outcomes of decisions. Furthermore, this project aimed to explore the impact of "public" participation in land-use governance on the sustainability of the resulting decisions, especially by tracking what perspectives and voices have been effectively incorporated through these routes, to what degree they effectively influenced land use, and how

wider participation could be predicted to affect these outcomes. As such, my project has sought to connect the policy and the “reality” of land-use governance in Gatineau from the perspectives of a variety of people who are engaged in these processes; to explore what drives the current dynamics and outcomes of land-use governance and how citizens, public servants and politicians engage with the institutions that shape land use.

I begin by providing some local context to the biophysical, social and political landscapes of Gatineau, characterising the people, groups and institutions that I could identify as having formal or identifiable roles in shaping land-use decisions and outcomes. These include “engaged” citizens¹² and civil society groups (residents associations and issue-specific groups), local media, business interests and land developers, various agencies (federal and provincial) and the municipal government.¹³ Taking some inspiration from Turner’s institutional ethnography of land-use planning (Turner, 2006), I describe the general process of land-use governance (both as it is understood by the participants of my study and as it is explained publicly in municipal government documentation), and where these governance actors are generally involved in this process. In doing so, I use Smith’s (2009) framework of “goods of participatory democracy” to frame my exploration. This exploration asks how various people, groups and institutions interact, are enabled and empowered or inhibited throughout formal and informal land-use governance processes, and what these interactions mean for the general state of participation in governance and sustainability of land use.

My intention throughout this project has been to help inform an improvement in the sustainability-focus of governance in Gatineau, by “holding a mirror up” to the people involved in these governance processes, offering critical analysis and exploring the potential for increased popular participation to improve the competence, sustainability and legitimacy of land-use governance. Academically, I hope that this work contributes an analysis of a real, living polity to help inform theoretical ideas about participatory governance and the project of sustainability, especially regarding the potential roles and contributions of civil society, in the context of Canadian municipal land use and urban sprawl.

¹² I use the term “engaged” throughout this document to denote people and groups who have actively tried to interact with governance institutions, specifically around land-use issues. “Engaged civil society” similarly stresses the people and groups in civil society that have actively tried to interact with land-use governance institutions.

¹³ Throughout this document, I refer to these people, groups and institutions collectively as “governance actors.”

The objectives of this research have shifted a number of times since they were initially described in my research proposal. The objectives, research questions and methods presented here are the latest of these iterations, reflecting the approach that I have taken in the analysis and data communicated in this thesis.

3.1.2. Questions

The research questions that directed my research and analysis are as follows:

1. *What people, groups and institutions are generally engaged in land-use governance in Gatineau, and through what processes do they shape outcomes (or attempt to do so)?*
 - Which people, groups and institutions are currently engaged in the processes of land-use governance?
 - In which processes are these groups engaged and how do these groups and processes fit together in the “overall picture” of land-use governance?
2. *Using Smith’s (2009) framework for assessing participation in governance, in what ways can Gatineau land-use governance be considered participatory, or not?*
 - Who is included and excluded (in either presence or voice) in the processes of land-use governance (including in the workings and decisions of various institutions and civil society groups), and how?
 - Who controls the agenda of land-use governance? Who determines the direction of processes and the scope of deliberations, and how?
 - What processes and practices can (and do) governance actors use in researching, choosing, hearing and integrating various types of information and concerns, and how do they thus approach the task of building wisely “considered” decisions?
 - How visible and accountable are governance processes? How transparent is the selection of participants in processes, the selection and analysis of “relevant” information and informants? How visible are potential intervention-points for governance actors, and how effectively are decisions communicated?
 - For citizens, how beneficial and costly are the public-engagement efforts of current governance processes?

3. *How do the current form and actors of land-use governance, as well as the current absence of certain potential actors and processes, affect the potential for sustainability in local land use?*
 - What perspectives are especially prevalent or absent in deliberations, and with what results?
 - How does participation in Gatineau impact the potential for sustainability in land use? Can failures in participation be expected to systematically hinder sustainability, and can potential improvements be expected to systematically improve it?

3.1.3. Iterations and changes in research questions

Many aspects of this research process might be described as iterative. From the initial statement of my goals, my research approach, questions and the goals themselves have shifted and been modified by my own shifting understanding of issues, and perhaps somewhat by circumstance. As such, with important consequences on the process of my coding and analysis (described below), my research questions have changed a number of times.

In the process of being allowed to begin data collection, the research proposal which I submitted for the approval of the University of British Columbia's Behavioural Research and Ethics Board, posed two questions. The first was:

What perspectives or considerations have civil society organisations brought to municipal land-use decisions concerning the potential impacts of residential developments on local sustainability?

The second was:

How have the perspectives and suggestions of civil society sought to build consensus or "buy-in" among stakeholders, government actors or the general public?

These questions were led by an interest in the ways in which civil society had organised itself to attempt to understand and influence or challenge the trend of urban development in Gatineau, and by an interest in differences between the depth and character of sustainability-oriented discussions within civil-society organisation (as opposed to within central governance institutions). These early questions approached "perspectives and considerations," hoping that these might shine a light on how citizens with diverse interests interact, discuss and build (or fail to build) common ground. I approached this question with the thought that this diversity, unified through common actions in contesting the general trend of land-use governance, might

demonstrate something about the complexity and multi-dimensionality of perspective in civil society; and that this complexity and multi-dimensionality of deliberation might be promoted as important potential outcomes of participatory governance efforts. Partially through discussions with my committee, I recognised that I did not feel able to assess this question in a systematic way so as to produce results that I would be comfortable using to base concrete recommendations.

Through the first interview process, I began thinking about the system of governance and citizen engagement that I was witnessing in terms of Fung and Wright's (2003) theoretical and analytical framework of criteria for deliberative democracy.¹⁴ This motivated my research toward more specific criteria which I could assess in the context of land-use governance in Gatineau. Also, as my discussions with participants progressed, I began to see a much more complicated governance system than I had supposed, with the distinction between government and civil society blurring at the edges.

During coding, and recognising shortcomings in Fung and Wright's (2003) framework of deliberative democracy for the purposes of investigating governance in the context of Gatineau, I shifted toward Smith's (2009) framework for participatory democracy. While Fung and Wright's framework was designed to help analyse examples of deliberation in governance, Smith's seemed generally better suited for the purposes of assessing participation (including aspects of deliberation) in the context of a governance system that was not especially practically oriented toward citizen participation or deliberation.

Late in my analytical process, I began thinking in terms of institution-mapping and institutional ethnography after encountering Turner's (2003) approach to mapping municipal land-use planning processes. While I did not follow Turner's methodology, and did not gather further interview data to do a complete institutional ethnography, the concepts of mapping processes did provide structure to my final research questions and prompted me to include some analysis of textual documents (for which I was limited to those documents that were available online).

¹⁴ Fung and Wright's (2003) framework specifically includes the categories: *engagement, formal/procedural inclusiveness, information, deliberation, implementation, and maintained engagement.*

3.2. Epistemology and methodology

This project engages citizens, civil society groups, elected representatives and public administrators of Gatineau, Quebec in participatory research, employing both expert and depth interviews, field ethnography and components of institutional ethnography to inform an understanding of how citizen participation in land-use governance interacts with sustainability.

This research is generally consistent with *critical theory*, the *constructivist* and *ecological* research paradigms (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Consistent with critical theory, I am overtly concerned with equity, justice and legitimacy in distributions of power, and in engaging people in actively shaping their own futures. Within the ecological paradigm, my research is concerned with questions of social and environmental justice and environmental sustainability, concerned with “levers” to produce effective and lasting improvements in the relationship between human and environmental systems.

By committing to “participatory research,” I recognise the importance of socially just construction of knowledge (especially knowledge regarding democratic legitimacy and sustainability), consistent with the constructivist research paradigm (Stringer, 1999; LeCompte et al., 1999). I hold that legitimate knowledge must be built out of discussion between researchers and researched, and the results presented here represent efforts to bring together multiple (sometimes conflicting) perspectives. However, the final analysis in this thesis represents my own work of synthesis. I have intended to approach this project with a recognition of the barriers between the researcher and the researched. I have tried to consistently base my interpretations respectfully, on the descriptions of research participants’ lived experiences of these governance processes. This task was facilitated throughout my research by my own ignorance: I am well aware of my own shortcomings in understanding the intricacies of Gatineau’s land-use governance, and I am sure that this thesis will reflect only an incomplete grasp of the wealth of knowledge held in the diverse perspectives of my participants. My hope is that my efforts will help in integrating this variety of perspectives and that this will be useful in building discussions and finding solutions that move past conflicts to find lasting solutions to what all of my research participants will likely agree are important problems of land-use sustainability. While I hope that my research will be useful far outside of the City of Gatineau, I intend for this participatory research to serve as a lens through which citizens, civil society groups, governance institutions (and I) can understand the situation of governance for land use

sustainability, define the problem in language that is mutually meaningful and accurate, and thus form the basis for appropriate consideration and responses.

For this research, I have been inspired by the qualitative research methodologies of ethnography (LeCompte et al., 1999) and institutional ethnography (Smith, 2006). While these approaches are similar, institutional ethnography specifically focuses on attempts to “use informants’ accounts not as windows on the informants’ inner experience but in order to reveal the ‘relations of ruling’ that shape local experiences,” that is, the forms in which power is generated, held and coordinated in contemporary societies (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 15). Late in my research process, I became further inspired by Turner’s (2006) text-focused approach to institutional ethnography in the context of land-use governance. Turner approached the study of “ruling relations” in governance, in the context of urban development of a ravine in an Ontario municipality, and the resulting citizen efforts to contest this development. Turner’s text-based institutional ethnography focuses on official municipal documents that were designed to inform, standardize and legitimise municipal land-use governance. Turner’s work described how, in practise, these texts served to coordinate power, enable and inhibit inclusion, and shape large parts of the outcomes of governance processes. In this way, Turner suggests that texts are themselves important components of governance.

My research uses both the ethnographic approach (which DeVault and McCoy (2006) describe as most suitable for exploring individual experiences), and the institutional ethnographic approach (aiming to use individual experience as a window into the functioning of systems in which these individuals are embedded). I do not consider these to be mutually exclusive in any way. Instead, with regards to my second research question,¹⁵ the individual experience of attempting to access and engage with processes of land-use governance (or, for instance, of administering these processes) is important both in showing both the human experience and the practical reality of how land-use governance works for and from various perspectives (from within as well as from “without”). For this to be relevant, I have attempted to triangulate sources of information on these various aspects of governance, engaging participants from a variety of perspectives among local land-use governance actors.

15 “Using Smith’s (2009) framework for assessing participation in governance, in what ways can Gatineau land-use governance be considered participatory, or not?”

3.3. Methods

3.3.1. Ethnographic interviews and participant observation

Recruitment

Throughout this project, my primary research consisted mostly of ethnographic interviews. In total, I conducted 22 interviews, as well as two participant-observations of public meetings. These took place in two rounds: 17 interviews in the summer of 2010 (July and August); 5 interviews and both participant-observations in December 2010.

My recruitment of participants was purposive, with the goal of representing the opinions and experiences of a diversity of citizens and governance actors that were engaged or interested in Gatineau's land-use governance processes. The initial identification of participants was done through an analysis of journalistic accounts of land-use consultation and municipal council meetings, through letters and articles published in local news sources describing proposed land-use changes and efforts to oppose them, through publicly available information (websites, etc.) and through my pre-existing local contacts. I contacted initial participants through publicly available information (especially websites) and, thereafter, largely by the references of earlier interview participants. Other than people who expressed themselves in very public venues (i.e., municipal council meetings, public consultation process and opinion pieces in the local paper), all of my research participants granted me written consent to analyse these interviews for this project, without divulging identifiable information about them. Any intentional use of identifiable information about governance actors comes from published sources. However, I have avoided using peoples' names, intending that this project focus on governance, institutional design and processes, *not* on the specific people that currently occupy Gatineau's land-use governance systems.

The first set of interviews, in the summer of 2010, engaged members of civil society groups that are active around issues of urban development, environmental sustainability and wildlife conservation; members of neighbourhood residents associations; environmental conservation professionals; agriculturalists; municipal government administrators (urban planners and policy analysts); and journalists. During this period, despite repeated efforts, I was unable to arrange interviews with municipally elected representatives: due to my own poor planning and procedural delays, this interview period corresponded with a period during which

municipal council was not meeting, and thus many councillors were unavailable. The second set of interviews, in December of 2010, engaged two more citizens (active in civil society organisations and opposing urban development), as well as three municipal councillors.

While I attempted to interview a number of local and locally-active housing developers and contractors using their publicly available contact information, I did not receive any responses to these attempts. This may reflect the political sensitivity of urban development in Gatineau, as my research followed a series of controversial events (i.e., the Connaught Park development proposal and consultation). Developers' perspectives are thus underrepresented in my research, though some of their concerns and the governance procedures in which they engage can be pieced together through the perspectives of other interview participants, interviews with developers and letters written by developers, published in local media sources.

The interview process

I recorded each interview with a small, digital audio recorder, and often took field-notes throughout. I approached interviews by using the depth interview style (Spradley, 1979), allowing participants to build and express their own accounts of these issues, and seeking reflective explorations of personal narratives, ideals and expected or potential personal and local futures. Although the participants of this research had very diverse roles in land-use governance, I approached the task of conducting interviews with the goal of understanding the individual experiences, foci and issues that each research participant felt was important to tell.

I had been recommended to use open-ended questions to guide discussion toward issues and processes in land-use change, governance and decision-making, about the interaction among groups, institutions and government processes. In the first interviews, I came prepared with sets of detailed questions, expecting to use these questions as “directions,” guiding the issues around which I wanted participants' to express their perspectives. For example, in preparation for meeting with a journalist, I brought a set of questions which included this one (bulleted format and emphasis are from original text):

In the **process of development**, describe how you see the **usual series of events**?

- Where does consultation fit?
- Where are the major problems?
- Impacts: people, community, environment?

I began to realise that this interview style was somewhat leading. Terms such as “process of development” led (and perhaps misled) participants to discuss issues according to my own perception. For instance, suggesting through the sentence structure that developments are process-driven and standardised, perhaps putting emphasis on a “flow-chart” approach to understanding land-use change.

As I gained experience as an interviewer, and began building my own understanding of local experiences of land-use governance, I started treating my questions more as guidelines and preparing looser sets of questions. Eventually, I was preparing simple checklists indicating issues that I was hoping to get particular participants to comment on. For example, in preparing to speak with an environmentalist and community organiser, I prepared a set of points that included: “Biodiversity considerations in urban planning / development.”

This shorter approach seemed to produce richer, deeper, less scripted interactions and explorations of topics, and allowed more space for the perspectives of the interview participant to “dominate the agenda” of the discussion. My notes then served as reminders, in case of lulls in interviews and to ensure that my interview process had not missed what I saw as potentially important topics. As I did some interviews in French, my Francophone question-sets were often more detailed, helping me remember eloquent or accurate terms and phrases.

I allowed participants to suggest the location of interviews. Most took place in participants’ homes or places of work, or in public spaces (i.e., cafés). Several took place outdoors, in wooded and “undeveloped” areas that participants found interesting or relevant.

Transcription

I transcribed each interview using “OpenOffice Calc,” an open-source spreadsheet program. This did not seem particularly efficient, but worked and had several advantages: allowing me to keep track of the time and speaker in separate columns (thus allowing me to quickly go back to listen to a particular segment during coding), and to use other columns for notes and coding.

As I am fairly bilingual but more efficient at working in English, I translated French interviews into English as I transcribed. There were several instances in which I could not find an effective literal translation of a word or phrase. I generally transcribed these in French.

Coding and analysis

In order to make sense of my transcribed interview data, I derived a set of codes: one or two-word labels with which I tried to capture and identify the relevance of passages. I generally based my codes on my set of research questions and, as such, my codes evolved as I reviewed and refined my analytical framework and research questions.

While coding, I went through individual interview transcripts, identifying and coding what I interpreted to be the central messages with regards to my research questions. Of course, the process of labelling a complex statement with a one-word code is *inevitably* to generalise the meaning of that statement. Therefore, my coding process involved my starting a new document in which I would copy all coded passages and paste them under headings of their respective codes. Then, I created subheadings with which I tried to capture the relevance of passages. As passages accumulated from multiple interviews, these passages would come to support or contradict ideas expressed in earlier interviews. These subheadings allowed me to organise the intersections and divergences among different perspectives, but left the full expressions of my research participants intact.

My analytical process had to remain responsive to my codes. Throughout the process of coding, I realised several times that the categories set up by the codes that I had chosen were too restrictive – that by trying to lump too many passages together under one label (i.e., “deliberation”), I was losing any sense of the real importance of that passage. So, codes became split (e.g., “deliberation” became divided into “considered judgement” and “integration”). Furthermore, about half-way through coding, I significantly reworked my coding framework. This allowed me to organise my codes to more strongly reflect the subtlety of what was being conveyed in the words of interview participants. The passages that I had already coded generally fell easily into the new coding system.

My analysis resulted from this attempt to systematically identify themes and processes as they were described, supported and challenged by interview participants. I tried to pull together these stories to identify commonalities and differences in how interview participants understood processes, problems and solutions, reflecting upon these accounts while minding the roles of interview participants with regards to local land-use governance.

3.3.2. Policy analysis and analysis of journalistic accounts

I used the local, independent newspaper as a major source of contextual information and in informing my understanding of key issues, actors and perspectives. One newspaper in particular serves as an important discussion forum for the Aylmer sector of the City, and one in which municipal officials, developers and residents regularly contribute. I used some articles and “letters to the editor” in developing my analysis, though these were primarily for providing event-specific context and did not feature strongly in my ethnographic work.

Throughout the later part of my analysis, I considered some policy and planning documents (regional zoning maps from 1977, 1983, 2001 and 2010 and laws impacting local planning), public documents regarding municipal council meetings (notices of meetings, agendas, etc.) and zoning changes (notices of public consultation meetings for proposed zoning bylaws). I used these both to provide context to the perspectives of interview participants and partially to understand the role of policy in shaping the process of land-use governance. I largely identified documents based on those that were mentioned during interviews, as well as those published publicly on the City of Gatineau website.

Chapter 4. Results: context and governance in Gatineau

This chapter presents and discusses context information about Gatineau, Quebec. I have explored and characterised this case study site in terms of its recent history of urban development, the major local factors and policies that have contributed to this, and the effects of recent urban sprawl on the local landscape, environment and society. I then provide an overview of very recent policies that ostensibly guide the City's urban planning and civic engagement efforts. I return to this context information in the conclusions of this work, in which the record of sustainability in land use is considered in light of the city's processes and institutions for citizen participation.

I end this chapter by introducing the main governance actors (people, groups and institutions engaged in land-use governance in Gatineau) that I have worked with, studied and considered as part of this project. These governance actors are the foci of the next chapter (chapter 5), which describes and analyses the results of my ethnographic research of participation in land-use governance.

4.1. Case study site overview

Gatineau is the fourth most populous city in Quebec, and makes up the Province of Quebec's portion of the Ottawa-Gatineau metropolitan region, otherwise called Canada's "National Capital Region," "the fourth largest agglomeration in Canada after Toronto, Montréal and Vancouver" (Ville de Gatineau, 2009c). Gatineau claims to be "the most bilingual city in Canada," with 63% of inhabitants speaking both official languages (Ville de Gatineau, 2009c). Gatineau is very connected with the city of Ottawa, is highly influenced by the stable employment base of the federal government and numerous federal-oriented organisations and agencies. Gatineau is also the major population centre of the Outaouais region of Quebec, with 71% of the region's 350,000 inhabitants (in 2007) (Ville de Gatineau, 2009c).

The current jurisdictional borders of the City of Gatineau are the result of the 2002 Provincial decision to amalgamate five municipalities – Aylmer, Hull, Gatineau, Massons-Angers and Buckingham. These "ex-municipalities" are now treated as "sectors" of the new City, each with its own "service centre" (housing various extensions of the City's public service, including urban planning department). This amalgamation was highly contested, especially in the Aylmer sector, and was the subject of a referendum which failed to reverse the Province's

decision. In Aylmer, the civil society activism that emerged to force this referendum is considered by many people to have helped build the organisation, networks and capacity of resident-activism that is still important in Aylmer, and that has been especially present around issues of urban growth and land use.

4.1.1. Character of recent development

Coinciding with the formation of the new City of Gatineau, urban growth has become a key issue for Gatineau (especially in the Aylmer sector) since a local “housing boom” that began in the early 2000s. From 2001-2006 the Gatineau metropolitan area had the highest population growth rate of any metropolitan area in Quebec, growing by 8.5% from 251,610 to 281,650 people. From 2001 to 2008, the city saw 21,388 new housing starts, with an average of 2,675 housing starts per year (Bélanger, 2009). Over this period, Gatineau went from occupying 21.0% to 32.1% of the housing market of the National Capital Region. Housing construction was not significantly slowed by the 2008 recession. Despite that housing markets had slowed in most of Canada, in 2010 the City of Gatineau issued 46% more housing construction permits than it had in 2009, 75% percent of which were for detached, single-family homes (Hardy, 2010). Much of the city’s urban growth is characterised as urban sprawl, with much of the development taking the form of single-family, detached homes.

Gatineau’s Western sectors have seen the strongest rates of urban growth. Among the five sectors of Gatineau, the Western-most (Aylmer) has seen 33.9% of the city’s housing starts from 2001-2008. In 2007 and 2008, the Aylmer sector saw 53.2% of the city’s growth. Bélanger projects that the Western part of the City (including Aylmer and Hull sectors) will continue to see roughly 60% of the growth in population and real estate for the next decade, and that, in 2008, the land base could physically accommodate 35,255 additional houses. Of these, 24,676 were already under construction, approved or planned for development. Bélanger (2009) projects that, due to the elongated East-West structure of Gatineau’s urban area, and due to continued highway expansion, urban sprawl is likely to continue.

Indeed, as I introduced in my discussion of the drivers of urban sprawl (section 2.2.3), the regional level of infrastructure development is somewhat deterministic in its impact on urban development at the city scale. In Gatineau, the Province of Quebec’s Ministry of Transportation is indeed charged with the design of major through-ways. Also, due to the location of Gatineau

and its profound connections to the city of Ottawa (in the province of Ontario), interprovincial and thus federally regulated transportation infrastructure is also a major factor. Certainly, as Bélanger (2009) noted, the design and development of the major through-ways in Gatineau and the surrounding regions *has* influenced urban growth, and will likely continue to do so. While my research focused largely on municipal land-use governance, it is important to point out that these decisions occur within the bounds of the decisions of Provincial and Federal governance actors (which I will discuss briefly below, in section 4.3.4). In this regard, we can note that the highway 50, which has extended Eastward from the downtown (towards Montreal) for some time, is the major transportation through-way connecting the heavily-suburbanised Eastern part of the city to the downtown and to Ottawa. The highway 5, which is being actively expanded to the North of the city of Gatineau, is already being flanked by large (often controversial) housing, commercial and light industrial “nodes.” Major highway expansion to the West of the downtown has been discussed and planned since at least the 1970s, involving another major highway passing through the Gatineau Park to a highly controversial, as-yet unbuilt bridge to Ontario. This bridge has been a major source of controversy from both sides, with people in the Aylmer sector wanting to reduce traffic in commutes to Ottawa, but with environmental groups and some residents associations recognising that this will position Aylmer as even more of a bedroom community and a series of on- and off-ramps. Interestingly, while this bridge has remained on official urban and regional plans since the 1970s, City officials describe that it is there only as a vestige of past planning processes, seemingly forgotten. However, with the recent decision to expand one of the existing (old agricultural grid) roads, it seems like some elements of this plan are still being pursued.

Through my interviews, the use of the term “urban sprawl” in Gatineau showed itself to be somewhat more complicated than I had assumed. In terms of physical descriptions of developments built in the past 20 years, many criteria that define urban sprawl (that I introduced in section 2.2.1) are present and easily visible. With some notable exceptions, new large projects in the city (especially on the peripheries) are low-density, dominated by single-family homes. Aesthetically, especially in larger projects, neighbourhoods are often built with minor architectural variation, often with rotations of different models throughout.

While efforts have been made to increase public transit, this system is still seen as an unacceptable option for most residents, and car-dependence is very high. Furthermore, if we

consider the road networks of recent and proposed developments, we can see the road networks that are characteristic of urban sprawl. Figure 4.1 shows recent and proposed developments in Gatineau, with continued prominence of winding, non-interconnected roads. Figure 4.1 also shows the historical grid road network, which originally served rural and agricultural uses.

Figure 4.1. Map of street networks in recent and proposed residential development in Gatineau, Quebec (Aylmer sector).



(Ville de Gatineau Service de l'urbanisme et du développement durable, Brassard, Weiskopf, Lalande, & Gagnon, 2010)

These road networks, convoluted and difficult to navigate for non-local residents, pose important challenges for public transit accessibility. Outside of the downtown, most of the major through-ways are the old rural grid networks. Commuter traffic problems have been somewhat addressed by widening some of these grid-roads, and by adding some new through-ways to the downtown of Gatineau and Ottawa, as well as through the widening of bridges (with continued plans for the construction of new bridges and through-ways). However, traffic is a major local frustration.

The continued pace of housing development has raised frustrations of lacking investment in infrastructure relative to the pace of development. Currently, the City is investing heavily in upgrading water systems, building new schools and trying to promote public transit. However, a councillor that I spoke with described the problem of “several thousand homes planned in Aylmer” with only three roads currently leading to Downtown Gatineau and Ottawa.

The density of new housing is likely changing. According to Bélanger (2009), housing needs are projected to continue to grow by 2,100 lodgings per year in the short term. However, interpreting demographic projections (i.e., ageing of the population, continued in-migration of young professionals) and increased pressure for the City to densify development, Bélanger projects that 50% of new housing construction will be apartment buildings within ten years, with only a quarter of new housing remaining as “single-detached.” Even today, the most recent developments are notably denser than the suburban developments of the past decades. Bélanger notes that the city has already begun a process of change in the way residential development “is done” in Gatineau, tending to increasingly integrate apartment, row housing and detached housing in new developments. Bélanger also notes increasing use of public transit, increasing “environmental consciousness” within the public and government, and the increased marketing focus on “urban lifestyles” in several areas of the city.

Interestingly, councillors and members of the public service that I spoke with argued that sprawl is actually what is being avoided by the construction in Gatineau. Several people suggested that the construction, to fill the area between the old municipalities, was the most responsible way for the city to grow, thus avoiding more incursion into rural lands. As such, to manage what the City sees as “urban sprawl,” it has defined an “Urban Development Perimeter” (“*Perimètre d'urbanisation*”), ostensibly to limit growth.¹⁶ From conversations with senior public servants, it seems that this Urban Development Perimeter, while described as a limit, is somewhat treated as a goal. As such, the development of forested and some agriculturally-used¹⁷ land within the City is seen as important in unifying the city – what planners refer to as the “big-city” vision. In this approach, areas between the “old cities” are seen as vacant and inefficient,

16 The Urban Development Perimeter is noted by planners and councillors to be a shifting line, and thus a tool to limit urban growth temporarily, allowing pressure for developers to increase densities, but not necessarily ensuring any long-term protection to rural, forested and non-protected agricultural land.

17 Agricultural land is only protected by the Province of Quebec’s Commission for the Protection of Agricultural Land (“*Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec*”; CPTAQ) if that land is agriculturally-zoned. Some local agriculturally-used land is not zoned agricultural and is therefore more strongly subject to development pressures.

as gaps to be filled in the “big-city.” This approach thus defines urban sprawl as urban growth outside of the Urban Development Perimeter, and fails to treat the loss of undeveloped land within this perimeter as relevant.

With regards to development outside of the Urban Development Perimeter, it appears that this definition of urban sprawl (what some of my research participants termed “rural sprawl”) is also a growing problem. One environmental non-profit-worker described the explosion of construction in cottages and rural homes throughout the countryside North of Gatineau:

Everyone building cottages... cottages! Ha! They've become castles! And now you have local populations that are quite poor, living in pretty... modest homes... but now the real estate values are rising because someone has built a castle... It's a question of social equity, which isn't there either. It seems like nothing, but there are a lot of issues under here.

Furthermore, low density residential development is beginning to spread along the outside edge of the city limit. One councillor suggested that this development was perhaps due, in part, to Gatineau's Urban Development Perimeter, which shifted development outward (to the city's edge, often only several kilometres away), into areas that are perhaps less well-regulated. Furthermore, he suggested that, without increased regional planning, that this trend was likely to continue and worsen as the areas within this Urban Development Perimeter fill in.

4.1.2. Major factors influencing urban development

Gatineau and its predecessors (the municipalities of Aylmer, Hull, Gatineau, Massons-Angers and Buckingham) are clearly among countless municipalities in North America to have become host to vast tracts of suburban housing and urban sprawl. Certainly, many of the factors influencing Gatineau are common to this general trend. Economics, policy and planning approaches, and simple demographic growth have all contributed to urban development in Gatineau (and continue to do so).

Gatineau's urban sprawl seems to have resulted from planning policies that have favoured development as a tool of economic growth. One councillor described these as “an old way of thinking, that increasing the taxes from real estate development was good for the City.” Even in the 1990s, the ex-City of Aylmer was engaged in “selling off” publicly held land below market rates because, according to one local critic: “To them, vacant land is basically wasted land because it's not generating any tax revenues.”

As I described in the previous section (section 4.1.1), regional and provincial transportation planning has certainly been a critical factor in allowing urban sprawl to become so prevalent in Gatineau, and is increasingly facilitating “rural sprawl” into the adjacent areas of the Outaouais. As highways and through-ways have been developed, the commutes that potential home-buyers can contemplate as being “do-able” have grown. Several of my interview participants were very aware of the importance of road development in the process of urban and rural sprawl. Several local residents that have been especially engaged in environmental issues described controversies about highway development in frustrated terms, pointing out the lack of foresight of residents associations that, on the one hand complain about congested roads and the need for more or bigger roads and bridges to downtown Gatineau and Ottawa, while on the other hand complaining about the loss of green space and the suburbanisation of their surroundings.

While the sprawl model that swept North America did influence local planning policy (and likely continues to do so), a number of factors make urban development in Gatineau unique. These provide important context for understanding local land-use governance.

One analysis that was repeated throughout my interviews was that Gatineau’s “housing boom” in recent decades has largely resulted from development having been “held back” due to fears of Quebec separatism. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, home-buyers favoured the Ontarian side of the National Capital Region, despite the fact that land and housing prices were much lower on the Quebec side. Residents describe land, purchased and planned in the 1970s, that “were left fallow for almost 30 years” because “the [Parti Québécois] got in.”

Since these fears dissipated in the late 1990s, the region’s development has shifted toward the Quebec side where accessible housing, close to the downtown of Ottawa, is much more available. According to one resident:

What’s unique is how the brakes were held on for so long. It’s like you’ve got a set of eight horses, and all of a sudden they just let the reins go! And where the cart’s going, no one knows. Get out of the way.

Also around the year 2000, the Cities of Aylmer, Hull, Gatineau, Massons-Angers and Buckingham were amalgamated by the Province, forming the current City of Gatineau. Especially in Aylmer, this amalgamation was seen as a loss of local control, representation and identity, which prompted a significant civil-society outcry resulting in a failed referendum to reverse the Province’s decision. Almost ten years later, many residents still see the

amalgamation as having resulted in a degradation of planning, regulation and enforcement of development, and a degradation of services and infrastructure maintenance. A local journalist described the link between urban sprawl, amalgamation and the citizen activism that has sprung up since this time:

It's really been since amalgamation.[...] January first 2002, when the Cities amalgamated. And, up until then... there was a bit of a complaint, you know [...] a green space here was being used. Someone would go to City... local council and complain about it, but it wasn't a really big issue. It was only once amalgamation started, and sort of the same time – I don't think they're connected – but the building boom began. And then! Everything hit the fan! Every council meeting! Every single council meeting, now, of the Gatineau council, they're complaining. And what's weird is that so many people see it as the result of amalgamation, and I think it's just coincidental. But people still keep thinking... they still keep thinking that it's the amalgamation that's causing this sprawl – yet, most... most of what's going on in Aylmer was de-zoned ten years ago. And that's all been the local council that de-zoned it. [...] Now, the new one is de-zoning land that, in ten years from is going to show up...

A local councillor commented that “citizens felt that we'd changed all the rules, and that we'd changed the way that the City worked because of the amalgamation.” However, many councillors and residents that I spoke with recognised that, while amalgamation was perhaps a factor, development was inevitable in Aylmer:

Look out [East]. Out [East] you might as well live in Montebello, the way the city was sprawling out there. And then you look at a map and you see Aylmer. You see huge pieces of undeveloped land. You don't need to be a brain surgeon. You live in Aylmer it takes you 12 minutes to get downtown. You live in Gatineau it's like forty minutes. What do you do?

While the amalgamation may have only coincided with an otherwise inevitable housing boom, the amalgamation and urban growth have combined to act as a “spark,” around which groups and alliances were formed to develop civic engagement strategies, developing experience of civic processes, and building networks and capacity.

4.1.3. Effects of urban sprawl on the environment of Gatineau

Sprawl has been cited as a major ecological concern in the National Capital Region, especially with regards to ecological habitat loss and fragmentation. Concern is also rising around the fragmentation of agricultural communities and the resulting impacts on the region's food security (De La Salle, Fix, & Barrs, 2009).

In terms of agricultural preservation, in 2009-2010, 13,311 hectares of the City of Gatineau was zoned agricultural. Comprising 39% of the city's land base, most of this is

clustered on the city's Eastern and Western edges. Registered farm businesses occupied only 47% of this area (6,306ha) (Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec, 2010).¹⁸

Ecologically, local environmental experts describe the Outaouais region as unique in Quebec, comprising mostly mixed-deciduous forest in a province largely dominated by Boreal and Tundra ecosystems. As such, the Outaouais is described as having the highest level of biodiversity in Quebec, and is home to many threatened species.

Within Gatineau, development is causing a number of changes to ecosystems. According to one naturalist that I spoke with, the loss of agricultural and open fields to large-scale development project, is reducing habitat for breeding and nesting birds throughout the area:

They're not going extinct, but before there was a major construction boom in Aylmer, there used to be lots of open fields where we would have sparrows that would breed and nest in summer, but now a lot of those fields have been made into housing projects, so you can't find certain breeding birds anymore. I used to be able to go every spring and get my Eastern towhee [...] They like small pastures that are going back to brushy areas. Now you can't get it. I got it this spring, but now even that last sector is being built.

Similarly, increased development along the river is threatening important resting and feeding areas for migrating birds:

[This area] is not critical in the sense that it's been designated by international organisations as a place where birds stop and refuel [...] but what happens is if you keep cutting back all the little areas [...] it's like death by a thousand cuts. No one cut is going to wipe out the species, but eventually they'll have no place to refuel. Not all birds can do those long flights of thousands of miles without re-fuelling. Some of them have to refuel every day. So if we keep cutting out all the little areas, it does become critical. It's not critical all by itself, but if everybody does have that mentality, you can create a critical situation.

In the past few years, the issue of biodiversity within the city of Gatineau has been raised by a number of groups. One is an organisation specifically targeting the conservation of one of the only remaining large pieces of undeveloped, forested land in the urban area: the Boucher Forest. The Boucher Forest Foundation has reported that this 700-acre forest is “of significant ecological value,” housing important biological diversity and providing the equivalent of \$6,000,000 in environmental goods and services (Boucher Forest Foundation, n.d.). Other areas,

¹⁸ Within Quebec, the Commission for the Protection of Agricultural Land (“*Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec*”; CPTAQ) has the mandate of guaranteeing Quebec's agricultural potential and activity for future generations. The CPTAQ manages and enforces the *Act respecting the preservation of agricultural land* (1978), and functions as an “autonomous decision-making organisation exerting a socio-economic role of regulation” (Savoie, 2006). The CPTAQ has been seen as largely successful in protecting “good quality agricultural soils” in Quebec – an area of 63,500 square kilometres, barely 2% of the provincial territory, but situated in the most populous areas of the province (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007).

locally known to be ecologically important, are being less actively pursued by conservation groups, and many similar areas forests and wetlands have been lost and developed throughout the past decades.

4.1.4. Planning and governance

During the past two decades, the development and transformation of Gatineau, especially in the Aylmer sector, have prompted residents to challenge the City's planning and management of urban growth. Several interview participants considered this a question of proportion: the scale of change that residents felt in their daily lives, their communities and social lives, and their environment sparked the responses that have recently come to a head in calls for moratoria on development. One councillor described the proportions of the change:

So, when it happened, all of a sudden – the people of Aylmer that were used to a population of 25,000 people – there were lots of people, lots of places where people were living in places where in their backyards were deer and partridge, really the country in the city. And, from one day to the next, the bulldozers come in and there are houses and houses as far as the eye can see. But even then, it's not like there was a change in attitude or politics. The zoning was all in place already.

Another councillor described changes in the social and built environments as “enormous,” as having placed enormous pressure on road networks and public infrastructure, felt most strongly among residents that “knew the old Aylmer.”

The City certainly seems to have recognised and responded to some of these concerns. My interviews with public servants often featured the terminology of “sustainability” and “sustainable development,” with claims that “the objective of the City is to develop in function with what we call sustainable development.” This language is very prominent in the recent Strategic Vision, 2009-2014, which proposes eco-responsible neighbourhoods and transportation, as well as the goal of tackling “head on the issues of urban sprawl, tighter and more responsible management of urban developments, the improvement of the built environment and the preservation of resources” (Ville de Gatineau, 2009a, p. 17). Furthermore, the City has begun championing the principles of walkability, accessibility of commercial services, and of community infrastructure – specifically in the context of their “urban village” policy. This policy proposes “consolidating” existing urban centres, and creating “village centres” in new residential neighbourhoods. My conversations with urban planners suggested that they are being increasingly tasked with integrating issues of environmental sustainability into their projects,

which are implemented using concepts of green spaces and green corridors, reduced use of impermeable (asphalt and concrete) surfaces, as well as targeting increased social diversity and density.¹⁹

The City of Gatineau is certainly continuing to approach road infrastructure hierarchically, with the construction of local streets that serve only the residents of those streets, to collector boulevards on which no housing would be possible (or desirable). One councillor noted that the City is making streets narrower, trying to reduce asphalt-use due to costs. However, the City's approach to re-thinking its road infrastructure does not appear to extend to the broader problem of inefficiencies with the disconnected, winding form of local road networks.

Meanwhile, as I have noted (section 4.1.1), major Regional and Provincial transportation infrastructure – the planning of which supersedes municipal planning – is continuing to be built to facilitate long-distance commuting and, thus, both urban and rural sprawl.

Bélanger (2009) suggests that the City of Gatineau is appropriately strategising to promote density, to protect “good quality soils” (agriculturally-zoned and otherwise), and to limit “sporadic” urbanisation far from urban centres. It seems that there is a renewed focus on land-use planning that is “desirable from a collective point of view,” toward “consolidation” and “concentration” of new development, and a focus on existing road networks and infrastructure. Bélanger, however, suggests that Gatineau must look more fully at the socio-economic costs of its current development strategy, which, he maintains, is dominated by “urban sprawl.” He also suggests that the City adopt a stronger “tool box” for managing urban development responsibly.

In terms of bio-diversity conservation, the City presents its support for the Boucher Forest Foundation as a concrete example of its commitment to conservation. However, contrary to the City's stated goals, an environmental non-governmental organisation employee expressed that much of these strategies are “lip service,” supported by once-off examples with very little integration of sustainability (especially with regards to the social aspects of sustainability).

Indeed, despite the publicity that the City's new “green” approach has received, engaged residents that I spoke with are generally not aware or, rather, not convinced. Another local commentator, while seeing the City's policy strategies as encouraging, suggests that these do not reflect reality as it is experienced by Gatineau residents:

¹⁹ However, one planner suggested that social diversity and density might be less relevant in Aylmer, considering it to be more “bedroom.”

In the City's Action Plan they include words like 'sustainable development,' and they even elaborate as to what that means, saying 'buildings and people need to coexist with nature,' and then they turn around and, 'OK,' just cutting everything down and build wall-to-wall tons of asphalt and little trees, which is the opposite of what they say.

4.2. Participatory governance policy in Gatineau

Finally, as I described earlier, one important development that has emerged in the City's Strategic Plan 2009-2014 is a stated commitment to "participatory governance." This document promotes concepts like "integration" and "communication" as tools for managing the problems of an increasingly complex society, and expresses recognition of the importance of input from residents and organisations (Ville de Gatineau, 2009a, p. 18). The document expresses the goal of investing in innovation and the development of a "culture of participation," with a "spirit of equity and democracy."

As participatory governance is central to my research project, I intend to approach the City's stated commitment to participation as a starting point for my assessment of land-use governance in Gatineau: to determine the degree to which Gatineau's land-use governance processes can be considered participatory, or not.

4.3. Institutions, people and processes in land-use governance

On the surface, casual observers of land use and planning in Gatineau often recognise the municipal council as the centre of power, the point of decision-making on the future of the city's landscape. In contrast, my analysis shows that "governance" is a more fitting way to view the forces and decisions that organise changes to the Gatineau landscape. Land use in Gatineau is shaped by a web of people and institutions, and the processes in which they are engaged. Even the formal decision-making power of municipal council is nuanced, spread out, facilitated, constrained and shaped by various groups.

Local governance was the focus of my project. I paid special attention to municipal government, developers and civil society (residents, residents associations, and locally-focused non-profit organisations). This categorisation (municipal government, developers, civil society) is imperfect – many of the lines that separate these groups are blurred – but it serves to focus my analysis. Where it is especially relevant, I have noted the boundaries to municipal governance: where control over land-use sits more strongly with Provincial or Federal governance actors.

While these governance actors have not been the focus of this project, throughout this research I have come to recognise the importance of region, province and nation-level decisions and land-use paradigms on municipal scale land use.

I will briefly review this network of institutions that make up land-use governance in Gatineau and then turn to an assessment of the degree and ways in which this system might be considered participatory.

4.3.1. Municipal government

Municipal government was a major focus of my project. My interviews included members of the municipal council and public service, members of organisations that work closely with the City, as well as residents that have all forms of sentiments about their relationship with municipal land-use governance processes.

My research focused on several groups that were responsible for land use within municipal government, especially the municipal council, several divisions of the public service, and the Planning Advisory Committee (“*Comité consultatif d'urbanisme*”; CCU).²⁰ These institutions of the City of Gatineau are involved in many aspects of land use, through a set of procedures and “tools” laid out in the Province of Quebec’s *Cities and Towns Act (2011)*, and the *Act Respecting Land Use Planning and Development (2010)*.

Municipal council

Gatineau’s municipal council is made up of elected representatives from 18 wards, plus one mayor (elected by voters from the whole of the city). In the 2009 municipal elections, each councillor’s ward held between 8,000 and 13,000 registered voters (Ville de Gatineau, 2009b). Other than during two annual breaks, councillors meet at least weekly for executive council meetings and committee meetings, and meet 16 times throughout the year for televised and public council meetings. Televised sessions occur generally during the day, during which councillors discuss the agenda items for that evening’s meeting. In the words of one councillor:

²⁰ The Planning Advisory Committee – in French, the “*Comité consultatif d'urbanisme*” – is referred to locally as “the CCU.” I have abbreviated it as “CCU” throughout this document.

We start at one o'clock usually, so we're on the website of the City of Gatineau and you can follow all the debates. And, that's really where the debates happen. When we get there at night, at seven o'clock, everything has been resolved. There are no more debates. We had the debates during the day, so that's why at night it goes a bit faster. The only side on which it's more exciting is with the citizens, who come to ask questions, but unfortunately it's always the same – or almost.

Typically, each councillor participates in several of the City's eleven committees and commissions, which intend to allow council to study issues in greater depth, to "exchange ideas, talk and develop recommendations" with citizens and partners (Ville de Gatineau, 2011a).

Planning Advisory Committee (CCU)

The Planning Advisory Committee (CCU) is an intensive deliberative body required under the *Act Respecting Land Use Planning and Development* (2010). The CCU generally sits every three weeks throughout the year and includes three members of council and seven resident-members. This committee deliberates and provides non-binding recommendations to council on all major land-use issues on which council votes.

Public service

Both the ten-member CCU and the nineteen-member council, while recommending and officially deciding many aspects of land use and policy, are supported by the work of a public service of over 3,000 people. Within the public service, the "Service for Urban Planning and Sustainable Development" (Planning Service)²¹ is the most engaged in supporting land-use decisions. The Planning Service employs planners, engineers and environmental specialists, among others. The Planning Service is responsible for the majority of the research, liaison with developers, negotiation and production of building permits, requests for zoning changes and minor variances, as well as coordination of the production of "Metropolitan Land Use and Development Plans." They also play a central role in coordinating consultations on planning issues.

Municipal tools and procedures for land-use governance

The City uses a "hierarchy" of planning tools to deliberate and regulate land use. The "Metropolitan Land Use and Development Plan" (Metropolitan Plan)²² is a key, legally required

21 In French: "*Service de l'urbanisme et du développement durable*"; hereafter referred to as the "Planning Service."

22 In French: "*Plan métropolitain d'aménagement et de développement*"; hereafter referred to as "Metropolitan

document that provides direction, objectives and criteria with regards to transportation, environmental protection and enhancement, the definition of minimum density levels, the development of agricultural activities, etc. (*Act Respecting Land Use Planning and Development*, 2010, sec. 2.24). Metropolitan Plans are revised periodically, during which large changes can be implemented to zoning across the City. Metropolitan Plans provide the “vision” for “Urban Development Plans”: technical plans specifying regulations and zoning. Outside of the five-year cycles of developing metropolitan and urban development plans, zoning changes occur through individual processes, requiring public consultations and, under a strict set of conditions, the possibility of resident-initiated referenda. Similarly, “Minor Variances” allow exceptions to the stipulations of the City’s zoning by-laws, allowing an expedited tool for the City to change regulations pertaining to land use, though with less input of residents. Public servants described this hierarchy of planning tools as allowing the City to plan coherently from the macro to the micro scale, first defining large zones and then allowing fluctuations within zones.

4.3.2. Developers

Developers are almost unanimously seen as critical actors in shaping the landscape of Gatineau. Single developments in Gatineau can involve thousands of houses. In local residents’ accounts of the formal processes of land-use governance, developers seem to have limited public visibility. Unfortunately, they also have limited visibility in my study, as I was unable to speak with representatives from any of Gatineau’s development companies.

Developers engage profoundly with the ‘governance’ of land use, as the groups that “implement” land-use decisions, either working within the existing limitations of past decisions (zoning regulations) or seeking changes and minor variances to zoning, and negotiating around the interpretation of municipal regulations and policies. Developers are largely seen as having significant power over municipal land use. In Gatineau, developers are seen variously, both as the drivers of land-use change (economically motivated, highly strategic and savvy about the costs and benefits of various municipal procedures, tools and regulations) and as tools of city-building (critical partners in accommodating expected urban growth, guided by incentive and controlled by regulation).

Plans,” as they are known locally.

4.3.3. Civil society

I use the term “civil society” to refer to organised groups of residents. In my use, I am most often referring to self-organised groups of residents, engaged specifically in land-use issues. Civil society in Gatineau includes a number of groups that have succeeded in gaining access to more central decision-making bodies and in gaining some leverage to shape land use. Civil society also includes some groups that might consider that they have failed to significantly affect land use after having overtly tried.

These groups are difficult to categorise. Among the most prevalent and long-standing are what I refer to as “issue-specific groups”: those that function with explicit mandates to promote the importance of specific issues in land-use decisions, such as environmental and biodiversity protection, the creation of designated protected areas, the conservation of heritage structures and spaces, and the promotion of local business interests. On the other hand, the current residents associations generally appear to be both more recent and more unstable, with explicit mandates to represent the concerns and interests of residents in specific neighbourhoods. Residents associations, at times, appear to “blur edges” with groups that are more “issue-specific,” those concerned with specific local issues (such as a specific development on what was previously a green space), or in support of a specific local policy (such as a permitting process for the removal of trees).

Twice in the past decade, “coalitions” of civil society groups have emerged in the Aylmer sector. Both of these were centred around some of the stronger local residents associations, but involved the support of issue-specific groups. These coalitions have drawn people together based on common interests in relatively major events (such as the amalgamation of five cities in 2002, and the residential development of a highly visible piece of land in Aylmer).

Urban sprawl has been taken up by most of these groups through the past decades, especially through the coalitions. However, it seems that the strongest criticisms have come from small groups of citizens with specific intents of stopping specific developments. These citizens groups have organised awareness-building efforts, have frequently addressed many levels of the City at meetings and consultations, and have infrequently engaged in direct action, sometimes with significant media attention. However, these citizens are not engaged in formal processes of land-use governance beyond consultations. Nonetheless, they have certainly

influenced these issues through persistent lobbying, shaping the local discussion of sprawl and maintaining public focus on the pace and character of development.

4.3.4. Multiple levels of government

The focus of my project was the municipal level of land-use governance. However, the prevalence of Provincial and Federal-level actors in Gatineau's land-use governance emerged somewhat throughout my interviews and research. While my results on this level of governance actors are not complete, I have discussed these levels of government occasionally, largely in terms of how these levels of government relate to the municipal-level actors in land-use governance: municipal government, developers and civil society.

Indeed, regional, provincial and federal land-use governance actors should be noted to be very important shaping the landscape of Gatineau, the National Capital Region and the Outaouais. However, in terms of the participation of civil society groups, the “weave” of these multiple levels of governance actors was strongly noted as a confusing and, at times, seemingly anarchic arrangement. For example, an employee of a local environmental civil society organisation summed up her confusion of trying to work with “government” on issues of sustainability and land-use in Gatineau:

“The casino, at one point, some guru somewhere on the planet decided that it would be good to have a resort, something that would draw in tourists... [for which] you need to have three elements out of five. One of the elements was a golf-course. But, Leamy Lake [which surrounds the Hull Casino] is a wetland! It's the confluence of two big rivers! I think you don't need to draw a big picture to figure out that it's a wetland. So anyway, it fell to figure out who defines ‘wetlands,’ and who had jurisdiction over the wetlands. So, it was complicated. In the end, the Casino belongs to the Province of Quebec. As citizens, we're owners of the Casino. The hotel also, it's the property of the government. But Leamy Lake park is managed by... the National Capital Commission! So, the casino said they wanted a golf-course. The National Capital Commission said they were in agreement [...] and the City was in agreement – the City of Hull, before the amalgamation. But then everyone was like... ‘No way! This is ridiculous! There are 160 species of birds in there and it's this and it's that [...] You can't do this to a wetland!’ So, we won that one, at the senate. That was part of another battle. We were a group of citizens against the three levels of government!”

Thus, while the municipal government institutions are obvious centres of power over land-use, the Federal government affects land use in Gatineau in two important ways. Since 1959, a “crown corporation” controlled by the federal government, the National Capital Commission (NCC), has functioned with the mandate of stewardship of federal lands and buildings in the National Capital Region. In 2009, the NCC claimed to own and manage 4,715 square kilometres

(National Capital Commission, 2009), including much of the shorelines of the Outaouais river, many parks, monuments, and heritage buildings, many important green spaces and most of both the Gatineau Park and Ottawa's "green belt."

The NCC engages in directing planning and land-use throughout Gatineau, Ottawa and the surrounding regions. As such, it sometimes seems to take on a role of coordinating discussions between the City of Ottawa and the City of Gatineau, including organising multi-year visioning initiatives that try to integrate local citizen input from both sides of the Ottawa/Outaouais river (City of Ottawa, 2011).

Furthermore, the federal government is considered an important player in urban development in the centre of Gatineau's Hull sector, where various federal departments have significant office space, thus controlling important parts of office real estate and, at least in past decades, functioning as a powerful real-estate developer. As I will discuss further, the Federal government's position as a centrepiece of the region's employment base is also likely to influence many aspects of citizen engagement.

Provincially, the Quebec Ministry of Transportation (*Ministère des Transports du Québec*; MTQ) and the Quebec Ministry of Sustainable Development, of the Environment and of Parks (*Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs*) are important institutions in determining land use in several areas. In Gatineau, the importance of inter-provincial commuting and transportation (between Gatineau and Ottawa) increase the role of the provincial Ministry of Transportation in shaping transportation axes in Gatineau. This is entirely relevant for the region's urban growth and sprawl, as Bélanger (2009) has noted that highway arteries have largely defined recent expansions in Gatineau housing development.

The Quebec Ministry of Sustainable Development, of the Environment and of Parks is charged with several mandates, including the preservation of important habitat. This Ministry also oversees a key public consultation process, called "BAPE hearings," managed by the Office for Public Hearings on the Environment (*Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement*; BAPE), which aim to protect environmental quality in developments involving provincial institutions – thus including Ministry of Transportation projects.

Also within Provincial jurisdiction, the Commission on the Protection of Agricultural Land ("*Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec*"; CPTAQ) is a provincial commission of 16 people with the express goal of guaranteeing Quebec's agricultural potential

and activity for future generations. The CPTAQ manages and enforces the *Act respecting the preservation of agricultural land* (1978), and functions as an “autonomous decision-making organisation exerting a socio-economic role of regulation” (Savoie, 2006). The CPTAQ covers “good quality agricultural soils” in Quebec – an area of 63,500 square kilometers, barely two percent of the provincial territory, but situated in the most populous areas of the province – and claims to be largely successful in preserving agricultural land (Gouvernement du Québec, 2007). In the 2009-2010 annual report, the CPTAQ reported that 13,311 hectares of the city of Gatineau was zoned agricultural, comprising 39% of the city’s land base. Registered farm businesses occupied only 47% of this area (6,306ha) (Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec, 2010). Most of this agricultural land was situated in the Eastern and Western edges of the city of Gatineau.

Chapter 5. Results: participation in governance

In this chapter, I present the results of my research on processes and institutions of through which citizens of Gatineau can, do, and are *said* to be able to participate in land-use governance. In doing so, I have used an analytical framework largely drawn from Smith's (2009) categorization of "goods" of participatory democracy. My analytical framework serves to organise my research and analysis into the following categories: *inclusiveness*, *popular control*, *considered judgement*, *transparency*, and *efficiency*. I have used these as "indices" of participation in governance, as a framework for assessing the degree to which participation is being realised, currently, both by Gatineau's governance institutions and civil society.

This section analyses the majority of my primary research on this issue, which I then discuss in my conclusions and recommendations (sections 6 and 7, respectively) in assessing how the current approach, processes and institutions for citizen participation in Gatineau impacts the sustainability of land use and urban growth.

5.1. Inclusiveness

As I introduced in section 2.4 (Analytical framework), Smith defines inclusiveness in governance as a question of "who counts as 'citizen'" (whose interests are considered relevant in decision-making),²³ who is able to present themselves in governance fora, and whose voices are actually heard within those fora (Smith, 2009, p. 21). In assessing inclusiveness of presence, I have asked who is granted the opportunity to attempt to contribute to a decision and who typically "ends up" actually exercising this opportunity. I have attempted to observe governance processes and institutions for evidence of any ways in which "who is present" might be systematically biased, including whether there is evidence of processes that might promote the self-selection of some people over others. In assessing the inclusiveness of voice, I have asked whether there are systematic or evident processes of weighting the "value" and "relevance" of the concerns and interests of those who are present. This includes the question of inclusiveness of perspective and of means of expression, asking how different perspectives and differences in abilities and forms of expression are treated.

²³ I admit to problems with the term and concepts of "citizenship" in section 2.3.1.

5.1.1. City government

Inclusiveness and representativeness in council

While Gatineau's municipal council is the official forum in which land use is "decided upon," council is, by definition, not an inclusive body. In many cases, zoning and planning by-laws are decided upon by a council of 19 elected councillors, tasked with representing a population of more than 242,000 citizens.²⁴ Obviously, this institution, in some ways, runs contrary to strict models of participatory governance. However, as a democratic process supported by an enormous history and body of theory, Smith (2009) notes that representation can have an important role in ensuring that governance strikes a balance between inclusiveness and efficiency.²⁵ This history and theory of representative governance are far outside of the scope of this project. Instead, I focus my exploration on the local processes by which councillors are chosen and the legitimacy that they carry locally in their decisions, as seen by local people and actors in governance.

Locally, councillors are seen as having two roles – as leaders and as representatives – the distinction between-which is directly relevant to my discussion of legitimacy in representation (section 2.4.6). As "leaders," councillors assume the role of deliberating and making decisions in the best interests of their constituent populations. This was a common way in which councillors were perceived among the councillors that I interviewed, although with variation between individual councillors. One told me that: "I think that if the average citizen doesn't have this vision, someone needs to play that role, and this can be the role of the elected officials." If this model captures the whole role of councillors, then my analysis of inclusiveness is most relevant in the selection and accountability processes of municipal elections: outside of elections, the voices that matter in land use will be those of the councillors that emerge, victorious, from these elections. An alternative local perspective sees councillors as being "representatives" of the voices of their populations. For instance, a public servant – claiming that it was "absolutely not" his role to interact with the public on issues of planning – said that the local population make their demands known, "by way of the municipal council, especially. This is what the council is intended for: to be the voice of the population." In this case,

²⁴ The population of Gatineau was 242,124 in 2006, according to Statistics Canada (2007).

²⁵ Smith (2009) notes that two of the most highly esteemed examples of moderate-scale participatory democracies – ancient Athens and the more recent New England town hall meetings – have rarely achieved the participation of more than 20% of the population.

inclusiveness within the electoral process is still critical, but my analysis of inclusiveness must be expanded to include the processes through which councillors represent the voices of the people their wards.

Gatineau's recent electoral processes present barriers to inclusiveness in several important ways. First, "inclusiveness of presence" is limited by the basic criteria of participation in elections. In the most recent municipal elections, in 2009, 180,777 people were registered to vote, out of a population of 242,124 (Statistics Canada, 2007; Ville de Gatineau, 2009b). While these exclusion criteria are perhaps important, they do represent the exclusion of a significant portion of the population: over one quarter (25.34%) of the population was excluded on the basis of eligibility to vote in elections (largely for being under the age of 18). Second, inclusiveness of presence is likely strongly swayed by self-selection: only 71,244 (39.41%) of 180,777 eligible voters actually voted in 2009. The result of this can be striking, as was shown in 2009, in which the mayoral vote was split amongst five candidates. In this election, the "first-past-the-post" electoral process resulted in the election of the current mayor, after he received 44.11% of acceptable ballots cast. As such, he was chosen by only 17.11% of registered voters. Including those people who are not eligible to vote, this election of mayor this represents the active decision of only 12.77% of the total population of Gatineau. On top of this, a well-known phenomenon of representative democracies (for example, see Putnam, 2000) is the systematic biases in inclusiveness in the election of representatives, in which higher-income, more formally educated, and older voters are disproportionately well-represented. There is certainly no evidence to suggest that this bias is absent in Gatineau.

Interestingly, the proportion of municipal councillors to citizens was described as advantageous, at least in relative terms, by some of my research participants. For instance:

One of the reasons I think municipal politics are important is that they're accessible. You can go and talk to them. They're accountable to you. They're not going to be elected by 60,000 people. They're going to be elected by... 12,000 at the maximum, or not even that.

The inclusiveness of citizens' voices in elections is also problematic. While the voice of each active voter is considered equally in the selection of councillors and mayor, these do not systematically assure any degree of equality of voice in policy positions. For instance, the selection of councillors through the "first-past-the-post" mechanism used in Gatineau (that the candidate with the most votes wins) does not serve as a mechanism for selecting a councillor that

is representative of the policy positions of the voting population, across the board. Instead, a relative minority (perhaps with strong voting presence) can sway elections in important ways. However, even this compromised level of deliberation was not especially evidenced within the Gatineau electoral system. Instead, it seems locally accepted that councillors are chosen largely based on a general sense of approval (which is perhaps consistent with the “leader” model of representation).

Some residents and groups definitely take elections seriously, attempting to elicit explicit policy positions from councillors to inform elections and general civic politics. For example, one group organised an all-candidates meeting, an opportunity for a small public audience to consider how candidates (in this case mayoral candidates) approach important issues. However, in the words of one observer:

The trouble was that they all said the same thing in response to the questions. It was very hard to differentiate between them! Then it comes down to these trivialities of the way they dress, the way they speak, you know. Yeah. Not... not... issues.

Finally, considering that two wards were chosen by acclamation in 2009, almost 13.5% of those voters who actually cast ballots in the City were not given a choice of candidates.

It seems difficult to suggest, once the selection of candidates results in councillors at the municipal table, that the voices of residents are *systematically* “included” in eventual land-use decisions due to the electoral process.

Tied into this process is the inclusiveness of candidates within the electoral race. In Smith’s (2009) evaluation of the participatory nature of some forms of representation within democratic innovations, he considers representative bodies on the basis of “representativeness”: the degree to which representative bodies reflect demographic diversity in the wider population that they are tasked to represent. In Gatineau, it seems that candidates are not likely to be selected to evenly represent the general population, in terms of at least two metrics: education and gender. By gender, the 2009 election appears quite biased, having drawn a candidacy of 83.7% men (41 out of 49), while the elected council holds 73.7% men (14 of 19). Some councillors seemed to recognise this, suggesting that they were successful as councillors because of their professional qualifications and impressive education. By inference, this suggests that councillors consider that disproportionately high levels of education and political experience are required for successful electoral candidates. One councillor suggested that municipal council

was perhaps especially “not inclusive” of certain “types” of people, and was likely to exclude people that were not passionate about politics:

It’s really the passion of the thing. You have to really like it. It’s not your thing if you don’t like the human contact, participating in debates. It’s not your place. Find another job.

While there may be many benefits to the current electoral process, another example from the 2009 election clearly suggests that this tool of selecting candidates does not result in a very reliable representation of citizen policy positions. In this example, two councillors fought for one seat on council in the Gatineau’s Western-most ward (Aylmer). A political newcomer succeeded in winning the seat by a single vote, receiving 1,789 votes, while the incumbent received 1,788: a difference of a single vote. While both of these people have represented important aspects of their ward’s population on council, the issues that they champion and their approaches to engaging residents are quite different. This is highlighted by the words of a resident in this ward:

We finally have a new councillor for this ward. [... The previous councillor] finally lost, but he lost by one vote. I lived here for... for twenty years I sent that damn guy emails at least two, three, four times a year! He never responded to a single email! Never answered, never responded, never commented, never talked to me! Twenty years as a councillor! [The new councillor] comes along, and within a week or two I sent him an email saying ‘congratulations!’ He sends me an email saying ‘thanks very much.’ [...] He’s engaged in the community. [...] So, to actually have a councillor that cares about the community is an enormous step forward.

While this residents’ interpretation is likely more exuberant than others, the contrast between councillors’ approaches might serve as a symbol of the precarious inclusiveness of residents’ voice through council: one vote, cast differently, could have resulted in a remarkably different approach to governance in this ward. If we see councillors as “leaders,” one vote determined which half of voices were to be included from that ward for the next four years.²⁶

In the opinions of residents and councillors themselves, the selection of councillors appears to be quite important in determining the resulting policy positions of the City. Despite the City’s stated commitment to “participatory governance,” civil society advocates seem to view the characters and individual “visions” of councillors as critical in shaping land use. This suggests that Gatineau’s councillors are more “leaders” than “representatives.” While constituencies can be assumed to change policy preferences only subtly over the period of an

²⁶ In this example, 50.03% of voters selected the winner. However, only 35.54% of registered voters actually participated. Thus, this election was decided by only 17.78% of the ward’s 10,205 eligible voters.

electoral campaign, this period of time can result in the selection of councillors with dramatically different policy decisions compared to their “predecessors.” The resulting council therefore includes people who might have relatively polarised policy positions, and some of these people ostensibly interpret their election as mandates to firmly express these opinions. On the one hand, councillors express personal goals of tightening the Urban Development Perimeter and proposing moratoriums on development. Others (in the opinion of some residents) “honestly [believe] that development is good – the more people we have here, the better.” The concern of a local environmental advocate highlights these dynamics:

What I’m worried about is, most mayors... two terms, three terms and then somebody defeats them. So, the next term, what will his or her agenda be? The last election there was one developer that ran for Mayor, but he didn’t win. I don’t know what his agenda... I can’t think that his agenda would have been for saving designated areas. I think he would most likely have preferred development. And these people want to develop where it is easiest to develop and where there’s the most return.

The alternative to the “leadership” model sees councillors as representatives, tasked with communicating the “voice of the people” in council. In Gatineau, there appears to be an important variety in councillors’ approaches to engaging their constituents, and no systematic process for residents to communicate with councillors. As such, we might consider the degree to which councillors use their roles to proactively include and integrate the voices of their constituents. Judging by my interviews with residents, there are differences of opinion on how well these approaches work in allowing residents’ voices to be heard in council. Speaking with the coordinator of a respected civil society organisation, I asked if she knew of ways in which councillors “took the pulses” of their constituents (besides legally required consultations):

I haven’t seen it, no. I suppose that it must be that the councillors know, and that when something’s going on that people talk to them, but I don’t know. I don’t see any structure, apart from the fact that someone sees that there’s a truck that’s arrived and has started digging, when it’s already too late.

Regarding councillors’ consideration of their constituents’ thoughts in land-use decisions, for instance, one councillor told me that:

Well, there’s no consultation if there’s no project. If nothing special is going on, we don’t consult people to consult them.

Another councillor confirmed this, to a degree. He suggested that the typical means by which he was informed of his constituents’ perspectives was through their actively informing

him, often by email: “People know me and they have things to tell me, they aren’t shy about it.” Considering this councillor’s approach as a “process” of inclusiveness of the voices of his residents, it would seem that this councillor is likely to hear the voices of those of constituents who “aren’t shy” about expressing them. It is difficult to say exactly what biases this creates in this system of representation, but certainly it is likely to favour the concerns of people who have the time and the linguistic, rhetorical and political capacity to communicate effectively through this medium. Indeed, a councillor who had served for many years described how his communication with residents had changed with the rise of email:

I remember when I started [...] I got a letter... in five years I’ve had one letter from a citizen. Before, I had two per week. You know? And, people... when they called you and spoke to you in person, they were a whole lot more polite! Whereas, on the internet... people say whatever they want! It’s changed things a lot. It’s easy, on the internet, to say whatever you want.

One might take this expression to suggest that the internet has increased the accessibility of councillors to residents. However, as one councillor informed me, emails easily get lost in this process, in which a councillor will easily get 50 messages in a day. In terms of inclusiveness, a number of residents that I spoke to suggested that communication with councillors was far from accessible. In asking a couple of impassioned residents about how the City had tried to build trust with them throughout the course of a local zoning conflict, they responded:

Here?! You know, we can’t even get our councillor to return our phone calls! He won’t even call us back!

It seems that, for residents and groups that are strongly opposed to specific decisions, especially with regards to projects that council is promoting, these lines of communication were especially ineffective. The failure of council to engage with dissenting voices was prevalent throughout my interviews. One group described this problem in very straight-forward terms:

The problem has tended to be that since we became active in trying to block something big [...] they don’t want to talk to us. They don’t want the input.

However, this experience was not unanimous among residents or civil society groups. Some had good working relationships with councillors, which seemed to serve to increase the “voice” of these residents within council.

If you have a good relationship with your councillor, your councillor can tell you, ‘Look, this is coming up. This is on the radar screen, this might be in the next month, or the other month, but this is coming down the pipe, and you should know so that you can prepare.’

Similarly, some councillors’ reputations and perspectives seem intricately intertwined with local civil society organisations, including both issue-specific groups and residents associations. For example, in notable cases, residents have described councillors as their “voice in council.”

One of the strongest outcomes of my interviews was the sense that the links between civil society groups and councillors was irregular, that instead of councillors acting as “representatives” of the voices of their constituents, some voices were included while others were excluded. Some residents were perceived as positively engaging with their “democracy,” while others were seen as “complainers.” In the words of one councillor:

So, there are citizen groups that do the job of ‘watchdog.’ And that’s alright. [...] So, you’ve got the input – sometimes – that offer you service. It’s not always just to complain.

While this theme of imperfect representation is critical and recurring in my research, it seems that it is coming to the attention of council and is being addressed by some members of council. Although I cannot speak to the effectiveness of this effort, it is interesting that this critique seems to have reached at least one councillor, who recently organised a “citizens evening” in which he invited all residents of his ward to attend – addressing at least some of the proposals for improvements that were suggested by my interview participants.

Inclusiveness among councillors

The selection of individual councillors and their relationships with constituents are not the final steps in determining the inclusiveness of voice on council. The final decisions of council are determined by majority vote, which raises two issues. The first is the process of inclusiveness of individual councillors’ voices within council (irrespective of the degree to which any individual councillor’s voice is “inclusive” of the voices of their constituents). The second is how this decision-making process determines the geographic scale at which land-use decisions are made.

On this first point, a number of factors influence the inclusiveness of individual councillors in the discussions and decisions of council.

In terms of City processes for deliberating issues, councillors are typically each tasked with sitting on a number of committees which serve to inform and make recommendations to the

rest of council. In any issue that is first deliberated by a Municipal committee, the voices of those few councillors that sit on these committees might be assumed to be “heard” more clearly than others. However, final decisions occur through meetings of the entire municipal council, in which debates seem relatively vigorous and for which the recommendations of committees are not always followed. As such, the inclusiveness of council might be seen to be relatively equitable across the board.

However, my discussions with councillors, residents and observers of political processes point to a different dynamic. It seems that deliberations among councillors are heavily influenced by negotiations and alliances between council-members, such that the political capacity of individual council-members is a critical element to the inclusion of their voices. For instance, a local commentator described a recent political alliance that has been quite influential in terms of representation of the Aylmer sector within the wider City of Gatineau:

The previous trio of councillors didn't exactly work together. There were feuds between them. [...] And now, [one of them], not to get isolated, has teamed up with the other two. So, finally we have Aylmer's three councillors sticking together on most issues.

This commentator considers this alliance to be the result of political skill – in which negotiating support was a major determinant of councillors' success in council. If we are to take this at face value, inclusiveness on council is likely slanted toward the more politically capable and more politically opportunistic members.

On the second point – that the process of council deliberation and decision-making shape the relevant geographic scale of council's decisions – the decision-making structure of council serves to include the voices of representatives from across the City, despite that decisions might only influence people within fairly distinct areas. This was explained to clearly by one engaged resident:

I don't have the numbers but I'm quite certain that if you look at the permits, the housing permits, Aylmer's gotta be 70 to 80% of the housing permits. But, they have three votes out of eighteen on what kind of development happens there, right?

The sentiment that Gatineau now controls Aylmer has been a rallying point for civil society groups in the former municipality of Aylmer since the 2002 amalgamation. Indeed, this arrangement of councillors from across a wide region has resulted in the voice of councillors from across the City speaking to issues that often disproportionately impact residents in particular sectors or neighbourhoods. As such, even accepting that councillors might imperfectly

represent the voices of their constituents, this arrangement of council promotes the inclusiveness of voices that promote the interests of the whole City over the interests of the most affected, raising the challenge in Goodin's proposal that democracies should aim to include the voices of "all affected interests" (Goodin, 2007; cited in Smith, 2009, p. 21).

Planning Advisory Committee (CCU)

The CCU, as a committee of seven residents and three municipal councillors, has several specific goals and a number of practical uses outside of these. The official goals of the CCU are to include the perspectives of "normal citizens" in land use and urban planning decisions, however this group also serves as a forum in which land use and urban planning issues are deliberated and debated, thus diverting some of the weight of these discussions from the agendas of the whole municipal council meetings.

In considering the inclusiveness of the CCU, it is notable that the mandate of the CCU is to provide recommendations to municipal council, and that these recommendations are not binding. As such, inclusiveness in the CCU only translates to inclusiveness in the final decisions of council insofar as council considers and accepts these recommendations and their rationales.

Despite its limited, advisory role, both public servants and councillors see the CCU as the primary tool for ensuring the popular inclusiveness of council's governance of land use and urban planning matters. According to one councillor:

It's to assure that the project that we're presenting, or the demands (because we don't only do projects)... to assure that it respects what a normal citizen, when they're going by on the street, wants. In the end, that's the goal.

Both councillors and public servants that I spoke to describe the CCU as a kind of "filter," or "quality assurance mechanism" to ensure that land-use decisions meet the standards of "ordinary" residents:

Here in Gatineau, our citizen members... what we want are ordinary people. They're the people who are retired, the school teacher, the... we're looking for ordinary people. Why? Because in Gatineau we have a whole array of experts that come to the CCU. We have a representative from each of the service centres who come to represent urban planning, either the director or the deputy-director, and we have each of the people in charge of the files that are presented to us. So, here, we have a whole array of specialists, we have the adjoint-director for urban planning in Hull, the head, that comes. And, we have a full-time secretary. So, certainly, here, what we're looking for are ordinary, ordinary people, and we tell them so. We don't want a contractor, or an architect, or a real-estate agent... because we have all of that here.

In assessing the inclusiveness of the CCU, it is useful to consider Smith's discussion of inclusiveness of "mini-publics": small groups of people that aim to be representative of wider populations, convened to deliberate on specific governance issues. Smith argues that, in these cases in which public participation is clearly limited by the size of the group, the democratic principle of equality of *opportunity* to participate might be legitimately traded for equality of *probability* to participate. As such, he considers that inclusiveness of mini-publics be judged by the presence or absence of "systematic" biases in these bodies (Smith, 2009).

In terms of presence on the CCU, the inclusiveness of the CCU is mandated by the *Act Respecting Land Use Planning and Development* (2010), such that CCU resident-members must be chosen among residents of the municipality. Otherwise, the selection of members is left to the discretion of council.

A 2010 City of Gatineau "Recruitment Notice" specifies the current council's "desired profile" for resident-members to the CCU. These criteria read as such:

Interested applicants must be residents of the City of Gatineau, be at least 18 years old, have a good ability to orally express ideas and opinions, in an objective, clear and precise manner; to have tact and good interpersonal skills; to have good judgement and to have a good ability for integrating ideas. (Ville de Gatineau Service de l'urbanisme et du développement durable, 2010)

Moreover, the recruitment notice asks interested persons to submit their *curriculum vitae*, as well as a letter explaining why they wish to become members of the CCU.

This selection criteria and process alone presents several concerns for the inclusiveness of this body. As these criteria come from a recruitment notice, they will influence the eventual composition of the CCU, primarily insofar as they will act as incentives or disincentives for people to apply. The criteria that applicants should have "good," "clear" means of expression and interpersonal skills suggest that these positions will likely attract people with formal skills of expression. This call for residents that are both rational and eloquent is likely to sway the "self-selection" of applicants. Furthermore, as this notice was not translated into English, we can only assume as to the accessibility of the CCU to Anglophones or allophones (people whose mother tongue is neither French nor English) whose French-language skills are less developed. Although bilingualism is common in Gatineau, this question of language should not be treated lightly: even for Francophones, language use and accents are historically tied up with socio-economic status. As such, we might suspect that Anglophones, allophones and some

Francophones would be systematically biased against (“encouraged” to self-exclude) even in applying to the CCU. There appears to be, at least, a lack of systematic assurance to the contrary.

Beyond the “quality” of members’ expressive abilities, the recruitment process aims to select people who have the abilities to express themselves in an “objective” manner, seeking people with “good judgement” and “good ability for integrating ideas.” While, clearly, these would be desirable characteristics for a deliberative body, in terms of inclusiveness these place value on scientific, rationalistic approaches to thought and seem to suggest that, even among the general population, some “judgements” are more valuable than others.

Once applicants have self-selected, the CCU does not seem to have any systematic guidance of the CCU’s selection of applicants or use of the selection criteria. As such, there is no systematic process to avoid the CCU’s interpretation of these criteria (“rational” and “good judgement”) in such a way as to result in a selection of residents that generally share perspectives and values with the existing members of municipal council and CCU members. Thus, this selection process, while likely creating a general bias based on perceived linguistic ability, likely also biases against certain positions and perspectives, and against dissenting voices being present on the CCU.

Indeed, a resident that I spoke with, who was very engaged in her neighbourhood residents association, told me that she had decided not to even try to participate in the CCU:

They choose who they want – and they don’t take people like us, not someone like me. They would never take anyone like me. So, yes, there are people on there! [...]. It’s... the majority of the time, they’re people who will approve what they say.

Further systematic biases in inclusiveness might be interpreted from the “burden” of participation, and thus from the responsibilities and duties of this body. The CCU is a voluntary group that convenes at least monthly throughout the year, on Monday evenings. One councillor described the load that this position places on members:

The CCU, in Gatineau, have 40 or 50 files. We receive them Thursday, and the CCU is Monday. It’s as thick as this... for a citizen. In fact, I can show you, but for a normal citizen it’s not straight-forward! So, the people that are there are devoted, to read this, to measure this, measure that. They get out, go out to the site to see what it’s like... and it’s volunteer work! [Completely volunteer?] Completely. So, we start at five o’clock. People arrive, we buy them dinner. Dinner’s ready. They eat from 5:00 to 5:30, and at 5:30 we start. If people go out of their way – someone lives in Masson and has to go to Aylmer to see a project – we reimburse them the cost of their travel. That’s it. It’s quite the job.

Considering this burden, this councillor admitted that it is difficult to fill these volunteer positions. It seems not-unlikely that the representation on the CCU is thus biased towards people with relative abundance of time, retirees and non-parents, and almost certainly biasing against some shift-workers and evening workers (thus likely biasing towards higher wage-earners). Moreover, considering that meetings are held in the Hull sector of the City, the CCU might bias against an even geographic distribution of participation across the city, with obviously lower personal costs to participation among residents of the Hull sector:

We try to select from all sectors. I mean, surely, considering the amount of work, not many people want to participate, so sometimes we have to... there are more people from Hull sector than from the other sectors [...] but we would like to have representatives from all sectors. We have a representative from Aylmer sector, [...] Two from Gatineau, that's three. And the four others are from Hull.

Considering the load of participation on this committee, it seems not unlikely that the CCU fails to represent certain portions of the population.

Moreover, on a more basic level, one concern is the proportionality of this body, and its ability to represent the diversity of perspectives and interests in the whole of Gatineau with any degree of fidelity. Indeed, with only seven resident members, it seems that this committee might become “captive” to the specific concerns of the individuals selected. For instance, a councillor that has participated in committee proceedings described the concerns of one specific resident-member:

I remember that there was a member that was very, very strong on roof slopes. It tired her that the slopes of roofs were different from one house to another. The civil service adapted. They demanded that contractors build the same roof slopes from one house to another.

Interestingly, while this resident-member's concern might be valid, it suggests that this committee can become sensitive to the concerns of a relative minority, while perhaps missing a number of other concerns, priorities and foci that are present in the wider population. In this regard, even disregarding the other biases described above, the small number of residents on this advisory committee (population 7) seems very unlikely to capture the variation in interests and perspectives of the general population of Gatineau (population 242,124 in 2006) simply by fulfilling the criteria of “ordinary citizen.”

Public service

The public service, as I've noted, is not a publicly inclusive group in the governance of land use in Gatineau. Their mandate is to provide the expertise, administration and implementation to the decisions of council. As such, while it is not inclusive of the general population, the public service is itself "included" in governance in key ways. In both the CCU and the municipal council, the public service is the key provider of information and administrative structure to deliberations and decisions. Despite that council is included in the discussion and has final decision-making power, the public service is important in developing the "vision" of the City and in determining the generalities of the Metropolitan Plan. Similarly, urban planners and other specialists from the public service are present at each CCU meeting, to which they present information and respond to the committee's questions about the various projects and proposals.

The voices that inform and that are heard by the public service, and that are "included" within the processes of the public service is a significant area of critique and concern for local observers of land-use governance. Evidently, the public service engages with developers in discussing and developing nearly all types of proposed land-use changes. The processes through which urban planners work with developers are legally required to be confidential, and are thus hidden from the public. As such, these discussions are directly inclusive only of a few voices, with developers' being prominent.

The relationship between the Planning Service and several civil society groups is also important, though is rarely criticised. The City has a strong relationship with a number of groups, which it consults systematically, though on a voluntary basis. According to a member of one such group, their role is to fill the gap in the City's technical knowledge: "The City does not have the expertise in conservation, and they recognise that, and they don't want to hire anybody to take care of that."

This relationship seemed to have formed, partially, due to past conflict over development and perceived legitimacy. While, in these relationships, the City is obviously not required to follow the recommendation of these organisations, they allow the City to suggest that they consult relevant local organisations, thus increasing this perception of legitimacy.

The processes of gathering and presenting information to the CCU and municipal council involve the active decisions of the Public Service as to which information and which

perspectives are relevant. It is not irrelevant, then, that certain bodies are preferentially included in these decisions. I will return to these issues more in discussing both the control of processes and the considered judgement in decisions-making.

5.1.2. Developers

The presence and voice of developers is certainly perceived to be of critical importance in land-use decisions. Residents perceive developers to be very capable of expressing and forcing their interests on the public service and council. For instance:

The problem is that the City's in these relationships with companies that cause problems, but they can't really comment on them. It's just like [one prominent residential developer], which is hugely involved with being a contributor to the Boucher Forest, and it also is a contributor to the *Jeux de Québec*, so... 'can't touch that hand!'

Bolstered by recent allegations of corruption between many levels of the construction industry and the Quebec Provincial government (the Bastarache Commission), admittedly cynical residents have suggested that land use in Gatineau is likely also subject to corruption. One resident described chains of close connections and business dealings between developers, locally known drug traffickers and the municipal council of the old City of Aylmer. Another, citizen summarised this sentiment:

I'm trying to remain moderately optimistic, but having been to enough of these meetings... There are theories that there's the face of government, that we see now, and then there's actual government that's behind that, whether you want to call them biker gangs, street gangs, organised crime... developers!

Claims that “developers have a lot of power” and “developers have too much power” were ubiquitous among my interviews with residents. Beyond allegations of corruption, the public perception of the increased accessibility that the City grants to developers seems entrenched in the local understanding of land-use governance. Many residents describe developers and public servants as collaborators.

Alternatively, the Planning Service is designed to support developers (and other land-owners) in their development plans, to help developers navigate administrative procedures and to comply with regulations. As these planning processes are generally confidential (other than situations in which they are subject to public consultation or processes of changes to zoning by-laws, etc.), public servants counter that it would be illegal for this arrangement to be otherwise,

for residents to have access to information and to be allowed to participate in more preliminary planning stages of developments.

The accuracy of either of these perspectives is, of course, beyond my ability to ascertain, as it is difficult to determine whether developers' voices are given precedence over the interests of the general public behind closed doors. Nonetheless, the public distrust in the legitimacy of these interactions might be seen as problematic in itself (which I will return to in my discussion of transparency in governance; section 5.4).

5.1.3. Residents and civil society

The inclusiveness of residents and civil society in Gatineau's systems of land-use governance is a complex affair. What I intend to undertake here is to assess the inclusiveness of residents' voices through various forms of consultations and procedures for resident input, as well as the inclusiveness within civil society organisations.

Municipal council meetings

In sixteen sessions per year, council meets to discuss and publicly decide upon municipal issues ranging from Minor Variances and zoning, to Metropolitan Plans and budgets. The City of Gatineau's website highlights these sessions as "opportunities to ask elected officials questions about matters related to municipal affairs."

Indeed, these meetings do serve as regular, predictable times in which residents are granted time to ask questions of council. As such, these council meetings do offer moments in which residents can actively, equally present themselves to engage with council. However, it might be difficult to describe these as moments of popular inclusiveness in governance.

Prior to council meetings, members of the public that wish to pose questions of council have to sign up their names on a list. As described earlier, the proceedings of evening council meetings begins with the councillors' repetition of decisions reached through debates that were held earlier in the day (each with a brief, introductory description). Through my observation of council meetings, many decisions are decided unanimously and without public debate (while debate was ostensibly held earlier in the day). When decisions are not unanimous, councillors in the minority often express their reasons for opposing the decision. After dozens of decisions, public questions are invited.

The process of public questioning begins with residents lining up at two microphones, in two aisles between the rows of audience seating. Public questions are limited to 150 seconds (2½ minutes) each.²⁷ Individual councillors (usually only one) are then given an opportunity to respond, after which the resident must pass their turn on to the next questioner. Questioners cannot respond, clarify or ask for clarifications after councillors have responded, unless they have pre-emptively signed up to pose a second question.

While this process does grant equal access to any resident who is willing and able to attend these public questioning periods, this process likely does limit the inclusiveness of public voice in these question periods.

Primarily, on the question of inclusiveness of presence, it seems that the accessibility of council meetings is questionable. Meetings are often held in City hall, in Hull sector – the downtown of the City of Gatineau. However, council meetings do rotate out to each of the five sectors of the City (ex-municipalities). Even though these rotations do not affect the agenda of council meetings (council does not preferentially discuss issues pertaining to these City sectors during meetings in those sectors), this rotation is noted to have a significant impact on attendance. One commentator noted that:

When it's in Aylmer, it's packed! When it's in Hull, there are a fair number of people, and when it's in Gatineau, there are hardly any people.

This difference in turnout for council meetings is rationalised by this interview-participant as a difference in the importance of civic issues affecting these areas:

There aren't a lot of issues for Gatineau. Name me an issue for Gatineau in the last two years. Name me an issue for Hull? There have been many: the development of Old Hull, the Robert-Guertin arena. Here, there was the pool, there was the development down... there was McConnell, there was development, the Boucher Forest, des Allumetières [a thoroughway to downtown Gatineau and Ottawa]...

This difference in attendance based on the location of meetings, despite that council meeting agendas do not target these meeting locations, suggests that the accessibility of council meetings impacts the willingness of residents to attend. This fits with reason: council meetings

²⁷ In my experience, and those described by residents, council attempts to enforce the criteria that residents use this opportunity to pose a question, and not to attempt to make comments or inform council. These comments, as well as contextual preambles, are limited by the chair of the council who, speaking into a microphone, asks questioner whether or not they have a question to pose to council. Residents' opinions and perspectives are often still communicated, either through these preambles, or through through the nature, phrasing and subject matter of their questions. One resident described this process as "a little bit like a sword-fight underwater."

are often held during the week (generally on Tuesdays), begin at 7:30pm, and can run for several hours (more if they are heavily attended and include many public questions). For Aylmer residents (anecdotally and reputedly the most numerous attendees of council meetings), attending a council meeting in the most Eastern of the City's sectors (Buckingham or Massons-Angers) is likely to take over 40 minutes of driving time each way, which, of course, assumes that the residents have access to cars. Using the current public transit system, this trip would likely take at least twice the time.

Beyond inclusiveness of presence, the format of these question periods likely limits the inclusiveness of voice. Residents described that the prescribed time-limit and format of this process limits the potential of their concern being expressed clearly to council: residents that have engaged in these question periods see barriers to meaningful expression and dialogue. For example, one resident told me that:

I watched, just recently, a municipal council meeting on TV, and I felt so... bad! Hearing people with arguments that were... very well founded... were answered with babble and I thought: How can the Chair, who's there, not say 'That's not the question that he asked you!' That no-one's there to hold people responsible for what they're saying.

On grounds of "means of expression," it seems likely that the process of municipal council question periods involves an important process of self-selection (and self-exclusion). In terms of language, while Gatineau claims to be the most bilingual city in Canada (Ville de Gatineau, 2009c), the City of Gatineau is under provincial jurisdiction and functions primarily in French. English-speaking residents are able to pose questions in English during council, and many councillors are bilingual, but several primarily Anglophone (English-speaking) participants of my research expressed hesitation to express themselves in council meetings. It was not clear to me how much this hesitation influenced the degree to which Anglophone residents' voices were heard, or the degree to which they presented themselves at council meetings.

Perhaps more striking was the general sense of intimidation that some of my interview participants expressed about their having posed questions at council meetings. One resident – a mother who posed questions about a proposed zoning change while holding her young baby – described the challenge of attempting to engage with council through the formally prescribed route:

It's very intimidating... especially because... it's a little bit like everyone's taking a turn at the guillotine. You see people take their turns before you, that are being given random responses to their questions... that are trying, regardless, to speak anyway, but that are being brought to order by the... friggin'... the Chair, who would say: 'That's enough, you can't speak any more.' A little more and there would be a big thug that would come and make you sit down. So when it comes to your turn, you really have the impression that... well, I had the impression that it was a waste of effort. At the same time, I said: 'Well, this is what has to be done.' I don't know. I experienced this as something that's very... very cold.

Other residents described that dissenting voices are generally ignored by council. One example that I witnessed involved a resident passionately refusing to use his allotted time to pose a question, instead attempting to accuse the council of mismanagement of public transit. In the end, he was escorted from the room by two police officers. In the words of one resident, who considers himself to now be ignored for having criticised the City "too often":

They're operating with the façade of democracy. Because they'll let you come. It's not like they're blocking you from coming to a meeting. [...] We had a meeting one time at city hall, where the president of the council [...] said: 'I'll give you a little word of advice. You can come to meetings, but you come to too many meetings.' It was insane. We went to have a meeting with this guy and it was like being in the principal's office. He was basically saying: 'Your methodologies are not good.' As soon as the other councillors see you coming, see you step up to the microphone, see you walk into the room, they all go 'Oh God, here we go again.' He was basically trying to say: 'if you're smart, you won't show up anymore.'

It appears from these interviews that council's question period is not a process that allows the full exploration of citizens concerns and interests, and in which dissenting voices are especially dissuaded. Interestingly, one might argue that these processes disproportionately *include* dissenting voices, by generally making the costs of engagement quite high, and thus selecting for people who are likely to be especially passionate about having their voice heard. As I quoted earlier, one councillor, in describing the process of council's deliberations around these meetings, suggests that "the only side on which [the evening council meetings are] more exciting is with the citizens, who come to ask questions, but unfortunately it's always the same – or almost."

It seems that the inclusiveness of council meetings and question periods are skewed, both in terms of presence and voice. *Presence* appears to be limited by geographic distance to council meetings, which likely increases the proportion of public attendees who have access to cars. Furthermore, this process is likely biased towards the presence of those residents who are able to dedicate several weeknight hours to this process, thus likely towards people who work during

daytimes and who do not have commitments to small children, among others. Finally, it seems that presence at these meetings might be biased towards residents who consider their concerns to be important enough to risk the potential “waste of effort,” and biased towards persistent, dissenting voices. Of those residents that present themselves at council meetings, it seems that their *voices* have several barriers to being effectively included in the discussions and considerations of council with any significant degree of depth and discussion. The voices of the most critical and frequently dissenting voices seem to risk being categorically ignored.

Public consultation

From City documents and conversations with councillors and public servants, the City is described as dedicated to public consultation. Public servants informed me that the City consults in advance of the preparation of policies, for instance, so that the “lives of citizens are included in the policy.” Councillors and public servants seem to view these consultations as important in two ways: to inform decisions and to produce projects that are “globally acceptable.” In the words of one councillor:

The law obliges us to consult the population on all of this. So, we do a first draft and we consult the population. People come to say, ‘Oh, no. I agree, I disagree, these are my questions...’ [...] Here in Gatineau, if the law asks for two consultations, we always do more. We consult more, and we invite people to send us questions through the website.

Among the residents that participated in my interview research, there is divergence in perceptions of the inclusiveness of the City’s processes of land-use governance. Some expressed that the City consults adequately but that residents are not sufficiently responsive to the City’s efforts, while others saw residents as ignored or used opportunistically by the City.

One perspective that resounded throughout my interviews with residents, however, is that the consultations of the City are focused much more on producing “globally acceptable” outcomes than they are on informing decisions. Many citizens have come to equate the term “consultation” with the presentation of information by the City: largely one-way flows of information from the City to the residents, with the City essentially informing the residents of its intentions and then eliciting feedback. Residents described that “here, when they present something, it’s already cooked,” or “everything is already decided.” Another described a recent consultation effort as “a dog and pony show.” A local journalist described what she saw as the general, public impression of consultations with reference to land-use decisions: “The

consultation process means very little to residents who see what happens after a consultation process.” Even some councillors seem to agree:

I’m one of those who thinks that the City’s process of consultation is fairly defeating. It’s more often a session of information on the decisions that have already been taken, or that are going to be taken, than they are real consultations.

The approach of consultation as information session seems to be an appropriate standard according to one councillor’s description of these processes:

Urban planners, with technicians, with everyone, go out into the different service sectors, the different sectors of the City. And, it’s good... people are well-informed, if they’re interested in participating... in coming out and giving their opinions.

Similarly, public servants described consultation processes as being important opportunities to inform attentive audiences of the City’s intentions and rationale. This approach is consistent with public servants and some councillors that I interviewed portrayed the problems of participation and land use: that residents’ fears and concerns are generally misguided, either due to fear and misunderstanding of processes, or out of stubborn unwillingness to consider change. In the words of one public servant:

In general, people don’t want their environment to change. So, often groups will come out strongly, trying to block developments so that their environments don’t change. They would like it to be immutable.

In the opinion of another councillor, this approach – of the City determining the overall form of policies or projects, and then informing and seeking feedback – is an important compromise, rooted in a concern for inclusiveness. This councillor suggests that the residents that engage in consultations are always “the same 15-20 people,” and thus that consultation processes only serve as fora for the voices of engaged residents. Similarly, an urban planner suggested that these processes systematically attract critics. This seemed to be recognised also by residents, who offered some more insight into why this bias might exist. One such resident, frequent public critic of municipal decisions, claimed that “unless you’re really persistent, you’re probably not going to come back.”

Residents frequently described the barriers to finding out how to engage with consultation processes, and even more-so for processes to instigate resident referenda about proposed zoning changes. For instance, in the words of one resident:

When it comes time to contest a decision, it's fairly complicated to figure out how to start, and it seems that it's a labyrinth. You have to figure out how to move through it: 'Who do I have to talk to? What kind of paper do I need? Where do I bring it?'

It seems that the City's consultation processes promote a certain self-selection of residents, favouring those who are engaged enough in land use issues to (1) understand and (2) take the time and effort to be "included" in these processes. Residents and City officials alike bemoaned the lack of widespread engagement in consultations. Certainly, the way that they currently occur could not be considered inclusive, in providing an equal opportunity for citizens to present themselves, and there is reason to suggest that the voices of residents are not strongly or evenly heard – again with dissenting voices being approached by some councillors and public servants as unrepresentative, irrational and problematic.

Zoning changes

In cases of zoning changes, after consultations have taken place, residents can take a further step to voice their concerns: to request a popular registry, which – if a sufficient number and percentage of the neighbourhood's residents agree – can result in a local referendum on the decision.

The process of triggering a registry begins with a "public notice," advising residents of areas adjacent to a proposed zoning change that these residents may request a zoning change (i.e., Ville de Gatineau, 2011b). According to many residents, these notices, similar to public notices of consultations regarding zoning changes, often inform residents in cryptic terms:

Firstly it's Chinese: people don't understand it! It's a code for zoning change, at this number, on some road. You have to decipher it! You can't read it, unless you call the City and ask. It's complicated. It's not easy for citizens to intervene.

As this resident suggests, these documents generally employ technical language to explain proposed zoning changes, making reference to relevant zoning by-laws by number and identifying the current and the proposed zones (as well as adjacent zones) by number throughout the first page of the notice. As such, most of the language is unlikely to be relevant to citizens who have not already studied these processes (professionally or through previous attempts to engage with them). The only geographic language that is accessible informs the reader of the city sector (ex-municipality) and electoral district targeted by the notice. On the second page, a map situates both the zone that is subject to change, and the adjacent zones from which a registry

might be requested, although this map does not situate the zone within the larger city, such that readers must, if possible, orient themselves by identifying adjacent streets on the map. In some instances (i.e., zoning changes within very new, large developments), the streets depicted on this map have not yet been integrated into maps or sites like Google Maps, such that these proposed changes are very difficult to locate without using the City's own planning documents. These notices go on to specify the number of people that must sign the request for it to be successful, and to specify which people in which zones can participate in requesting a registry.²⁸

One resident who was very familiar with this process described the experience of being faced with these public notices:

Listen, it requires a Ph.D. in... I'm exaggerating, but the majority of people can't understand what they say because you have to go onto the City's website, to check out what number corresponds to what place and to what aspect, to figure out 'OK, this is going to change;' you have to already be able to do research, to be able to go see how it works, and then you have 'X' number of days, and you have to go to the City, to Hull [...] It's really very complicated.

Two participants of my project, who together undertook to prevent a zoning change, described the barrier that this process posed to their effort to engage their neighbours:

The story with the registry is that when we want to stop a zoning change, you have to have a certain number of people that sign a request to open a registry. So we did that. We went onto the street, we got the amount of people that were required, so they had to open a kind of vote. And the vote was [...] in Hull, at the City Hall. [...] One day, [...] from five to seven. [...] If it had been here, in Aylmer... no no, it has to be done at the clerk's office. So we didn't have enough people to go out, so we lost that battle, unfortunately. Because, I'm sure that the people didn't want this project, but they weren't going to go to the point of going all the way to Hull to sign.

This process again suggests that these registries and referenda are likely to disproportionately include the voices of strongly concerned residents. These residents assumed that "the people didn't want this project," which I did not undertake to verify. Critically, however, neither does the current process of zoning change: instead, the default decision (as described by the public notice, as well as a public servant during my interviews) in the event of insufficient opposition through these prescribed channels, is that proposals be accepted without the need to be approved by residents. This is not trivial, or rare. According to a municipal urban planner that I interviewed:

²⁸ For instance, residents must have lived in a given area for at least 6 months, and only one member from any home can sign the request.

Often, in cases of minor projects... there is no-one at the consultation! Because it's clear. Either because it's quite clear and banal, or because people don't see it – the signage, because we can't call everyone, eh? – and lastly because they've telephoned to the City and they spoke with me and they don't need to displace themselves because they already know the response.

Within civil society groups

Civil society groups – issue-specific groups as well as residents associations – are treated by some councillors and residents as mechanisms through which council is made aware of, and kept accountable to, the interests of residents. For instance, one resident who has contributed significantly to her residents association explains that the City knows “that in Aylmer, it's the residents associations that react. So, their role is to engage and inform people, their residents.” Moreover, she claims that “the City is conscious of the importance of these associations. They don't throw sticks in our wheels.”

Indeed, residents associations and issue-specific groups have succeeded in organising some notable resident-centred interventions in land-use governance, successfully spurring City-wide discussion of the pace of urban growth and halting specific developments (at least temporarily). In some instances, even councillors described these groups as important in balancing a governance scenario that too easily overlooks the interests and opinions of residents.

However, the partial formalisation of the roles of some civil society groups (and thus their preferential inclusion by councillors and the public service) suggests that I must also address these organisations in terms of their representativeness or inclusiveness of the general population.

My research seems to suggest that, as with the inclusiveness of residents in consultation processes, civil society groups are especially inclusive of the voices and concerns of relatively small, tight-knit groups. In my focus on Aylmer, it seems that central figures rotate among the executive positions of the associations within this sector, with some important social connections even extending periodically into council:

The people that are involved in a community are almost always the same. [...] It's always the same people that are talking. [...] We always see the same people in the committees, interested people who give time, who volunteer! They're always the same! There are maybe 50 people in Aylmer that we find when we do an activity, that we see at the socials. [...] The people who are interested in giving 60 hours of volunteer time per week!

Within the wider City of Gatineau, another participant explained the same phenomenon:

It's always the same people. Well, actively, there are perhaps 400-500, but you know? It's always the same people. We all know each other.

It seems that these groups serve as an important network, providing the majority of the support for local engaged civil society. A local councillor notes how these groups (which he describes as the “spirit of community”) also shape the political agenda:

I see people who are in the thick of it. These are the people who have been here for a long time. [...] People who get engaged in the community. [...] So, it's my link with the community and, for me, it's extremely important.

The coordination of the efforts of these groups against urban sprawl is relatively recent. In a recent, coordinated effort of some key associations in Aylmer's engaged community, five residents associations and three issue-specific groups wrote a letter in which they denounced the pace and character of development in the Aylmer sector, especially focusing on the proposed housing development on a historical horse racetrack (the “Hippodrome,” also referred to as “Connaught Park”). This prompted an effort that was seen as resident-led, that apparently shut down a public consultation meeting and (at least temporarily) convinced council to halt a proposed development.

It is clear that the mutual support among this community has promoted political change and that their voices have been “included” in political debates to some degree. A local commentator described this civil society coalition as a “part of the democratic process”:

Well, I think they realised that they had to do something, and the citizens... you know... we're stronger united than we are going individually. [...] So they realised with that kind of an approach, it's a heck of a lot better than just citizens going to City council, and the question period and standing up and getting three minutes and that's it, you know.

However, the tight-knit core of this association of civil society groups opens them up to the critique of illegitimacy and unrepresentativeness. For instance, the Connaught Park protest, which was coordinated through this core of active residents and then caught the attention of several newspapers, has since been downplayed as the work of an exuberant minority, as an example of self-interested NIMBYism, and as a group of people that are irrationally opposed to any change.

Again, it seems nearly impossible to validate either opinion about the legitimacy of these groups. However, my interviews do shed light on some factors that likely affect inclusiveness within these groups.

When I asked engaged residents about the ways that they were involved with civil society organisations and direct action efforts, some residents reported strong, principled commitments to these efforts, having taken significant time off work, while some described having become involved more strongly after retiring. Meanwhile, people that were fully employed, with some exceptions, expressed difficulties in being adequately engaged. In describing their activities with civil society and land-use governance processes, these people described having spent significant amounts of time researching, attempting to navigate City processes for citizen engagement, and attempting to inform and engage fellow residents. These residents described that at “heights” of engagements these processes felt like full-time jobs. Many of these engaged residents expressed the importance of their roles as leaders: that civil society action occurred largely through the capacity and efforts of these people. Meanwhile, they recognised that the majority of people lack the time or energy to devote to these processes:

I can understand the pressures. The idea that you’re saying, yes, if we could draw all these people together, that would be ideal. But is it achievable? I’m not sure. Everybody has only so much energy and things that they can donate.

As such, at least within the core of engaged residents, those that are able to devote significant time to these efforts seem likely to be somewhat biased toward people with higher incomes and employment flexibility, or towards retired people. Otherwise, it seems that some of the most engaged residents are so engaged “just by sheer necessity”: those that feel most potentially impacted by proposed policies and projects. One of these people, engaged by necessity while trying to prevent land-use changes that would likely have threatened their livelihood, clarified this potential bias for me, saying that: “The people who get involved, usually they have a reason for it, right? It’s not just because they want to be good Samaritans.” Similarly, this resident explained the exclusion of voices through these groups:

There are very few people who want to step out, because for the most part people aren’t committed to it. It’s not life and death for them. ‘Oh it’s a shame to see the trees get cut down.’ ‘Oh, we lost another couple of swamps here.’ But they’re not living it to the same degree.

While these engaged residents were described by some as “socially committed,” considering the incentives and disincentives that influence engagement in civil society, it appears likely that these groups are likely not representative of the wider interests of the community. Instead, these groups likely systematically attract people that are already engaged, that are

threatened by or interested in particular processes and decisions, and that are especially available to devote time and resources to these causes. Furthermore, according to a number of residents, these groups likely especially include residents in the older, more established communities and thus fail to include the voices of many residents in the more recently-developed areas.

Considering the barriers to engagement in civil society, a number of people expressed that the lack of public voice in land-use governance seemed self-reinforcing. This idea seems to hold with the dynamics of citizen engagement described by both City councillors and civil society groups, in which the lack of engagement has reduced the perceived legitimacy of citizen engagement processes for both groups. However, the catch is that if engagement is perceived to be low both in civil society groups and in the City's formal civic engagement processes, so is the perceived legitimacy these groups and processes. For inclusiveness, this might result in a polarisation: as formal processes lose perceived legitimacy, civil society groups become more important as "inclusive" means of communication of residents' concerns. However, in doing so these groups become open to critique regarding their abilities to represent "non-engaged" residents.

5.1.4. Inclusiveness and the Federal and Provincial governments

With regards to the Provincial and Federal levels of government, what emerged from my interviews mostly came from discussions with local non-government organisations that attempt to coordinate between the three levels of government, developers and civil society organisations. In the perspectives of these participants, the Provincial and Federal governments do not appear to be very inclusive of the presence or voice of local citizens, and often have no mandate to do so. For instance, Public Works and Government Services Canada is tasked with buying and managing property for the Government of Canada. With many Federal public service buildings in the city of Gatineau, this department has a significant impact on the landscape. However, it appears that the general federal public service is not accessible to local citizens or civil society groups:

I can't work with the Federal: there's no local door! I call it 'Planet Canada.' It illustrates what it is. It's there, but it isn't there. It has an impact: all the people who commute in cars, all the people who work on the territory, all the buildings. All of this has an impact on the landscape, but... I don't have a local door! Like... Montreal has 50,000 industries, but they can go see each individual industry and say: 'Do you want to participate in our campaign X?' But I... I have one big one and I can't speak to it.

However, the mandate of the National Capital Commission (NCC) – a federal crown corporation – is more specifically inclusive. The NCC’s “integrated approach” to planning specifically lists “public participation” as a consideration. The scale of participation is perhaps complex, however. The NCC’s website claims that it is responsible for “planning and developing the Capital Region to reflect Canada’s evolution as a nation” (National Capital Commission, 2010). Thus, the website describes an “open and ongoing dialogue,” as well as an approach to public consultations, that aim to allow Canadians from across the country to contribute to planning the nation's capital. This suggests that the NCC can act as a facilitator for nation-wide public participation in planning.

However, on the most local level, the NCC’s “Regional Planning Principles” lists the need for participation to include federal, provincial and municipal planners. This suggests the NCC’s role as a coordinator and partner in regional development, which is reflected in some of its initiatives. The “Choosing our Future” initiative, for instance, aims to integrate planning between the City of Ottawa, the City of Gatineau and the NCC. This project involved the hosting of a number of public events to engage local residents and businesses, as well as industry experts, in establishing a shared vision of the future of the region (City of Ottawa, 2011).

Unfortunately, local citizens don’t seem to see the NCC’s processes as reflecting the voice of local people. Instead, the NCC is considered a forum in which the regional scale interests of “developers” can be given a voice, as is suggested strongly by one citizen.

He was a developer. He was a guy who had land on the territory. He was the president of the NCC! I mean... he was there for fourteen years. Talk about conflict of interest!

This sentiment seems to be somewhat common among citizens, especially those concerned with local green spaces and biodiversity. A naturalist, considering a stretch of forested shoreline along the Ottawa river, describes a locally prevalent the lack of certainty about who’s voices and interests influence the NCC:

What influence are these contractors and developers going to have with the City, or the NCC. And depending on who is thinking and running the NCC [...] the NCC has flown certain ‘test balloons’ from time to time, saying that maybe they should open up the area.

In terms of Provincial institutions, the Commission on the Protection of Agricultural Land (“*Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec*”; CPTAQ) is locally engaged in the protection of agricultural land with a mandate of ensuring that the “general interest” of the

protection of agricultural lands and activities are upheld. Thus, the CPTAQ does not have a mandate for local inclusiveness in decision-making.

Some citizens and commentators consider the CPTAQ's processes for removing land from agricultural zones to be more "inclusive" of developers than of non-developer individual land-owners, with some considering the CPTAQ to be possibly corrupt. In the words of one resident:

I've dealt with individuals trying to get changes, which is virtually impossible, versus developers getting changes, which seems to be easier.

The Provincial Ministry of transportation and Ministry of Sustainable Development, of the Environment and of Parks appear to also have mandates of managing the territory in the interest of the general, provincial population. As such, the decisions of these ministries appear to not be directly inclusive of citizens' voices locally, with mandates to oversee province-wide issues. However, the Province has established one important process for ensuring that local citizens' voices are heard in Provincial development projects: consultation processes managed by the Office for Public Hearings on the Environment ("*Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement*"; BAPE) were initiated to allow for citizens to contribute information and express concerns toward the outcomes of a proposed development. These processes are "tiered," with residents being able to request several levels of increasingly in-depth processes in which to express their concerns. However, while the expressions of these engaged citizens does become "known" to the ministries involved in development, and to the developer themselves, there is no binding outcome and no direct inclusiveness of citizens in decision-making (Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement Québec, 2009).

5.2. Popular control

Smith (2009) uses "popular control" to assess the degree to which citizens can influence and control processes of governance: the ability to set the agenda and prevent its "capture," the potential for real impact on the outcome of a process, as well as the ability to prevent the limitation of participation to "safe" issues, thus suppressing conflict and dissenting voices.

In borrowing this analytical concept of popular control, I have somewhat expanded its use to not only assess whether or not governance in Gatineau is controlled by "the people," but also to assess *who does* have this control. Obviously, my focus on the City's goals of participatory governance leads me back to the question of popular control, but in recognising that governance

is a complex system of institutions, actors and processes, I also try to assess chains of control that might extend or limit the actual reach of the public.

5.2.1. City government

Within Gatineau's governance system, control of many processes that shape land-use change certainly resides strongly with municipal government – although within the bounds of some Provincial and Federal jurisdiction, as I have mentioned. Thus, while limited by Provincial authority and law, Gatineau's municipal government (through Strategic Plans, Metropolitan Plans and Urban Development Plans) has the ability to determine many aspects of the “macro” scale of land use, as well as determining important aspects of the more specific details of land use in urban growth (through case-by-case zoning changes, Minor Variances and plans for particular projects). As I have described, control is described by public servants as hierarchical, with a statement of vision overarching the technical regulations, then refined and implemented through Minor Variances. Public servants suggested that this hierarchy of control, from principles to specific decisions, allows land use to remain objective, accountable and orderly:

The demands that you have from different people would be judged in terms of these large base principles that you've adopted. Without that, if you don't have these basic principles, you will accept as a function of whether or not you like something or you don't. For instance, somebody wants to install a big shopping centre somewhere? We would say 'Oh yeah, I like you.' No! We had decided that these big shopping centres would be in *these* two big areas.

However, councillors are often quick to point out that they currently have limited control over elements of land use that are most salient to the public. For instance, in one councillor's opinion, residents misinterpret changes to the landscape as changes in political will:

From one day to the next, the bulldozers come in and there are houses and houses as far as the eye can see. But even then, it's not like there was a change in attitude or politics. The zoning was all in place already.

As such, despite the importance of the City's control over zoning, in cases where land has already been zoned and planned, it becomes unfeasible (perhaps due to political risk) for the City to prevent new development. This is an important temporal aspect to land-use governance, wherein one municipal government can control elements that will only come to bear on physical land-use changes well later. This is certainly, in part, because residents seem to be more reactive to the *events* of land-use change (over which the sitting council has relatively little control) than

to the processes of zoning and planning (during which council has more latitude to shape outcomes).

In cases in which zoning already allows development, the City seems to have more limited control over the outcome of land use. In the short term, the City has a certain restraining power over development through the “deferral” process, with which it can ensure that land, regardless of its zoning, can be kept from being developed for “5, 10, 15, 20 years.” In the words of one public servant:

Because there is still a lot of land within the city that are... that are available... and necessarily we know what that will bring, eh? When you go farther and farther without filling in the frame of the centre-town. We’re talking about more fields... If there’s a fire it will be farther, so we’ll have to build new fire stations. The bus service, well, it will have to be farther, and there will be a city between them. So, there is enough pressure from different promoters that want their lands to come out of deferral.

This deferral process is important in implementing the intent of the Urban Development Perimeter, allowing the City to attempt to control the location and pace of development, and possibly allowing the City to impact housing density by restricting development to more central lands. This process is described mostly as an economic issue: the City has recognised the need to defer peripheral lands in order to minimise the costs of fulfilling its own legal responsibility to extend municipal services (fire prevention, public transit, road maintenance, etc.) to peripheral areas. According to this public servant, deferral does not prevent development, but rather serves to “pace” it: “The day that our services will have reached all the way out there, when development has reached that point, we’ll take it out of deferred zoning.”

Once land is zoned (and is thus outside of much of the direct control of the City) incentives become a more important tool (i.e., tax incentives to develop within the downtown as opposed to on the rural fringes). Otherwise, the City depends on regulations – policies and modifications to zoning by-laws (i.e., Minor Variances) – to shape the parameters of developments.

These tools offer the City some procedural recourse to impact physical land-use changes and allow the City to “control the agenda” in some ways. However, these are certainly “political” processes and the use of these tools (as well as failing to use them) is up to council. For instance, depending on the way that the City sees its role, the City can choose what falls into

the definition of “fairness” in treating land-owners and developers. For instance, in the opinion of one councillor:

Given that the zoning has already been done, there are quite a number of developers that are sitting on lands for seven, eight years, paying taxes, hoping that some day there will be a demand for it. You know? [...] We can't remove someone's zoning, because that belongs to someone... You know? You can't remove the right for someone to build.

However, some residents have criticised the City's approach to already-zoned land as an abdication of responsibility:

No one wants to take responsibility for what the developers did, so everybody backs away from the fact that this was authorised by somebody... or is happening at all! Nobody wants to take responsibility for anything at all... so they're saying that: 'You should talk to the guys in [the previous mayor's] era.'

In the face of these criticisms, it seems that the City's legal boundaries of control are somewhat unclear regarding development on land that has already been zoned. For instance, the idea of a “moratorium on development” has been proposed numerous times in the past decade, several times gaining significant popular support, but repeatedly downplayed as legally questionable.

When the City's principles finally come to bear on individual decisions about specific areas, the control mechanisms of the City seem to be somewhat more moderate. As such, negotiation appears to be a major tool of the City, influencing major aspects of specific developments. One councillor, describing a specific example, stressed the importance of negotiation in achieving the City's goals:

There was another example. [...] A big building that was being built on Highway 5, in the business park. The citizens opposed it, while the zoning allowed us to build something worse! It allowed industrial! But, in negotiating with people, finally what we passed by the City, with the developer, we put a buffer between their houses and the project on which we planted trees. [...] It could have been a tire factory and there wouldn't have been a buffer. We couldn't have stopped it. But, we negotiated so that the City would be nice, the citizens would be happy, and the developer! I think he created between 60 and 75 jobs with that! So, it was worthwhile for the City.

Overall, it seems that the City has a flexible set of tools with which it might achieve goals, but is only actually “in control” of land-use change within fairly limited boundaries. These boundaries are the outermost limits of “popular” control through City processes. However, as these limits are flexible, some of the City's tools are dependent on political will and, therefore, the strength of these tools is sensitive to popular pressure.

Municipal council

In considering both the municipal council and the Planning Advisory Committee (CCU), I turn again to Smith's (2009) discussion of "mini-publics".²⁹ Smith considers several components of the processes that potentially reduce the control of participants in mini-publics. Most notably, these include issues of control over the choice of the issues that are being deliberated, the way that these issues are framed, the selection of the experts that address the group, and control over the outcomes of these mini-publics.

Without revisiting the discussion of representativeness in Gatinéau, it is first important to assess the degree to which control by councillors corresponds to control by the public. Iris Marion Young criticises what has become a norm for elected representation, about which she considers that "in most actually existing democracies, the moment of accountability is weaker than the moment of authorisation" (Young, 2000, p. 132; cited in Smith, 2009, p. 50). In Gatinéau, for instance, the actions and decisions of councillors are not controlled by their constituents between elections: there is no process for recalling councillors, leaving accountability and control in the threat of non re-election. Moreover, it seems that even these electoral processes involve some important limitations to public control and accountability. The fact that negotiations between candidates can produce the election of councillors by acclamation suggests that even the electoral tool of accountability and public control can be weak. While some councillors make great efforts to engage with their constituents regularly, the formal procedures of representation fail to ensure that residents are guaranteed significant control over even general aspects of the municipal land use agenda, much less over individual details. As such, my discussion of popular control through the mechanism of council is limited from the start.

Although the lines of control between residents and council are imperfect, through interviews with engaged residents it seems that residents assume council to be capable of wielding significant power over the character of land use. Indeed, within City government, council is certainly an important locus of control over the agenda of the City.

However, as I have noted, within the overall picture of control over land use it seems that councillors are perhaps more limited than some residents assume. In fact, the balance of control

²⁹ Smith defines "mini-publics" as small deliberative groups that are (typically) set up to represent a wider population's interests, concerns and values in a given decision-making area.

between (the 19-person) council and the (3000-person) public service presents some obvious concerns. In the words of one councillor:

It's a big machine to flip around, three-thousand employees, or close... so you have to be patient.

Some councillors, including several that are attempting to improve mechanisms for public communication and transparency, described these limitations as a kind of institutional momentum. Some residents also expressed concerns of not being “convinced that the councillors are engaged at day one”:

The promoters start talking to bureaucrats and at some point they involve the councillors, but by the time they involve the councillors the game plan is all cooked up, right? Everything is clear and the councillors can only interfere or tinker at the edges, unless they stop the project altogether which is a political risk.

A councillor confirmed this dynamic, saying that: “Technically, we have the final word on the management of the landscape, but all the evidence points the other way.” According to some councillors, their “final word” often occurs in passing, in the midst of a constant flow of proposals prepared by the public service. Indeed, it seems that the proposals that are put on the table, from the fine scale of Minor Variances to fairly large scale of policies and vision statements, very often originate in the public service. As I will discuss further in the next section, the public service likely determined many aspects of how these proposals are prepared and how much councillors are practically able to know about the decisions they are making. Rebecca Neaera Abers sees this dynamic in the relationship between elected officials and techno-bureaucratic administrations as a critically limiting factor, to some degree demobilising more radical proposals and certainly limiting the scope of the council’s agenda (Abers, 1998; cited in Smith, 2009).³⁰

Several councillors noted that understanding and experience with the processes of council was crucial to their abilities to impact the outcomes of decisions. For instance, one councillor described a vote about a relatively minor project in his own electoral district. Despite that he felt that this project was unlikely to affect residents in any other district in the city, he failed to gain the support of other councillors. In his opinion, he lost this vote because he failed to recognise the importance of requesting a technical change to the voting procedure:

³⁰ Abers (1998, 2003) considers the example of elected participatory budgeting councils in Brazilian municipalities.

In this case, it was a bit of inexperience on this file, because I should have asked for a vote by show-of-hands, which would have made people compromise, rather than... in the vote that was taken, I opposed, and they asked others if there were other oppositions and no-one raised their hands. If we had asked for a vote, I would have had a chance, maybe not to win, but I would have had some more votes of support.

In terms of controlling the agenda, councillors noted having pulled issues from meeting agenda, which one councillor claimed was a relatively informal process.³¹ As such, depending on individual councillors' relationships with other councillors (to convince the majority of council to agree), they appear to have a certain degree of negative (subtractive) control over council agendas. I did not hear of councillors adding issues to the agenda in this fashion.

Planning Advisory Committee (CCU)

Similar in some ways to municipal council, the CCU is established to represent the population, although officially this role is to consider issues from an experiential perspective. It is notable that residents of the City have no control to choose or recall CCU resident-members. Furthermore, as all of the files that the CCU considers are confidential, the wider population has no opportunity to impact (or to even know about) the CCU's deliberations. However, considering the CCU as one route where "popular" concerns are able to weigh on aspects of land use, I will briefly consider the processes of control within the CCU in terms of the scope and issues under its consideration, its sources of information and its control over the depth of its enquiries and the outcomes of its efforts.

Council submits issues for consideration by the CCU. As such, CCU resident-members have no control over what they are tasked to consider. Moreover, the scope within which issues can be considered is similarly restricted. Similar to councillors' control of the municipal council agendas, the CCU meets to consider a specific agenda, the elements of which are prepared and formulated by the public service (sometimes in discussion with the people and institutions that are requesting land-use changes, such as developers). As such, according to official procedures, the CCU sees proposals in relatively late stages, usually immediately before these are submitted to councillors for their officiation. These are presented as whole proposals, which the CCU can choose to accept or refuse. Because public servants are present for CCU meetings, refusals can result in public servants returning to negotiate with developers, which suggests that the CCU

³¹ Councillors seem to pull items especially in cases in which they need more time to consider and consult on an issue.

does have informal power to “tinker at the edges” of these proposals. However, in general, this scope of control appears to be very minimal.

Certainly, with regards to land use, the CCU is very clearly tasked to consider land use issues within the frame of current policies and zoning regulations, without formal ability to call these policies and regulations into question. For instance, in the words of one councillor:

You know, sometimes citizens will say ‘Why don’t you make him plant 15 trees?’ Well, it’s because we can’t always tell the contractor, ‘Go! Plant trees! Plant trees!’ The regulations allow us to require him to plant one, in the front. In negotiating, we always ask him to put more, but there are limits.

This councillor sees the mandate of the CCU as limited to details: to offer opinions within a narrow scope. This approach is to use the CCU as a kind of filter, to ensure that the public service hasn’t forgotten some obvious details:

Nothing comes to the CCU that hasn’t been worked over for months, and returned to the contractor’s drawing table... It isn’t simple, so that’s what we have to make understood: that there’s a lot of work in these. But, sometimes it’s work that’s so technical, or so asleep at their desks, that they’re missing some little things: ‘Oh my! It’s true that we forgot that! That’s super-important!’

As with council, the CCU is described as being very heavily burdened with deliberations, often tasked with considering hundreds of pages of technical information within short time-spans (typically four days). As all of the CCU resident-members are volunteers, even councillors seemed to consider that it was a heavy burden for them to be able to consider all of the information, which likely reduced resident-members’ abilities to express the full extent of their limited control over these processes. Furthermore, the information format, language and presentation – especially under such limited time frames – likely limits the scope of the CCU’s discussions, their consideration of possibilities and their willingness to raise alternatives (as is perhaps also somewhat the case with council).

The public service also acts as a major source of both technical and procedural information for the CCU. The selection of public service “resource people,” as well as occasional external sources, is generally outside of the control of CCU resident-members. Most often, these resource people will be the same planners that are “in charge” of the very projects under consideration, people who are professionally tasked with preparing proposals and interacting with developers. CCU members either ask questions of these resource people, going through issues case-by-case, or, “if the project is very complicated,” public service-members will

introduce the issues with an information presentation. As such, the public service is very likely to have has a large amount of control and authority over the information and technical details that are both open to consideration and that are considered most appropriate.

The CCU is a purely advisory body and thus has no binding or direct procedural control over the outcomes of issues that it considers. One councillor described how frequent concerns of CCU resident-members often become informally integrated into the public service's negotiations with developers and land-owners, for instance promoting the planting of trees, aesthetic considerations like harmonising roof slopes within neighbourhoods, or structural concerns such as requiring gutters on sheds. However, once recommendations of the CCU reach council, they can be simply accepted or refused, at the discretion of council members.

Again, the "top-down" control of information and agendas in the CCU is likely to dampen proposals for more radical and holistic changes, even within the limited latitude of committee's power. Considering that, overall, the CCU is unlikely to be representative, the lack of control of this body is perhaps not a diminishment of participatory governance principles, as more control by the CCU (without a reform of the selection and recruitment processes and of the operations of this body) could lead to a more biased governance system.

Public service

After council has produced decisions regarding land use issues, it then falls to the public service to design the implementation of these decisions. With regards to the implementation of policies, this process was a major source of criticism by residents and councillors. For instance, even in the eyes of some councillors, the City's policy on "urban villages" appears to be misused by urban planners, with one councillor suggesting that public servants "[are] using the language that they want to be able to sell a project." In the context of some consultation processes, councillors, residents and political observers seem to believe that there is often a lack of "buy-in" by the administration for participatory efforts. As such, even when consultation processes and policies seemed to produce "the right words," the transition to "how well they're being followed up" appears to be opaque and unsatisfying.

In sum, the potential biases of control within council and the CCU (i.e., control over the information and procedures of council; control over subsequent implementation) suggest that the

City is not equipped to fully or equitably represent the concerns and interests of residents in controlling the processes of land-use governance.

5.2.2. Civil society

Other than through elections, the control over political processes is largely limited to non-binding processes (municipal council question periods, consultation processes, etc.). These processes are often organised and led by the City and suffer similar limitations as do processes of CCU and councillor deliberations discussed above: citizen-participants have very limited control over the scope, sources and format of information, and outcomes of these processes.

Furthermore, residents frequently described how City-oriented civic engagement efforts offered them limited time to prepare, unless they were notified directly by their councillors. Residents claimed to that these municipal processes limit their abilities to adequately consider consultation meeting agendas, “to look at [them], assess [them], pose questions of their councillors or of their city bureaucrats, and prepare to intervene.”

The city – the morning and the afternoon of a city council [meeting] – they get together and they prepare the night’s session so that they can have the debate. It’s not exactly *‘in camera’* because you can get those on the internet. So, they can debate, but they don’t debate in front of everybody. [...] But what happens is that, based on that discussion, sometimes things are pulled from the agenda. That’s why it’s as if the agenda for ‘tonight’s’ City council meeting is printed at dinner time. So, unless you go there, you won’t be sure that your thing is there.

Similarly, the scope of civic engagement processes (consultations, council question periods) has been strongly criticised by residents, prompting coordinated boycotts of some such processes by civil society groups:

The way that the consultations are set up doesn’t let the public express themselves, because they direct the consultation. They say: ‘Here’s a map. Where will you put the park? Where will you put the... whatever?’ That’s not what we want! We want to sit and ask, ‘Do we want a development? What type of development? What will it mean, this development?’

In the context of land-use changes on specific lots, some residents expressed that the usefulness of consultation processes is compromised by the late stage at which residents are consulted. Even an urban planner described that consultations at this stage often result in only the changing of “little details, to compensate... to limit the negative impacts.” However, a public servant explained the City’s legal boundaries:

We're restrained by the law. There are things that we cannot do before-hand. [...] It would be like you, you were at your house and you decided to put in windows or a shed behind your house, and the City said 'OK. We're going to do a consultation with the neighbours, to see if they're alright with the shed that you're thinking of.' For the time being, it's not possible.

As I have described, there are processes in which residents can engage, in which they can trigger referenda about zoning changes. As such, there is at least one tool in which residents have binding control, although this only allows negative control: while residents can block land-use changes, these decisions do not prevent these and similar proposals from resurfacing. According to one resident, previously rejected zoning changes often resurface at more opportune moments:

If there's too much opposition, they say 'Oops, maybe we should wait.' Then, when it is summer, they say 'Well, there is a minor correction to the bylaws on this part to allow... whatever.' But, in the summer, everyone's on vacation. No-one reads the newspaper and it passes like that, and it's a *fait accompli*.

Moreover, Quebecois cities are only required to hold referenda when zoning is being modified outside of the five year "Metropolitan Planning" periods, and even this unique tool of binding resident control is, according to one resident, being reconsidered by the Provincial government. One councillor explicitly described what she considers the problem with the current process of referenda allowing too much control to be leveraged by a very small minority of residents:

I don't think it's normal that a project can be able to be killed by only five citizens! [...] It isn't normal that a project goes to referendum, paid for by the whole City of Gatineau, because of five people, laughing hysterically, want to keep a field behind their house!

It appears that the extent of popular control through these processes of civic engagement depends on how residents' concerns are perceived within council: whether their interests are seen as reasonable, or as "laughing hysterically." As such, residents and residents associations have widely expressed feeling disempowered by formal civic engagement channels, in which their concerns are treated as irrelevant or illegitimate. In this context, some prominent civil society groups have organised themselves into coalitions around central issues; carefully supporting commonalities among the groups, while avoiding overstepping the interests of their constituents. Some groups describe their approach to "control" over land-use issues as a process of "diligently" developing strategies and making efforts to be seen as respectful and "reasonable"

by the City. The strategic success of these coalitions has meant that a certain, limited control is now exerted by organised civil society groups. Unfortunately, as I explored in the context of the inclusiveness, the rise of these groups likely presents some biases of control among the population. Without revisiting these arguments, it is likely that the control exerted by these groups allow some degree of increased control to be exercised by relatively charismatic residents, those with relative abundances of time, ability and experience, and those with relatively greater personal interest, sense of threat or other motivations to become engaged. This is certainly the opinion of one councillor, who claimed that the organised civil society actions around the Connaught Park development represented the opinions of a relative minority, while many other residents had come out to take part in what, for the City of Gatineau, was perhaps a fairly innovative approach to planning development.

Some civil society groups, especially those issue-specific groups that have formed consultative partnerships with the City, obviously have more leverage than others, at least in communicating their interests to the public service and council, which might be seen as increased “control” within land-use governance. However, it came up several times in my interviews that these groups likely moderate their recommendations in order to maintain their relatively privileged positions, and sometimes due to their dependence on funding from the City. While certainly some groups still actively criticise the City, the possibility of both losing access to decision-makers and of losing funding seems to be a concern for at least some of these groups. One member of such an organisation describes how, as their role “evolved into a partnership,” they learned to “watch what [they] say.”

Viewed as a whole, while many of the City’s approaches to land-use governance do make use of resident consultations and partnerships with civil society groups, it would be difficult to suggest that these relationships and interactions allow an even distribution of popular control.

Finally, several of my interview participants suggested that some elements of civil society action can be limited and controlled by developers. The most important of these, raised by several people, was the threat of lawsuits. In several cases, residents described developers presenting local activists with “slap suits” to intimidate residents into “backing off.” For instance, in the case of several residents who very publicly intervened to stop a contractor from deforesting an area for housing development, allegedly without a permit, one resident described that:

They then got a letter – this is about four or five months later – from the developer, suing them for lost time. And the guy was doing the work without a permit! You know? This is what I’m getting at. They went there, and they sat there and interrupted the construction, and they get threatened with what we would call a slap suit now, for intervening!

Furthermore, a journalist explained that one local newspaper has similarly received threats of law suits, following their coverage of urban development. However, these threats have never been carried out:

But they *can* sue us just to... like what Conrad Black used to do! He would sue people left and right just to put a chill on everything. Even if you lost, it costs money just to defend yourself! And, especially small papers! We don’t have the money to hire lawyers...

Many residents that I spoke with consider developers to be able to define large aspects of land use by circumventing the formal processes of the City, due to political “connections,” “excessive” negotiating power and ability to exploit procedural loopholes within the processes of the City and other major governance institutions (e.g., the Provincial CPTAQ or the Federal NCC). Again, these allegations are beyond my ability to verify within the time and resource constraints of this project. However, they do suggest that residents lack trust in the transparency and justice of land-use governance, and that residents do not trust that there is a fair balance between the economic interests of private land holders and the general well-being of Gatineau’s residents and communities.

5.3. Considered judgement

In Smith’s approach to participation in governance, he defines “considered judgement” as “the capacity of citizens to make thoughtful and reflective judgement” (Smith, 2009, p. 24). In my use, I have attempted to summarise how the institutional designs and governance processes allow governance actors (with particular focus on municipal government and civil society) to consider information in shaping land-use decisions and policies. Smith’s conception of “considered judgement” is concerned with how factually informed governance actors are. However, I have generally spent little time assessing the factual accuracy of the perspectives of Gatineau’s governance actors. Rather, I have focused on the broad lines of their approaches to knowledge, on the sources of information and ideas, and on the processes through which reflection, judgement and integration of perspectives is systematised or otherwise ensured (if at all). Smith’s use of “considered judgement” asks about the degree to which governance systems

promote participants' thoughtful engagement with the experiences, interests and perspectives of others; thus to what degree perspectives are based on "common" goods and interests, rather than "raw preferences," "narrow private interests and pre-existing knowledge and prejudices" (Smith, 2009, p. 24). This question is extended to ask whether these institutional designs exert pressures for considered judgement to flourish.

Again, I have extended my use of this concept to assess the degree to which other actors within the governance structure can be said to engage in considered judgement, and to analyse the processes through which residents' considered judgement might be promoted by, and communicated through, these institutions and processes. Furthermore, as my interest especially involves the sustainability of Gatineau's land-use governance, sustainability principles have especially guided the aspects of considered judgement that I have observed here.

5.3.1. City government

As I have already noted, the policy changes that the City has publicised in recent years (i.e., Ville de Gatineau, 2009a) demonstrates the City's increasing recognition of sustainability issues and threats (including links between sustainability and urban sprawl). However, I have also described the gaps that many of my research participants perceived between the City's official discourse of sustainability and its record of actual land-use decision-making and implementation.

Throughout my interviews, it was obvious that the City of Gatineau still includes many voices that see fields and forested land within City limits as "undeveloped" and, by inference, "to be developed" within the coming decades. The root of this perspective might be what remains a perspective bias toward economic analyses of urban growth, tied with an economic model that considers urban growth and the growth of taxable populations as appropriate and desirable revenue sources for the City. Certainly, perspectives on this issue have changed and are changing, which many residents are seeing represented in a sweep of new councillors. However, my analysis suggests that the institutional design of the City's decision-making and visioning processes seems likely to foster a certain amount of inflexibility.

Several aspects of the City's processes do suggest that the integration of ideas is a goal of the current institutional design. According to one public servant, the amalgamation itself increased the potential for coherent considered judgement of land use, allowing a wider area to

be considered by a “unified” municipality. Similarly, the City’s primary process for the consideration of land-use decisions intends to integrate planning throughout the City: such that the “principles” of the city-wide Metropolitan Plan filter down to individual decisions on development proposals. This process has allowed the definition of important corridors and limitations on urban development, and has allowed the City to consider a more holistic approach to land use. However, the “wisdom” (and sustainability implications) of this more-integrated and broader-visioned approach to planning now depends entirely on the deliberative processes of one centralised municipal government.

Within Gatineau’s City government there are important processes that seem likely to prevent some degree of considered judgement. In terms of the City’s institutional adaptability – the ability of the City to responsibly evaluate and respond to trends, challenges and changing conditions – processes for considered judgement are especially important in allowing the City to reconsider past decisions and policy approaches. In writing about institutional designs that favour considered judgement, Dienel suggests that “opportunity for advancement, promotion or re-election” are likely to limit decision-makers’ openness to changing their views (Dienel, 1996, p. 114; cited in Smith, 2009, p. 94). Indeed, in Gatineau it appears that “political risk” is an important limitation in council’s ability to consider innovative ideas. The incentives of re-election are likely to create some level of disincentive against councillors reconsidering past positions and decisions, and perhaps limit incentives for strong leadership and innovation in council.

It seems that the design of the Planning Advisory Committee (CCU) might serve to reduce this disincentive toward innovation and reconsideration of previous positions and decisions, at least in one respect. As the CCU involves volunteers, selected for relatively short terms with no public recognition, the “reputational effect” would perhaps be limited, while the incentive for popular re-election would be non-existent (while there may still be some incentive for re-appointment). However, these elements also suggest a lack of public accountability: there is no potential for CCU resident-members to be recalled, other than from within council, and no limitations to the number of times resident-members can be re-appointed. All of this likely limits the CCU’s flexibility on past ideas and ideologies. Furthermore, Smith (2009) explains that deliberations among small groups can lead to small argument pools, and thus to decisions being based on the interests of particular people rather than based on an integrative, reflective

approach. Procedurally, the CCU does not appear to attempt to prevent this dynamic. For example, one councillor provided the following illustrative anecdote:

I think it's the White pine. There was one day at the CCU, I don't know why – someone might have seen a report or something – but all of a sudden we had to put White pines everywhere... but our civil servants are there to listen, not to argue... but the White pine, it would seem, is not a tree to suggest in an urban situation. So, they simply said this, without pushing too much, but... the result was that there would be White pines in that development. We followed the recommendations of the citizens.

These dynamics seem consistent with Smith's assessment of “irrational group dynamics” in the deliberation of small groups, which arise, in part, due to “reputational effects” and “small argument pools” (Smith, 2009, p. 99). Similarly, the culture and processes of decision-making in Gatineau's municipal council seem to include at least some degree of negotiation and alliance-building among councillors, again limiting the potential for considered judgement. Furthermore, according to some residents, the “small argument pools” of municipal council have produced dynamics where council seems to latch on to ideas that are popular or trendy in wider society, without necessarily considering the applicability of these to the local context or their relevance to particular local problems. For instance, one resident described the recent focus on making Gatineau a more bikeable city:

‘Don't worry. We're all going to be riding bikes, soon, to work...’ which is a wonderful idea but it's a complete denial of the culture. You can't have a building boom with every second guy driving a dump truck at mach 101, to make his money, and then say that ‘Oh, we're going to have safe places to ride our bikes and go to work.’

While I do not personally consider the idea of safe bike spaces to be an inherently poor one, it stands that the personal experiences and perspectives of councillors seem especially powerful in shaping the decisions and vision of council. For instance, residents described the importance of councillors “value systems” in determining the appropriateness of considerations in land-use decisions:

They were all pro-development. And this was [a past mayor of Aylmer]... just could not understand where we were coming from when we were wanting to protect places like Boucher Forest or Fraser's Fields... there were a lot of natural areas and she really could not understand what the fuss was about. It wasn't that she had any grievance, she just couldn't relate to it, why so many people make a fuss about, you know, four acres of Pine trees.

Alternatively, the “vision” of the current mayor and council are largely seen as integral to the more environmentally sensitive approach of the new City's deliberations and broad policy

positions. Similarly, councillors told me openly about how they felt their role as elected representatives was to express their own convictions:

Otherwise, we change ideas like the wind, and in the medium or long term it will be useless. People won't follow you.

While a focus on individual councillors' convictions might allow steadfast approaches to public policy, it seems that the ideas of individual councillors might be more important than processes of considered judgement and deliberation in council. Some local political observers consider that this likely limits approaches of the City to the terms of office of councillors and mayors.

As I have discussed, control in both council and the CCU is likely to be vulnerable to domination by charismatic, politically experienced and skilled members. This likely extends to processes of considered judgement also, thus limiting the thoughtful engagement of members with the experiences, interests and perspectives of others. For instance, as I have described, it seems that simple procedural technicalities (such as requesting "a vote by show-of-hands") are likely to influence the outcomes of council decisions. The councillor who failed to recognise the importance of this procedural tool, due to inexperience, suggested that this failed to promote compromise on this decision.

In the processes of developing "considered judgements" on land use issues, information sources for council and the CCU both rely heavily on the public service: the administrative and technical expertise that are most readily available to both council and the CCU come from within the public service. Indeed, it appears that the public service defines important parts of the City's strategies and decisions, from visions down to Minor Variances. Foremost in this process, the public service defines the "baseline" upon which council and the CCU deliberate and form decisions. In the description of one councillor, the role of the public service is to provide objective technical advice:

We have all the fields of expertise possible. So, that's our... they, naturally, don't decide and don't represent the contractors. They present, coldly, a file and make a recommendation, positive or negative.

Unfortunately, from conversations with residents, it seems that while the public service similarly sees its role as one of logical and empirical advice, there is an inherent value judgement that this technical advice is necessary and, moreover, *sufficient* for the appropriate development

of the City. One resident described being dismissed by a previous director of urban planning for one of the City's service sectors, who told her that: "Well, we're the planners. We know what's best for the City. We know what's best for the community." More remarkably yet, another resident described a discussion with another past director of urban planning, demonstrating the perceived role of the planning service within the City's process of considered judgement:

I remember talking to this... the director of planning at the time... and, he said... and I said, 'Look. These areas are going to be cleared. This is an environmentally sensitive area. They're wetlands.' And he said, 'Look. [...] I'm an urban planner. That's what I do.' Meaning, urban planning is basically putting in roads, putting in houses, putting in factories or industry... 'That's what I do.' And I'm here, and I'm basically saying, 'No, you shouldn't touch this area because it's significant and it's unique to the region.' And he says, 'Well, this is what I do. This is what I'm trained to do. I'm a planner.'

As much as the assumed role of these two directors of urban planning might represent exceptions rather than the rule in Gatineau's public service, the flow of information, with a focus on professional technical expertise of engineering, science and urban planning, seems likely to promote the importance of conventional (dominant) technical perspectives. As such, the experiential and social-value components of these decisions might be subsumed by technical perspectives. Furthermore, these technical perspectives do not necessarily represent all sides of an issue, even all technical sides.³² With potentially incomplete technical expertise and experience of the public service informing the municipal council, it seems likely that council is not fully capable of "filling in the gaps" in this information. As such, it appears that councillors are likely to defer to the authority of the City's technical expertise. For instance, councillors described how their positions on council have been important learning processes about policy:

Before being at the City... there were tons of things, as a Citizen, that I didn't realise! I mean, throwing a piece of cardboard in the garbage... the cost! The cost! I would never have thought the costs would be so high! Clearing snow... fixing a hole! It's incredible. You start thinking... roads that are all curvy, you ask, 'Can't they make them straight?' Well, yes, but then you realise that it's to slow traffic that they make roads all curvy... because if they're in straight lines: 'Zoooooooom!'

To a degree, this quote shows the importance of the public service in shaping council's decisions. This councillor – who it seems may have entered this position with a certain amount of uncertainty about the necessity of "sprawl-type," circuitous and unconnected road networks –

³² For instance, heritage groups have long claimed that the Gatineau public service fails to adequately integrate expertises in architecture and conservation architecture. Also, as evidenced in this interview, the technical and scientific concerns for ecosystem functions have not been weighted equally in Gatineau's land-use planning service.

appears to have been informed about the importance of these designs after having been elected. While this perspective change may have been well-informed, and may represent a balanced approach, it is at least interesting that “curvy” roads now seems so evident a solution, especially given this very councillors’ concerns about efficient public transit (expressed earlier in this interview).³³

Beyond potential limits in information, the structure of governance in Gatineau's government seems to present a number of barriers to the adequate consideration of land-use issues. Councillors have expressed that the timelines involved in both council and CCU meetings – in which these groups receive their agendas four days prior to meetings – limit their abilities to ensure integrated, sustainable land-use decisions. Residents described instances where councillors have misunderstood meeting agendas, which are admittedly highly technical. According to some, these factors of the design and administration of deliberation meetings limit considered judgement in council:

The meetings are boring, you don't know the agenda until you get there, and the issues are particularly cryptic.

As I have discussed, information and perspectives of residents can also inform councillors’ deliberations in a number of ways. Information can reach councillors through council meeting question periods and consultations, and through less formal modes (i.e., emails). Councillors, thereafter, appear to use their personal judgement in determining “how serious [residents] are” and in evaluating the “reality of the neighbourhood.” The importance of residents in informing councillors is obviously an ad-hoc process, with residents describing vastly different interactions with councillors, either between neighbourhoods or after changes in councillors within their neighbourhoods. Again, I have been unable to systematically analyse the impact of these processes, other than to suggest that the obvious *lack of process* does not ensure methodical or balanced consideration of information coming from residents.

Apart from its role in vetting proposals from the perspective of ‘normal’ residents, the CCU appears to have an informal role of improving the City’s capacity for deliberation, acting as a first stage to the consideration of issues by council. According to one councillor:

³³ Certainly, the anti-sprawl literature that strongly contradicts this councillor’s received wisdom on the merits of “curvy” roads (Duany et al., 2000; Condon, 2008) does not appear to have been impartially conveyed to her by City’s urban planners.

The CCU is like a step in between the urban planning service and the municipal council. If we removed the CCU, all the debates that happen in the CCU would end up in council. We would never get through it all. The City would choke, because it's already complicated, the CCU.

However, the CCU certainly faces the same, if not more, lack of capacity and time for deliberating land-use issues as does council, has a more limited scope in its ability to direct and prioritise its own efforts and, in some ways has less incentive for innovation in problem-solving. Furthermore, procedurally it seems that CCU resident-members might have a mild incentive to reach positive consensus and, perhaps, an incentive to decide to skip deliberation on projects about which they have insufficient information or little interest. This incentive resides in the fact that procedures are designed to limit the length of meetings in recognition of the fact that resident-members are volunteers and are recognised to be heavily burdened with their CCU responsibilities.³⁴ Specifically, resident-members, prior to meetings, are provided with packages of technical information about each proposal, accompanied by a checklist. Resident-members use this checklist to indicate any proposal that they intend to approve. Prior to the meetings, a public servant compiles these checklists and removes any issues that have received unanimous support from the agenda. In practise, it seems that this occurs regularly, though usually in less than ten percent of files in any given meeting.

Furthermore, as I described earlier, the CCU is provided with information directly by professional public servants whose task it is to prepare proposals for municipal decisions. These public servants are the same people who are tasked with interacting with the developers and land-owners requesting land-use changes or approval. This seems to be an imperfect process, in which the major resource person for the CCU is also the person tasked with ensuring that proposals conform with the City's policies, and who have at least partially been responsible for drafting the documents under review. At least, this process seems to problematically fail to *ensure* that the information that is provided to the CCU be entirely "cold" and "objective." Apart from being "resource people" on every CCU decision, the public service also provides some degree of more formal education of CCU resident-members. A councillor described this "education" as public servants spending "15-20 minutes [every couple of CCU meetings] on 'What's an urban plan?' 'What's a wetland?' 'What's happening in other cities in terms of...

³⁴ According to one interview, the CCU is often tasked with making between 30 and 50 land-use decisions in single-evening meetings, which often consist of reviewing hundreds of pages of technical documents.

parking?” Furthermore, once per year, urban planners plan field trips with CCU members. According to a councillor familiar with this process: “They take us around to see a project... in Ottawa, or in Gatineau... or in Montreal. We try to give a bit of... another perspective.”

A resident, who was in communication with previous CCU resident-members, described the CCU as very deficient in capacity and support. She described resident-members as often entirely unfamiliar with the specifics of the cases on which they are deliberating, having insufficient time to review projects, and general having difficulty understanding the complexity of files on which they were voting. Furthermore, it is difficult to say the extent to which CCU resident-members are able or willing to scrutinise the information of the public service. As such, as the informal primary location of deliberation on land-use issues for municipal council, the CCU appears to be poorly designed and supported to ensure that considered judgement is appropriately and fully elaborated.

5.3.2. Residents and civil society

As evidenced by residents’ and civil society groups’ inclusiveness and control of Gatineau’s land-use governance, the deliberation within these groups is only as relevant as its integration within the final land-use decisions and outcomes. Generally, many of my interviews suggested that residents were generally incapable of engaging sufficiently or meaningfully with land-use governance processes. However, some tactics and processes have been successful for residents, and as such, the processes by which decisions are considered within civil society are especially relevant in some cases: the relationships between the City and particular (mostly issue-specific groups), within coalitions of groups that have effectively engaged with council (both confrontationally and supportively). Furthermore, the judgements that are generated by municipal processes of consultation and referenda can be important in some instances. Finally, the role of local media appears to be critical in informing, fostering deliberation, and in communicating and “forcing debates” between residents and council.

In City processes

In engaging with City processes, residents frequently suggested that they and their colleagues were often challenged in ways similar to council and the CCU. These challenges included late access to meeting agendas or public notices, limited time to prepare questions and to mobilise residents to present themselves to comment on or question proposed land-use

decisions, and inexperience or lack of technical knowledge to predict and understand the implications of public notices of land-use changes. Moreover, many residents expressed very limited opportunities to have meaningful dialogue with councillors and public servants: for instance, they described that interactions with councillors were generally limited to very short questions during municipal council meetings with no opportunity to thereafter respond to the council-members' answers.

Meanwhile, it is again notable that, in the case of zoning changes in which there is a *lack* of sufficient public outcry and sufficient mobilisation and/or organisation to successfully stop this change through a referendum, proposed changes are explicitly assumed to be supported by local populations. Basically, if residents cannot express "strong enough" opposition, in very specific ways, it is assumed that residents consent to zoning changes. Given the barriers to triggering referenda, this seems to be, at least, an overly simplistic assumption and results in a faulty "considered judgement" due to an established institutional design and process.

Given these barriers, some of my interview participants blamed residents themselves. They see their failure to adequately engage with processes as a sign of inadequate "considered judgement": As incapability to "see development coming" and incapability to recognise efficient procedures for challenging development. In a similar perspective, some residents described the demands of other residents as unrealistic and poorly founded, suggesting that these demonstrate the inability of "average" residents to formulate adequate proposals and judgements.

Some councillors and public servants described the perspectives of residents as often being very misguided. They similarly bemoaned the fact that, in their opinions, residents generally misunderstand the procedures, responsibilities and limitations of government. These City officials often extended this view into a general comment on dissent within civil society: that residents fail to recognise the complexity of government and governance processes, the effort of negotiations between the government and developers, and the good intentions of the efforts of governance actors.

However, their lack of control in the general process of land-use governance requires that most civil society groups remain constantly on the receiving and reacting end of land-use decisions. As such, I did not generally hear residents refute the claims that civil society and residents were under-capacitated. Instead, residents often spoke of their own lack of capacity, of

their limited ability to interpret the relevance of proposed land-use changes,³⁵ and of overburdened communities attempting to remain vigilant in interpreting and informing each other of upcoming land-use decisions.

Even groups that are systematically consulted, while these often receive some funding from the City to support their efforts, expressed that they are both under-capacitated (often run by volunteers), and generally lack time to react to proposed land-use changes. It appears that the major exceptions to this trend are cases of groups that have informal arrangements with councillors, in which councillors are able to alert civil society groups of upcoming issues and debates, helping them to prepare.

Interestingly, the residents' efforts that are described by residents as under-capacitated, under-informed and "reactive," are the same that were described by some councillors as the prime examples of NIMBYism (or "the Not In My Back Yard syndrome"). Councillors described cases in which residents reacted to stop proposed land-use changes and thus, in the opinions of these councillors, almost derailed potentially positive developments. For instance, one councillor described a case in which the public service and councillors had negotiated for months to prevent a developer from building several "single-room occupancy" buildings (in the words of one councillor: "Rooms that are rented by the week... by the month... not too expensive, not too nice.") in an undeveloped urban lot. The City instead proposed that this developer build "high class" condos. However, this proposal by the City required a zoning change, whereas a single-room occupancy buildings did not. Thus, the City was legally obligated to undertake a consultation process, with the potential for residents to trigger a referendum. "A small group" of residents came out strongly against the proposed change, reacting strongly to the possibility of increased local traffic, the potential devaluation of their homes, and the loss of the vacant lot. As such, the councillor described how the public service had to placate these residents for hours, answering questions and negotiating.

While, to several City officials, this process seemed like the result of the "NIMBY syndrome," it seems that we might equally assume that these residents were caught off guard. As such, what was interpreted by councillors as conflictual, irrational actions by residents should perhaps more accurately be perceived as the result of a general lack of capacity to consider the

³⁵ This lack of capacity to interpret proposed land-use changes was noted by several residents as a reason for which groups to either over-react or under-react to these proposals (the distinction between which depends on the opinion and perspective of the speaker about the nature of the project).

possibilities and limitations of the situation, due in part to limited access to information and the late stage of resident involvement in the process of land-use change.

Within civil-society groups

Not surprisingly, the deliberation among civil society seems strongly related to the major issues of control and inclusiveness within and between groups. Much of the consideration of issues by civil society is driven by a relatively small community of resident: people with significant social capital and experience, and people that are capable of commanding a certain amount of popular respect. These few people are largely seen to have been central to efforts to organise, forge alliances and mobilise residents associations and issue-specific groups which otherwise have relatively limited mandates.

Within some of these key groups, several residents spoke of informal networks of information and action which have been important in deliberating and organising responses to proposed land-use changes:

It was very interesting because we had a network, I had a call-out list of people for that project, and what happened is... I get one of the residents in that area, and he gives me a call and he says, '[...] they're in there cutting! They've got the equipment in there!' So I went in there and they had an excavator with a cutting head on it. So, I said to phone up [another resident], and I said '[...] they're in there cutting!'

Experienced and engaged residents described having developed positions and strategies from multiple (often failed) efforts to influence municipal land use. According to several long-time residents, procedural learning from past efforts seems to be important in promoting newer efforts, in understanding procedures, through having made key community connections for mobilising and informing fellow residents, and sometimes through the infusion of concepts and ideas into the general discussions of land use. One resident suggested that the increasing population of recently-arrived residents – inexperienced with local trends and histories of land use – has diminished the capacity of civil society to respond to proposed land-use changes:

If you're around for more than 10 years, you'll see this pattern emerging. And, so, because the average person in Canada moves once every five years, they're not familiar with this and these people from the outside come in and, next thing you know, they're up in arms about this project that's coming in and, 'It's affecting the creek!' And I say, 'Well look: These are the key players. This is the process. This is what happens.' [...] I can see what the ramifications are, and a lot of people don't. [...] They take it at face value.

Another resident described the importance of the experiences and memories of long-time residents in being able to predict, understand and react to proposed changes:

The people that have lived here have been here for a long time, and they have a long memory, and there was a lot of bad stuff that happened, and the people up here are very well educated, and – you know – they’re not just going to lie down and say, ‘OK. Do what you like. Not a problem.’ [...] Well, we formed a community association – a group – and we had boatload of meetings, went to a lot of City council meetings, and had a bit of a war in the press, and sent lots of emails, and basically rallied around... and that was it!

As I have already described, it seems that the examples effective combinations of deliberation and strategy through civil society depend on a relatively small community of people. This again raises the issues of control over deliberation, the prioritisation of some perspectives over others, and the sources of information that are or are not accepted. Throughout my interviews, I did speak with several residents who expressed generally feeling disenfranchised within civil society groups. For example, one resident spoke of residents associations being dominated by tight relationships between association presidents and councillors, and thus serving to diffuse criticisms of those councillors. Others were frustrated at issue-specific groups’ unwillingness to take strong stances on issues for fear of harming advantageous relationships. Similarly, it appears that some groups’ interests can sometimes become especially responsive to the interests of a small minority of their constituent memberships. In several cases, groups seem to have become known as “vehicles” for specific messages or agendas, and thus come to be seen within the City as “irreducible” and unwilling to compromise. Similarly, it seems that some groups might develop entrenched positions, from which reflection and reconsideration might become unlikely. These shortcomings within civil society groups pose important challenges to the consultation approaches of the City, which often uses these groups to legitimise municipal deliberations and decisions.

However, the domination of deliberation by a limited few (in the name of “the people”) should not be considered the whole story, or even the most important story. On the contrary, civil society groups and engaged residents sometimes seem to place a significant emphasis on representation, on process and inclusiveness. Important voices within civil society thus appear to act as mediators, approaching deliberation as an important role in the process of building legitimacy, trust and alliances between groups and people whose opinions and interests might only be relatively loosely connected. For instance, within the Aylmer sector, groups have a wide

diversity of mandates (expressly and informally): To promote heritage and history; social justice and equity; caution and integration in urban planning; environmental sustainability; preservation of agricultural land and productivity; as well as more immediate concerns of traffic and infrastructure. Many residents associations' concerns and activities (although many groups are only infrequently active) overlap with those of some issue-specific groups, though they are more rooted in concerns for the quality of life and, often, housing values within neighbourhoods. Considering the diverse and general nature of these concerns, it might be easy to see how these efforts are seen or derided as being no more profound than "opposition to change," or NIMBYism.

It appears that the successes in fostering deliberation and considered judgement among civil society leaders have been due to the development of links between civil society groups. These efforts have highlighted the logical connections between groups' mandates and efforts, built strategic information-sharing networks, and built trust and mutual support among residents associations and issue-specific groups. As such, many of these successes stem from groups' recognition that they might gain control through cooperation and mutual support, and through efforts to integrate diverse interests and concerns into coherent positions about specific decisions, policies, and – to some degree – governance processes.

From my discussions with residents of Gatineau, there are many examples of such integration in perspectives and positions among civil society groups. Some groups, especially groups involved in heritage and history, expressed the importance of the human experience of landscapes and built environments. These groups saw important links between heritage and environmental concerns, largely from the perspective of the human experience of rural and "green" landscapes. Similarly, heritage seems to be connected to local business interests, seeing important possibilities for overlap between a community's character appeal and its economic vibrancy. Concerns for the economic value of the historically rural and small-town character of the Aylmer sector thus appear to line up somewhat with the broad strokes of environmental concerns and community sustainability, while all of the above "issues" have found common ground with residents associations concerns for residents' quality of life.

Perhaps the most powerful force in the community is the surge in the presence of residents associations, which are being promoted within several wards with the support of councillors. Through the recognised hard work of several skilled and dedicated residents, these groups'

influences have periodically combined in “coalitions,” at least temporarily, to voice a concerted interest in profound change to land-use governance.

The role of more engaged residents from these groups is notable in facilitating information-sharing in the informal deliberations of civil society. Residents with professional and practical knowledge, skills, experience and research abilities appear to work informally to inform each-other of important goings-on, between groups and “causes,” as well as between sectors. For instance, this appears especially important in deciphering municipal land-use change proposals, for which some groups and residents with experience in urban planning and architecture recognise that they have important skills and abilities to interpret the potential importance – in human terms – of certain zoning change proposals:

In my perspective, whenever I receive the newspaper of the region, I always go to the end to see what the City wants to do with by-laws, and I go to the site to see if there will be any implications, because we are the only ones who will understand. And if there is a comment, we will take the phone and call. If we feel that it is more than that, we call the people that we think might be involved, and we say, ‘Look. There is a meeting for this and this and that. It would be a good thing if you could be there for that meeting.’

Notable in these efforts are the administrative, policy and political experience of the many federal public service employees that reside in Gatineau. In other cases, biologists, environmental scientists, naturalists and agriculturalists were all described as having offered technical abilities and opinions, while people with skills of human resources and management, historians and educators all appear to be engaged in various aspects of information sharing. Certainly, critical among these is the detailed knowledge of local landscapes and histories, including political histories, that exists among some older residents. Describing the management of a decommissioned land fill that rendered ground-water undrinkable for a large area of the rural edge of West Gatineau, one resident cautioned that, “People up here have lived here for a long time. They have a long memory and they remember that, and there’s no way we’re going backwards.”

Within the Aylmer sector, an important element in fostering the integration of ideas across group jurisdictions is the bilingual newspaper, “the Aylmer Bulletin.” Many residents described this paper as a critical entry-point into engaged communities, especially because of its vibrant and accessible “letters” sections. These letters sections, which allow generous space for residents and groups to express anything from complaints about speed bumps to expenditures by

the federal government, are recognised by the paper's journalists as being among the most widely read portions. Residents that are otherwise disengaged in civic affairs described this space as important in defining the evolving local identities of the area, while others have used this as an important space for outreach, for discussions on residents' civic research projects and for the expression of potential alternatives to City policies. As such, while the journalists themselves are sometimes criticised as biased – as favouring certain positions and political figures – it appears that the paper is perhaps one of the key tools that has allowed the Aylmer sector civil society to create an important voice for itself, while other sectors rely on non-independent (corporate, not locally owned) media sources that, in the opinion of many of my research participants, are very unlikely to publish such vibrant and, sometimes, controversial letters by residents.

Despite the surges of alliances between groups and the notable facilitating factors within Aylmer, these collaborations appear to be critically supported by the voluntary efforts of a few, dedicated individuals. As such, these surges seem to struggle to maintain momentum. Partially, this seems to be due to the inherent fractures in the interests of groups, which – for all their similarities – also comprise many differences. For instance, environmental groups that promote the control of urban sprawl for ecological reasons have profoundly different approaches from environmental-health and quality-of-life advocates, who argue against raising residential housing density.

Group momentum seems to rely especially on rallying events: issues which sometimes surprisingly capture the interest of a critical mass of residents due to their centrality (in geography and historical importance), and sometimes due to their relatively widespread familiarity and thus their symbolic importance. Again with regards to the Connaught Park (“Hippodrome”) development, one resident described the importance of these “milestone” events:

There will be *how many* houses there? 4000 houses? [...] But people don't know what that area is called: you pass by it every day, but you don't have an identifier for it in your head. Whereas, the Hippodrome: right away you see the Hippodrome. If you talk about the 'Embassades' project, people say, 'Oh yeah... the Embassades,' but they don't really know exactly what it is. But this! This, everyone knows.

While these events are seen as important in themselves, the symbolism of this site is seen to have had a critical role in sparking interest, debate, and turn-out at consultation processes. In

this case, both civil society organisers and the City's staff appear to have been caught by surprise by the unprecedented turn-out of residents at the consultations. While some claim that "People identify with the Hippodrome, with this space that has been part of the City for over 100 years," others recognised that it was especially important as a symbol:

Something that really united something, that was really a symbol, was the Hippodrome, and that's what made people get on board, because it touched... there's nothing left of... we're all angry! They're building everywhere, whether or not there's infrastructure, and people know it!

To summarise, it is clear that civil society is not efficiently set up to promote sophisticated considered judgement. What my interviews suggests, however, is that there is both an interest and a certain capacity – despite barriers – to organise expressions of residents' common interests, to come together over differences and deliberate about the common good. This potential has been somewhat cultivated by the well-proportioned efforts of tight-knit communities of engaged residents. How well these groups have avoided recreating or creating new biases and shortcomings in considered judgements is difficult to determine, but they are certainly under-capacitated to *ensure* a lack of bias any appreciable degree. However, it does appear that these groups avoid some of the trappings of the institutional designs of City council and the CCU, due to the increased flexibility and more direct, human accountability mechanisms between and among residents and civil society groups. However, it is also clear that the elaboration of judgement from within civil society is also much less risky than within City government: with no binding outcome of civil society's positions on issues, the most visible roles of these groups are as critics, and their successes are most visible in negative outcomes (the halting of developments and consultation periods).

5.3.3. Effective scale of considered judgement

In general, people don't want their environment to change. So, often groups will come out strongly, trying to block developments so that their environments don't change. They would like it to be immutable.

The geographic scale of the interests of residents, and the scale of civil society activism, were often at the core of both councillors' and residents' critiques. The concept of "the Not In My Back Yard syndrome" was often raised by councillors, caricaturising local efforts for control over land use. The concept of NIMBYism seems to be employed to evoke an important value

judgement about the “appropriate” scale of land-use governance. Councillors seemed to consider this question of “appropriate” scale somewhat arbitrarily, depending on the specifics of the case and on their personal connection to the issue and area in question. For instance, some councillors in Aylmer seemed to generally support the fact that local people were interested in having more leverage over the Connaught Park development, to match the proportion of the impacts of that development that they felt they would have to experience (relative to residents in far-away parts of the City that had probably never heard of the site). Other councillors, from other parts of the City, saw it as evidence of the remainder of inconsolable residents that “have never digested the amalgamation,” for which the Aylmer sector has been notorious since the efforts to de-amalgamate on the part of some Aylmer civil society groups and residents. These contrasting perspectives describe the same phenomenon, with one side framing the issue as the vestigial bitterness of sore losers, and the other alleging of an illegitimate distribution (or seizure) of power.

Interestingly, throughout the binding land-use governance processes in Gatineau, it seems that there are polarising biases: within the decision-making of council, representation and equal weighting of councillors from across a wide and still socially disconnected territory might be seen to bias considerations towards policy positions and specific decisions that represent the interests of the whole of the City. Within zoning change referenda, however, negative decisions *can* allow decisions to represent the opinions of only those people residing and owning property within immediately adjacent zones (which can often be extremely small and, in the case of zones situated within large development projects, can represent very few and very recently-arrived people).

Both of these options seem to present challenges to considered judgement in the governance of the City. The extremely small scale over which referenda can be called has been criticised by residents, citing instances in which many people have been excluded from eligibility in calling or participating in referenda, despite the sentiment that they are very influenced by their outcomes. Alternatively, one councillor complained that this process lets referenda be called (“paid for by the whole City of Gatineau”) by an extreme minority (“five people, laughing hysterically, who want to keep a field behind their house”). On the other side of the scale, residents and councillors alike recognise that the most rapidly developing areas, which are most subject to the decisions of the City, are represented by a minority of councillors.

As such, developments in some areas are being decided by councillors that do not have any mandate to represent the interests of affected residents.

In either case, it seems that the processes of land-use governance in Gatineau are not necessarily effectively scaled to promote considered judgement: the thoughtful engagement with the experiences, interests and perspectives of others, either at the whole-city scale, or at the adjacent-zone scale.

5.4. Transparency

I use Smith's (2009) concept of "transparency" to refer to citizens' capacity to scrutinize and understand the activities of governance institutions. As such, transparency does involve the visibility of the actions, deliberations and decisions of governance actors, but moreover includes the visibility of the *processes* through which actors can and do produce outcomes: the procedural limitations, requirements and possibilities, including the visibility of civic engagement. Moreover, in the context of civic engagement, transparency involves how well citizens can understand and predict the possible and likely outcomes of their engagement efforts. Smith (2009) considers transparency to be a crucial component of the ability of a participatory governance arrangement to achieve considered judgement, and in allowing effective popular control of governance processes: that citizens must be able to know where, when and how interventions are possible and likely to be efficient. Moreover, Smith suggests that transparency is necessary to legitimately counter the concerns of skeptics, who might – as many of my interview participants did – "contend that engagement is little more than the co-option of participants" (Smith, 2009, p. 25).

5.4.1. City government

In conversations with councillors and public servants, the City was described as imperfect but improving its means of transparency. The most published example is the policy of video-recording municipal council pre-meetings (the deliberative fora before the public, evening council meetings in which decisions are officiated). These recordings are then broadcast on local television and are available and archived online on the City's website. Councillors described these videos as important tools in helping residents understand the City's reasoning and the processes involved in municipal decisions. The City's website states: "Never before have municipal current affairs been so accessible!" (Ville de Gatineau, 2008).

Some residents have supported this move heartily, and use the service:

A lot of people actually don't pay attention and... and... a lot of people don't get involved! How many people go to City council meetings, right? And, one could say, 'I played basketball that night.' And that's fair. But you can go on the internet! That's one of the things that [the current mayor] did. You can go on the internet and watch the council meetings. You can go on TV. I used to do that. I'd put the TV on and I would iron my shirts, watching the City debates, and sometimes I'd go in person.

However, it seems that the video broadcast is perhaps of only limited value to transparency. Considering that the communication of information is a two-step process – first, that the information be conveyed, and then that the information be received – the potential of this service is likely unmet. Residents that are very engaged, like the one cited above, seem to use this service occasionally and described having used it especially during peaks of civil society activity. However, for the vast majority of residents, this service seems unknown and unused.

Another publicised effort to improve transparency was a recent modification to the publication of meeting agendas. Meeting agendas, within the past year, were modified to include “explanatory notes” on each agenda item. These notes were promoted as tools of transparency by a host of relatively new municipal councillors, who argued that these texts are important in making municipal council agendas more accessible. However, these paragraphs still seem somewhat cryptic, and one councillor (while in support of the explanatory notes) admits that transparency remains “a question of interest and time.” These notes have improved the limitations in accessibility in the language of municipal council agendas, but this has not necessarily appreciably improved the ability of residents to understand the implications of decisions, especially in human terms. The timing of agenda publications, as well as the fact that these remain only in French, certainly limit the ability of residents to really understand and engage with this information. As I have already addressed, this is also the case with public notices, which many residents described as cryptic and not informative.

The website of the City of Gatineau is a good source of some information, and a certain amount of official policy documentation is available there. However, especially in terms of clear descriptions of the processes of government, this website is relatively silent. The processes of deliberation and decision-making, and the chains of information flow, are issues that have only been clear to me after communicating with a large number of people, within and outside of government. Furthermore, tools of accountability to ensure that official processes are being

followed, as well as how official policies are being interpreted and implemented, are quite limited – leaving many of the allegations of residents (for example, of misuse of process or, at worst, corruption) unverifiable but also not easily falsifiable.

Indeed, according to a number of residents that I spoke with, the City currently operates with a “culture” of poor communication, which some cited as being responsible for residents’ over-reactions when presented with municipal proposals and decisions. For example, according to one resident:

You hear somebody says, ‘Oh! They’re trying to change the agricultural zone!’ And everybody gets up in arms but the problem is [...] they do not communicate well. If they communicate at all, it’s extremely poor, and they could solve a lot of their problems by being a little bit more transparent and straight-up with people.

Transparency is also somewhat limited in terms of accountability – as I have described – as residents feel that, even if they are able to ask questions at municipal council meetings, they are rarely answered satisfactorily and are procedurally barred from re-posing, clarifying or responding to potentially inadequate or incorrect information from councillors.

For some residents, issues of transparency and accountability are more than principles:

So, over the past five years, this is what we’ve come to. When the whole [zoning change] thing was going on, that was for two years. It was bloody stressful. Every single day you’re thinking, ‘What’s going on? Is our [business] going to be ruined? Is our quality of life going to be ruined?’ All that kind of stuff. [...] Two times that I asked that question at council, publicly, my councillor has told me, ‘I know your coordinates and I’ll get back to you.’ Because he doesn’t want to talk about it. And all I wanted to know was, ‘Is it happening or not?!’

Transparency of process information

Certainly, the transparency of process information is a limitation that I have raised several times throughout this project. Residents have repeatedly described failing to understand how, when and even where to intervene to effectively interact with the City, and often feel that there are “missing steps” for both accountability and even for intelligent institutional design. For instance, councillors described the frustrations of both residents and councillors during consultations and CCU meetings, in which residents did not recognise the limitations, possibilities and expected results of these processes. Quite often, it seemed that residents over-expected results from processes, whereas public servants described these processes as often designed for the “pedagogy” of residents.

Councillors and residents alike have described the poor state of residents' understanding of processes of the City. Some residents claim that this lack of understanding is perhaps more problematic than the shortcomings in that process. For example, one resident expressed:

I'm not convinced there's something wrong with the process. I... there might be, but I'm not convinced. [...] I would argue a lot of people don't know these processes. A lot of people actually don't pay attention and... and... a lot of people don't get involved! How many people go to City council meetings, right?

Interestingly, residents themselves seem to be at a loss to blame the City for this lack of understanding, seeing it rather as a problem of civic disengagement. While this perspective certainly fits with popular wisdom and empirical evidence from democratic disengagement across Canada and throughout established democracies worldwide, it is certainly questionable as to the degree to which the City has attempted to make these processes more understandable. Certainly, it appears that this general misunderstanding of City processes poses challenges for council, who describe much of civil society's protestations as resulting more from misinformation than from principled opposition. Councillors have clearly described instances in which residents have protested against proposals that, according to these councillors, are the best possible outcomes:

What's difficult to get the citizens to swallow, for me, is that the law lets us do something, or lets developers do things. So, in Connaught Park, the developer [...] has a proposal that the citizens refused... but, that... it could become a go-cart track! That's why, people, the reason isn't logical! If it becomes a go cart track, that's not cool.

As I have described, this lack of process information is perhaps key in limiting residents and civil society's ability to engage with the City in deliberations, which, in turn, likely limits the considered judgements that generate eventual land-use outcomes.

In addition, the popular lack of understanding of the processes of municipal governance leads to a likely bias in the land-use outcomes of the City. For example, according to several residents, developers are considered to be strategically taking advantage of poor information systems. For instance, because of the apparent lack of public understanding of Minor Variances, one resident describes that:

Citizens follow things, more or less, but things happen that they don't know: Minor Variances! These are to let the Cities be not too hermetic... but this is a huge, huge door that the government offers them. Minor Variances... we both know that these aren't minor. And this is another process: you have to know the right moment to intervene, and whether or not the City will listen is another thing.

This, again, suggests that the structure of information and transparency in Gatineau means that the processes of governance are likely to be more available to some than to others, and in this case are likely more available to those residents who have made the effort (out of capacity, interest or perceived necessity) to understand it.

Beyond the transparency of general process information, conversations with residents suggested a lack of procedural transparency about how the City's policies and decisions are implemented; about the process from decision to implementation. This criticism was raised a number of times throughout interviews with councillors and residents, especially with regard to the concept of "urban villages":

This urban village thing, they came out with that almost ten years ago and it was in response to the public backlash, because it was constant... because of the papers, people were concerned with the rapidity of change in their communities. It was unstable, they didn't like what was going on... so, finally, the planners said, 'Why don't we come up with this concept of 'urban villages'?'

In the City's documents, urban villages are described as a new approach to urban planning for the City of Gatineau, one that ostensibly focuses on environmentally responsible human densities, mixes of uses and activities, and balances of jobs and residences. However, these have faced strong criticism, especially where they are used in the planning of developments of previously forested, agricultural and recreational land. While the general principles seem to be largely accepted, many residents described the policy as having been "stretched" and "distorted by various civil servants," while others saw it as "just a way of sugar-coating the development." In the words of one resident, who described the City's relatively new "Le Plateau" urban village:

Don't tell us that that's a shining example of an urban village, because if that's a shining example, we are freaking doomed. Because that's a shining example of suburban sprawl and bad land use!

Evidently, the transparency of Gatineau's approach to deliberation, decision-making and implementation with regards to land use has not succeeded in gaining unanimous trust or legitimacy among residents. To the contrary, most residents that I spoke with – residents who had often engaged with and scoured the City's processes and deliberations – described these as unfair, biased and, in some instances, corrupt. Residents alleged that public servants intentionally tried to hide evidence of having approved residential developments on past industrial sites, and of actively trying to slow residents' requests to see development permits

(during which, according to one of my interview participants, the planning department was hastily drafting up the permit at the last minute). Once again, I am forced – due to lack of evidence – to temper my conclusions to the observation that, at least, the City’s transparency processes are failing to stem frustrations and are certainly failing to build trust with concerned residents:

What happens is that when people come up against a *‘fait accompli,’* even if it’s something that’s good, they complain! We’re at that point in the world today, you see? There’s, perhaps, some BANANAism also, you know: Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything? That’s tiring, but at the same time, you know about it! So, why not organise yourselves so that you’re not bashing your heads against the wall?

5.4.2. Civil society

Smith (2009) argues that transparency (both within groups and for outsiders) is arguably more easily achieved at smaller scales, where participants are also neighbours and where the activities of groups can be more easily communicated informally. However, Smith notes that small groups are also likely to be more opaque to newer residents, as the rules and procedures of these groups are likely known informally and are thus not accessible to people who are not already connected within those communities.

In Gatineau, I cannot report that civil society groups are shining models of transparency. The activities and decisions of civil society groups are not always clearly conveyed to their members, and group members and constituents are rarely directly consulted unless they actively take part in the administration of the groups. Of course, it would be difficult to describe transparency as either the responsibility or the mandate of these groups. However, given their roles within governance, it is important to note that decision-makers cannot assume that these groups’ participatory legitimacy and transparency can stand in for the shortcomings in the City governments’ own transparency.

5.5. Efficiency

No matter what you do, there are always going to be skeptics, right? That’s where a lot depends on the process that you put forth. If your process is sound, then it’s going to get traction. If your process is seen as biased, then forget it.

I use Smith's (2009) conceptualisation of "efficiency" to consider the costs of participatory processes, both in terms of the demands that they place on participants and in terms of resource costs to governance institutions.

In this research, I have focused on cost as a question of the demands that participation in governance places on citizens and administrators. Smith (2009) also notes that critics and established institutions alike often see increases in popular inclusiveness and control as potentially prohibitive in administrative costs. Similarly, the costs of engagement for citizens are perhaps an important counterweight to the benefits of participatory governance models, where to effectively engage might require important amounts of time (spent learning, researching, discussing, etc.) and effort, whereas benefits might not be so straight-forward. As such, these costs are often cited as barriers to the realism of the adoption of innovative participatory governance models, although Smith cautions that these costs must be compared against the costs of *not* engaging residents in participatory governance.

I look at efficiency largely with regard to the costs and benefits of participating in current governance processes, as perceived and expressed by the participants in my research.

Barriers to participation

As I have discussed, there are a number of factors that prevent residents from participating in council meetings or in the Planning Advisory Committee (CCU), as well as notable barriers to resident participation in civil society groups. In the opinion of some councillors, public servants and residents themselves, there are also evident barriers preventing residents from participating *effectively* in these fora: that is, barriers to residents' abilities to generate realistic proposals and successful, satisfying outcomes. Certainly, residents' experiences of engagement in land-use decisions were rarely described as simple. Indeed, the costs on residents of engagement with land-use governance processes appear to be high, through both City processes or through civil society.

We might consider that the high costs of engagement are evidenced especially through the frequent references to low attendance at City council meetings, difficulties in recruiting residents to the CCU, and community leaders' claims about the difficulties in building and maintaining even minimal popular engagement within civil society groups. Certainly, these claims at least seem to speak to the relative costs of engagement, relative to the myriad of other interests and

priorities of residents. According to one resident, who was rare in my interview process of having described some optimism in local processes of civic engagement:

In this world, where most people have double-incomes, two kids, a dog... So that's why, if you have an issue that people really care about, they'll latch on. If they don't care, they won't latch on. If there's something that people can coalesce around, it's easy to get people to invest their time. It becomes a priority. It becomes important enough that: 'I'm going to drop watching 'Desperate Housewives.' I'm going to go.'

Throughout my research, it seems that those resident-engagement efficiencies that exist are due to the effort and dedication of a relatively small group of community leaders and due to a tight community of engaged residents. This community forms a network which increases the general capacity for information-sharing, deliberation and support, allows some degree of "institutional memory" about the local history of engagement, thus increasing the local capacity for political strategy and experience. Furthermore, this network allows civil society groups to maintain both a critical mass as well as a division of labour and economy of scale in the efforts of administering civil society groups.

Fragmented populations

However, these engaged residents speak frequently of the challenges of engaging other people. According to some, local populations are fragmented, with interests and perspectives that rarely line up. For instance, one resident described a "collection of residents" attempting to work together to stop a proposed subdivision:

You get them all in one room and you realise that their backgrounds are totally different, their values are... their world views are totally different. They only have, like, one or two things in common: 'We don't want that subdivision coming in!' This guy might not want it because his house value might drop. This guy might not want it because he likes walking his dog there. This person might not like it because, 'Oh, they're going to be bringing in a bus, and the bus is going to be coming into our community, keeping us awake at night!' So, they all oppose it for different reasons.

Certainly, this description of "the population" as a generally irreconcilable, vision-less mass of people presents a challenge to any form of coherent representative or deliberative governance. Substantial effort would be involved in building a coherent and conciliatory response (a "considered judgement") out of such a diversity of perspectives, interests and needs. Societal issues of land use might have to generally resign themselves to the challenge of fragmentation and, thus, to some degree of conflict and compromise.

However, it seems that there are a number of barriers that would be more accurately associated with the specific governance processes and structures in Gatineau than with the fragmented “nature” of the city’s population. In the responses of my interview participants, these barriers especially involved the time-intensiveness, the psychological and emotional demands, and the extra costs for people (and perspectives) that are already politically marginalised.

Time-intensity

Time-intensiveness was often cited both as a barrier experienced by people that were already actively involved, and as a rationale for why wider involvement was unlikely. In interviews, residents that had led campaigns (both successfully and not) described the important efforts of drafting and printing letters and petitions, walking door-to-door, doing presentations for groups, making alliances with councillors, businesses and other organisations, and many, many meetings. One resident thus described the time-intensiveness and emotional demands of being civically engaged:

I need to pay attention to my life. It’s hard, it’s really really hard, these efforts. It takes a lot of energy! They’re paid! The people from the City are paid full-time, while we have other jobs, we have families also... it’s very hard!

This quote also demonstrates the conflictual dynamic that was very commonly described in my research: the impression of “the people” being in opposition to the City on land-use issues. The most deeply engaged residents described having taken time off work, or having become strongly engaged only after retiring. Others, especially young people and young parents, described that without the engagement of retired or already-experienced family members and other community members, they would have been incapable of figuring out City processes enough to participate in civic affairs in any meaningful way.

Emotional demand

For some residents, these efforts were emotionally demanding in themselves. Certainly, the challenges of just engaging, and thus taking personal attention away from other activities, seemed emotionally tasking for some (such as the resident quoted above). Others expressed frustrations arising from the friction and opposition faced throughout efforts to oppose land-use changes:

For the time being, I just can't do it anymore. I need to slow down a bit. [...] It takes, it eats, it gouges. And you're always fighting against people who have tools that you don't have! They have money! They have people working for them! They have salaries! They're paid to do that, you know?! So, it's hard in these times. [...] There I go again, all angry. I don't want to be angry anymore. [...] It's not good for your health.

Some described having personally “failed” at the whole project of civic engagement, while others seemed to consider civic engagement to be a defeating process in Gatineau, defeating people “one by one,” and seemingly having caused people to give up on the City altogether:

Residents have more or less shut down. Those people who couldn't tolerate what was going on moved out ages ago, within the last ten years. There are a few hangers-on, and they've just given up all hope...

Relatively costly for politically marginalised

Some engaged residents recognised that the costs of civic engagement were likely prohibitively high for “most people”:

We had the impression that we were, at least, facing people who [...] didn't impress us. But I imagine that, for Mr. and Ms. Everybody... [...] They wouldn't present themselves there. Never, ever. Or they'll go to one side, and say, 'My god, it's a group of crazies!'

Certainly, residents who described having presented strong opposition to projects described having been met with conflictual attitudes, describing the experience as being like “taking a turn at the guillotine.” Some have described feeling “talked down to,” ignored, or actively insulted by councillors during public council meetings. At least, it appears that this experience can seem intimidating to the inexperienced or the timid:

You're not welcome there, because people look at you because they know you're coming to oppose something, and you have very little time, so you try to... to introduce the project so that the other councillors hear, and at the same time giving the arguments that you want, and then asking a question.

Critically, Gatineau's participatory processes seem especially slanted towards people with confidence in public speaking, and towards those with relative abundances of time. It seems both likely and consistent with my experience of research in Gatineau, that the most engaged residents seemed at least somewhat higher income (retired, or able to take time off work to engage civically), seemed relatively older (young people were almost entirely absent from the

networks of engaged residents that I was able to identify). Smith has noted that, in participatory processes:

Psychological barriers that often stop more politically marginalised citizens from attending and/or speaking often combine with fiscal limitations: losing a day's labour or paying for childcare means that poorer residents and women can face increased burdens compared to other residents." (Smith, 2009, pp. 62-63)

Indeed, the barriers to participation for marginalised people are well known in democratic theory. For instance, in 1980, Mansbridge wrote that: "The psychic costs of participation are greater and the benefits fewer for lower status citizens. [...] Each act of participation not only costs them more but also usually produces less" (Mansbridge, 1980, p. 103; cited in Baiocchi, 2003, p. 53). Responding to this challenge – and coupling resident effort to tangible outcomes – seems to be among the most important issues in creating efficient and legitimate participation. Gianpaolo Baiocchi (2003) describes the importance of outcomes in participation, going so far as to suggest that tangible outcomes from participation are critical in building any appreciable sense of legitimacy and any appreciable utility from participatory efforts.

Failure to produce results

In Gatineau, the perceived likelihood of achieving positive outcomes from participating in civic processes seemed quite low. Although some participants seemed generally satisfied with their success, they did describe that they were aware of the limitations of what they could realistically accomplish and they generally stayed within these barriers as a matter of strategy, so as to maintain effectiveness and build rapport with council. Otherwise, the majority of residents that I spoke with described civic engagement as generally disillusioning. Even residents that belong to fairly successful groups (groups with informal agreements to be consulted by the City), described consultation processes as being little more than the presentation of "*faits accomplis*": pre-made decisions, about which residents were being informed.

One resident, who had witnessed over 40 years of development in Gatineau, described this disillusionment process as being somewhat cyclical:

People got involved and... they were thwarted, one by one, by the system. They were unsuccessful at stopping the development. The best you could do was string it out, or slow it down... but invariably these areas were basically paved over and houses were built.

Certainly, among the people that I interviewed, there was a widespread sense that engagement was generally not likely to produce meaningful results that reflected the needs of the residents that participated in consultation processes:

You see what we're up against! You see why we're a little frustrated by this whole 'civic thing.' We still trundle out to the meetings. We still go out to the Hippodrome thing, go to the dog and pony shows, but we're under no pretense to think that it's going to make a difference. So you try not to invest your heart and soul into it, because if you do you're going to get burnt.

As would only be reasonable, already marginalised residents would likely not be easily drawn into consultation and civic engagement processes that, generally, are perceived to *not* offer participants meaningful opportunities to have their concerns heard and, thereby, *not* shape outcomes.

Net costs of barriers to participation?

Unfortunately, because consultations do not effectively engage residents in straightforward, transparent processes, they seem to become increasingly biased toward the voices of already-engaged residents, thus losing further legitimacy within council. According to one councillor:

I'm of the school in which you have to bring something. A blank slate costs too much. You can't always show up with a blank slate and, unfortunately, if you come with a blank slate, all the public consultations involve the same people! So, if you arrive with a blank slate, it's the same 15, 20 people that decide for the City... whereas I tell myself: 'I was elected...'

As such, while it seems that Gatineau's processes for civic engagement are likely to present would-be participants with a number of important costs (i.e., time, stress, and lack of usefulness), these costs to participants also appear to impose costs on the overall processes of governance in terms of lacking resident trust and buy-in for the decisions and institutions of governance. In this light, we might consider the costs of the current approach to participation in relation to what might be the costs of a more thoroughly participatory approach. According to Smith, "Part of such a calculation will be a comparison with the perceived costs and benefits of *not* embedding participation within the governance process" (Smith, 2009, p. 26).

It appears that, in considering the shifting ideas of participation in governance in Gatineau, it is at least worth considering the balance between the potential difficulties of participatory approaches in relation to the potential for increases in perceived legitimacy and cooperative

relationships with residents. One of my interview participants mused that increased procedural transparency would greatly increase the efficiency of her efforts in engaging with the City, describing this as “a road map to contest us”:

I understand, on the one hand, because it’s like... here’s all your homework. So, it would complicate their lives... but we might get the impression that there’s transparency, and that there would be a real willingness to act according to what people want, or what they don’t also!

Chapter 6. Conclusions

In this chapter, I present the major conclusions of this research project. I begin by presenting an overview of these conclusions (section 6.1) and I then explain each conclusion in depth. I have organised my conclusions into two sections: conclusions about the participatory nature of processes and institutions of governance (section 6.2), and conclusions about the impacts of these institutions and processes on urban sprawl and sustainability (section 6.3).

Before I begin, let me make clear that the conclusions that I have presented here are not intended to disparage the individual efforts or work of any councillors, public servants or residents. Throughout my research, I was very impressed with the knowledge, dedication and sincerity with which my interview-participants approached their work and efforts. Obviously, I was not equally impressed with the state of Gatineau's land-use governance system, or with its systems to ensure justice, equity and sustainability in land use. However, rather than seeing these problems as the result of any person's mal-intent or irresponsibility, I see these problems with participation, land-use governance and sustainability as systematic, "intricately nested" aspects of the design of Gatineau's governance institutions and processes, and in the governance institutions and processes that have become common throughout North American democracies. As such, these conclusions were written to focus on strengths and weaknesses in governance institutions and processes, and not to focus on the achievements or failures of specific people and governance actors.

6.1. Summary of conclusions

1. Land-use planning and governance in Gatineau generally fails to foster meaningful civic participation beyond legally-required consultations.
2. Land-use planning and governance in Gatineau notably fails to foster meaningful civic participation in decisions regarding the design of governance institutions and processes.
3. Currently "engaged" civil society groups are not optimally formed or supported to improve the legitimacy of citizen participation in land-use governance.
4. Current processes and institutions of governance do not foster deliberation or considered judgement on land-use issues, especially regarding the geographic scale of land-use decisions.

5. Gatineau's land-use governance does not systematically ensure that adequately complete and complex information is considered in decision-making.
6. Current planning and governance processes do not systematically promote adaptability, and are instead poorly designed to ensure that the entrenchment of planning paradigms and techno-bureaucratic approaches to knowledge are challenged and avoided.
7. Current planning and governance processes are not adequate to build or maintain trust, buy-in and perceived legitimacy among citizens.

6.2. Conclusions on participation in land-use governance

Observing Gatineau's governance processes and institutions through the framework that Smith (2009) laid out for studying participatory governance innovations has allowed me to make a number of conclusion about the state of participation in Gatineau and the impacts that this has on the interactions between governance actors – especially between residents and government. I undertook this study to consider how civic participation (and the lack thereof) might influence the sustainability of land-use decisions with regards to urban development, and generally how governance processes and institutions deal with the problems that are inherent to attempts to manage complex systems. In this regard, I have especially considered the challenges of achieving adequate complexity and completeness of information and synthesis in decision-making, and the challenge of coordinating and implementing effective management strategies.

Participatory governance models attempt to address some of these concerns by suggesting that decision-making and decision implementation can be more appropriate, realistic, fully informed, and coordinated if the voices and perspectives of people, groups and institutions that interact and impact these complex systems on a day-to-day basis are included. With these promises, participatory governance models have gained some acceptance by governance institutions at all scales – including by the City of Gatineau. However, in many instances, the implementation of “participatory governance” has either lagged behind the official promises of governance bodies, or it has been criticised as having been employed only within procedural boundaries, thus perhaps serving as a form of social control and manipulation: a pretense at

empowerment and a tool at engineering consent as opposed to actually empowering publics (Cooke & Kothari, 2001).³⁶

Gatineau's Strategic Plan for 2009-2014 sets important goals for "a participatory approach, focused on the future" of the City (Ville de Gatineau, 2009a, p. 12). Among more specific sustainability objectives, this document lays out several "strategic directions" for the City, one of which is to promote "participatory governance and responsible management" (Ville de Gatineau, 2009a, p. 28). This strategy describes that "participatory governance will remain a key element in municipal intervention," that the City recognises "the roles of residents and organisations" as well as partnerships, and the importance of "accountability." Specifically, this document commits the City to "pursuing the development of a culture of participation by Gatineau's residents and partners, both internally and externally, in a spirit of equity and democracy." Furthermore, this document claims that:

The desired changes are not only based on collective but also individual commitment. This will make it all the more important to involve residents in preserving and enhancing their environment. (Ville de Gatineau, 2009a, p. 29)

In light of these plans, it appears that land use in Gatineau faces many challenges of participation in governance, although it also seems to be addressing some of these.

Conclusion 1. Land-use planning and governance in Gatineau generally fails to foster meaningful civic participation beyond legally-required consultations.

My exploration of Gatineau's land-use governance institutions, groups and processes suggests to me that citizens, attempting to participate in land-use governance, face important obstacles and limitations. This applies throughout formal governance processes, for which my research suggests that residents are not systematically assured of either inclusion or equitable representation. Moreover, citizens have little control over governance processes and are not generally offered efficient or impartial deliberation-processes within these processes. While some notable efforts have been made to increase inclusiveness and transparency in governance (both by specific councillors and by the City as a whole), transparency is still very lacking, especially with regard to process transparency. As a whole, governance processes present many barriers to citizen engagement, placing high costs and presenting few obvious benefits to those who do attempt to engage.

³⁶ It is in this context that Smith (2009) places special focus on "popular control," for example, examining the degree to which citizens are able to guard against the "capture" of these processes by political elites.

My research also suggests that land-use governance in Gatineau is especially likely to engage a relatively small, often interconnected group of people. This does not appear to result from systematic or intended exclusion of specific people, but from systematic barriers to wider participation which result in self-selection, in which certain people are either more able or more willing to engage. This seemed to most notably engage people with relative abundances of time, people that are relatively passionate and/or critical of governance processes, and people that feel directly affected or threatened by specific land-use issues or decisions. Biases in these processes likely contribute to the perspectives of some public servants and councillors that public engagement processes often served mainly as fora for citizens to vent their frustrations, that they disproportionately attract particularly dissenting and critical citizens.

Some of the biases that I have observed in citizen participation in civil society groups and in City processes appear to be self-reinforcing, as citizen engagement processes present barriers that might seem prohibitively high to people who are less passionate, less directly affected, or generally less able to dedicate time to municipal land-use governance issues. The factor that I would argue is most important in this self-reinforcing dynamic is the lack of transparency in land-use proposals and governance processes. This lack of transparency presents residents with a sharp learning curve for engagement. For residents to engage in land-use governance processes, they have to first be “awake” to the processes and potential impacts of various proposed land use issues, for which they must have learned about the various tools and language that the City uses to communicate. Residents must learn to interpret the technical and procedural information provided by the City to be able to engage at even a fairly basic level, and then must learn about the modes of communication and engagement that are possible, appropriate and likely to be effective for them to meaningfully engage. As such, experienced residents (those who are already potentially more aware of trends and processes in governance processes, and who are able to more strategically direct their efforts) likely face lower barriers to *continued* engagement, thus being more likely to participate consistently. Related to this issue are the costs of time and emotional commitment to engaging in municipal processes, which many strongly engaged people described as very taxing. Moreover, the perception that civic engagement rarely, if ever, satisfactorily addressed the concerns of residents seemed common even outside of the more engaged communities in Gatineau, and was strongly expressed among those that had worked hardest to attempt to have their voices heard throughout the past decades of Gatineau’s

urban sprawl. This is likely an important factor in limiting the recruitment of the wider public and is certainly likely to prevent the development of trust in civic engagement processes.

In contrast to these self-reinforcing biases, some processes and common practices of municipal land-use governance seem likely to systematically bias *against* the inclusion of dissenting voices. For instance, the appointment of CCU resident-members by council, the informal processes through which councillors engage with residents, and the cold, dismissive or confrontational treatment that several residents described in trying to express dissent against specific municipal decisions, all seem likely to increase the barriers to the participation of critical and dissenting voices. Moreover, as there did not appear to be any systematic way in which dissenting voices were judged as to their potential legitimacy and relevance, these voices may have important results on the limitations of information and perspectives that contribute to land-use governance outcomes.

Conclusion 2. Land-use planning and governance in Gatineau notably fails to foster meaningful civic participation in decisions regarding the design of governance institutions and processes.

What participatory processes do exist in Gatineau rarely offer citizens opportunities to affect the scope and depth of their “interventions.” In other words, governance processes and institutions fail to allow citizens to participate in decisions about “What is legitimate?” and “Who gets to decide?”

These concerns emerged strongly in accounts of tensions over the “scale” of legitimacy in land use and in the conflictual nature of civic engagement processes, in which residents (and some councillors) expressed frustrations and disillusionment about how legitimacy is determined and enforced throughout governance. It seems that the lack of public participation, buy-in and perceived legitimacy in the *design* of land-use governance processes and institutions was a major inhibitor in achieving meaningful, conciliatory dialogue on land-use issues.

In the current governance arrangement, many decisions are made by somewhat prescribed procedures, procedures which were likely designed with good reasons and intentions, the choices of “What is legitimate?” and “Who gets to decide?” are most problematic. As residents are not involved in answering these questions (and moreover feel that they have no forum in which they might even pose them), the City is likely to continue being faced with frustrated residents (“NIMBYs”) who, while perhaps misunderstanding the processes, certainly do not value, feel

empowered by, or feel responsible for these processes. As such, these residents are unlikely to feel compelled to trust or take part in implementing municipal decisions that might, otherwise, be in the best interests of these residents or of the city as a whole.

In terms of participatory practices, the approach of the City of Gatineau fits somewhat with the description of Cooper, Bryer and Meek (2006), who note that consultation processes often go only so far as to fulfil legal obligations to consult the public, which thus result in processes that are narrow in scope, limited in potential impact, and generally disillusioning. Experiences and interpretations that I heard from both residents and councillors seemed to fit with Mitchell's characterisation of the status quo approach to land-use decision-making: "DAD (decide, announce, defend)" (Mitchell, 2005, p. 2). Again, it appears that councillors and public servants recognise this issue to some degree, but that they see themselves as inhibited by legal restrictions. In my interpretation of Gatineau's land-use governance processes, the critique of the City's decision-communication approach stems at least partially from the lack of procedural transparency and perceived legitimacy: residents frequently encounter barriers to reliable technical and procedural information (information about how the system works and how they can most effectively engage with it). As such, my interviews suggested that residents are increasingly disillusioned with the whole system of governance, distrustful that decisions are being taken with their interests in mind, but generally not procedurally empowered to ensure the legitimacy of these decisions.

Conclusion 3. Currently "engaged" civil society groups are not optimally formed or supported to improve the legitimacy of citizen participation in land-use governance.

The City's current of approach of including specific, "established" civil society groups and other "partners" in governance is ill-designed to alleviate conflict, to improve buy-in and to build perceived legitimacy in land-use governance processes and institutions. My interviews certainly suggest that "established" civil society groups are inclusive of only a minority of residents. City civic engagement processes are similarly disproportionately inclusive, systematically (and likely unintentionally) biased to most strongly include those citizens that are already engaged in civil society groups.

Engaged residents and groups bear significant costs of engagement, while some benefits of their efforts are arguably in the common interest. Likely, some of these engaged citizens

benefit individually also, perhaps gaining important relationships with decision-makers and other engaged citizens, allowing them to more effectively and more subtly consider issues, and to more strategically act in order to have their voices included in decisions and deliberations. However, the downside of this disproportionate inclusion of engaged citizens is that some councillors, public servants and residents have recognised this as a bias and have thus been able to dismiss existing civic engagement processes. This recognition of bias has been used rhetorically by some councillors and public servants to suggest that civic engagement is problematic throughout Gatineau's land-use governance processes, thus arguing that City councillors are more legitimately and more directly representative than are the citizens that try to block developments and zoning changes through consultation processes and zoning change referenda. As such, the biases in civic engagement are used to suggest that civic engagement processes should be made *less binding* throughout the City's governance processes. Unfortunately, this argument does not seem to recognise the role of barriers to civic engagement in these processes, barriers which are, for the most part, within the power and responsibility of the City and the Province to improve. Meanwhile, these barriers are not easily changed from outside of government.

Indeed, I must conclude that – as it seems likely that these civil society groups are especially inclusive of only certain interests and people in Gatineau – these groups cannot be considered as adequate stand-ins for the direct participation of residents. Referring again to my discussion of the shortcomings in multi-stakeholder and collaborative governance approaches (section), to include only the voices with “recognised” interests in governance *is* to give these groups precedence over others. This approach is especially likely to exclude the most politically marginalised people, who are likely not adequately represented within most civil society groups, despite that they might be disproportionately impacted by some land-use decisions. As such, it certainly seems inadequate to assume that “those who show up” (or those who are invited) to consultations are those who are most affected or who have the most legitimate needs and interests in any given decision.

However, on this point I must be very clear: civil society groups are currently critical tools for the inclusiveness in land-use decisions, and their biased inclusiveness should not be seen as ill-intent or lack of effort on the part of these groups. On the contrary, these groups are especially important because of the shortcomings in the City's processes to engage more broadly

and equitably. Organised civil society *is* relevant, and is *most* relevant in the absence of significant improvements to civic engagement efforts (especially by the City). As such, it is inadequate for the City to approach civil society as unrepresentative and, thus, not appropriate to be consulted as “stakeholders” (as was alluded to in some of my interviews with City councillors and public servants). This perspective fails to recognise that the City’s approaches to decision-making and civic engagement are themselves creating the conditions in which civil society groups are both relevant and critical: civil society groups currently appear to be the most likely fora in which citizens *can* express themselves, and in which the critiques of citizens can be leveraged to have tangible impacts on land use.

Conclusion 4. Current processes and institutions of governance do not foster deliberation or considered judgement on land-use issues, especially regarding the geographic scale of land-use decisions.

As the processes and institutions of land-use governance in Gatineau are failing to ensure citizen inclusiveness, these governance actors fail to ensure that land-use decisions currently achieve what Smith (2009) calls “considered judgement.” As such, land-use issues are not approached to *ensure* both that the needs and interests of individuals are deeply considered, respected and balanced against one-another, and that outcomes are (and are perceived to be) reflective of “common” interests.

Many City processes are not well-designed to ensure that information is considered from multiple perspectives, that the perspectives of all affected parties are included, or that novel and potentially “politically risky” proposals are considered. On the other hand, processes that *do* engage residents in binding decision-making are very restrictive in terms of inclusion, and do not ensure any level of deliberation of common or conflicted interests and needs, either among “included” residents or in the interests of the wider population. As such, governance processes cannot be expected to adequately arrive at decisions that maximise or approach common interests, since many of these interests are likely neither known nor considered by central, empowered governance actors.

This is especially evident in the conflict between City processes and local, civil society activism (often characterised as NIMBYism). This conflict is essentially a concern over the legitimacy of the geographic scale over which interests should be able to bear on land-use decisions: the proportionality between “who decides” and “who is affected.”

Indeed, some councillors see that in some cases, sustainability (an undoubted “common” interest) can be thwarted by “participatory” processes, in which residents’ “wrath,” when effectively motivated, can be powerful in dramatically shifting councillors positions, sometimes *away* from sustainable outcomes. Furthermore, in Gatineau, some councillors perceive that residents’ use of binding refusals of zoning-change proposals have produced decisions that are against the common good, including only the considerations and interests of residents living in zones immediately adjacent to the zones targeted by proposed decisions. As I have described, some councillors saw the binding control that local residents could leverage through referenda as the illegitimate seizure of power from elected (or acclaimed) councillors. Similarly, some residents described the small scale of inclusiveness in zoning referenda as failing to recognise important affected parties (i.e., nearby groups that consider themselves likely to be affected, or local groups with personal concerns for the environmental or historical value of a site), thus that referenda fail to promote “common” interests even on quite local scales.

While these referenda do occur, and do represent an extreme in this question of “scale” of legitimacy, the other extreme is far more common: the decision-making of council, involving the deliberation and input of councillors from across the City, regardless of the location that was to be impacted by a decision. This process therefore ostensibly includes the interests of the whole of the City (though varying in response to council negotiations and alliances, and to popular pressure), regardless of how locally this decision might be felt. Indeed, residents and councillors alike described the illegitimacy of this primary decision-making process, through which councillors that may have have very little knowledge or experience of many sectors of the City have power over land-use issues that will only marginally affect them or their constituents.

Both of these options seem to be clumsy decision-making protocols, both appearing to fail to systematically include “all affected interests.” Clearly, without specific processes to foster the meaningful consideration of common interests, neither of these approaches to scale in land-use decision-making are likely to systematically foster “considered judgement” as Smith (2009) describes it. However, even supposing that either of these processes might approach “considered judgement,” the scale over which “common interests” must be deliberated – and thus the definition of “affected residents” – will likely have an impact on how those interests become defined. Currently, the City has wrestled with this to some degree, attempting to recognise the uniqueness of various neighbourhoods and ensuring that some issues (especially aesthetic and

historical) involve local (sector-level) consultations. With regards to sustainability, there is likely a similar balance to be struck, though what balance would most-effectively deal with this problem is likely to be very complex and context-specific.

On this question, rather than to suggest that civic participation is some kind of general, simple panacea to land-use conflicts and sustainability problems, I must return to the concern of Duany et al. that I raised in my introduction, that, when consulted:

People have trouble recognizing the profound effect that our physical surroundings have on daily life. When the topic of physical planning does surface, it is usually in the form of bitter citizen outcry over something gone wrong or about to go wrong, almost always perceived to be perpetrated from above. (Duany et al., 2000, pp. 220-221)

Again, this strongly reflects the complaints of public servants and councillors, who described being put off and discouraged by the frequent conflictual approach taken by residents in consultation processes. These councillors and public servants seemed to focus their exasperation with resident distrust and “bad faith,” considering citizens’ outcries as evidence of “the NIMBY syndrome.” Relating back to Burningham’s (2000) discussion of the rhetorical use of NIMBYism (see section 2.3.4), my interviews often showed public servants and councillors interpreting residents’ concerns as being misled, uninformed, and therefore “wrong” and needing to be re-informed. This is what Burningham calls the “deficit model of public knowledge and understanding” (Burningham, 2000, p. 57). In the case of Gatineau, the events of civil society activism that were derided or dismissed as NIMBYism often corresponded to events which engaged citizens saw as critical for aspects of their quality of life or as symbolic rallying points to express concerns that were often much wider: the character, paradigms and governing rules for urban development throughout the city. Moreover, these groups often demonstrated the capacity to integrate a diversity of forms of knowledge, producing policy perspectives that were seen locally as being quite legitimate or as at least being reflective of legitimate concerns.

The question of NIMBYism again raises the issue of legitimacy of scale, considering Goodin’s (2007; as cited in Smith, 2009) approach to inclusiveness in governance.³⁷ Again, the conflicts and debates around NIMBYism shows an incongruity in the City’s approach to citizen participation: for instance, the City supports and gives voice to the Planning Advisory Committee (CCU) to ensure that citizens’ “common” (in the sense of “day-to-day”) interests

³⁷ Goodin argues that “citizenship,” or the right to participate, should be extended to “all affected interests” rather than simply those recognised as citizens within existing political jurisdictions.

come to bear on decisions. Meanwhile, many councillors and public servants openly criticised some “engaged citizens” as expressing concerns and interests that, in the opinions of these City officials, were illegitimate, unreasonable or unimportant. This incongruity and lack of due process to ensure the consideration of all affected interests are key in producing the lack of trust, buy-in and completeness of information that I argue (in the next section) do and will continue to present barriers to finding meaningful solutions to the pressing problem that Gatineau faces in terms of urban growth, sprawl and land-use sustainability.

6.3. Conclusions on the impacts of land-use governance on sustainability

Participation in land-use governance is a critical goal in and of itself. However, participation in governance is also gaining recognition as potentially critical in building meaningful, effective solutions to the important problems of urban growth, sprawl and, especially, sustainability. Sustainability – our ability to predictably and persistently maintain a healthy, mutually supportive relationship with the environmental systems on which we depend – is undoubtedly a question of the “common good” (as has been extensively argued, for example, by Daly and Cobb (1994)). Ensuring the sustainability of human-environmental systems, while ensuring social and environmental justice, is a foremost responsibility of our institutions of democratic government. Unfortunately, this is a responsibility that, all signs suggest, we are dangerously failing to live up to. Our governments, ideally institutions of social problem-solving, are the foremost tools that we currently have in which individuals, with individual needs and interests, have a chance of bridging differences and figuring out the best path forward for all involved. Of course, Gatineau is only one institution among many that must now face the challenges of sustainability, and land use is only one facet of sustainability.

As I described in section 2.2.2, urban sprawl presents significant problems to sustainability, in terms of greenhouse gases emissions and climate change, ecosystem appropriation, habitat loss, degradation of ecosystem goods and services, food security, human health, and social and political stability. As these problems have gained increased public and academic awareness, strategies have been developed to address them. These often call for increased valuation of ecological services, increasing community resilience (i.e., bolstering institutional adaptability and flexibility in anticipation of likely changes in global energy systems and climate), and ensuring food security. To these goals, anti-sprawl strategies target density,

diversity and integration of human activities in urban and regional planning, aiming for stable and interconnected land use, and major improvements to the efficiency of transit and transportation systems for people and goods. Furthermore, sprawl (and, to a degree, anti-sprawl approaches also) present important biases in social outcomes, failing to ensure that everyone gets an “even slice of the pie.” Sustainable solutions must ensure a focus on social and environmental justice if solutions are to be politically stable.

Gatineau’s Strategic Plan for 2009-2014 sets important goals sustainable outcomes, as well as for participatory governance (Ville de Gatineau, 2009a, p. 12). This document lays out goals which include: to tackle urban sprawl, to direct urban growth in a coherent manner, to promote sustainable transportation, to integrate natural and built environments, and to serve as an example of sustainable development (especially with regards to climate change).

In many ways, Gatineau has presented a promising set of policies and approaches to sustainability, many of which specifically target the City’s problematic legacy of unsustainable sprawl. Approaches, such as the “Urban Village” policy and the recent Housing Strategy, aim to increase density in new developments and existing neighbourhoods, and to promote social diversity as well as a diversity of uses (especially residential and commercial). Furthermore, with the Urban Development Perimeter and the deferral of significant areas of land, the City has actively promoted density as well as the preservation of rural, “undeveloped” and agricultural areas. The City has also shown important support for conservation, integrating green spaces and wildlife corridors into planning criteria, and aiming to reduce the use of water-impenetrable asphalted surfaces and to reduce road widths. Notable efforts are also being made to improve the efficiency of public transit.

However, reviews are mixed as to the effectiveness of these strategies and efforts. Residents, even groups that are engaged in helping the City develop these strategies, criticise that there is more *discussion* of sustainability than there is *meaningful implementation* of existing strategies. As such, residents seem critical of the social equity that is actually being achieved through the City’s various strategies. Many people are especially concerned that these strategies are being used to present a fresh, “green” and socially just face to what is otherwise an uninspired, status quo approach to development. This seems especially demonstrable in the City’s continued planning of non-interconnected, circuitous road networks – failing to plan for the likely importance of public transit with what seem to be inevitable increases in energy costs.

Furthermore, the City's approaches to using the Urban Development Perimeter and land deferrals – which only ensure very temporary protection and are easily modified, even according to senior public servants – do not go far enough in recognising the problems of the degradation of ecosystem services and of bio-diversity loss.

This contrast between successes and shortcomings suggests that current strategies only succeed in scratching the surface of a handful of well-known, widely recognised (and critical) problems in land use and sustainability. Unfortunately, this scenario seems to support the concerns of ecologist and ecological economist William Rees, who argues that, globally, few if any current governance programs that claim to promote sustainability have had any significant impact, “apart from fostering the illusion of progress” (Rees, 2010). Certainly, current governance processes in Gatineau do not appear to be systematically structured for complex problem-solving and institutional flexibility. Meanwhile, Gatineau's governance system is currently tasked with resolving issues that require careful balancing of the interests and needs of a complex society in the context of that society's interactions with an even more complex and dynamic environment.

Certainly, Gatineau is not an exception in this analysis: the prospects of global sustainability now seem so challenging that people are beginning to question whether or not our governance models (representative democracies supported by techno-bureaucratic administrations) are up to the task (i.e., Fung et al., 2003; Rees, 2010). The challenge of sustainability goes to the depths of the principles by which our governance institutions are designed, to the processes for accountability and transparency, as well as to the responsibilities of citizens within these governance institutions. Gatineau is neither alone in this challenge, and nor will Gatineau be able to address these concerns on its own. As I have touched upon, the provincial and federal levels of governance might be considered, in some ways, more directly involved in affecting land use within Gatineau than is the municipality. In this way, the solutions to sprawl and sustainability are at least partially outside of the reach of the municipal processes that were the focus of my project. However, we cannot consider Gatineau in any way *not* responsible for the sustainability of land use within its borders, or even in the surrounding region. Within these parameters, how Gatineau approaches the design of its land-use governance institutions is critical for the sustainability of the city and region, and is therefore an important piece in the sustainability of the province, nation and world.

My hope in writing this work is that Gatineau can be part of the solutions to the profound social, economic and environmental sustainability challenges that our societies currently face. While contributing any truly effective solutions will require deep changes, definitely stretching to the foundations of our governance cultures and models, I believe that Gatineau is, in some ways, well-equipped to do so. Certainly, the City's stated commitment to sustainability and participatory governance are, at least, encouraging as a starting point for what will have to be much more profound efforts in land-use governance.

The following are the major conclusions that have emerged from my explorations of participation and governance in the context of Gatineau's land use, with regards to the implications of this governance arrangement for some of the major sustainability concerns of urban sprawl.

Conclusion 5. Gatineau's land-use governance does not systematically ensure that adequately complete and complex information is considered in decision-making.

My research has revealed several important challenges within Gatineau's ability to access and integrate diverse forms and sources of information and perspectives.

Within the City, I noted several processes that lack information "safety nets," thus failing to ensure that a complete and diverse set of information, policy alternatives and potential solutions are considered in land-use decision-making. This is especially notable in the deliberation processes of council, the CCU and civic engagement processes: in these deliberations, the flow of information is dominated by the public service, whose expertises are rooted strongly in rationalistic approaches to knowledge and in narrow definitions of *what kinds* of knowledge are relevant, and what kinds of problems are within the responsibility of the public service. As such, while the public service cannot be criticised for producing unimportant or inaccurate information, engaged residents (among whom there are professionals in environment, architecture and public policy, etc.) noted that the expertise of the City staff and officials were notably limited in scope and perspective. This likely limits what information is considered by council, even limiting what information council receives from competing *technical* perspectives: the technical perspectives that are considered "acceptable" throughout the City's processes come down to the opinions of very few people, and affect both the perspectives that are "heard" and the perspectives that are considered relevant to integrate into decisions. Certainly, this at least

places emphasis on “technical” considerations, while residents’ values and concerns have much less direct consideration by the fora of municipal council.

Throughout City processes, there is no assurance that the interests of “all affected parties” will be integrated in a systematic fashion. Furthermore, City processes likely limit the diversity of perspectives that are considered, especially due to self-selection and unintended systematic exclusion in civic engagement. This has likely resulted in a failure on the part of the City to foster local, on-the-ground problem-solving with regards to urban sprawl, and likely results in the City being forced to act with incomplete understandings of local contexts (social and political, as well as biophysical).

The limitations in the assurance of a diversity and completeness of perspectives, and the likely under-representation of non-technical perspectives in the City’s deliberation processes suggest that the entrenchment of the reductionist approach to land-use governance is likely to continue. As I have described, reductionist approaches to the governance of complex systems (on the scale of human-environment interactions) have been widely criticised as inadequate in addressing sustainability concerns (i.e., Ludwig et al., 1993).

This lack of information completeness is certainly not exclusive to Gatineau’s City government processes. Civil society groups are also obviously limited in their abilities to investigate land-use issues from all sides and integrate all perspectives. As such, I must reiterate that civil society groups are not the “missing step” in the City’s consideration of land-use issues. It would be very inadequate for the City to treat the current civil society groups as tools for deliberation, to which the City can turn over its technical land-use questions (as the City already somewhat does with the CCU). To the contrary, residents were quick to point out that their protestations did not intend to wrestle control of decision-making from the administration, but rather to force a recognition that the processes and trends of current governance were inadequate. Some councillors were also quick to point out how resident voices were very often reactive, based on misunderstandings of both land-use proposals and technical issues. Furthermore, councillors provided examples of cases in which very local interests of residents groups trumped broader municipal and sustainability interests through binding, local referenda.

Moreover, in current City processes, civil society groups seem to gain the “ears” of council through a combination of strategy and moderation. In terms of information, this likely reinforces “entrenched” (i.e., economic and scientific) approaches to considering information, as

these are more likely to cut through the barriers to the central governance actors. These “entrenched positions” are thus more likely to be heard and to produce successful results.³⁸

In all, Gatineau’s land-use governance system seems ill-equipped to deal with the technical or administrative complexity that seems to be a logical key to dealing with issues of land-use sustainability. In this regard, the lack of deep, convincing public engagement is perhaps a predictable barrier to the development of flexible, creative and locally relevant solutions to urban sprawl and land-use sustainability problems. Certainly, according to participatory governance theorists (i.e., Mitchell, 2005; Coenen, 2009), the knowledge, experience and creativity of “publics” are crucial in informing approaches that hope to address the complexity and subtlety that sustainability requires in both policy and implementation. However, such solutions are very unlikely to emerge from public participation without very well-designed processes, especially crafted to foster completeness of information and deep deliberation about *common* interests, while overtly, profoundly and equitably addressing the diversity of peoples’ individual interests and needs.

Conclusion 6. Current planning and governance processes are not adequate to build or maintain trust, buy-in and perceived legitimacy among citizens.

My research has found evidence of entrenched planning paradigms and institutional approaches to planning that have favoured urban sprawl, both by the Planning Service and by the citizens and their official representatives. I observed saw a lack of systematic processes to guard against the entrenchment of such paradigms. For the Planning Service and public servants, these paradigms were visible especially in terms of the focus on building urban areas designed for automobile use, continuing to zone relatively large areas for single-uses, and continuing to focus on short term economic and narrow engineering concerns as opposed to long-term and systems-thinking approaches to knowledge. For citizens and elected representatives, entrenched paradigms might more accurately be described as a steadfast unwillingness to consider certain alternatives to cultural norms such as low density residences or automobile use, and as a general misunderstanding of the constraints and problems faced (knowingly and otherwise) by municipal administrations, both legally and physically, and in terms of the requirements for sustainability. Indeed, Duany et al. (2000) argue that the

³⁸ Note that I do not consider “economic and scientific” perspectives to generally lack value in any way, but rather consider that to give these perspectives precedence over others by default is unwise, and fails to recognise the human (and other) purposes for which technical approaches are in any way relevant.

entrenchment of planning ideology has been important in the perpetuation of the sprawl model throughout North America, while Briggs has recognised that, throughout our society, “sprawl is part of our culture” (Briggs, 2008, pp. 51-2). The entrenchment of these paradigms is a major barrier to the ability of Gatineau’s governance actors to adapt to the requirements of sustainability.

The design of institutions and process for land-use governance in Gatineau seems likely to impede such institutional adaptability, reflection and revision of past decisions, and likely serves to insulate governance processes from radical and innovative ideas. However, councillors and senior public servants described an ongoing process of institutional reform. Published City documents similarly describe both an ongoing dedication to learning (specifically with regards to sustainability) and efforts to foster a “horizontal and multidisciplinary approach” within the public service (Ville de Gatineau, 2009a), which might be expected to allow more cross-disciplinary thought and more innovative attempts to manage the problems of sustainability. It stands to be seen as to how far institutional reform might be able to instigate the reconsideration of planning paradigms that appear entrenched in Gatineau – not only in terms of technical considerations of asphalt use and architectural integration, but in considering legitimacy, equity and social justice, as well as non-technical forms of knowledge and experience. Moreover, however, it remains to be seen as to how effective this institutional reform might be in ensuring that new planning approaches do not become unquestionably entrenched.

Conclusion 7. Current planning and governance processes do not systematically promote adaptability, and are instead poorly designed to ensure that the entrenchment of planning paradigms and techno-bureaucratic approaches to knowledge are challenged and avoided.

The sense of frustration that exists is proof that there are things that aren’t working... that procedures, the way things are done, doesn’t work.

As I discussed earlier, sustainability *is* a question of technical and experiential complexity in design, but sustainability is perhaps *most critically* a social and political problem, in which the stakes run as deep as the foundations of our cultures and socio-economic expectations. In this context, to suggest that sustainability can be a top-down affair is not credible. Beyond the technical and scientific realm, these barriers will require broad participation to even understand and express the full scope of the problem (especially in terms of the full scope of the social

barriers to sustainability). To identify socially acceptable and, thus, realistic solutions to sustainability problems (of which land use is only one facet) will require a further step (Mitchell, 2005). Hypothetically, therefore, it seems that this question of public “buy-in” is crucial. Of course, this is an assumption of this work, but one based in a strong body of thought and research. If this hypothesis is correct, however, Gatineau has a number of challenges in meeting its sustainability goals.

At least among many of those residents that my study involved, trust in Gatineau’s land use institutions was notably lacking. This lack of trust was of course variable, but extended from the public service and the municipal council, to the procedures of decision-making and, certainly, public engagement. Especially considering the perspectives of some experienced civil society advocates, it seems that an important part of this lack of trust was because, in the words of one such advocate, “a lot of people don’t know these processes.” There were several approaches to even this concern. One approach was to view this as a shortcoming of the public for not getting involved and not paying attention; another was to see it as a problem of inaccessible municipal process information – a lack of procedural transparency. Certainly, procedural transparency³⁹ was resoundingly seen as lacking among some of the less politically-experienced of my research participants (and among some quite experienced participants). My perspective on this debate is inconsequential. What is important, however, is that this lack of trust exists, and is important for the realisation of sustainable land use outcomes. Moreover, my research certainly suggests that resident-engagement processes are “inefficient” in terms of the costs of participation for citizens: they are difficult for people to physically engage in (in terms of time and emotional commitment, etc.), and they are perceived to be unlikely to produce satisfying results (in terms of residents feeling that their concerns have been incorporated into decisions, or even that these have been “heard”). As such, public servants and councillors seemed to perceive engaged residents as unreasonably, immutably critical – certainly unwilling to approve of the status quo, and immediately doubting proposed changes.

This lack of trust and buy-in likely limits how deeply sustainability-oriented policies will be taken up by individual residents in their every-day activities. However, without down-playing

³⁹ By procedural transparency, I mean both in terms of the accessibility of language in official process descriptions (for instance, processes were often explained in technical or legalistic language; also, documents were much more widely available in French than in English), and the predictability of what processes were actually likely to produce desired results.

the importance of building sustainable habits, I would argue that the more important impact of the lack of trust and buy-in is on the flexibility, creativity and “reach” of the government institutions themselves. These institutions are certainly fundamentally limited (by law and capacity) in the scope of their decisions. However, some councillors specifically described the challenge of institutional momentum, of the barriers to “flipping” the machine of government. Without popular support, and thus popular trust and buy-in, it seems that the interesting and creative ideas that do emerge within council and the public service will be unlikely to gain significant ground in the face of vested interests and entrenched approaches to land-use governance (i.e., certain aspects of the urban sprawl model, which are both an entrenched planning paradigm and are perceived to confer certain benefits to developers⁴⁰). Both political risk and institutional momentum seem to be important factors impeding the type of changes that would be required for Gatineau's land-use governance to even approach the current state-of-the-art of urban planning for sustainability – much less to “serve as an example.”

However, even more important than confronting the entrenched paradigms and (perceived) vested interests in the public service and among developers, trust and buy-in are critical in reconsidering entrenched ways of thinking among residents. As residents are not participants in “defining the problems” of land use sustainability, it seems normal that the majority of them might not recognise the importance or the logic of the specific approaches to sustainability that emerge from the technical expertise of the public service, or the public administration and re-election prerogatives of municipal council. This seems borne out in Gatineau, as even straight-forward solutions such as promoting “bikeability” within the City are seen as “top-down” and, despite being at least benign to most residents, are instead seen as foolhardy or even threatening. Certainly, this is also true of the concepts of densification and “urban villages,” which cannot so easily be passed off as benign, but rather involve important cultural trade-offs that will face stiff opposition unless treated carefully. Again, Gatineau shows a certain lack of transparency and lack of *active* inclusiveness in building policies: this is not to say that decisions are being made “behind closed doors” or that they actively exclude portions of the population, but rather that they do not *actively* engage people; deliberations and decision-

40 The perceived benefit of urban sprawl-type construction for developers is quite contested by empirical data, that show that well-built, more environmentally progressive designs can compete favourably. Instead, sprawl seems more often to be the result of inflexible planning codes, as well as perhaps institutional momentum on the part of developers – not empirical financial benefit (i.e., see Condon et al., 1998; Condon, 2010).

making do not make it into the living rooms of the people, often seeming to sorely “miss the point” in the eyes of residents.

As such, with low trust and low buy-in resulting from ineffective “investment” in transparency, inclusiveness and consideration of the “common good,” even potentially progressive and encouraging policies seem unstable. This is especially true if they come to be seen as the political liability of a specific administration and if they come up against vested interests. Put another way, unless sustainability is perceived as broadly legitimate, and that it therefore becomes entrenched in the popular understanding of the “common good,” it is likely to be unstable and inconsistently implemented from administration to administration. Coenen (2009) suggests that the active participation of a population is important to produce both deep popular understanding of the reasons for decisions (thus perhaps facilitating behavioural changes), and a greater acceptance and willingness to monitor and defend both the decisions and their implementation. On the other hand, decisions perceived as “top-down” miss this opportunity of harnessing the public in the development, reality-checking and spreading of ideas, the monitoring of implementation and the defense of decisions through political turbulence.

6.4. Discussion of conclusions

In conclusion, my research sees strong links between the state of Gatineau’s processes for civic participation and its ability to consider and respond to the sustainability of the local landscape. There are important links between the exclusion of citizens from deliberations and decisions, and shortcomings in the City’s ability to consider information and perspectives that are relevant, appropriate and important to affected interests. There are also links between the degradation of trust in the legitimacy of the City’s processes and institutions of land-use governance, and the the ability of the city as a whole (including the City government, civil society and residents) to deliberate and implement meaningful, sufficient responses to the problems of sprawl and sustainability. The result is a city and society that will be slow to adapt in a time of large scale changes in the set of economic, social and environmental conditions that will bear directly on the interactions between the society and the landscape of Gatineau.

These conclusions are consistent with the academic literature on participation and governance. In this literature, there are important examples of cases of increased participation improving the quality and impact of decisions taken. Participatory budgeting efforts in Brazil –

especially in Porto Alegre – have been shown to be extremely successful in allowing urban planning and municipal investment to more equitably address social problems across the board, where, previously, corrupt and clientalistic representative councils had largely focused investment in the wealthier parts of this City, which is noted for its extreme economic disparity (Abers, 1998; Baiocchi, 2003; Smith, 2009). By fostering deeply participatory processes, processes which have actively and successfully tried to ensure the participation of socially and economically marginalised populations, Porto Alegre has succeeded in vastly improving (though obviously not in perfecting) the “considered judgement” of municipal governance (Smith, 2009). In terms of sustainability, especially considering that environmental sustainability is thought to be highly unlikely without also achieving social sustainability (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), this now-famous example of participatory decision-making is certainly a point for optimism in governance for sustainability.

With regards to urban sprawl, my introduction makes clear that positive examples of sustainability-oriented land-use planning are rare in North America. Few municipalities and cities have succeeded in preventing urban sprawl and, despite fairly notable diversity in the forms and functioning of municipal governance structures, the rarity of positive examples points to the strength of the drivers of urban sprawl, and to the weakness of municipal governance structures abilities to counter these drivers. If we again consider “how intricately nested all of the elements are that conspire to make our new communities unhealthy” (Condon, 2008, p. 60) – financial incentives, entrenched planning policies and institutional designs at multiple levels of government, not to mention consumer preferences and popular assumptions about economic rationality, all of which have served to promote urban sprawl – it is perhaps less surprising that counter-examples are rare.

This rarity of examples of sustainable land-use governance is perhaps somewhat demonstrative of the scope of challenges facing many aspects of sustainability: that due to the weakness of accountability and deliberation mechanisms in many of our democratic structures, combined with the predominance of a market-based decision-making and valuation paradigm (which focuses on individual rather than common needs), our societies are woefully unprepared to produce adequate, holistic and coordinated responses to our sustainability deficits. This was not a specific focus of this project, but I recognise that Gatineau and many Cities are faced with these challenges, intricately nested into our policies and institutions, and even our assumptions

and cultural beliefs. I believe that this reinforces the need for deliberative, conciliatory participatory processes – mediated and facilitated by democratic, just and accountable governments – in which sustainability can be approached as a project of the common good.

That said, a number of examples of positive, sustainability-oriented land-use governance do stand out. Briggs (2008) demonstrated that carefully crafted participatory processes were central in eliciting the buy-in of a critical mass of stakeholders and governance actors in the in Utah’s Salt Lake City metropolitan region. This participation, not only of prominent stakeholders (although this was absolutely important) but also of citizens, was critical in changing the trend on urban development, curbing urban sprawl through shifting popular and developer acceptance for urban densification, and the building of adequate governance structures, skills and will for sustainability-oriented land-use planning. In the Metro Vancouver area, participatory design processes – called “Design Charettes” – have been key in allowing the sustainability-oriented Provincial policies to be translated into “on the ground,” by facilitating and working out some of the politically-charged challenges and contradictions in these policies, and rendering them applicable and acceptable in specific, local contexts (Condon, 2008). These have produced “consensus plans,” aiming to integrate the physical, technical, environmental, and “lived” concerns of a diversity of stakeholders and citizens. Of critical importance, Condon (2008) notes that these plans have succeeded in abating the concerns of local developers, reducing the perceived risk of building communities that stray from the suburban norm, and thus overcoming at least one of the “elements” that are so intricately nested to make sprawl communities so unhealthy.

My project is, of course, not an experiment or observation of participatory innovations in governance. However, my ethnography of land-use governance processes in Gatineau certainly demonstrates cases in which sustainability has been notably compromised, where “better” alternative land uses have been jeopardised by the City’s failure to consult inclusively, openly and pro-actively, by poor communication of City plans and objectives, and by the lack of trust and “good faith” between residents and the City with regards to land-use planning. In this way, the links between sustainability and participation – and between *missed opportunities* for sustainability and *inadequate* participation – is demonstrated in the case of Gatineau with regards to the theoretical links between participation and trust or buy-in. However, there is also evidence from Gatineau that, among many people, trust and buy-in are still fully attainable, and

have been approached in some instances. Some residents that I spoke with are perhaps unlikely to change their opinions of the City easily, and likely not without fairly far-reaching transformations to the way that the City consults, communicates and ensures openness and transparency of decisions *and* decision-making processes. However, recent turn-out at well-promoted consultation processes (i.e., the Connaught Park development) suggests that residents are at least willing to participate. Unfortunately, this example is also a case of the City's failure to go far enough to convince "engaged" residents that this consultation process would be transparent, inclusive and produce truly conciliatory results. This is perhaps an example in which the legacy of consultations in the City was not considered and rectified before moving forward, such that the past experiences of "engaged" (particularly well-connected and politically experienced) residents served to diminish the potential for fair and open consultations. In this instance, the Salt Lake City case study that I have mentioned (Briggs, 2008) is a useful example, in which public trust and buy-in was built very carefully and respectfully over time, targeting deep and sophisticated local solutions to the conflicts and contradictions that are inherent between sustainability and urban development, as these are currently understood. In contrast, the Connaught Park development consultation was immediately treated antagonistically by many civil society groups, who described being frustrated by unclear and non-transparent communication about the nature, timing and potential outcomes of these consultations. In my view, this is the strongest evidence that my research has produced to suggest that increased participation would improve the sustainability of land use in Gatineau.

I have already provided fairly extensive analyses of the shortcomings in Gatineau's land-use governance processes in terms of their systematic assurances of considered judgement, and complete and complex information in decision-making. This lack of systematic assurances of complex and complete consideration of information is, itself, a strong obstacle to sustainable land use in Gatineau. Beyond this finding, in terms of the complexity and completeness of information contributing to the governance of this city and the landscape that it occupies – undeniably an extremely complex system to govern sustainably – my research suggests that increased participation, properly and carefully facilitated, would improve sustainability in local land use. Many expertises and experience-sets that are evident within civil society (not to mention those that we can assume to be present in the wider citizenry, un-engaged by civil society groups) were often notably absent within the City's public service. This was clear to

many of my research participants from a diversity of perspectives (and to myself) with regards to technical expertises of environmental management and sustainable landscape management, heritage and architecture, and even aspects of urban planning. It was perhaps most striking, however, in the local and historical knowledge that people had of social and, especially, environmental aspects of the landscape – from the histories of land-use and governance (which again influence the legacies with which set the context for current and future governance efforts), to intricacies of local hydrology and ecology. For Gatineau and its people to sustainably govern themselves and their society in relation to the complex environmental systems that exist on this landscape, the participation of residents – with their myriad experiences and understandings – seems necessary. Certainly, the current political-bureaucratic processes and institutions are almost certainly inadequate for this task.

My conclusions must be tempered, however. Participation is a very vague term and to suggest that “participation” is *the* missing step in Gatineau’s efforts towards sustainable land-use would be overly simplistic and inadequate. For instance, it would be foolhardy to suggest that either sustainability or social justice would be *achieved* by implementing more participatory governance efforts. In fact, sustainability and justice might even be harmed if participatory governance efforts *do not ensure* that citizens are given support to actually participate as equals, that participants are representative of the wider society of the city, that opportunities exist for participants to learn about a wide array of possible technical approaches and to explore what these approaches would mean for a wide diversity of citizens that might be affected by participatory decisions. If citizens are not strongly compelled and supported to recognise and develop respect for each-others’ values and world-views (in other words, if considered judgement is not fostered), then further participation could lead to new forms of exclusion and oppression and, thus, would likely fail to further the goals of sustainability. Furthermore, if participatory governance policies only extend part-way, allowing citizens to express themselves on specific decisions but failing to allow citizens to consider the deeper questions of process legitimacy, these policies are likely to unearth even more frustrations. Indeed, research and innovations in environmental conflict management (notably: Rojas, 2003; Rojas & Reyes, 2003; Rojas, Magzul, Marchildon, & Reyes, 2009) have demonstrated and advocated strongly that certain principles be followed in environmental governance for sustainability. These are quite consistent with the findings of my research, especially that transparency and equitable

accessibility of information, equitable distributions of power in deliberations, the recognition of diversity and potential conflict in values and world-views are critical to effective participatory processes. These results are also consistent with and supported by the findings of many deliberative democratic scholars (i.e., Young, 2000). It is clear that “participation” is a complex goal, which must be approached carefully. If treated as a “buzz-word,” participation might result in economically and administratively wasteful municipal efforts, damage trust and fail to appreciably further the goals of sustainability.

The City is currently already engaged in promoting “participatory governance,” but appear to have only gone part-way in accommodating and achieving critical buy-in and trust. As it stands – without further, deeper institutional reform – these efforts will likely fail to produce and implement sufficiently profound policies to impact the long-term of sustainable land use. However, I would very much like to note, however, that Gatineau is in a good position to start addressing these problems of lack of trust and buy-in, and lack of completeness of information. For one, while much of the City has already been built according to the urban sprawl form, which will likely face ongoing sustainability and quality of life problems (and which will likely now require urban planning focused on retrofitting for sustainability), but there are many parts of the City that remains gifted with green spaces. Furthermore, the city is populated by people that have shown themselves to be sensitive and willing to engage on issues of land use. Finally, first steps have been taken towards developing participatory governance tools. If these are harnessed in well-designed civic-engagement processes, they might begin to provide citizens with proper opportunities *to* engage, through which the City may well be able to take a leading role in addressing urban sprawl and the sustainability of urban and peri-urban land use.

Chapter 7. Recommendations

This research project concludes that Gatineau’s system of land-use governance is lacking a number of elements in its approach to participatory governance, and that the city is therefore very likely to face critical challenges in its pursuit of sustainable land use. This chapter describes a number of recommendations that attempt to bridge the conclusions of this research with the theoretical and case-study literature on participatory governance for sustainability.

To fully implement these recommendations may be outside of the legal control of the City in some instances (i.e., residing in Provincial and, perhaps, Federal jurisdictions). However, in principle, these recommendations could be at least practically implemented on the municipal scale, through the creative use of tools and jurisdiction that are municipally controlled.⁴¹

I have organised my recommendations into several categories. First, I have drafted recommendations intended for the City of Gatineau’s municipal government and public service. These recommendations for City government are then subdivided into “larger-scale” recommendations – those that imply relatively fundamental reconsiderations of governance processes and institutions – and “smaller-scale” recommendations – which consider reconsiderations and modifications to the current types of civic engagement approaches of the City. I then provide three recommendations for the City to consider how it might implement participatory governance reforms, and how it might address limitations to its jurisdiction to re-design municipal processes (authority for which is dominated by the Province of Quebec).

Second, I have drafted several recommendations intended for residents, citizens and civil society groups, intending that these might allow some direction for strategic advocacy and activism to address both issues of legitimacy in governance and sustainability of land use.

Many of these recommendations, like many of the conclusions, are interconnected, such that individual recommendations do not address individual conclusions directly. Instead, in my discussion of each recommendation, I describe (to some degree) how these address the set of conclusions that I have presented in section 6.

41 This effort might gain inspiration from the Brazilian participatory budgeting efforts, which – at least in the case of the City of Porto Alegre – are not legally enshrined and not technically binding (the elected representative council maintains veto powers, though these powers have never been used and would be widely seen as illegitimate), but are considered very secure due to the immense popular support, high participation rates and perception of legitimacy. For literature on the Porto Alegre experience, see Smith (2009, chap. 2), Baiocchi (2003) and Abers (1998, 2003).

7.1. Summary of recommendations

7.1.1. For the City of Gatineau

Smaller-scale recommendations

1. Dramatically increase policies and tools for transparency and communication in land-use governance.
2. Dramatically increase the accessibility and depth of land-use governance process information.
3. Set and meet ambitious targets for inclusiveness and representativeness in civic engagement processes.
4. Minimise procedures that default or bias towards “pro-development” instead of “considered judgement” in land-use governance.

Larger-scale recommendations

5. Deeply engage citizens in designing the processes and defining the “rules” of participation in land-use governance.
6. Seek solutions to the apparent conflicts between the geographic scale at which decisions are considered and the interests and needs of “affected” parties in land-use governance.
7. Reform representation in governance institutions (especially the Planning Advisory Committee) to ensure inclusiveness, representativeness, transparency considered judgement, and accountability.

Strategies for implementation

8. Implement profound participatory governance reforms both at the level of both strategic, high-level planning and in individual land-use decisions.
9. Explore jurisdictional limitations, options and flexibility to expand and institutionalise public participation in land-use planning.
10. Implement participatory governance reforms on a “voluntary” basis.

7.1.2. For civil society

- 11.** Strive to maintain and build popular legitimacy and inclusiveness of civil society groups.
- 12.** Recognise and organise civil society around the strategic, cross-issue benefits of procedural reforms for participatory governance.
- 13.** Promote understanding, networking and deliberation among civil society groups and among both “engaged” and, as yet, “disengaged” residents.
- 14.** Build, share and promote civic capacity, political literacy and tools for collaboration and cooperation among civil society groups and citizens.

7.2. Recommendations for the City of Gatineau

While I have drafted recommendations for both the City and civil society in Gatineau, I should be clear that the level and depth of participatory governance that I suggest is required for sustainability in land use, while maybe driven by impetus at the “grass roots,” is an effort that must be coordinated to be inclusive of the whole of society, and in such a way as the interests of citizens are treated fairly and equally. Sustainability, if we take it to be a profoundly common good, can really only adequately be coordinated by a just and democratic government. As such, participation must be coordinated by government, and the recommendations that I propose here aim to improve the capacity and justice of the state in addressing sustainability in land use. The resources and support for participatory processes must come from the state, especially to ensure that participation is accessible, equitable and targets the common interest.

The challenge that this poses to the municipal government structure and priorities is significant, and current government institutional designs are likely not immediately ready for this challenge. However, principles, strategies and examples of efforts to improve both participation and sustainability in land use are gaining prominence and, likely, will continue to do so (Rojas, 2003; Rojas et al., 2003; See, for example: Briggs, 2008; Condon, 2008; Rojas et al., 2009; Smith, 2009; Duval, 2010).

7.2.1. Smaller-scale recommendations

This first set of recommendations for the City of Gatineau target currently existing processes and institutions, or the creation of what seem to be relatively simple, minor programs, with modifications to improve the current civic engagement approaches of the City.

While I follow these with “larger-scale” recommendations (section 7.2.2) which I consider important to a full implementation of participatory governance principles (and to a full appreciation of the benefits thereof), I have listed these “smaller-scale” recommendations as first steps, that might be taken to start improving land-use governance in the relatively short term. These focus especially on improving issues of transparency, information-sharing, and the basics of inclusiveness and representation, as well as taking developing tools to ensure that planning paradigms do not become entrenched or unquestioned in land-use governance.

Recommendation 1. Dramatically increase policies and tools for transparency and communication in land-use governance.

Transparency is a fundamental aspect of participatory governance, affecting the ability of citizens to be included, to exercise the full extent of control allowed to them within governance processes, to consider issues, and to do any of this with any appreciable level of efficiency. As such, increasing transparency is one key action that the City can pro-actively take to break down barriers that might currently prevent the wider participation of residents in both civil society and City processes. By providing access to technical and decision-making information (as well as procedural information (see recommendation 2), the City will certainly be inviting more scrutiny of its actions and of the rationales for its decisions. However, this scrutiny is itself in the interests of building trust, buy-in and perceived legitimacy among residents, of ensuring that the information that contributes to decisions is adequate, complete and complex. This will help to build more informed and sophisticated responses and perspectives among citizens, and will help to promote institutional adaptability and prevent the entrenchment of certain perspectives.

The City of Gatineau should take bold steps to increase its communication of public information regarding all forms of land-use decisions and governance processes, within the constraints of legal jurisdiction. This effort should strive to increase the transparency and communication of all relevant, decision-specific technical and process information, and should clearly and systematically communicate recent and upcoming decisions, all with the intent of ensuring that this information is both accessible and *used* – that it achieves at least a basic level of “uptake” among the media and the public.

This effort goal will most likely involve a significantly bolstered online system for the City to communicate and archive information such that people can see and trace what information (technical and otherwise) contributes to decisions. It might also serve to coherently

and systematically receive, publish and respond to information provided by residents, and to act as an information-sharing system for residents, where they might put forth information, perspectives and solutions, propose the consideration of outside sources of expertise, perspectives and solutions, and generally deliberate and build more nuanced understandings of common interests, agreements and disagreements – thus allowing existing conflicts to be dealt with in a more systematic and conciliatory fashion.

The accessibility of these services for residents is key, and developing information systems that can organise information effectively is very important. This will require that all information is available in both English and French (for a City that prides itself on its bilingualism), and must ensure that this information is available “offline” also, at least in all service sectors and over the phone. Finally, this will likely require significant public-engagement efforts, to ensure that this system is both useful and used. In this light, the City might consider exploring some degree of open and open-source information systems, in which residents can suggest and perhaps even contribute in developing improvements.

These initiatives for transparency will only be deeply effective if initiated by the City, especially by municipal council. They will certainly involve some important investments into the public service, which will have to be deeply involved in creating, maintaining and using this system. However, an improved information system might also be considered helpful and might improve efficiency within the public service. As with several of these recommendations, improved transparency of this nature could possibly be pursued unilaterally by civil society groups, and while the amount and quality of information that civil society might gain would likely be helpful in the short term, its greater impact might be to challenge the City to ensure a more systematic, more accurate system. As such, this civil society effort might be approached with the goal of being made redundant.

Recommendation 2. Dramatically increase the accessibility and depth of land-use governance process information.

Similarly to my first recommendation, the City should ensure that information about *how* land-use governance occurs should be made very explicit, detailed and accessible by the City. This should especially include information on the “flows” of decision-making, of information, and of implementation, and should be very explicit and detailed in describing how citizens can access information about and, ideally, request changes to processes, criteria and timelines for

participation. Again, this task would be best undertaken with the full collaboration of the City government, but could again be initiated by civil society, with the intent of being made redundant by demonstrating the potential benefits of a more accurately informed, engaged public.

Implementing this recommendation might involve the creation and maintenance of a form of “manual” (which might be primarily housed online), to describe current City processes for managing decision-making, including very specific instructions on how citizens can engage themselves, including protocol details about what is required for these City decision-making processes to be challenged and changed. For the City’s interests, this should include details on the legal requirements and limitations imposed on the City by Provincial jurisdiction, as well as what is uniquely municipal policy, thus allowing residents to understand clearly how they might engage with municipal processes, and such that residents can ensure that their demands or concerns are reasonable and directed toward the appropriate level of government.

This effort would address several of the conclusions of this research, but will be especially important in building a more effective, more balanced and more informed civil society, which will therefore be less unrealistic, more effective but also potentially more cooperative with City processes. This will certainly be important if the City wishes to proactively address the complaint of public servants and councillors, that residents fail to recognise the complexity of government and governance processes, the effort of negotiations between the government and developers, and the good intentions of the efforts of governance actors. As such, this will be important in building trust, buy-in and perceived legitimacy among residents. By allowing more effective and more informed civic engagement, this might also be expected to help improve the completeness and complexity of information in decision-making, and thus improve the adaptability of governance.

Recommendation 3. Set and meet ambitious targets for inclusiveness and representativeness in civic engagement processes.

This is a core aspect of participatory governance, without which civic engagement efforts cannot be considered legitimate. The central concern is to ensure that all interested parties are engaged. This recommendation is again very important for ensuring that governance processes are perceived as legitimate, and that they foster trust and buy-in among the public. Most importantly, this recommendation addresses the concerns of many of the municipal officials that

I spoke with, that current civil society groups and consultation processes are biased and inclusive of only a minority of people and perspectives.

Goals for inclusiveness and representativeness in civic engagement processes must be at least supported by municipal government, though could initiate as a demand from within civil society. The explicit goal of these efforts should be the demonstrably representative engagement of citizens, especially with regards to the City's social diversity – thus in terms of gender, race and ethnicity, socio-economic class, age, etc.

Responding to this recommendation will likely require a more explicit effort to identify and systematically address barriers to public participation in all existing civic engagement processes. However, my research has identified some general barriers that should be addressed:

- The physical distance of civic engagement processes and of “intervention points” was noted as a barrier by many of my research participants. Addressing this concern would require that the City make some efforts to ensure that the primary location of all processes (including City clerk duties for registries) should be chosen to reflect the interests that are likely to be most directly affected by these processes. Moreover, efficient and accessible public transit could be offered directly between meetings and all other service centres of the City. Furthermore, addressing this recommendation might involve using modern communication technologies to provide meaningful civic engagement opportunities: for instance, civic engagement processes could involve remote location (for example, hosted in the City's service centres) and online (in real-time, with possibility for text-based question-posing). Online applications could allow residents to pose questions and suggest alternatives in real-time, as well as see questions already asked and the responses that had already been provided (thus reducing redundancy).
- Barriers of residents language and communication proficiency is an issue that has many potential solutions, but should ensure that residents be given equal access to information, at least in English and French, and that translations be provided in all public events.
- Barriers for young parents could be alleviated by providing affordable childcare during public meetings.

- Meanwhile, the critical barrier of disempowerment – the decisions of residents to not participate because they do not consider participation as likely to produce meaningful results – is trickier, and should urge the City to explore deeper innovations to create legitimate processes that can produce tangible, demonstrable results for the efforts of residents. Among these, one of the most frequent frustrations was that, in existing civic engagement processes, citizens were not able to question the sources or quality of councillors’ responses to citizens’ questions, which (in the eyes of citizens) allowed councillors to disregard citizens questions with impunity.
- Barriers for marginalised populations should be the subject of further participatory and participatory action research, and should be explicitly and strongly addressed.

Recommendation 4. Minimise procedures that default or bias towards “pro-development” instead of “considered judgement” in land-use governance.

This recommendation suggests that the processes of land-use governance should be re-considered in terms of the “procedural biases” that they might contain, which currently favour the continuation of urban development instead of the “considered judgement” of development. The primary example that was revealed in my study is the current “procedural assumption” that, in the event that a public outcry about proposed land-use changes is not sufficiently strong (not sufficiently organised, politically educated, connected or capable), the assumption of the City is that the public is in agreement with proposed decisions. Addressing this recommendation is likely impossible without the buy-in of municipal council. However, it is possible that this might be a question of jurisdiction, in which these “biased” procedures are Provincially legislated. In either case, the challenge of these procedures is unlikely to originate without civil society initiation and support.

These “procedural biases” are obvious problems for the quality of the City’s deliberations, complexity and completeness of information, and represents a very faulty assumption given the current obvious biases and barriers in citizen participation. Addressing these concerns would be critical in building perceived legitimacy, and in improving institutional design to allow current (“pro-development”) planning paradigms to be challenged.

7.2.2. Larger-scale recommendations

This second set of recommendations for the City of Gatineau target what might be seen as longer-term, deeper reforms to land-use governance processes and institutions. In general, these imply the implementation the “smaller-scale” recommendations, or at least the principles represented in these recommendations. In the long term, the implementation of only smaller-scale, non-structural reforms to governance processes and institutions seems more likely to fail to achieve the potential benefits of participation. On the other hand, one might hope that the smaller scale recommendations could be empowering enough to spur deeper recognition of the importance and benefits of participatory governance, thus driving exploration of deeper participatory governance tools.

Recommendation 5. Deeply engage citizens in designing the processes and defining the “rules” of participation in land-use governance.

If participatory governance efforts are to be stably legitimate over the long term, they must incorporate participation in the definition of the “rules” of land-use governance, in determining and providing process for *re*-determining the definition of “legitimacy” in process. Such “rule definition” processes are especially critical as these are the fora in which the processes of participation will be designed, in which they will gain the trust of citizens, and in which the criteria and processes by which future land-use issues will be decided. This is an important challenge to participatory governance, as public participation is notably more difficult to foster in “higher order” discussions than it is in specific decisions that can be more tangibly expected to impact citizens’ lives.⁴² Despite this challenge, strong public engagement should be seen as critical to build an inclusive, locally appropriate definition of the problems for land-use governance, and in defining the interests and needs that have to be met by “common interest” solutions.

This recommendation addresses concerns that are obviously central to participatory governance. However, moreover, wide citizen participatory in problem and rule-definition is very important in allowing the City and civil society to understand and resolve conflicts that seem so prevalent in cases of specific decisions, in which residents are alleged to misunderstand

42 This has been noted by Baiocchi (2003) in the context of Porto Alegre, Brazil’s highly successful participatory budgeting efforts,. Baiocchi notes that *annual* budget decision-making fora attract *and sustain* socially diverse and surprisingly high rates of participation. However, the higher-order deliberations about the processes and principles that should guide governance attract much less attention and participation.

the efforts and interests of the City government, and in which the City is seen as failing to act in the interest of local residents. This process is therefore key in building the understandings of “common good” that will open the possibility of directly challenging the planning paradigms and approaches to knowledge (in the public as well as in the City government) that are contributing to the perpetuation of urban sprawl and unsustainable land-use.

This recommendation obviously suggests a complex process of implementation, which is beyond the scope of this thesis to specify exactly. However, if I were to suggest an approach that might be useful in beginning this process, it would be the use of “mini-publics” (as described by Smith (2009)). Following a growing trend in democratic innovation, Gatineau could assemble one or several small groups of residents that would be specifically tasked with deliberating the design and rules of land-use governance processes and institutions. Recruitment would have to be done in such a way as to build significant public trust and perceived legitimacy (i.e., ensuring that these groups represented the citizens of the City in a diversity of ways), and that the deliberations of these mini-publics would have to be very transparent and well-publicised within the City. They would have to foster input, concerns and information from the wider public, and information sources would have to be diverse and inclusive of alternatives. In the end, I would suggest that the decisions of this body should learn from the experience of the British Columbia Citizens’ Assemblies and referenda for electoral reform (in 2005 and again in 2009), in which the decisions of the Citizens Assemblies were put directly (with no modifications by politicians) to binding, Province-wide referenda (Smith, 2009).

This recommendation seems very unlikely to gain traction without being first accepted by City councillors, or being made into a critical election issue. As such, the broad lines of such a solution could be initiated by civil society groups, especially by those “engaged” civil society actors that have been successful in assembling civil society coalitions in the past. However, it seems that such an initiative, emerging from civil society, would need to be very strategic in generating popular buy-in, and in generating perceived legitimacy and trust among councillors.

Recommendation 6. Seek solutions to the apparent conflicts between the geographic scale at which decisions are considered and the interests and needs of “affected” parties in land-use governance.

This recommendation is unfortunately, principally, a call for more research: both case study research from comparable locations that have approached this and similar problems, and

participatory research within the City of Gatineau. It requires that the City and/or civil society explore the legal, jurisdictional and potential improvements to the equity and legitimacy of the geographic “scale” at which decisions are considered. The goal of this effort is that decisions can be made to more legitimately reflect the interests and needs of all affected interests, and the specific solution to this concern is not clear to me at this point. However, this recommendation does seem to be critical to the goal of fostering trust, buy-in and legitimacy among citizens, and in creating a land-use governance system that treats the critical problems of land-use change and sustainability in a more deliberative and consider fashion.

Responses to this recommendation could emerge from within civil society, but again seem unlikely to gain traction without gaining the buy-in of at least some key City councillors.

Recommendation 7. Reform representation in governance institutions (especially the Planning Advisory Committee) to ensure inclusiveness, representativeness, transparency considered judgement, and accountability.

Corresponding to my second recommendation, I suggest that the City (again perhaps spurred by civil society groups) should reform its central processes and institutions of land-use governance to be more inclusive and representative of the wider Gatineau population. I believe that this should certainly apply to the representative institutions of the City, especially the Planning Advisory Committee (CCU). This should primarily involve reforming the CCU’s selection criteria and processes, to involve specific targets for inclusiveness and representativeness (in terms of gender, age, ethnicity and race, etc.). Furthermore, these processes should explicitly ensure that people are not preferentially included or excluded (including by self-selection and self-exclusion) based on their perspective and past relationship with the City. It seems for any substantial representativeness to be achieved, the size of the CCU should be expanded significantly. This will likely require that participation in the CCU become significantly more appealing to residents (which includes an assurance that the CCU’s deliberations will have meaningful impacts), and that it become more efficient (thus suggesting more administrative support, more time for CCU-members to independently review documents, and perhaps more use of modern communication and information systems to lessen the barriers to participation stemming from the physical location of CCU meetings). Furthermore, the internal processes of the CCU should be reformed to allow increased control by CCU-members

of the direction and scope of deliberations, more use of independent sources of information in deliberations, including allowing and encouraging CCU resident-members to request alternative sources of information.

On the other hand, in some ways the membership of the CCU should be made more transparent and accountable to the general population. This should at least involve shorter, non-renewable terms of office, some process of election as opposed to appointment by councillors, the possibility for the public to re-calls CCU resident-members, and the ability for residents to access and contribute to the information sources that are considered by the CCU. These impartial and independent sources of information in deliberations).

Beyond the benefits of fostering trust, buy-in, legitimacy and more meaningful civic engagement in governance, these reforms are especially important for the CCU to become a forum in which difficult issues can be deeply considered from the perspective of residents, allowing the CCU to challenge and avoid the entrenchment of certain perspectives in governance decision-making bodies (and ensuring that certain people, or people with “agreeable” perspectives, cannot be repeatedly appointed to these fora).

The formation of the CCU is only loosely governed by provincial law, and its recruitment and rules are largely determined by policies and decisions of municipal council. As such, these changes would be relatively straight-forward and simple to be initiated by City councillors. However, the fact that the CCU and its processes are not often in the “public eye” makes it likely that this will be far from a priority of councillors, such that these changes would be more likely to result from broader participatory reconsiderations of governance processes.

7.2.3. Strategies for implementation

This third set of recommendations for the City of Gatineau suggest ways in which improved participation might be actually implemented. These recommendations are generally complementary, and might be used together to maximise the potential “reach” of participatory efforts within the legal jurisdiction of the City.

Recommendation 8. Implement profound participatory governance reforms both at the level of both strategic, high-level planning and in individual land-use decisions.

Care should be taken by the City to implement recommendations one through seven both at the higher, strategic level of planning – in which the principles of land-use decision-making can be ensured to reflect the interests and needs of all affected parties – and at the scale of individual land-use decisions – in which peoples’ voices can help interpret the higher-level principles to have impact “on the ground.” This is especially important to frame deliberation on the more local-scale in the broader-scale principles and decisions, to ensure that residents can both trust the implementation of principles to be in the common interest, while holding residents and City officials accountable to the legitimacy of these higher-order “principles.” It seems that this process is key in developing trust and buy-in for the challenging decisions that will be required for more sustainable land-use governance, in which both citizens and the City government must become willing to consider and implement fairly dramatic changes in land-use.

Recommendation 9. Explore jurisdictional limitations, options and flexibility to expand and institutionalise public participation in land-use planning.

The legal jurisdiction of the City of Gatineau is certainly limited by the Province of Quebec in some important ways. However, the legal boundaries of this relationship are unknown to me. Considering recent experiments with participatory budgeting in Montreal, it seems at least possible for Cities to enact some measures to improve participation in governance. In this light, both the City and/or civil society groups might explore the legal options and “latitude” of the City to expand public participation in all aspects of land-use planning. While the first steps of this will likely be limited to legal and academic analysis, this could transition to some form of advocacy work with the Province of Quebec.

Instituting and entrenching participatory governance within municipal by-laws would likely offer participatory governance measures more stability, and could maximise the “scope” of participatory governance within the limits of Provincial jurisdiction. These benefits might be desirable in the case of some aspects of participatory governance efforts, but this deeper, more permanent institutionalisation is unlikely to occur (and is perhaps in some ways undesirable) early in the development of Gatineau’s participatory governance efforts.

Recommendation 10. Implement participatory governance reforms on a “voluntary” basis.

In the case of many tools for participation, “voluntary” tools might be more realistic and more desirable (especially during the early, experimentation phase of developing participatory governance). Furthermore, for the City to implement more profound participatory governance within the perhaps-limiting frames of Provincial authority, “voluntary” means may be required. By “voluntary,” I mean to suggest that the City could establish participatory institutions and procedures which, while not recognised or incorporated by Provincial law, would be recognised, supported and respected by the municipal council. This recommendation emerges directly from Smith’s (2009) and Baiocchi’s (2003) discussions of participatory budgeting in the City of Porto Alegre, Brazil, in which participatory processes were set up in the 1980s, voluntarily, by the City. Since the 1980s, councillors have supported and respected the decisions of participatory bodies, and have never used their powers of veto on the budgets that have been developed through these participatory efforts. Instead, because these participatory innovations are so deeply supported by the population of the City, this “voluntary” participation has become entrenched and has survived important changes to the elected administrations of the City.

Smith (2009) notes several benefits to this “voluntary” arrangement. The most prominent is that, by not solidifying any one method or set of principles in law, the tools for participation remain flexible and adaptable, able to be reconsidered and modified in response to realisations of shortcomings. Moreover, if need-be, this “voluntary” arrangement can be dissolved if it is decided to be impractical, thus reducing the risk of experimentation with participation. Of course, while allowing more far-reaching implementation of participatory governance than by legal institutionalisation, councillors must be willing to allow some of their powers to become “symbolic,” choosing to support the will of the people while, technically, retaining the right to veto. As such, while this initiative might originate in civil society, it requires a deep, principled acceptance by elected councillors (or electoral candidates).

7.3. Recommendations for civil society

I will re-iterate that it is my belief that just and democratic government, committed to the task of defining and pursuing common interests, are the most legitimate and most likely tools for achieving sustainability in complex systems such as that between humans and their surrounding environments. While citizens and civil society have critical roles to play in creating the drive

for, designing the operation of, and participating in governance for sustainability, adequacy in the participation necessary for sustainable environmental governance, in my view, should not be left to institutions which – regardless of their merits – are not mandated to represent the whole of a population, and are not designed to be accountable to that population. While I must re-state that government is a much more appropriate location for participation to produce sustainable land-use outcomes, these recommendations aim to suggest ways that civil society can preempt some aspects of participatory governance for sustainable land use, provide tools for government to use and bolster public interest in issues of sustainability and governance. As such, civil society can have a critical role in driving the process of capacity-building of government, and in holding government accountable to properly conduct participatory governance.

I should also note, however, that this is already an assumed role of civil society: I am not inventing these recommendations from thin air, or from theory, and I believe that these are recommendations that can realistically be undertaken by civil society groups currently active in Gatineau. I am most heartened and inspired by the instances of “coalitions” of civil society groups, which have achieved important deliberative capacity, public legitimacy and political leverage in the past.

In the absence of City-initiated efforts for participatory governance, civil society can still take steps to improve the legitimacy, deliberation and sustainability-focus of land-use decision-making. Moreover, civil society groups might organise to be able to promote or even proactively design and implement some aspects of participatory land-use governance (some examples of which I have already touched upon, such as my first two recommendations, above).

Recommendation 11. Strive to maintain and build popular legitimacy and inclusiveness of civil society groups.

It is my hope that existing civil society groups will recognise the partial accuracy of City officials’ claims that these groups are not always inclusive and are likely unrepresentative of the City’s wider population. In this light, existing civil society groups (especially those involved in the civil society coalitions) might strive to strengthen their efforts at inclusiveness, perhaps setting some level of “example” within the City of how it might proceed to build real and perceived legitimacy. This is potentially critical for the continued relevance of existing civil society organisations. Moreover, increasing inclusiveness is important for the ability of these

groups to deliberate and integrate information into realistic, “globally acceptable” positions, and thereby to further leverage their positions within land-use governance in Gatineau.

Increasing the inclusiveness of existing civil society groups will have to involve a push to include both marginalised populations and currently under-represented populations (including “new” residents to the city). As such, civil society groups must make themselves very accessible, transparent and open to new faces and ideas. Civil society groups might try to model tools of communication, transparency and deliberation that would be desirable for the City government to adopt. Furthermore, for civil society group to attract wider membership and participation, they must be efficient, effective tools for people to express and deliberate about their interests and needs with regards to land use, and these civil society groups must become able to produce tangible results – in other words, participation in these groups must be worthwhile to people who, while perhaps very willing to become engaged, are not able to devote enormous amounts of time without seeing impacts from their efforts. This is an unfortunate paradox since, without wider participation, civil society groups lack the legitimacy to be able to leverage effective results; but without this ability, these groups will not be more widely perceived as efficient tools through which people can express their interests and concerns in land use.

Recommendation 12. Recognise and organise civil society around the strategic, cross-issue benefits of procedural reforms for participatory governance.

Following from my previous recommendation, and especially from the paradox of legitimacy and effectiveness, it seems advisable that civil society groups focus their efforts strategically on the most cross-cutting issues, those that are most relevant to civil society organisations throughout the City. In this light, civil society organisations with widely diverse mandates might see the strategic power of building recognition, organisation and advocacy around “procedural” reforms, to advocate for and strategically work with the City to cooperatively build meaningful and equitable participatory processes through which more narrow interests can be more fully, more comprehensively deliberated.

However, this recommendation is certainly susceptible to the challenge that (as one of my research participants said) “democracy isn’t sexy.” Certainly, rallies for democratic reform might have difficulty attracting significant buy-in. As such, learning from what has fueled civil

society group “coalitions” in the past, efforts for procedural reform might build off “catalytic” events, such as controversial land-use decisions or procedures.

Recommendation 13. Promote understanding, networking and deliberation among civil society groups and among both “engaged” and, as yet, “disengaged” residents.

Again tied to my previous recommendations for civil society, whereas current resources are very limited among “engaged” civil society, the efforts of civil society actors might be most strategically used by trying to promote understanding and capacity among citizens (both engaged and “unengaged”). Specifically, civil society groups should develop tools to allow the wider engagement of residents, and should attempt to widen the scope of potential alliances in civil society, increasing the diversity groups (and thus of perspectives, interests and expertises) that are engaged and connected in civil society, thus increasing the power, legitimacy and considered judgement of the voices of civil society organisations. This should especially try to broaden civil society connections between the various parts of the city and region, facilitating wider civil society deliberation and coordination of goals and strategies to be able to engage and connect with similar, related or parallel land-use issues and concerns throughout the region.

While this is a general recommendation, it is one that City officials have already expressed some degree of interest in, and for which some councillors might be interested in supporting. Specifically, currently “engaged” civil society groups might attempt to work with pro-active councillors to promote civil society gatherings, networking and brainstorming sessions.

Recommendation 14. Build, share and promote civic capacity, political literacy and tools for collaboration and cooperation among civil society groups and citizens.

Finally, civil society groups (again, perhaps in collaboration with certain amenable municipal councillors) might try to organise tools and sessions to promote information-sharing, education and training for residents, aiming to bolster the political literacy and civic capacity of residents. This might involve online tools and the creation of physical spaces in which residents can engage efficiently in sharing strategies, knowledge and tools, and in learning key skills to improve the capacity of civil society as a whole. These efforts would hopefully be helpful in building trust, buy-in and legitimacy among residents, and in building trust *for* councillors that participated. Meanwhile, these spaces would be important in improving the ability of residents

to deliberate and contribute towards more complex and complete consideration of land-use issues.

This recommendation is especially important in recognising the advantages for “considered judgement” that exist in civil society: the exploration of ideas, solutions and alternatives is much less risky within civil society than within City government. Civil society is a safe space in which politically risky alternatives can be considered, problems discussed and avoided, solutions hammered out. Furthermore, if legitimacy can be coordinated for certain ideas and perspectives in such civil society fora, these can then gain traction with the City – while this traction often fails to flow from the City to civil society without being seen as “top down.”

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