

EMPATHIC LEADERSHIP IN SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

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## ABSTRACT

Analysis of planning practice has led theorists to claim that planners are increasingly involved in communicative work as they negotiate between competing interests and opposing parties. A normative study of the resultant theory of communicative planning, alongside a review of current trends in leadership and mediation literature, leads to a set of guiding attributes of conduct and action. This research begins by synthesizing these guiding attributes of effective planning into a framework of Empathic Leadership. In sustainability planning Empathic Leadership is particularly concerned with mediating between different perspectives while simultaneously advancing a specific agenda. The work of eight sustainability planners in the Vancouver region, each a leader in her respective field, was analyzed using the Empathic Leadership framework. Planners were interviewed shadowed and observed, and their staff and colleagues were surveyed to gain multiple perspectives on the significance of the various attributes of leadership. Empathic Leadership was found to permeate every aspect of the practitioners' work and they were found to possess many of the skills necessary for being exemplary leaders. The research also revealed that their work is an iterative pentad of: visioning, engaging emotions, building community, employing strategy and implementing action. The visions are compelling, seductive and infectious yet ambiguous. Emotions are strong and recognized as being significant, yet poorly integrated into the other elements of the pentad. Communities rallying around the visions are cohesive, fluid, diverse and context-specific, but largely untested. The strategies are political, relatively transparent but rarely uphold the inclusive values of the vision. Actions are varied, innovative and often democratizing, yet implicitly homogenous and classist. While ample evidence of communicative planning exists, it is an unrealized ideal; the reality is a temporally larger scope of relational planning whereby change is achieved through the building of relationships over time.

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## PREFACE

*Trodden and struggling, wavering, reaching and receding before the jolts that come my way. Groping to stand and finding a stand and slipping to fall, but holding to keep from withdrawing into the darkness of my despair. Being hit and conquered and buried beneath my load of life but finding a place to continue to be nothing but the one thing that will leave me aglow: the freedom to love. More than just the passionate embrace of sexual space or the unquestioning smiling tolerance of social grace: this love is a reverence for the power of the self and an awe of the majesty of our collective destiny. This love is at once spiritual and practical. It is what fuels my desire to rise and what informs my choice to act. It resides within and beyond reason and is fueled by its like in everything that has ever touched me.*

*Free of the protection that keeps me fearful of telling you that I love you, I sing with joy at the prospect of our union. To erupt in laughter in the company of another, and to look across the space of glee that resides between us to see a pair of eyes brimming with the raw beauty of ecstatic expression, is love. To give and protect and nurture without thinking, is love. To understand that I do not understand and to admire and respect while disagreeing, is love. To love those that I cannot imagine loving and to love those who cringe at the thought of my love, is love. To contribute to the unshackling of love between carriers of galvanized hate is the greatest honour that could ever be bestowed upon my life. If my dream is to reach outward and help cultivate a world of reciprocal inspiration across diverse populations, then my task is to reach inward and shape the world that resides inside of me.*

February 2001

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I began this journey wanting to give of myself to somehow assuage my sense of undeserved privilege as a member of the consumer class of the North. The accident of fate that had me live at this time and place seemed like a certificate of responsibility, demanding that I do my part in redistributing privilege. It would not do to simply live my life in relative luxury. I took on the task of undertaking research that I thought would allow me to give of myself. I thought that I could perhaps produce a sliver of knowledge that might be of some larger benefit to a world in turmoil. It was a vain thought, for the research itself was a luxury. It was a luxury and a privilege to be able to take five years of my life to pursue a doctoral degree. I have gained immeasurably more than I have given and I hope that I will somehow start to repay my debt to the world through a life of teaching and writing.

There is also my debt to specific individuals who have supported, guided and nurtured me along the way. My debts to them are so deep that this work does not feel like my own. I was simply the conduit through which the efforts, ideas, behaviour and insights of others came to be combined and embodied in a single piece of work. Unlike countless unfortunate PhD students, whose stories I have heard over the years, my experience with every member of my supervisory committee has been extraordinary. I feel very fortunate to have had the benefit of their wise council and inspiring example.

My foremost debt is to Tony Dorsey, my mentor, my teacher, my supervisor and, dare I say, my friend. His guidance has marked my entire journey in the world of planning. His commitment, his integrity, his transparency and his overall leadership as the Director of the School of Community and Regional Planning has inspired me, and my research, in countless ways. Tony has given me many gifts of experience over the years but the one for which I am most grateful is the gift of his trust. He believed in my work long before I believed in it myself. He taught me to trust my own instincts. He treated me like an equal, like a colleague and a confidante. I often feel like this trust, this confidence in my judgment, was the equivalent of handing me a decade of academic experience. Even so, my debt to Tony cannot be quantified.

To Leonie Sandercock I owe a special kind of gratitude. Discovering her writing was akin to discovering a revitalizing and resonant way of understanding the human processes behind cities. Her influence upon my work has continued to be a source of inspiration and innovation. Her appreciation of the value of searching inward for sociological insight, and her understanding of the power of emotions on our capacity to act and interact across difference, have encouraged me to take risks I would never have otherwise contemplated. Her coming to UBC and agreeing to be on my supervisory committee was one of the best things that happened to my research. Knowing that she valued my work has given me tremendous reserves of confidence over the years. Her courage in venturing into uncharted territory, her probing intellect in analyzing and charting that territory, her capacity to weave together a story from seemingly disparate strands of knowledge, and her ability to do it all in profoundly insightful yet accessible language, will always be the ideal to which I aspire.

Moura Quayle was impressive from the first moment I met her. She has a unique ability to make everybody she interacts with feel valued and deeply appreciated. Thanks to Moura I got my first opportunity to experience the trials and tribulations, and ultimately the joys of

teaching. She too believed in my research long before I did. She also served a rather unique role on my committee. She has long played a leadership role in the area of sustainability in Vancouver and at UBC. As the Dean of Agricultural Sciences (now Land and Food Systems), she was a role model for me and it was her example that helped me conceptualize the components of my work. Had I not valued her wisdom and creative engagement of my work so much, I would have gladly substituted her for one of my research subjects. The further I got in my research the greater my admiration grew for the manner in which she navigated the turbulent waters of the university bureaucracy while still managing to give sustainability a voice.

Peter Frost probably deserves the greatest acknowledgment as the inspiration for this particular research. It was his pioneering research in the areas of emotions in organizations, and his award-winning course on organizational leadership that helped me find my own passion in planning. Peter's death in October of 2004 was a tragic loss for many, many people and was certainly a loss for me and for this work<sup>1</sup>. Peter was also an incredible teacher and his creativity and dynamism in the classroom formed memories that will be with me forever. His facility with infusing research on emotions into previously unsympathetic disciplines was a great source of comfort for my entire research committee. He was simultaneously energizing and calming and was one of those people in whose company you always loved to be. He persistently encouraged me to tell a story and his advice played a large role in how I wrote this thesis. He never got a chance to see the final product and it is my deepest hope that he would have approved.

This research would not have been possible without the participation of Larry Beasley, Johnny Carline, Patrick Condon, Daryl Fields, Cheeying Ho, Sebastian Moffat and Bruce Sampson. They all kindly agreed to participate in my study and generously shared their thoughts and feelings about their sustainability work. I consider each of the interviews they granted me to have been a precious gift, and my observation of their work to have been an imposition that they graciously accommodated. Through their insights and their sharing I gained a deeper appreciation for the complexity of their work. I grew to respect and admire them and to think of them as mentors in my own work in the area of sustainability. I am deeply indebted to them and, as the following pages reveal, their voices make up a large and important piece of my narrative.

I am also indebted to many other mentors whose writings have inspired, guided and buttressed my own research. The work of John Friedmann, John Forester, Patsy Healey, Judith Innes, James Throgmorton and Bent Flyvbjerg built a solid foundation of theory upon which I could stand. Without their pioneering work my own explorations would not have been conceivable. They broadened the territory of knowledge that we can attribute to urban planning and allowed me to claim that my own research is a legitimate part of the field.

Many friends and colleagues also deserve my gratitude for their advice and support over the years. Derek Masselink, Sarah McMillan, Tanja Winkler, Sharif Senbel, Eric Loucks, Barbara Montgomery, Michael Harstone, Tim Dewhurst, Leslie Dickout, Laurie Aikman and Vanessa Timmer have all helped me to varying degrees as I traveled the path of research and exploration.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see Csillag (2004) for an obituary of Dr. Peter Frost.

My deepest gratitude goes to my parents. They have given me the gift of their love and their undying, immeasurable support. To them I owe my life, my values, my education and the desire to serve. My parents' presence in my life is a joy and their friendship is a blessing. I am deeply indebted to them in more ways than I will ever know, and I dedicate this work to them.

## 1 - INTRODUCTION

This research is the culmination of many years of trying to find an appropriate avenue through which I could contribute towards greater environmental and social justice. My interest is quite simply to help find egalitarian ways for humans to make use of ecological resources without irreparably damaging the ecological systems that generate those resources. I see injustice in our collective indifference to the destruction of the earth's systems upon which our minds and bodies depend. I see injustice in the enormous inequity between the relative comfort of my lifestyle and that of my peers compared to the abject poverty that billions of people suffer. My sense of injustice is further fueled by my recognition that our affluent Northern lifestyles could never become the norm. It is a biophysical impossibility (Senbel et al. 2003)<sup>2</sup> and for us to live a life of luxury requires others to live a life of insufficiency.

Injustice was not all I saw and experienced of the world. I was inspired and emboldened by the creativity, innovation and courage I encountered in my quest for an alternative vision. From the profundity of the critical written word to the majesty of built exemplars of urban and ecological integration, I was awed by what is possible. In my architectural research I came across literally hundreds of brilliant ideas that seek to lift us from our destructive quagmire. Yet very little was being done. The problem, it dawned on me, is not a lack of ideas, or a lack of interest, it's a lack of persistent action: a lack of leadership.

So I set out to study leadership in planning, but it was not to be the traditional understanding of leadership with all its trappings of authority and draconian control. Change towards sustainability would need to be cooperatively derived, and I had no interest in promoting a return to an authoritarian role for planners. Planners also, quite simply, do not have sufficient power to impose sustainability ideas on decision makers when those ideas are likely to challenge countless norms and conventions. I turned to current expertise in the areas of mediation and facilitation as well as managerial leadership to find models of leadership that suited my inclination towards collaborative leadership. This inclination is itself informed by contemporary directions in planning theory which position the planner as a convener of forums of communication between a range of experts and with different groups in society (Forester 1989, Healey 1992, Innes 1995, Forester 1998). Bringing together communicative planning with mediation and leadership led to my development of the framework of Empathic Leadership, which I then applied to my study of eight Sustainability Planners in the Vancouver Region<sup>3</sup>.

Chapter 2 introduces the framework for Empathic Leadership and traces its evolution through its various theoretical influences. Empathic Leadership is composed of 14 attributes grouped under personal actions, relational actions and developmental actions. It is this framework that has guided my research inquiry from the outset. Empathic Leadership constitutes those attributes of communicative planning and leadership that are

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<sup>2</sup> My Master's research in planning modeled different scenarios of consumption and resource productivity over the next hundred years in North America and concluded that our current trajectories of consumption are unsustainable.

<sup>3</sup> The "Sustainability Planners" refers to those planners in Greater Vancouver who participated in the study as opposed to "sustainability planners" which would refer to the broader and more general group.

normatively demanded of practitioners working to affect change. They are self-awareness and self-reflection; self-regulation; articulation of values and visioning; compassion and understanding others; communicating and relating to others; building relationships; resolving conflict; inspiring others; visioning and creating culture; acquiring knowledge and skills; understanding power, authority and influence; empowering others; and healing and confronting pain.

While Empathic Leadership lays out the set of practices that sustainability planners ideally employ in performing their work, it does not reveal the manner in which they perform these practices to advance the sustainability agenda. It is a general toolkit for affecting change and my research here is specific to sustainability. Chapters 3 through 7 apply Empathic Leadership to sustainability planning and present what I have found to be the five essential steps of sustainability planning practice: vision, emotion, community, strategy and action. Chapter 3 presents sustainability as a vision and a series of visions. This is the root of action and the seed of inspiration that drives individuals and groups to act, react and create change. The voices of sustainability planners give us the first glimpse of sustainability visions. Moving from personal values to organizational and societal visions we see how an idea can grow to include increasing spheres of influence. The complexity and variety of sustainability is then further explored through theories derived from different disciplines leading to sustainability theory as it is discussed by planning theorists.

In Chapter 4, I present emotions in their various forms as they relate to sustainability planning work. Emotions are shown to be the stimuli for both action and reaction. Passion is profoundly powerful in charging planners and infecting those with whom they interact. It brings hope and enthusiasm and guards against debilitation from setbacks. Negative emotions also come into play and are part of the array of issues that planners have to contend with. Whether they divide people or unite them, whether they inspire or paralyze, emotions are ever present in planning work and Chapter 4 explores the different ways that planners manage their presence.

Community has long been integral to theories and debates in planning. In Chapter 5, I introduce an understanding of community that revolves around ideas and visions. It differs from traditional forms of community, which connect people around geography, place, culture or identity. It is a permutation of community converging around ideology. In this case the ideology is dynamic and the connections are constantly shifting depending on the issue and the context. The manner in which planners build communities of support across geographic scales and across perspectives contributes to our understanding of how the relational actions of Empathic Leadership operate.

Strategy is introduced in Chapter 6 as a planning activity that is routinely employed to leverage avenues of support and empowerment that would otherwise not exist. I try to shed the stigma of strategic planning being manipulative and unilateral and instead paint a picture of selective collaboration and partnership. Disenfranchised groups and fringe ideas gain power and legitimacy through strategic alliances across sectors and across political ideologies. The discussion turns to the possibility of deception and manipulation in the absence of regular ethical reflection. The potential abuse of Empathic Leadership, through which relationships become self-serving, must be countered with a strong sense of ethics defined and redefined as part of the planner's ongoing self-reflection and self-awareness.

Chapter 7 is a recasting of many of the issues discussed in prior chapters with an emphasis on the implementation of visions through action. I discuss specific projects that planners have undertaken to bring life to their visions. My intention here is to be neither comprehensive nor exhaustive but to highlight two different ways of involving members of the public and engaging their ideas in the creation of a collective vision. I see both innovation and opportunities for greater adherence to sustainability principles. The final chapter offers conclusions on the manner in which Empathic Leadership is practiced and offers insights that serve to inform knowledge in both communicative planning and sustainability planning.

Three different narratives stream through each of the chapters. Beginning each chapter is my own voice, first as a student of sustainability and then as an advocate of sustainability on the UBC campus. The second narrative is a thematic analysis of the words of the Sustainability Planners as well as my own observations of their work. This narrative is also informed by statistically supported assertions about the perceptions of those working with the planners in the field of sustainability planning. Towards the end of each chapter I return to a theoretical narrative that I first introduce in Chapters 1 and 2. I discuss theoretical questions that arise through my analysis of the work of the planners, or that were raised earlier and were subsequently addressed in some way through the implications of my analysis. Much of this work's engagement of relevant literature occurs in these penultimate sections of each chapter. Theoretical explorations and the connection of this work to the literature unfold sequentially through the course of this work. I then conclude each chapter with discussions on how planners could help increase their own capacities for effective action.

This research finds its home in Vancouver for several reasons. The Greater Vancouver region is home to numerous projects and initiatives that are attempting to implement sustainability in some way. These projects range in scale from innovative construction technology, to provincial roundtables.<sup>4</sup> Research in the region is also at the cutting edge of sustainability analysis and implementation.<sup>5</sup> The region is rife with activity in the area of sustainability, but it has never been studied from an integrative planning perspective.

British Columbia has a long history of addressing sustainability issues in innovative participatory processes. Dorsey and McDaniels trace Canadian environmental initiatives back to the mid 1960s with the convening of a symposium on Pollution and our

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<sup>4</sup> Some of the more visible and ambitious projects include the City of Vancouver's Southeast False Creek "Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood", commitment by two major universities to employ sustainability strategies in developing their endowment lands, the Greater Vancouver Regional District's "Sustainable Region Initiative", and numerous projects by non-governmental organizations.

<sup>5</sup> William Rees' (UBC) work on the Ecological Footprint has been widely cited and is increasingly influential in the field of sustainability measurement. Raymond Cole's (UBC) work on the embodied energy of buildings is at the cutting edge of construction and engineering sustainability. Mark Roseland's (SFU) work on the characteristics of sustainable cities is frequently cited in sustainability planning literature. Lawrence Green's (US Center for Disease Control formerly UBC) developed the Precede-Proceed model of behavioral change. Numerous research and educational projects were undertaken by the Sustainable Development Research Institute (now called Initiative) at UBC including QUEST.



Environment, after which a flurry of activity took place (Dorcey and McDaniels 2001). Environmental concerns developed in concert with new large development projects in urban regions. The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) launched the Livable Region Strategy in the early seventies to garner citizen involvement in a visionary multi-jurisdictional regional plan (Dorcey and McDaniels 2001). This plan evolved over the years and continued to play a significant role in regional growth management until 2001 at which time the GVRD began to replace it with the Sustainable Region Initiative. Johnny Carline, the director of the GVRD, chose to start the SRI in lieu of reviewing the Livable Regions Strategic Plan in order to tackle a broader range of sustainability problems in greater depth (Carline 2003a).

The British Columbia Roundtable for the Economy and the Environment was established in 1990 as a provincial response to growing national and international concern about sustainability, initially stimulated by the watershed Brundtland Report (WCED 1987). The Roundtable was comprised of 31 members including both governmental and non-governmental representation. Although there were similar roundtables in other regions and at the national level, this one was distinct in its emphasis on multi-stakeholder involvement and consensus building (Dorcey and McDaniels 2001). This collaborative approach gained popularity and numerous other processes followed the Roundtable's example. The British Columbia Commission on Resources and the Environment, the Fraser Basin Management Board and Land and Resource Management Planning are all examples of planning processes that explicitly sought to include diverse interests and stakeholders in the making of plans and the drafting of policies. Although there was a period of decline in the mid-nineties in citizen involvement in British Columbia, both in terms of participation and institutional interest, there continues to be a strong appetite for innovation and citizen engagement (Dorcey 2003).

The region is also home to many pioneering institutions that are contributing towards a greater awareness of sustainability issues. The region is replete with environmental groups such as the Society Promoting Environmental Conservation, Ecotrust Canada and the Sierra Legal Defense Fund; social justice advocates such as the Tenants Rights Action Coalition and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives; and progressive financial institutions such as VanCity and Four Corners Community Savings. VanCity has for a number of years invited its members to vote for one of a number of short-listed innovative environmentally or socially sustainable projects. The winner receives a million dollar grant. VanCity also funds smaller projects through a variety of grant programs. This culture of innovation and activism makes the region ripe for broader and more large-scale participatory governance initiatives.

### **Problem Statement**

Sustainability planning has become popular yet it is complex and riddled with internal paradoxes of process and content, which threaten to undermine its utility. The problems are wicked, the geographies are intertwined and the visions are divergent. Progress towards sustainability is mixed yet evident in pockets throughout the Greater Vancouver region. This research seeks to learn how planners navigate the rough terrain of human interaction to make progress towards a vision of sustainability.

Sustainability literature calls for participatory governance yet traditional mechanisms of participation have been found to be insufficient. Developments in communicative planning theory, coupled with experiments in innovative planning practice in Greater Vancouver, offer valuable opportunities for the advancement of sustainability planning. Communicative planning also stands to gain by being studied as an integral component of the larger sustainability movement.

Communicative planning is an attractive idea that promises increased opportunities for participation by a greater segment of society. It is founded on a universalistic sociological idea of consensual decision-making aided by rational communication. Its potential for explaining much of planning work and for further democratizing planning processes is significant yet it is not without its detractors. Critics accuse communicative planning of being too idealistic and somewhat naïve about the indomitable effect of politics, socio-economics and institutional structures. The debate continues as more research attention is directed at how communicative processes are imbedded in the larger forces of society. This research illustrates such an imbeddedness and shows how communicative action is used to both perpetuate and counter pervasive power structures.

The details of the planning actions and interactions that facilitate greater opportunities for communication are largely understudied. We know little about how to cross boundaries of experience, culture and socio-economy in the context of collective visioning. Focusing on the procedural content of communication, including the emotional content, and how it is managed in communicative planning has been encouraged but has not been directly studied. The work demanded of planners by these descriptive and normative trends in planning literature amounts to a form of leadership for sustainability. Therefore researching sustainability leadership will not only serve to improve the practice itself but it will also inform broader questions in communicative planning.

In planning's emerging role as the guardian of open and inclusive participation by all citizens affected by a planning decision it has inadvertently taken on a central role as the guarantor of democratic processes at the micro-scale of society. The normative requirements are somewhat understood: open and transparent process, inclusive and egalitarian participation, and the devolution of power and authority across all classes and groups. Yet the reality is not so tidy. The art of the process; garnering enthusiasm, building a collective vision, managing unpredictable behaviour, acknowledging emotional scars, and facilitating inspirations and epiphanies, are far less understood. Meanwhile individuals and organizations are taking leadership roles in defining different ways of visioning and decision-making. This research seeks to learn from these exemplary projects and communicates planning and leadership insights that would help practitioners working towards sustainability goals.

Sustainability was conceived in response to the parallel stimuli of empirical analysis and real world observation of environmental depletion and deprivation. Beginning with a Malthusian analysis showing us increasingly incapable of providing human populations with basic needs, sustainability theorists have always sought to be prescriptive above all else. It is widely acknowledged in the literature that the kinds of gains demanded by sustainability's various proponents have not been met. It has further been suggested that failures are in large part due to faulty process, exclusionary governance, or a simple

disconnect between theory and reality. It is this third culprit that forms an important anchor for my work. While the ignorance by theorists of the conditions of practice has often been blamed for seemingly pedantic academic debates across many professional disciplines, when it comes to sustainability this shortcoming is further marred by an implied prejudice. It is widely assumed by sustainability theorists that on the whole society is unsustainable and, by extension, so too is all current practice.

I reject this premise on the grounds that much of the content of our modeling and theorizing about future scenarios of sustainability comes from contemporary examples. There are pockets of innovation all around us and practitioners view them as the seeds of change. It is my contention, and this is an important premise for this research, that theoretical discourse has overlooked current successes and deemed them to be irreplicable isolated cases. Incorporating the experience of these projects and learning from their successes and failures will provide invaluable insights for future directions in policy, systems analysis and institutional design and research.

Sustainable development is deemed to be entirely consistent with the spirit and purpose of town planning, and to permeate all its activities (Selman 1995).

This total infusion of sustainability into planning is advocated by several authors (Beatley 1995; Selman 1995; Jepson 2001) and has given prominence to the notion of sustainable planning. Beatley's 1995 article claims paradigmatic stature for sustainability (Beatley 1995). Unlike Innes' (1995) interpretation of the communicative trend in planning as a paradigm, Beatley's proof is a normative argument about worth (Beatley 1995). Sustainability is ecologically imperative, socially needed, and qualitatively and aesthetically desirable (Beatley 1995). Selman (1995) sees sustainability as a renewing force that gives planning its legitimacy and necessity in the public sphere. McDonald asserts that "the whole direction of mainstream planning must be guided by the criteria of sustainable development" (McDonald 1996:235).<sup>6</sup> His definition of sustainability is balanced between environmental and socioeconomic issues, and between procedural and substantive concerns. He also argues that good planning has always been concerned with sustainability. Conversely the sustainability literature also utilizes many of the tools of analysis and implementation used in planning. So much so that McDonald contends that "planning is one of the essential tools to achieve sustainable development" (McDonald 1996:230).

The work of sustainability planning is complicated and challenging to the extreme. It requires communicating difficult ideas with troubling implications. At its core, it calls for fundamental shifts in the values and structure of society towards greater justice and equity across different socio-economic groups and through future generations. It questions the status-quo, it is skeptical about the capacity of technology to solve all problems, and it promotes abstract ideas about nebulous scenarios. As an ethic and a mission it inspires great passion in its proponents and incites considerable resentment by those who enjoy

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<sup>6</sup> The terms "sustainable development" are used by McDonald, but other authors use the term sustainability to discuss identical issues. Sustainability is the term preferred here because it avoids the implication that economic growth (i.e. development) is a necessary precondition for sustainability. Making it a noun rather than an adjective further emphasizes its unique importance.

power and privilege through current systems. Sustainability, in short, is a gargantuan project. It comes as no surprise that proponents of the idea are calling for leadership, the cultivation of leadership qualities, and the training of a generation of leaders. I therefore sought to study sustainability planners and the communicative work that they perform as leaders in their respective areas of influence. A more detailed definition of sustainability planning with all its challenges and internal conflicts is discussed in Chapter 3 as a component of the various sustainability visions held by both practitioners and theorists.

### **Rationale for Leadership Research in Planning**

The work of planners as promoted by planning theorists, and as further demanded through their negotiation of the complex terrains of sustainability, pluralism and advocacy, requires action and practices amounting to leadership. The variety of social, institutional and political contexts within which emancipatory change must take place make leadership a necessary and primary ingredient of planning work. Flexibility, creativity, team building, refined social skills, risk-taking, coalition building, negotiation and persuasion are all practices commonly espoused in theories of leadership. Drawing from management and organizational sciences sheds light on the work that planners are expected to undertake, and in many cases are already undertaking, while highlighting specific areas that need to be explicitly engaged in planning education and practice.

Sustainability planning has moved beyond its infancy as a practice in the Greater Vancouver region. As the coming chapters reveal, sustainability is commonly acknowledged as a legitimate direction in several planning departments and the regional planning office. In the meantime, communicative action planning has emerged as a legitimate approach to the study and practice of planning. It evolved out of observing the work of practicing planners and theorizing about these observations. It is descriptive in suggesting that much of planning already involves communication as a primary tool for the creation and implementation of plans, and prescriptive in acknowledging and promoting planners' facility with human relations. Beyond the broad significance of communicative action, planning theory offers little direction for acquiring the tools necessary for communication or for developing greater efficacy in this role. Leadership analysis provides a framework for researching, developing and refining knowledge on communicative planning. When applied to sustainability this knowledge guides sustainability planning practice and communicative planning theory with the ultimate goal of informing both theory and practice.

### **Research Question**

The primary question guiding this study has developed and transformed through the course of this research but always related to issues of sustainability, communicative work and Empathic Leadership. The question that has endured the test of substantial revisions and modifications and that has withstood the test of fieldwork is:

**How, and to what extent, do planners exercise Empathic Leadership to advance sustainability?**

Empathic Leadership is defined in Chapter 2 by distilling and reorganizing best practices as informed by leadership, mediation, conflict resolution, negotiation and communicative

planning literature. This research departs with the assumption that Empathic Leadership is in existence to varying degrees and desirable in its entirety. While the terminology and the framework of Empathic Leadership are my own, the claim and the assumption that the components of Empathic Leadership exemplify best current practices is taken directly from the interdisciplinary literature I reviewed. The main research question asks how sustainability planners use Empathic Leadership specifically. Given that theorists believe these attributes to be prevalent it is important to learn how they are practiced. Chapters 3 through 7 answer this question through a presentation and analysis of the five areas of vision, emotion, community, strategy and action.

### Methods and Methodologies

This research primarily employed qualitative methods with an emphasis on ethnographic analysis. I sought to understand how sustainability leaders conduct themselves in different situations and how they interact with others through the processes of planning. Absolute replicability of situational reaction is neither possible nor desirable. Every situation inherently has its own idiosyncrasies with its own context and its own set of actors. The data gathered reveals unique individual reactions to unique situations and cannot be made to represent typical practices or reproducible results. Each person's life history and each person's style and personality, for example, likely results in a personalized mechanism for dealing with emotions and emotionally loaded interactions. The degree to which they are cognizant of emotive interactions and the manner and intent of their preparation for those interactions is likewise unique. It is the richness of detail and the depth of analysis that answered the research question.

Quantification and calculation are certainly possible for this kind of study, and have been popular in psychology research for decades, but they necessarily generalize contexts in ways that would conceal the details surrounding specific situations. In addition to its intended contribution to knowledge and academic discourse, this research is also intended to be a resource for practitioners engaged in communicative planning work. Statistical analysis charting norms, trends and general tendencies might serve analysts making broad policy recommendations, but the practitioner working in the field would be better served by following the trials and tribulations of the individual experience. Gauging the reflexivity of practitioners and revealing their stories, is a form of inquiry that can only be achieved through qualitative methods. Within the larger rubric of qualitative methodology, it is the ethnographic method that is most suitable to uncovering the social relationships between people even when such relationships occur in a professional context.

My research question requires an in-depth exploration of individual people and the manner in which they engage others for the specific goal of sustainability. I began with the assumption that objectivity is unattainable. I am, instead, making my subjectivity explicit. The very choice of my research area and the manner in which I have defined my scope and chosen my subjects are all intertwined with my own values and experiences as an architect and a planner in search of greater environmental and social responsibility.

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They

turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos (Miles, 1994:8).

Qualitative methods were first conceived in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology dating back to the 1920s and 1930s (Denzin, 2000). The tradition evolved from the detached observation of dark skinned subjects by white male ethnographers to a self-conscious awareness of the impossibility of representing the "other" (Denzin, 2000). Qualitative researchers have become keenly aware of the political nature of their research and of the contextual idiosyncrasies of every project. Denzin and Lincoln describe themselves as engaged in a "struggle to connect qualitative research to the hopes, needs, goals, and promises of a free democratic society." (Denzin, 2000:3) This is not a matter of choice. Neutral observance, as was once assumed to be the role of the researcher, does not exist. "The age of value free inquiry in the human disciplines is over" (Denzin, 2000:19). This normative position acknowledges the subjectivity of research rather than attempts to disguise or deny it.

My own research follows this tradition of seeking to align the objectives of the research with the aspirations of the subjects. This is neither a presupposition of findings, nor a presumption of fortitude on the part of subjects, but rather an assumption of what kinds of questions would matter to the subjects. The answers are forever unfolding but their relevance is guaranteed through iterative reflection based on the evolution of the data. Some participatory action research traditions demand an inclusion of the subjects as participants from the very conception of the project all the way through design, data gathering and analysis (Kemmis, 2000). This is not the approach I am taking. The research design and research questions were derived through an analysis of the literature and in consultation with my supervisory committee and were only complemented by feedback from the participants.

Although qualitative methods are now widely accepted as legitimate forms of inquiry in the social sciences, the debate continues about the relative merits of each of the various qualitative and quantitative methods. Denzin and Lincoln provide an excellent overview of this debate and of the elevation of qualitative methods to a discipline unto itself (Denzin, 2000):

[Q]ualitative research lays down its claim to acceptance by arguing for the importance of understanding the meaning of experience, actions and events as these are interpreted through the eyes of particular participants, researchers and (sub)cultures, and for a sensitivity to the complexities of behaviour and meaning in the contexts where they typically or 'naturally' occur" (Henwood, 1996:27).

The struggle for legitimacy and recognition by practitioners of post-structuralist and constructivist methods is no longer the essence of qualitative methods. The debate between positivist and constructivist approaches continues but the importance of qualitative approaches is no longer in doubt. The last decade has seen sufficient growth in scholarship and development of qualitative methods to warrant paradigmatic status equal to

quantitative methods (Henwood, 1996:26; Lincoln, 2000:163). Lincoln and Guba (2000) summarize the ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings of each of positivism, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism. Positivism upholds the dualistic and objectivist tradition in which truth is discovered through experimental manipulative methods in which hypotheses are verified through quantitative analysis. Postpositivism is modified to include a critical appreciation of contextual factors. Findings are probably true and are derived through critical multiplism, the falsification of hypothesis and may include qualitative methods. Critical theory considers reality to be shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values. Its approach is subjectivist and findings are mediated by values. Methods are dialogical and dialectical. Constructivism is relativistic in seeing reality as specific and locally constructed. It is also subjectivist and its findings are created through hermeneutical and dialectical methods (Lincoln and Guba, 2000:165).

This research focuses on the interactions of individual people in specific situations that cannot be generalized to explain social phenomena. This is not replicable across situations let alone across individuals or organizations. Its greatest kinship is therefore to the constructivist paradigm. The work contributes to our understanding of leadership in communicative sustainability planning and planning work more broadly. Conclusions do not unequivocally state that planners engaged in sustainability work face a uniform set of situations and that they react and behave in a given manner. Conclusions do show, however, what specific individuals have done in specific situations to push forward a sustainability agenda. This project enriches our understanding of planning work and informs us about areas of planning that have only been tangentially researched, hardly discussed, and never taught.

In this research I employed the iterative cycling of grounded theory. Data from initial interviews were coded and categorized and used to inform subsequent interviews which were, in turn, coded to inform the observations and so on (Pidgeon, 1996:178). There are countless ways to code, categorize and organize qualitative data. The information generated through the research does not necessarily fall into neat packages of findings. Although the organization of information evolved over the life of the project, as informed by the content of the information, using the Empathic Leadership framework from the outset allowed me better access to more detailed arrays of information (Miles, 1994). I employed two parallel systems of coding the information. The first is a simple chronological record of each of the planning practitioners and the second is a coding along attributes of Empathic Leadership. Information was, at times, duplicated in each system. Material that did not fit into the components of Empathic Leadership as outlined in Chapter 2 was initially coded separately. My own autoethnographic writings were likewise recorded chronologically but also duplicated in the two parallel systems the first referencing individual practitioners and the second the Empathic Leadership framework. As the project evolved I reviewed the effectiveness of the framework as well as the possibility of adding categories related to specific planning projects that sustainability planners might be engaged in.

A preliminary stage in this research involved an initial exploration of the significance of difficult or traumatic events in the transformation of thought and subsequent action by individuals. At the time the research focused mostly on the transformational experience as

an agent of change both individually and collectively. I sought out a number of activists working in the areas of social and environmental sustainability and conducted open-ended interviews with each of them. The results were insightful in testing out interview methods for eliciting personal values and life-stories. However, I found that life-stories alone were not enough to inform me about the communicative work of these advocates. My own communication with the interviewees was my only reference for how they communicated. While none of the initial set of interviewees are a part of this larger study, they helped guide and refine its methods.

I used the Empathic Leadership framework in two ways. First, as I proceeded to uncover the manner, and extent, in which it is manifested in practical application, I tested its general utility as a framework for understanding the work of sustainability planners. Through this process I remained open to discovering that the components of Empathic Leadership, which constitute best practices as derived from the literature, were not in fact present or prevalent in sustainability planning work. Second, I applied it to the research context to ask questions of the individuals I interviewed and situations I observed. The research was conducted in three parallel streams each with a specific methodology: interviews, observations and surveys. Accompanying all three, for the duration of the project, was a fourth track of autoethnographic reflection.

I set up individual interviews with each of the participants and at the start of each interview I asked their permission to record the conversation for transcription later on. These were open-ended interviews in which I sought information about each of the actions of the Empathic Leadership framework. Do the practitioners think about their own values and thought processes? How do they relate to people? What are their ideas about sustainability? Due to the open-ended nature of the interviews, specific questions varied from interview to interview depending on the direction and intensity of the discussion and the kind of rapport of communication that we developed. In some instances questions would trigger a whole series of enthusiastic revelations while in others the interviewee would not be so inspired by the same line of questioning. I noted such reactions and in many cases they form a part of my findings.

I also asked questions about issues that arose out of my observations. I used the Empathic Leadership framework as a reference for guiding the questions. The emotional content of my questions about self-reflection and self-awareness and the generally personal nature of the in-depth interview style sometimes took the interviews into the grey zone between research interview and counseling interview. King suggests establishing clear parameters at the beginning of the interview where the risks of intrusiveness are explicitly stated and an option for 'opting out' is given (King 1996). I chose not to formalize the exchange with a specific opting out clause but told research participants they were free to not reply to questions.

Grounded theorists are sensitive to their affect on the interview process. They are wary of cutting off "theoretical leads" through overly directive interviewing. Interviewers could likewise unknowingly load their questions with assumptions and prejudgments (Pidgeon, 1996 :89). My questions were open-ended and any slant they may have carried was neutralized a few sentences into the participants' answers. These were not short answers that would simply affirm my preconceived assumptions. Rather the interviews were a



chance for me to hear about the experiences of the participants in doing their work along general themes of inquiry. I also use the participants' voices directly throughout my analysis and writing. This entire document is a weaving together of the words of the Sustainability Planners to create a narrative of practice.

Eight planners formally participated in this research. In addition to the open-ended interviews described above I observed them working in various forums including everything from small working meetings to workshops to plenary presentations and public speeches. Two practitioners work for two separate non-governmental organizations, two work for a provincial public corporation, one for a private sustainability consulting firm, one for an urban design institution, one for a regional planning district and one for the largest municipality in the region. In addition to the transcribed audio recordings, extensive field notes were an important source of data. The various components of the Empathic Leadership framework were used to analyze and categorize the different types of data collected.

*When I first started doing this I thought I could go in and talk to the person and talk to the staff and all would be revealed. I since realized, and was directly 'informed' by a staff member, that it will be impossible for the staff to talk freely unless I go behind the back of the person and engage in gossip mongering and tabloid reporting. This does not feel right. I've decided to use a confidential questionnaire to survey the staff as a way to get around their inhibitions (Senbel field notes 2003).*

The final component of the research was a result of the above reflection. I conducted a survey of the staff and colleagues (Staff and Colleagues Survey)<sup>7</sup> with whom the Sustainability Planners work on a regular basis. Working with five of the planners I identified groups of people with whom they work in various capacities and I sent out 76 questionnaires with assured anonymity unless respondents chose to decline it. The total response rate was 72 percent. Two planners joined the study too late in the process to allow sufficient time for disseminating the questionnaires and a third was reluctant to allocate more time to this research but arranged for me to interview the president of the company. Results from the questionnaire are used selectively throughout the thesis to support, augment the other data sources. On a couple of occasions the results indicate contradictions between the planners' own perceptions of their work and conduct and the perception of their staff and colleagues. The final section of the questionnaire is also important in showing the relative significance of various attributes of leadership from the perspective of staff and colleagues. Appendix B includes the full questionnaire.

The overall design of the research gave me a variety of avenues and sources for collecting information. This multi-pronged approach allowed me to employ triangulation to approach the questions from different perspectives. I worked with the subjects' own self-definition and self-descriptions, my own observations of the subjects at work, and the survey responses of the subjects' partners in communication. The findings of each source were checked against those of other sources. Triangulation was used not as a system of adding

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<sup>7</sup> Please see Appendices B for the questionnaire and Appendices C and D for summaries of the results.

certainty to specific observations but rather as a way of presenting different versions of the same story (Denzin and Lincoln 2000).

### Subject Selection

The subjects were selected using a snowball technique beginning with my personal network of sustainability planners and advocates based on 8 years of work in this region. I also asked two members of my supervisory committee to suggest individuals who work in the general areas of social, economic and environmental sustainability. As is apparent from the discussions in Chapter 3, definitions of sustainability vary considerably. In soliciting information and suggestions about individuals doing work in this area, I inquired about the nature of their work and the makeup of their constituencies. I was seeking individuals who were not only concerned with one of the three areas of environmental, economic and social sustainability, but who were also attempting to integrate them in some way.

My own local network began in 1992 with my work on architectural projects in First Nations communities and on a "green" building at the Strathcona Community Gardens. Through the organization of a national student conference on sustainability and subsequent work on sustainability at UBC, my network of sustainability practitioners has become extensive. I continue to be pleasantly surprised by my constant discovery of people who are working in this area. From an initial list of 18 practitioners I began contacting planners and discussed my research interests and asked them for further suggestions. The list grew to over thirty and I began considering three factors in making a final short list. First I noted those individuals who had multiple recommendations and who continued to be suggested by other practitioners as good candidates for the research. Second, I looked for planners who were involved in projects that were considered important and pioneering in some way by other practitioners. Third, I was looking for some degree of diversity in terms of area of work, scale of work and organizational context within which the planners worked. Although I wanted a gender balance, none of the participants were chosen for their gender. The following is an alphabetical list of people who formally participated in the study and with whom I conducted in-depth interviews. They are the only people I approached for participation; nobody declined to participate. I also gave each of them the option of anonymity at the outset but they all declined it.

1. Larry Beasley, Co-Director of Planning, City of Vancouver
2. Johnny Carline, CAO/Commissioner, Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD)
3. Patrick Condon, James Taylor Chair of Landscape and Liveable Environments, University of British Columbia (UBC)
4. Daryl Fields, Water Use Planning, BC Hydro
5. CheeYing Ho, Director, Smart Growth BC
6. Susan Kurbis, Program Coordinator, Environmental Youth Alliance
7. Sebastian Moffatt, Owner and Principal of Sheltair, Inc.
8. Bruce Sampson, Vice President - Sustainability, BC Hydro

Table 1 provides a summary of the organizational context within which each of the planners work. While organizational structures are not the focus of this research, the coming chapters reveal several instances in which the Sustainability Planners have to contend with organizational hierarchies. Planners reveal different strategies that they have had to undertake to expand the sustainability vision within their respective organizations. Table 1

is not intended to be analytical but simply an introduction to the diversity of environments in which the Sustainability Planners work.

Sustainability Planner	Organization	Position	Size/Number Of Staff	Organizational Structure	CONSTITUENCY AND SCOPE	Mandate
Larry Beasley	City of Vancouver (Municipality)	Co-Director of Planning	Hundreds, dozens of planning staff	Hierarchical structure	Residents of City of Vancouver with some influence on other municipalities	Guide development and help create a livable city with a high quality of life
Johnny Carline	GVRD (Regional District, partnership of 21 Municipalities)	CAO	Thousands	Hierarchical structure	Residents of member municipalities	Infrastructure services, but seeking to expand mandate to regional sustainability
Patrick Condon	UBC, Design Centre for Sustainability	James Taylor Chair and Professor	6-12	Somewhat hierarchical structure with delegation of managerial responsibilities	Varies and is client driven	Design and collaborative visioning to promote sustainable communities
Daryl Fields	BC Hydro (Public Corporation, Provincial Utility Provider)	Various, most notable for her management of Water Use Planning division	Thousands, Daryl in charge of small division with decisions affecting hundreds	Hierarchical structure	British Columbia	Agreement on water use planning management plans
Cheeying Ho	Smart Growth BC (NGO)	Director	6-12	Somewhat hierarchical	British Columbia	Replace sprawl with complete communities
Susan Kurbis	Environmental Youth Alliance (NGO)	Program Coordinator	6-12, + youth on short term contracts	Non-hierarchical amongst full-time staff	Urban youth in Vancouver area	Empower youth and promote environmental and social consciousness
Sebastian Moffatt	Sheltair, Inc (Private consulting firm)	Owner and Principal	10-16	Hierarchical	Varies and is client driven	Advance urban sustainability through planning analysis and design
Bruce Sampson	BC Hydro (Public Corporation, Provincial Utility Provider)	Vice President of Sustainability	Thousands, Bruce working in corporate office not in charge of any division	Hierarchical structure	British Columbia and foreign customers buying power	Provision of water and power at minimum cost to consumer

### Table 1 – Summary of Sustainability Planners' Organizational Context

Appendix A profiles the organizations for which the Sustainability Planners<sup>8</sup> work through the words of the organizations themselves. The planners were chosen for their individual work, rather than that of their organizations but in some cases, as this research reveals, it is impossible to disaggregate the two. In some cases the organization might even be considered, at best, apathetic about sustainability and, at worst, antithetical to its mission. The individuals have, nonetheless, managed to carry forward with a sustainability vision of one form or another. I individually contacted each of the planners and invited them to participate in the project. I scheduled two interviews during which I asked open-ended questions about the nature of their work, their visions and the vision of their respective organizations. As mentioned above I also used the Empathic Leadership framework as a guide in asking whether the planners think about their own values and thought processes? How do they relate to the people they work with? How are they advancing their ideas within and without the organizations in which they work? I came to know, respect and admire each of these individuals and fondly refer to them by their first names throughout this work reflecting the level of familiarity we developed. My journal entries allowed me to reflect on how my observations evolved as I became more familiar with their personalities and character traits. The combination of my self-reflection in my journal entries and my use of the Staff and Colleagues Survey allowed me to be conscious of the degree to which my closeness to the research participants was affecting my analysis of their work. It is my hope that you, the reader, will also become acquainted with these planners and come to know them as people engaged in challenging planning work and not merely as research subjects.

The research methods I used demanded a certain application of the Empathic Leadership framework in my own role as a researcher. In-depth interviews and ethnographic work in the postmodern context of embedded subjectivity require a relationship of trust and empathy between the researcher and research subject (King 1996). My own attempts at building these relationships of trust and my own reflection and communication with the research subjects are not only intertwined in the methods, but are also activities encapsulated by the Empathic Leadership framework.

Empathic identification in qualitative inquiry requires the observer to get "inside the head" of a subject to understand her or his motives, beliefs and desires (Schwandt, 2000:192). This has required me to employ some of the characteristics that I was seeking to explore. My own notes of the experience of attempting to see the world through the eyes of the practitioners and their constituents were relevant as data and as guides for data analysis. Following the ethnographic tradition in anthropology, I kept a journal of my reflections about the process and about my own behaviour and these became a part of my collected data. My own communicative actions were therefore analyzed to contribute to answering the research question. I was my own subject.

Every doctoral degree is a journey of learning across several planes of knowledge and experience. Mine is no exception. I have come to discover things outside of myself in the tiny fragment of the world that I studied, but also things about how I interact with that fragment of the world. This work is necessarily reflective in that it asks questions about the

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<sup>8</sup> Please note that the terms "Sustainability Planners" refer to those planners in Greater Vancouver who participated in the study as opposed to "sustainability planners" which refers to the broader and more general group.

actions of individuals towards others in a quest for certain societal outcomes. My own actions as an individual, both as an agent of change in the small spheres of influence I inhabit as a graduate student, and as a project participant and partner-in-reflection with the Sustainability Planners, amounts to sustainability planning. This work is therefore very much intertwined with my own person.

In many research situations the object of discovery is some form of truth that lies outside of the student's daily experience of the world. In other cases, and this is becoming more frequent, the lines between student and researcher, indeed the line between life and research, is not a line at all. It is an amorphous and dynamic zone of overlap and cross-fertilization. Participant observation and action research have developed enough over the last 30 years to constitute a legitimate field of inquiry that moves the researcher from being a peripheral observer to being an active participant or even to being the centre of analysis. My own research, as is revealed in the coming pages, links my work as a researcher and planner to that of the research participants. It is not merely the choice of research methods itself that necessarily links me to my participants but rather my proximity as a planner to the subject of my research.

I did however have to maintain some degree of detachment to allow me to stand outside of what I was observing, doing and hearing, and to analyze it in the context of normative theory as outlined in the Empathic Leadership framework. My journal notes were an invaluable resource for this task. I routinely found myself having to reflect on how I was being affected by my research and how my own supposition and assumptions were evolving. As is apparent in my personal introductions to every chapter self-reflection and ethical deliberation were important in maintaining a productive balance between too much detachment, that would undermine my ability to relate to the research participants, and the complete absorption into their work that would undermine my ability to be critical and analytical.

### **Methodological Precedence**

A number of researchers have conducted similar ethnographic research of individual planners. Forester is the most prolific writer in this field (Forester 1989, 1996, 1999, 2000a, 2000b; Forester, Fischler et al. 2001). His books and articles present an understanding of planning practice as informed by profiles of practitioners. Through a combination of observation and individual interviews Forester has developed an extensive database of planner profiles. Healey's 1992 article was an observation of a single planner at work and is exemplary of the kind of detailed ethnographic analysis that communicative planning theorists have been conducting (Healey 1992). Her work demonstrates the richness of data that can be collected from a single day's observation. Her study further illustrates the importance of communicative work in everyday practice. She concludes however that little is known about what communicative skills actually involve and what ethical questions are inherent to this kind of work (Healey 1992).

Donald Schon's widely cited and influential book "The Reflective Practitioner" is built on a series of observations of professionals at work (Schon 1983). His section on town planning is based on the work of a single planner. Through in-depth interviews and observations of meetings and interactions Schon was able to determine how the planner framed his role and acted upon that framing. He compared the planner's capacity for reflection-in-action to that

of a hypothetical planner who might frame his role in such a way that would make private dilemmas public and private assumptions would be subjected to public test (Schon, 1983:235). By observing and analyzing the work of a single individual Schon was able to make generalizations about the entire profession with enduring relevance. Intense observational analysis also has precedence in the case study approach in business, management, leadership, negotiation and mediation research. Kolb and associates (1994) profiled mediators in an in-depth study of practitioners with distinctly different mediation styles and approaches.

### **Defining the Vancouver Sustainability Planner**

My definition of a sustainability planner is broad and inclusive. The majority of research participants do not use the term planning to describe their work but in every case their work constitutes planning in one form or another. The coming discussion on the nature of planning reveals the great diversity of opinions on what planning is and by extension who might be a planner. In some cases the term sustainability is not one that my research participants are comfortable with and in other cases, the term planner is something they would not readily use to describe themselves. Their reluctance with the labels is not an aversion to the type of work that the label implies, but rather, a reluctance to be pigeonholed and stereotyped. Nevertheless, each of the planners who participated in my research is working directly on changing organizational and societal norms and practices towards what they perceive to be greater sustainability. The following are examples of how two of the participants relay their official job descriptions.

*I'm the CAO/Commissioner for the GVRD and all the utilities, and my prime functions are; number one, to be the principle liaison between the political body and the staff to interpret the political wishes into managerial actions and to interpret what problems and issues we come across into political policy questions for the Board to answer. That's the first function, secondly to provide overall managerial responsibility and direction to the team and determine what the priorities are (Carline 2003a).*

*I'm the Co-Director of Planning and the Director of Current Planning and I also sit as a voting member, of three voting members, of the Development Board that makes decisions on development. As Director of Current Planning, I am responsible for managing the policy context and input for the regulation of development and the changing of development. There is a Director of Development Services that handles the process [development] and then my staff and I handle the content. So we review all developments and I have a group of staff that look at changing zoning. They are the rezoning people. I have an urban design team. I have a heritage team. I have a whole team that focuses on all aspects of the inner city central area (Beasley 2003).*

There is no mention of sustainability, no mention of organizational or social change and no allusion to any kind of vision. These may well be the official job descriptions but as this research reveals, their work activities and their personal agendas within their respective organizations are ambitious, visionary and actively implementing ambitious visions. Traditional definitions and even contemporary job titles can be deceptive. I therefore neither limited my research to practitioners with traditional planning jobs nor those who explicitly label themselves as sustainability advocates.

### **Biases and Limitations**

There are a number of biases inherent in this kind of study. First there is the selection of the leaders themselves. The "snowball" technique limits the sample to established social and professional networks. Sustainability planners working in relevant areas but whose circles of influence are outside the range of the "snow-balling," or who are unknown beyond their circles of influence were not considered. My biases of subjectivity and those of my professional and academic sustainability networks have informed the conceptualization of the research, the formulation of the methods and have undoubtedly affected the collection and analysis of data. Rather than attempt to counter subjectivity I have been explicit about the decisions I made along the way and justified them through explicitly stating my epistemological frame of reference.

There are other methodological limitations stemming from the manner in which I accessed the Sustainability Planners' stories. Being identified as a leader worthy of detailed doctoral research may have caused the planners I studied to embellish their responses to paint an idealized picture. Outright falsification is unlikely because of their relatively public roles but there may have been a tendency to talk about optimum or intended behaviour as opposed to the reality of what actually happened. Real interactions are full of shortcomings and messiness and my research methodology explicitly sought to avoid self-aggrandizement on the part of the planners being studied.

Through the course of my research I developed enough familiarity with most of the planners to be able to tell when their version of how they conduct themselves might not mesh with that of their staff and colleagues. I did not rely on intuition alone; the Staff and Colleagues Survey and my own observation of interpersonal interactions were another check. Inconsistencies of perception were in fact a significant research finding. Gaining access to a planner in "action" for observation proved difficult however. There was likely an inherent bias against giving me access to certain difficult situations or interactions that were expected to have the potential of showing the practitioners in a negative light.

My research did not systematically contextualize all planning actions in the procedural and hierarchical boundaries of each organization. Another study might have focused on the structure, size, culture and power distribution within each of the organizations that the planners worked for. Studying their actions from an organizational perspective would have led to a series of insights about a planner's ability to operate and affect change from within different institutional settings. A different starting point may have indeed interpreted all action as being determined by different organizational contexts. I found considerable overlap, however, in the sequence of actions that planners undertook irrespective of the size and scope of their organizations. I followed their lead in identifying areas of significance in advancing their visions and my focus is a reflection of my findings and not a presupposition of relevance.

There are many other ways of studying organizational or social change. Issues of process, including the design and implementation of group process are extremely important to leadership in an organizational and public context. The manner in which a planner, or a leader, conducts processes of collective visioning and participatory decision making is integral to our understanding of that planner's work. This research does not, however, explicitly focus on process. I reflect on process as part of a broader set of activities and interactions that the planners are engaged in while pursuing their goals of realizing

sustainability visions. Chapter 7 does address two types of process but does so in terms of the macro scale of greater inclusion and accessibility as opposed to the micro details of process design.

On several occasions in this document I conceal the identity of the planner I am discussing. None of the planners' identities are revealed in Chapter 2 for example. This was a difficult ethical decision that I had to make in consultation with my research supervisory committee. I wanted to follow through on the findings of my research but I also did not want to betray the trust of my research participants who had generously entrusted me with their stories and their working environments. I finally decided to include those findings that would be damaging to a person's professional reputation but to do so without revealing their identity. I did not set out to avoid controversy; rather I had to employ diplomacy and strategy in handling toxic stories. I had to employ some measure of Empathic Leadership in studying the Empathic Leadership of others.

Other methodological limitations are those typical to any research. Unlimited time and money would have allowed me to spend much more time with each research participant, to interview them more extensively, to have observed them in a wider range of activities, and to have surveyed their staff and colleagues more intensively. For example, I was unable to make use of the option of interviewing respondents of the Staff and Colleagues Survey who included their names and contact information. At the end of the questionnaire there was an option for respondents to include their name for a possible follow up interview and 24 out of 54 respondents (44%) provided contact information. The questionnaire responses themselves provided me with sufficient data and conducting the follow up interviews would have extended the research period by several months. I made the decision to forego the follow up interviews but with unlimited time and resources they would have added additional depth and richness to the research results.

This research is specific to Vancouver with its environmental, geographical, historical, political and cultural idiosyncrasies. It is also unique to the eight Sustainability Planners I studied. It is not a study of planners in general, nor even of sustainability planners. It is a study of eight sustainability leaders in the Vancouver area who have done noteworthy work with a range of organizations and across a variety of perspectives. Although the results are useful for planners elsewhere, situations will be different and contexts will necessarily require a different set of strategies and activities that are specific to that region. Neither the Empathic Leadership model, nor the pentad of action, are universal in their applicability. Empathic Leadership is derived from writings about North American practice and the pentad of action is derived from observing Vancouver area Sustainability Planners. Different cultural and institutional settings would require context specific conceptual frameworks and would likely result in different models of action to advance a sustainability agenda.

The following chapter introduces the Empathic Leadership framework, which formed the basis of my inquiry. It is an investigative lens that I crafted in order to study and analyze the work of the Sustainability Planners. As the chapter illustrates, the Empathic Leadership framework is a sequence of actions that I culled from the current thinking in leadership, mediation, negotiation and communicative planning. I systematically identified those actions that are deemed effective in that literature. I then organized, combined and



reorganized the set to make it more useful as an aggregated tool for both research and practice.

### 2 - EMPATHIC LEADERSHIP IN PLANNING

*Over the last couple of years, in discussions with planners and academics, I have frequently come across the perception of empathy as being something akin to sympathy. In various conversations and correspondence with colleagues I have seen my work labeled as being focused on emotive, empathetic or emphatic leadership. While the latter might be selectively employed as a strategy within Empathic Leadership, it is only a small piece of what I studied. Empathetic leadership is similar to empathic but I am careful to avoid it because of its associations with the word sympathetic. Empathy is different to sympathy. Empathic Leadership is not about altruistic goals of compassion, although these may be present, but rather, it is about deliberately attempting to comprehend another's perspective in its entirety. Postmodern, post-colonial, and cultural theorists would, of course, object to this as an impossible and politically loaded task. You cannot possibly know what it is like to occupy another person's world. To even attempt it is to trivialize the experience of others and this is especially problematic if they are less privileged or oppressed by your own perspective of the world. I do not take issue with this line of reasoning, in fact I totally support it, but my approach for this research departs from a different theoretical position. My purpose here is to find avenues for mediating difference and arriving at joint and collaborative visions for societal change. This necessarily requires reaching, or attempting to reach, understanding across the different perspectives presented by the planners and their constituents. My foundation is therefore derived from mediation literature on the one hand and communicative planning on the other.*

Empathic Leadership is my own conceptual construct. It is derived from a review of leadership, mediation, negotiation and communicative planning literature. In reading these varied perspectives I sought those actions that were not only seen to be effective and desirable within the individual discipline, but that were also recurring across the different disciplines. I was seeking the cumulative and overlapping wisdom of all of four areas of action-informed theory. There were cases where a particular action was only prevalent in one literature but was so strongly prescribed, and would logically integrate into actions prescribed in other literatures, that I chose to include it. Articulating a clear vision was one such action. It was extremely prevalent in the leadership literature but was absent from the communicative planning literature, especially that which sought to distance itself from the comprehensive planning model. Having arrived at a set of attributes that were consistent across the different areas of knowledge I combined and reorganized the list to give it a sequential logic. It begins with the individual and internal spheres of awareness and action, and continues to include the ability to relate and to communicate to others. The last set of actions is developmental in causing the planner to reflect on those areas of personal and relational action that require refinement and improvement.

This chapter is composed of three distinct sections beginning with a discussion of the theoretical context that gives prominence to the communicative and emotive content of planning work. A discussion about relevant lessons from mediation and negotiation follow. The second section presents the Empathic Leadership framework with 14 attributes of leadership grouped under three areas of action. It is in this section that lessons from the leadership literature are integrated into the discussion. The final section is a summary application of the Empathic Leadership framework to the Vancouver Sustainability Planners, and is a preview of the findings addressed in much greater detail in each of the following chapters.

### Communicative Planning

Communicative action builds on traditions evolving from the Frankfurt School of thought that moved to reject the uncritical embrace of technology and all things scientific. It was put forward by Habermas as a historical analysis of the evolution of the sphere of public discourse at the end of the seventeenth century in England, and in France one hundred years later (Mattelart and Mettelart 1998). Planning underwent a similar critique of modernity as it transformed from being based on science and its neutral revelation of facts and natural laws (Friedmann 1987) to being a facilitative process of negotiating between multiple groups and multiple truths (Sandercock 1998).

The 1960s saw the beginning of a large scale rejection of the supreme authority of science and rationality. Many factors led to this gradual diminishment of objective rationality. Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" was instrumental in casting doubt on the supremacy of scientific intervention by illustrating the deleterious effects of pesticides (Carson 1962). This work did not receive much mention in planning theory but had a significant effect on public opinion in North America and is widely regarded as one of the major catalysts that started the environmental movement. Jane Jacob's *Death and Life of Great American Cities* cast doubt on the value of planning expertise that consistently favored large planning projects, and destroyed the humanistic character of cities and city streets (Jacobs 1961). The major failures of the day were freeway construction that displaced inner city neighborhoods, and large monolithic housing tenements that ultimately lay abandoned. The popularity of Paul Davidoff's advocacy planning in the mid to late 1960s further demonstrated the great divide between the technical knowledge and comprehensive plans of planners, and the needs of affected communities and groups (Davidoff 1965). It became evident that while planning claimed to be rational it was also exclusive in its bias of catering towards certain segments of the population while ignoring others entirely (Sandercock 1998).

This scientific, reductionist and exclusionary attribute of modernity was first cast into doubt, from within science itself, by Einstein's understandings of the relative nature of our "objective" observations of the natural world. It was subsequently further undermined by Thomas Kuhn in his depiction of scientific thought as a history of scientific institutions (Sandercock 1998). Sandercock brought the full bearing of this evolving understanding of truth into planning practice and theory. Sandercock demonstrates the existence of multiple stories, multiple histories and realities each with an equal claim to validity and truth. The history of planning is not a confined singular truth but rather a plural and evolving series of perspectives and relationships of individuals and groups to each other and to society as a whole.

Like many critics of comprehensive rationality, communicative action planners, denied the existence of an objective scientific truth. They see knowledge, no matter how scientific it is purported to be, as value laden (Innes 1995). Power structures were seen to be perpetuated through the use of socially constructed norms and manipulated truths (Forester 1989; Innes 1995; Sandercock 1998). Innes saw communicative planning, as informed by Habermas' conditional use of rationality, to be an avenue for freeing planners from the role of technocratic expert (Innes 1995). Planners can instead focus on the facilitation of emancipatory communication.

"Both knowledge production and exchange are infused with ideological and political practices that protect the powerful and confuse the powerless." (Healey 1992:10)

Habermas posits that of the three types of reason that humans employ, instrumental-technical, moral and emotive-aesthetic, it is the first that has dominated public discourse and invaded private spheres (Healey 1997:51). Habermas also proposes a normative model of democracy that concerns itself with "action oriented to reaching understanding" and to an ideal "structure of linguistic communication" (Habermas 1998:246). This alternative to liberal and republican understandings of democracy, in which politicians are elected for their stand on issues, is deliberative democracy and would form the foundation of a state-wide adoption of communicative action as a form of governance.<sup>9</sup> It relies on will and opinion formation through a "free and open political culture and an enlightened political socialization, and above all on the initiatives of opinion-shaping associations." (Habermas 1998:252). Habermas goes on to say that it is only with difficulty that these processes can be subjected to political control. So here we have a well-articulated and powerful vision of society governing itself through discourse, dialogue, communication and consensus. Much of Habermas' work is based on the critical observation of the real life muddling through of decision making but he affords us more inspiration than instruction in the realm of democratizing communicative action.

Healey enriches the discussion of communication theory in planning by drawing on Giddens and his understanding that power dynamics are constantly recreated through mutual exchange; "we are culturally made or socially constructed, and at the same time makers of cultures and social structures." (Healey 1997:46). She further summarizes Giddens' theory as one which sees humans as living "through culturally-bound structures of rules and resource flows, yet human agency, in our continually inventive ways, remakes them in each instance, and in remaking the systems, the structuring forces, we also change ourselves and our cultures." (Healey 1997:47). This is an empowering idea because it implicates us as accomplices in the perpetuation of our own power structures regardless of the degree to which we have unfettered agency in our respective political systems.

Even if discourse and communication are continuously recreating society with all its power imbalances, as Giddens sees it, they also have the power to prop up hitherto unheard voices. Rational discourse and the articulation of visions may be standard tools for planners but they are also the tools of the powerful in perpetuating their own power. Who is more capable in engaging and excelling in rational discourse than the wealthy and the powerful? This does not negate the significance of communicative action as an agent of change and empowerment, but rather stresses the importance of understanding the challenges of varied cultural and socio-political contexts to this broad theory. The diversity of our citizenry demands that we accept and nurture more inclusive methods of communication that reach beyond technical rationality and into ethical, emotional and relational rationality. While each of these is illustrated through the course of the coming chapters, Habermas lays the foundation for the kinds of conditions that would give rise to a more inclusive rationalism in the following excerpt:

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<sup>9</sup> Dryzek was the first to use the term deliberative democracy Dryzek, J. (1990). The idea has been critiqued as undesirable, ineffective and inherently biased by Mouffe, C. (2000).

Thus the rational acceptability of a statement ultimately rests on reasons in conjunction with specific features of the process of argumentation itself. The four most important features are: (i) that nobody who could make a relevant contribution may be excluded; (ii) that all participants are granted an equal opportunity to make contributions; (iii) that the participants must mean what they say; and (iv) that communication must be freed from external and internal coercion so that the "yes" or "no" stances that participants adopt on criticizable validity claims are motivated solely by the rational force of the better reasons. If everyone who engages in argumentation must make at least these pragmatic presuppositions, then in virtue of (i) the public character of practical discourses and the inclusion of all concerned and (ii) the equal communicative rights of all participants, only reasons that give equal weight to the interests and evaluative orientations of everybody can influence the outcome of practical discourses; and because of the absence of (iii) deception and (iv) coercion, nothing but reasons can tip the balance in favor of the acceptance of a controversial norm. Finally, on the assumption that participants reciprocally impute an orientation to communicative agreement to one another, this "uncoerced" acceptance can only occur "jointly" or collectively (Habermas 1998:44).

For others this devotion to rationality, irrespective of how inclusive we might make it, is a perpetuation of a Cartesian binary that subjugates emotion (Murphy 1999). Murphy argues that emotions are integral to the human being and cannot be separated from reason. Pure emotion and pure reason do not exist and we are always subject to a mixture of the two. For Murphy "reason and emotion never exist in isolation, do not form a dichotomy, and certainly are not antagonistic human qualities... they are essential, harmonious functions of the psychosomatic entity, the human person - intricately interwoven manifestations of the subjective and objective fact of human consciousness" (Murphy 1999). Murphy sees the separation of emotion from reason as one of the fundamental problems of modern society. The dichotomy assumes that reason can be devoid of emotion and therefore elevated in its capacity for truth and that emotion is somehow purely subjective and therefore has no resemblance to objective truth.

The critique of communicative action that I am putting forward here has to do with a continued devotion to rational discourse.<sup>10</sup> The Modernist paradigm has been rightly accused of being exclusively devoted to the machinations of the material world. Truth and

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<sup>10</sup> Rationality in planning has many definitions and has been expressed in many different ways depending on the epistemological underpinnings of the discourse. Planners have often thought of their decision making as being more rational than that of politicians and the public as a whole Reade, E. (1985). For an analysis of the use of rationality in planning literature please see Breheny and Hooper (1985). The inherent "Rationality" of planners is contested by a number of theorists including Flyvbjerg (1998) and Sandercock (1998). Rational discourse as promoted by Habermas in communicative action assumes that under conditions of balanced power relationships consensus can be achieved by engaging in dialogue through which the most rational argument wins. His position continues to defer to reason at the possible expense of other claims to legitimacy and validity such as emotion, compassion and faith.

knowledge were confined to that which can be observed and analyzed impartially. Postmodernism has given us the opportunity to appreciate that such impartial objectivity is an illusion. Science itself, through Heisenberg's work and Einstein's work in quantum physics, was a glimpse into the power of the observer in shaping the observation. Derrida and Foucault took this much further and dissected the very structure of our socially derived identities and relationships. Neither action nor interaction can escape the effects of power and privilege on the actors. Context became central to the nature of action. This understanding of the world gelled more naturally with the experience of planning. Comprehensive master plans that served the public interest and met all the needs of all the citizens came to be known as an elusive dream.

Planning, however, as informed by Habermas, continues to be confined to the realm of rationally derived decisions. I am not suggesting that we begin to teach students irrational behavior and unaccountable spontaneity. We need rationality to understand the dynamics of planning processes and the relative positions of each party within those processes. But there is a considerable dimension of the human condition that cannot depend on rational discourse alone. Furthermore Habermas' conditions for optimum communicative action, as comprehensive as they seem, do not account for everything. They assume that different groups and different individuals will be equally capable of engaging in rational deliberation in which the most reasonable argument forms the basis of consensus. Diverse expression is not as simple as giving people an opportunity to be heard. There will always be some segments of society who are better suited to debate, self-expression and articulating their values. They will necessarily be privileged in a society in which communication is the currency. Others may be incapable of expressing themselves verbally and may have never been socialized to be model communicative citizens. It is perhaps naïve to think that everyone could be, or would even choose to be perfectly communicative.

A common criticism of communicative planning is that it assumes too tidy a set of conditions. Power imbalances could never be neutralized, free and open communication would never be actualized and most significantly, planners are not necessarily the sensitized, reflexive, egalitarian and ethical beings that communicative planning theorists require them to be (Huxley 2000). These assumptions are not integral to communicative planning theory. They are indeed weaknesses and much of communicative theory concerns itself with guarding against them. Distance from the ideal condition is a profoundly important area in which we need to educate and sensitize planning students. The impurity of the planning sphere is duly acknowledged but rather than defer to traditional models of authority, communicative planning theorists encourage planners to exercise their considerable discretionary powers in nudging planning decisions towards that ideal. Whether falling short of the ideal is damaging enough that we need to abandon the entire communicative project only time and further research can tell.

Fischler levels perhaps the strongest argument against the capacity of communicative planning to be truly emancipatory (Fischler 2000). He questions whether the price of "emotional self-disclosure" and cultural self-identification, as requisite conditions of open communication is too high (Fischler 2000). Related to this argument is the tendency for cultural specificity and bias. Communicative planning omits to question the ability of planners to cross cultural and class divides in their capacity to communicate and elicit communication. Yiftachel and Huxley (2000) add to this criticism the idea that the discourse

and writings of communicative planning theorists is itself arming planners, perhaps prematurely, with the privilege of being arbiters of knowledge and communication.

[Y]ou can't take people where you haven't been yourself... we need as individuals and as communities to be about getting people to deal with the fears which immobilize us and bar us from our basic instincts towards growth (Mel King quoted in Sandercock 1998: 132).

Acknowledging that we are emotional as well as rational beings necessarily requires planners to consider the emotional content of their communications. As Forester succinctly puts it "people not only have interests; they care about them as well" (Forester 1996). This caring is much stronger than an inclination of likes and dislikes, it is a source of passion and it is "a central element in the micro-politics of the planning process" (Forester 1996). Sandercock relays the presence of those emotions that run deeper and are more insidious: fear and trauma (Sandercock 2000). People are not only motivated by what could be, or by preserving what is, but more deeply by what was and what has been.

If planners "ignore the affective and passionate pulse of people's participation, they will be scorned as being insensitive and callous, to say little of being distrusted, if not detested" (Forester 1996). Forester states that a truly progressive planning practice would deliberately engage passion and emotion in its dealings with people in planning processes. Emotional projection or empathy further enables us to more fully appreciate the complexities of the issue and the experience of those involved in conflict situations. We cannot presume to have "perfect intersubjectivity" or perfect understanding of the experience of others but we can certainly bridge differences and attempt to appreciate the experience of a particular problem from another person's perspective (Forester 1999). Empathy is not only the capacity to relate emotionally to others but more fundamentally the emotional ability to relate on all levels to the experiences of others.

Nussbaum makes an argument, on philosophical grounds, that takes emotional health to a "normative ethical view that stresses imagination, reciprocity, flexibility, and mercy." For her, a public ethic that appreciates emotions leads to greater capacity for self-realization, but, on the other hand, she sees emotions creating a positive contribution to ethical deliberations. She makes the case for compassion leading to concern for others in the absence of any other personal motive and this concern is necessary for ethically desirable outcomes such as helping others (Nussbaum 2001). In an uneven and imperfect world helping others to some degree is necessary both ethically and pragmatically, but for our purposes it is perhaps more important to state that helping others does indeed take place.

Another imperative requiring planners to deliberately confront the emotional content of their work, is the need to undo decades worth of policy and design interventions favoring a singular public interest based on the historical assumption of a singular and absolute truth. The contribution of Sandercock's work has not only been to expose this historical bias, but also to inform us of the trauma that such a bias has caused in our cities and neighborhoods (Sandercock 1998). Planners acted as experts who knew what was best and have been responsible for promoting their notion of what is best. The now infamous abandoned

tenement buildings in major US cities, exemplified by Pruitt-Igoe<sup>11</sup>, are an obvious testament to the distance between the lived experience of citizens and the visions of the "public good" as implemented by planners and architects. Demolishing the buildings may remove the physical problem but there are residual emotional effects that cannot be as easily removed. Issues of resentment, distrust and anger cannot help but surface as planners attempt to work with community residents who have felt wronged in the past.

Nussbaum's departure from the traditional schism between emotion and reason has parallels in a growing literature on emotions in organizations. Frost et al. (2000) have noted, "dominant discourse separates emotion from rationality and divides people in organizations from their emotional responses" (Frost et al. 2000). They counter this dominant discourse and acknowledge that "organizations are sites of everyday healing and pain." Their research relays stories of individuals in organizations who encounter emotions as part of their daily work. A professor summarizes it well when she says "I see lots of pain which people bring to their workplaces simply because they are human beings... most people actually walk in through the doors as wounded people" (Frost et al. 2000).

Compassion here rises in the face of pain and not simply for the sake of a collective or benevolent ethic, or out of a desire to gain deeper understanding. The goal in the cases that Frost et al. studied is an instinctive human response to offer comfort in the face of pain and injury. It is neither premeditated nor part of a larger social plan but it "involves reaching toward another in ways that allow feeling to guide action" (Frost et al. 2000). Unlike much of the preceding discussion, which has shown how emotions play a role in processes of collaboration and mediation of conflict, the significant premise here is that pain is always present and is as varied as it is ubiquitous.

The presence of an emotional component to planning work is significant in terms of interpersonal and group communications as well as the personal health of the planner. Mediation work, for example, can be lonely and emotionally demanding. Working with people whose "anger and emotional wounds are overpowering, but with whom the mediators must hold themselves in check or disguise their own painful or angry reactions," will undoubtedly require great resilience on the part of planners (Kolb and Associates 1994). Wendy Sarkissian's "speakout" in which residents spoke of old injustices and lingering fears was an emotionally charged event that must have stirred all kinds of emotional responses in those who witnessed it, including the planner herself (Sandercock 2000). We have no mechanism in planning theory or in our planning curricula for addressing this role of planners, yet it seems critically important to making progress and collectively moving forward. Definitions of planning reveal that planning work is already known to venture into emotionally "charged" territory.

Communicative action planning theorists view planning as the exercise of communication, facilitation and mediation between different individuals and institutions to arrive at solutions and processes reflecting the range of interests affected by the specific planning issue. We can carry these definitions further to include the work of planners working directly within civil society and not as planning office planners. Community leaders,

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<sup>11</sup> This was a post-war federal public housing project in St. Louis completed in 1956 and only a few years later fell into a state of disrepair, dereliction and vandalism. It was demolished using explosives in 1972 after sitting vacant and vandalized for a decade.



activists, community advocates, mediators, negotiators, and policy analysts all play an important role in engaging and empowering civil society and promoting change through action. Any contemplation of action that is forward looking, involves a number of parties, and has an outlook that is physically, socially, economically and temporally broader than the immediate context, is planning.

There are those who are far less concerned with the content of planning work and choose to stress process instead. Higgins et al. use the term 'management' to describe planning work (Higgins et al. 1995:23). They identify 15 management competencies required of the planner; well developed political skills, strategic management skills, decision making skills, intellect, well developed communication skills, well developed negotiation skills, self and stress management skills, well developed influencing skills, personal integrity and flexibility, well developed people management and relationship skills, change management skills, well developed analysis and problem solving skills, results oriented and drive for achievement and business and commercial skills (Higgins et al. 1995:55). According to them, "to understand management as the process of carrying out and delivering planning activities is to understand that it beats at the heart of all planning services." (Higgins et al. 1995:39). The significance of their study is not so much that planning is essentially an exercise of management, but rather that planning requires a rich and diverse array of skills. Little attention is paid to these skills in the planning literature and planning schools spend very little time developing these competencies in planning students.

The exercise of defining emotions has more often revolved around the presence or absence of basic emotions than it has with the actual experience of emotion. Debates range from disagreement over what emotions are considered basic, to whether emotions are pre-cognitive or are socially constructed through feedback mechanisms (Gallois 1993). The field of emotions and emotional communication is vast in disciplines of psychology but for my purposes it is sufficient to state that the basic emotions generally agreed upon in the literature are "happiness, sadness, fear, anger, and disgust, and sometimes contempt, guilt, shame, or love" (Gallois 1993). Emotional communication occurs through verbal and non-verbal means, has distinctions based on culture and gender, and has complex social and physiological triggers (Gallois 1993). Another set of questions that are potentially useful for planners to consider, include whether an emotion elicits a positive or negative reaction, how intense it is and the frequency with which it occurs (Gallois 1993).

The above discussion illustrates an evolution of thought in planning that demonstrates the legitimacy and justifiability of focusing on emotions in planning theory and practice. Not only are emotions in and of themselves worthy of greater exploration and understanding, but they also lead us to consider new perspectives on the process of engaging and communicating with others. Acknowledging that the planner necessarily embodies emotional as well as scientific rationality requires us to address the planner's subjectivity. This is not to assume partiality on the part of the planner, and add the burden of having to constantly prove impartiality. This perspective does however recognize the planner as an individual with complex thoughts and emotions communicating with other individuals with equally complex thoughts and emotions. Communicative planning is much more complicated than a mere competition between ideas in which the best idea wins. The literature on mediation and negotiation provides some important lessons for how we might integrate the messiness of conflict-ridden communication into planning practice.

### Leadership, Mediation and Negotiation

The leaders we select to head our social organizations will set the goals and determine the values by which we measure accomplishment. They will integrate the needs and activities of the pluralistic constituencies that look to our social institutions for support, service and meaning. They will tie together the disparate goals, measures of success, and strategic policies that will govern our lives in the next century (Fairholm 1991).

Leadership has traditionally been studied and analyzed in countless ways (Chrislip and Larson 1994), but the literature has generally evolved from stressing the innate traits of leadership and the unique attributes of the individual, to an appreciation of the range of circumstances and conditions that give rise to outstanding leadership (Useem 1998). The study of leadership has traditionally been informed by scientific methodologies and the search for an exact and predictable management science (Fairholm 1991). However, authors often represent past leadership trends as being myopic and deficient, much like progressive planning's view of comprehensive planning. A new more useful approach to leadership presents a fluid understanding of the practice. It is neither an exact science nor a method of controlling subordinates. Leadership is now understood to be "a series of dynamic relationships between people [and...it is] the art of making these relationships work" (Fairholm 1991).

Leadership has been studied in order to catalogue, communicate, educate and replicate the practice of leadership. Beginning with the great man theory that distinguishes leaders from those who follow them, to tracing the behavior of leaders, leadership scholarship moved to a contingency theory of attempting to understand the context within which leadership occurs (Hunt 1984). According to this perspective leadership is as much about the circumstances and the environment, which allow leaders to emerge and followers to be drawn to them, as it is about the unique attributes of the individual leaders. Any discussion of leadership must necessarily touch upon issues of authority and the hierarchy of decision making. Traditional notions of leaderships were synonymous with authority. Authority relationships create efficiencies that have enabled the rise of civilizations but they simultaneously expose us to misuse and abuse (Heifetz 1994).

Authoritative leadership can be particularly problematic in planning if expertise and professional opinion is used authoritatively to disregard the expressed hopes and fears of citizens. We know from past experiences that conditions of authority and privileged opinion are highly subjective so we must be deliberately cautious about introducing the idea of hierarchical leadership into the sphere of planning. However, contemporary literature on leadership has independently become critical of purely authoritarian modes of leadership. Collaborative leadership, values leadership and servant leadership are some of the recent trends away from top-down imposed authority. Heifetz does maintain, however, that some circumstances absolutely require relationships of authority. He uses the example of the emergency room in which collaborative decision making would likely result in death (Heifetz 1994). In the sphere of planning such urgent decision making is far less likely but issues of urgency and survival have appeared in environmental planning literature. Citizens are told that in the face of impending human extinction it is imperative to willingly accept the authority of austerity.

Current understanding of leadership, and indeed the utility of leadership analysis for planning, is less about predicting and ensuring desired outcomes and more about managing unpredictability. The emotional content of planning communication renders processes necessarily unpredictable. The following definitions of leadership demonstrate a spectrum of perspectives of leadership. Each may be the most relevant depending on the institutional and interpersonal context within which planning takes place but it is the collaborative and communicative types of leadership that will most likely characterize planners' work.

For some, leadership is a polarity of types, from tactical to positional with collaborative leadership emerging as the preferred method (Chrislip and Larson 1994). For others the polarity is between the conservatives and the radicals with the former being more inclined towards scientific precision and the latter towards the idiosyncratic processes of leading and following. Values leadership is similarly concerned with process. It is a developmental approach that stresses individual development of leaders, followers and stakeholders (Fairholm 1991). Leadership based on the philosophy of values includes an explicit definition of the values of the organization and individual development in line with these values. Caring, service, innovation, productivity, improvement, vision-setting and self-development are leadership dimensions that Fairholm draws from surveys of state and local leaders in the US. The ultimate effect of values leadership is the creation of other leaders and a culture of individual development. This approach is particularly applicable to discussions of empowerment and citizen participation in civil society as it pertains to planners.

The relevance of emotions on the effectiveness of leadership as well as the effective performance of different kinds of managerial tasks is demonstrated by Goleman et al. (Goleman, 2002). They support their argument through numerous citations to studies that track performance with morale and the feel of the workplace. They also cite neurological studies that prove a chemical physiological connection between the human beings and the social and emotional environments that they inhabit. Goleman applied his widely cited work on emotional intelligence (Goleman 1995) to leadership (Goleman 1998), and found that self-awareness, compassion, empathy, social skills, motivation and self-regulation are essential for effective leadership.

The presence of emotions in our lives and their significance to our functioning seems to have become increasingly acknowledged through the work of Goleman and others on emotional intelligence. Both Nussbaum and LeBaron go further however (LeBaron, 2002; Nussbaum, 2001). Nussbaum links emotions to ethics in a manner that defines an emotional epistemology. She takes emotional health to a "normative ethical view that stresses imagination, reciprocity, flexibility, and mercy." For her, a public ethic that appreciates emotions leads to greater capacity for self-realization, but, on the other hand, she sees emotions creating a positive contribution to ethical deliberations. She makes the case for compassion leading to concern for others in the absence of any other personal motive and this concern is necessary for ethically desirable outcomes such as helping others (Nussbaum 2001).

"Emotions are not just the fuel that powers the psychological mechanism of a reasoning creature, they are parts, highly complex and messy parts, of this creature's reasoning itself. Thus a theoretical account of emotions is not only that: it has large consequences for the theory of practical reason, for normative ethics, and for the relationship between ethics and aesthetics." (Nussbaum, 2001:3).

LeBaron informs her exploration of emotions with an analysis of the practice of conflict resolution. She found that intuition and feeling play as great a part as reason in the work of the practitioners she interviewed. They almost all rely on "ways of knowing informed by emotions," (LeBaron, 2002:48). If emotions are an epistemology, as Nussbaum and LeBaron's work suggests, then it is one of the ways of knowing that leaders can employ to meet the demands of a particular situation. It provides access to a realm of understanding and communicating with others that is otherwise inaccessible.

LeBaron builds on Goleman's work on emotional intelligence and defines it as the ability to "recognize and manage our own feelings and read and deal effectively with other peoples' feelings" (LeBaron, 2002:52). The acts she describes to illustrate this point are acts of courage and leadership. A student in a class she taught, having distanced himself from a fellow student after an ideological conflict, reflected on his own feelings of internal conflict. He was angry and resentful towards the other student and at the same time felt guilty for not applying the conflict resolution theory he was learning in class to his own life. He exercised emotional intelligence and "invited emotional fluency into their exchange" (LeBaron, 2002:53). He proceeded to go out of his way to connect with the other student and ended up having a long, open and honest conversation that increased their appreciation for each other's point of view. The action took intrapersonal intelligence in the way the first student explored his own feelings, and interpersonal intelligence in the way he managed to reach out to the second student.

The interplay between feelings and thoughts is particularly poignant here. It was a conflict of thought that precipitated negative emotions and it was the negative emotions that stirred thought about resolving the conflict, which resulted in a better feeling and a heightened appreciation of the other's thinking. Facility with both thoughts and feelings, the ability to distinguish between them, and the capacity to identify one's own feelings are essential for accessing the knowledge contained in emotions.

Mediation and negotiation were likely always used by planners to persuade politicians and other professionals of the merits of a particular plan. The practice became more formalized with the onset of advocacy planning and its legal frame of reference. The conciliatory experience of mediators in the face of adversity is informative for our understanding of the challenges of communicative action. At its most elemental level the work of facilitators and mediators encounters emotions any time a conflict exists or arises. Planning work frequently involves conflict. For example, conflict around land-use and the allocation of natural resources amongst members of society is commonplace (Dorcey 1997). The absence of conflict does not however mean an absence of emotions and it is the manner in which emotions are treated or ignored that has the potential to affect long-term progress.

Bush and Folger's approach to mediation departs from the results-oriented tradition and focuses instead on larger social transformation. These concepts are attached to "an emerging, higher vision of self and society, one based on moral development and interpersonal relations rather on satisfaction and individual autonomy" (Bush and Folger 1994). Bush and Folger see a role for mediation that is broader than mere resolution of conflict. For them this is a process that allows participants to become more self-aware and to better understand themselves as well as the other parties. Empowering weaker parties,

"safeguarding them against pressured settlements" and contributing to greater equality in society is for them the promise of mediation. This larger social goal is not only admirable in itself, but it is also synonymous with notions of social sustainability as defined in the next chapter.

What is of particular interest here is the definition of empowerment and recognition. Empowerment in the mediation process is to give all decision making powers to the parties. Recognition is about each party gaining understanding and insights through the process about themselves and the other party (Bush and Folger 1994). Recognition is an appreciation of the human predicament of the other party not out of self-interest for strategizing against them, but out of a genuine desire to empathize (Bush and Folger 1994). The use of terms such as sympathy, compassion, respect and empathy clearly indicate that an emotional exchange is taking place when one party moves to recognize the circumstances of the other and to offer some kind of accommodation. Thus defined, recognition in mediation can be seen as the dissipation of negative emotions between parties and their replacement with positive ones. Making use of opportunities for empowerment and recognition is a procedural process of repeatedly placing the decision making power in the hands of the parties and intervening only to ask questions of clarification, to offer alternative interpretations of situations and to articulate the general state of progress. There are many opportunities for identifying and recognizing the emotion involved in conflict. The kind of self-reflection that is demanded by eliciting a party's views of itself and of others could undoubtedly lead to the surfacing of strong emotions. Bush and Folger talk of the common feeling of being threatened and attacked, and reacting with hostility and suspicion in mediation processes (Bush and Folger 1994).

Kolb and Associates critique mediation through a systematic analysis of the work of mediators across a number of different areas of work (Kolb and Associates 1994). The myth of social change and personal transformation is debunked. These normative positive elements are not altogether absent and there are examples of it occurring but it is far from the ideal espoused in the literature and proclaimed by many of the mediators themselves (Kolb and Associates 1994). Furthermore, the pure neutral benevolence of the mediator is deconstructed in a manner similar to planning theory's deconstruction of the planner as the impartial technician and promoter of public good (Kolb and Associates 1994). Mediators are people with their own agendas and their own sets of needs and tactics. They are business people who are running a business in a competitive business climate. This explicit acknowledgement of the subjectivity of the mediator or mediating planner is particularly important for the study of planners working towards a prescribed end such as sustainability.

Subjectivity of purpose has a parallel in the presence of subjective emotions. Kritek describes negotiation as a process that "is transacted among vulnerable and limited humans, all of whom harbor their personal set of needs, hopes, dreams, fears, fantasies, vanities, failures, and faults" (Kritek 1994). Kritek further identifies compassion as the essential trait for relating to others and that patience is the foremost tool for enabling compassion. In the absence of compassion, negotiations could harm both parties. Directing compassion inward is just as important as directing it outwards. Having compassion for ourselves is essential for understanding our own needs and allowing us the chance to step away from a process to give us the chance to heal. Kritek's own exposition of her self-reflection is quite revealing.

She recognizes that sometimes "unacknowledged intolerance or vanity or fear lurks in [her] heart" and prevents her from "seating compassion" at the negotiating table (Kritek 1994).

Kritek's definition of compassion is very useful for our discussion of the toxic emotional exchanges that planners can face. She defines it as the "capacity to be aware of distress and to wish to alleviate it, to bear with, to suffer with ...it is reflected in our willingness to place ourselves in their reality as they experience it, to feel as they feel and to feel with them... compassion assumes empathic oneness with others." (Kritek 1994). It is not the same as pity in which we see others as standing outside of ourselves and merely observing them and regretting their afflictions but not sharing them. The kind of self-reflection exemplified by Kritek's work is essential for enhancing the awareness of planners, both about their own place in a particular planning process and about the experiences of those others with whom they are working. Kritek's experiences seem to relate directly to planning work. She describes how negotiations can actually increase compassion and understanding of different points of view. Forester makes direct links between the work of mediators and that of planners. The emotional content of this work is both implicit and explicit. "Sensitive improvisation", listening, understanding, perspective taking, role-playing are some of the tools through which planners respond to different circumstances (Forester 2000). Forester does not suggest that mediation always be used in planning processes or that all planners ought to become mediators but he offers us some useful insights on the benefits of mediation in planning for a multi-cultural setting.

If you listen closely to others, try to hear what they are saying and also what they are not saying, what they are feeling and what they are trying not to feel, you begin to know and understand the dimensions of their humanness (Kritek 1994). Collaboration plays a similar kind of role in building bridges and opening lines of communication. For Dorcey (1997) collaboration has the advantage of making the power structures in planning processes more even. Consensus and multi-stakeholder processes enable the building of new structures to address society's evolving needs in a climate of government "retreat." The emphasis here is on the institutional and governance structure through which "politics, power relationships, history, organizational inertia, human dynamics, time, resources and uncertainty" can be addressed (Dorcey 1997). In his case study, the goal of collaboration was progress towards sustainability within a large watershed with overlapping political jurisdictions, a variety of land-uses and a wealth of natural resources. Dorcey describes in detail the mechanics of the multi-stakeholder process indicating the extensive web of communications and relationships that such a large process would necessarily require. The greatest difficulties were faced in gaining support of individuals in government agencies and in doing so the challenge was communication. Dorcey relays how staff had to "spend inordinate amounts of time contending with active hostility to the initiative, allaying suspicions, correcting misinformation..." (Dorcey 1997).

There is a high cost to managing emotions when planning for change especially when some important long-term consequences are being contemplated. What role does emotional communication between the parties play during the formulations of these positions of suspicion or hostility? To what extent do destructive and distancing emotions prevail despite efforts at building trust and goodwill? These questions go beyond the scope of my research and would require a gargantuan task of conducting a statistically representative qualitative survey of public process participants. I am instead highlighting here the

significance of emotions and presenting emotional literacy as a necessary characteristic of self-knowledge and relational competence. The Empathic Leadership framework (Table 2) articulates more fully how planners might use self-awareness and a heightened capacity for engaging others to advance specific causes by communicating across diverse constituencies with varied degrees of receptiveness.

### Framework for Empathic Leadership In Planning

Emotional engagement is not an isolated action that can be turned on and off. It is part of a larger repertoire of actions towards people and situations. It is about building personal and interpersonal facility over time. Leadership research has increasingly focused on the leader's ability to know herself. A person can only effectively interact with others if she knows herself and knows how others respond and react to her way of interacting. In order to be effective as a communicator she has to know how she communicates and be sensitive to how others interpret her communication. She will, of course, be more capable in some areas of interaction than others and she will want to improve in those weaker areas. This sequence forms the basic structure of the Empathic Leadership framework. It begins with *personal actions* related to the individual's internal awareness and internal capacity; extends to *relational actions* linking the individual to others in processes of communication and collective action; and culminates in *developmental actions* that focus on methods and strategies for improving both individual and group effectiveness. Table 2 shows the more detailed breakdown of each of the areas of action. The 14 actions are derived from combining descriptive analyses of exemplary action from the four areas of communicative planning, mediation, negotiation and leadership. The order is intended to be sequential but also cyclical and iterative. For example it is only through self-reflection and self-awareness that a person can articulate her values, and it is only then that she can resolve deep conflicts. However it may be necessary to undertake healing and confronting pain in order to begin to address the conflict. No action discretely fits into any one of the three areas of action; the Personal, the Relational nor the Developmental. Rather there is considerable overlap and connection between them and they continuously inform one another as the arrows in Table 2 suggest.

Empathic Leadership Framework		
Personal Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self-Reflection and Self-Awareness</li> <li>2. Self-Regulation</li> <li>3. Articulation of Values</li> </ol>	
Relational Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Compassion and Understanding Others</li> <li>5. Communicating and Relating to Others</li> <li>6. Building Relationships</li> <li>7. Participation/Collaboration/Inclusion</li> <li>8. Resolving Conflict</li> <li>9. Inspiring Others</li> <li>10. Visioning and Creating Culture</li> </ol>	
Developmental Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Acquiring Knowledge and Skills</li> <li>12. Understanding Power and Influence</li> <li>13. Empowering Others</li> <li>14. Healing and Confronting Pain</li> </ol>	

Table 2 - Empathic Leadership Framework

### Self-Reflection and Self-Awareness

For all contemporary leadership theorists the foundation of leadership is a strong and healthy relationship with oneself. (Chrislip and Larson 1994; Fairholm 1991; Gardner 1995; Greenleaf 1998; Heifetz 1994; Kotter 1996; O'Sullivan 1999; Useem 1998). This relationship is a mental dialogue, or perhaps the absence of a dialogue between the leader and herself. Mediators and negotiators likewise have to be able to understand their own internal struggles and prejudices in order to be fully capable of understanding others (Bush and Folger 1994; Kritek 1994). Knowledge of our own strengths and weaknesses, knowledge of our own prejudices and presuppositions, and knowledge of our own emotions are precursors to knowing how to engage others, let alone how to get to know them. This is not just a singular period of self-awareness and maturation beyond which we start to see the world through different eyes, although the significance of this "adult" transformation may be profound. Self-reflection and self-awareness are constants that leaders carry with them through all their work. They range from deep thought on a particular problem to an ongoing sensitivity and analysis of a communication as it is occurring.

The personal and private nature of this form of deliberation makes it difficult to study. In planning literature this action arises only in the context of ethical dilemmas in which the planner has to make a difficult decision. Deliberation is often encouraged but deliberation in the absence of self-reflection might serve to always assume a distance between the planner and the work, a distance that may not exist. An awareness of oneself and one's place in the process could become an integral part of all planning thinking. It can accompany any kind of task and it need not take up inordinate amounts of time or be foremost in the planner's mind. A less obsessive strategy is to simply incorporate a reflexive tendency towards acknowledging and understanding the subjectivity of the self as it relates to the world around it. Perhaps most importantly self-reflection gives us the ability to learn from our mistakes and to realize our imperfect natures.

### Self-Regulation

Everyone learns self-regulation to some degree through the trials and tribulations of life. Some forms of it, such as waiting to cross the street when there are no cars, are more critical than others. Other forms are developed over the course of life to achieve social integration and avoid animosity and aggression. Self-regulation and self-discipline are about the socialization of knowing how to act, what to say, when and how, depending on the circumstances. It is about holding back when the impulse is to lash out, or about maintaining beneficial habits and a healthy routine. Self-regulation in relation to others is necessary for effective leadership, conflict resolution and any work involving dialogue (Kritek 1994; Useem 1998). The significance of this action for planning work speaks for itself and it is especially important in emotional exchanges. Being on the receiving end of an angry exchange, for example, requires a great deal of self-control to avoid replying in kind, or becoming hostile or even violent. Seeking to understand the emotions behind the exchange and wanting to avoid taking the attack personally requires self-regulation.

Sometimes the anger may seem irrational but to the "zealots" their outrage seems perfectly justifiable and logical (Susskind and Field 1996:18). Responding in a manner most conducive to a constructive dialogue is not a simple recipe. It grows out of self-awareness as well as the particulars of the specific situation. In addition to the deliberation mentioned above in which the planners chose to think before proceeding with the projects, self-



regulation seems natural to the team of planners negotiating with the developer in the Environmental Planning Case. On two separate occasions in the discussion when the developer seemed irritable and aggressive in his manner, the planners chose conciliation over confrontation. It seemed well within their mandate as professionals "guarding the community from an urban design viewpoint," to stick to their position in defiance of his demands for less resistance (Forester 1996). Yet they reacted with neither arrogance nor indignation. They regulated their own behaviour by exercising patience and restraint.

Self-regulation does not imply that emotions have to be repressed. There will be times when unexpressed emotions become a barrier to progress and a planner will actively encourage participants in a planning process to reveal their feelings in whatever form they take. Anger will necessarily need to be expressed as anger. In this case self-regulation becomes both more important and more difficult. Allowing sufficient expression of emotion to be honest and to communicate pain, but not so much expression that you perpetuate a mutually reinforcing cycle of animosity, is the challenge of self-regulation.

### **Articulation of Values and Visioning**

This action receives much more attention in the leadership literature than in mediation or planning literature because it is the impetus that drives the individual and makes her work build towards a particular outcome. The subjectivity of the individual has been deliberately and erroneously understated in planning work. The successful leader is one who has a vision of where she wants to go and how she wants to be, coupled with an indelible drive to get there (Fairholm 1991; Useem 1998). Personal values are the springboard for what would eventually become the values of the entire organization. Hence visioning is both a personal action as well as a relational one and a discussion of its relational attributes follows in the visioning and culture forming section. Personal visioning is an introspective exercise of becoming aware of those values that drive us as individuals. It is an act of articulating both an epistemological stance, from which we draw meaning, and a moral stance through which we decide how to act. Vision is a synthesis of what matters the most and what we are earnestly passionate about. It is also a set of principles that guide our actions and affect our decision making both on a personal level and a professional or organizational level.

For some planners personal vision is much clearer than for others. Advocacy planners for example, are very clear about their mission of aiding disenfranchised groups (Davidoff 1965). It is the mediator type of planner, or the planner as manager of processes, who has to exert extra effort in understanding her or his personal vision. As Kolb and Associates clearly state, even among mediators the absence of a personal agenda is a myth (Kolb and Associates 1994). The agenda may well be, as Forester would see it, a less adversarial form of advocacy (Forester 1989). A mediating planner's vision would be a dedication to doing good and being fair and attempting to bring justice to the injustice of power domination and oppression. An even more procedural vision might be a commitment to an inclusion of all voices and a deference to the "will" of the process. Sandercock's inclusion of multiple stories and multiple histories might lead to this form of pluralistic vision (Sandercock 1998). Whether the emphasis is on content or on process it behooves planners to be able to articulate their personal vision to know the reference point from which they consciously or subconsciously relate to others.

### Compassion and Understanding Others

Many authors have written about the importance of compassion both in conflict situations and in day-to-day organizational interaction. Kritek, Bush and Folger spoke of its transformational value (Bush and Folger 1994; Kritek 1994). Frost et al. spoke more directly to its necessity as a counter to the ubiquity of pain (Frost et al. 2000). To follow Kritek's model compassion is an extension of self-reflection, self-awareness, listening and patience. For Frost et al. compassion is an intuitive action in response to a perceived need in others. It is a form of reaching out to help. Both approaches are relevant for planners. The systematic slowing down of impulsive reaction, and the questioning of one's own preconceptions and prejudices, is necessary for planners dealing with the public as well as other professionals. Personal dynamics of character and personality can affect any interpersonal exchange and in the absence of self-reflection breakdowns in communication could become barriers to progress. Likewise the unacknowledged presence of pain could poison a process from the outset.

The role of the planner as a party relating to other parties is distinguishable from the role of the planner as a facilitator or mediator between two or more parties. In the first case, the planner is involved and invested in a vision. In the second, she is merely a facilitator of visions but the compassion needed for emotional expression and communication are the same. The important distinction is the degree to which the planner is likely to be a direct participant in the emotional dialogue.

### Communication and Relating to Others

Communication is of paramount importance for any kind of collective decision making process and its accompanying emotional exchange. The capacity to listen to others and understand what they are intending to communicate, and the ability to communicate thoughts and sentiments in accessible ways are the basic tenets of dialogue and are the currency of communicative action advocates. In addition to sending communication and expressing oneself, receiving communication and sending an acknowledgement of having heard what was communicated are important for validating what was said. Relating to others is as necessary in planners as it is in leaders and mediators and it is the basis for learning about the parameters of a problem. In his study of Chicago's electric utility company, Throgmorton (1996) demonstrates the power of communication in arenas of contested ideas. Not only does he highlight the importance of persuasion, but the importance of being open to persuasion. It begins with an openness to listen and continues to a willingness to express.

### Building Relationships

This is an obviously necessary characteristic for anyone who has to interact with people as part of their job. It is especially the case for interdisciplinary, inter-agency, and inter-group work. For planners "deliberations involve exploring and building working relationships as much as they involve research, analysis, expertise and visual presentation skills" (Forester 1999). Relationships of trust facilitate the free expression of ideas and a willingness to communicate freely across power hierarchies (Shockley-Zalabak 2002:161). Throgmorton (1996) emphasizes the significance of the web of relationships surrounding a planning issue and warns against excluding groups who may seem insignificant but have a considerable affect on decisions. Both the desire and ability to build relationships across a broad range of

groups and individuals is essential for promoting an agenda of lasting change (Childs 2003).

### **Participation, Collaboration and Inclusion**

Fairholm's portrayal of "values leadership" includes a process of change that disseminates power and shares decision making responsibility (Fairholm 1991). This evolution varies with the idiosyncrasies of the individual leader. It requires systematic and deliberate steps to change those with whom leadership is to be shared. There must be a mechanism by which co-workers and constituents can exercise their own talents and intelligence in advancing the collective vision. The leader, according to this perspective, "must be willing to engage in a continuing program of personal change to develop those capacities and those values that honor people, share governance, and produce high-quality performance at all levels." (Fairholm 1991). These goals of power sharing are directly synonymous with the inclusive intent of communicative action planning as expressed by Habermas.

Collaboration is evident in the Environmental Planning case in the way senior and junior planners shared the responsibility of responding to the developer's protests (Forester 1996). Planning rarely achieves the ambitious extent of honoring people and sharing governance as expounded by Fairholm. Even though there is a long tradition of promoting such participatory governance in planning dating back to Arnstein's ladder (Arnstein 1969), most forms of participant inclusion continue to fall short of true power sharing.

### **Conflict Resolution**

It comes as no surprise that effective leaders ought to be effective at resolving conflict. No matter how well intentioned the leader is, disagreements and conflicts will arise and the leader has to be adept at dealing with them. Conflict resolution is an extensive field in its own right with practitioners departing from a variety of professional and disciplinary perspectives. As the conflict grows or as the planner becomes aware of its depth and breadth she would increasingly have to rely on the expertise of professional mediators.

### **Inspiration**

The quality of affecting others in such a way that they are moved to feel, think and act in a certain way is necessarily emotional. Motivation comes from within but it is fueled by its like in others. The capacity to inspire comes with "self-confidence, dominance, and a conviction of moral rightness." (Fairholm 1991). It requires a vision that is logically sound and internally consistent and morally upright, but it is also about a feeling. Inspiration is a desire to emulate, repeat and perpetuate a certain state of being or knowing that is communicated by the leader.

Perhaps our lack of studying relationships is a result of a conceptual bias against viewing the work of planners as inspirational or a methodological tendency to not study the personal effect of the planner on others. These reasons for the knowledge gap are mere speculation. My research clearly suggests that planners can be inspiring but further study is necessary to document the manner and degree to which planners inspire those with whom they work. It is clear from the leadership literature that inspiration is an essential ingredient to effective leadership (Useem 1998), and acknowledging its worth is a necessary step in our appreciation of leadership role of planning.

### **Visioning and Creating Culture**

This is related to the articulation of a personal vision discussed earlier. Here, however, the personal vision becomes part of a larger whole. It begins to occupy a presence in every exchange and eventually forms a culture that is integral to the organization. "We need tireless advocates of a vitalizing mission" Fairholm states, "[w]e need leaders who urge others to share their vision for the organization and get involved...this kind of leadership... asks the leader to move the organization from *believing* to *doing* to *being*." (Fairholm 1991, original emphasis). The greater the change that is being sought the more necessary it becomes to be able to move from ideas to actions.

### **Acquisition of Knowledge and Skills**

In addition to an acute awareness and sensitivity to the planners' constituents and stakeholders, the planner must be prepared to act on this awareness to develop skills in areas in which he or she is deficient. These can be technical skills or, for our purposes here, they can include greater capacity to undertake any of the actions in this framework. They are also about acquiring knowledge in a certain area to better enable the planner to understand the context within which she or he is planning.

### **Understanding Power, Authority and Influence**

Forester and Sandercock have each written extensively about power dynamics and the tendency of the power elite to seek to perpetuate the socio-political structure in which they flourish (Foreseter 1989, Sandercock 1998). In an organizational context, understanding the hierarchy of authority and decision-making is essential for being able to introduce change, take initiative or exercise leadership. It seems self-evident that "the organizational environment of planning will substantially influence the reception, appreciation, and effectiveness of planners' work" (Forester 1989). But, planners also need to know who the decision-makers are, who the powerful interests are, who most influence the politicians to whom planners report. Who are the powerful developers, for example, who are pushing for a certain zoning change? Who are the special interests who favor this form of urban investment over another? This awareness is equally important for non-governmental planners who have to operate outside the system. Knowing who is resisting the planner's attempts at taking a particular approach and understanding the impetus for this resistance is necessary for facilitating communication, building relationships and moving forward.

### **Empowering Others**

For leaders with authority, empowering others involves delegating responsibility and sharing authority. When you have it, it is relatively easy to distribute. For mediators and negotiators, their relative position of neutrality or "trustworthiness" can be used to buttress the weaker parties against the manipulations or influence of the stronger ones. For planners, the task becomes trickier. They can use different types of information and they can affect the presentation and use of information to balance the playing field in favor of those who are only armed with stories and anecdotes against those armed with consultant reports, engineering studies and financial projections (Innes 1998). Planners could also use their discretion in strategizing with one party over another to empower the weak over the strong (Forester 1989). The idea is not to favor groups or individuals over others, but rather to understand the power dynamics and to seek to counter the imbalances.

### Healing and Confronting Pain

Calls for the continued democratization of society and of organizations, as well as the constant pressures of adjusting to global and local environmental and economic changes, demand an appreciation, and indeed the cultivation, of the planner as an agent of change. A necessary side-effect of change is pain and personal trauma. In management research pain and trauma are often viewed as the unfortunate and negative downsides of change (Kotter 1996). Other theorists in management and in planning on the other hand, are beginning to recognize emotional content as an integral component of everyday life and essential for resolving conflict and achieving change (Frost et al. 2000, Forester 2000). It is this humanizing perspective that forms the basis of Empathic Leadership.

Specific mention of pain and healing in emotional communication is just as sparse in leadership literature as it is in planning literature. Studies of leadership differ in that they make much more frequent and focused reference to issues of change both at an organizational level and a personal level. Change produces stress, uncertainty and confusion. It follows that change is traumatic and that trauma requires healing. Frost et al.'s work is seminal in this area as it demonstrates the constant presence of pain and healing in organizations (Frost et al. 2000). It gives explicit validity to an area that has so often been relegated to the domestic sphere and considered insignificant. The presence of pain demands awareness and a strategy or mechanism for dealing with it, or at the very least, familiarity with the different methods that people employ to deal with pain and suffering.

Sarikissian's work as presented by Sandercock (2000) is explicitly therapeutic. Racial tension and mistrust were pervasive in the neighbourhood and had been built up over "200 years of racist history" (Sandercock 2000). Sarkissian intervened as a planner with a "speak-out" in which people from each side of the conflict were able to express their grievances and be heard by the other side. In this case the therapeutic intervention was successful, but planners have to be extremely cautious and aware of the limitations of their own training. Planners cannot and should not become therapists<sup>12</sup>, but they must recognize that there is a therapeutic component to their work. When citizens show up angry at public hearings and shout out their opposing opinions, the planner must acknowledge the pain and confront it if she is ever to begin a dialogue between the opposing factions. In the Environmental Planning Case when the developer got impatient, the planners reacted by calming him rather than staying neutral, or further antagonizing him (Forester 1996).

Empathic Leadership represents an ideal set of capabilities put forward by leadership, mediation and communicative planning experts. Because this ideal is not born out of abstraction but out of the observation and analysis of actual practice, I proceed with the assumption that Empathic Leadership does, in fact, take place to some extent. The extent to which it occurs will of course vary. The following section and indeed this entire research is devoted to uncovering the extent to which planners exercise Empathic Leadership and the manner in which they use it to advance a sustainability agenda.

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<sup>12</sup> While planners will continue to find themselves in counseling roles, and may indeed choose to seek out these roles to achieve resolution on particularly traumatic planning problems, they do not have the benefit of professional training in the sciences of psychology. They are neither licensed nor regulated for such work and must defer to professionals whenever possible.

### Preview of Empathic Leadership in Sustainability Planning

In this section I preview some of the findings of my research with the Sustainability Planners that relate specifically to the different attributes of Empathic Leadership. Because of the summative nature of this chapter's depiction of the planners their identities are deliberately concealed. Without deeper analysis and contextualizing commentary I felt that in many cases I felt that it was unfair to connect situations to specific individuals. This consideration continues throughout the dissertation. In most instances, when an individual's actions or words would paint them in a negative light that would adversely affect their ability to do their work, I chose to hide their identity. Initially this was a matter that left me deeply conflicted. I wanted to be true to my research but I also did not want to leave a trail of toxicity associated with my research. In the end I followed the model used in much of the management and business literature in which lessons are gleaned from "masked" cases. Specific identities were not necessary for me to reveal the insights I gained from certain observations. While I do not associate actions with identities in this chapter, there are only a handful of situations in the coming chapters in which I do not directly attribute a quote or an action to an individual planner.

If there is one recurring theme in the leadership literature it is the capacity for leaders to be self-reflective and self-aware. Do the individuals look inward and think about themselves in relation to others and to the world around them? Do they reflect on events as they unfold and assess their own conduct in order to learn from them? Are they adaptive to situational changes? The degree to which this self-assessment and learning occurs, and the speed with which it occurs, allows planners to adapt to any situation and to become more effective at performing their work.

Self-reflexivity is important for anyone working with people but is particularly important for those whose work requires partnerships, collaborations and dependence on others. Planners do not typically wield enough power to exact compliance and sustainability planners are often working with complex relationships and abstract ideas that make it especially important for them to continuously learn from their practice. The ongoing practice of self-reflection leads to an evolving state of self-awareness that serves to equip individual planners with knowledge about opportunities and constraints in any planning communication. All the Sustainability Planners who participated in this research laud the dual practice of self-reflection and self-awareness as necessary and important. The practice is not, however, commonly incorporated into professional practice and varies considerably with each individual as well as the culture of their respective organization.

The act of communicating with others requires immediate response and reaction to outside inputs. Spontaneity and reaction cannot be avoided. Whether it is words or gestures that trigger an emotional response, or a poorly articulated position on an issue, planners often find themselves acting in ways that they later regret. A necessary evolution of the capacity to be self-reflective is the capacity to self-regulate. Frequently the more constructive reaction to the anger of others is an attempt to diffuse the tension or at least resist the temptation to respond to anger with more anger. This element of Empathic Leadership does not prescribe specific norms of conduct, or parameters of acceptable responses, over other kinds of reactions. Rather it is solely concerned with the planner's own perception of desirable conduct.

This particular characteristic has proven difficult to determine in relation to the planner's "unregulated conduct." It is no surprise that the planners I studied, who by virtue of continuing to do the work that they do, are not prone to behaviour that is unacceptable or destructive of professional relationships. The extent to which this is a result of self-regulation versus an innate characteristic is important because it reveals the individual's capacity to grow and change in other areas. Two of the planners had struggled with modifying what others had deemed as difficult behaviour. In one case the planner used to be a difficult, stubborn and opinionated boss and had changed to the point where his staff feel relaxed, comfortable and supported by his actions. In the other case the person is in a constant struggle to afford his staff the attention they need.

The articulation of values is a personal endeavour that is a necessary precursor to creating a shared collective vision. All of the Sustainability Planners could articulate personal visions that were similar in nature and scope to the vision of their organizations. None of the personal visions, however, were completely synonymous with the organizational visions. One planner talked of having to be very deliberate in differentiating between the two because the success of the organization requires devotion to its stated mission and not to the personal agendas of its members. Another planner found that particularly in sustainability work people had to believe that they are personally contributing to the mission through their own values and commitment. Otherwise they would not be motivated to do the work that they do. Leadership analysts see being clear about a vision as an essential starting point without which action is unfocused and unproductive (Heifetz 1994, Gardner 1995, Greenleaf 1998)

Compassion and understanding others requires the basic action of listening. While all the planners studied exhibited a capacity to do this, they were not exclusively compassionate or attentive in their listening. Time and urgency often took precedence over careful consideration of others. Indeed there were moments when planners were clearly ignoring suggestions made by staff members. In one instance the planner repeatedly carried on with his conversation with another person at the table as though his staff person had not spoken. The message was that the staff member's contributions were not worth the group's attention and for the remainder of the afternoon the staff person became increasingly distant and disinterested in the meeting.

On another occasion the same planner was communicating his desire for a staff member to limit her contributions to recording information by ignoring her substantive suggestions and turning to her when others spoke asking "did you catch that?" This type of poor communication was most common between planners and their staff and less so with outside individuals. In addition to the urgency of a task, power is another determining factor in the degree to which planners will attempt to relate to those with whom they are communicating. Power over a person is inversely proportionate to the effort to relate to that person. This does not mean that healthy communication does not occur. The contrary is true. In every case the rapport between staff and the planners was clearly indicative of a connection that would have required conversations and communications in which a mutual relating to others took place. It was evident, however, that it was usually up to the person with the greater power to determine when and how meaningful communication would occur.

Building relationships comes with the realization that any project, initiative or policy requires a supporting cast of many individuals. Within organizations strong bonds of trust and a mutual interest enable teams to work more effectively and more efficiently. This is well documented in the management literature. Planning, however, requires an extra dimension of relationships across organizations. Sustainability projects in particular require partnerships between different bodies of government as well as different organizations in an attempt to address the complex set of factors affecting sustainability. The Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) for example, partnered with Smart Growth BC, United Way and the Business Council of BC in order to launch the Sustainable Region Initiative. In addition to the shared values of wanting to invest time and energy into making the region more sustainable, individuals within each of the organizations had to build relationships of trust and respect with individuals from other organizations. The CitiesPlus Sustainable Cities competition entry, was likewise a partnership between Sheltair, a private consulting firm, the GVRD and the Liu Centre for Global Studies of the University of British Columbia. The scope and complexity of any one project is beyond the capability of any one organization so partnerships are essential. Of all the attributes of Empathic Leadership, relationship building seemed most prevalent across all planners and across all planning initiatives.

Participation, collaboration and inclusion is at the heart of one of the major paradoxes of sustainability planning. Do you use scientific analysis and the expertise of specialists to prescribe bitter medicine that will not be understood or appreciated by society and therefore risks not being followed through? Or, do you build a collective vision of a mutually agreed upon future through an inclusive and open process that improves the likelihood of implementation, but would also likely leave out any difficult personal or societal transformations? This paradox carries through to the work of the Sustainability Planners. Many have very strong visions and are fairly resilient in working towards those visions in spite of outside input or influence. Others are more wedded to the ethic of economic, social and environmental responsibility but are flexible about the way to get there.

Participation, I found, was not always practiced. There were times when it was deemed counter productive to involve a public who is ill-informed about the issues and would only choose the alternative that would have the least effect on their lives. A powerful example in British Columbia, that some of the planners use to argue against participation, is a recent referendum on a vehicle gas levy intended to raise money for public transit while curbing consumption. Public debate did not get to the level of analytical discourse that policy makers were hoping for. The result was a crushing defeat of the proposal and a public relations nightmare for transportation planners in the city. Involving the public continues to be viewed with some degree of caution especially by those whose projects are broad in geographic and temporal scope. Others who seemed no less visionary thought it essential to include the public in order to achieve support through the various implementation and life stages of a project.

Conflict resolution is a skill that is practiced in ways that are akin to relationship building. I saw no evidence of formal conflict resolution interventions on the part of any of the planners. Planners faced their share of conflicts but they approached them through patient one-on-one dialogue and discourse. They headed off conflict. This action is not as developed as it would be with deliberate attention and professional development that



targets conflict specifically. For example, handling an irate speaker at a public event takes skill and grace. On one occasion one of the planners was visibly irritated by a comment made by another planner at a workshop. He was clearly affected, his presentation was negatively affected, and the feeling in the room was one of tension to the point where several workshop participants deemed the entire event a failure. On the whole it appears that the Sustainability Planners rely on their own experiences with trial and error to refine their conflict resolution skills. They do not draw on other experiences or expertise in this area from other sources.

Inspiring others varied with the scope of the work and the planner. Some of the planners studied are charismatic speakers, others have powerful ideas, and others have a vision of how the different components of sustainability fit together. They are all inspirational at some level by virtue of pushing boundaries and working towards change in one way or another. The differences come with their differing styles and personalities, as well as their different emphases on sustainability issues. Some are particularly inspiring because they practice the kind of balance and healthful existence that they preach while others seem too busy to be holistically inspiring. The implication, rather, is that they are sacrificing their own balance and health today so that people tomorrow could live more healthy balanced lives. The cost is the sustainability of their mental, physical and emotional health and potentially the health of their professional and personal relationships.

Visioning and creating culture is very much linked to the inspirational aspect of leadership but it adds to it the ability to affect others with a vision and to have them embody that vision in their professional behaviour and actions. In some cases, staff and colleagues of the Sustainability Planners seem infected with enthusiasm and commitment for the mission of their respective organizations more broadly but also for the particular visions of the planners. In other cases, staff seemed to behave as they would in other jobs, with professionalism but no personal investment. In all but one of the cases, the office environment seemed to be healthy and congenial and the planners relied on this healthy spirit to achieve collective visioning and "buy-in" for the sustainability mandate.

Acquiring knowledge and skills occurs in a variety of different ways amongst the Sustainability Planners. Most undertake professional development initiatives of one form or another. In four cases the development is incorporated in the structure of the organization while in others it happens on a more ad-hoc basis as the time, inclination or need arises. One person employs a personal coach, and relies on that relationship for growing and evolving as a leader. On the whole there seemed to be little awareness of the many options and opportunities for learning about and practicing different leadership skills and scenarios. Other knowledge related to the technical aspects of projects and initiatives and seemed to come from one recurring source, the dialogue with other people. Meetings are the primary occupier of the Sustainability Planner's time. Some literally go from one meeting to another all day long. There is little time for reading or acquiring new skills.

The ability to understand power and influence is linked to the relational actions of building interpersonal relationships. Strategic alliances are necessarily sensitive to power structures and the Sustainability Planners are acutely aware of who yields what power in what circumstance. This, of course, is not solely confined to traditional figures of authority. In some cases it is the media or the public that are powerful agents in the workings of a project.

Being sensitive to power and being able to work with different power structures is one of the most remarkable attributes of the sustainability planners. None exhibit partisan bias and all are capable of communicating with audiences from across the political spectrum. One planner said that she occasionally observes herself through the eyes of a younger person who thinks she has sold out because she is forging relationships with large institutions. She said she used to think that way too, but now realizes that the only way to move forward is to be able to bring together different groups and different types of people.

There is varied evidence of the empowerment of others through the work of the sustainability planners. In one case this is the explicit mandate of the organization and the planner is very effective. In another case the opposite seems to be true. Individual contributions seem to be lost in the larger vision of the organization. Individual empowerment does not occur and is not acknowledged as being important. The full potential of the individuals and, by extension, the organization is therefore not realized. This is an example of where new knowledge and skills would help the organization but would require an investment in an area that is not seen as directly contributing to output.

Healing and confronting pain is also quite varied depending on the organization and the individual Sustainability Planner. In one case a weekly meeting was devoted entirely to addressing the wellbeing of a grieving colleague who was no longer at the organization. There was a clear desire to confront the pain and work towards healing it. In another case, after a tumultuous year and a half of a bad working relationship the planner informed the affected staff member that her contract would be terminated and was greatly offended to hear that the staff person had been looking for other work. In this case the sustainability planner's own pain was at the forefront and none of the pain of the outgoing staff member was acknowledged.

On the whole there seems to be a tradeoff between focusing on technical innovation and dedication to the details of a vision on the one hand, and building and maintaining a healthy, thriving and empowered office culture. Those who pay more attention to the former tend to forego the latter. It is not clear, however that those who focus on a healthy working environment forego the capacity to be visionary or technically innovative. In many cases it is specifically the strong team environment that spurs creative input and innovation from the individuals in the team and of the team as a whole acting in unison.

A major finding that very much supports the literature on sustainability, as well as that on communicative planning, is the interdisciplinary and inter-agency nature of communication. Willingness to work with people from every side, people you would not align yourself with politically, is instrumental in making progress on sustainability projects and initiatives. Adversarial politics give way to the realization that no one group or party can yield enough power to be the sole agent of, or barrier to, change. The result is a work ethic of partnership, alliances and mutual benefits. This is not a recurrence of back-room dealing and negotiations behind closed doors. Rather it is the forging of interpersonal relationships in ways that appreciate common humanity and mutual concern for the well-being of society.

Another outcome of this research indicates that many planning offices operate with an organizational structure that is similar to firms and corporations without benefiting from

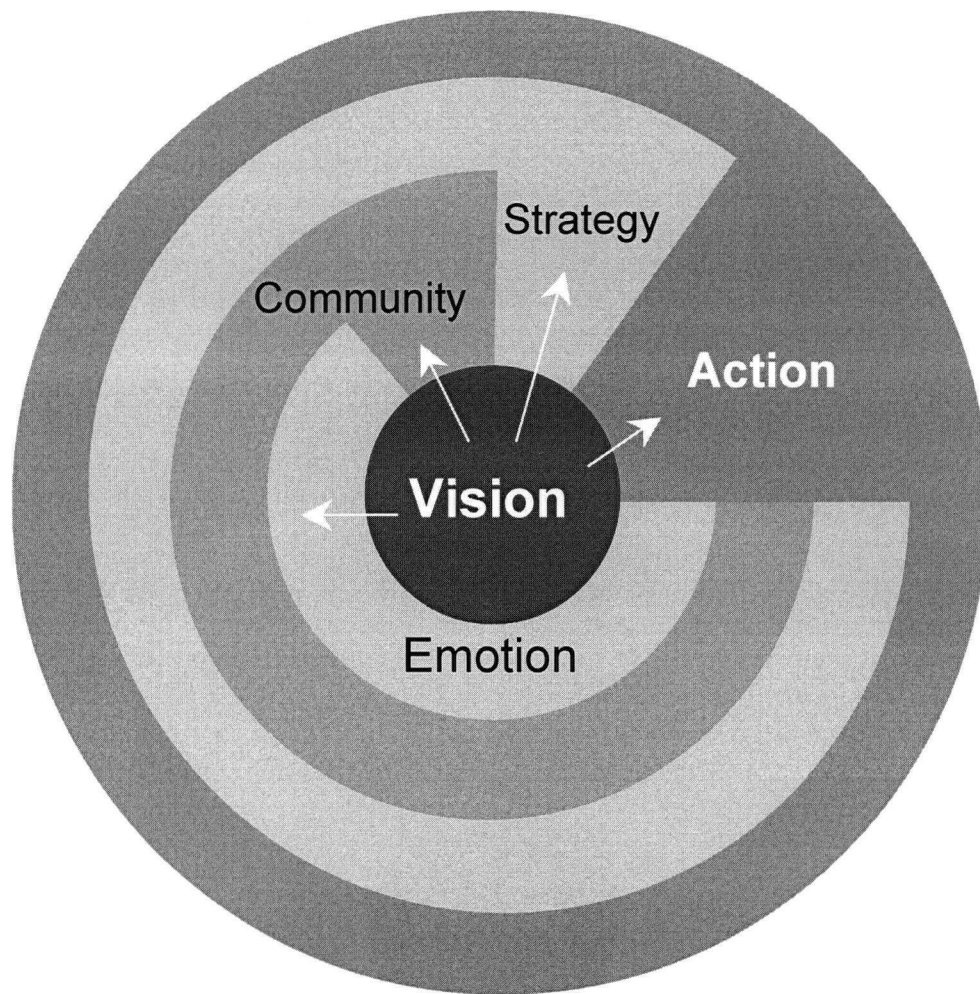
the managerial resources that such a structure affords them. The similarities, differences and overlaps between planning organizations and market-based enterprises is understudied and certainly under-taught. The details of planning actions and interactions that facilitate greater opportunities for communication are largely understudied. The remainder of this work will help fill this gap. We know little about how to cross boundaries of experience, culture and socio-economy in the context of collective visioning. I will explore in greater detail the procedural content of communication, particularly the emotional content, and how it is managed in communicative planning.

This research departed with the assumption, derived from the literature, that Empathic Leadership is a desirable leadership model for planners. I went about testing how it occurs, the extent to which it occurs, and what components of it are used for what purposes. The prevalence of Empathic Leadership in planning work demonstrates the capacity of planners to take leadership roles in addressing all their communicative needs and in relating to people from different perspectives and different points of view. Sustainability Planners employ a number of different communication strategies to build a culture of sustainability depending on the scale, frequency and duration of the interaction.

By developing and employing an Empathic Leadership framework this research demonstrates that planning work involves emotional and relational content. The personal and developmental realms of self-reflection, self-awareness and healing are quite significant in mediation and leadership literature and are only just starting to be recognized in planning. In this chapter I explored these areas and expanded upon their employment and significance to planning work. New methods and manners of conducting planning that acknowledge the planner's own self and the way in which she relates to others to advance a vision has major implications for communicative planning theory, as well as prescriptions for planning practice and the requisite imperatives for planning education.

While Empathic Leadership represents the range and scope of attributes that are important for effective communicative planning, it does not outline the conceptual progression of sustainability planning. Empathic Leadership represents a set of descriptive and prescriptive actions derived from communicative planning, mediation, negotiation and leadership literatures. I combined these actions into a logical sequence beginning with the individual and traversing outward to include others. While the organization, the specific heading and the definitions are my own, the content represents knowledge from the literature. I was therefore able to begin my field research with the assumption that Empathic Leadership exists to varying degrees in any planning work occurring in contexts of diversity. My research question was to uncover the manner in which Empathic Leadership occurs. How, and to what extent, do planners exercise Empathic Leadership to advance sustainability?

Figure 1 – Pentad of How Planners Exercise Empathic Leadership to Advance Sustainability



I found the answer to this question in five layers of activity. The more I explored the relationship between the various types of work that the Sustainability Planners engaged in, the clearer the pattern that emerged. I discovered a pentad of activity that is somewhat linear in its initial progression but highly iterative in its ongoing actualization. Figure 1 illustrates the five elements of the pentad and shows how each is connected to the others and that the vision is both centrally significant and continuously feeding into each of the other areas. The process begins at the heart of the diagram in the centre circle and moves out. Vision and emotion are foundational and highly intertwined. Emotion is a strong partner in driving the vision. Community is the mechanism by which the vision is expanded to include an ever-increasing number of supporters and strategy is the deliberate mapping of means for achieving specific ends. Action occurs throughout but also takes on the form of engaging society to advance the vision. Even though the pentad is a research finding I introduce it here as an important conceptual model and a central structure for organizing my analysis and results. Each of the following chapters elaborates, demonstrates and analyzes this basic pentad as the manner in which Empathic Leadership is used to advance sustainability planning.

### 3 - VISION

*When I graduated from architecture school I went through a period of intellectual lethargy and emotional destitution. Then I came upon Jeremy Rifkin's *Entropy* (Rifkin 1989). The loss of innocence that had characterized my maturation into international citizenship was finally articulated by Rifkin as a critique of all things exploitative about the world. The impotence that I felt as a young adult with no hope of affecting a world seemingly indifferent to its own suffering became justified. What I felt was no longer a vague instinct of pervasive malaise. It was a rationally constructed argument against the irrationality of blind consumption. It was a protest against the myopia of consuming ourselves out of the ecosystems that sustain our life support systems. It was as though we were digesting our own digestive system and in so doing had become giddy and oblivious to the inevitability of our demise. If this sounds bleak then it accurately captures what I, and many of my peers, felt in the early nineties. We were educated, privileged and largely pessimistic. Our only hope was that we would somehow weather the coming catastrophes with only superficial scathing.*

*So it was with quiet desperation that I discovered a worthy cause into which I could pour my youthful vigor. Those were the beginnings of a modest vision that eventually brought me to this research. As an architect I could apply an environmental and social consciousness to every young architect's typical desire to create memorable spaces. After two years of architectural practice, and another two in graduate architecture school, I grew impatient with the rather restricted capacity of architecture alone to affect change. At best it allowed for incremental and spotty intervention. I was drawn to the broader scope and larger scale of urban planning. Beginning with environmental planning and ecological considerations of physical infrastructure I once again expanded my attention to include the human dimensions of decision making for societal change. This research is a culmination of that interest and constitutes my vision as a teacher and scholar for advancing knowledge in areas that may help us face the uncertainties and complexities of globalization and global change.*

*As with any premeditated life endeavour, I have embarked on this journey of doctoral research to attempt to reconcile my desire for personal fulfillment with my need to make a meaningful contribution to society. My ambitions are deep in both regards: I seek to contribute meaningfully while attaining profound satisfaction. I returned to graduate school after a short career in architecture looking for a stronger connection to the social and environmental problems that I saw to be pervasive. Rather than simply cater to the tastes of the affluent through architectural creations, I sought to understand the dynamics behind some of our social injustices and to find ways of applying myself against them.*

*Planning as a theoretical and professional discipline provides a framework for viewing and understanding the functioning of society's social and physical systems. It enables us to take a historical perspective on how cities and communities came to be; to employ analytical tools to understand the relationships between the different influences on these outcomes; and to ultimately recommend a strategy for affecting change towards more desirable conditions. It uses a broad perspective on society and the many biophysical and social relationships that contribute to its functioning. For me, planning's greatest attribute is its capacity for multi-disciplinary thinking with a simultaneity of depth and breadth. It must, for example, be concerned with the minutiae of water born pathogens while also attempting multi-sectoral multi-national agreements on large dam projects. It promotes democratic and participatory visioning of cities, while embroiled in the contentious details of a particular rezoning application.*

*Sustainability promises a similar integrative framework that connects all the facets of modern life into a web of influence and causation. It is as unattainable conceptually and practically as it is ambitious, yet it is inclusive. The antithesis of reductionism, sustainability makes relationships, connections and holism central to its definition. It is critical yet constructive, cautionary yet hopeful. A sustainable condition must be a just condition. It must be devoid of oppression and exploitation and must emancipate those who have been oppressed or exploited. It must treat as precious the bounty of nature that sustains life and society. It must empower individuals to live free and fulfilled lives. As idealistic as it sounds, it is not naïve.*

*Proponents and advocates of sustainability can barely articulate the dream let alone realize it. The sustainability ideal is vague and the goal elusive, but the driving ethic is consistently revolves around the desire to enable people to live healthy, free and peaceful lives and to do so for everyone for generations to come. Implied in this ethic is the judgment that present conditions are unhealthy and lacking. Experts vary widely on the degree of malaise, the priorities for intervention, and the nature of the desired end state. The perceived weakness of sustainability as being excessively ambitious and multi-faceted and therefore complex to the point of inefficacy is precisely what draws me to it. The term "sustainable" may be trendy and frequently hijacked for ulterior gain in all manner of enterprise, but for me it stands for the simple idea of considering social, ecological and economic factors while attempting to improve social, ecological and economic conditions.*

*If I am drawn to planning for its insights on the functioning of society, and to sustainability for its ambition for social and environmental justice, then I am drawn to leadership for its capacity to affect and inspire transformation. Whether it is through the powerful grip of bold and resonating ideas, or the infectious presence of a leader in action, leadership marks the path for others to follow. So here I am, seeking to understand the work of sustainability planning leaders. I offer my own thinking and aspirations as a component of this work not only as a way of demonstrating its relevance to my interests but, more importantly, because I am very much a part of the research. The contents of my inquiry, as well as the methods I employ, require my own story to be present and explicit throughout the research.*

### **The Significance of Vision**

Every planner, no matter how progressively indifferent to advancing her own personal agenda, must have a vision. Whether it is a vision of a particular cityscape, or a vision of an inclusive and fair process of decision-making, the presence of a goal towards which a planner works is integral to the definition of planning. If action is to be taken, then there must be a choice of direction towards which this action must lead. That direction is what I term vision. The degree to which this direction is well articulated and the degree to which it is able to capture the imaginations and aspirations of a variety of people, is the degree to which it is a powerful and influential vision. "Vision," countless authors have stated, "is the foundation of leadership." So what is the vision of sustainability planners? This chapter explores the notion of vision from two general perspectives. The first is a rendition of the goals and objectives of sustainability planners as defined through their own work and their own words. The second is a distillation of more theoretical visions as presented through definitions of sustainability in a range of literatures.

The clearest result from the Staff and Colleagues Survey was the indication that having a strong vision is one of the most important attributes of sustainability planning. Eighty four percent of respondents ranked having a strong vision as one of the top five attributes and ninety four percent of respondents ranked it as important (appendices C-3 and C-5). The attribute also scored the highest mean score by far with 3.5 points compared to the second place attribute of "good communication skills" having a mean of 2.1 (Appendix C-4). So the strongest message from the respondents about what matters in this line of work is "vision". The framework for Empathic Leadership likewise directs us towards an emphasis on vision and its significance as a necessary ingredient for affecting change.

### Personal Evolution and Vision

The following words by the Sustainability Planners who participated in this research offer a glimpse of why sustainability planners do what they do. The statements also constitute an articulation of a personal vision, which is central to the personal realm of Empathic Leadership.

#### Susan

*Poverty, and environmental stuff is pretty key. I live in the downtown eastside. I live on the 800 block of East Pender and it's kind of my world. I've lived in rural Saskatchewan, super poor. We were a really, really poor family, so it's always been the community that I want to work in, the poverty community and definitely having an environmental connection. I actually think that low-income people are the greatest environmental citizens. Every day when I take my recycleables out to my alley somebody is standing there waiting to take stuff out of it and it's not a middle class person. It's somebody who's from the neighbourhood and we have a little talk and that guy is a great environmental citizen. I think that's really, really true. To me a lot of the leadership of how to live in the world and how to make the world better comes from communities that are low income... Somebody's pushing the cart down the alley and collecting every scrap of useable stuff. What's his ecological footprint? Very small, he can teach me stuff about how to live on the planet. (Kurbis 2003a)*

#### Patrick

*I've always been interested in this stuff. I worked in neighbourhood action when I was a younger man in the late seventies and early eighties, in neighbourhood groups. So I've always approached my work in landscape architecture from the neighbourhood activist side. This is going back a ways but I'm an old hippie and was politically radicalized. [I'm] an American and was politically radicalized in the 60s during Lyndon Johnson's administration, and the Vietnam war, and the Nixon administration, which was quite horrific in my view. A lot of people my age, from white middle-class backgrounds, became radicalized and became activists. It was at that point and it was those imperatives that got me going. But the more recent manifestation of that occurred a little bit accidentally by me accepting the challenge of becoming this James Taylor Chair in Landscape and Liveable Environments. Then, thinking about what was the way that you could begin to impact the fundamental question of the role of site and community design in regional sustainability [became my mission]. (Condon 2004a)*

#### Cheeying

*I've never really worked in the social justice field except for volunteer work and that is not my passion. I think part of the reason I do this stuff is because it's a really good tie for what interests me intellectually to what interests me emotionally. The whole policy stuff around land use intellectually*



*interests me. For example, I wouldn't work for the Tenants Rights Action Coalition... because [I'm drawn] to the broader issues. That was a big part of moving from BEST (Better Environmentally Sound Transportation) to Smart Growth... [where I am] working on transportation issues and realizing how transportation and land use and access and equity tie into every day life (Ho 2003a).*

Cheeying worked as a teacher in Botswana and Ottawa for nine years before returning to Vancouver where she started working in environmental education at SPEC<sup>13</sup> and then at BEST where she became Executive Director in 1997 (Ho 2003b). *The whole thing about consumption really freaks me out and social equity is really important to me: some sort of central access and equity and using what we have more efficiently, using our land more efficiently (Ho 2003a).*

*When I was at SPEC I was asked for this position at BEST and first I thought OK I'm not really interested in working for an organization that is focused on bicycles. I cycle everywhere but I'm not a bicycle activist. Also I thought the pay was really pathetic, so I wasn't prepared to do that. But after being pursued a bit and thinking about it, and the project they wanted to hire me for was to run an alternative transportation campaign. They were opening up an office under SkyTrain station at VanCity at Main and Terminal, and I thought well OK this is an interesting challenge, and I eventually applied for the position and got it (Ho 2003b).*

### Daryl

*I'm sometimes happier around woods than I am in the city. I like being out in nature. It sounds trite, but I do. This cabin we have is right on the lake and that's where I go to regenerate. That's my refuge... My mother was a social worker, and I was brought up in that culture, with the values of helping other people. [I grew up] being cognizant of other people who don't have the same innate luckiness as we do, and I knew that very, very concretely. We would have people knocking on our door at midnight for Mum's work and stuff like that. She'd come home just wiped out and I'd say what's wrong Mum, and she would say I was just at a family where the father had the knife out and the kids were in the room... (Fields 2003b).*

*I had exposure [to sustainability] with the BC Round Table for the Environment and the Economy so I sort of knew about the three legs (economy, environment, equity) and balancing them. But I think it's through actually being in a corporation that does something where you start seeing the practicalities and the realities of it. I think I also went through a phase where I did negotiations and sort of said, well is that sustainability, and it didn't suffice to me as being sustainability. Similarly, when I came here, because I'm an economist everybody said tell us the value of fish. That didn't suffice for me as sustainability either. So I guess it has evolved from that perspective in terms of how we make decisions. One, it's how we make decisions and... it's understanding in a practical sense what it means: those two things together... For me sustainability is not an end place. It's not something you describe as having so many tons of greenhouse gas emissions. It's not an end state, it's a process. So the vision for me is to make better informed and more balanced decisions about how we live on this earth. Those words, better informed and balanced, have a whole bunch of layers of meaning to them. (Fields 2003b).*

### Johnny

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<sup>13</sup> Society Promoting Environmental Conservation

*I have a background in urban planning which overlaps heavily with sustainability. When I was in charge of Richmond our Planning Department did make contact with Bill Rees back in the early days of the development of his Ecological Footprint. We did some joint work with him to see whether it was practical and applicable in a local sense. So, I became familiar with the concept at that time and I remember saying to my staff, "either this is the most important thing or it really is on one side. But if we're really at species risk or something close to that, then my Lord, we should all be taking this as first priority." It was difficult at the time, both in terms of the development of general thinking and in terms of the specific political context that I was working in, to find a very good expression for [the sustainability perspective]. It was just one of those things that was one of a number of things I was interested in but not centre stage (Carline 2003a).*

*I was aware that the Liveable Region Strategic Plan (LRSP) was coming up for review, and the people who work on the LRSP are very devoted to it and believe a lot in it. But I was aware that 2 or 3 things [required our attention]. Number one, the Translink 75 dollar [vehicle] levy debate reflected that the community at large, if it ever had grasped the LRSP, had lost it. The vision wasn't there. It wasn't motivating the way people responded to a specific issue. Secondly, we had a lot of divisions within our communities; urban, suburban, environmental, business. Those kind of right-left divisions came out really strongly in that \$75 debate. Thirdly, the people who did know about the LRSP, other than the professional planners themselves, were a little bit bored with it (Carline 2003a).*

*If you really want a sustainable region you have to step away from starting from the point of what is your jurisdiction and look to what it is that makes a sustainable region because a lot of these things intersect. One of the fundamental notions of sustainability in my view is integration. Constantly keeping economic, environmental and social issues integrating so you don't come up with a wonderful economic plan, if that is your forte, and that just screws socially or environmentally where we're going. Nor should someone take only one of the dimensions and say we don't have the responsibility for everything (Carline 2003a).*

### **Sebastian**

*I was initially comfortable being an engineer because it didn't require any political discussions with anybody, or any compromises of any sort. I wasn't prepared at that time to make those changes or to live with contradictions in my life. I really had to be a purist, so if you are really technical you don't have to deal with the messy realities of a lot of things that we've been talking about. So for years I was hiding, but I never felt right, I was there with only one foot. I was really, really... oh what's the word? I was not fully engaged. I was underutilized (Moffatt 2002).*

*I took a course with Bill Rees and I started to read about ecological economics and I started to look at the whole environmental issue from an engineering perspective. I looked at thermodynamics, the laws of thermodynamics, and I just thought, wow, that was it. I had found out where I belonged. All of a sudden the passion and the work came right together and I felt like I could really do something here and that's the point I'm making. Part of what makes everything work for me, to ride the ups and downs of the consulting business, and to put the extra hours and time into really wanting to do a good job, is that this is what I am here to do, it just feels right (Moffatt 2002).*

*One of [my] four ambitions is to help cities in the world manage the transition to sustainability and people in business know that. It's a bit of a joke, I'm Sebastian and I'm going to help cities around the world become sustainable. But it is my ambition and that is what I'm working on and it's interesting*

*how I had this ambition before this project<sup>14</sup> and before a lot of other things happened and it's interesting how things are progressing now. I'm just laughing but in a funny way I'm getting closer. So I think ambitions are so key and people hold off for the stupidest reasons just like me, for years and years. So I had an ambition and then you can start to figure it out and take advantage of all the opportunities that come your way (Moffatt 2003).*

Another ambition "is to start to mentor people, to start to teach and write, and that is in fact why I'm doing a PhD right now. It's because my ambition is to be a teacher and writer... and another ambition is to create something very special on earth here and I'm doing that through my farm right now. But it doesn't have to be through my farm, it could be through other ways, but I'm doing all this permaculture and I planted all these four thousand trees and seven ponds and all these hedgerows and brought in all these animals. I'm turning that place into an incredible centre of biodiversity and it's my art, ... And the fourth ambition in my life is to become a patriarch, an elder, who is respected and loved and is the centre of a lot of people's lives (Moffatt 2003). I think that people everywhere are largely wired to want to serve others, and the way we serve others is by listening to them and they'll tell you what talents you have and listening closely and asking a lot. That will define what you'll do with your life and your career and you'll be hugely satisfied if you'll find effective ways to serve people (Moffatt 2002).

### Epistemology

I found the planners' visions to be rooted in an ideology that is critical of status-quo priorities and values. Visions are not mere alterations of systems of operation but a fundamental shift in worldview and priority setting. Skepticism about the capacity of scientific knowledge to generate truth is as evident in practice as it is amongst the planning theorists and philosophers discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Even those planners working in an environment steeped in quantitative analysis find themselves doubting the accuracy and predictive capacity of the scientific tools they work with. Bruce described to me how he had come to view some of the mathematical models that he found to be commonly used for decision making; *look there are some real problems with this program we're using and if they haven't been to university for five or ten years they don't understand the point you're trying to make... so it almost made it more frustrating because I didn't have any where near as much confidence in the tools we were using but really couldn't convey that to my colleagues... You certainly don't want to take everything as gospel when you're working with some of those econometric tools and this has definitely helped me in working with John [Robinson]<sup>15</sup> on the climate change piece. I understand the pitfalls of modeling and structural changes (Sampson 2003). The lack of confidence that Bruce is describing is not merely a problem of a particular framework of analysis. It is part of a generation's growing doubts about the capacity of scientific modeling to mimic or represent real world systems. The crisis of confidence is not in the tool but in the idea that tools can be relied upon to give us accurate enough representations of reality for us to use them as a principle method in decision-making.*

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<sup>14</sup> Sebastian is referring here to the CitiesPlus International Sustainable Cities Design Competition.

<sup>15</sup> John Robinson is a Professor at UBC who for many years was director of the Sustainable Development Research Institute and works with scenario models that communicate sustainability decisions. He is also promoting a sustainable design research building that would function as an adaptive laboratory of green design.

Bruce has therefore developed a preference for the scenario approach, which generates a whole series of possible outcomes rather than a single prediction. *It helps give you a healthy skepticism about modeling and forecasting so the scenario approach, where you're saying given these drivers the world can evolve in a number of different ways and not getting too precise about how it may have evolved and [instead you] watch signposts. I think that background, [my skepticism about models], helped me get a lot more comfortable with that scenario approach and the validity of that approach even in when you're looking in the electricity sector there's a whole range of drivers that can affect our business including environmental, sustainability and climate change issues (Sampson 2003).* The fundamental difference in the scenario approach is not in the tools themselves, although scenario models do tend to be inclusive of a wider range of variables, but rather in the planner's humility regarding the certainty of their knowledge. This marks an epistemological shift from the days when a numerical output was akin to absolute truth for policy makers.

For other planners the epistemological shift is more radical in its critique of how our world functions. Patrick describes his work as a facilitator of design charrettes as a direct response to a failing system of decision making stemming from a reductionist worldview. *I would describe the charrette process as a necessary response to the complexities of our current planning challenges, particularly when you relate it to sustainability issues. Because the diagnosis is that the city is a mess, dysfunctional if you will, precisely because issues have been considered one at a time in separation from other issues. If you have a transportation problem, you narrow it down to a transportation problem. You have a housing problem and you narrow it down and you only look at housing. So that leads people to do wrong things, like build freeways, which is, in my view, generally a wrong thing. To build housing projects for the poor is generally a wrong thing, but it comes out of thinking about things in narrow ways. Is this a housing problem or a transportation problem? The consequence of that disintegrated thinking, which is really what it is, disintegrated thinking leads to a disintegrated landscape where the individual pieces might function well but the whole composition is disintegrated and dysfunctional (Condon 2004a).*

*This comes from trying to apply a methodology, which worked fairly well getting people to the moon and solving a whole host of technological problems, which [uses] a paradigm of the world, or an epistemology which [views] the world [as though it is] Newton's watch, [as though it is] a mechanical entity. Thinking of the world that way, the scientific model, is a good way to get you to the moon or to solve technical problems but a bad way of dealing with highly complex systems like the city or like an ecology...so we have identified the need for an ecological model, a model of making decisions that is rooted in a paradigm other than a Newtonian one. The model is an ecological one, an ecological systems one, a sustainability one (Condon 2004a).*

Sebastian likewise sees the problems stemming from a destructive epistemology. *I believe in the whole idea of mental models, they match the paradigm that you carry and move around in, including what life is all about, fundamental values. Those things of course cut across all of these things. You could have a sphere called spirituality or epistemology, or eskatology<sup>16</sup>, or epistemology and man's relationship with God. If you get me talking about metaphysics I go to the Hindu scriptures, which talk really well to me. I love that stuff. The idea of consciousness and how it works as understood by two thousand years of thinking about it.... This is that, and that is this, and that is all there is. If this is that and that is this, what does that say about sustainability? It is all the*

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<sup>16</sup> Eskatology is the study of theories and predictions about the end of the world.

*waking world, the dialectic. It is an experience of ego. The ego is there to keep your body from being eaten and to make sure it has something to eat to keep your genes around and procreate (Moffatt 2002). Sebastian goes on to explain how he finds Western definitions of sustainability wanting. The whole way in which those other explanations for sustainability work is rooted in the concept of reality and the individual which is completely deficient, unquestionably deficient. So how can those explanations be enough? Well they can't be of course, and I would argue that a lot of what we're doing is around personal growth and it is about a metaphysical issue here (Moffatt 2002).*

The dualistic separation of realms of reality brought on by the age of enlightenment is the mental model that Sebastian finds problematic. Separating the mind from the body and the spirit from the intellect, and emotion from reason has left us disconnected from important and necessary sources of knowledge and meaning.<sup>17</sup> Epistemological reflection is one form of self-reflection that relates personal vision to the philosophical probing of meaning and ontology. My discussions with planners revealed that this form of reflection does not affect their planning work in a direct way but serves to inform career decisions, life and work missions and is also a grounding influence in difficult times. In day-to-day work they do not appear to draw from the wisdom that they clearly embody during moments of self-reflection. They are, at any moment, subject to the same societal biases of materialism and reductionism to which they may have material objections. Many other examples of self-reflection as it relates to issues of emotion, community and strategy will become evident through the sustainability planning work presented in the coming chapters.

### Organizational Vision

Epistemological positions and personal visions are only the beginning of a process of imagining different organizational, institutional and social systems. The change begins with finding, refining and articulating a personal vision and then goes on to include an organizational vision. Creating a common purpose that unites members of an organization and has them working in a particular direction is the next step. The stories of planners altering direction and developing an organizational vision are the beginnings of the relational realm of Empathic Leadership. *When I first started working at EYA<sup>18</sup> we worked with private schools exclusively, and we ran environmental conferences and did a lot of wilderness stuff. We took kids into threatened areas to try and get them protected. We would take high school kids and we'd run trips into the Carmana [Valley] with the hopes that they would go back with slide shows, educate people and then it would be a lobbying tool. We were a wing of the Western Canada Wilderness Committee... We moved out of that world, because they already had so many opportunities, and our first crossover to do more poverty and social development work was with the [Strathcona Community] Gardens... I went to this meeting with all these high school students and we sat down with Mugs and Ellie<sup>19</sup> and said 'hey can we get involved with the garden,' and they said,*

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<sup>17</sup> Sebastian also discussed some of the personal changes that are necessary to affect broader change. *Some of my best friends are Buddhists and the dharma problem is one that they subscribe to totally so they don't see any point in trying to change things at a political or systemic level. It's the individual that's working through their own pain and problems and unless you work with them and become an alchemist, turn all our shit into gold, by how you relate to them, nothing happens it's all just everybody going around replicating the problems at a larger and larger scale. Just kind of like critical theory problems, you can't get out of a knot? You're just projecting and projecting and projecting. So the same problems manifest over and over again, because nobody is going through any actual fundamental personal change (Moffatt 2002).*

<sup>18</sup> Environmental Youth Alliance

<sup>19</sup> Community leaders and Board Members of the Strathcona Community Gardens Society

*'yeah why don't you start a youth garden over there.'* Everything spun out of that, because then we started to get into poverty work a lot more (Kurbis 2003a). This marked a shift from being an almost exclusively environmental action organization to one that integrates socio-economic and environmental issues, which as we will later see, is much closer to the integrated approach of sustainability planning theory.

Daryl has a similar approach to integrating environmental issues with social issues. *There are a number of environmental and social issues related to what we call the generation assets of BC Hydro. All of the dams, the power houses, related to actually taking water or taking natural gas and making electricity from them: not the transmission lines, not the distribution lines, but the actual generation facilities [involve environmental and social issues]. So my responsibility is around sustainability with a particular focus on environmental and social responsibility related to generation* (Fields 2003a). Daryl's role in the larger context of BC Hydro seems to be small relative to some of the other activities of the organization but her work became increasingly influential at BC Hydro. Through my interviews with senior management I learned that they consider her work to be exemplary of the kinds of sustainability initiatives they would like to showcase.

*Generation has tried a number of different ways of structuring around environmental and social responsibility. The idea of bringing sustainability together as a key business unit had gotten somewhat fragmented and there was a need for a group to bring together a tighter vision around what we're doing. So I think that's partly why it was formed. The other reason was to give it more profile at the senior management level, so we have what's called a Generation Management Committee and previously there was no one at that committee who was fully and wholly responsible for environmental and social responsibility. They wanted to raise that profile up so I'm now that person* (Fields 2003a).

For Johnny, the GVRD was in a unique position to not only affect, but to generate, a regional vision for sustainability both through the GVRD's reach as a regional planner, and through its various interactions with the community of regional decision makers. *Ultimately, success comes when you have what [Jeb Brugman]<sup>20</sup> called an urban regime where we have essentially the whole community, but certainly the whole decision making community, aligned around a future vision, which has to be a sustainable vision rooted in the values and aspirations of your particular community. It's not just sustainability anywhere. This is sustainability in Vancouver* (Carline 2003a).

At BC Hydro the organizational emphasis on sustainability seemed like a natural extension of the corporate mission. *You could see that given the issues globally that the world is facing, increased sustainability seemed obvious and then, when I sat back and looked at the fit, the natural fit for hydro of that vision just seemed like a no-brainer. I then spent more time researching and thinking about it and doing background reading and became convinced... Our vision is to become North America's leading energy company. Our vision is to get people to use less energy. The business case is that since we have low cost hydroelectric power, we actually sell our power at about half price. At the extreme, if half of our customers use half of their energy, or all of our customers use half of their energy our customers would win because their energy bill would be lower and the environment would win because of the reduced impact from bringing on new resources, and we'd win*

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<sup>20</sup> A sustainable cities expert who was brought in to advise the GVRD on urban sustainability.

*because we can make twice as much money selling power in the market. So the PowerSmart<sup>21</sup> piece is kind of a no-brainer in my view and that is top of the peak in terms of our resource options. We'll always be pushing to do as much PowerSmart up to the marginal cost of energy so that's kind of the big picture, and there's a triple bottom line (economic, environmental and social accounting), with each of these themes (Sampson 2003a).*

*The second [piece] is Resource Smart, which is the eco-efficiency concept. How do we get the most energy out of our existing facilities with the same environmental footprint? Again there's a triple bottom line component there. We repowered an old facility and almost doubled its output with the same environmental footprint. We had heavy stakeholder engagement to build support for that and [now] there are jobs in the community. The third piece is when you push the envelope on conservation and you push the envelope on Resource Smart then you have to bring on new energy. We now have a 50% target for clean energy and we started out a few years ago and said OK if we're going to be a leading sustainable energy company we better be doing something about renewable energy (Sampson 2003a). Mike Costello, who was President of BC Hydro for much of the time during which Bruce's team successfully integrated sustainability to the overall mission of BC Hydro distills it to a simple corporate value, "you know you have a good product in sustainability" (Costello 2003).*

*Cheeying's work at Smart Growth BC had sustainability as a focus from the outset. Although she shies away from the term, she describes her organizational vision in terms that are identical to those used by urban designers concerned with sustainability: our mission is to replace sprawl with more compact complete communities. Our Smart Growth stuff tends to be more environmental but we are not an environmental organization. We really try to be clear about that and a lot of the message is: if we develop more compact communities and use land more efficiently we're preserving this beautiful province that we call home. So it tends to be environmental. The social arguments we have tend to be around actual supportable housing, but we haven't done a lot of that yet (Ho 2003a).*

*Cheeying draws a distinction between what she does and what she understands sustainability to involve. Smart Growth seems to be a strategy and a process, whereas sustainability seems more like an end goal. It's hard to define sustainability because people use it so loosely, and that's why we use Smart Growth more than sustainable communities (Ho 2003a). The emphasis of the organization, however, reveals a common bias in much of sustainability planning as it is practiced. The overriding focus is consistently on environmental values with less attention paid to economic and social ones. As discussions later in this chapter reveal, it is the emphasis on environmental issues that distinguishes Smart Growth from sustainability theory. Johnny admits to the same bias at the GVRD. While I think of the traditional three legs of the stool you probably find more environmental work in our organization than anything else (Carline 2003a).*

*Daryl describes her evolving role at BC Hydro not only as deliberately inclusive of different sustainability issues, but also directly integrating the relational components of Empathic Leadership. I've been there since the very conception of water-use planning<sup>22</sup> and was maintaining*

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<sup>21</sup> This is a system of incentives that BC Hydro introduced to encourage its customers to reduce their energy consumption and thereby limiting overall demand.

<sup>22</sup> Water-use planning is a division at BC Hydro that uses multi-stakeholder forums to make consensus based decisions on the use of water resources including specific flow rates through dams.

*that policy and strategy of water-use planning as well as making decisions around what preferences BC Hydro had at each of the individual water use plans. So while water use planning captures a lot of environmental and social issues, it doesn't capture all of it. My job scope has significantly expanded [to include] insuring that people know what their objectives are, that we've got the right resources in place to get the work done, and to get the work done to meet our environmental and social responsibilities. And then, thirdly, [my role] is leadership in terms of motivating people, developing people, and insuring that people feel good about what they are doing and that their values are being upheld coming to work every day (Fields 2003a).*

Larry's approach to an organizational vision is more about processes of relational work akin to the directives of Empathic Leadership and less to do with sustainability specifically. We built something we called the cooperative planning model which is now acknowledged in planning circles around North America as an alternative way to undertake planning. Rather than build a lot of energy into confrontational approaches, we have tried to build energy into collaborative approaches. And so there is a lot more energy that goes into creativity and into positive analysis and positive building rather than into the fight. It was partly through our own experience, partly through our own inclination, just the way we are and the way we relate to the world, and partly because of circumstance. Vancouver, at the time that we basically took over the reigns of the city from our predecessors, was just starting a time of unprecedented change, at a scale that we had never seen before. Within several years, two hundred and fifty acres became available in one part, eighty acres in another part. Whole sub-communities were being re-planned we were reshaping the entire policy for the downtown. We were making very dramatic changes in a very pluralistic environment (Beasley 2004a).

Sebastian recounts a process that can be described as organizational self-reflection in which the organization's internal vision was related to its external societal vision. *We developed a mission statement for the business. We developed indicators. Everything we wanted our communities to do we did ourselves and that has value, and of course we're a values based business anyway. It's not about just making money here, so it's part of our corporate culture (Moffatt 2003).* The organizational vision is not necessarily a direct extension of the personal vision. Cheeying later describes how her own personal vision and her own choices for action are different to those of Smart Growth and here Sebastian describes how people at Sheltair do not necessarily share the same personal vision. *I know we don't [all share a common personal vision] because we've had a lot of talk about it. Some people are much more cynical about the world, and our ability to change it, than others. Maybe we aren't able to do anything, just replicate our own neuroses. We're not saints, and it's extremely complex and the causality is hard to figure out. So it's pretty hard to think that you can change the world, or that it needs changing, or that you have a right to do so... I think the ethics underlies the business more than the political and environmental values that you have. Really, fundamentally, the environmental movement is a highly ethical thing. It's about future generations, other species, things like that and about deeply living all that (Moffatt 2003).*

For Patrick the match between his personal vision and his organization's mission is exemplary. *There's a high degree of compatibility between what I'm doing right now and my values and my capacity as a person. I'm pretty fortunate in that respect. I think not too many people get that opportunity. [I] feel really well matched between what I want to do and what I felt capable of*

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Daryl's work in this division is revealed in the coming chapters. Chapter 6 on strategy includes her description of how she began this approach to decision making.



doing and how I'm strategically situated to do stuff. The university, UBC, is a totally dysfunctional university, but I thank them and kiss their feet because they provide me with this kind of opportunity (Condon 2004a).

Susan's description of EYA reveals that it seeks change through education in a very different way for a different demographic. *[We do] youth centered grass-roots action towards environmental recovery and environmental education. That involves everything, including meetings and a lot of it is a combination of [things]. We talk a lot here about this bridging concept of trying to bridge activities of the young people to what is possible through various government funding. Getting permission for the [Strathcona Community Gardens Eco-Pavilion],<sup>23</sup> where we had to get all these permits, brought these two [worlds] together. So we're kind of a bridge (Kurbis 2003a).*

*Our mission says linking social and environmental [issues] through grass roots projects so we do a lot of social stuff. We run, in particular, a lot of aboriginal programs, Red Wire being the biggest one. It's an urban native youth magazine and we do a lot of stuff with poverty work, and the Eco-Pavilion project was like that. Because we specifically hired a group of women who were disadvantaged in various ways: barriered. Multi-barriered is one of the terms we use (Kurbis 2003a).* EYA's work demonstrates a layered approach to sustainability that integrates environmental education with experiential learning aimed at empowering youth and breaking down barriers of class and privilege. The process also serves to provide employment for youth and potential access to further employment opportunities as a result of their expanded skill-set.

While the organizational visions for the different Sustainability Planners are quite different they share a common desire to address a range of social and environmental issues through their respective spheres of influence. The integration of environmental social and economic concerns varies considerably in practice but they all share a desire to have the issues be more integrated in their work and in broader society.

### Societal Vision

Extending out from the organizational vision is a vision of how society as a whole might function differently. In some cases this broader vision is being realized through the work of the organization and in other cases it is a longer-term goal that will require years, if not decades, to implement. In the case of BC Hydro, their focus is narrow enough in terms of energy related activity that they are already starting to see positive results across a range of environmental and socio-economic issues. *We're getting a great response back to our "green" calls (Requests For Proposals) and our customer-based generation calls. That fits in really well in terms of sustainability because those projects are usually outside the lower mainland area where you have the lowest unemployment rates [and the green projects are generating jobs]. So you have communities that have been struggling and you have clean projects, clean environmentally friendly projects that are zero emissions like small hydro projects that are being built in areas where you need the jobs and the spin-off benefits to sustain those communities. So for us here in BC there's a real fit (Sampson 2003).*

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<sup>23</sup> This project was the construction of an Eco-Pavilion, with ecological design features, by young women from a range of socio-economic backgrounds learning carpentry for the first time.

For others, like Smart Growth for example, the societal adoption of their vision is more difficult to measure and can only be implemented at a slower pace. When Cheeving described what underlies the broad implications of a widespread Smart Growth vision, she said, *I guess community really is it. How we define community and how community is shaped, the social capital side. How do we build community?... Even though, again, I'm not looking for community activism* (Ho 2003a). Here we see two things: a broadening of the narrower earlier definition of Smart Growth being predominantly concerned with environmental factors, and an internal struggle for Cheeving between her personal tendency for activism and her organization's mission and mandate. Later on, in Chapters 5 and 6, she speaks of the difference between her personal politics and those of the organization. My knowing about this internal conflict is indicative of the degree of self-reflection and self-awareness that Cheeving is clearly exercising and is also a testament to her willingness to share.

Patrick, through his own work in partnership with Smart Growth, paints an even more encompassing societal vision. *The Smart Growth on the Ground*<sup>24</sup> principles are; (i) each community complete, (ii) options to the car emphasized, (iii) work in harmony with natural systems, (iv) building and infrastructure are greener, (v) smarter cheaper, (vi) housing needs to meet the whole community, (vii) good jobs are close to home, (viii) spirit of each community is honoured, and (ix) everyone has a voice (Condon 2004b).

For Johnny, sustainability planning needs to provide a mechanism of nested localism in which different neighborhoods are better integrated into increasingly larger planning regions. *I worked in both Vancouver and Surrey and there is very little connection between what you plan and do in downtown Vancouver and what you plan and do in Marpole or remote areas like that. And in Surrey there are just absolutely different places. There is absolutely no identification whatsoever between someone in South Surrey and someone in the Guildford area, none. The fact that they have the same municipal name is totally coincidental. They don't work in the same place, they don't live in the same place, and they don't shop in the same place. There is hardly anything that ties them together other than the fact that they have this place called Surrey they live in. Johnny does not see sustainability requiring formal planning at every level. For him, a sustainability vision is strategic in selecting those areas and scales of intervention that require regional planning. A lot of genuine community activities, that might operate on the fringe or even outside of government occur in these neighbourhood or community scale activities and that works already* (Carline 2003a). At those scales and in those areas Johnny does not see a need for replicating activity at the larger regional scale.

Larry's vision of Vancouver's City Centre is an articulation of a physical manifestation of the sustainability principles of livability, diversity and density. *We have guidelines for family housing and 25% of all housing has to meet those guidelines. If you don't meet those guidelines we don't give you an approval. We have an unusual attitude about development here. Our attitude is if you don't measure up, we're not afraid to say no in this city. Many cities are so afraid to say no to any developer and so they get what they deserve, but for those other cities it may not matter. It may be more important to have a business interest in their city because business is their objective. Ours is quality of life and it has to do [with transportation]. Do we continue to dedicate more and more of the public realm to the automobile or not? We just simply say no more. We simply said that all the*

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<sup>24</sup> This project is a joint initiative between Smart Growth BC, the James Taylor Chair for Sustainable Communities and individual municipalities embarking on collective visioning and implementation of community plans.

*increase in movement demands that we have an alternative mode, so we're increasing our bicycle network. We're building more transit, aggressively building more transit in this region. We are putting emphasis on pedestrianization, putting in all kinds of measures to pedestrianize the city and bring a greenness to the streets. So those are some of the things and then landscaping. We require landscaping of a voluptuousness in this environment that other cities don't even think about, both the reforestation of the public realm through street trees and parks and on private property. Now we're pushing that right to the nth degree and saying well let's get more of our roofs [green], let's move forward on that (Beasley 2004b).*

Susan's vision naturally integrates the various sustainability issues by focusing on building the capacity for youth to be empowered and engaged in the decisions and processes of planning. Part of the goal is to build capacity within the youth community and to also build capacity in the community at large to accept young people coming in and making changes occur. To me it doesn't have to be EYA being the only organization doing it but to see it successful, and that would be even better. I don't like centralizing things. I don't think it's the best way to go. So one thing we've been working a lot on is trying to build capacity in other youth organizations to do this work and make it happen and that's part of our vision; to really spread it out and try and get capacity out there in the world and in youth organizations to do this type of work (Kurbis 2003a).

*There are obvious basic problems that we believe exist like poverty. This is a problem, especially in children; the voicelessness of children and youth and they are basically hidden away and not allowed to participate in the shaping of their world. That's a problem, and environmental destruction, that's a problem, and we'd like to see that change. I was one of the main people who brought us out of conservation, preservation activities and into community development. I kind of dragged us over here and said, "well let's do some work in the poverty community and let's be involved in children and youth who live in poverty who want to have environmental experiences, whatever those may be, and to help facilitate them to transform their environment so it's a better place to live" (Kurbis 2003a). Susan's vision is as inspiring as it is ambitious and strikes an elusive balance between social, environmental and economic sustainability.*

### **Vision of Conduct and Process**

While most proponents of sustainability would agree with Bruce's statement that "a lot of what sustainability is about, is stakeholder engagement and dialogue" (Sampson 2003a), the degree, method and manner by which dialogue and engagement should take place is unclear. The starting point of the typical public process from which sustainability planners have to work is astonishingly traditional in its conforming to the placation mold of public participation. The following conversation surprised me not for its content but for the matter of fact acceptance by Susan that pretence is the reality of how participatory planning is conducted. I asked Susan what had come of the City's process of deciding where to locate new artificial turf fields<sup>25</sup>. *The latest thing we heard, we have inside perspectives and then there's the official stuff that's going on, so we're kind of working both angles. I asked if she meant the*

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<sup>25</sup> EYA had been concerned that affluent West Side residents would never accept artificial turf fields and flood lights in their neighbourhood and that the ultimate location of the fields would undermine EYA's long term efforts of lobbying the city for a wildlife corridor running through East Vancouver starting at Trillium Park.

Parks Board. Yeah through the COPE<sup>26</sup> connections and just trying to give us information that is official and then there is overtly what's actually happening. So the story on the street now is, one [field] in East Van, one on the West Side. They are both in schools and they are not going to go to Trillium at this point (Kurbis 2003b).

"What about the process?" I asked. At the meeting that I had attended with Susan, the Parks Board had committed to convening a public process and dedicating 4 months and a few thousand dollars to it (Senbel in Kurbis 2003b).

"Isn't this the way all processes are," and then in response to my look of surprise, "honestly?"

"You make a decision and then you decorate it with a few public meetings, or what?"

Isn't that the way it is though? Our experience with the SkyTrain was like that, they had a public consultation process which was totally bogus, and they already knew at the end of the day what they wanted. So our experience, EYA's experience, with public consultation processes is [just like] that, I would say a hundred percent. There's an agenda, it's been decided in the back rooms already, you might be able to move a little bit but not lots. Southeast False Creek is another one. My God we were involved with that eight years ago. But at the end of the day there was a decision made at the Planning Department in the city, or the development or the real estate office, or wherever, that they were going to try and make as much money out of that site as they possibly could, and they would dress the edges with environmental features which are so minimum. That's more of a public relations campaign than an actual example of some sort of sustainable community (Kurbis 2003b).

[Public protest] is effective in the sense that [the process] is exposed for what it is. It's a farce of a public process. Protest usually gets in the news. So people acknowledge that that's true. At the end of the day, I do believe that most people are good, and those civil servants, and the PR companies and the landscape architects and all the people who are working there are embarrassed. They know we're not being unreasonable. Like Linda<sup>27</sup>, I ran into her. You run into them later on, and she was one of the main people from the city working on that SkyTrain expansion. I ran into her at another series of meetings just recently. So this was years ago, four or five years ago and she said to me "Susan, you remember me..." And we just had this really open conversation and she said yeah it was bogus and we knew it, and it was embarrassing and I just want you to know that we want to make changes. So [the process was] four years ago and it was still in her head. She knew that it was ridiculous (Kurbis 2003b).

Patrick echoed Susan's cynicism about the intent of public participation in planning decision making. I think most of the participatory planning methods are kind of a sham you know, where you go out and you don't really trust the people to really [participate]. You get the pros to put something out there and people go I hate it or it's OK, and the pros look at it again. People don't get a chance to do it, they just get a chance to react to something that the professionals have provided... Present and defend, dodge tomatoes... Yeah and you get to say that we've had a public meeting (Condon 2004b).

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<sup>26</sup> Coalition of Progressive Electors. This is a Municipal political party that is generally considered to be sympathetic to issues of environmental and social justice and who had been newly elected with a majority of seats in Vancouver's City Council at the time of our interview.

<sup>27</sup> Linda is a pseudonym for an employee at the City of Vancouver with whom Susan had had numerous disagreements about the SkyTrain Millennium Line decision process.

The manner in which EYA is open, inclusive and trusting is in stark contrast to the supposed openness of public participation and decision making. While the context is different and in EYA's case participation is more broadly defined, Susan's description illustrates some of the risks and opportunities that openness entails. *People often describe us as working on the edge of chaos all the time, because there's a lot going on. We don't have a huge grip on it. We kind of let things go and see what happens and how they form. We give you tons of power and opportunity to go out there and create things and you don't necessarily have to come through some system of approval to go out in the world and make things happen and that can really tweak people who are watching. [People say,] "OK you guys you are all over the map, what the hell are you doing?" And they'll come back and say, "you're chaos creators what the hell is going on here?" But on the flip side I think that is why EYA is successful as an organization. It's because freedom exists. People can really run with things and they could also fall on their face and create a big headache for us, and you know offend somebody, or do something that gets us in trouble like posting that stuff on the website and now our charity status is in jeopardy. Well whose fault is that? Well, you know, it's not anyone's fault? We have a pretty open website people can post stuff on it, you don't have to go through some big process to do it. So that kind of thing is awkward and can get us into trouble but I think its also one of the greatest things about this organization. It makes it tick, it makes it healthy and vibrant (Kurbis 2003a).*

It is the messiness of open participation that empowers youth and puts them in a position of trust and responsibility. There is a risk, of course, that mistakes will occur but without that risk the power to participate is stunted and the process becomes superficial. With uncensored participation individuals can truly become engaged, invested and contribute to a collectively derived planning outcome. Daryl believes that imagining innovative solutions and making better decisions evolves out of participatory decision making. *It's the combination of that real diversity of perspectives, and the diversity of types of information and types of learning, those two within a structured process really push innovation... I get so excited when we get a group of people together and they come up with solutions that they never thought about before and they are better solutions. We may not get more power generation, but they've had that conversation and said this is our collective responsibility and this is collectively what we're doing. That's exciting to me, and to me that's sustainability (Fields 2003b).*

For Larry, participatory decision making is a necessary way to draw on the range of expertise required to address the range of problems facing cities. *Our simple reality, our simple conclusion was that it's too complicated too complex [to plan without participation]. It involves too many interests to be able to be achieved through those confrontational approaches and in fact we looked around us to other cities and we realized where we saw failure we usually saw a style of operation that was confrontational. Larry then goes on to illustrate how planning occurs at the City of Vancouver. What we finally determine to do is the result of thousands of conversations. You don't just learn from the Allan Jacobs<sup>28</sup> you know. You learn from the lady on the corner who's been sitting in a second floor apartment looking down on that corner for ten years. She would tell you things that no one else can tell you. She would also give you some advice that no one would think you should listen to. So in terms of my world of shaping and trying to manifest the great city, that kind of interaction and learning is just as important as the great thinkers. Just as much*

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<sup>28</sup> A former Director of Planning for the City of San Francisco and Professor of Planning at UC Berkeley and author of a number of influential books including: *Great Streets*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995 and *Looking at Cities*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985

*responsibility gets vested and just as much wisdom is there, and so it's layers [of public involvement] (Beasley 2004a).*

*Every time we start taking on a project and work out the program, integral with that is what is a suitable way to work with this community? What makes sense in this issue because of these people and their needs? Often we start off by going out and saying to them what's a suitable way of working with you? We're just about to scope doing a new public realm plan for all the inner city, and we know we have four months of just going out and talking to people. How would you like to participate with us? Not saying there are three ways you can participate with us, buy in or you know... because in a pluralistic society people won't do it (Beasley 2004a).*

Susan talked about the ways different organizations including the City of Vancouver, attempt to integrate the voice of youth and for her this is often a selective and deceptive method of involvement. *Appointing youth on boards is common but it's not a model I really like. I don't think it's very fair. The Vancouver Foundation does the same thing, there's a youth council of the Vancouver Foundation and they just hand picked a bunch of people who are connected to the Vancouver Foundation. It needs to be young people from the community who decide who's their representative not who your friend's kid is. That's not youth representation, that's tokenism (Kurbis 2003a).*

The darker side of participatory decision making is often ignored. The tyranny of the majority and a collective blindness to injustice would not necessarily be alleviated through participatory decision making. Sebastian recognizes this limit to making tough and revolutionary decisions and connects it to issues of sustainability that are potentially unpopular. *I don't think that we would have gotten rid of slavery through personal growth, no. And you can apply that to all sorts of things. In fact my friends who don't recycle or who invest in the absolute worst bloody stocks and think it's all OK because its just a game, I do my best to try and change that, but if I could, I wouldn't let them do what they're doing. I wouldn't wait for them to personally grow out of it. Basically, they shouldn't be given that kind of freedom because they don't know how to deal with it. Yes, I am a little bit of an elitist that way. But I don't apologize for that (Moffatt 2002).*

There is clearly a range of perspectives on public involvement in decision making amongst the Sustainability Planners. There are also varying definitions of what constitutes participation, what is an appropriate degree of participation and how effective it is in affecting the necessary change. As we shall see later in this chapter, sustainability theorists are also divided about the merits and degree of participation necessary for achieving desired outcomes. There is a growing consensus, however, that without being involved in the creation of a vision and the decision to implement it, members of the public will not be invested enough in the vision to support its implementation.

### **Visualizing the Vision**

Despite his seeming lack of faith in the ability of the average citizen to make the right decisions regarding sustainability, Sebastian continues to be active and creative in attempting to educate individuals and organizations about the issues. He extends his interest in alternative worldviews as discussed earlier to construct three different ways of looking at sustainability through social, economic and ecological lenses. He uses different theories expounded by three writers as a way to communicate sustainability to diverse

audiences. He borrows from Murray Bookchin<sup>29</sup> to say... *the whole ecological problem is a social problem and that we abuse Mother Nature no differently than we abuse the poor or the old, or future generations, or people in the Third World or in the South. So exploitation, oppression, hierarchy and abuse are built into our social relationships, is it any surprise that other species in Mother Nature get in the way... It's all about redefining social relationships and how we relate to each other and how out of that will flow changes to ecology and without it it's just the same old oppression dressed up in a green coat. We will have technology that pretends to be green but in fact will be ultimately exploitative or oppressive because that's the nature of our relationship. It's how we view ourselves in relation to the Other. So then I, you know I quote and I get into that, and get a fairly convincing argument and that's the whole point is that I can speak that language. The majority of people in the sustainability movement actually have never heard it expressed so clearly as Murray Bookchin would do it, but they'll relate. Yeah its about family its not about technology or labour or riches or information or any of those things. It's about family relationships. People work hard because they have a healthy family and their parents expect them to. People who love or relate well or look after the environment do it because of their family environment, it's the social environment (Moffatt 2002).*

He then borrows from Paul Hawken<sup>30</sup> to put forward an economic sustainability perspective... *its not social and its not environmental. The whole issue is around our economic relationships and what we have is a huge economic system that drives us every day. You get up and you drink your coffee and after the first three or four years of idealism you get out and work for the dollar and our incentives are all perverse now. You get richer the more you offload externalities onto other people and future generations or other species. Is it any wonder that we end up with an environmental problem? Let's get the incentives right for goodness' sake. He wouldn't say it this way, [but] we're machines basically and if you get the programming right human beings will produce the desired product and right now we have a system which is inhumane. The global economic system [is inhumane], and we just have to make it humane by getting the incentives right so that the people who are wealthy and respected and proud and have high status in our society are the ones who did the most for future generations and for the environment and for preserving natural capital (Moffatt 2002).*

Finally from Herman Daly<sup>31</sup>, Sebastian articulates the ecological perspective... *we can't leave it up to incentives of human behaviour because that will all take too long and too much will escape. There are fundamental rights and that is no different to our constitutions. Would you allow people to bargain off, you know make a little more money on their new housing development by excluding all races except Europeans, or by allowing no women in or allowing no single people? There are fundamental rights here, you cannot discriminate and we don't allow it. A hundred years ago we would have but now we think it inappropriate and unnecessary for people to make more money by hurting people in that way. But with different species some people can go ahead and do that. We're already wiping out 10,000 species a year. We're right down to the last bits of ecological capital that we're robbing from people all over the world and future generations and really what we need is an environmental bill of rights no different than our social rights enshrined constitutionally to ensure that you cannot trade away things unless there are surpluses and you can't abuse the environment (Moffatt 2002).*

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<sup>29</sup> A self-described Ecologist and Anarchist and author of numerous books including *Towards an Ecological Society* (1980) and *Urbanization Without Cities* (1990).

<sup>30</sup> Author of *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution* with Amory Lovins and L. Hunter Lovins (1999) published by Little, Brown and Company.

<sup>31</sup> Ecological Economist and author of *For the Common Good* with John Cobb (1994)

These three perspectives do not encapsulate the totality of issues that must be addressed and preserved. Sebastian continues, *when I work in Europe of course they always use four spheres because they have culture (laughter), and we have explored the possibility of using culture as a separate sphere but for almost all the work we do with cities, culture is assumed in our social sphere and it works quite well there* (Moffatt 2002). Sebastian speaks passionately about each of the arguments he presents. He has clearly thought deeply and extensively about his vision for society and became animated and invigorated as he recounted the different perspectives that contribute to his imagining of a changed world.

The Smart Growth vision, as Cheeeying articulates it, is quite the contrast in its simplicity. She paints a picture of complete communities that grabs the imagination and appeals to people's everyday needs. She deliberately chooses to reach people by using every day language. She speaks of *having more arguments around mixed income, mixed-use neighbourhoods where kids have access to [various amenities]. They grow up more well-rounded. We also want to tie in some of the seniors' stuff like better access to amenities that would allow aging in place so we want to build more arguments for Smart Growth... Basically we want to replace sprawl with more compact and complete communities so we're using less land and using land more efficiently. In terms of tax dollars we would be spending much less on building and replacing infrastructure. We're building things closer together and making them more complete, which includes a range of housing types and costs so people can afford to live in different communities or different people can afford to live in the same community* (Ho 2003a).

In contrast to the image of housing, neighbourhoods and communities, Johnny visualizes a collaborative process through which sustainability can be collectively achieved by the different levels of government and different types of organizations. *Through discussion we'll come to some general agreement on the direction we'll have to go, and some general agreement on the strategies we have to [implement] and we each try and find a piece of the puzzle that is ours and come back to our respective jurisdictions with all our autonomy still intact and say, "well if we really want to support that direction here's what we have to do, do we agree to do it?" If we don't we go back [to the regional group] and say why we weren't doing it.* (Carline 2003a)

Larry's visualization combines the means with the ends. *We basically have a city where people are beginning to have a conversation about intensification in their community within their neighbourhoods, where in most cities every one in the community is seen as having NIMBYism and we're all smarter than they are and yadeyadeya. Well Ann [McAfee]<sup>32</sup> approached her job as a collaborative effort. She built true constituencies, had a very respectful interface with people, and there was a lot of mutual learning and breakthroughs in attitude as a result of that. We've done that across the board. We're very open... involving thousands and thousands of citizens on all fronts at all times, over and over and over again. That's another level of that collaboration* (Beasley 2004a).

*We hold a responsibility first and foremost, to create a very comfortable attractive, interesting, provocative city for the people who live here, who choose for whatever reason not to live at the heart of the culture of the world, but who choose to live here. It probably has to do with the natural environment, it has to do with other things they aspire to, or it has to do with the fact that this is where they're stuck... Because of what we are and where we're sitting in the hierarchy of cities, we*

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<sup>32</sup> Ann is Co-Director of Planning, with Larry, at the City of Vancouver



*have to take advantage of what we do have to work with, to position ourselves to be competitive among cities, both for the needs of our own people, and for the need of our competitive placement in the world. Both of these come down to really the quality of life in the city. So way more important than other cities is that we make this place fantastic (Beasley 2004b).*

*We have an ability to create a kind of city, which is different, by virtue of this quality of life that we can entice people with. And because of a lot of other limitations that we can do this in a very intense mixed use way and that we can emulate some of the best thinking about density, mix, social diversity and all those things of cities because it can be driven by this quality of life aspect... Unlike almost every other North American City, we can decide that our prime objective for several generations is going to be to develop a city in which people are in residence pervasively, of all kinds. Not just wealthy adults, or poor adults, but families with children, the disabled, people with special kinds of lifestyles, not just needs, not just dealing with the needs side, but also people who have special lifestyles. Culturally diverse, because in some cultures, people who come here have very extended families so they have a different kind of housing need than someone else (Beasley 2004b).*

*What we can do is create a city in which we are looking at every kind of residential possibility and making every kind excellent, attractive enticing. And we can probably draw people back out of suburban lifestyles into urban lifestyles and as we do that and as that gels, well we may not be the centre of the world culture but we will generate, as cities have for millennia, our own culture, our own business imperatives, our own social imperatives and that will be very new to us... My vision is that we have an ability to create a city that is to some degree contrary to globalization, contrary to the homogenization of cities that is going on around the world. It is very unique, and it is very interesting and that actually competes with those world cities not by trying to be what they are but by being an alternative that they could never be and that's how I see us really developing (Beasley 2004b).*

Sustainability planning, as illustrated through the words of the Sustainability Planners above, reveals a range of perspectives including issues of urban form, ecological preservation, collaborative decision-making and social diversity. Definitions are both broad and dynamic within any single planner's vision but also wide ranging across the different planners. The following sections demonstrate how the diversity of visions presented by the planners is reflected in the diversity of positions taken by different theorists. Beginning with a theoretical discussion of sustainability, as it is debated by writers in a number of different disciplines, I conclude with a discussion of how planning theorists connect sustainability to planning.

### **Sustainability Planning**

While the definitions of sustainability vary, the problem is typically introduced as one of threatened ecosystems and depleted human habitat. We are reminded of the numerous species that have become extinct and continue to become extinct. We are reminded of the many threatened ecosystems with their respective threatened resources, such as collapsed fisheries, clear-cut forests, eroded soils. We are reminded of the various ways in which wastes are slowly intoxicating us through our rivers, lakes, wells and even the air we breathe (Beatley, 1995; Jepson, 2001; Rees, 1995; McDonald 1996). Generic living organisms will always suffer the consequences of their own success by affecting or depleting the larger system within which they reside. Human society is no exception (Rees 1995; Jepson 2001).

Life forms can only survive if they regulate themselves by responding to feedback from their habitat about its capacity to support their consumption and assimilate their waste. Otherwise the entire ecosystem could be threatened and destroyed. The supposition by environmentalists and human ecologists such as Rees, is that human society, having reached the limits of the earth's ability to support it, is in danger of causing a global ecological catastrophe (Rees 1995). The magnitude and severity of the sustainability task, as presented through this perspective, are shocking if not completely debilitating.

Rees argues that humans have already overextended the capacity of the earth to support them. An expansionist worldview, coupled with a faith in the ability of the free market to compensate for extinction and ecosystem destruction has created a culture of ignoring our biological nature. He cites Nobel Laureate Rogert Solow who, in 1974, stated that through the functioning of technology, innovation and substitution we can live without natural resources (Rees 1995). Parallel to this blind faith in science is a hunger for material consumption and equating its abundance with success. Happiness, satisfaction and our very identities have been socially constructed to be a product of what we own (Rose 1990).

The pertinence of sustainability to any profession with ties to public policy and systems of governance has been clearly demonstrated by many authors (Dale and Robinson 1996). Planning has had its share of exposure to sustainability issues to the point where it is now widely accepted as an important and legitimate consideration in plan formation and decision-making (Jepson 2001). As Jepson points out this relationship between planning and sustainability can be far more reciprocal than is typically realized. He argues convincingly that planning is uniquely suited to taking up the challenge of serving as "the communicative link between scientists and the general public." (Jepson 2001:499).

Our own copious consumption, its appeal as the ultimate goal by those who currently consume less but aspire to consume more, and the very tangible physical limits of the planet combine to create a problem of gargantuan proportions. This is clearly worthy of planners' attention. Of course planners should be concerned about this irrespective of the exact precision of the statistics tracking our increasing vulnerability. Rees shows that there are some who dispute the magnitude of the problem and others who claim there is no problem at all (see Beckerman 1995). Erring on the side of caution should be reason enough to take these cautionary analyses seriously. What is more problematic, however, is that the degree to which warnings of global disaster are alarming is directly related to a condition of privilege and plenty. People struggling to feed themselves and their families, and for whom the prospect of starvation is perpetually imminent, will have no sympathy for us bemoaning the end of the world. For millions of people around the world, a good day is when the end is put off for another day.

According to most theorists and all of the Vancouver Sustainability Planners, sustainability is quintessentially about the appreciation of the limits imposed on us by the earth. Unlimited growth is therefore inherently unsustainable. Sustainability is justice extended into the future (Daly and Cobb 1994). Sustainability is also an elusive condition and it is the process of enabling a system to change that is of paramount importance (Robinson et al. 1996). Sustainability thus becomes a process and not a state. This fits into the more participatory and communicative notions of planning in which the nature of the public

good, which in this case would be the precise characteristics of a sustainable state, cannot be predetermined and will never remain static.

Beatley outlines numerous strategies for reducing the ill effects of urban development on the natural environment (Beatley 1995). He discusses green businesses and ecologically minded commercial ventures and realigning government jurisdictions along bioregional boundaries (Beatley 1995). Viewed from this perspective sustainability is largely an exercise in growth management and the mitigation of the adverse effects of development. While he covers everything from taxation, to governance, to equity, when it comes to mapping out planning responsibilities, the issues continue to revolve around physical and environmental issues (Beatley 1995).

Jepson's extensive documentation of the interface between sustainability and planning dwells primarily on the ecological basis of sustainability. He does mention the three Es of sustainability: equity, environment, economy; but his discussion of substantive issues focuses exclusively on the causal relationships between urban form, planning and the natural environment (Jepson 2001). The planning literature continues to perpetuate a theoretical gap between the environmental demands of sustainability and social and economic demands of human society (Beatley 1995; Rees 1995; Berke and Manta Conroy 2000). All give greater emphasis to the natural resources upon which humans depend. The traditional split between physical planning and social planning is being inadvertently reemphasized through the sustainability planning discourse.

A greater ideological split characterizes the broader discourse around sustainability. The Sustainability Planners frequently speak of having to cater to the dual imperatives of economic and environmental sustainability. Amongst researchers this duality is even stronger and is symptomatic of fundamental disagreement about the relative priority of each of our natural and environmental systems. On one end of the spectrum proponents of simplicity such as Meadows et al. (1972) and Schumacher (1973) call for a halt to economic growth and a global adoption of a subsistence lifestyle to avert a total collapse of ecosystems. On the other end of the spectrum are proponents of sustainable development who see wealth and growth as necessary preconditions to social and economic sustainability or, taken to the extreme, that sustainability is not even a problem worth discussing (Beckerman 1995; Tate and Mulugetta 1998).

The ideological rift is so vast that McDonald (1996) states that "Conflict between expansionist economic development arguments and ecological sustainability is the problem for sustainable development" (original emphasis). Shaw and Kidd take issue with McDonald's focus. For them sustainability planning at the local scale is less gripped by the tension between ecology and economic growth than it is by differences of socio-economic class (Shaw and Kidd 1996). If there is a tension it is between those who have access to resources and those who do not. The special status of sustainability among the array of concerns that planners contend with is therefore stated in a different way.

"For planners and planning educators, sustainable development must become one of our key concepts, but must treat issues in a holistic and integrating manner, where questions of social justice and access to resources

and opportunities are as important as environmental protection."(Shaw and Kidd 1996)

Sustainability is therefore seen to carry the historical baggage of environmentalism, and this bias is criticized in different ways depending on the critic's perspective. While Shaw and Kidd find typical conceptualizations of sustainability weak in their avoidance of difficult political questions of justice and equity, Tate and Mulugetta find those same conceptualizations to be trendy political correctness (Tate and Mulugetta 1998). Technocentrism, in their view, is a much more appropriate method for ensuring human welfare. Rather than placing the environment first, they suggest placing humans first on the list of societal priorities. Their arguments are built on neo-classical economics theories, which claim that the combination of an unfettered market and technological innovation render concern with sustainability myopic and irrelevant (Tate and Mulugetta 1998). Their primary objection to the wholesale adoption of sustainability by the planning profession is that it is unchallenged and authoritarian. While their work alerts us to the dangers of environmentalist universalism, it also demonstrates its own bias of marketplace universalism. Their concerns would be largely allayed, however, if they considered a broader definition of sustainability that goes beyond environmental sustainability to include social sustainability, participatory decision making and inclusive governance.

Another form of universalistic thinking appears in the utopian renditions of sustainability. One of the approaches to sustainability is dedicated to envisioning and promoting a society based on a set of normative values. Unlike fantastical utopianism this form of visioning is realistic and realizable (Spain 1995). The power of this approach is its capacity to transcend the status-quo and to imagine entirely new ways of structuring society. The weakness, of course, is that as realistic as these visions might be in theory, they are disconnected from many of the forces that govern our current systems. Spain draws parallels between feminist ideals and sustainability principles. Both uphold caring, a sense of community and skepticism about technology. Their emphasis on quality of life in non-economic terms is also convergent (Spain 1995). The significant finding here is that the point of departure is a clear articulation of values. A deeper engagement of these values into a strategy of implementation might dampen the utopian nature of the visions, but perhaps not the spirit.

The impetus for sustainability, as it is expounded in the literature and presented above, is an urgent appeal against environmental degradation. This has been followed, both intellectually and procedurally, by a reactionary challenge concerned with the need for economic prosperity. Both arguments are tempered by the realization that the key to the relevance and longevity of sustainability is social justice. The result is a definition of sustainability that attempts a balance between issues of economy, ecology and equity. Yet even this tripartite conceptualization implies a simplicity that does not exist. As O'Riordan points out, "[s]ustainability politics increasingly will involve many centers of power and decision-making, connected by public-private partnerships and civil society coalitions reaching out across space and time to connect global to local and here and now to the distant future"(O'Riordan 2002).

An important theoretical connection that has been underplayed in the literature is that which links communicative planning to sustainability. The governance and social sustainability directives of sustainability read like a list of objectives from a communicative

planning manual. Participation, transparency, equality, inclusion, empowerment and emancipation are all deemed to be essential attributes for the process of envisioning and implementing a sustainable society. Selman (1995) and Beatley (1995) mentioned these strategies for sustainability but did not connect them to the emerging tendency towards communicative planning. Jepson (2001) saw communication as a contribution that planning can make towards sustainability beyond the needs of its own discipline. "Planners," states Jepson, can be "the communicative link between scientists and the general public." He goes on to suggest that planners can promote sustainability ideas in the public sphere. "[T]he profession's intrinsic interest in balance and integration," are cited as further contributions that planners can make to sustainability planning processes.

Wheeler mentions communicative planning in his discussion of sustainability, but does not build on the rich body of literature dealing with communicative issues (Wheeler 2000). The general orientation of his work is directed at a greater appreciation of the implementation challenges of sustainability and the social dimensions of that implementation. Public debate, citizen activism, participatory planning and consensus building are critical to the success of sustainability planning (Wheeler 2000). This is supported by the broader sustainability literature reaching beyond a planning audience. Planning needs to rediscover an internal interdisciplinarity that exposes its various theoretical threads to each other. What is blatantly missing is the obvious connection between sustainability and the considerable body of planning literature that devotes itself to issues of empowerment and processes of participation and communication. Sustainability projects in Canada and Europe have made more progress linking issues of citizenship and empowerment to issues of sustainability than projects in the U.S. Roundtables across Canada and especially in British Columbia were particularly successful at bringing together a variety of interests in an equal playing field (Dorcey and McDaniels 2001).

The primary imperative for sustainability governance is the acknowledgement that society is only as healthy as its individual members, and that these members are healthiest when they have a say in the functioning of their home environment. The requisite foundation is democracy but a simple representative democracy is not enough. People may have the freedom to vote but they are subject to the tyranny of the majority if what the majority chooses is unsustainable (Maser et al. 1998). Deliberative democracy shows more promise than representative democracy in engaging citizens in ideas and programs that may not have popular or political appeal but that are necessary for overcoming difficult social and environmental problems.

Rather than emphasizing broad political ideologies and focusing on special interests, deliberative democracy stresses dialogue and communication for a broad spectrum of decisions. Groups and individuals express their views and discuss their particular understanding of the problem at hand. Decisions are made to include all viewpoints (O'Connell 1999). Those who have less power and influence are given just as much opportunity to express their views as those who have more power. In those cases in which the capacity of groups to express themselves is limited or is different to the norms of the dominant culture, they must be provided with the time, space and opportunity to be understood in a manner which best reflects their message (Young 1996). This kind of process is necessarily costly and time consuming but promises to achieve greater democracy

and more egalitarian sustainability because it does not preclude the involvement of any member of society.

The directive of an inclusive and transparent democracy for sustainability is important for two distinct reasons. First, communication and deliberation, rather than simple voting, achieve a greater degree of citizen participation, which would create a more engaged and active citizenry. Citizens would be more informed about sustainability issues and the important steps that need to be taken in order to move towards greater sustainability. By being involved in discussions and deliberations citizens would be exposed to the range and complexity of the environmental, social and economic issues that affect sustainability. They would therefore be better equipped to address those issues, make decisions of policy and action, and follow through by making the necessary tradeoffs or behavioral changes that might affect their daily lives.

The second important reason for citizen participation in decision making is that our collective vision of sustainability is impossible to define. Sustainability is an evolving concept that will continue to be defined and refined as we move towards it (Maser et al. 1998). In addition to the philosophical idealism of democratic governance and citizen participation there are also practical imperatives of its application. Experience has taught us that without citizen participation grand visions for sustainable practices are extremely difficult to realize (Dorcey and McDaniels 2001). Citizens are not only important as the smallest unit of decision making that affects behaviour and consumption at the micro-scale, but they also provide a wealth of knowledge and a resource for brainstorming creative ways of tackling sustainability (Maser et al. 1998).

Not everyone favours the widespread utilization of citizen participation for all decision making. Aside from the known costs of time and money, there are also risks associated with delegating responsibility to a lay population. Some fear that a lay population would not be able to fully grasp the complex web of technical information that needs to be understood in order to make informed decisions (Dorcey and McDaniels 2001). Another significant uncertainty with citizen involvement is the impossibility of predicting an outcome or guaranteeing its sustainability. Leaving all decisions up to the participating stakeholders might lead to a series of decisions that meet the stakeholder's individual needs but counter the requirements of sustainability as the experts see them. Wheeler found that public involvement often blocked the implementation of any kinds of change (Wheeler 2000). Both Johnny and Sebastian talked directly about how premature citizen involvement will lead to decisions based on personal convenience and not the larger "public" good.

The ideal of full citizen involvement is extremely rare on a large urban scale<sup>33</sup>. Communicative action, the theoretical foundation of communicative planning, promises greater participatory governance. Its proponents envision a society in which citizens are constantly involved in discussions and deliberations and are perpetually fashioning and refashioning their communities, neighbourhoods and cities (Habermas 1984). It is proactive, inclusive, democratic, egalitarian and open to any mode of expression. It is often upheld as

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<sup>33</sup> Participatory budgeting is one area in which full citizen participation is increasingly achieved. Examples include Porto Alegre, Brazil in which 14,000 citizens participated in 2003, the Neighbourhood Participation Project in L.A. and Eugene Decisions in Oregon are further examples of citizen engagement in budget decisions (Flintoft 2003).

the ideal, but it seems more attainable in theory than in practice. Communicative planning has much to contribute both practically and theoretically to social sustainability and to sustainability governance. Sustainability, on the other hand, may be able to give communicative planning the broader connection to institutional systems that political economy theorists have been asking for. Perhaps, through sustainability, communicative planning will become imbedded in a larger structure of social change. It will not appear to be a singular panacea for democratization, but rather an integral component of a profound shift in society's system of ascribing value and priority.

Planning would do well to marry its tradition of radicalism with the movement towards sustainability. Perhaps there is an argument to be made using quantitative impact assessment on exactly which unsustainable practices are more damaging than others. Perhaps there is a calculus that would reveal suburban sprawl to be more deleterious on the planet in terms of pollution and resource depletion than ethnic war or starvation. Such a calculus would inherently place differential values on human life depending on where it resided and how much financial capital it was worth. So justice, and some semblance of equity across populations, has to be equally fundamental to sustainability as is ecological integrity.

Diversity enters writings on sustainability through the door of social wellbeing. It is implied, if not directly stated, that communities need to feel acknowledged, appreciated and empowered in their identities in order to participate in a healthy and sustainable social system. Cheezying, Daryl, Larry and Susan have all explicitly stated their belief in the value of community empowerment as a precursor to meaningful engagement. Pirages introduces an additional evolutionary rationale for the diversity imperative. Cultural diversity, he argues, is essential to maintain because in the climate of considerable uncertainty surrounding the future of the earth and its inhabitants, we are relatively ignorant of the kinds of attributes that will be called upon to educate the human family for its own survival (Pirages 1996: 10). We may need to draw upon the experience and wisdom of the entire spectrum of cultural knowledge that exists in the world today in order to find solutions to the problems we will face.

Can we move nations and people in the direction of sustainability? Such a move would be a modification of society comparable in scale to only two other changes; the agricultural revolution and that of the late Neolithic and the industrial revolution of the past two centuries. Those revolutions were gradual, spontaneous, and largely unconscious. This one will have to be a fully conscious operation, guided by the best foresight that science can provide...If we actually do it, the undertaking will be absolutely unique in humanity's stay on Earth (Ruckelhaus 1989:167).

A debate in the *Journal of American Psychology* about the urgency of sustainability and the professional ethics of intervening to bring it about has great relevance for the planning profession. While some hail it as an ethical imperative that cannot be disassociated from any field of psychology (Oskamp 2001; Riebel 2001), others go much further to call for a reorientation of education systems and priorities, and for social transformation of unimaginable proportions (Raven 2001). Anderson (2001) offered psychological

explanations for people's tendency to believe in positive illusions and to be defensive over changes in their habitual practices.

Schouberg (2001) cautions against moving from "professional interventions" to "political intervention. It would be relatively easy for psychologists to slip into Orwellian roles because of their power over their patients. Schouberg reminds his colleagues of the disputed nature of environmental claims of looming disaster. He further warns his colleagues against engaging a literature and a body of knowledge in which they have no capacity for critical assessment (Schouberg 2001). These arguments are valid to the degree to which environmental devastation, and its damaging effects on human livelihood, are contested. Proponents of psychological intervention are not suggesting a coercion of their clients but rather a widespread initiative to conduct research in the various areas of psychology that seem directly linked to unsustainable behaviour. Should the public, or individual clients seek guidance in these areas, the knowledge would be available or at least the research well on its way. Furthermore, the history and evolution of psychology is replete with examples of expert knowledge steering public behaviour and governing societal norms to reconcile individual citizens' aspirations with institutional and state goals (Rose 1990).

For Anderson (2001), solidarity versus divisiveness is the underlying tension in sustainability. Values and stances on particular issues are less influential than wanton hatred. The psychology of group hatred is therefore deserving of much more attention than it has received. Peace is obviously a precondition to the ability to plan although there are occasions when planning needs to continue in the absence of peace (see Forester 2001). There are also circumstances in which issues of peace, or the lack of peace, very much affect planning work. The peace line in Belfast, or the Jewish settlements in Palestinian territories, for which Jewish people make a historical and biblical claim, are physical spaces that are very much dictated by the politics of peace and war in the respective region. Planners can claim to have no power over political climates but they have the skills to play an important role. If they follow the spirit of the profession and its roots of intervening for the benefit of the social good, and indeed for the benefit of the disenfranchised, then they will necessarily become involved in facilitating progress in these contested physical spaces. Once again sustainability becomes linked to issues of justice and equity.

At a minimum social sustainability requires the survival of human beings; freedom from conflict and the threat of violence; adequate nutrition and shelter; equality and justice; and the ability of individual human beings to pursue their personal potential. Although these seem like a range of needs of decreasing significance, they are a complete package of human rights and it is impossible for some conditions to be achieved over the long term without the achievement of all others. Planning is a field that has long concerned itself with justice. Today this is the magnitude of justice that planners must contend with. Planners can no longer hide behind the technical requirements of road engineering while ignoring a whole host of interconnected conflicts.

Sustainability is at once a set of social conditions that we as a society can aspire towards and an ethical code of conduct that we as individuals can adhere to. At the scale of the individual, social sustainability is benevolent, courteous and well-mannered behaviour. The kind of conduct that fosters positive interpersonal relationships is the glue of a



community. At the societal level, social sustainability is about fair, equitable, egalitarian, emancipatory and empowering action. Communicative action and inclusive planning demand that sufficient diversity be attained within the boundaries of a planning problem to avoid NIMBYism, and to foster a sense of shared destiny (Fainstein 1996). Sustainability planning is a normative quest to help create and maintain a healthy society. Like all other planning traditions, it uses a particular view of the world to look around at the condition of society and to look ahead at how that condition might be improved. One of its primary assumptions is that the status quo favours certain groups over others and relies on ecological, sociological and political relationships that are unhealthy and that cannot be maintained in perpetuity. Continued sustenance, justice, peace, reciprocity and self-actualization are the central goals of sustainability planning.

Sustainability then, has many definitions and is presented with varying priorities and demands. Different value systems underpin the different stances and it is up to the planner to determine how these values can be balanced. The approaches presented above represent the spectrum of stances on sustainability issues and they will likely be duplicated amongst the constituencies that planners have to serve. The challenge is to always be mindful of not privileging one claim to the "truth" of sustainability over others. Regional factors, local contexts and socio-economic and cultural differences will likely produce differences in priorities, all of which raises the significance of participatory planning to arrive at some form of agreement about what kind of systems and relationships are worthy of perpetuating and how to begin working towards that future.

There is no doubt that sustainability planning is gaining momentum as a field of inquiry worthy of thought and scholarship in planning literature. Journal articles explicitly focused on sustainability are becoming more frequent and are covering a wider range of issues related to planning. I too cannot help but be seduced by this exciting promise that seeks to connect and resolve socio-economic and environmental justice in an emancipatory rescue of human society. Everything planners do and hope to do, and everything that can connect them to politics, economics, governance and commerce can fit within the folds of this emerging movement, and herein lies the problem. How can such complexity and dynamism and total inclusion be managed intellectually and practically, and how can it ever hope to succeed? The Sustainability Planners do not, of course, work with these issues in their entirety. My interactions with the planners revealed that they are well versed in the details and intricacies of the various issues of economic, environmental and social sustainability but are selective in deciding what areas to focus on.

#### **Developing Capacity for an Evolving Sustainability Vision**

Given the range, complexity and interconnection between the varying issues relevant to sustainability, Sustainability Planners have had to find ways to focus their effort. Biting off smaller pieces of the larger sustainability puzzle is an obvious method for coping. Planners build a vision that takes advantage of an organization's relative strengths and position, and they concentrate on that vision. The organization itself may change and evolve and the planners will incrementally tackle larger or different issues. Inherent in the capacity to identify strongly with a sustainability vision is a capacity to evolve and change as circumstances change. Definitions of sustainability are dynamic and changing with our evolving knowledge and understanding of the different social, environmental and economic

issues. The ability to change is therefore a necessity that strengthens the sustainability vision and prolongs its relevance.

Cheeying's reflection on how she has changed over the years is parallel to a broader change in sustainability circles from radical environmentalism to broader, inclusive, pragmatic and inclusive sustainability. *We were in a peace march and there was a young woman definitely in her early twenties holding this placard saying men are the cause of war. A blanket statement like that and my friend and I were [put off by it]... Another friend who is really gentle said to her "I don't find this statement productive" and we started to have this conversation with her about making blanket statements. We said, "Look there's a ton of men who are in this peace march because they don't support war. You can't just blame them for other root causes and [causation] is very complicated". And so this young woman, you could tell that she was thinking, "I have this ideology, how dare these women try to debunk it." However she was also thinking, "they're women they look sort of young, they're probably somewhat cool but older." So you could tell this woman was trying to figure out what's going on. "Should I shrug them off because they've sold out or should I listen to them?" So afterwards the three of us were just laughing at how we were probably thinking the exact same thing not the exact same issue but having this very strong ideology in our early twenties and now we are way more realistic (Ho 2003A).*

The deliberate pursuit of evolution in terms of ideas and vision is a process, and is not a passive acceptance of the tides of change. It requires a deliberate self-exposure to new ideas and different stimuli. Larry, for example, is on a constant quest to remain current and fresh in his thinking. *Occasionally I might take a more formal training, you get at a point in life, where you're not doing that any more, not as often. I know that in the professional side of planning and architecture and other engineering, there's this very popular thing now that everyone, goes back for continuing education... I probably go less in to those kinds of environments to learn, and I learn more through reading, discussing listening, and having a conversation with the right people. I spend a lot of time talking to people on the internet for example, all over the world who are dealing with issues, I also mentor students in various parts of the world that have, somewhere or another, connected to me on something that they are doing. We keep the conversation going and I help them out. I have about five of those students, one in China, a fellow on the East Coast and others, and I'm learning more from them (Beasley 2004a).*

The capacity for self-reflection and self-awareness is a prerequisite for developing an evolving vision of sustainability. I found a high degree of active self-reflection amongst the sustainability planners I interviewed. Three of them use people outside of their organization and their families as a sounding board for issues and ideas. One person uses a personal coach, another a men's group and a third has a group of friends that he regularly meets with to discuss sustainability issues and their related work. Another talks about thinking things through on the drive home and later on in the evening. She would often think about an event that had taken place during the day and, based on her self-critique, would follow up the next day with a communication intended to improve the situation. In another case the entire organization has a culture of constant self-assessment of programs and people with both formal and informal weekly reflection. The developmental realm of Empathic Leadership seems healthy and strong as far as personal and organizational visioning is concerned. What seems sorely lacking is the realization that collective visioning in broader arenas, across organizations and with members of the public requires special skills and attributes. Group reflection requires skillful facilitation and creativity in seeking

stimulating ways of engaging diverse groups. It is only after that realization occurs that personal and organizational development can take place. The difficulty of integrating the range of issues affecting regional sustainability and the difficulty of including the totality of people affected by the issues in creating a collective vision requires the devotion of substantial resources for developing capacity in this area.

Sustainability planning is an enormous task. It is complex, fraught with uncertainty and requires a delicate balance between the needs of individual autonomy and the demands of collective destiny. Navigating the paradox between the imperative of change and the requirement of participatory decision making, without which lasting change is not possible, is a challenge that sustainability planners must continuously face. They have to be visionary yet participatory, resolute yet inclusive, courageous yet compassionate. They face a grave task but its gravity is no reason to abandon it in favour of a safer endeavour.

Sustainability planning does constitute a public interest. It is an attempt to be all-inclusive and to champion the cause of those without champions, the impoverished, the marginalized, the disenfranchised, the ecosphere. It is a stand for justice and peace and health. It is all the good fights rolled into one. This posture is necessary because of the growing realization that society is not comprised of discrete divisible units but, rather, is a mesh of interconnections and interdependencies. Addressing one imbalance or injustice while ignoring others is necessarily myopic. But, in attempting to address everything at once, sustainability planners expose themselves to the very criticisms that have been so vigorously directed at the comprehensive planners. Is it enough for them to be concerned about process when the very impetus for embarking on a planning process is to address specific problems as perceived by the planners. What if the process takes the planners down a different path that completely misses the issues that the planners perceive to be the problem? How much time and money can they fairly invest in communicating ideas and passing on information before it becomes a manipulation of the process? The following chapters shed greater light on this tension between sustainability planning as an important and worthy endeavour and its capacity to become self-absorbed and dogmatic.

The governance debate between collective decision making on one side and unilateral decision making on the other is as enduring as civilization itself. Until the enlightenment the historical progression has been a development of arguments for what societal values should be universally applied. In post enlightenment and modern eras the manner in which such values are attained, and then, the very idea of defining universal values have come to be questioned. Yet the separation that pluralism demands misses our inherent connection as shared inhabitants of the same home and as Hoch states, "the idea that we are free to do as we please so long as we do not hurt others misses the dense fabric of our interdependence" (Hoch 1996:227).

Our collective destiny as neighbours and co-inhabitants of our cities and regions demands that we not shy away from global issues, both physically and metaphorically, that might affect us all. Sustainability promises to be a framework for addressing the multiplicity of issues that affect us all. If planning is to indeed become "*the profession*" of the twenty first century," (Udy 1991:3) it must take on the difficult task of sustainability as defined in this chapter. The term itself may be short-lived but the issues and their interrelationships promise to be enduring. However, maintaining the capacity to be self-reflective, self-critical

and engaged in deliberative communication is an absolute necessity to avoid the pitfalls of self-referential exclusion and dogmatic enforcement of a singular view of reality.

Sustainability planners may be inclined to resist letting citizens decide for themselves how they want to live if it contravenes the principles and vision of sustainability as the planners see them. The paramount directive of sustaining life on the planet is, in its conceptual form, superior to all other anthropocentric imperatives. Herein lies the power and the danger of sustainability. It is powerful because without it we needn't consider anything else, and it is dangerous because it carries the weight of absolute authority and exclusive claims to reality and truth. Judgment of what is required to sustain life on the planet, and what manner of social construct are to be sustained are contestable claims, and if planners lose their capacity to be critical of these claims, then sustainability might as well be another highway construction program displacing inner city neighbourhoods for the greater good of society.

Although the nature of the plans that sustainability planners are, and would be, proposing is radically different from that of the comprehensive planners of the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the potential for myopic and exclusionary dogmatism remains. What is needed is a strong ethical position on the role of the planner as a guide rather than a manipulator of process. Forester's work (Forester 1989) on the possibility of simultaneous mediation and advocacy suggests that it is possible to both guide the process and facilitate its capacity to express plural interests, but what is needed is a code of conduct that would guide planners through this difficult and murky terrain. Otherwise sustainability planning could easily lose sight of its conceptual imperatives of egalitarianism and equal participation. In their zeal for changing the world for the better planners could end up putting all their efforts into persuading the world that it is their vision of the better world that is the one everyone must uphold. Participation would give way to manipulation, and planning would experience another gargantuan setback of relevance and utility much like that of the era of utopian comprehensive planning.

Working with people and involving them in the creation of a vision and engaging their hopes and fears are the building blocks of Empathic Leadership. Emphasizing attributes that enable planners to better articulate their visions and to further harness passion to build community and commitment to the vision and to strategize to expand the vision and expand the community around the vision make up the remainder of the Empathic Leadership framework. The following chapters therefore depart from the formation and evolution of the vision to explore the ways in which increasingly larger numbers can be included in further cultivating and expanding that vision. The capacity to expand the vision and let it evolve unfettered by dogma is imperative for its own sustainability.

### 4 - EMOTION

*I began this journey of sustainability research with a quest and a desire. Both emerged from my sense of extreme disillusion with the state of the world as I came to know it. It was unjust, it was oppressive and its only constant seemed to be an ethic of exploitation. That was the darker side. The bright side came several years later when I discovered inspiration and excitement by seeing the very same issues as an opportunity for change and for extraordinary humanity.*

*As an advocate for sustainability planning on the UBC campus starting in 1998 I began to meet many likeminded students and staff who had deep concerns about our trajectory as a society and were committed to doing whatever was possible in their sphere of influence. Many were also committed to actively expanding their sphere of influence. They exhibited youthful exuberance and optimism and were confined only by the limits of their own ideas. Their excitement was infectious and no sooner had I recognized that this was a group of likeminded people whose united voice could represent a formidable force on campus, than I realized I was part of the group. What began as a series of conversations started to gel as a cohesive community of people. Two specific tasks catalyzed the formation of this community: planning a national conference on sustainability planning and organizing to inject environmental and social consciousness into the development of a university town.*

*The conference succeeded in bringing together students from a range of disciplines across campus and had an interactive practical component that took participants out to exemplary projects and communities across the Vancouver region. The excitement and sense of optimism of both organizers and participants was palpable. A feeling of elation pervaded, not just for the success of the conference, but for the sense that the seeds of a more sustainable world were all around us in humble yet promising initiatives throughout the region and in the minds and hearts of the citizens of the region.*

*Right around the same time the Sustainability Advisory Committee formed at the University and it too had major aspirations. The C.K. Choi building had just been built with its use of recycled building materials, composting toilets and greywater systems. Touted as the first of a new generation of ecological construction this building was to be the prototype of all new construction on campus. The Sustainability Advisory Committee brought together faculty, staff and students who were knowledgeable and interested in helping to make the campus a model of sustainability. We would be the leaders in showcasing to the world what it would be like to build an ecological infrastructure supporting an ecological university town. This was not necessarily the stated mission of the committee but it was certainly the explicit objective of the sub group of faculty, staff and students with whom I was aligned. Once again the excitement and optimism were palpable. Our excitement even served to renew the faith of faculty members who had become jaded with repeated disappointments.*

*We were neither naïve nor ignorant of the challenges of affecting change in an institution as large and bureaucratic as UBC. We were however unprepared for the degree to which we would face indifference, opposition and hostility. The sub-group of advocates began to be marginalized at meetings, publicly mocked and targeted as trouble-makers who should be avoided at all costs. I am not confrontational by nature. I naturally tend towards building relationships and feelings of good will. I prefer to be liked even by those I disagree with so I was not high on the list of people who were rumoured to be "black-listed" on campus for their radical opposition of University development. Others in my group readily communicated their disappointment and anger with the university administration's seemingly patronizing dismissal of new ideas. So while I was known to collaborate with "the trouble makers", and was often seen in their company, I was spared the full brunt of authoritative opposition. I was therefore*

*able to observe, from a somewhat detached perspective, the effects of marginalization on the psyche of our group. The physical result on the ground was the approval of a Master Plan and neighbourhood plans that were neither visionary nor exemplary. New construction was status quo in its design and implementation and was criticized by architects and planners throughout the Vancouver region.*

*In the space of one year, we went from boundless enthusiasm and energy, to anger and resentment, to disappointment and dejection. My friends and colleagues became disillusioned with the University. We refocused our attention onto our own individual pursuits, our jobs and degrees, and only selectively and periodically participated in campus planning events. There are many questions surrounding our actions and conduct and overall strategy, lack of strategy, resilience and lack thereof. Some of these will be visited in the coming pages and chapters but what is profoundly significant to me here is the enormous effect that our emotional states had on how we functioned as planning advocates.*

It became glaringly apparent to me that emotions and emotional content permeate all of planning work. From emotional exchanges, including those that lack emotion, to the emotional states of groups and organizations, we cannot escape the effects of our emotive sides. It behooves us to better understand the workings of this largely unacknowledged domain of planning and to gain some insight into how we can better navigate it. Should we try to influence or direct the ebbs and flows of emotions and what can we learn from the way practitioners handle them?

Central to the capacity to relate to others, as exemplified by the various components of the Empathic Leadership framework, is the ability to read and acknowledge emotions. Relating to another person or another perspective requires understanding the full spectrum of influences that govern their thinking. Emotions are clearly part of that spectrum. Empathy, while not an emotion in itself, requires facility and confidence in engaging emotions. The Oxford dictionary defines empathy as the "power of projecting one's personality into (and so fully comprehending) [the] object of contemplation." (Oxford 1988:315). So while it does not necessarily follow that empathic understanding include emotional literacy, such an understanding would be incomplete without recognizing the presence and power of emotions in any perspective and particularly in planning work.

### **Emotion as Seed of Vision**

Without exception, any discussion of a vision or a goal by any of the sustainability planners was charged with emotion. The starting point of a vision, with all its power and influence, springs forth from an emotional state. Not only is it a catalyst that spurred the Sustainability Planners to work in this area, but it is such a powerful source of inspiration that it fuels their passion to persevere in pursuing their vision. Sebastian's raw articulation of his position is unusual in its directness but typical in its underlying premise of agitating towards a future that is more sustainable.

*In those areas of conflict right now, and what's happening to my planet is an area of conflict big time right now, I'm absolutely freaked out by it. I'm infuriated by it. I am hugely stimulated by it and give me the power and I'll do something about it, you know, I won't be a Buddhist in that area (Moffatt 2002). Sebastian's entry into this work was not inspired by any one single incident nor did he experience an epiphany of major proportions. Rather, he describes a whole range of factors that came together to have him be interested in and dedicated to*

sustainability. What is remarkable here is the emotion with which he speaks about the planet. It is not just a matter of work or planning professionalism. It is a passion derived from his core as a human being who feels that his planet is threatened. His stake in the process of affecting change is deep and personal. Cheeying's statement is similarly charged, *the whole thing about consumption really freaks me out so social equity is really important to me* (Ho 2003a).

This position is not uncommon among many of the friends and colleagues with whom I have worked on sustainability issues. In a preliminary research study<sup>34</sup> of four community activists, I found that thoughts of danger related to global injustice and impending collapse played a large motivational role in the lives of those I studied. It is part of an environmental culture that traverses many generations and has the attraction and seduction of being ethically derived and morally positioned as a sweeping evolving judgment of social and environmental injustice. It is also clearly steeped in emotional substance. That is not to negate its legitimacy but rather to acknowledge its power as a driving force and as a source of resilience in the face of opposition. It can be rationalized and frequently is, but the conviction and purpose that come out of that rationalization is very much an emotional position.

Johnny's journey was long and infused with many factors that over the years culminated in his adopting sustainability as a vision and a strategy for the GVRD. He describes listening to a talk by Jack Layton at the Canadian Federation of Municipalities conference. *He got into his own motivation about sustainability, and his own belief that there was no scientific evidence that convinced him that the species would be around in six generations time and a whole bunch of other stuff along those lines. I went to a few other sessions at the conference and I found myself with one of those surges of "My God this is crucial, this is important, this is centrally relevant to where we're going." I also detected the enormous buzz that was going around in everybody else. Everybody got excited at the conference. It really grabbed people. One issue or another really grabbed people so I reflected on it coming back on the plane and said, "This is it!" The notion of what Vancouver is, what it means to people, how it can hand down to the next generation, and the generation after that, and how it relates to this global context, is where I want to take this* (Carline 2003a).

It is not only Johnny's own excitement that is important here, but also his realization that others were equally excited and that this was an issue around which he could galvanize support. It had the emotional resonance of a strong vision and it made particular sense for the Vancouver region. Here was an approach and a rationale to regional planning that makes it legitimate, necessary and exciting. Johnny recognized from the outset the significance of emotional appeal to his staff and constituents. He characterized it as excitement and the incitement of passion, and that people would feel a visceral connection to the idea and the vision of a sustainable region and he set about to create and recreate that connection.

*My first period in the GVRD was spent essentially putting it in order, giving it some credibility to the Board and putting appropriate budgeting and control systems, in and breaking down the silos, and I came to a point where, "OK, you've made a lot of progress, you've got a lot of Board buy-in and*

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<sup>34</sup> This was an exploratory research project intended to inform this dissertation. I interviewed four women who were activists in four very different areas of sustainability covering the range of economic, environmental and social activism.

*all the rest of it, but gee what we need now is something positive." We've done all this training, we now know. We're now a proper organization but that's nothing inspirational. Very few people get turned on by "wow, its time to do program planning again," or "gosh this budget system really works." Yeah there is a certain analytical pleasure in it for analytical types, but most people won't get excited. It's a means to an end. What's the end?... We've got this lean, mean organization. It now needs to be motivating. This organization is capable of doing something, letting loose and give it an objective to go and achieve. Conscious reflection on that eventually led to the Sustainable Region Initiative (Carline 2003b).*

Cheeying also describes very simply what excites her about the work she does. Hers is a more focused and tangible vision of urban neighbourhoods but her excitement was evident as she talked. *We talk about vibrant communities a lot and I love being able to walk somewhere and just sit down and have a coffee and just watch street life go by. So personally I love the vibrancy of some of the Vancouver neighbourhoods that's why I would never live in any of the suburbs (Ho 2003a).* More than the simple statement of personal preference, this is the revelation of a deep-rooted impetus to be working in the area of Smart Growth with its requisite focus on limiting urban sprawl and replacing it with compact and complete communities. Cheeying is personally driven and motivated at the level of preferred personal experience and excitement by the kinds of neighbourhoods she and her organization are working towards building. It goes much deeper, however, than superficial aesthetics or an affinity for a cosmopolitan experience. It is about what such "vibrancy" represents. *I went to Portland for the Growth Management Leadership Alliance meeting... and it was then that I just met all these Smart Growth activists across the U.S. and they were talking about equity issues, around poverty and race and housing, and I thought, oh "My God, this is so it!" This is really bringing in the social justice stuff, in a better way and it was so integrated, and here we had people who could argue for transportation, and argue for affordable housing...it brought things together for me so I was very motivated after that (Ho 2003b).*

The balance of emotions, or motivational factors that needs to be achieved requires sensitivity to the reaction of its intended audience. In his lectures on the impending global ecological collapse Bill Rees talks about spiritual rejuvenation as a means to remain optimistic.<sup>35</sup> Different practitioners have different methods of attaining that rejuvenated state, but a recurring concept I found was that the kinds of frightening scenarios of social disintegration and ecological malfunction that motivate people to act and dedicate their lives to sustainability need to be tempered with optimism and driven by hope. Otherwise the reality of our present global condition becomes too tragic and debilitating. Johnny describes a sensitivity to the importance of hope in how he has had to shift his own approach to telling the sustainability story to different communities. *I've now turned it a little bit around to look at a more positive approach for this region to sort of say this region's got some great things that we all treasure. It's got some problems we all want to address, [but] we all want to a) hand it down to our kids in a good fashion and b) we want to set, not exactly a model for the world... at least provide no grounds for people dealing with even bigger problems to look at us and say well they're not doing anything. Why should we even try (Carline 2003a).*

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<sup>35</sup> Bill Rees is co-inventor of the Ecological Footprint concept and lectures widely throughout the world on ecological economics and the current paradigmatic deference to economic growth. He is also Professor of Ecological Planning at the School of Community and Regional Planning at UBC.



### Passion: Emotion as Vector and Conduit of Vision

Once instigated, the vision of sustainability itself requires sustenance. Without exception, there came a moment in every interview I conducted with each of the Sustainability Planners when a typical tone of explanatory dialogue was interrupted by a quicker pace and an animated expression. It was a spark of excitement that called attention to itself as the source of continued inspiration for those who carried it. I recognized it as a seductive web of hope that drew me to its centre. This is not mere poetic prose. This is a glimpse of the inner drive that feeds the vision of sustainability planners and it is the drive that draws others to them. It is passion. Passion is a foundation that sustainability planners build on for their own internal drive and it is also an emotion that they cultivate in others.

When I asked Johnny how he builds his staff's excitement about sustainability and what he does with it, he replied *I stir it up as much as I can, with speeches, videos, personal visits, asking them how they're doing and getting really involved and delighted and excited myself about it and reinforcing the notion that they have this enormous opportunity to influence, and they're doing it. Repeating the success stories, trying to broadcast the success stories internally and externally getting whatever coverage and feedback we can. Getting an organization which has had a long time engineering culture to kind of say its OK to be really excited and its OK to say God I really believe in this, and it's happening* (Carline 2003a).

*I'm teaching [my daughter] that one can make a difference and that being passionate is important and you know it isn't just about drawing a pay-cheque. Using your head and working with people can be exciting and helpful to society* (Fields 2003b).

When I asked Mike Costello, who at the time was the President of BC Hydro, what is Bruce Sampson's most effective attribute in the sustainability work that he does, his simple reply was "passion!" *"Passion, that word is thrown around a lot these days but believe me, he has an incredible single focused passion for this issue... He doesn't wing it, he is well researched, thoroughly researches what he does, and you combine that with the passion. Those would be his attributes, so that then makes him an example, and a salesman for sustainability"* (Costello 2003). Mike also credits Bruce's passion for BC Hydro's international networking success, *I am sure, that because of Bruce's passion and knowledge of this issue he was able to get us into [the World Business Council of Sustainable Development] almost instantaneously* (Costello 2003). Bruce himself links networking with passion, *it has to be driven by passion, you have to really want to network, because you have to free up a lot of time for this. It's not an easy issue so you have to really want to do it* (Sampson 2003a). Here we get a glimpse of how passion is a motivator that drives its holder to work harder and dig a little deeper to perform in ways that might otherwise seem unnecessary. Sebastian describes how he makes use of this internal drive to fuel his work. *All of a sudden the passion and the work came right together and I felt like I could really do something here and that's the point I'm making, that part of what makes everything work for me and to ride the ups and downs of the consulting business, and to put the extra hours and time into really wanting to do a good job, is that this is what I am here to do. It just feels right* (Moffatt 2002).

The Sustainability Planners themselves need passion to perform, but they also seek to cultivate it in their staff so that they too will be driven to perform and contribute to the building of the vision and the change. As Johnny puts it, *you don't do that [get a commitment for sustainability] by writing technical reports or whatever, you have to do a lot of face to face presentations where people can feel your belief and see your passion and get a bit of it and start to*

*understand it from your point of view and ask any questions they want and feel (Carline 2003a). For an idea to catch on it really comes down to the infectious enthusiasm and drive of the people who are promoting it and you've met Bruce, he's got it in spades (Costello 2003).*

The recipients of a message need to be moved by what it represents or what it promises. The vision that sustainability planners hold is not a sterile stoic set of conditions that they are mechanically moving towards. It is a dream, a hope, a desire, an aspiration and a conviction. It comes from a strong belief and is propelled and preserved by strong belief. It requires passion. When Johnny was searching for a new vision for the region to revise the Livable Region Strategic Plan he did not begin by looking for quotas or standards to be met. He searched for a dream: a dream that would captivate the collective imagination of the citizens of the region and would inspire them to act and become involved. He describes his own internal dialogue. *I said we've got to find something that really addresses what people are concerned about, we've really got to do it in a way that would get them excited about the future of the region again (Carline 2003a).*

Johnny also describes how the sustainability "fever" overtook his staff. *We've been going through this process of what does this mean and what can you do and you're in a unique position to influence the future of this organization and through it the future of the region. Only you can do it. You've got to do it by going back to your jobs and really seeing how your jobs can contribute to sustainability... Its unbelievable the passionate responses we're getting back and I'm totally surprised by them. We won an award last year from some people doing this down in a wastewater treatment plant. I heard the engineers making a presentation on the [sustainability of the] filtration plant to the water committee the other day and I hadn't reviewed it, I hadn't pushed it... (Carline 2003a).* Johnny saw that the passion that had spread through the organization had created an organizational momentum with a range of outcomes directed at sustainability. The engineers who were not the initial proponents of the new sustainability mandate of the organization had taken it upon themselves to link their work to that mandate. Their excitement bred a commitment to invest in a mandate beyond their typical scope and they were successful enough to win an award. The culture had been created through an infectious passion and Johnny no longer had to personally oversee every sustainability initiative.

What is this passion that spreads within a person and jumps out to infect others. Mike describes Bruce's passion as being informed persistence. *If you had this conversation with Bruce five years ago he would have said, this is important, climate change is happening and we have to deal with this in a holistic way. Now he has the conversation with you and he grabs you by your shirt and says, "Do you get this?" That's passion (Costello 2003).* There is clearly a sense of urgency that is communicated through this kind of passion. It sounds almost confrontational but not in an aggressive or malicious way. There are other characteristics that are at play here. Cheeying was on the receiving end of an impassioned message when she heard Jeb Brugman<sup>36</sup> give a presentation on sustainability initiatives in cities across the world. She describes the balance of characteristics that made her instantly admire his ability as a spokesperson for sustainability, *he was talking about the strategic city... and I was just*

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<sup>36</sup> Brugman is an expert on sustainable cities and is principal of City-States in Toronto. He was hosted by the Greater Vancouver Regional District to give lectures and conduct workshops on sustainable cities as part of the Sustainable Region Initiative.

*sitting there thinking wow he sounds like a passionate guy, excellent presenter, really clear and neat ideas, and I just liked his persona (Ho 2003b).*

Sebastian describes the balance of attributes that he and one of his co-workers at the time exhibit when they are communicating sustainability issues. *I listen to Elisa talk, and something comes across from her when she's doing public speaking, that I think I also do... We're both really well read, really committed and fairly good with words, but we're not being flippant. We are not flippant. When she talks I hear someone who cares, who is genuinely caring about you, the listener, and about the ideas. What you hear is a lot of caring that comes through about the ideas... She can be fun and easy and relaxed and it can be a gracefulness in the presentation and that's delightful to listen to and watch. It really engenders some respect and some cooperation on the part of everybody. They get this feeling of: great, I really like this person because they are showing some caring about what they're talking about, they really genuinely care (Moffatt 2003).*

Caring here is important. It is not a blind indifferent or insensitive passion, but rather one rooted in genuine concern for a collective state of well-being. The passion does not proceed unaffected by people and events. It envelopes them and is affected by them. At least that is what happens when a vision becomes infectious. In addition to caring and sensitivity to others a recurring theme here is the balancing of passion with knowledge in the traditional areas of science and technology. We see it in Michael's comments about Bruce, we see it in Sebastian's comments, and Daryl also describes it as one of her strengths. *I think I had in the last week two different people say you're very logical and you're very passionate... Someone said so and so can do this presentation but you bring so much more passion to it, so we prefer that you do the presentation (Fields 2003b).* So the knowledge is a given, perhaps because it has for so long been at the forefront of professional credentials. Knowledge of substantive issues is taken for granted as the base from which every sustainability planner operates. What sets a sustainability leader apart is her passion and her capacity to communicate excitement, conviction and hope around issues that might otherwise seem mundane.

Sebastian speaks proudly of an occasion on which he managed to stir excitement through his own passion, *a senior environmental scientist from the government came up afterwards and said to me, your presentation is the stuff my dreams get made of. That was really interesting feedback to get from somebody. We're talking about water systems here, Maged, water systems! But what I've done is elevate the subject such that people can really get excited about what they're doing and where it's going. That, I think, is something that comes from me being able to not be attached to the ideas. I'm not trying to get power out of the whole thing, it's not my source of power, it's my genuine passion, that's all it is (Moffatt 2003).*

Passion here is not the dogged adherence to a single idea, but rather a detachment from single ideas and a devotion to larger issues however they may be implemented. Passion is not something you can simply acquire to perform a task but it seems essential for building and communicating a vision. It comes from convictions and beliefs that provide fulfillment on intellectual as well as emotional and spiritual levels. In every case I studied passion may start with simple enthusiasm but it can only endure through a deep self-awareness and a sense of knowing oneself and knowing what matters to you in your vision of the world.

### Emotion as Vulnerability

The counterpart of passion as motivational force is passion as source of vulnerability. Caring exposes you to pain when you suffer setbacks in those areas you care about. In doing my research I encountered a degree of prejudice against the idea of giving weight or credence to emotions as a legitimate factor in discourse or in arriving at decisions. The stigma of emotions as fueled by the Enlightenment and Modernity endures. Emotions and emotional expression are afforded weight and are recognized as being present throughout planning work, but the idea that emotions alone are insufficient persist for two reasons. The first seems to have its roots in the idea that the expression of emotion is a sign of weakness. If you become emotional then you have lost your capacity for reason or deliberative action. The second reason is more utilitarian. For emotional positions or expressions to translate into "workable" factors they somehow need to enter the more mutually examinable territory of rational expression. This is a common strategy for dealing with emotional expression and Sustainability Planners achieve it in different ways.

Cheeyng recounts an event when she was personally insulted in an email message sent to an organization's listserve. She was targeted and attacked and her credibility and integrity were questioned. By any measure it was a traumatizing experience yet she felt somewhat guilty about her reaction. *I just went home and cried and that wasn't really a very good way of handling it* (Ho 2003b). The specific details of what happened may in fact reveal that there were better ways of handling that particular situation but Cheeyng's judgment is rooted in what she perceived as a momentary lapse of emotional poise and stability. Other planners displayed similar prejudices but were reluctant to share with me stories of those challenging moments when they became emotional or distraught. I felt that I would have had to spend much more time with them to establish sufficient rapport and trust for them to feel like the occasional seemingly negative story would not taint my image of them. The issue here is that it continues to be seen as a negative characteristic to experience distress. It is not considered integral to life. This is a cultural phenomenon worth exploring because it demands of us that our lives always be heroic and devoid of weakness. Any social change, particularly one that is as holistically ambitious as sustainability will necessarily require struggling with weakness. Yet we deny it. If it is negative we deny its existence.

I was facilitating a workshop on ecological architecture a few years ago when one of the workshop participants started to cry mid-sentence. The ideas she was explaining were not particularly moving but the magnitude of the change that she imagined to be necessary for society to be healthy was simply overwhelming. She began to cry and could not speak. Her silence spoke louder than anything that she could have said. It spoke of sadness and of fear. The collective reaction by other participants was a different kind of silence, pregnant with meaning and littered with uncomfortable quick glances. Through our silent gestures we told her we sympathized with her and even pitied her. Some of the looks I got as a facilitator fumbling to create a safe space for her implied that the state of the world was all very tragic, of course, but that she was being weak and sentimental. We quietly required of her that she pull herself together and that we get back to the subject at hand. We chose not to recognize that she had presented to us before our very eyes the essence of that subject we were so desperate to return to. That what was being suggested as an architecture of the future may well be inventive and exciting but was ludicrously ambitious and would require monumental shifts in perception by everyone from politicians to construction workers. By ignoring our vulnerability, and the very common fear of radical change, we made ourselves

all the more vulnerable to not being effective in being catalysts for the change we were purportedly championing.

Sebastian goes further with the idea of vulnerability and presents it as a desirable state of being when communicating a sustainability vision. *The fear-based presentation, the stuffed shirt stuff, is I know this and you don't. My power comes from what I know and all the rest of it. If you're really genuinely in there, with two feet, it's different... If your strength comes from, or your power comes from, vulnerability then you are much more approachable for everybody than if your strength comes from whatever else, money, knowledge, age, sex, colour, and all those other things... You know that when you see great speakers talk, they are humble people. They are not on a mission to convince themselves through you that they're worthwhile, because if they are, who's got the time for that?* (Moffatt 2003). Humility here seems interchangeable with vulnerability. Your humble state allows you to be accepting of the possibility of being hurt. You are perpetually prepared to be hurt. You are humble and vulnerable and therefore approachable and empowered all at once. Power comes from the ability to tolerate setbacks. Indeed setbacks are expected. Approachability comes from the ability to see others as partners and equals in the project of change. This is the ideal and not necessarily the practice. I saw glimpses of it in all the planners I observed. Some seemed to exhibit it more frequently than others. My notes on Larry Beasley are peppered with the same phrase over and over again: humble confidence. Larry has an air of humility and confidence that makes him seem approachable yet powerful at the same time.

Another kind of vulnerability I came across is in the blinding power of conviction. Proponents of an idea can sometimes believe so strongly in that idea that they become singularly focused. Their absolute conviction may cause them to behave aggressively and independently in their quest to achieve their goal. Sebastian illustrates this point clearly when he says *on issues of passion, where I have a conclusion and I want to make a change, of course, I'll use whatever power I have to make the world the way I want to make it* (Moffatt 2002). There is no pretence of inclusion here or participatory decision making. This is a clear case of righteousness and ownership of a moral authority. As unilateral and shocking as this statement may seem it is honest and it uncovers an underlying contradiction between believing strongly in an outcome while at the same time seeking a majority or consensus decision in achieving that outcome.

Finally, there is a type of emotional vulnerability that created the age-old prejudice against emotions: moodiness. In some cases individuals are simply ineffective at work that requires human interaction when their ability to interact in a respectful way is not reliable. Susan describes how it is easier to reach such seemingly unavailable people when they are youth. In dealing with emotionally difficult youth she has found some degree of success, not so with adults. *It was supposed to be this socially inclusive thing when we were building the nursery. We wanted to work with this woman and we were trying to negotiate and work out this contract with her, so that she could do the metal work on it. She was completely unreasonable, impossible to work with. And even though we made all of these attempts, we even sent a delegation down to her office... so my experiences in that way and dealing with adults, I find them harder typically to break down the barriers. Not impossible necessarily, but harder* (Kurbis 2003b).

Through this work and that of many others who are trying to make room for emotions and to find mechanisms for constructively building emotional content into planning work, it is

important not to romanticize emotions as a magical indicator of the real issues at play. Emotions are many and varied and can indiscriminantly traverse arenas. Toxic emotions carry over from personal and home environments to work environments, from childhood to adulthood, and even, as will become apparent in the coming pages from one area of work to another. Planners should certainly be alert to emotional content and to its expression but they cannot hope to be able to heal or even diffuse trauma wherever they come across it. In some cases they can, especially if the trauma is related to planning issues,<sup>37</sup> but there will invariably be cases where the trauma can only be revealed let alone healed through professional psychotherapy.

### Emotion as Possibility and Opportunity

The power of emotion as a driving force for galvanizing support and harnessing momentum cannot be overstated. The passion that seemed essential as a starting point for individual planners is complemented here by the outward and collective communication of excitement. As opportunities arise and success is achieved, even in small ways, a certain momentum starts to build. The excitement of one person or a team can quickly spread to involve a larger team and a greater capacity for action. In a conversation I had with one of the sustainability planners she described the conviction and deep enthusiasm that she observed in the work of another sustainability planner, "it just seems like he is taking on this religion and he's evangelical about it... he's great."

Bruce recounted an incident when he had a particularly successful meeting with the Board of Directors of BC Hydro. He exhibited obvious excitement when he told me about the aftermath of the meeting. *I had one of the best lunches I had following the meeting saying let's keep pushing on this.* He gestured with a clenched fist indicating determination and a positive outlook. He went on to describe in great detail the technical milestones that he was striving to achieve. *For the next ten years we're going to spend 600 million dollars to try and reduce load by about 3500 Gigawatt hours, which is huge. There is no other utility even close. So now the challenge is OK what can we do in the next ten-year block? Can we do more than that?* (Sampson 2003b). He came back to these measures of success later in the interview. *We'll be going over that in the next management team to try to assess how far we can push the envelope on the PowerSmart piece and then renew focus on ResourceSmart which is the eco-efficiency piece of getting more and more existing facilities [to be more efficient] and then you've got the clean energy portfolio so yeah its really exciting* (Sampson 2003b).

He did not have to tell me that it was exciting. His entire being spoke of excitement. Even though he seemed relaxed in his posture he was smiling broadly, his eyes were open and expressive, he spoke with energy and his hand gesticulated with a rhythm that matched every milestone he was after. I too could not help but be excited. I could not help but be drawn into his excited state. It was instructive for me to experience this as a researcher but I imagined how much more inspiring it would be if I was actually an employee of BC Hydro or on one of the many teams that Bruce is a member of in his sustainability work. I would be motivated to work and produce and build on this excitement. Bruce stated the obvious

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<sup>37</sup> Wendy Sarkissian's work at Eagleby is an excellent example of a planner's facilitation of healing on the scale of a neighbourhood community.

when he said, *typically more stuff gets done when people have a strong passion for it* (Sampson 2003).

He displayed his passion and that display alone was infectious. He did not have to give a motivational speech or to incite fear about impending doom to win my enthusiasm. He simply modeled it for me. Of course I am predisposed to find Bruce's excitement appealing. His work and efforts fit into my perspective of what is desirable and necessary in the world. As Larry points out emotional allegiances are very individualistic. *People will hear something, and if it feels good to them they are your supporters in doing something, and if it doesn't feel good for them they are not your supporters. It is very important to have people articulating something powerfully strong, which is why the new mayor is such a strong leader for us, because he's strongly, at a very visceral level, vested something out there as a vision for us that we agree with as a city organization, and our citizens bought in* (Beasley 2004b).

This vision that the citizens of Vancouver have bought into belies a more complicated distinction between the holder of a vision and the audience and potential advocates or co-holders of that vision. Rather than being an exercise of aligning ideological idiosyncrasies, Empathic Leadership requires the harnessing of emotions into discernable issues for discussion. Larry describes this process through recounting a particularly raucous public meeting. *I was chairing a meeting of several hundred citizens where people were standing up and screaming and running down and throwing things and getting into arguments and having fights about things, because this was very emotional, these issues are very emotional. But even more to the point, because you come, any citizen comes at issues in a very experiential way, because for more citizens these issues are not kind of the bread and butter of their day. If they're lawyers, engineers, factory workers, taxi drivers, family people, whatever they do in their lives, they also have very little tolerance to go through an intellectual exercise. Therefore an awful lot is based on managing the emotion or what I call managing the myths, as much as managing the facts. And I don't mean that for personal manipulation, I mean that for the purposes of enabling people to participate in a meaningful way to come to judgments that matter, but also it's where leadership and vision do come in as a strongly tangible pool to tap into people's emotions* (Beasley 2004b).

Managing emotions is very much what this chapter is about. As Larry points out it is not the manipulative mechanistic sense of the word management that comes to bear, but rather, its organizing and coordinating quality. Being sensitive and receptive to emotional expression, knowing when and how to give people time to express it, and knowing how to channel and harness its power is critically important for championing a vision across diverse groups with diverse interests. Managing or coordinating emotions is therefore central to the relational capability of Empathic Leadership.

Vancouver is probably unique in that many of its citizens already harbour some emotional attachment to a vague notion of livability and environmental quality. A number of the Sustainability Planners talked about this unique characteristic of the majority of citizens having common aspirations for the future of the region. Patrick touches upon it in his description of the level of commitment he was able to secure in a sustainable communities Smart Growth design charrette process. *I think actually throughout the Lower Mainland in BC, and you wouldn't get the same thing in Houston, but throughout the Lower Mainland of BC people pretty much want these principles. They already want this stuff and they're frustrated because they can't get it. So in our communities, Maple Ridge, like all others, you can't get this stuff. They can't*

*get complete communities. They can't get places that are nice to walk around. They're saddened by the destruction of the streams in their town. All these things they want but they somehow can't get. So if they're city staff, they are frustrated. If they're elected officials they are frustrated. So when we come along they say, "oh good, maybe this will work", and that's basically why. It is really a good question to ask, because you have to ask yourself yeah why would a city invite somebody from outside in, and that's the answer. It's because they're frustrated. Because they know that they've tried to do it in the past and it hasn't really happened (Condon 2004b).*

This is the same kind of sentiment that Johnny recognized and was trying to tap into when he set out to review the Livable Region Strategic Plan. *A review of the LRSP itself was neither going to give us the scope to deal with the things that were going to be relevant to people's concerns. Nor was it going to bring people together, I thought, because it wouldn't grab them (Carline 2003a).* So instead of a simple review, Johnny launched the Sustainable Region Initiative to capture the imagination of citizens and to cultivate excitement. Johnny, Larry and Patrick describe the feeling in the region as a latent force that is out there waiting to be tapped into. It is connected to the identity of the region and the desire of its residents to continue to live in a beautiful, scenic and clean naturally adorned urban setting.

### **Emotion as Divisive Force**

Uncontrolled, unmanaged and unacknowledged, emotions can be an ugly and divisive force. At best it is a distraction and at worst it can be hurtful and traumatic for participants in a planning process. These are the manifestations of emotions that are problematic to planners. Johnny describes how the regional Master Plan only became an issue once it involved a specific issue of great importance to the average citizen: the vehicle levy proposal<sup>38</sup> that was brought to a referendum in the Vancouver region. It is a classic case of polarization, anger and animosity along a clear demarcation between two sides of an issue. *The physical implementation of this plan [Livable Region Strategic Plan] or whatever it was, was not present in their every day life. So it just kind of faded away and only came back in the end through the transportation back door with people's increasing frustration with congestion and then the total blow up over financing and the solutions to that and that got everybody really divided. There were some very ugly scenes in our Board Room, in our public meetings, with clashes between people representing the central city and suburban interests, economic interests, environmental interests and so on (Carline 2003a).*

Animosity and anger also well up within organizations on a smaller scale irrespective of the wider coalitions that may support a particular position. Cheeying describes a conflict that created division in an organization she used to work for. It started with passion for a particular vision for the role of the organization and a dogmatic and steadfast reluctance to alter that vision in any way. The result was an ideological split that created a rift and eventually a parting between two groups. Cheeying was one of the leaders behind an evolution of the vision and was attacked for her position. *Everybody [knew] all the stuff going on, and it wasn't just me who felt it, everybody felt the attacks if they were coming... and I felt this way about... activists. They're really passionate but they tend to be quite single minded... (Ho 2003b).* Cheeying goes on to reflect on her own actions in the conflict. *When I was frustrated*

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<sup>38</sup> This was a proposal, that went to a public referendum in 2002, to tax vehicle use in the region to generate income for public transit projects.



*it was very obvious that I was very frustrated and I didn't know how to deal with these Board members who I just thought, they just don't get it, they do not get it... I could have been a lot more diplomatic, sometimes I was just plain frustrated and I felt like I was hitting my head against the wall. There was one Board member who was there, who basically said to me. "I'm a Director you do what I say," type thing. And I still don't agree with her method. It was about voter education and she wanted to rate candidates, and I said, "I can't do that, we cannot, we just can't do that." She said, "well I'm on the Board and you should do what I say." It was weird, very weird. (Ho 2003b).* The events that Cheeeying describes were actions instigated by passions rooted in a particular vision, which in turn elicited reactions and a different kind of passion. The result was not so much one perspective against another, although that was the underlying disagreement. The explicit division manifested itself as one set of passions against another. Neither the experience, not the results were positive. What seemed missing was the process of mutually acknowledging the intensity of each other's emotions and each other's legitimacy in having a fundamental disagreement about the direction that the organization would take.

*One always needs to look at the relationships that happen in a bureaucracy as simply relationships among people where loves and hates can become as important in terms of the day as the issue of the day. Or where the issue of the morning can cloud the issue of the afternoon. Or the experience of the issue of the morning can cloud the issue of the afternoon... Several weeks ago, with another senior person, in the morning we had a very major struggle out of which this other senior person was feeling quite resentful. In the afternoon we had a meeting where we highly agreed on something but we couldn't agree that afternoon, so we both intuitively cancelled the afternoon. We waited a few days and then we had a meeting on that item and then we came to a working conclusion very quickly and off we ran (Beasley 2004b).*

Larry's approach is effective when there is an opportunity to step back and take time to cool off. There are many occasions however when the fallout of confrontation and animosity is immediate. The mediation and conflict resolution literature is full of examples when even in those circumstances you have to be able to take a break or call a time-out. Shifting the adversarial space of attack is a delicate issue. On the one hand you do not want to trivialize the anger and hurt, but at the same time you do not want to reward aggression. I watched Susan handle a conflict situation with such finesse that I almost missed the incident altogether. What seemed unique about her approach was her manner and her tone, and not the words she spoke. The words were as typical an acknowledgement as I always hear: something in the vein of you are angry and you have every right to be angry. It was the lack of any hint of condescension that I found remarkable. There was no implied hierarchy of behavioural maturity. There was no pity, or feigned sympathy, or any sign of irritation at the delay. It was a simple acknowledgement that someone in the group was experiencing a severe discomfort that any one of the group members could at any time experience. It was a simple reality and that we as a group would take the time to address it. Years later she describes the process in very simple terms. *Where it's going to hurt somebody you can isolate it somewhat, take them to the side and figure something out, so that's normally what we do, is talk it out, acknowledge it and try and deal with it as quickly as we can and as openly as we can (Kurbis 2003b).*

*I think some people don't like strong emotions. It's something I really appreciate. [I appreciate] that emotions are out there on the table because then you can deal with them. You deal with them openly*

*and talk about them. The first thing you're supposed to do is to acknowledge that you hear what they're saying and repeat after them. Make sure that they understand that you understand, even if you disagree. Doesn't really matter, they need to know that you're hearing what they're saying* (Kurbis 2003b)

There is no doubt that emotional outbursts require time and energy and take away from the flow of any planned agenda. They are unpredictable and disruptive but also unavoidable. We know that negative emotions, expressed aggressively or guarded stubbornly, are an inescapable component of planning for change. Planner processes would be better served if they included a temporal and financial contingency for emotional processing. Such resources need not be exclusively dedicated to negativity but could equally capitalize on the relationship forming and building positive emotions. Daryl describes how she would rather endure the trials of negativity if it means she could benefit from the positives of passion. *I don't have a problem with emotion, ... I have a problem with emotion when it's disrespectful and disruptive, intentionally disruptive and manipulatively disruptive. I have a problem with that, but no, passion is what drives stuff. God, I'd much prefer to be out of a job with lots of passion than have no passion and be in a job* (Fields 2003b).

### Emotion as Cohesive force

I found the idea that positive emotions should be deliberately used to balance out negative emotions to be widely used both in terms of the individual professional and the larger organization. *I think the big issue for me is when you feel like what you're doing is the right path and feel it in your bones, ... as you go down that path events reinforce that you're on the right path, and it gives you a lot of energy to try and deal with negative emotions with positive emotions* (Sampson 2003). I also found evidence of a larger sensitivity to the ebbs and flows of emotions in a wider public process. Common aspirations for a particular future can be a strong mobilizing force that brings people together around specific issues. Johnny describes the early impetus behind the Livable Region Strategic Plan. *We went through this history in the late eighties and early nineties of rapid growth that led to people having a fear about the future of the region. That brought people together, at least those who were interested and active enough to notice. It brought us together around some kind of vision around the future of this region, expressed in the LRSP. It wasn't a terribly widely understood or embraced plan, but for urban activists and community leaders... there was a sense, for the first time that the region had some significance to people* (Carline 2003a).

Over time, however, that cohesion proved to be limited to a group of people with a professional or personal interest in urban issues. The sentiment of working towards a vision for the region was not universal; indeed the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) continued to be relatively unknown. Over the last three years the work of the GVRD has become more known through its association with regional transportation issues but it has also been disputed and challenged. The controversy continues with the GVRD's Sustainable Region Initiative but Johnny is undaunted. He continues to believe in the underlying commonality of values of the people of the region. The following few paragraphs of Johnny describing his experience promoting sustainability as a vision for the region illustrate the degree to which the common vision is an emotional sentiment rather than a universal public interest in the traditional planning sense of being an articulation of a specific desirable physical outcome. *When we were invisible at least we were invisible delivering water and*

*processing sewage, and if you talked to anybody, they'd go "oh yeah, do you do that, oh that's good, you know, that's OK." Now we're very visible and very relevant but very kind of controversial and unpopular so what we have been talking about in sustainability, is that this is in fact the opportunity, at the community level, for people to come back together and say, you know, whether you live in Langley or whether you live in False Creek, there is something we have in common here. That basic thing is we actually love this region and we don't want to screw it up in terms of what we hand down to future generations. We do not want to use this region up, we do not want to leave a Los Angeles or a Chicago or something awful to our future generations (Carline 2003a).*

*It does seem more difficult for kids these days than it was for us in our days, and yeah we would like a city where our kids and our grandchildren have a reasonable chance of earning a decent living and having a good life. There are all these issues about crime and drugs and maybe some of it is driven by the newspapers, and we are concerned about that. We are concerned that we are kind of, on the positive side, you know continue to have flourishing arts, sports recreation, outdoor things, and yeah we love this environment and we are concerned about the yellow pall down the Fraser Valley. We'd like to see it go away, we'd like to see the fresh snow on the mountains, its very important to us, we like the idea of the rivers having fish in them. We don't want them to become urban sewers and we get quite worked up about it (Carline 2003a).*

*You don't have to push them very much before they kind of say, you're absolutely right and there is no division there, everybody agrees that that's what they want. I even got in trouble with a business group when I said, you know, your focus will be on the economy I know, and they just said "what do you mean. We care about this place, we care about the environment we're in, we care about the social institutions and the social welfare, and the poverty and homelessness. We bleed like everybody else. Don't pigeon hole us into just being business," which I found very gratifying. They got quite passionate about it (Carline 2003a).*

*They said parks are precious, we should raise taxes to pay for parks. I was shocked, I'm in the Chamber of Commerce and... "yes parks are a very important part of our regional heritage and stop screwing around with them we don't want this kind of stuff." So they got passionate, they got inspired. The same [happens] even at the political level. Allan Williams who was a Councilor in West Vancouver, he used to be the Attorney General in the Social Credit party, and is now well into his seventies. He is respected, and I don't think he would mind my calling him a somewhat curmudgeonly politician. He just retired, and at one time when we were forming the GVTA which he opposed, he got up at the large Council of Councils and called me the most dangerous man in the region. When I concluded my Sustainable Region Initiative presentation to the West Vancouver Council, he turned around and said this is probably the best thing the GVRD will ever do. If you can engage the regional public in actually seriously talking about its future and seriously looking at the decisions that have to be made at the regional level to secure that, that would be the greatest thing you'll ever do (Carline 2003a).*

Johnny was visibly moved by what he described as Allan getting passionate. He saw it as an indication that the appetite for a future-centred discourse by all citizens of the region is strong. We see a picture of a common identity forming yet it is untested. It is relatively easy to seek and find excitement around the prospect of making decisions based on the desirability of future scenarios. It invariably proves to be more difficult when you have to face the challenge of deciding between tradeoffs. The circles within which Johnny has been operating to promote regional sustainability and those he mentions are not reflective of the

diversity of the region. They represent powerful voices and important players, but not all the players, further limiting our ability to draw conclusions about the universality or endurance of this perceived regional enthusiasm. What is important here, however, is having an awareness of this public emotion and being able to mobilize it to arrive at the more difficult tasks of collective visioning and inclusive decision making.

Sebastian describes how it takes an emotional connection with people to be able to communicate with them and to harness and work with their feelings. *It's about getting over human inertia and fear and the territorialism and greed and all that stuff that makes people resist change and I think that that ability to speak in language and to actually touch the heart of people, and let them know you know their feelings... is such an incredibly important skill if you want to communicate, and if you want to lead you have to communicate* (Moffatt 2002).

Daryl's work with BC Hydro's Water Use Plans was very much about tackling the difficult task of group decision making. They moved from excitement about making decisions for the future, to strong emotions about entrenched decisions, to consensus. *That's one of the things that Water Use Plans did. We didn't just look at the impact information and then had a heated debate around emotions, we went to the next step, which was to help people understand what their relative values are... there's work that has to be done to understand what one's relative values are, and there are tools and techniques that we've used to help people do that and those are your emotions, so emotions are incredibly important* (Fields 2003b). The simple acknowledgement of emotions is only the first step in bringing people together. To move towards agreement, dialogue and communicative interaction needs to take place. The key to a successful conclusion is strong facilitation that takes emotion from being an expression of disagreement to a source of cohesion, bonding and agreement.

### **The Power of Emotion: An Ever Present Component of Discourse**

A number of planning theorists have discussed the presence of emotions in planning work (see Forester, Sandercock, Throgmorton, Flyvbjerg). When I started this research one of my assertions, based on my reading of planning literature and my assumptions about planning work, was that emotional content is more present in planning work than is generally acknowledged. What I discovered was something much stronger. Emotional content is ever present. There are degrees of emotional expression of course, whereby the research, writing and reading of a technical report is likely less emotionally charged than angry accusations about contested spaces. However even in the case of the technical report it appears incorrect to assume that it is devoid of an emotional charge of some sort.

The way Daryl describes how interpersonal treatment affects the quality of her work environment clarifies how emotions transcend the type of work being performed. Emotions are ever present as long as the work involves other people or teams of people. *I'm pretty clear on my core values and when I am not doing well, it's usually not to do with the work. It's usually to do with interpersonal treatment. How I have been treated, or how someone else has been treated. It comes down to not what actually happened but how it is happening* (Fields 2003b). This is similar to Larry's description about how negativity in one meeting can carry on to the next. The issue is not whether the subject matter lends itself to emotional expression. It is about the coming together of people to work on a project and these people are always, invariably, inherently part emotion.

Seen in this light, the dichotomy between fact and emotion becomes a false one. Data does not sit outside of human interpretation. Data is subject to biased extraction, manipulation, and exploitation. It cannot be disassociated from the ontologies, epistemologies and experiences of those it affects. Yet I consistently find evidence of the dichotomy being perpetuated; emotions being pitted against data. *Affect is as important as any intellectual data or anything like that because the emotions manifest or reflect people's values, people's personal values. This is one of the benefits of the structured process, the structured process does a couple of things, but overall, it allows people to articulate their relative values in a manner which can make sense, in a manner in which other people can hear them* (Fields 2003b). Daryl is not subjugating emotions and making them inferior to rational discourse but stating the need to translate emotions into rational discourse in order to discuss them and incorporate them into decision processes.

Emotions are heightened around decisions over land-use for a variety of reasons ranging from historical marginalization (Sandercock 2003), to environmental protection, to ideological or community aspirations. Larry also cites personal security as a source of passionate concern, whereby the feeling of danger fuels passionate engagement in planning issues. *We're working on some very difficult, difficult problems in the Downtown Eastside and the emotion of security, I mean by this, my personal emotional security. Not me the planner but a community person, or various kinds of community people, is at the very heart of the reality of what we can and can't do there, and what's acceptable and not acceptable. Most citizens come to urban issues in a non-intellectual way and come at them in a visceral way through their experience of the city and their working conclusions are very vested through that experience and express themselves emotionally* (Beasley 2004b).

Once again signs of the dichotomy appear. Larry's closing sentence suggests an oppositional relationship between experiential and intellectual engagement of the issue. Larry continues with a stated need to counter emotions with logical thinking. *While we have to understand the power of emotions, our contributions go beyond emotions, and to match and manage the emotional side of the equation with information and good analysis and logical thinking and decently good process... I think what is important, though, that we not therefore found all of our activities on the principle of just emotions. What I constantly say to my staff is, and to myself, I say this to myself, "the world can be emotional but we must be analytical." So when a staff person comes to me and says, "you know I'm feeling kind of bad about the scale of that building that's there, and you know I just don't think it's very good Larry," I always say that doesn't matter to me, tell me why, let's see the analysis show me the impacts on shadowing and people, go through the analysis and come to a working conclusion attitude that is based on more than your emotions* (Beasley 2004b).

Daryl makes another kind of distinction that relates to decision making. She posits rational justification versus ethical positioning based on moral reasoning. Here she suggests that heightened emotional responses occur when the opposing ideologies confront one another. Sustainability is clearly a shift and a movement that requires a confrontation of ideologies and it will necessarily become heated as we begin to question fundamental paradigmatic assumptions that our society has operated under for decades, if not centuries. *Some of the most heated debates I've had around sustainability are, "are we doing this because it makes good business sense or are we doing this because this is the right thing to do?"* (Fields 2003b)

Emotions are of course present whenever relationships are present. Whether personal or professional, relating to another human being, interacting or communicating in some way is rarely ever neutral (Frost 2003). Whether it is the moodiness of a particular member of staff or the accidental snubbing that occurs when schedules are busy and communication is hurried, emotions are present. The planners I studied all seem aware of the significance of relationships and of the emotional quality of relationships but few seemed to pay particular attention to how they ought to handle emotions.

The prevalence of residual emotional content will invariably increase as planning becomes increasingly communicative in nature. Planners themselves will have to acknowledge their own emotional states, vis-a-vis the communicative process, and they will have to deal with the emotions of others through that process. The Habermasian ideal of communicative deliberation requires us to speak to groups and to speak publicly. Public speaking is a notoriously nerve wracking experience for the majority. That alone requires planners to have facility with making people feel at ease and to diffuse accidental tension and misinterpretation that might arise through simple nervousness in public settings.

I found little evidence of a deliberate attempt to put people at ease in practice. A couple of the Sustainability Planners spoke in general theoretical terms about making sure people felt heard but the reality is that in practice their behaviour varies. On some occasions they are gracious and welcoming of dialogue while on others the planners themselves became defensive about a seeming criticism of their work and their planning process. Reacting with irritation and communicating displeasure at people's critical observations does not create a hospitable environment for open discussion and engaged participation. As you would expect, on those occasions I witnessed defensiveness, participation was either stunted or the criticism became aggressive and caustic, neither of which contribute to healthy constructive thinking. Criticism was most productive when the planner distanced herself from the proposed plan or process and was simply relaxed. Her easy manner and relaxed demeanor put everyone at ease. Moving beyond self-consciousness and focusing exclusively on one's own nervousness to focus on making others feel at ease will become an increasingly important role for planners as they attempt to involve more of the public in more of the decisions around sustainability.

Emotions will always be present to varying degrees as planners interact with others and recognizing the potential of emotions to filter our perceptions and alter our capacities for unfettered interaction is an important first step. Moving beyond recognition to the point of maneuvering through a process while allowing emotional expression, alleviating tension and harnessing passion is the kind of emotional capability to which the Sustainability Planners aspire. I saw glimpses of it across the planners as a group but certainly not to the degree of being a basic skill that each of them possess and routinely uses.

### **Resilience**

As the discussions of vision in the last chapter demonstrate, sustainability is difficult and complex. We will see in the coming chapters that it is a journey punctuated with setbacks and frustrations. Every Sustainability Planner has experienced impediments of one form or another but they persisted. They reacted with emotional resilience and a steadfast attachment to the immutable goal of their sustainability vision. Far from being unaffected,

they fully experienced a drop in morale but fought back and persevered to either retackle the source of the setback or to simply move on to face other challenges. The key, quite simply, is to really want to get something done (Sampson 2003a).

The struggle against challenging circumstances is often internal and personal and occurs away from the planner's professional life. Daryl's difficult struggle to realize her vision of multi-stakeholder decision making around the use of water around contested hydro dams occurred behind a visage of confidence. *I've had people say water use planning wouldn't have happened unless you persisted in your communication of the vision and your confidence that this was the right way to go. They didn't know that I was sweating buckets at home, but that's a communication issue, that kind of resilience and that steadfastness* (Fields 2003a).

Through the difficult times when she felt turbulent emotionally she focused her attention elsewhere as a way of coping. *I avoid. When I've tried to deal with things and it is just not happening or when I feel it's just my own personal emotional stuff, I back up. I don't know if avoid is the right word, but I back out, and I get going on work. I just say I've got these things that I have to do and I just follow that. I had a great lesson from my mother. She lost her fiancé in the Second World War, and she was at university at the time, and she said she had exams, her economics exams actually, I don't have any idea how my mother thought about going into economics, but anyway. She said she'd just go out on the lake with her books, she'd row for a bit and work for a bit, and cry for a bit and work for a bit and cry for a bit and keep putting one foot in front of the other. It's all you can do in bad times* (Fields 2003b). Daryl's description of her mother was so vivid and so moving that I pictured her rowing in the middle of the lake embroiled in this gargantuan battle of grief, strength, desperation, anguish and resilience. I was inspired and humbled by the seeming insignificance of my own struggles in comparison. Even now, as I write, I feel a deep privilege to have been the recipient of such an inspiring piece of family history and feel an emotional charge to carry on. I can only imagine the magnitude of Daryl's level of inspiration by this story.

Daryl's own daughter is a source of comfort and her simple act of offering her tea is an invitation to relax. *She knows how to read me like a book. She'll come and say mommy would you like me to make you a cup of tea. That's kind of our getaway. When things get too stressful, we go to tea and reading* (Fields 2003b).

Daryl also draws comfort from recognizing her own good fortune and uses it as a means of gaining perspective. *When I look at the big scheme of things for my life, man... I've got a job. I can put food on the table. I can do things with my daughter. We can go traveling, we're healthy, we don't have any alcohol abuse or substance abuse we're dealing with... For me in the big scheme of things, ninety percent of the population would love to be in my place... I do have a little trick, when I'm feeling down and out I just force myself every night before I go to bed just to right down three gratitudes. I don't do it every night but when things are tough and you know what, there's tons of them out there and I end up writing five or six or seven... You just have to keep things in perspective that's all. I don't always keep things in perspective though. I'm making it sound like I do, but I have some very, very down times and sometimes it's hard to keep your feet on the ground* (Fields 2003b).

But she does keep her feet on the ground and she feels a sense of responsibility for coming out of any state of dejection that she might find herself in. *You know, and then you get balls from left field and you have to make those personal choices and within your personal choices make it*

*work and so, yeah, I will stick with people while they're going through a tough time, at some point though personal responsibility has to take over and my daughter did that to me the other day. It was very good, I guess I instilled that value in her...she said, "come on mom, snap out of it. Get on with life!" (Fields 2003b)*

Johnny recounts a struggle that was much more public and his reactions to the setbacks were very much intertwined with his professional work. He had to weather a storm of resistance and continue to work through it. *We had this first meeting of this political committee, we had this corporate intergovernmental affairs committee, where I gave them the briefing and they just plowed me, just plowed me. You know kind of my God there's all kinds of stuff going out there we don't have control. I've never heard of this conference you're organizing. You're not organizing a conference. It was February, and it was just you know, I was nervous about it. I had a premonition that this new Board was going to find its feet and find its authority and so, in order to try to anticipate that I brought in all my partners; all the SRI partners, the Fraser Basin Council, Smart Growth, BC Business Council, United way, TransLink CEO, all to join in this great presentation. [We used the approach of] "Here's what we've been doing, aren't we great, it's just wonderful, here are the plans that have already been approved by the previous Board. Here's what's coming out. This is just a briefing." It didn't matter.*

Anxiety spread across the whole organization when the vision, towards which everyone had been building, came under attack. *They just plowed all of us, just plowed us, and the impact, well you know. I'm used to that over thirty years, so you go home and kick the cat for an hour or so, and then you kind of sit down and say alright here's the problem what do I do and come out with a game plan and fix it. What I wasn't anticipating was within 24 hours the internal buzz telegraph about that committee had gone around the organization like wildfire, you know, "oh my god the committee has turned on Johnny. The SRI is in jeopardy, what are we going to do, oh dear, is all this work gone for nothing?" (Carline 2003b).*

When an organization's identity becomes intertwined with a vision and that vision comes under such a fundamental attack a crisis of identity is unavoidable. *It was a very ugly meeting. The partners, the private sector partners went out and said how could you work here, are you out of your mind. I could never understand that. They were direct, real direct personal attacks. And of course you know being pushed back to the very limit, as one of my colleagues said, you just pushed, you came that close you know in defending the process before breaking off the engagement.*

In order to persevere, Johnny had to shift his own attitude about the setback and his position relative to the community of staff and peers that had formed around the sustainability vision. *So you could see that the place was just in dismay. The morale had just [plummeted] almost reinforcing the sort of notion that those people who wanted to sit on the sidelines and say until I absolutely see the political commitment, I'm not committing myself to this because you know what happens. The people who had committed themselves were feeling oh dear, what's happened. So it was faintly gratifying in the sense that it showed me that I had probably generated more commitment in this organization. Not I, but there had been, the team had generated more commitment than we realized. There was a whole bunch of people hanging on to this thing and invested a lot of their emotional energy into this and now we're in a state of dismay and so wow, I've got two problems now. Number one, I've got to turn around the Board, and number two, I've got to tell these people no, no, all is not lost here. This is not a setback. This is the Board showing it wants*



*to be engaged. I just have to use my political skills now to turn this into a positive thing. Trust me, trust me, we'll get there (Carline 2003b).*

*Last Friday when I went in to deliver my response two months later, everybody was waiting... How did it go, it was kind of cute walking back to the office, with people whispering "how did it go, how did it go, did it go alright?" And then by two or three in the afternoon when I saw people down in the cafeteria the said, "I heard it went OK this morning," and give you a whack on the back kind of stuff. And I said, "yeah I got unanimous support." "Oh that's great!" so there was a buzz [of excitement]. It is the focus of the organization and for those who understand it and bought the concept they're passionately committed and sensitive to whether this is going to be successful or not (Carline 2003b).*

Susan experienced a crisis of similar proportions on the scale of the entire organization. The difference was that EYA, as Susan described it, is in a constant state of tension. They see their work, and their role, as being on the margins of what is acceptable by mainstream society and there is a degree of anxiety inherent in operating in that marginal space. Having their charity status investigated, which has the potential to completely transform their identity, seemed to have far milder an affect on EYA than I would have expected. Susan explains how it is a part of the culture of the organization. *EYA has always worked on the edge. We've always known that we walk this line. We are really a youth organization, there's only very few adults who actually work here who are over 30. [They think] "Oh yeah we're going to get caught eventually and we are going to lose our charity status." The Board was upset about it and I don't think we'll actually lose the status to be perfectly honest. I think we'll get a letter of reprimand and we'll have to divest ourselves of those activities. It makes a difference because we kind of have to decide. Do we want to do advocacy work? Do we always want to be looking over our shoulders? Because Backhouse<sup>39</sup> is still on our website daily (Kurbis 2003a).* Resilience at EYA was simply a state of being. They had a general impervious attitude towards setbacks and change.

### Anger and Fear

When I talk about emotions in planning, people most often assume that I mean anger in conflict situations. The typical image conjured up is one of a heated public meeting in which an angry resident stands up and expresses his fury about a proposal or a plan. These situations do exist and I certainly experienced a number of such occasions. Larry talked about it as a common occurrence. He often sees the open expression of anger when he chairs a meeting on a contested or controversial development. This is not surprising given his very public position as the Director of Planning. Others are a step or two removed from encounters with the public, and emotion is communicated in more subtle ways during planning processes. Even so, within each of their spheres of operation Sustainability Planners had to interact with anger. Cheeying's ordeal with an angry membership at B.E.S.T. was a drawn out battle over the organization's identity and it is not surprising that emotions became extreme. She attributes it a general feeling amongst cyclists of feeling victimized by society's auto-dependence. *You know you're very vulnerable on a bicycle so it's*

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<sup>39</sup> This is the person who reported EYA to Revenue Canada, thereby instigating an audit of activities, claiming that they were breaking the laws restricting charitable organizations from supporting political action.

*easy to get really pissed off about the injustices* (Ho 2003b). As planners describe the emotions they encounter, anger is always expressed as a result of fear, the fear of change.

In planning discourse we tend to speak of emotion in general, and anger specifically, to be awkward circumstances that planners have to contend with. They are seen to be external to the planner and exclusively in the sphere of the out of control public. Ludicrous as it may seem, inherent in our attitude is the assumption that planning professionals are in control of their emotions and arrive at planning events in a state of neutrality and poise. This, needless to say, is untrue. As this Chapter demonstrates, planners are subject to the ebbs and flows of passion just like everybody else. Anger is no exception. Anger and fear can intertwine to traumatize a person for years affecting their very desire to engage in issues that really matter to them. *I had been so incredibly wounded by public school and my whole experience of it. I was just full of anger for years and it kept me from [being engaged]. There was a long period where I was hiding, even from myself... I wanted to do what I think I was supposed to be doing right at the beginning but I was so angry* (Moffatt 2003).

Another common and incorrect assumption by planners theorizing about emotion is that anger is negative. Anger can also be an indicator of, and a necessary step towards, passion. *There are surges of anger at times when things that I interpret as putting careers in front of the public interest or something like that, and I don't try to get rid of those. It does reflect the fact that I believe in what I'm doing and that I still have a passion for it. But experience gets you to the point of realizing very quickly that creating imaginary speeches in which you slay the dragon doesn't get you there. What you have to do is get in place, a practical response to whatever the setback is, or the diversion is, and look for positive things to do, and practically go about it and once you get the game plan moving, the anger and the anxiety go away because now you're doing something* (Carline 2003a).

Anger does of course also fit into the traditionally acknowledged form of aggression towards a plan or proposal as Larry described earlier in this chapter. *You run into challenges where you're on a path that you want to be more aggressive within a particular area and there's pushback, you run into that all the time* (Sampson 2003b). The push-back as Bruce puts it, is a result of inertia and reluctance to change. It is partially due to an ideological disagreement about the nature of their work but Mike Costello relates it to an emotional response. *It's fear of change... people who are used to getting things done in a certain way without thinking of those things would say this is just ruining my life. Why do I have to worry about getting community support. I used to build lines down that road all the time* (Costello 2003). All of a sudden their world changed and no one had informed them that it would. Change simply announced itself one day in the form of a sustainability vision and those who have to change will of course resent it if they do not understand or have not accepted the vision.

Fear, like anger, is a double-edged sword. Several Sustainability Planners talked of tailoring their vision to the audience in order to more effectively reach them: to avoid triggering fear as a debilitating force rather than a motivating one. Johnny talks of omitting the heavy message of a potential ecological collapse because the tragedy of the doom scenario is stunting. *One thing that has changed since then, not so much in my own internal motivation, but the way things are presented. I started doing this both with staff and community to test it out. I found the global context was just too pessimistic for people... If I did the climate change and the poverty gap and the new diseases and all this kind of stuff, oh gosh! I was at one Rotary Club lunch*

*and I did this spiel. I had a whole presentation that I'd worked up and I was getting towards the end in my global context. I looked up and could tell they were all kind of looking down at their soup hoping I'd go away before they got to dessert so they could actually enjoy a bit of their lunch. They were really down (Carline 2003a).*

People also fear the effect of change on their lives, on their personal behaviour and their lifestyles. *They're worried about (time) demands and all the rest of it. What difference will this make? How will my job change? So I actually get ahead of that and say when you do all this, but if you don't change anything, you've wasted your time and you've wasted my time. So keep in your head at all times that what comes out of this process is something we're going to be doing differently. How you do the job, what we're doing what we're producing. You know these are the templates and tools we're looking for, the criteria we're looking for but you have to drive it. You have to resist this idea that you're just going to have a nice conversation about the state of the world and how nice it would be if we could fix it and drive it down to real practical solutions, because if we don't change anything, I'm not interested (Carline 2003a).*

Fear is not exclusive to those reacting negatively to the demands of sustainability. In the tumultuous world of championing a sustainability vision and trying to affect change there are numerous examples in which fear becomes the primary emotional presence in the planners' own psyche. Whether it is fear of failure, or fear of organizational or personal change, or fear of the potential outcomes of environmental and social chaos, fear sometimes emerges and displaces passion. As planners describe it, it is more chronic than acute and usually simply passes with the passage of time. Sustainability Planners simply don't have time for it. There is too much to do and when fear is overwhelming taking on small attainable tasks helps to remove its paralyzing effects. *You know if you're afraid of something, the fear is always before you start doing it. Once you're actually engaged in doing it, you know if it's a sporting event or whatever. Once the game begins and you're actually involved in trying to win the game then the fear of losing is far less than it was beforehand. Well it's the same with this. It just becomes a challenge. It becomes the task ahead of me. OK it's a bit of a nuisance but I've got to go on and win that person's support and explain it to them one more time and find a way to get to them, you know just create it into doable tasks and that gets it done (Carline 2003b).*

In some cases the Sustainability Planner might be asking people to digest a change that would turn their world upside down. EYA's work is radical enough for it to elicit all kinds of fear of a revolutionary kind of change that has the potential to restructure hierarchies and redefine social legitimacy. *EYA, for example, offers an alternative degree program for youth. They go into it seeking their place in the world and then they come out ready to take on all kinds of things, if they survive the program. Which is kind of like school. They come out of it appearing in Board meetings and being strong and articulate in public discussions and do so with a powerful agenda of social and environmental justice. So that's probably what freaks people out. It's an alternative initiation into society (Senbel in Kurbis 2003a).* Fear in this case takes on a whole new magnitude. It is no longer an issue of personal inconvenience. This form of Sustainability causes an ideological confrontation of epistemological proportions. Fearing this confrontation is understandable. The Empathic Leader draws on her facility and capability with emotions and her ability to understand another person's perspectives to communicate the justifiability of the fear, and to work through it to arrive at a place of dialogue and communication where common understanding could be built.

### Leadership and Emotions in Planning

We have seen how the work of planners often amounts to the management of emotions and emotional exchanges particularly in the context of seeking resolution and better social outcomes. This is not an area that has received much attention in the planning literature but has flourished in the management sciences and organizational behavior literature (see Appendix F). The field of leadership has also grown to require the inclusion of issues much larger than single institutions or confined organizations (Fairholm 1991). In the following section I draw on leadership literature to help map the terrain of Empathic Leadership in planning.

Developing the skills and the experience of managing emotions requires independent initiative and change in the culture of planning. It requires working with hope against fear, managing anger and building trust and empathy. Recognizing the presence of emotions in the exchanges and communications undertaken in planning work is the first step, but having the capacity to address emotions and manage them takes planners outside of their areas of expertise. Planners are neither counselors nor psychologists, nor can they be, so we can learn from the experience of other professionals, who are likewise untrained in the science of psychology, but who still have to contend with emotions and have to communicate through difficult and possibly traumatic situations. We have much to learn from organizational leaders and the study of leadership. Leadership literature is relevant to our purposes not only because it has dealt more explicitly with emotional engagement, but also because dealing with change and emotions in planning requires leadership. The decision to take on the task of emotional management requires taking risks and navigating areas of public engagement that have uncertain outcomes. It requires having a vision of a particular culture of interaction and working with others towards that vision. Leadership of one form or another is necessarily integral to change regardless of the scale at which this change occurs.

In its most basic definition, leadership is about guidance in a particular direction or towards a particular goal. It includes an understanding of the terrain that must be traversed in reaching the goal as well as an understanding of the entity that must reach that goal. Leadership is not confined to the powerful and there is much to be gained by recognizing that there is a little bit of leadership in each and every one of us. The first entity that must be understood is the leader's own self. The inward journey to discover what it is that has shaped the leaders experience of the world and what it is that they carry with them when they interact with others, is central to their ability to communicate with people and guide them in a particular direction. I introduce the term *Empathic Leadership* because it captures the theorists postulations of the importance of leaders projecting their understanding out towards people and situations in order to more fully comprehend the variety of perspectives that make up the planner's constituency and professional community.

Insights from the mediation and negotiation literature also emphasize the importance of achieving a basic degree of self-reflection and self-awareness to be able to relate to others and to understand them as equal partners in a process. The absence of hierarchy between oneself and others and the capacity to see legitimacy in the realities and experiences of others is essential to making lasting change. The potential for personal and social transformation to occur out of a seed of trust-building and compassion-forming is significant even if the reality is

a somewhat watered down version of the ideal. The relevance to planning and to planners is equally significant.

Hence my framework for Empathic Leadership begins with the personal realm and includes self-awareness, self-reflection and value formation. Reflection then extends out to others in the form of awareness and empathy so that the experience and outlook of others is understood and valued. This relational realm includes an understanding of people and an ability to communicate, collaborate and build relationships and inspire others. The developmental realm is associated with the acquisition of knowledge and skills as well as cultivating an understanding of culture, society and power. Emotional development in this third realm occurs in the form of healing and balancing of personal priorities [see Table 2].

### Empathic Communication

Communicating with an ability to empathize, with an ability to relate, is a powerful reciprocal exchange that includes an exchange of knowledge, experience, awareness, emotion and nourishment. Empathic communication begins with a level of sensitivity and awareness of the emotional state of those with whom the planner is communicating. In a utilitarian sense, it enables the planner to understand the communicative context within which she is working in order to respond optimally. It is a form of rapid appraisal of human resources. On a human and personal level empathic communication enables an appreciation of the internal thought and emotional processes of people in addition to their distilled intellectual or technical contributions. Once again, similar to the temporal scope of self-reflection, knowing the feelings of others can occur in the space of immediate perception, or in a longer term growing acquaintance of their character and their needs. *I think most people are really driven by contribution especially in the area that we are in. "Am I making the world a better place?" and if you don't tell somebody that they are making a contribution then [their interest wanes]... (Fields 2003a)* Sebastian generalizes even further to state the importance of communicating knowledge of people's feelings. *Let them know you know their feelings... because empathy is such an incredibly important skill if you want to communicate, and if you want to lead you have to communicate (Moffatt 2002).*

Empathic communication as the Sustainability Planners practice it is distinct from gaining and maintaining an intimate knowledge of people's personal lives. Knowing and understanding that someone is in pain, and working within the demands of that awareness, does not require knowledge of the root of the pain. *I don't care if people are able to share feelings. I think its good to a certain extent. If they're comfortable then it's good. I don't want to mix up too much. [A staff member] wanted to talk to me about his personal situation. One time he said to me he sees me more than he sees his wife and he'd like to be able to talk about his personal things. I thought I can't go there with you because it was just too much. I can talk to you sometimes but I can't be that intimate, because I don't have the energy to do that (Ho 2003b).* Cheeying is neither able nor willing to be everybody's best friend, nor should she be. Being able to communicate empathically does not demand of Cheeying to know her staff member's private details. Nor does empathic communication require her to befriend her staff in any way that does not feel natural. It is not her role to provide him with the companionship that he may need, but it is important for her to be aware that he may be communicating to her from a place of loneliness.

Another kind of empathic communication occurs all the time in conversations in subtle ways that we may not even recognize. We receive through intonation and body language messages that may accompany or may be separate from spoken communication. The following analysis was a part of notes I had taken during a meeting and I had read over these notes prior to this interview with Cheeying and here I am relaying to her what I perceived through my own communication. *It was very subtle but a couple of times when she didn't know where the other person was coming from and she took offence to his seeming praise of the Province for this program that they developed. It was just so obvious from her frown that she didn't want to be praising the Province. That undermined things he said after that. For a while she dismissed things that he would say and at some point she irritably interrupted him in the middle of something he was saying. He noticed. He sensed what she was doing. I saw him look at her and then he seemed to go out of his way to try to relate to things she was saying, trying to engage her. By the end she had started to trust him again but it took a while. Early on I too must have said something that didn't agree with her because she was almost scowling at me. I realized that it wasn't just her manner, or way of being intense, when later on I said something about social justice that she must have liked. As I looked around the room, making eye contact with each of the participants, I saw her smiling broadly and nodding her approval...*(Senbel in Ho 2003b).

Cheeying and I reflected on this exchange for a few minutes. She remarked how some people are just hostile towards the current government and that they would never regard anything they do favourably and are quick to judge anyone who appears to side with government. She also said that she was too busy chairing the meeting to notice the subtleties of the exchange I mentioned but that she would notice if she was a part of it. Messages are often so subtle that you could miss them or misinterpret them or miss them altogether. I was so busy noticing how the other person at the meeting was responding to being judged, and how he was going out of his way to instigate a second more favourable judgment, that I completely missed the fact that I too had been the recipient of a harsh judgment. I was rather oblivious to the fact that I had judged the judger rather quickly myself. It only took a few facial expressions and body gestures for me to decide that she was cantankerous and partisan. Had she not found reason to smile at me I would have walked away from the meeting with that initial judgment. It is important to note that this was not a hostile setting. It was a brainstorming session aimed at starting a new initiative and I was invited to participate. The overall feeling was friendly, collaborative and congenial. Many of us had just met for the first time and wanted to make a positive impression. When the setting is adversarial or competitive the actions and reactions tend towards disagreement and confrontation instead of reconciliation. The Empathic Leader would be tuned in to these signals and be adept at steering them towards dialogue rather than argumentation.

The reciprocity of empathic communication involves listening on the part of both parties as well as expressing, receiving as well as giving. *Fundamentally there's a degree of honesty. Honesty, not spontaneity or entertainment. It's honesty, it's honesty, it's honesty. So you have to have some willingness to say what you know and what you don't know. And to be clear where you stand and to be willing to say whatever is coming... It is very difficult to be honest in the moment in front of a group of people. It is what a good speaker can do. What I do to help me up there, I'm particularly good on my feet, so I ask people for questions and I'll say I really like being interrupted a little bit so please help me out. When I'm talking to a group, I'll say are there any questions and I'll stop and wait. There will be a pause, and the pause will get longer, and I'll be looking at them and*

*then slowly the energy will change. People will expect me to go on, but I just make them uncomfortable I just keep looking and all of a sudden someone comes up with a question and that's when things start to happen (Moffatt 2002). Here we see a process of learning from the recipients of communication about how they are receiving what they had just heard and to understand the different perspectives and interpretations of the discussion. It is not just about getting people to participate, but also about hearing from them and understanding their particular concerns.*

*Embedded in the ability to communicate is a willingness to confront anxiety and to work towards finding its source. I keep asking the question "why?" until there's an articulation of a very clear and specific objective and that often makes it clearer in a language that other people can understand. So if you think that something is really near and dear to you and you think about all the challenges to it, and what's it going to do to your home life and all that stuff, by the time you're actually talking about it, it's got all these other layers on it, that are incredibly personal and idiosyncratic to yourself. Other people are not going to understand that stuff, so you have to get at the core objectives, the core value that you're trying to drive at. (Fields 2003b)*

*The process of working through grievances is complicated, especially within relationships with some history of unresolved issues. Sebastian begins by acknowledging other people's grievances and expressing their legitimacy and then breaks them down to individual units that can be addressed separately. I gave credence to the fact that he had some issues, that he had been carrying some baggage. He had chips on his shoulder, grudges, regrets and stuff. He hadn't brought those to me. Those are his problems, if he wants to solve those problems I will help him solve those problems but right now I'm solving my problem and he said he'd help me so let's do it. Once you set those boundaries, what happens is you're individuating, as psychologists would say, you're just not getting your buttons pushed. You're not getting dragged in to the whole morass, you get out of the mush, and you get into dealing with what's really going on with you right now and working it through. It's amazing how other people, once you've got it down, will respond to that and you just end up bringing clarity to the whole office because of it. You just stick with the issue that you're dealing with... I think it's inquisitive, or learning conversations or whatever else, rather than attacking or blaming. So the attack blame thing is often where people want to go, but you don't have to go there and you can be really clear that you're not going to go there. And you can just set aside time for each issue and deal with it on its own merit. That is something I couldn't have done without the stuff I'm doing in my personal life, bringing that into my business life (Moffatt 2003).*

*Planners' ability to be truly engaged in an act of empathic communication is hampered by their tendency to be aggressively pursuing our own position and preparing our own retort in lieu of listening. It's amazing how often someone will react to something and you say to yourself, "that wasn't my question or that wasn't my commentary." About twenty percent into the whole thing they stopped listening and started preparing their salvo, and that's a very aggressive way to interface with, and interact with people. Its way more respectful to listen really carefully, even if the net effect is you are less articulate when you speak back (Beasley 2004a).*

*Planners, like every other busy professional, are also often rushed in their correspondence, which increases the likelihood of abrupt correspondence and unintended offensiveness. You could quite quickly zip off an email and then you read it two days later and go 'Oh my God, I sound like Attila the Hun.' But it's because you're rushed and you got to get it out and you [write something quickly] instead of taking a breath and really thinking about it. I also noticed that I have*

*to be careful at the end of the day because I basically go from one meeting to the next all day. I had my lunch in the meeting I just had, and you got to the end of the day and you're so geared up that you are just kind of blabbering* (Fields 2003a).

The tendency towards brevity and unintended directness occurs in every communicative context. Empathic communication requires a degree of sensitivity that a certain message may not carry the full range of thoughts and feelings that the portrayer of the message carries about the subject at hand. There may be subtleties, nuances and pleasantries that are not being delivered in the message but not because they were deliberately dropped as an expression of anger. It may be due to brevity, it may be due to a generally direct personality, and not aggressiveness, on the part of the person communicating, or it may simply be a function of unrelated personal matters. Particularly in multicultural settings, in which culture can be anything from ethnicity to socio-economic class to occupation, empathic communication is necessary to distill intended from apparent communicative content. Once again this is not just about the planners' sensitivity to the communication they receive, but also about their awareness of how their own communication is being received.

In my own work, as a sustainability planner and participant in this research, I have on numerous occasions found that taking notes during meetings, and directly afterwards, helped me assess my own conduct immediately. In some cases the notes caused me to be sensitive to interpersonal dynamics in a way that I would not have otherwise noticed. On numerous occasions, based on an awareness I had gained through reflecting on my notes, I went to talk to individuals with whom I had felt a particularly awkward communication. This sensitivity, of course, is greatly amplified by my attention to communication as a researcher. My intent in talking to the person afterwards was to reestablish the one-on-one connection and rectify whatever damage I felt I may have done to the rapport between us. More often, however, this kind of self-reflection takes place later whenever I have the time to fully digest the events of the meeting. My strongest indicator, and this was echoed by Daryl about her own work, is a nagging feeling that I either notice independently or that I become aware of through my own impatience or abruptness during unrelated communications later that day. As we shall see in the following chapter, the ability to build and maintain rapport is essential for having a sense of community around a sustainability vision. The capacity for empathic communication not only exists to varying degrees in each of the Sustainability Planners, but they also seek to cultivate it in different ways as the following section demonstrates.

### **Developing Communicative and Empathic Capacity**

*Usually you have to pay a lot of money to be allowed to talk about yourself* (Moffatt 2003). Sebastian jokingly made this comment about benefiting from talking about himself and his work. This is significant. Of course the joke is about psychotherapy but the significance here is about the value of self-reflection, self-awareness and self-analysis. This is the foundation of the Empathic Leadership framework and I found ample evidence of it amongst the Sustainability Planners. The following excerpts give the example of how Sebastian, Larry and Daryl worked, and continue to work, on developing their capacity to be self-reflective and to communicate from a position of self-awareness.



*Life is about personal growth and sometimes people are quite resistant to it. Particularly men are afraid of seeing their dark side, and exposing themselves to any kind of ridicule because of the shells that men create. Their image of what it means to be a man is especially scary for men to get involved in exploring truths about how you feel and truths about how other people feel about you. So it's a difficult thing to get started on. But people who are heavily involved in it, all got started from one thing or another, and often it was a real horrible something or another [that got them started]. But then once they started, all that matters is you're started, it doesn't matter how you got started. Once you start taking your armour off and feeling more comfortable, it's just fantastic what opens up for you (Moffatt 2003).*

*And for me there were different phases in my life, there was university and I was doing religious studies, and marathon therapy groups and all that crazy stuff and psychedelics in your high school. LSD makes you schizophrenic for a period of time, and you learn huge amounts about how the ego works and it is a life changing experience... I think the drugs and all of the... alternative spiritual stuff, and all the cross cultural experience... I've traveled all over the world and you learn to open up and question basic values and beliefs and take things a little lighter for a sense of perspective and humour, all of which happened to me as well. Then I went through a long period personally where I was definitely hiding from myself, and that was probably for 15 years or so. Then I broke out of that when I started attending personal development sessions on communications and things like that. [It was] just really nice instruction on how to become more self-aware and how to get to the root of some of the emotions that you had been experiencing but not recognizing and that was excellent. Then I got involved in the men's movement and there's **nothing** that compares to that.<sup>40</sup> I've met with the same group of guys, eight guys whom I love and meet with for three hours a week, every week. I know their lives backwards and forwards, I know everything about them. Their lives and their stories are as familiar to me as my own practically (Moffatt 2003).*

*Larry's path of self-reflection is as deliberate as Sebastian's. First and foremost you communicate by what you model in your own behaviour, and people will do unto you as you do to them in a way. I had to learn that, for example at one point in my work, a number of years ago, I actually got an advisor. One might even call the person a psychologist; I don't know what his official title is. I was having some difficulties with my relationships with my staff partly because I'm very much in a hurry. I'd sort of come to my working conclusions very quickly. The more pressed and in a hurry the less tolerance one has to sit and listen, and you know work your way through other people's learning... Sometimes I wasn't keeping up with some of my colleagues who were in more of a hurry, kind of thing, and I think everyone from time to time needs someone to assist them to kind of identify, how it is they are interfacing with people around them with the objective of balancing the way that you put forward ideas with wanting to listen carefully and react carefully and respectfully to other people's ideas. (Beasley 2004a)*

*We're taught, our whole culture teaches us and particularly men, I think are taught more about a very aggressive way to deal with other people. Even when they're being gentle, it's a very aggressive way to deal with other people. It's not based very much on listening usually. I find it's often the case, and it may be true with you I don't know, often when we appear to be listening we're actually not, we're actually preparing our next salvo. I tell all of my colleagues that its OK from time to time if you wanted to bring someone to help you in your interface, and that's not training. Group training in our world tends to be a devaluing exercise. It tends to be a hierarchical exercise between teacher*

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<sup>40</sup> Emphasis by Sebastian in the tone and volume of his voice during the interview.

*and those being trained and it's very difficult for people, and particularly mature people, and particularly very senior people. So there's a great benefit in personal training, personal interaction, personal assistance, and so I'm very open to that in my own practice and I support my staff to do that as well (Beasley 2004a).*

Daryl's source of self-reflection is a person who has come to know her, who observes her and who guides her towards her personal and career goals. *I have a personal coach. I meet with her once every six weeks but she's there. We've done some great work together around personal core values and just clarity in terms of why I took this job and things like that...we did lots of coaching work and then we didn't do any for a while but she has also become a personal friend (Fields 2003a).*

Each of the Sustainability Planners recognized the importance of some form of direct personalized feedback through a particularly informed person with whom the planner builds a relationship. Some relied more on individual staff members or spouses for this role, but each of Sebastian, Larry and Daryl sought a more formal mechanism for self-reflection and for increasing their ability for self-reflection. Sebastian describes in great detail and with palpable excitement the activities and relationships in his men's group. He describes the bonding and the companionship, the understanding and the support. It is clearly a very intimate set of relationships that exude the very essence of empathic communication. What I can't help but wonder is how much of this devotion is solely confined to this arena of interaction. Do his staff and colleagues benefit from this kind of emotional attention? They clearly do not. It is not humanly possible to be so thoroughly committed to another's well being across the spectrum of interactions that one faces in the typical day. But the lingering question is, is there a finite degree of empathy that one can realistically afford others. Does Sebastian use up his finite amount with the members of the men's group? Does he hold back with others because he is sufficiently fulfilled in his connection to his family of friends?

I pursued this issue further by asking for more detail about what he gets out of personal development. *It gives me a huge amount of leverage on all sorts of things that are happening here. There's almost no area of relationship that I'm not quite well versed in, and I've got all sorts of stories. It's very fun and it also helps me be strong. I've got more women working here than men and I'm very comfortable in that space. That's part of me being really comfortable dealing with emotional truth, just being able to relate and being comfortable in your own skin and all that. It makes it way easier. Yeah, actually, what the personal development does, whether in a group, or through sessions or through readings and personal effort, is it actually makes you more aware of what you're feeling. The closer you can get to what you're feeling in the moment, the easier it is to actually be effective with people so you can call people on stuff and express "I'm really unhappy here, now, it's not your fault." It's not their fault but it's important to express that sometimes and then let's find out why (Moffatt 2003).*

*I've seen guys change. People change slowly like trees grow slowly. It's only evidence and then logic that let's you see that a tree grows. If you sat and watched a tree, you could watch a tree for four weeks, you'd swear trees don't grow. People are the same, slow, but it's not that slow, and if they practice they change. And if you're wanting to practice effective communication, of the type I'm talking about, being genuine and being yourself so that people are more prepared to listen and follow and respect. Then, this sounds a bit pompous, but I'm playing up the idea, I think it's about being*

*honest and because honesty is what underlies all of that. If you're honest with yourself, you can be honest with others. It's another way of saying, if you're intimate with yourself, you can be intimate with others. You can write down in the moment the things I'm talking to you about, but if you're not actually willing to admit some of that stuff to yourself well how the hell do you get close to anybody else? How do they get to know you, you're not even letting yourself know you? So the honesty that comes from some personal growth actually is allowing you to be a lot more present in whatever work that you're doing and to bring more energy to it (Moffatt 2003).*

*Now these people who are incredibly evolved, like these gurus in India, and I've met one, they're phenomenal about energy and knowledge and about everything going on around them. They're not putting any energy in themselves in creating protection. There's just no fear. I'm convinced from knowing that person that tremendous amounts of our mental energy, moment to moment, goes into protecting a concept of ourselves and projecting that concept unto others. If you let go of that, you'd really be a powerful person, but if you accepted hypothetically that premise, then it follows that there's gradations too. As you get a little less afraid, because it's OK, there's strength in vulnerability, then you can be a little bit more present and more powerful in what you're doing. It's funny how this stuff is so seldom talked about in all the business talks and all the academia and everything else, the connection between self-knowledge and effectiveness in the work place (Moffatt 2003).*

As evidenced by Sebastian's words, and those of others through the process of conducting the interviews, it is clear that the Sustainability Planners were capable of a high degree of self-awareness and knew to seek it, and valued seeking it. This is not surprising really. They are each successful and accomplished in their respective careers and they know their strengths and weaknesses in dealing with different types of situations. They know how they have evolved over the years and how they would like to evolve further. Yet I sensed a certain incongruence. There was some distance between the high level of mindfulness and keen awareness of the minutiae and subtleties of human interaction as revealed through interviews and personal testimonies, and my observed behaviour of the mundane and the every day. The link between knowledge, awareness and action was absent. I did not observe any shocking rudeness or insolence, nor did I observe sensitivity to the emotional occurrences in the minds of those with whom they work.

My numerical analysis of the Staff and Colleagues Survey data supported what I observed. The lowest score given to any of the thirty-three questions asked was "she works on remedying her weaknesses." Emotional capability generally scored lower than other categories (see Appendix C-1), and all the questions relating to knowledge of other people's emotions scored relatively low (between 3.7 and 3.9 on a 5 point scale).<sup>41</sup> These results are insignificant in isolation because questionnaire respondents may simply be less aware of the emotional content of the workplace and the importance of self-development. However when considered alongside the results correlating between different responses, emotional literacy, or lack thereof, become more important. I found a significant correlation, for example, between being "more effective than others in a similar position" and "knowing her own strengths and weaknesses" (see Appendix D-1).

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<sup>41</sup> The five point scale uses scores of 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree. Mean is for all respondents who answered across all five surveyed Sustainability Planners. Please see appendices B, C and D for more detail. Please note that gender of the pronoun was used to match the gender of the planner in question for each survey.

Another informative survey finding was that when respondents revealed their identity they scored "she controls her anger," 0.8 points higher. On a five point scale that is significant. They also scored "you know when she is upset" lower if they did not reveal their identity, indicating either fear of reprisal, or powerlessness in their relationship with the leader in question. Such feelings of intimidation indicate a degree of emotional immaturity in the workplace, which is toxic for any workplace but particularly damaging given the importance of relationships building in sustainability planning as the following chapter demonstrates.

In the area of positive emotions, the planners had consistently high scores. "She is an inspiring leader" received high scores across all the different analyses (C-1, C-2, C-6, C-7, C-8). Handling high levels of stress and creating a positive work environment also received relatively high scores. Being an inspiring leader had a significant positive correlation with "striving to maintain a balance between social, environmental and economic sustainability" indicating the importance of inspiration in sustainability work.

The foundation of relating well on an emotional and intellectual level with others is being able to understand how others see the world and interact with it. Larry's attitude about public meetings, for example is precisely what we need to cultivate in planners. *A lot of people don't like public meetings, for example. I love public meetings. I love listening to what people have to say and how they say it, and how they put it together. That's fascinating to me* (Beasley 2004a). We do not necessarily need to cultivate enjoyment, although that certainly helps, but instilling a sense of compassionate curiosity about people, will help us better understand their motivations and aspirations as residents of the city and participants in its democratic decision making.

Ultimately I think that the most enduring way to cultivate a planner's capacity for empathic communication is to arouse her curiosity. Similar to the pedagogical approach used in Problem Based Learning, the primary incentive for engagement is self-propelled curiosity. If we can find a way to cultivate a sense of sociological curiosity in planning students and planning practitioners, then we have equipped them with a genuine desire to discover the aspirations of people while also reflecting on their own.

Planning leaders also can aid planning by contributing realism. They can insist on talking realistically about community conditions and possibilities. They can nurture an emotional climate where people feel comfortable seeing themselves and others as they are (Baum 1998:21).

The question is not whether emotions exist in planning work. It even ceases to be a question of how prevalent emotions are, for they seem to be ever-present. The question is what do we do with emotions? How are they handled? The Vancouver Sustainability Planners very much acknowledge the presence and significance of emotions. Their ability to handle them and work through their various challenges and opportunities varies from person to person, from situation to situation, and from type to type. Passion and the ability to communicate one's own passion and cultivate it, and harness it in others, is by far the most prevalent and consistent emotion in sustainability planning work. The following chapters, particularly the last section of each chapter, demonstrates the degree to which emotional capacity is

essential for developing capacity in each of the other areas through which planners exercise empathic leadership: building community, strategic and ethical thinking, and action. It takes emotional strength to be self-reflective and it takes self-reflection to be able to recognize how to act, and what to act on, when pursuing a greater capacity for affecting change towards sustainability.

### 5 - COMMUNITY

*The feeling of community took me by surprise. It must have been quietly brewing within me for some time, but one day, in the middle, of a meeting I felt a tangible belonging to an entity that was larger than myself. I felt a sense of belonging to a group that expanded the scope of my own hopes, aspirations and capabilities. It was the larger capacity for achievement by that larger entity that left me with a sense of awe at the power of collective effort. Of course the logic of strength in numbers had been imprinted upon my psyche since childhood. But knowledge acquired through experience left a far stronger impression than the story of a how a bundle of twigs is impossible to break even if composed of perfectly breakable single twigs.*

*In an instant I realized that I was not alone. I had known that I was not alone in planning the conference, but I had not realized it in that deeper way that you experience something to be true. Tasks that had seemed overwhelming and increasingly hazy as the likelihood of their completion diminished, became attainable and refreshingly clear once I realized that I was not alone. In hindsight I realized that I had never been alone on this venture, except perhaps on that first day when I made an announcement at a planning student meeting, but trust in the dependence and resilience of a community had taken time to build. It also became perfectly clear that commitment to the project was not mine alone. I had selfishly and arrogantly come to believe that my own drive and devotion to hosting a community building national conference were essential for its success. I had come to think that if I failed the entire enterprise would fail. My realization of a sense of community amongst the organizers was not only a realization that the conference would likely succeed, but that my own individual role was not vital to its success. I was simultaneously empowered and humbled: empowered by the added potential of a dozen minds and bodies and humbled by the relative insignificance of any one mind or body.*

*The various individuals and groups who are in some way committed to the idea of greater sustainability either at UBC or promoted by UBC have struggled to remain connected. I count myself as one of these individuals and I take my share of the blame for letting go of the sustainability "community". There definitely was a period during which we clearly felt strong, united, optimistic and passionate. The Sustainability Advisory Committee had recently formed and was meeting to respond to and ultimately influence a series of university development plans. Our mandate was broader than that of course. We were to coordinate all the various activities related to sustainability and promote pedagogical experiences that would lead our students and the broader Vancouver community to value sustainable practices.*

*We were a group of students faculty and staff and I remember looking around the room and feeling impressed that such a collection of inspiring individuals, each respected in her own domain, could be brought together for a single cause. We felt like we had power in our ability to harness student voices in large numbers. We had access to power in our group members ability to communicate directly with senior university administration, and by virtue of our membership we had around the table some of Canada's leading experts on sustainable technology. As it turned out, our community did not last. Unbeknownst to the younger members of the committee the leading experts had long since become jaded with the university bureaucracy and only attended enough meetings to assure themselves that nothing had changed and that there was no chance for improvement. Within months many of the committee members stopped attending meetings and eventually the committee was subdivided into a core group and "friends" of the committee. The friends were invited to attend brainstorming sessions once or twice a year but, as I reflect back on my involvement, I see that while*

*we started with a strong vision, we sorely and desperately lacked the "community" that would uphold and champion the vision.*

Communities are diverse and so too is the feeling of community. It can be as dynamic as the seasons or as permanent as geological landmarks. Some arenas of belonging seem to course through our veins from the moments of our birth and continue to pulse right through to the ritual of our passing, while others rise and fall with the circumstances of our life and our surroundings. Faith based and ethnic communities for example are extremely resilient affiliations and are profoundly significant in the organization of spatial and social planning (Baum 1997), while communities of political alliance can be short lived and may only last long enough to help pass or defeat specific legislation.

This chapter presents a form of community that is amorphous and evolving. It is an evolution of the idea of communities of interest and although it is rooted in place it is also connected to a larger global community of similar values. It is the community that forms around a hope and desire for a particular future. Its members come from across the political spectrum and from every ethnicity.<sup>42</sup> Their bond is a passion for achieving greater environmental and social justice. Their dream is a sustainable future. The challenge of having such an indefinable dream as a bond is that the bond itself is as elusive as the dream. On some issues, the grounds for agreement are present and powerful, while on other issues, different affiliations and value systems seem to dominate. The need for community and a communally derived vision is fundamental to the implementation of the institutional and behavioural changes that sustainability requires. The sustainability planner therefore has the challenge of creating and fomenting community where none exists, and managing it where it does. The following sections illustrate what it is that sustainability planners do for the sake of community. Community as I define it in the following pages includes connection and belonging: collectively believing in and working towards a common vision.

### **The First Community**

A fundamental task of any sustainability leader is to transform the personal struggle of finding and reinforcing her vision into a collective struggle, and building outward to include an ever-increasing circle of people in the work of realizing the vision. The work begins with gaining facility with one's own vision and the emotional buttressing of that vision. The emotional resilience discussed in the previous chapter is certainly relevant here in providing a foundation of strength from which leaders draw to promote their ideas. A source of resilience and the strongest most immediate community is family. In every case the Sustainability Planner either had children or a spouse and spoke affectionately of those relationships as being a source of sustenance and refreshment for their professional work. Planners recounted how spouses provide moral support, professional advice and even lessons in behaviour modification. In many cases families share the planners' visions but, more importantly, they understand it. Unlike members of wider communities, family members need not be partners in championing a cause, they may simply be the source of tranquility and balance in the planner's life.

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<sup>42</sup> While there is considerable ethnic diversity globally in proponents of global sustainability as illustrated through the proliferation of environmental and social justice NGOs all over the world, this research reveals that the cultural and ethnic diversity of the Vancouver region is not reflected in the groups of people working on sustainability issues (please see page 132 for further discussion).

Larry describes how his quiet family life balances his somewhat chaotic public life. *I think it's easier to say that in our own world as planners, if a person has a tranquil private life, that doesn't mean boring, it simply means in balance. That it is a good context in which to act out a very stressful public life. To manage a stressful public life and a stressful private life is difficult. By the same token I have met people who are doing that very well and in fact, in some people the quality of their public life seems to be driven by the complexity and contradictions in their private life. So I'm not sure how that fits together. For me I have a tranquil private life, with good friends, good partner, good supports and very little anxiety and so that puts me in a very strong position to deal with the complexities of my public life (Beasley 2004b).* A tranquil personal life serves more than simple refuge to include a measure of support, resilience and capability that extends beyond the capacity of the single individual. This is the heart of the meaning of community.

Bruce and Johnny both spoke with pride and warmth about their families. They both drew happiness and satisfaction from their ability to maintain a balance between their family lives and their hectic work schedules. They talked of making commitments to their children and of making time for them. *I have a great family and I've been married for 27 years so something's working. Part of it is if your family believes that what you're doing is valuable and important then you get a lot of support from them as well (Sampson 2003a).*

*I've got two older boys, one is 23 and one is 27 and until they left home, I was very involved. I had all of myself in their lives... I drove them to school. I became engaged in their work. I was heavily involved in their sports lives. They are both sporting guys. I coached soccer. I became swimming announcer. I spent a lot of time with them in those kinds of things... My kids were incredibly important to me... I remember for my interview for the Director of Planning job in Surrey, I [said] I have to tell you I coach soccer, and you've got to know that I don't mind which night of the week it is but one night of the week is going to be my coaching night and Saturday morning is when I play the game and my commitment to them overrides my commitment to you for those times. If you don't accept that don't hire me. I've always found that people are very supportive and say that's terrific that you've got that kind of commitment to other people too, so I was able to balance it... (Carline 2003b)*

*What flew out the window I guess was what I would call personal time, the notion of going golfing, doing something entirely for yourself. So my wife and I would go away on weekends, maybe three or four weekends a year. We'd find some romantic places to go in the northwest or something, look up a place and go away for the weekend and just spend time together like that and now the kids have left... If I'm home at night we'll go out for a walk together and maybe go for a drink together, something like that. I don't do a lot of socializing, with other people. I spend a lot of time talking at work, so if I have the opportunity to sit down on my own and read a book, I'd just love that, that's heaven for me (Carline 2003b).* Here we see the balancing effect of a tranquil home life preceded by the consuming nature of a busy family schedule. While the complexity, intensity and importance of family life renders it simultaneously contributive to, and subtractive from, the pursuit of a vision, in seven out of the eight Sustainability Planners there was a clear commitment to family. Daryl describes a commitment similar to Johnny's. *I'm pretty clear on where the priority is and I've been very fortunate in that my daughter is extremely healthy. She's just a really, really healthy person. Has been from when she was a baby. She's thirteen and she's been on antibiotics 3 times in her life. She's had a temperature maybe four times in her life. I mean she's just very, very healthy. She's a happy person, she does well at school she has her own passions... she*



*and mom get along. I am fortunate in that there aren't a lot of tugs. That part is a relatively easy one... So there's a tradeoff there but I guess the bottom line is I have a daughter with whom I have a great relationship. She's doing well at school. She's doing well at her extracurricular activities. She's healthy, she's happy, she's confident...(Fields 2003b)*

*As with Johnny what suffers in the quest for balance is her personal time. I don't get out and do stuff for myself as much as I maybe should. But I made that decision and it will change. In two years she'll be gone... I think when I turned about forty-two I started to become conscious of health. You're nowhere close to that, but you know you start thinking about your health. You know I want to ski when I'm seventy, so what do I need to do for this body to make sure that happens. You know the little wheels [charts] that people do in terms of the stuff to balance. That's probably the area that's kind of below the adequate line right now (Fields 2003b).*

In all three cases an underlying message to their stated commitment to achieving balance is the realization that balance is elusive. They are busy people with very full schedules and are unable to spend as much time with family as they would like. Stress and long hours were evident with all the Sustainability Planners. In addition to the comfort and solace of family life, not that these do not provide their own sources of stress at times, the planners benefited from creating clear boundaries between home life and work life. Cheeeyng never takes work home, Susan takes time off and Sebastian retreats to his island farm into which he pours his money and creative energy.

Going outwards from the family, a number of planners used other types of close relationships for support and guidance. Larry used a personal guide and assistant whom he describes as a psychologist "for lack of a better word". He also encourages his staff to make use of personal trainers who would accompany them to work and observe them in different situations. They would then provide feedback and suggestions for more effective behaviour. Daryl describes a similar relationship, *I have a personal coach. I meet with her once every six weeks but she's there and we've done some great work together around personal core values and just clarity in terms of why I took this job and things like that (Fields 2003a).*

Sebastian draws tremendous energy and support from his Men's Group. They are a sounding Board of ideas and give him advice when he needs it and brace him when he feels vulnerable. Bruce also benefits from a group of friends who get together to share their common passion for sustainability work. Although the bonds seem deeper than simple professional reciprocity, Bruce describes them as close friendships with tremendous respect and admiration, the relationships themselves create opportunities and incentives of expanding the network and building a larger community. *There's a group of six or eight of us that get together every now and then and sometimes when you're on committees and task forces or boards, with John and I for example, we're on the Climate Change Task Force and he'd always drive me home and we'd get talking and that's led to other groups that are working on other things that tend to have a sustainability tie-in. That helps build up the network where you have the personal relationships (Sampson 2003).*

Following the Empathic Leadership framework, in which individual visions grow outward from the self to include a greater number of people, Sustainability Leaders seem to follow an incremental logic of building on those who are closest first. It is that smallest structure of community, family and friends, that provides a primary source of support and purpose.

Building from this core of balance and resilience, leaders are able to expand their personal vision to affect the organizations and professional contexts within which they operate.

### Community within Organizations

The nucleus of the community around which growth occurs is neither constant nor uniform. BC Hydro provides an excellent example of how vision and community around a vision can sprout simultaneously in different places and grow independently and eventually become part of a larger community with a broader vision. Bruce came upon his sustainability vision through the work of others at BC Hydro, and the great success he has had in carrying his message forward was enabled by a wide range of pre-existing conditions. A growing culture of corporate sustainability within the organization had already begun and was headed by David Balser. Mike Costello, who was President of BC Hydro at the time I interviewed him, described how quickly Bruce adopted the vision and became a partner in championing the cause. *With Bruce's arrival and the introduction to that group of an individual who unfortunately is no longer around because of a very serious car accident, David Balser, the two of them crafted a change of focus of the strategic agenda of the company to adopt a sustainability concept and the various programs that fit under that umbrella (Costello 2003).* With a core group of senior proponents of the idea, sustainability began to spread through the organization. *Sustainability to a company as diverse as this in my view has to happen from the centre at least to start. So a small group in strategic planning sustainability, Bruce, David Balser and a few others, basically became the champions within the corporate group (Costello 2003).*

According to Bruce, the seeds of change had already been planted by David, who essentially handed him a vision. *The sustainability piece really came out of the work that he did with the environment team several years ago. I came on and was basically heading up the strategy piece and searching around for a vision. David and his group said look here's the vision, a sustainability focus. So I was really in the listening mode. But again you test it to see if it makes sense and think through the range of different scenarios and maybe go back and do some reading. You just go this fits. This makes a lot of sense. So then my role really was to help champion it (Sampson 2003).*

Beyond the vision itself, several practices within the organization were recognizably congruent with the values of sustainability. Bruce pays tribute to Daryl's work with multi-stakeholder groups as contributing to the acceptability and eventual adoption of sustainability strategies at BC Hydro. *Water-use plans have been a great example of the sustainable approach in action, again that wasn't driven by me... it was happening before. It was part of what we did as a company it really is an excellent model for stakeholder engagement and resolving conflict and tradeoffs. Daryl Fields, and the whole water use planning team, has done a great job. That's really sustainability in action. That wasn't my doing. Hydro had all the elements of sustainability anyway (Sampson 2003a).* By giving credit to Daryl, Bruce achieves several goals of forming community around a vision. He acknowledges the worth and significance of a member of staff, which makes her feel appreciated and encouraged and the whole company looks good. He also emphasizes those projects at BC Hydro which are already committed to sustainability, thereby rendering the idea less radical to those who might otherwise oppose it.

Mike adds to the list of practices that already fit within a sustainability approach, which Bruce was able to integrate into an organizational vision. *Some of the components that fit under*

*the sustainability umbrella have been alive in Hydro for a long time. The biggest one being PowerSmart and energy conservation. We're a leader in the world in that area [as well as] stakeholder consultation and aboriginal relations. They were here and doing very, very well. What Bruce and David were able to do was to basically link all of these into a kind of recognizable concept, sustainability, put an umbrella around it and add other pieces. (Costello 2003).*

Bruce began by doing his own fine-tuning of the sustainability vision and started with the very top of the organization where he had an audience. *I spent more time researching and thinking about it and doing background reading and became convinced. And then the next piece once you get convinced is you've got to get the CEO convinced, and the Board convinced, and luckily I had a very strong relationship with the CEO and getting things done was built on trust. He knows that when I recommend something, I've done a lot of research in thinking about it and if you build that trust over time, and I had done that because I used to work for him in the Ministry of Finance, you get a good audience (Sampson 2003a).*

The conditions were ripe for the adoption of sustainability and Bruce benefited from that environment and built on it. His first task was two fold: to broaden the network of people at all levels of the organization who are pushing towards the vision, and to impress upon individuals in the organization that this was not a temporary trend but a long-term change and to encourage employees to think how the change would affect them (Sampson 2003). He describes his strategy in simple terms *really my role was more to say let's make sure we're leaders and not followers this is the right path so let's try and make it happen. Lets do what I can to make it happen so there are a lot of people at Hydro that were, that had a lot more knowledge than I did about it and then you got to use them. I was just learning about it (Sampson 2003).*

With a mixture of perseverance, passion and humility Bruce won the support of the Board and continues to infect BC Hydro's employees with enthusiasm about striving for his ambitious vision. Mike describes how Bruce has managed to do this. *Being a one or two or three-man band in an organization of six thousand, you can't ram something like this down anybody's throat. You have to be able to personally influence people, and you do that not by telling them they're stupid, and not by telling them they're doing something the wrong way and that you're smarter than they are. That wouldn't work and he's just the opposite. He sees the great skill and talent that is in this organization and respects it, but tries to push them further on the agenda without saying you've been ignoring this issue for ten years, and smack. His personality, his approach, his interpersonal skills on something like this are absolutely key. (Costello 2003)*

The day-to-day work of expanding the network is literally a process of involving people. It is a process of presenting and sharing ideas, eliciting feedback and engaging in discussion, which generates refinement and more presenting and more sharing in an iterative process of perpetual evolution. Not only is the vision benefiting from a multitude of minds and experiences through this process, but also the community of people who have personally invested in the vision continues to grow. The process becomes a self-perpetuating engine of change. Bruce describes the practice. *You work with a range of people in the company and you bounce ideas off of them, with a lot of whiteboard brainstorming sessions to refine the basic concept. Typically you go back to the CEO and say look here's what I'm thinking. Here are the raw elements of the presentation. You got to keep it pretty focused, not too many slides and more time for questions and then you typically pull it together and get buy-in from the CEO and then do a test run with the*

*management team. We had a retreat and so on and you get input and you refine it and you get it ready and take it back to the Board and that creates further work (Sampson 2003).*

Creating an environment in which people feel empowered to contribute and affect change within their sphere of operation enables a feeling of belonging and ownership in an organization. Larry describes his philosophy behind involving his staff in the collective construction of a vision at the City of Vancouver. *To take the view that it's a hierarchical organization in which some people are more important than other people often doesn't lead to people feeling good about being a part of a community. To take a view that no matter what you do at this organization your bit is important and it is as important as another bit, really empowers people positively to give of themselves to a community circumstance. You know then there are techniques that I think one uses, sometimes very explicitly to manifest that, but a lot of times it just happens naturally (Beasley 2004b).*

Nathan Edelson<sup>43</sup>, a senior planner at the City of Vancouver, further demonstrated how personal empowerment contributes to a feeling of community and commitment to a central vision at the City of Vancouver's Planning Department. He described Larry as being a boss with a grand vision who recognizes that in order to achieve that vision he has to have a very large number of people dedicated and committed to that vision in their respective areas of work. *He knows that if he asks me to do something that I'm not keen on, it'll either never get done, or get done in a strange way, or will be put off. He also knows that if he wants me to do something that I agree with I will work hard and get everyone on my team working on it. (Edelson 2004)*

The very idea of having a central leader is counter to the idea of building community or building a network of equally empowered individuals. Susan, for example, was persistently uncomfortable with the label leader. *I always have problems with this word leadership I have to say. It's like a word that makes the hairs raise on the back of my neck because I don't really believe in an individual leading people, I don't think that's the way that happens. I don't like to focus on that stuff so much like an individual and rating and bringing out the individual and focusing on a single individual. Here at EYA it really doesn't work that style because the idea is to put young people forward and to give them as many opportunities as possible and you tend to be way in the background (Kurbis 2003a).*

At BC Hydro central control and hierarchical organization are more traditional. Even within the hierarchical structure, community building around a vision still takes place in every direction of power, across to include colleagues, down to include staff and subordinates and up to include superiors. There is a clear pecking order. Daryl describes her approach in convincing a new boss, who was inexperienced in the issues that BC Hydro had been confronting, to adopt sustainability ideas. *She doesn't come from a fish background she doesn't come from the same sort of First Nations environment that we have here in British Columbia, so rather than sit down with her and say you know this is the right thing to do, we need to demonstrate what are the management opportunities. What are the management risks and how well are we positioned to make some difference and then the leap is a little less (Fields 2003a).*

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<sup>43</sup> In addition to being a Senior Planner responsible for the Downtown Eastside, Nathan teaches part time at the School of Community and Regional Planning. His expertise is planning in contexts of extreme diversity.

Daryl goes on to describe how she promotes a sustainability vision by *identifying the drivers, creating a policy framework that mitigated the biggest risk for hydro, maximizing the biggest value and then it was only after we had done all of that that the leap was much smaller. It was still a leap we are still dealing with culture change, but it was much smaller. And I think that's probably the approach I'll be taking with any new manager. Some people have a much clearer idea of the big situation and the opportunities and possibilities than other people do and that is what you have to attend to* (Fields 2003a).

In the case of Smart Growth the structure is less hierarchical and the sense of community and connection between individuals is strongly collaborative and participatory. Members of the Board are themselves champions of a sustainability vision and the task of engaging them is more one of refinement and priority setting. *"Community" exists in this case, and serves to provide support for the vision. We present options and usually we present recommendations to the Board and the Board usually agrees, sometimes they don't but it is rare. My Board is really good they raise the big questions, so they definitely keep me on my toes, definitely. They help decide, they help hone down the questions. Another thing, because our office is in Vancouver and all the staff live in Vancouver we tend to be a little Vancouver centric although we're a provincial organization. I think we have ten Board members or eleven and four or five are in Vancouver and the rest are in different parts of the province so typically they bring the other perspective. We have an Okanagan Board member a couple from Victoria and one in Whistler* (Ho 2003a).

Cheeyng enjoyed an equally strong sense of community and common purpose at BEST. After a period of struggling with the mission of the organization, a feeling of common purpose permeated throughout the organization and staff were able to be more directed in their activities. *It was a great organization to work with because staff cohesion was just awesome. It was just awesome. It was really great that way. And once we got Board members who shared a similar vision it was much easier* (Ho 2003b).

The story of how the make-up of the BEST community changed is a case of an evolving identity to match an evolving vision. The organization started off as a bicycle advocacy group and with Cheeyng's influence expanded its scope to include the promotion of a range of alternatives to automobile transportation. Some of the original members embraced the expansion while others resented it. The community of people involved in the organization changed to include a larger base of support while some of the original members no longer felt an affinity with the organization or its vision. The change was not easy however and Cheeyng recounted numerous conflict situations that ultimately strengthened the sense of community and purpose amongst the organization's members. *I think one of the consequences of those conflicts at BEST is that a lot of people who are really instrumental in getting going as a bicycle group dropped away from BEST over the years. It is definitely unfortunate and I do take some responsibility for that. On the other hand it might not be that bad of a thing because people do need to move on when things change. And also I found this really odd about BEST is that some people who were really involved in the beginning just didn't want to see BEST changed and would hang on, and hang on. When it was so apparent that it had become different they finally let go as opposed to stay with BEST and work at it being the most effective transportation advocacy group* (Ho 2003b).

Community is sense of cohesion and common purpose by individual contributors. In most cases the sustainability vision itself is powerful enough to draw people together to create a community. In some cases, however, where the organization is old and large and predates the very notion of sustainability, community and commitment already exist. It then becomes a matter of infusing that existing network with the sustainability vision. At the GVRD for example *a larger group of people who just simply want this organization to be successful, to be influential, to do good for the community. They weren't necessarily on the sustainability bandwagon. They now understand it and see that it's a vehicle. They're not disciples of sustainability but they are total GVRD people. You know this organization is full of people who bleed GVRD kind of thing and want it to be successful, and are committed to it from that point of view* (Carline 2003b).

Specific actions for creating community exemplify relatedness and empathy. Empathy once again does not signify upholding the perspective of others as being the most relevant, but rather understanding it, acknowledging it and acting from a position of common understanding. A number of the sustainability planners spoke of working to create such an environment of common understanding. Daryl spoke of how she tries to connect with her staff by *trying to walk around. I try to keep track of what individuals are doing. So that when I do walk around I can say, what about that film that was being shot at the REC site, or trying to be aware of what individuals are doing as individuals. I think it is tied to the work planning. If Karen is there sitting at her desk working away and there's no recognition in the work planning process in terms of this is what we expect you to get done, then she doesn't know that she's being valued* (Fields 2003a).

*For me it is [important to be] really intentional around building relationships, which I've done externally... and I will do that with my peers, be it going to them and just saying, "listen this is what I was thinking of doing. Are you OK with that?" Or saying, "can you give me some advice on that?" ... I'm the least experienced of all the staff and some of them have lots of years of managing people and so I seek advice and I joke with them, just all around building relationships* (Fields 2003a).

*I think part of it is being intentional around showing up as a leader and that is not just being directive. There are some skills around being directive. Yeah we need this done and yeah I'm sorry that you drank too much last night but we need this done. Another aspect of that is encouraging and growing people and a third aspect is linking people. You know, "you're working on this and I've heard of somebody working on that. Why don't you guys get together."* (Fields 2003a).

Johnny also devotes time and energy on building relationships with his staff. *Often you'll find Delia and myself, and my executive assistant, will just sit and talk until six thirty, seven o'clock on a Friday night instead of getting home and being sensible. So it's a good social atmosphere here as well as a good work atmosphere so I would feel most of the time that I'm not at work* (Carline 2003b). In addition to Johnny's own words, I observed a level of collegiality between Johnny and his staff that was remarkable. While he clearly operated with authority in directing his staff during management meetings and public forums his manner in the day-to-day work did not set him apart as the man at the top.

Sebastian is unique in his role as leader of his organization in that he runs a small business, which needs to remain profitable. His approach to relationship building is pragmatic and revolves around differentiating between the positive and the negative in the behaviour of

others. He describes how he manages morale by really [focusing] on what people are doing well. What they don't do well, you don't focus much on it. In fact you find a little bit of what they are doing well... and you just focus on that. So it's the rule for good relationships, in work and outside work. It's all about encouraging positive behaviour and that way you cut back on all the gossip and the triangular type groups that happen in businesses. You generate good relationships and trust and it's a way better environment and people do change and everybody loves to respond to positive feedback and they remember it. Negative feedback tends to have the opposite results. Initially for a short period it encourages people to try and do something different but really what you've been telling them is that they are poor at something so then they fulfill your expectations and continue to be poor at it. Generally speaking having the wherewithal and the confidence and to see what people are doing well and getting them doing that and then rewarding them doing that, is the art of management. It's also a big part of communications... you can't take on other people's problems or you go crazy (Moffatt 2003).

Sebastian cited the example of having to adapt his own style to accommodate a member of his staff. *She just gets so she doesn't care. What makes her care about things isn't content. It's keeping other people happy. Since I'm her boss, I have to make it really clear when I'm not happy. Then she works like hell and I get happy and she's happy and then we go through that process again. She can't just be all steady, up and down and up and down and so that means I have to give negative feedback, really heavy. I'm not happy and really confrontational and then I have to give her the positive feedback, I'm really pleased, here's a ticket for a good meal. I don't do this but I should, here's a ticket for a good meal, take out a friend, go somewhere. That would be such a valuable investment for me when she did something I could really reward and then she'd really be working in a system that suited her style* (Moffatt 2003).

Sebastian muses about another way in which he could behave in a more ideal way towards his staff. *So if I come in and I have time for everybody, in an ideal situation I actually go around and say hi to everybody specifically. [I would] ask them what they're doing and how they're doing and can I help, and have some laughs. If a day starts that way everybody is better you know, I don't always have the time to do that, but in an ideal situation... Usually firms, as they get larger as we're starting to get now, over a dozen people, you'd have a managing partner who'd be on everybody all the time, and then there'd be... somebody like me who does more of the visioning marketing project management stuff. But we don't have that here yet, so I'm pretty remiss basically... but it is my job and I'm aware of it and I try and do it... and always my preference has been to find people who are really independent and self-directed because I don't really like to take the time to manage somebody else's time. I don't really have the time, even if I wanted to, so the place works best for people who are very independent. It's very horizontal in terms of structure* (Moffatt 2003).

Here we have another definition of horizontal structure. It is more about independence than about having a sense of ownership, power and contribution. In this case community building would ideally require people who fit the mold of emotional independence and self-directed desire to produce. Whether this is a plausible expectation in a world of plurality and diversity is in itself a legitimate question. What is informative here, however, is that the capacity to get along with, manage and enthuse different types of people is necessary for building community. Eighty percent of survey respondents indicated that having "good relationship building skills" is important to sustainability planning work (see Appendix C). Survey results also showed a strong correlation between "working well with different types of people" and "being more effective than others in a similar position." (see Appendix D)

In the delicate work of building community around a vision sometimes the assumption of common understanding precedes the common understanding. Having achieved agreement amongst the previous Board, and some support from the new Board at the time, amongst some Board members, Johnny pushed ahead on the Sustainable Region Initiative prematurely early in 2003. The outcome was an ugly meeting of personal attacks and accusations in which the sustainability mission was cast under serious doubt. According to Johnny a number of outside guests, and a few members of the organization itself, thought the idea of the SRI had been killed at that meeting. Johnny turned it around and by the time the Board met again on this issue he had everyone's support. He did it by *basically by sitting back and standing away from the problem and saying what is driving the concerns that are being expressed here. We know, I know, that the sustainability theme is being well received out in the community. I know it's being well received by certain parts of the political body, why are some new members and some returning members in returning positions fighting this off. I reached the conclusion that part of it was, that the last Board had essentially approved of what we were doing but hadn't really engaged in it* (Carline 2003a). So he set about engaging the Board by talking to members individually and convincing them that they had shared values and interests. Sustainability, or the creation of a healthy and vibrant region, was in everybody's best interest.<sup>44</sup>

We see here once again that the community around a vision is not a static entity of known quantity and proportion. A group of core supporters might be consistently wedded to the vision, although we saw in the case of BEST even those changed, but there is a large body of people who can be supportive of the vision in general but who would take issue with specific policies or actions. The GVRD case also showed the opposite. The vision might at first glance seem unpalatable until it is presented in a different light. The degree to which such a loose connection can be relied upon varies with different issues and different political and socio-economic contexts. Over time the empathic leader develops the ability to understand her community well enough to be able to predict the level of support that she may have in her vision and can act accordingly.

### Community across Organizations and Institutions

Changes in government can have a range of implications on the internal direction and functioning of an organization. *When you have a change of government and change of chair and CEO, [the important this is] convincing them that the vision is right and getting them to buy into it so you don't have flip flops and you don't have a different vision* (Sampson 2003a).

The outward building of community around a vision within an organization is essential for acting on the vision but if that action is to ever have wider success it requires a broader support. It requires community across organizations. Every leader I talked to without exception has a network of colleagues and partners in other organizations and other sectors that help advance the vision. Bruce describes the importance of building this wider community of support. *Networking is absolutely critical. I'm on probably too many boards but it's very difficult to get things done unless you have a network. So I'm on the Board of the Fraser basin Council, on the Board of Science World... Being on the Board you go to retreats and you can influence the thinking about strategies of those entities and obviously I was saying, "gee, part of our*

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<sup>44</sup> See Chapter 6 for greater detail on how Johnny managed to garner support for the SRI.



*vision at Science World should be the science around sustainability. It's a growing important global issue and people are thinking about it (Sampson 2003a).*

This network was essential, for example, for Bruce to promote the idea of a sustainability research centre. He calls it John Robinson's centre because John has been promoting this idea for several years and has applied for numerous funding grants and appealed to corporate and private donors. *For John Robinson's centre of sustainability at UBC we were talking about the Finning lands and there you need collaboration with Simon Fraser University, Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design and British Columbia Institute of Science and Technology. So I said, "well I'm meeting tonight with Ron Martin at Simon Fraser and I'll talk to him" ... so Ron and I talked and Ron got very excited about it and said sure yeah let's get John to give me a presentation. So it's amazing really the networking piece is really useful. (Sampson 2003a).*

Bruce gives another example of the network in action. *[In the] climate change economic impacts panel you've got about eleven leaders in the community and you build up a network there and we've all become good friends over that process and that helps to get stuff done and you can phone any of them up and kick ideas around with them and that leads to other things. Dennis Conner from Quest Air is on the panel. He had a meeting with the Premier, for example, today and he's got one on fuel cells and developing the fuel cell sector in the province and he invited me to that meeting (Sampson 2003a).*

I also discovered considerable overlap in the work of the sustainability planners who participated in this research. Cheeying and Patrick and Johnny and Sebastian have collaborated on numerous projects promoting sustainability in the Vancouver region. Cheeying describes a full partnership with Patrick Condon for an ambitious initiative. *He's created this new program called the Sustainable Communities Program so it's not really coming out of the James Taylor Chair. Smart Growth BC and Sustainable Communities Program at UBC are partnering for this project called Smart Growth on the Ground. We're working with municipalities to design neighbourhoods completely according to Smart Growth principles (Ho 2003a).*<sup>45</sup>

In Larry's case networking took on a more formal structure. Within the City a culture of collaboration had developed but they also brought that culture with them when they interacted with the public and with developers. *Every single person has a different style, a different approach, a different tolerance for the unknown, a different sense of what their personal needs are and all of that. Certainly that's a part of what occurred here. What we did do is we actually very overtly built this cooperative planning model. We talked a lot about it among all the players. We codified it the best we could. We laid the whole process in a series of iterations from highly conceptual to specific, so that we could deal with people's issues at the scale they need to be dealt with, we were lucky because we also had a very high quality series of city councils, with very high quality politicians. When I compare it to other cities we've been very, very fortunate in just the brain power and understanding of the politicians that we've been working with (Beasley 2004a).*

### **Community across Perspective**

*[I]f you want to reach out to people, stop talking to each other in your privileged little rooms. (Fisk 2004)*

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<sup>45</sup> See chapter 7 for detail on Patrick's work on this project.

Entering the abyss of hostile opinions can be a daunting task. Building community across different opinions and ideologies is one of the most challenging tasks of leading in an environment of diversity. Beginning with humility and a genuine deference to collective wisdom is a gentle and conscientious way of creating community across difference. Bruce describes testing out his ideas in a friendly yet diverse atmosphere first. *There's a group of us in the city that meet at different task force and committee and meet actually in the evening. I think those interactions are really, really helpful because you get a lot of energy and a lot of new ideas and you can test. [With] people with a wide range of experience in different areas you can test some of your thoughts and get good feedback so it's a constant adjustment process (Sampson 2003).*

Having tested out his ideas in a friendly atmosphere Bruce is better able to approach people with different perspectives. BC Hydro is such a large organization that it is home to many different visions and many different perspectives on what the priorities are and how they should be achieved. *Being a one or two or three man band in an organization of six thousand, you can't ram something like this down anybody's throat, you have to be able to personally influence people, and you do that not by telling them they're stupid. Not by telling them they're doing something the wrong way and you're smarter than they are. That wouldn't work and he's just the opposite. He sees the great skill and talent that is in this organization and respects it, but tries to push them further on the agenda without saying you've been ignoring this issue for ten years, and smack... His personality, his approach his interpersonal skills, on something like this are absolutely key. It would be extremely easy for people just to say, "well I'm not going to invite that guy into my management team meeting to talk about sustainability, because he just pisses me off so I won't do it," right, "I'll fight it, I'll fight him." Nobody was fighting Bruce. Nobody was saying get this guy out of here, absolutely not. They have found him right from day one to be engaging and stimulating and really helpful and without that it would have taken a lot longer (Costello 2003).*

Cheeying does a lot of reaching out to people who would have traditionally been aligned against a sustainability agenda. She described meeting with the Urban Development Institute, the professional association of developers as an important step in advancing Smart Growth. Development, she contends is where the next wave of innovation and progressive action will take place. This capacity to see beyond traditional stereotypes, whereby developers are construed as a villain, allows Cheeying to be innovative, creative and effective in building broad community support for her activities at Smart Growth BC. The key to her success is her *being able to build good relationships. You have to be a nice person... I think it's really important that you're able to not only speak the language, not necessarily speak the language of the others, but be able to understand where they are coming from. It is much easier to figure out areas of commonality, to start from an area of commonality than to start from an area of difference. So it's sort of a lesson I've learned over the years (Ho 2003a)*

Daryl also refers to language as being essential component of reaching out to people and advancing a common vision. *When people ask me what I do I say basically I'm in the language business. Because I work with business people, I work with biologists, I work with bureaucrats, and they all speak a different language and unless you figure out how to get a common language it's going to be very difficult to come to common solutions... It's [about] creating a neutral and mutually understandable language to have some tough discussions around tradeoffs (Fields 2003a)*

Consistency and authenticity in language is important in conveying a sense of caring and honesty and for building trust and exemplifying diversity when dealing with differently

empowered people. *I don't really go to another level to talk to somebody and use different language and that kind of thing. I try and keep it pretty consistent, partly because I think they need to see that consistency. I need that consistency for my own sanity but also especially when I'm dealing with bureaucrats and government people. I think they just need to see that not everybody wears a suit and just because you're not wearing a suit doesn't mean you don't have a way to contribute to the conversation. It does affect it though definitely (Kurbis 2003a).*

Differences across perspective go beyond language and power into our very conception of what has value in the world. Moving from conflict or a seeming clash of interests to agreement requires peeling away the layers of assumptions until core values reveal themselves. *I've just found that so frequently we could get into battles over the mechanisms when the mechanisms are not as important. What you need to do is to go back and think about what matters. What matters to you, which is all around objectives... I had someone in here today who said well one of your people told me I had to do this, this, this and this, and I don't have time to do that. That's not what my boss tells me to do. OK well let's take a look back and see what the objectives are for [power] generation as a whole. This is what I see as being the objectives. In other words this is what matters. This is what matters to you. This is what matters to me. This is what matters to generation, and I find that frequently creates a common platform to have a discussion about how you're going to meet those objectives. Because I find most of the disagreements rise in the mechanisms and how you are going to do something. Who's going to do what by when, and often if you go back and talk about what matters it validates that person first of all and it says we're in this together. We've got some things that we've got to do together. OK, now together, how are we going to figure out how we're going to do this? (Fields 2003a)*

Larry also characterizes his approach as helping people move away from positioning and working from basic interests. *If I would say there's one fundamental philosophical way that we approach our work its interest based problem solving. To take everything we face and to try to get beyond positioning and beyond kind of direct solutions and back to people's basic interests and see how you could bring those interests together in another way that is more fruitful than what first appears. It's dramatically effective in terms other than compromise. It's not about compromise, but about realizing best aspirations differently (Beasley 2004a).*

Johnny has a similar approach although somewhat more authoritarian in its implementation. *I've seen the impact of people who are just about to put on this little cynical head space," oh God here's another thing... Not only is he not going to be one of these guys who just wants to talk about theory and high falutin' stuff, he's actually giving my own values back at me, through me, and demanding something. And that really appeals to the hands-on guys. I make jokes about wonks and grunts. How the planning's going to be real and the reality has got to get planned to bring these people together and get people to get used to the fact that they're a diverse bunch of people who are now working together for this one actor (Carline 2003b).*

*It's been very interesting to watch Jock Finlayson at the BC Business Council who you know picked up the torch early on and became one of our early partners. His presentations over the months have increasingly now pointed to the fact that wow, you know, you've also got to take environmental and social issues into consideration here [in addition to economic ones]. Marrying that with Ron Dumouchelle [President] of United Way of the Lower Mainland, who's another of our first round partners, who gives this really marvelous presentation on the development of social capital as the foundation for economic prosperity, that without social capital you're going nowhere bud. You can*

*see them listening to each other and well you know that's right. You've got a point and wanting to get up and reinforce each other on the stage. This is already starting to get the small scale kind of synergies that you are looking for (Carline 2003a).*

*To achieve consensus and provide leadership with a group of people wherever they come from you have to be able to actually understand and relate to them on very different perspectives on what's the fundamental issue here and what's the fundamental solution therefore. So if you can't translate what you're doing into their worldview you're going to have problems like every group seems to have when they talk about sustainability... To get agreement to act without agreement on all the points or principles requires a huge sense of goodwill. It's the creed of human interaction... when there are difficulties between friends in relationships or in work, it's all the same, what builds the goodwill that can lead to consensus is knowing that you've been heard (Moffatt 2002).*

*Sebastian links the need to find a common language to the ability to achieve a common understanding. To find excuses to voice each person's experiences or doubts or issues and if you can do that well, talk in the other person's language using the key words and key experiences, because that is how you really talk to someone, you talk in their experience, then you have a way of building consensus and making things happen and that is what you are talking about with leadership (Moffatt 2002).*

*To claim that all differences can be transcended through common language and knowing that you've been heard is patently naïve. No practitioner will make that claim and even theorists withdraw from the seductive purity of that opinion. Sebastian himself, who so eloquently describes how to arrive at agreement makes very strong statements about the lack of agreement and the deep roots of conflict around sustainability issues. I just feel comfortable being a radical... I will use the power that I have to influence other people. Now the reality is that given all the power in the world my choice would be largely not to influence anybody. I don't think I have the right and I don't want to, and I think people are complex packages and I wouldn't even understand how to do that. I respect the individual's freedom and I want to treat them as they treat me. But on issues of passion, where I have a conclusion and I wanna make a change, of course, I'll use whatever power I have to make the world the way I want to make it. That is my right and my responsibility as a human being so in that sense I'm a radical, I'm an existentialist, I'm a secular person I guess that way. I don't see that the world exists outside of me. I'm in the end going to call the shots the way I want to and the way I will and that will be that. In the vast majority of cases that will be to let people manage themselves and run their own lives, and I'll expect the same, but in a few cases we have conflicts right now, major conflicts and I'm quite prepared to use whatever power is available to me (Moffatt 2002).*

*He goes on to be anything but compromising or consensus building. In those areas of conflict right now and what's happening to my planet is an area of conflict big time right now. I'm absolutely freaked out by it. I'm infuriated by it. I am hugely stimulated by it and give me the power and I'll do something about it, you know, I won't be a Buddhist in that area (Moffatt 2002).*

*When I first started working with Susan on this research she had just undergone a grueling one-month process of being audited for possible transgression of the Charity's Act. What she describes is a conflict that provides a significant counterpoint to the idea that building community across different perspectives is an easy task. This George Backhouse is on a search and find mission. He took out Friends of Clayoquot Sound. He's very good at what he's doing. He*

*took out Greenpeace, he got their charity status stripped. He goes after environmental groups. He really doesn't like environmental groups because they are so effective... When [the auditor] was here she said they get three packages a week from Backhouse at charities division. He does this full time and he's trying to take out charities that do social and environmental stuff and he's completely supported by right wing groups to go through our stuff and find any hole. For him to find what he found on us, he must have been going through our website for a long time. If you go to our website it's filled with shit, like all the magazines we publish are on there. There's so much on there to read. He must have been studying our website for weeks, just reading every single thing... There's a war going on out there... It was pretty bad (Kurbis 2003a).*

*We deal with the Downtown Eastside young people and some of those folks are really knarly... We're down here, mixing around. Now we have the squatters in our garden. They're right there in Strathcona Park. That's what the Park Board meeting was about last night. They wanted to turf them. There's a huge camp in Strathcona Park, massive one (Kurbis 2003b).* Susan is very clear that her allegiance is with those with the least power, which in this case is the homeless squatters, whose voices and issues were being ignored. I wanted to know more about how differences in identity and community might arise within a group even if they have a common identity that unites them in a broader social context. The group of young women who built the Strathcona Gardens Eco-Pavilion had the common goal of learning how to build and to building a house. They were all women in their late teens and early twenties. They all lived in East Vancouver. They all felt outside of popular culture and mainstream power structures. Their common bond was strong. Yet it was not strong enough to displace conflict. I had built some of the heavy timber trusses for the Eco-Pavilion and I had sensed some tension in the group so I asked Susan about it. Her answer

*I think there's only so much you can cope with and you have to be careful. I think there's so much people can process, within a limited time given the stress and the complexity of the program... I learned a lot of lessons, and I think we all learned... It's interesting where the allegiances fall [when a conflict arises]. The Aboriginal women teamed up with the girls who were involved in the sex industry. That was a rift. And the more educated women, white women, I would say, were another group. I saw the divisions based on class quite strongly (Kurbis 2003b).* Susan's answer reveals that there are perhaps limits to how much diversity you can effectively contend with, facilitate and celebrate in any one endeavour. Differences in behaviour communication styles led to a conflict between a First Nations Woman and a couple of white lesbians. The lesbians deemed the First Nations Woman to be homophobic while she thought they were classist and condescending. While a feeling of community across difference was cultivated through the common goal of building a house, when a conflict arose that threatened personal identities, individuals receded away from the new community to the more trusted common bond of socio-economic class. The feeling of community around the goal of fighting for social sustainability was not strong enough to withstand the very same social forces that the new community is trying to resist.

### Community across Society

I found a lot of evidence of planners building a sense of community across society in a way that is similar to networking across organizations and across perspectives. Planners create networks and build on them across many different groups but also across segments of the region's population. Bruce describes how in order to work on his vision for British

Columbia he has had to engage in initiatives and relationships that are broader than the immediate mandate of his organization. Sustainability as a vision has no organizational boundaries and in seeking to realize the vision proponents often have to step outside of their traditional boundaries of operation. Bruce describes how important it is to take on networking roles in the broader community.

*Someone came to me and said we've been talking and we'd like you to join the Science World Board. So what I attempt to do is [ask] does that fit with my role at Hydro, and since my role is the Vice President of Sustainability, it also fits with my longer-term vision for the province as well. A big piece of sustainability is education and so I thought, well that looks like it will be fun and there seems to be a fit there, so I agreed to that.*

*Someone else came to me and said gee you should be on the Board of Fraser Basin Council. David Marshal<sup>46</sup> asked me and again they have a sustainability vision. That's a great organization and it's a huge part of the province. It represents 2.7 million people and 80 percent of its gross domestic product. If you want to find out what people in those communities are thinking, and a lot of what sustainability is about, is stakeholder engagement and dialogue, then [the Fraser Basin Council] is a great venue... Now I'm on the Strengthening Communities Sub-committee and that fits in with their vision. What I will do is I'll bring people from the company and talk about the PowerSmart program and the ResearchSmart program and looking at resource options in the future. It helps build that dialogue with people so that people understand what we're doing as a company and why we're doing it, and also to get feedback from them to understand what their issues and concerns are. Again it relates to my job and it gives BC Hydro a visible presence in the community (Sampson 2003a)*

Bruce reiterates the same point with a specific emphasis on building up sustainability strategies. Certainly a big part of my job, the external piece on boards, is basically trying to find out where our customers and the community is at and thinking through how that fits into our strategy and where we can fit in. For example on the Board of the Fraser Basin Council, and there's a strengthening communities initiative task force that I'm on, and out of that work there is interest in a real strong sustainability focus. There's interest in the green energy program and the permitting aspects associated with that. For example I got a call a few weeks ago that said there's a conference in Prince George and if I could come and speak. So you just think through that and you go no I'm not the right person to go, I arranged to have the right group at Hydro go and give a presentation that addressed the issues that that community had. It helps us get a better understanding of what the issues are in the community and it helps move the projects forward and we can suggest our practices to help build-up (Sampson 2003).

Cheeying's work at Smart Growth BC has a similar scope of provincial influence and community building. She launched an education campaign at the time of municipal elections to raise awareness about issues related to land use and density. In different municipalities we partnered with on the ground community groups to host public candidate forums. We partnered with Surrey Social Futures. In Vancouver we partnered with BEST and the Tenants' Rights Action Coalition and we did a couple in Victoria and then the communities where we didn't have a real presence we sent them a package on how to hold a forum type thing. Basically here's how to do your own if we couldn't partner with them (Ho 2003a).

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<sup>46</sup> David Marshall is the Executive Director of the Fraser Basin Council.

Another of Cheeying's roles, as Director of an NGO, is fundraising. The activities she describes are very much about reaching out across diverse groups to try to garner financial support. The effect is twofold: funds for running the organization and informing the public about the organization and renewing contact with that public and requiring them to reestablish their commitment to the organization and the values of that organization. The work is awkward and uncomfortable but the rewards are worthwhile. *I've been doing [fundraising] for ten years, but I'm still not super comfortable at it. ... I don't know if it makes a difference but because I am staff and I'm asking for money for my own organization that I get paid out of, it feels a little odd sometimes. So, I'm really working with the Board and trying to get them to do more fundraising...I'm working on what we call a case for support to try to make a really compelling argument that we're the organization you need to give money to, to help preserve what we've got in BC (Ho 2003a).*

Johnny's vision of reaching out to a broad community includes a broader and more diverse audience. He spoke of setting up *task forces working on specific issues. [We] brought [people] in from all walks of life, who have an interesting background, essentially to generate some ideas. The notion was to take the results of this, try and do some massaging into integration and get some general themes out of it, and then take it to a conference where the public at large can have at it and see what they like and what they don't like and add to that. But also form this assembly of thirty five organizations or so which would have a direct interest in this, and see if they could take this work and work it up to a vision of sustainability for the region with some implementation strategies and implications that people would then take back and apply in their own jurisdictions. I put that concept in front of my poor new senior political committee with all the mayors of the big communities and found that I was trying to get there too fast, and they hadn't embraced it and internalized it (Carline 2003a).* Johnny's vision was perhaps too ambitious for some tastes and not ambitious enough for others. Including people from all walks of life in task forces sounds too loose and unpredictable for elected officials, the Board members to which Johnny has to report, and it sounds too vague in its inclusion of true diversity.

Of all the sustainability initiatives and actions I studied, the only planner to include the voices of the truly disenfranchised is Susan. She deliberately sets out to work with people on the fringe. She seeks out marginalized youth to work on various environmental projects and EYA provides them with tools and opportunities for participating in the economy of society. *People who are a bit more from the margins of society, or who could be viewed as being from the margins started to say hey, this is starting to fit into how I want to see the world so now there's a whole kind of a machine working (Kurbis 2003a).*

Larry is drawn to the idea of pluralism and diversity but sees it from a very different perspective. His is a desire for diversity that seeks plurality in all its richness. It is modernist in its idealistic and seeming detachment from issues of equity and power. *It's a marriage really of substance and process and that's true more today and more in our culture than probably ever in history because we are so pluralistic, and good for us. That means we're all living together comfortably and happily but it also means ... that one has to find a way to bridge between the solitudes of millions of people, thousands of people (Beasley 2003).* Clearly those residents of Vancouver who Susan represents would not identify their place in the city as being comfortable or happy. The large-scale motherhood statements promoting the image of the city therefore have to be tempered with the reality of those who are least advantaged. If their plight is ever to change then they must at least become a part of the discourse.

### Creating Culture and Communicating the Vision

The notion of creating culture and a sense of community around a vision requires an effective communication of that vision. This act of communicating a vision, and expanding the community of people who believe in a vision, requires an additional quality that is beyond the vision itself. *I've seen this... you can have people with rapport but they don't have any great ideas there. So you'll do something together but it won't be great. And I've seen other people have brilliant ideas but they don't really know how to realize them in their relationships with other people. They'll go nowhere. They're just the brains over here with those great ideas that no one is paying attention to* (Beasley 2003). This act of creating a culture of understanding, acceptance and excitement about a vision requires communication and networking.

Bruce spends much of his time networking with other organizations. *I'm on the Board of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development... and I'm Hydro's liaison delegate. So we're getting some profile there. We've got some of our case studies and that's been included in their documentation. If you look at their website and case studies you see BC Hydro's Aboriginal Relations Program or Water Use Planning or "E-Points" for energy efficiency. Again that international profile...* (Sampson 2003a). For Bruce this is not just a public relations exercise, it is a way of communicating BC Hydro's vision and gaining support and enthusiasm about the vision. It helps create an identity that in turn attracts the attention of those seeking a similar identity, or seeking to learn from this identity or seeking to support it. It also adds a level of legitimacy to this vision that is internal to the organization itself.

Articulating a sustainability vision and identity can be a delicate matter especially if the goal is to gain popular support across a broad spectrum of people. When Cheying and I discussed some of my research interests in assessing the kind and level of urban density that would give rise to possible negative psychological and social effects she reacted quite strongly. *I don't want people to take anything we say against density as the excuse against density. We talk, we always, always say we don't encourage high rises as the solution. You can get medium density with a whole range of options like secondary suites, infill, duplexes, fourplexes, you know the whole range. You can achieve similar densities without the whole Corbusier thing, the architect, you're an architect right? I was going to say the architectural ego, the edifice complex* (Ho 2003a). In this case Cheying's concern is with the substance of the vision itself as well as how it is carefully communicated so as not to alienate potential supporters of the vision. *One sound bite we always use is that there's a range of housing options in the same neighbourhood as well as every street* (Ho 2003a).

Johnny articulates his vision in a way that everybody can understand and relate to and it is through that common understanding that people will accept and adopt the idea. *Most people who live here, when they have a little moment to reflect on it, [think] yeah this is a pretty special place. Physically it's special, and socially special and they like it. They like different things about it, but they all like it. They really do have a sense of we really don't want to screw it up and if you push them a bit further you can say, you know yeah, it does have those three dimensions, yeah we are concerned about our kids getting jobs* (Carline 2003a).

Johnny is also very clear about what it takes to build a culture around the sustainability vision. *It's almost become a cliché: communication, communication, communication! But, in*



*something like this where what you're trying to do is to raise awareness about what you're doing, and to have people come to the conclusion that this is not only compatible with what they're trying to do, but in the end is perhaps the appropriate and best framework for what they're trying to do. Then engage and entice them into starting to make a commitment to helping this go along (Carline 2003a).*

Larry spends 80% of his time interacting, communicating and relating to people and only 20% on personal production. When I asked him how he communicates he said: *Trying to listen as much as possible. And then trying to facilitate them getting out what is it that they want to say, and what's behind what they really want to say. I do a lot of facilitating between people who are not getting together, whether it's staff to staff, or the community with the developer, or staff with the developer or staff with the community or whatever it might be. To help people realize that they can bond, and that they can have a common place to go, or help people realize: OK so there are genuine choices to be made so let's have a respectful way to do that. And a lot of that, in my opinion is built on high respect for everyone (Beasley 2004a).*

Sebastian's estimate of the amount of time he spends in communicative acts seems conservative but it eloquently illustrates why communication is becoming increasingly important in planning work. *I would guess maybe half of what we do is one way or another related to communications, even though we are not a communications firm. The amount of original research is not that great. A lot of it is translating things into forms that are more appropriate for different audiences, and working really hard to present things in a way that looks professional and saves them a lot of effort and time... More and more percentage of our time is going into communication. I think there's nothing wrong with that because I think a lot of the issue hasn't been a scarcity of knowledge, it's been a scarcity of understanding (Moffatt 2003).* I found a lot of evidence for the assertion by planning theorists that planning has evolved into a profession of communication and facilitation. My observation of research participants indicates that the majority of their work involves communication and they have a deep appreciation for the value of communication.

### **Developing Capacity for Community Building**

A central component of Empathic Leadership is self-awareness. It is through knowing one's self as an individual, as a group, as a community that one can know what to improve before being able to go about improving it. As is apparent from the discussion below much of the capacity to self-reflect on relationships is inextricably linked to sensitivities to emotional fluctuations both within oneself and amongst the community within which one is working. The relational realm of Empathic Leadership, as a series of attributes, is essentially a process of creating and cultivating community around a vision. The capacity for community building is therefore, as this section demonstrates, a combination of the personal and relational realms of Empathic Leadership.

Each of the Sustainability Planners had a different way of obtaining feedback about their work, but the desire to obtain feedback and the appreciation of the importance of self-analysis was universal across all of them. The variety of feedback mechanisms is impressive, and if the different methods are somehow combined they would provide a very powerful tool for both the personal and relational realms of Empathic Leadership. Daryl uses a common management evaluation tool. *We have what's called 360 degree evaluation and it is based on questions around certain competencies, things like business acumen or coaching or*

*different business or leadership competencies. And these 360s involve everyone. My boss would answer questions. I would pick four or so peers. I would pick my managers and other people, so right the way around, up and down and around you. That's one mechanism [for getting feedback] (Fields 2003a).*

Larry describes a less formal but no less comprehensive method of taking stock of the entire organization, and including everyone in the stock-taking. *If you genuinely live and work in a respectful way with everyone around you, sometimes issues come to the fore outside and then you have to take stock. It's really important to take time to take stock. We as managers have retreats. Our staff groups have retreats at all levels of the organization. We have meetings with our senior planners, what we call principles' meetings, as the private firm would have, so that we air our problems in an array of staff. We work on their conclusions out of those discussions. It's a very nonhierarchical organization. It's an organization of mutually respectful professional people. By that I don't mean just the planners, I mean the clerical staff, the technical staff, all of whom play a highly professional role for their part of the contribution, and that's how we do it (Beasley 2004b).*

At EYA Susan is very sensitive to the effect of power in the functioning of their program and on people's ability to freely provide feedback so she is constantly seeking a variety of program and personal evaluations. *When I first started at EYA part of my undergrad was in conflict resolution, so I took courses in that area, and I took courses in the Justice Institute when it was still in Vancouver. We used to use it when it was closer because they offered programs and stuff... I did my Master's while I worked here to reflect on what I'm doing and how is my style. We do consistent evaluations. That is one thing I'm pretty rigid on. With every program I do pretty intensive evaluations with people that I'm working with, which can be anonymous. Sometimes I do them weekly, where I say how is this going, how am I working with you? Not only just me but the program in general, [we] to try and get as much feedback as possible (Kurbis 2003a).*

All the Sustainability Planners I interviewed thought about things after they happened in an inquisitive way that seeks to learn and understand and improve. There are two time scales in which such self-reflection occurs. The first is what I call macro-self reflection and it is a broad mapping of progress through a person's life work. Through the course of his life, for example, Johnny has undergone a considerable shift in the way he interacts with people and even in the way he thinks about them relative to the work that he does. Monitoring his personal progress over time and mapping the landmarks of transition is very much a process of self-reflection. *In my early career as a manager in Toronto, I was classically task focused and very driven and very demanding and personally hands-on. I've always been personally hands-on, and I still am personally hands-on, a classic command and control manager and somewhat impatient with other approaches... There was a famous hockey coach who was the general manager of the Toronto Maple Leafs, famous for trading away players who may have been loyal to his organization for fifteen years, but were no longer useful and [just like that] they'd be gone as he traded to build his team. And I had a sort of [similar approach]. I built a team. I took over an organization that was about to be scrapped it was so awful and built a team that finished up. It got me provincial recognition but did it in a way that sort of discarded some people along the way. I was very focused and very driven and not particularly a good listener, not particularly a developer of staff. It was reflecting on that, when I finished that assignment [that changed me]. It worked for me in the sense that it got me all kinds of recognition, fame and a new job and promotions and all the rest of it, but I felt faintly dissatisfied.*

*I got some advice from some people who were observing my career from the outside [who said] you're in danger of becoming just a warrior rather than just a consensus builder. You've done really well but you need to really reflect on this. I think probably my wife was the biggest influence. She's a totally different personality from me. A teacher and a person who, well we got involved in parents groups and all the rest of it. So the whole process of taking four and a half hours [for something] that I thought should take ten or fifteen minutes because. To visit and build relationships, hang around and to hear somebody's story [seemed like a waste of time]. My wife would regularly send me to the kitchen to do the coffee or whatever because she could see that I was about to explode. I learned a lot through that process. Eventually we did wonders through this process and I would have lost them all.*

*Ray Spaxman who was my first boss out in Vancouver when I came out would tell me, because he knew that I love soccer, and he said, the trouble with you is that you analyze a situation and decide what you need to do. You run down the field with the ball, make all the right moves, turn around to make the pass for someone to score a goal, and the only trouble is they are all still back at the half way mark trying to figure out what bloody game it is, let alone what the plan is. You can't do it on your own. You've got to be able to stand back and spend far more time developing the team (Carline 2003b).*

*It wasn't an overnight kind of thing. It's something that I still kind of consciously work on. I guess in times of stress you do revert to OK now is the time to issue some orders and get things going but that's been probably the most dramatic change in my leadership style if you like. I'm still high energy, I still lead from the front, but I spend a lot more time, kind of listening and trying to accommodate diverse values and styles, and finding ways for people who thirty years ago, I would have just simply said, transfer them, send them to the minors (Carline 2003b).*

This kind of macro self-reflection in which a person can map how they have changed over time is important in helping the person understand what behaviour and what actions are relatively more effective. It allows for overall shifts in style and attitude. However, in order to be able to react and modify one's behaviour in the short term, and to maneuver within a professional situation a planner needs a more immediate and systematic process of micro-self-reflection. Through my interviews and through the Staff and Colleagues Survey I was looking for evidence that planners engage in reflection on actions and events as they occur or immediately afterwards. In the questionnaire "evidence of self-reflection" scored slightly below the mean compared to other attributes of leadership. This may have been due to the difficulty of knowing much about another person's thought processes as exemplified by actions.

Through the interviews, however, I found evidence that most of the Sustainability Planners do indeed reflect on events especially when the events were contentious or seen to be unsuccessful. Daryl exemplified exactly the kind of self-reflection that is called for in the Empathic Leadership framework. She does this through a variety of mechanisms but, most importantly, she reflects and seeks input. *I have a few close colleagues and friends who I'll say how's it going? How am I doing? After a meeting I'll say, "I don't know what happened in there but is there something that I did? Did I have paint on my face or something?" (Fields 2003a).* Daryl reflects on the possibility of having created tension or toxicity through a particular interaction. *When I hear myself I can't necessarily stop myself... [I interpret] the reaction I get from*

*people and how I feel. When I'm driving home and I think, oh why did I do that? Or there may be fallout the next day or whatever (Fields 2003a).*

Daryl also looks for clues in the way people act towards her. *It's about intangibles, people's body language. You know how people respond to you. Walking around the floor people are [obvious]. When you walk by their office and say "Hi Clive how are you doing?" If they kind of go "fine thanks" and put their head back down then you know that either they're really busy that day, or that something's up. Maybe something completely not to do with myself but I guess its just kind of every once in a while keeping your feelers out (Fields 2003a).*

*There was an instance where there was a bit of ruffled feathers and something else happened on top of the same person and I said to my administrator could you send a note saying [such and such]. I read the note. It was very officious and I know because my administrator, when she is pressed she gets very, very formal. She's used to working in the president's office, which is very officious, so I just sent an email this morning saying I just reread this note and it does sound officious and I didn't mean for that to be the case. So I don't have a problem saying 'mea culpa' (Fields 2003a).*

This desire to be open and humble is shared by other Sustainability Planners. On the whole, however, it does not seem to match the reality of their behaviour as perceived by staff and colleagues. Admitting error appears to be the Sustainability Planners weakest attribute. Out of 33 questions asked, "He apologizes when he makes a mistake" received the second lowest mean score of 3.4 on a five-point scale.<sup>47</sup> For those who answered that the planner in question is either, "effective as a champion of sustainability in the Vancouver region", or "more effective than others in a similar position", or "strives to maintain a balance between social, economic and environmental sustainability", the lowest scoring attribute in every case was "he apologizes when he makes a mistake." This is significant because it indicates either a reluctance to admit error or being oblivious to the error. In both cases it represents a barrier to building relationships and a barrier to creating a resilient feeling of community. Mistakes, according to Frost (2003), create toxicity in an organization and if not dealt with or relieved, will grow and create considerable barriers to morale and productivity and ultimately to the bond and commitment to the organization or the vision.

With busy schedules, numerous responsibilities and ambitious visions it is very much a challenge for planners to be aware of all the different toxic situations that may exist in an organization. It is equally difficult to be able to spare the time to address them. *I could probably name off the top of my head right now four things that are not settled the way I'd like them to be. I don't mean resolved but just relationships or issues. They aren't comfortable for me right now and I know they are out there, but you can't deal with each one of them when they happen because there's just not the time so they will either grow into large explosions or they will be dealt with before they grow into large explosions (Fields 2003a).*

To prevent "explosions" from occurring planners expect conflict, plan for it, and act to resolve it as it arises. One of the most impressive instances of conflict management occurs systematically at EYA. It is integral to the manner in which the organization operates *With*

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<sup>47</sup> The five point scale uses scores of 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly disagree. Mean is for all respondents who answered across all five surveyed sustainability planners. Please see appendices B, C and D for more detail. Please note that gender of the pronoun was used to match the gender of the planner in question for each survey.

*the youth I expect it, especially with the group of women we were working with. There were intense conflicts between them because we were engaging this range. Some people without their grade twelve, some people with university, white, black, aboriginal, non-aboriginal, there were a couple of sex-trade workers working on it. They're not going to get along necessarily... there is [a lot of conflict] in our model, because our model of operating is to bring diversity together... The idea, the theory is to begin the group with training in conflict resolution, mediation, diversity training. We did tons of it. We did stuff on anti-Semitism, every ism, homo-phobia... As we go along, if issues came up, we'd have a workshop or discussion or whatever needed to be done, or conflict resolution thing about it... (Kurbis 2003b)*

Theories and practices of conflict resolution are well known to the Sustainability Planners and Sebastian exemplifies knowledge in his comments about listening. *If you've got two people who are just about to kill each other, you know they might be friends but they are really upset with each other. or maybe they're a couple, one of the best mediation techniques is to say OK you please state what the other person is actually saying. Have you understood it? And to the other person you be quiet and you listen because you're going to correct them when they are finished and then you flip it the other way too. I've used that technique lots with other, not often in work but in other situations in life. My point is that it takes all of the energy out of the air and that yeah you pretty well got it except that you've missed this or something and people know that they've been heard. To really know that you've been heard, and understood, its implicit, is so important for people to have the good will to go along with somebody and give them some trust. I think that when I look at people whom I have found really excellent at gaining trust and providing leadership whether it's in projects or school or anywhere, it is people who can speak well from the other person's point of view (Moffatt 2002).*

Susan explicitly incorporates her training in conflict resolution<sup>48</sup> into her work. For example, she begins her workshops by collaboratively creating a list of tolerable behaviour. *We would start with some basic conflict resolution and diversity training, OK we're all different we don't expect you to love everybody in the group but we expect a certain level of respectful behaviour to happen. We as a group come up with a list of what is tolerable behaviour, what isn't. Let's just come to consensus on that right now, and if we cross these boundaries this will be the way we'll deal with it (Kurbis 2003b).* Along with the list of tolerable behaviour is the setting of boundaries of conduct that are established for everyone's safety and traversing this boundary is grounds for removal from the process. *They were fighting amongst themselves much, much more than within the larger group. So that's the idea with the young people, and if it becomes unbearable, there are certain rules that if you break you're gone. You can't stay in the program. So any kind of verbal or physical abuse you get kicked out (Kurbis 2003b).*

*I remember there was one conflict particularly between one of the girls who was an ex sex trade worker, and there was a few lesbians on the project, and this dynamic between her and them became quite heated and intolerable, because of perceptions of, she was homophobic for sure... I don't know if that was it, or more her feelings, her perceptions that they didn't respect her and there was a cliquiness that existed between certain groups of people. It particularly existed between the different lesbians on the program. There was a cliquiness within them, which she felt really threatened by and couldn't cope with very well. So because of her background, I'm assuming, she acted out verbally.*

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<sup>48</sup> Susan has a B.A. in Political Science with a minor in Peace and Conflict Studies.

*She was extremely verbally abusive, and on one occasion she sent her boyfriend down, to beat us up (Kurbis 2003b).*

*She left, she came back, she left, she came back. We tried to resolve it with her but it was clear that it was not going to work out. There was just this level of aggression and violence that couldn't be tolerated in the group and everybody wanted her gone. So she ended up leaving the program. But it wasn't great. I wasn't happy how it all resolved... Some people have talked to me about [how] there's a limit to the range of people you can really deal with in a group. So you really need to think about that carefully before you start (Kurbis 2003b).*

Having rules in place does not automatically translate to "eviction" if the rules are broken. In the following story intolerable behaviour caused group reflection in a way that ended up strengthening the sense of community around a project. *There was a young guy who was Latino, and he was working with us, I think he was the only guy in the group. He wasn't working directly under me, but I was one of the co-managers of the program. He felt that there was a gender bias against him and that he was always in a situation where they were always dealing with women's stuff and women's issues and he was minimized and he freaked out and had this total, throwing shit around and screaming and yelling at them and completely out of control in a meeting. Because at this meeting, it had kind of gotten to a point where there needed to be a meeting to deal with it, so they were all sitting around discussing it and that was his reaction to it. Flipped out and stormed out of the place and was gone.*

*So they stayed and had a discussion about whether to kick him out or not. Because normally somebody who does that would get the boot. So anyway, he was gone for the day, he came back a couple of days later and they sat down again and the women decided they didn't want to kick him out. They wanted him to stay a part of the group. They were able to discuss it and work it out and make him feel like they weren't targeting him and that these were the issues that existed in the world. That yes indeed because there were so many women in the group they tended to focus on it more. They tried to work to minimize it so they weren't only talking about these issues. Over time it worked out great and he ended being a really good contributing member of the group (Kurbis 2003b).*

These inspiring examples of conflict resolution do not seem to be the norm across all the Sustainability Planners. Conflict resolution rated surprisingly low in the Staff and Colleagues Survey. Out of 17 questions related to organizational and community building "she resolves conflict" rated 16<sup>th</sup> (see Appendix C-1) and out of a total of 33 questions it rated 27<sup>th</sup> (see Appendix C-2). The attribute was also scored poorly by all who strongly agreed that the planner is "Effective as a Champion of Sustainability in the Vancouver Region." In those cases resolving conflict received a score of 3.82 and was last but two out of the 33 questions. This suggests a mismatch between knowledge about conflict resolution and the reality of daily practice. A detailed examination of this question is necessary to identify the exact cause of this seeming lack of ability or exercise of conflict resolution. Is it simply not a priority, or is it a skill that Sustainability Planners lack? Perhaps the nature of their work of championing a vision will necessarily create conflict as it seeks to affect change. If, however, Sustainability Planners are successful at building community wide support for their vision they would necessarily have to resolve more conflict than they create. My observations of their work suggest that the difference is one of context and not ability. Sustainability Planners on the whole are less concerned about conflict issues within

their organizations than they are about gaining broad support and alliances across different organizations.

Survey results also show that the sustainability planners are perceived to be good public speakers and good communicators. The attributes scored 4.5 and 4.4 respectively (Appendix C-1).<sup>49</sup> Having good communication and relationship building skills also scored 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> in the top five most important attributes of sustainability planning (Appendix C-5). Their mean ranking was even higher with “good communication skills being the second most important attribute and relationship building being fourth (Appendix C-4).

Working well with different types of people has a significant positive correlation with being more effective than others in a similar position. Resolving conflict is also positively correlated to being more effective than others in a similar position (Appendix D-1). Community building then, is important. This is not at all surprising but it is encouraging since, unlike emotional proficiency, it is fully recognized by those working in the field as a necessary component of sustainability planning work.

There is also no great surprise here to communicative planning theorists. They have long claimed the significance of communication and interaction in all its forms. The distinction I make here is a slightly stronger emphasis on people than on the communication itself. Clearly the two are inseparable, and perhaps the language used by theorists is simply a residue of Habermasian influence, but my observations here suggest that communicative planning might perhaps be better described as relational or empathic planning. This statement will be further supported in the next chapter’s discussion of strategy and strategic action. The purity of communicative planning is shown to be an unrealized ideal. What occurs is a series of deliberate incidences of communicative action strategically positioned to advance a specific agenda.

The agenda being advanced is not malevolent. It is essentially the sustainability vision in its various versions as presented in Chapter 2. The vision is inclusive and “seeks the greatest good for the largest number over the longest period at the lowest cost for all who are touched by the change.” (Cheshire 2003). Cheshire’s definition is about compassionate and creative leadership but its message of inclusion would resonate with sustainability planners. It is also appropriate here because it seems naively ambitious and lofty in its aim of qualitative, quantitative and temporal inclusion. Sustainability proponents sometimes appear to be similarly ambitious in their aspirations, which makes success difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, the degree to which inclusion is genuinely integrated into the practices of the Sustainability Planners I observed is remarkable. The stories of manipulative and tokenistic public engagement discussed in Chapter 2 notwithstanding, the kinds of participatory processes I witnessed through my research, make the exclusive comprehensive master plans of old seem like an ancient practice in another profession. In every instance there was a genuine desire to achieving a diversity of inputs and representation by as many groups as possible. Desire is not achievement however.

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<sup>49</sup> The five point scale uses scores of 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree. Mean is for all respondents who answered across all five surveyed Sustainability Planners. Please see appendices B, C and D for more detail. Please note that gender of the pronoun was used to match the gender of the planner in question for each survey.

The reality of practice was constrained by everything from time, money, and political feasibility to sheer ignorance of what it takes to get people involved. Not one of the dozens of meetings or workshops or conferences I attended reflected the full diversity of the region. Even the entire spectrum of meetings combined does not cover the full ethnic, socio-economic and cultural diversity of the Vancouver region. The largest of the regional workshops continue to present the same cast of characters that Sandercock describes as being overrepresented in our history of planning (Sandercock 2003: chapter 2). The majority are professional white males. There are exceptions of course, both in terms of pockets of diversity within any one meeting but also in terms of greater diversity and representation in some processes over others. First Nations on the whole are greatly under represented, which is especially alarming since the entire region is under overlapping unsettled land claims. Women are under represented and so too are visible minorities.<sup>50</sup> The poor are also conspicuously absent from all planning processes. The closest representation was in the form of a room full of social service workers in a session on social sustainability.

The Environmental Youth Alliance is an exception to all of this in that they deliberately target disenfranchised youth for their programs. They seek ethnic and class diversity and they find it. This is how they have positioned themselves and it works but it is not a vision that aspires to include everyone. Moving away from Vancouver's West Side to the Downtown Eastside was not only a move towards the less fortunate, it was also a deliberate move away from the more fortunate. Their mission evolved and their culture changed to no longer focus on affluent youth so they too are exclusive in their own way. Perhaps pluralism that includes everyone all the time is an impossible ideal. Perhaps it can only occur in a nested system of networks. The practice of sustainability planners certainly suggests that it is not easy. Susan's work with diverse groups of youth and her own words are a direct statement against the feasibility of total inclusion and equal participation promoted in the ideal of communicative action.

The ideas of community and relationship building, and their significance, have been stressed and well articulated in some sustainability planning literature (Maser et al. 1998; Portney 2003). Authors have stressed the power of community and its integral role in cultivating a long-term sustainability agenda. Nevertheless, how communities change and react over time, how they come together and come apart has not been studied or analyzed. A tradition of deep analysis of the detailed workings of community does of course exist in anthropology and social services literature and they focus on traditional notions of community in which people are bound together through their cultural identities or socio-economic groups. Community as a dynamic coalition of evolving partners who agree and collaborate on some components of sustainability and then differ and part over others, has not at all been studied. The work of the Sustainability Planners in Vancouver reveals that it is this amorphous form of community that is most prevalent when sustainability is taken out of a core group or organizational setting to the public at large.

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<sup>50</sup> At one GVRD workshop on the Sustainable Regions Initiative I counted 4 women and 6 visible minorities (two of whom were women) in a group of approximately 50 white men. I am not suggesting that this is intentional or deliberately perpetuated on the part of the GVRD but it is certainly noticeable and problematic.



Maser et al. offer four types of human relationships as being essential for sustainability: intrapersonal, interpersonal, between people and the environment and between people in the present and those in the future. (Maser et al. 1998). The Vancouver Sustainability Planners showed evidence of all four to differing degrees. The intrapersonal relationships which Maser et al. (1998) characterize as "the individual's sense of his or her own spirituality, self-worth, personal growth, internal power and so on," is very much evident in the words of Sebastian, Larry and Daryl and to a lesser degree the others. This level of self-awareness and self-reflection is further evidence of the importance of emotional capacity in being able to confront other capacities of relating to people and building community.

Interpersonal relationships are clearly the primary tools through which the Sustainability Planners build community around their visions and thereby expand their scope and influence. Portney (2003) articulates the importance of interpersonal relationships.

Even in cities where high levels of participation in political and governmental decision processes are not evident, it is still possible for cities' sustainability initiatives to seek to "build community." For the most part, building community refers to efforts aimed at promoting greater interpersonal interaction, greater participation in civic organizations, and, in short, fostering civil society (Portney 2003).

This notion of civic engagement is very much reinforced by the work of the Vancouver Sustainability Planners. Having invested in increasing their own opportunities for interpersonal interaction to build community around their sustainability visions, they are now attempting to foster civic engagement and increased participation by residents of the region. They are, in my analysis, struggling to succeed at being truly inclusive in their participatory efforts but they are facing many constraints. It is not unusual, as Baum points out, for planners to be well intentioned and deliberate about seeking open participation that is representative of the members of a community and to fall short due to logistical and institutional constraints (Baum 1998).

Theorists have also highlighted the relationship between leadership and community building. It takes an ability to form relationships across different perspectives to form community. It takes interpersonal communication and dialogue.

Sometimes a single leader provides a compelling vision that links immediate issues to a broader project... but more often in our cases the process of "interest articulation" and "interest aggregation" (to use jargon from political science) emerged from carefully nurtured conversations among ordinary folks (Putnam and Feldstein 2003).

Maser et al.'s contention that "human relationships are the social glue of a community" is an obvious and intuitive one but further emphasizes the importance of interpersonal communication (Maser et al. 1998). The Sustainability Leaders devote the majority of their time and energy to communicating. They expand their visions by building relationships. The literature on community development further emphasizes relationships and

communication as being fundamentally important to participation and civic engagement, and are therefore essential features of community formation.

Community development, according to Pantoja and Perry (1998) has moved from being a specialty field that is primarily the domain of social service providers to an interdisciplinary enterprise addressing the range of socio-economic needs of a community (Pantoja and Perry 1998). Based on their work in a low income rural community in Puerto Rico they have come to see community building as a process of "mobilizing and educating the residents to participate in the activities most vital to changing the reality of their lives" (Pantoja and Perry 1998). In Vancouver it is the planners who for the most part want to change the lives of their communities towards a sustainability vision based on a perceived threat, not a current one. Yet planners still have to contend with a general reluctance by people to participate and become engaged unless they stand to benefit in some tangible way.

Reardon's narrative of his work in East St. Louis includes three fundamental lessons about building relationships with a community, for which I found parallels in my own research (Reardon 2000). First, Reardon and the University's School of Planning, as a condition for working with the East St. Louis community, had to go through a "probationary" period. Although this trust-building period was formalized through an agreement with a local community leader, it often happens informally especially on an interpersonal level. I experienced it in my own process of conducting research. Agreement to participate in my study was not an automatic inclusion into the world or work of the Sustainability Planners. I had to earn it by conducting myself in a professional, unobtrusive and appreciative way. These are the characteristics that came to be used to describe my presence when Sustainability Planners had to introduce me to attendees at the various meetings I was observing. The planners also spoke of having to slowly and patiently gain the trust of community organizations. There is still a lot of work to be done in this area to build the trust of a greater diversity of residents of the Vancouver region. Lower income communities, multicultural communities, and suburban communities continue to be underrepresented in the sustainability initiatives.

Second, Reardon had to commit to five years of partnership to demonstrate his willingness to continue to be engaged irrespective of any setbacks or frustrations (Reardon 2000). As we shall see in the next chapter, communicating long-term commitment to a vision is essential in getting people within an organization to trust the worth of personally investing in that vision. The same is true for people outside of the organization. Why commit of your time and energy into a passing fad? The Sustainability Planners have, without exception, deliberately set out to create a long-term vision and to communicate its durability and resilience as a vision. Their own perseverance and dedication to their respective sustainability visions is in itself an explicit communication of long-term commitment.

Third, Reardon had to relinquish control. He handed over decision making to the community and left it up to them to determine their own priorities for planning and development (Reardon 2000). This form and extent of building a relationship in a community has not occurred in any of the Vancouver cases. There are many examples of open and inclusive participation like the City of Vancouver's CityPlan process, or the design charrettes that include community residents, but decision making power was never totally relinquished. Handing over decision making to a community does, of course, carry

risk for those who would be relinquishing control so in this case the trust has to be built in both directions. Furthermore, because Reardon did not have the power and control of a government employee it was relatively "easier" to relinquish control. Planners and public officials will require time and perhaps probationary periods of their own to trust communities enough to give them control over sustainability decisions.

Creating, expanding and implementing a vision by enlarging the community of supporters who uphold the vision, and doing so without alienating the original community of supporters, is one of the greatest challenges of expanding the scope of change. Particularly in those areas of sustainability that affect marginalized groups, the greater the legitimacy that the vision gains the more mainstream it becomes and the more difficult it will be to continue to advocate on behalf of the truly marginalized. This happened with BEST and threatens to happen at EYA with their threatened charity status forcing them to abandon some of their alliances with First Nations youth. The overall mission of raising societal consciousness and affecting large-scale change might be met, but the needs of the truly disenfranchised would be lost.

Of course there may be cases where sufficient emancipation occurs through an organization's work that groups championed through that organization's mission may no longer feel marginalized. If, for example, road design, traffic amenities and other infrastructure were sufficiently secured through BEST's work before it shifted towards more general alternative transportation advocacy, then bicycle advocates who felt left behind by BEST's shift would have felt less abandoned. They would still no longer have an advocate but they would also have had less need for an advocate. However, if EYA was forced to limit its more marginal activities as it gains greater ascendancy in the non-profit grant receiving economy, then First Nations youth, homeless youth and ex-sex trade workers would be left without an advocate. The result might superficially look like a mainstream shift towards sustainability, but the reality would be a considerable impoverishment of social sustainability.

It is broadly accepted by each of the Sustainability Planners and the respondents to the Staff and Colleagues Survey that communication is a key component of any sustainability work. This is no surprise both from the perspective of planning theory and that of sustainability, which requires education and reconceptualization of human activity. Being a good communicator received the fifth highest score of the 33 questions asked in the survey and having good communication skills, as stated in Chapter 5, is consistently one of the two most important attributes of sustainability planning across various analyses.

However in my own observations of interactions and workshops I did not perceive superior communication skills or exemplary interactions that would lead me to believe that the planners have exceptionally refined skills of communication. One possible reason is that my reference point may be markedly different to that of the survey respondents. However upon further observation of interpersonal interactions, I realized that my perception as an outsider to events and processes afforded me a more distant and calculating position. Over time, as I became more involved in processes and became more of an insider, I began to appreciate a level of relatedness between the individuals at the table or in the process that countered the effect of what I had previously perceived as deficient communication and

awkward interaction. The relationships were strong enough that they endured the inadequate day-to-day interactions. Relationships it turns out are a stronger factor in the quality of communication and collective decision making than is the immediate communication itself.

While the Sustainability Planners talk a great deal about how much of their work is about building relationships, they appear unaware of the degree to which relating to people and working well with different types of people affects the overall quality of their work. Staff and colleagues, however, consistently ranked good relationship building skills in the top five most important attributes of sustainability planning work. The reason for this inconsistency became apparent through my observations of the planning workplace. The Sustainability Planners are perfectly adept at creating and maintaining bonds with others. They are however correct in noticing a personal shortcoming in this area because they are selective in their communicative efforts. In the absence of sufficient time to adequately and sufficiently relate to everyone all the time, they are selective and strategic in engaging in empathic communication. Strategy, as the following chapter demonstrates, is very much a process of allocating personal and organizational resources towards achieving the greatest possible gains towards an overall sustainability vision.

As important as communication is in terms of each of the Sustainability Planners' work agenda, it is not practiced with the kind of care that communicative planning theorists would demand. I saw the planners working in a whole range of settings ranging in size, scope, form and content. Only when the stakes were high was communication empathic in the sense that would serve the needs of all parties. For much of the time, communication seemed officious and deficient in its ability to elicit free and open dialogue. Yet it did not seem to matter. There was sufficient rapport between the various parties that any shortcomings in the immediate communication were insignificant relative to the good will and trust that had been built over time through interpersonal relationships. This suggests that the scope of communicative planning needs to expand to consider longer time frames of interaction. It also suggests that communicative action conducted in the short time frame of a few meetings, no matter how perfect it may be, is insufficient for building trust and community around a vision. Planning theory, planning practice and planning education would all benefit from a greater emphasis on the study and understanding of relationship building as an integral component of planning practice.

## 6 – STRATEGY

*We never really had a strategy in our sustainability work at UBC. We certainly had conversations about how to act to better position ourselves as a group to gain greater power and influence over the University's decisions but we never strung them together. We adopted a revolving series of approaches and tried different things at different times in a constant adaptation to perceived failure. Our objective of building a sustainable community at UBC that would be a model of what is possible for the rest of the city and for other cities was perhaps too idealistic to ever be achieved so failure was inevitable. Yet as I reflect on our actions, and our inactions, I have come to realize that our failure had less to do with the specifics of our vision than they did with our lack of strategic thinking. We never truly grasped the structure of power hierarchies that we were contending with. At one meeting I mentioned in passing that we should map out all the individuals who have the ability to exercise power over the University Town Plan in terms of their relative power and their relationships to one another. I visualized in my mind, as I suggested this, a flow chart of influence coded with the various interests and concerns of each powerful person with any potential opportunities for influencing their thinking. This would be our battle plan, not in any deceptive or malevolent way, but just in a way that would begin to balance the power imbalance. People at the meeting reacted positively and seemed genuinely excited about the utility of such a mapping of power. But the idea, like many others, remained an idea, unrealized. Although I had suggested it in the vein of requesting feedback about its relative merit, I was really saying someone should do this. Or someone should get someone to do this. At that point in the process I was not about to commit to this, or any other effort, that would require me to commit much time or energy. I had become pessimistic. I did not believe that we as a group of relatively powerless advocates on a University Campus could affect change, and I was not alone. Here is where we failed.*

*The reality is that most of changes that would theoretically get us closer to a sustainable society would require some degree of risk. Unless you positively have a vision or believe in a vision and are committed to it you have no reason to take any risk beyond those that naturally come with your job. Why on Earth would you want to complicate your life or burden yourself with an increased possibility of making a bad decision? You wouldn't and that is absolutely understandable. Although we claimed to understand this, we did not really include this appreciation of risk averseness in our approach. We proceeded without acknowledging that those who would have to make the final decision and bear the responsibility for the outcome of campus development were operating from a real estate development paradigm of maximum return on investment. There was no malicious intention. Profit is a standard priority in their world and any other priority would have to be justified within the parameters of their profession. Yet we seemed to judge them to be narrow-minded, self-serving and scheming. They were self-serving, and so were we. We were serving and seeking to implement our sustainability vision, nobody else's vision, but our vision. They were scheming and we were not, but we should have been. We resented their strategy of undermining our efforts and seeking to further theirs. Instead we should have created and acted on our own set of strategies. Here is where we failed.*

Strategic planning initially benefited from, and then suffered from, its association with the exclusive molds of rational and comprehensive planning. Critics of traditional planning and its assumption, and ultimate distortion, of the idea of a public good are many and varied (see Appendix E). Master plans were exclusionary, out of touch with the needs of those they affected, and served to subjugate entire segments of the populations they claimed to serve. Even if such deleterious effects were ignored, by the time long term plans were

implemented the circumstances for which they were conceived invariably changed, making them moot and wasteful. The turn away from such an approach in theory, for the practice continues in many a planning office, is entirely justified. Progressive planning is more inclusive, more participatory, more democratic, and more pluralistic in its epistemological and methodological practice.

Sustainability planners, by virtue of the inclusive ethic of sustainability, and the imperative of popular citizen support for the implementation of sustainability, have been deliberate in their quest for inclusion. The reality I discovered was much more nuanced and complicated than a simple dedication to citizen participation. Instead I found a shrewd strategic engagement of different groups at different scales and different times dictated not by the desire to be participatory but rather by the demands of achieving certain objectives. Strategy, I discovered is a far more accurate descriptor of the impetus behind participation than is the pure desire for communicative planning. The choice of who to include, how and when, is only one of the many decisions that I have found to elicit strategic thinking. "Strategy" as applied to planning will undoubtedly sound Machiavellian or manipulative in the style of Flyvbjerg's Aalborg (Flyvbjerg 1998). In some cases it is, but in others it is simply the reality of being in a struggle against powerful societal forces and real constraints. This chapter illustrates the ways in which strategic action is employed in sustainability planning and reveals a complicated ethical and professional terrain in which a planner has to make difficult decisions and act in deliberate yet subtle ways.

### Contexts of Power and the Status Quo

Knowing how to act and what course of action to take requires knowledge of the terrain within which one has to act. Where are the power centres, what are strengths and weaknesses of your organization and what are the opportunities for gaining more support and leveraging more power to advance your agenda? Despite the Machiavellian machinations that such strategizing seems to connote, the employment of strategic thinking is not limited to Machiavellian intentions. It is in fact those organizations who are most disenfranchised who have to resort to painstaking strategic forethought in order to carve out a space for their voice in the creation of societal priorities.

Bruce describes the numerous factors that he needs to be aware of in order to move forward in advancing the sustainability agenda. For him and for BC Hydro the interpretation of the lay of the political, biophysical and economic land requires projections into the future. It is not simply a matter of understanding the status quo, but of attempting to predict the range of scenarios that might possibly take place. *There's a whole range of drivers that can affect our business including environmental, sustainability and climate change issues. You have to weave all of those into a range of different scenarios and then basically try and chart through a strategy that's as robust as possible under the range of different scenarios. I think you can easily get off side if you just choose one path and assume that the world is going to unfold like that. Even in the five years that I've been with Hydro, when I first came over here deregulation was all the rage and people just thought that that was happening. There weren't any scenarios. [It was assumed that] that was going to happen and it's just a question of the pace of it happening. While it has happened, it's stalled out in many jurisdictions and there are concerns in some areas they'll go back to re-regulation. There have been a few experiments that have gone not too well so at Hydro we did take that scenario approach and then watched the signposts. [We] basically said let's have a real pragmatic strategy,*

*because what we have here isn't particularly broken so let's look for opportunities for improving it* (Sampson 2003).

Exercising strategic thinking is clearly not just about analyzing and interpreting the context within which you are operating but more importantly about adjusting your mode of operation accordingly. Harry Brill's thorough analysis of how a Neighbourhood Action Committee failed to mobilize tenants in winning a rent strike is a story of missed opportunity resulting from strategic inaction (Brill 1971). Strategy and strategic action are inextricably linked to power. Where are the centres of power, who controls them, what opportunities for alternative empowerment exist, what alliances between power groups exist and what opportunities exist for forging new alliances for empowering specific agendas? These are profoundly important questions for any organization and are worthy of specific and focused study. While this research is focused on the mechanics of Empathic Leadership for sustainability, embedded in any attempt at affecting change is the necessity of understanding, confronting and working with or against power centres.

### **Privilege, Personal Power and Ethics**

In doing this research I came upon a paradox of ethics that has not been fully recognized in planning theory nor explicitly confronted in planning practice. When promoting a sustainability agenda, with its inherently ethical dictum of advocating on behalf of social and environmental justice, the proponent will necessarily reach two kinds of limits beyond which further action would be ethically questionable. The classic question 'do the ends justify the means' is profoundly relevant here. The first danger lies in the formation of strategic alliances with partners under conditions of opaqueness and relative secrecy. Not only does the objective of public participation and citizen involvement risk being compromised, but the entire spectrum of issues that comprise the sustainability vision risks being clouded by those alliances sheltered from public scrutiny and accountability. The second danger, and potentially far more dangerous, is the employment of Empathic Leadership for the ultimate purpose of undermining those with whom you empathize. I use empathize here in its value neutral form which does not mean sympathize with, or have compassion for, but rather to attempt to see the world through another's eyes.

The paradox lies in the increasing potential for abuse with the increasing pursuit of both Empathic Leadership and a sustainability vision. When and how benevolent intent might morph into malicious abuse seems impossible to predict. The divide is not clear and whatever code of ethics governs this question cannot be externally monitored or enforced. It will remain a matter of personal conscience and self-awareness. The emerging implication for planning practice and planning education is developing and enriching the planner's capacity for self-assessment and an honest reflection on intentions, actions and outcomes.

The practice of self-reflection and self-awareness obviously occurs long before the need for ethical self-assessment. From the very creation of a sustainability vision through the governance of emotions, and the creation of community, self-reflection guides the planner's actions and reactions to situations. When it comes to strategic action, self-reflection plays an important role in positioning the planner, the planner's values and vision alongside those of the organization. For most of the Sustainability Planners personal vision is fairly well matched with the vision of the organizations they work for. Occasions do arise where the

planner has to advance an agenda that is different to her own. Cheeying, for example, describes how she consciously chooses to reign in her own politics for the sake of advancing the Smart Growth agenda. *You can have fairly strong views about a position, but it's not necessarily the right one for the organization to do. For example, the position that I take with Smart Growth BC or with BEST are more conservative than I believe personally. For example I wouldn't have Smart Growth BC do direct action whereas I might* (Ho 2003b). Cheeying's personal politics are strong and she described participating in protests and marches with her friends, but not as a representative of her organization. If Smart Growth BC were to engage in direct action it would alienate many of its partners and potential partners. This is an obvious strategic choice on her part with no real dilemmas or ethical questions.

There are many other forms of benign strategic action. The correlate and necessary successor to self-reflection, for example, is acting on the knowledge gained through the reflection. As the framework for Empathic Leadership suggests, the processes of self-reflection and action are cyclical and require constant iteration. Larry describes a process of deliberate relationship building through which self-awareness and directed self-development takes place. He uses relationships to affect personal and organizational change. *You do create interfaces and this is not just by accident. You have to really work hard to build the interface so learning can take place. Then you also build friendships and friendships then become deeply influential in the way you actually do your work. Because one thing starts to happen, which I think is even more important than learning, and that is vesting responsibility. What happens is you develop friendships with people who are doing these great things. They are basically saying to you, you have to do them too, and you are in a position that you can do stuff, so don't let us down* (Beasley 2004a). Seeking and nurturing positive reinforcement and social commitment can therefore be a way of deliberately guiding one's own behaviour.

Another form of self-awareness is knowing one's relative place within a social or organizational setting. Here we begin to enter a terrain of conduct based on ethical considerations of power and justice. Susan, for example recognizes her own position of power as a member of any project team. She is the person who hires the youth and has the power to fire them. She is also older and has the weight of society's deference to age behind her decisions. Her knowledge of her relative power extends beyond knowing when to exercise it to knowing its influence in conflict situations. *If I'm perceived as being part of the problem, then I can't do the facilitating or the training. We'll bring somebody else in to deal with it. Which can happen, because, I'm a white, heterosexual educated woman. I've got all these problems to be in a position of power. So you have to be really humble and be: "OK if this is about me that's totally cool, let's talk about it." Ironically though it didn't seem to be about me that much* (Kurbis 2003b).

Susan goes on to emphasize the importance of clearly demarcating power and responsibility in the projects she facilitates. She uses strategy to attempt to diffuse the effects of power. *I think to work with young people in this diverse kind of scale [of projects], in these types of programs there has to be boundaries. Otherwise, you're not going to get anything done, and people aren't going to feel safe, so there has to be a buck stops here place. The idea with those rules is to try and not have it be assigned to myself as an individual necessarily but to try to make it more of a group collective. So the buck stops with the group... We always have an ombudsperson that we usually try and introduce the group to at the beginning, who is younger. So if there are authority problems specifically with me, or whoever, the coordinator or manager, they can go someplace and complain*



(Kurbis 2003b). While other Sustainability Planners talked about wanting to empower their staff and subordinates through sharing power and responsibility, every organization, with the exception of EYA's youth projects, has a built in hierarchy of decision making and responsibility. Smart Growth BC has a more distributed, horizontal hierarchy but the larger the organization the more hierarchical it tends to be. As Daryl put it, being higher up in the organization you earn more money, you have more decision making power, but you also have the stress and responsibility that comes with that power.

The interplay between power and strategy is not solely about gaining more power in order to advance a particular agenda. From Susan's description we see the example of recognizing that one's own power is necessarily greater than some of those with whom one works, or over whom one has influence. Assigning degrees of empowerment is philosophically difficult and politically loaded but it is safe to say that any planner, or any person to whom the label "sustainability planner" can be applied, will always be more empowered than some of those involved or affected by his or her work. Thus recognizing one's relative power and working towards creating a supportive environment that enables participation by less empowered individuals is an essential component of Empathic Leadership.

*Empowerment is also an evolving condition. My own experience with sustainability advocacy at UBC forced me to confront some real ethical and procedural dilemmas. Over the years I felt increasingly distant from my constituency of students because I had been brought into the fold of privilege. Through awards, scholarships, formal recognition and participation in decision making committees I experienced tremendous personal growth. I felt a sense of gratitude towards the Academy. It had facilitated my growth and I didn't want to rock the boat that had provided me with so much. I felt an obligation and a loyalty to the institution that I was critiquing. Yet I felt a solidarity and obligation to my community of sustainability advocates to have a clear and loud message. Initially I tried to use my position of relative trust with senior administrators to try to communicate our sustainability vision but eventually felt that my voice was insignificant. The louder I got the more of a nuisance I became, not the more influential. Over time I felt a quieting of my oppositional stance. I let myself become resigned to the power of the institution and focused my advocacy efforts elsewhere. But behind this rationalization and apparent justification was the knowledge that I would have been more critical and more persistent had I not been bestowed with distinction by the University. I felt that I had "sold out" on my role as advocate and spokesperson for sustainability on campus (Senbel field notes).*

My experience may not be universal but it is certainly not unique. Each of the Sustainability Planners I studied has become more influential and more empowered over time. Greater influence does not necessarily translate to greater distance from the average member of a planner's constituency. Greater influence does mean increased exposure and interaction with those who yield greater power. The nature of political processes is such that there will be increasing pressure to enter into arrangements of mutual benefit with those who yield greater power. Such arrangements may serve to further empower the sustainability planner and her organization and may even advance the organization's agenda, but they may also serve to alienate a certain constituency that had traditionally supported the organization. The following sections explore the strategic implications of power, first within organizations, and then across organizations. At the end of the chapter I will return to ethics as an inescapable concern in strategic action.

### Power and Strategy in an Organization

Self-reflection on the scale of an organization is a common occurrence in a range of organizations ranging from private sector firms, to educational institutions to NGOs. What used to be mostly an exercise of financial auditing and improved accounting has evolved into a process of reviewing an organization's mission and assessing the mechanisms through which it seeks to achieve its mission. In some cases such outside input enables organizations to confidently change in ways that might otherwise seem unattainable. In the case of B.E.S.T. the external review allowed the organization to simultaneously broaden its focus and narrow the type of work it was engaged in. Cheeving describes what is really the starting point of any organizational strategy, refining the vision and charting the course that would help actualize that vision. *We sort of got a grant to look at the organization and hire consultants to do some sort of strategic planning with us. One of the recommendations of this organization, of the consultants, was [that we] need an executive director, [we] need to do a strategic plan. At that time we also ran the store Main Station Bikes, and they said you must get rid of Main Station Bikes. It's sucking up all your resources, its not making money, because it was opened up as a community economic development project that store, it didn't work (Ho 2003b).*

Cheeving continued to think strategically about the future of BEST beyond the external help with organizational visioning. Seeing a relative vacuum of forward thinking she adopted a leadership role. *There was no leadership at the organization and there was no thinking too much further about what's going to happen when this project funding goes... so I started taking on more of the fundraising and that type of role. The people on the Board at that time [were a real mixture]. Some pretty progressive people who had vision, others for the most part were real bicycle activists who wanted to promote bicycles. So there was a conflict between me and them in the fundamental philosophy of where we wanted the organization to go so there was a conflict for probably two or three years at the beginning between where I wanted the organization to go and [where] some people on the Board wanted to keep BEST (Ho 2003b).*

The larger the organization the more complicated the process of understanding the political and socio-economic environment through which the organization has to navigate in order to achieve its objectives. At BC Hydro Bruce makes use of scenario building to inform corporate strategy. *When I talk I start out with "here's what we're facing globally. Here's some global scenarios so you need to think about how they may affect your strategy going forward." Then you look at North American and regional trends as a subset of those global trends and then you look at local issues. What's happening in Canada? We've signed on to Kyoto, the US hasn't. What's happening within the province? There's Johnny Carline's Sustainable Region Initiative, the Fraser Basin Council (Sampson 2003). Bruce describes the strategic necessity of scanning the environment for resources and constraints.*

One of the challenges of large organizations is maintaining focus and upholding any one mission as a priority. Unlike other organizations that can create and maintain a singular focus on sustainability issues, BC Hydro's primary mandate is to meet the energy demands of the province at the lowest cost to consumers (see Appendix A). For Bruce to make and maintain sustainability as an integral component of that mission he has to be sensitive to the changing priorities and activities within the organization. For example when the entire corporate office was being restructured he did not indifferently keep drumming home the sustainability message. *If you get restructuring a corporate office and the whole reorganization of the company takes up a lot of time and focus and so you have to balance... People are working full*

*time on those issues you can't overload them with worrying about other issues, so the actual focus of implementing some of the action associated with the vision can go through cycles. CEO will have a schedule for some specific things that he wants to get done by a specific time and they have to get done. When they're done there will be time [to do other things]. It's not that you stop doing these things but the energy, while some people are grappling with other priorities, is changed sometimes (Sampson 2003). Here we see an ongoing "scanning of the environment" as well as an evolving and flexible strategic approach to implementing the sustainability vision.*

The sustainability vision need not be abandoned or temporarily disregarded, when an organization is preoccupied with its own internal changes. The vision simply has to adapt and the sustainability leader has to find different ways of integrating her goals into an organization's activities and priorities. Bruce, for example, capitalized on his CEO's priority of reducing energy demand. *For us the most important thing we can be doing is to get our customers to use less energy and Larry Bell (CEO) is such a strong supporter of PowerSmart.<sup>51</sup> He's kind of the father of it. When he came back [after having been gone for a few years] it really helped ramp up our emphasis in that area. Over the next 10 years we're planning to spend 600 million dollars to reduce load by 3500 gigawatt hours. You can't do that unless the CEO has a strong vision as well (Sampson 2003a).*

In other cases the organizational culture has to undergo an evolution. At BEST many of its long time supporters were actively and vociferously opposing a larger mandate for the organization. *A lot of the flack we got from some of the long time members was [about us] moving away from the grassroots of bicycle activism... It took a long time, about a year, to negotiate this long-term agreement with TransLink, which is still going, to provide regional trip reduction services to companies. So BEST would give workshops to employees to develop plans in the company to reduce vehicle trips, which is a really good program. And it's a contract so that we made some money off of it to feed through to some of our other programs. We got a fair bit of slack for that, you know, "you're in bed with corporations now" (Ho 2003b). The manner in which an organization's culture is changed varies. BEST's transition was clearly more conflict ridden and contentious than BC Hydro's for example. Being a non-profit with open membership requires a markedly different strategy to implement change and to maneuver around the obstacles to that change.*

Larry, Johnny and Bruce all talked of bringing in speakers who are perceived to be experts in their respective fields of specialization to provide an "objective" outside perspective and help articulate a new direction and a new vision. Larry went an extra step and hired the outside experts as consultants and sought to learn from them through the process of working together on a project. *We got them right here and we commissioned them to do an exercise so we could have an action together. That was just as much about learning and raising our consciousness for a lot of people in our organization as it was about planning a street. Planning the street was a kind of an obvious result but to see some of our planners and our engineers transforming their attitudes about what was possible and what was good and what was excellent... I include myself among those [who transformed]. We use all kinds of opportunities. I'm using this opportunity now with the tall building review where we're trying to identify some of the best designers in the world, who are doing these kinds of things. Lets get them here. Let's have some talk, let's learn. With sustainability through one of my associations, I discovered this fellow Herbert Dreisetl who's a*

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<sup>51</sup> This is a program introduced by BC Hydro to encourage residential energy consumers to adopt conservation measures such as a higher level of heat insulation and energy saving appliances.

*landscape architect, managing water. I managed to get him here. Because I'm involved with a lot of organizations around the world, and around North America in particular, whether it's the Waterfront Centre, or the Congress on New Urbanism or whatever, I'm always finding ways to interface with people that have great ideas (Beasley 2004a).*

Both Johnny and Bruce benefited from having a core group of sustainability enthusiasts already working at their respective organizations. They were able to capitalize on this resident expertise and passion and build outwards to include others in the base of support. Johnny describes how he did this. *The first thing I had to do was develop within staff an opportunity for people who also felt that this is the direction we should be going. There was already a whole bunch of people on staff who were ahead of me in this kind of learning curve. They'd already got there and they had been waiting for some time for someone at the senior management or political level to kind of pick up this ball, and provide some opportunity for them to get involved in moving us down this direction. The biggest challenge was to educate, engage and persuade the rest of staff that number one: this was a worthwhile direction for this organization to go; two: that it was actually relevant to the work they did, each individual person; and three: that it wasn't going away. This wasn't sort of a flavour of the month. I met with small groups to begin with, with people whom I thought were potential champions and then expanded and had them expand to a little bit more. Then I started doing broader presentations to the staff and then bringing in external people, to addresses, lunch time addresses to a hundred, hundred and fifty staff at a time, so that they would start to understand and get educated about what this all meant... Once I was reasonably confident that this was where we, that I could bring enough staff with me, I then tackled the Board level through its Planning and Environment Committee, and again bringing in a panel of people to discuss the different perspectives (Carline 2003a).*

At the end of the day the members of any Board have the ultimate power to steer the organization where they see fit. Knowing and understanding the Board and being able to communicate, engage and persuade the Board is essential for sustaining and implementing a particular vision. In the case of Smart Growth BC the Board is itself championing the organization's vision of replacing sprawl with compact complete communities. With BEST, however, Cheeving had to move from one form of sustainability advocacy, that of promoting bicycle transportation, to another, that of promoting multiple alternatives to automobile transportation. Ultimately it took a change in the composition of Board members for the transition to be successful. *We had Board meetings where two Board members would stand up and just argue with each other. So eventually over years, I spent a lot of time trying to build the Board and put a more professional Board on. But that took years, because you can't really just get rid of Board members. So eventually the Board turned over and I think the Board right now is pretty strong there, but it took a lot of time to build the Board there and to change the organization... There were probably a couple of times where I just sat down with certain Board members and said, "Is this where you really want to be?" Other times it was pretty natural that they felt there wasn't the fit (Ho 2003b).*

Whether with Board members or other key people in the workings of an organization, individual conversations are essential for affecting organizational change. Daryl, Johnny, Bruce and Cheeving all recounted occasions when such conversations were pivotal in gaining wider support. Daryl describes the significance of these conversations: *In terms of actually affecting change, I think one-on-one is the most powerful. That is not to say that the group stuff isn't important but I just think about instances where I've worked one-on-one and then that is*

*brought back to the group. Not that you kind of go away and have these little side deals and everything, but you have that conversation so that you can do the hearing and figure out the language to do the communicating. And the one-to-one also gives you an opportunity to confirm or communicate the value that you see from another individual and if people don't think they are valued they are not going to make an effort to work with you (Fields 2003a).*

Regardless of the size of the core group that champions sustainability in a large organization, the group has the capacity to expand and move outward. Daryl and Johnny spoke of the great importance of individual interactions that persuade increasing numbers of people to support the sustainability vision. Mike Costello, former President of BC Hydro, describes a similar process but with group interactions. A couple of individuals would make presentations to a small group and through dialogue and discussion ideas would spread. As Mike describes it, the relative power and influence of the disseminating group was a factor. *Sustainability to a company as diverse as this is, in my view, you have to do it from the centre at least to start. So a small group in Strategic Planning Sustainability, Bruce, David Bolser and a few others, basically became the champions within the corporate group. It started with a small number of people... and that's sometimes difficult because the businesses are here and the corporate group is sort of up here kind of detached from it. What you really want to do is get it into the businesses. That's the whole purpose so really the only way to go forward to take the champions here and basically start pretty much top down and push the concepts down and get support and champions within the business (Costello 2003).*

*Rather than sort of sending five hundred people into the trenches, who didn't exist anyway, to go from the bottom up, you go from the top down and you just make it real for these folks and you also make it hard for them to not follow... and the bar keeps getting raised. Those are things that you just can't ignore. So there's a sort of requirement in the job, but for those things that aren't legally mandated, but just make good business sense in the broader definition, you just got to use the champions you've got (Costello 2003).*

Not only were the champions used but they were used repeatedly and consistently to expose key people in the organization to the sustainability vision. *What you need to do is expose on an ongoing basis the other senior leadership group to them and to what they are trying to do and how it should change their business. It's that kind of bringing them along by using the enthusiasm and the drive of these individuals and then you have to make it real for people so it's not just some flavour of the month that someone up at Corporate Head Office is dreaming about... The senior management has to be on board. The champions have to be driving and energetic and they have to find allies within the bowels of the organization and you need all these pieces (Costello 2003).*

The content of the message was a persistent encouragement to approach issues from a different perspective, from a sustainability perspective. *You have to show them why it's better to think about these issues in a certain way versus the old way and just keep pounding at it. There's really no other way... With greater global recognition, international organizations give us greater recognition. Then the more that happens, the more employees say, just a second now maybe this isn't just a strange idea of Bruce Sampson and others. Maybe we are on to something here that we want to buy into and it does make sense (Costello 2003).*

The quintessential characteristic of Empathic Leadership, reflecting, analyzing and reassessing is the foundation of strategic thinking and is essential for working in an ever

changing and evolving environment. *Before going to the Board we do a dry run with the management team. Here are some of the thoughts, here's the framework and here's the main message. What do you guys think? So they'll provide feedback and you adjust the presentation to reflect some of their comments and take one piece of it and say I think you're missing this piece or that you might want to emphasize this point so you just refine it that way... I was doing the dry run for the Board so I had the same presentation and they knew that it was a presentation for the Board. It's everybody's different read on how the Board will react (Sampson 2003).*

Bruce consistently used feedback to assess his strategy and thereby almost ensured success from the outset. *You just try to assess the situation and try to figure out what will work and then the big piece though is trying to figure out if you're on the right path. That's where talking and getting feedback from people is really helpful because in any business there's lots and lots of smart people out there. If you road test your ideas with those people and listen it helps you get more confidence that you're on the right path (Sampson 2003).*

Unlike many attempts at defining an amorphous sustainability state, BC Hydro required a precision of purpose. A nebulous dreamy vision would have never caught on. Bruce always translated his sustainability vision into a set of targets and an action plan to achieve his targets. His conversations with me on achieving sustainability always revolved around specific numbers that would be achieved by specific dates. His vision may have lacked some of the seductive language used by other Sustainability Planners, that of a just society living in harmony with an interdependent ecosystem, but it had the practical advantage of being comprised of tangible attainable goals. *You've got the vision you know where you want to get to then you've got to come up with some meaningful targets and then you have to put together an action plan in place to make that happen and cross reference it with the business plan (Sampson 2003).* Although Bruce describes his vision in practical terms he did so with persuasive passion and conviction, which are integral to any strategy of persuasion.

BC Hydro is such a large organization that moving forward with a vision requires the maintenance of a strong focus and resisting the temptation of having a multitude of ideas. Michael Costello spoke about Bruce's challenge of remaining focused when there seemed to be so many important goals worthy of pursuing. *When you're dealing with a concept like that, where you are in a position where you're not actually running a business but you're sitting over here in a corporate group trying to influence, you run the risk of having so many good ideas about how the world should change. And he does. But you're not actually empowered to implement anything specifically so you lay out a very huge smorgasbord of things to get done. He's very good at that and he is now I think better focusing on specific aspects of it whether it be climate change, greenhouse gas, Lower Mainland air-shed. Before that it was fish and a long list of things, but he's now focusing more and compartmentalizing more to move more specific things... I'm talking about something that he's improved on, when you have so much to get done and so many things that need change the risk is that so much doesn't get done because there is so much to get done. It's a question of focus (Costello 2003).*

Another form of focus is in the ability to distill pragmatism from idealism. Daryl remains focused on the practical reality of working in an organization with multiple objectives and a culture of marketing business ideas. Rather than focus on the ethical necessity of participatory decision making, she promoted the business reality of working in diverse and

often conflict ridden watersheds. *There is marketing based on this is the right thing to do and we need to do it, and then there is marketing based on demonstrating results. There is quite a balance between the two. The Water Use Planning program was a huge shift for BC Hydro. It was a massive step for BC Hydro. So how did we get that project through? Well it wasn't by going out and saying well you know the right thing to do is to sit down with people and ask them how we should operate the plants, No! We didn't do that and if we had done that we probably wouldn't have gotten anywhere. I think what happened is that we had some successes. We recognized the synergies of external drivers that were happening. We developed partnerships both internally and externally and then it became a business reality (Fields 2003a).*

After the first project was a success it became easier to build organizational support for a similar participatory approach for subsequent Water-Use Planning projects. With every new project came new successes and eventually convening multi-stakeholder facilitated decision making forums became the norm. Focusing on small pilot projects that then become exemplary is a relatively low risk endeavour that enables adaptive learning. At the GVRD Johnny deliberately set out to build a repertoire of exemplary projects. Having initiated the Sustainable Region Initiative and whet people's appetite for sustainable practices, he set out to demonstrate its implementation with specific projects. *We then really started to put a focus on developing projects and tools to sort of change the way we did business internally to generate example of how things would change, and documenting those examples. So we could use those examples every time we talked to anybody saying look what we've already done. It can make a difference (Carline 2003a).*

Initiating projects is only the beginning of course. In the various research projects I undertook for each of my Masters Degrees (Architecture then Planning) I came across countless exemplary projects that seemed to demonstrate the benefits of innovative technology and integrated systems. However, rather than being beacons of hope, they became unique exceptions to the norm. What my research participants do differently is that they document, analyze, promote and improve their successes to spawn more successes. Johnny describes how he made use of his early successes. *We were really fortunate that in our first year one of the projects was just spectacularly successful. I didn't start it and I take no credit for it, it was people out in the workforce that did it, they had new optimization computer technology and they were looking at operations at the wastewater treatment plant, initially with a notion of we want to minimize pollution. There was some environmental consciousness and then they noticed that the energy bills were going up and they really focused on optimization of the plant and the reuse of methane, which we were already doing to some degree. Within a very, very short time of applying that technology they reduced the methane emissions, green house gas emissions by 75% and reduced the operating cost of the particular plant they started with by thirty thousand dollars a year. By the time that was applied right across the Board it was up around 300,000 a year and across the Board 75% reduction of green house gas emissions. That got us the CH2M Hill Federation of Canadian Municipalities' award for sustainable waste management. So we were lucky to get a kind of a flagship project right off the bat that I could use particularly for cost conscious politicians who kind of say here come the pointy headed planners again with their concepts (Carline 2003a).*

The ability to converse with the Board of directors and to be able to build a shared vision is critical for the culture of sustainability to take root. Cheeving struggled at BEST to build consensus around broadening the scope of BEST's activities and partners beyond bicycle advocacy. *Sometimes Board meetings were just painful experiences, because we disagreed and it*

*was very hard for me to go along with a vision that I don't agree with. On the other hand it wasn't a Board decision it was a couple of individuals that tended to really disagree and it was really frustrating because they were trying to advance their, I felt that they were trying to advance their personal agenda, as opposed to what would make the organization more successful. I felt that if you just keep focusing and preaching to the converted you're not going to make any big institutional change. You really need to broaden out who your audience and your message are (Ho 2003b).*

In the case of politically influenced boards of directors the context of operation fluctuates. BC Hydro, the GVRD and the City of Vancouver are all affected by changes in government and leaders within these organizations have to strategize against having to reinvent themselves every time there is a change in power. Johnny describes his actions in the face of a new Board that was actively resisting his sustainability vision. *There's a new Board, fifteen new members on the Board, and we're just going through that process and I think because a) we hadn't totally engaged the previous Board and b) because there's a big shift in the content of the new Board, there wasn't a ready handover, a ready sense of ownership of this whole project and we've just experienced at the last committee meeting a little turn back... I've got to somehow massage this process so that... my political masters can feel comfortable that they are in control about what issues are going to have to be faced. To [what] extent they can be in a consultative process, and at the same time not take away the recognition that this is a collaborative process and the GVRD can't be in charge of everything because we're not (Carline 2003a).* Here Johnny is referring to the Board's reluctance to take on sustainability projects that are outside of its mandate or expertise, beginning with the general idea of public involvement in long term planning.

Johnny also faced resistance to the idea of holding a conference on sustainability and had to exercise some degree of flexibility in meeting his own objectives of tying together the work of several task forces. *The way things were set up and the scale of conference we were having, we'd already got into just one hotel with one weekend available and trying to get my committee to agree with that was pushing them when they weren't comfortable to be pushed. Whether we would be able to get them comfortable in time to hold on to that date, or whether it becomes smarter to have some interim intermediate step of taking the results of these task forces, and working it through some sort of smaller political process with smaller consultation process, and then doing a bigger conference in the fall (Carline 2003a).*

Johnny describes in detail how he worked in the face of resistance to gain support for his vision. *When we came to brief the new Board to tell them what we were doing, some of them rapidly saw that at least the next steps were going to involve some very active public engagement from which some kind of suggestions and directions were going to come out, which might involve directions which they hadn't anticipated. It might involve expansions to our responsibilities and our obligations and they didn't feel like they were in control of this. This was something that was happening under the GVRD flag that they were somehow kind of, spectators to. They needed to be engaged, they needed to have a sense that each step along the way, they would have the opportunity to look at what was in front of them, reassure themselves, slow down or put on hold things they were uncomfortable with and let it move forward. So once I started to conceptualize this as not a resistance but a desire for engagement and control, I simply set about finding out what kinds of ways they would like to be engaged and what kinds of steps of control that would make them feel comfortable and go back and deal with it. It involved a few off line discussions with some of the more powerful critics (Carline 2003a).*



I asked Johnny what he meant by “offline”. Well not in committee, not in formal sessions. sitting as we are over this table one-on-one. It involved talking to some of their colleagues who were supportive to say, you know you may want to discuss this with your colleague. I’m not quite sure he’s seeing the total picture. He doesn’t see where you’re coming from. You might want to have those discussions. So mobilize other opinions that they might listen to. Political opinions as opposed to staff opinions so that they could get a sense of oh, some of my colleagues are comfortable with this. And just building relationships, in certain cases, in other ways. Knowing that some directors who are uncomfortable maybe haven’t built a relationship with me, weren’t as previous Board members had. [They] hadn’t really got this confidence to say alright, Johnny is in charge let him go ahead and do it. We’ll see what he turns up with. I worked with them on the things they were interested in somewhere else and facilitated, see what their particular interests were, facilitated a path for those interests to get advanced. So they stop and say this works for me working for this guy. I can get these things on the table. I can get access to certain decision making powers that I hadn’t had access to before. Well that makes me feel a little more comfortable working with him. Oh, now what does he want. He wants the sustainability thing. Alright, well maybe we can feel a little bit more comfortable. [I had] to get more trust built in there, and clearly I had to focus that on two or three key people. I didn’t have time to do that with everybody, and I didn’t have to do it with everybody. With two or three people I focused on those kinds of strategies to build some trust and some rapport (Carline 2003a).

Daryl and Bruce also talked of the importance of one-on-one dialogue in spreading their ideas. The personal attention to an individual’s hopes, fears, anxieties and aspirations allows the leader to engage the particular concerns of the person they are hoping to convince. Clearly one-on-one conversations are too time consuming to be the sole method of spreading the vision but leaders make use of this communication in important instances. The decision to engage in personal dialogue is a strategic one even it is not the result of strategic deliberation. Some calculation of the relative merits of investing time and energy in personal communication must take place as the sustainability planner decides on the degree to which they will initiate or respond to a conversation. Two ethical questions come to the fore here. First, how does the planner determine that his biased attention to power hierarchies is for the ultimate advancement of a more “power balanced” agenda versus simply perpetuating existing power imbalances? Second, how can the planner resist bargaining off public interest for the sake of winning strategic allegiance from a powerful body? The answers to these questions are impossible to determine in the abstract. They are ethical dilemmas that are not only situation specific, but also subjective. In the absence of a clear transgression of ethical standards, it is extremely difficult to determine in absolute terms whether an action was ethical. Judging the ethics of specific behaviour in terms of transparency and pandering to powerful bodies is virtually impossible for anyone other than the planner herself. The planner therefore has to be both routinely engaged in self-reflection, ethically aware, and proactively well versed in the dilemmas facing sustainability planners.

I saw ample evidence of periodic and in most cases frequent self-reflection. Ethical sensitivity was also evident in many cases, especially as it related to traditional notions of ethical conduct as laid out in professional codes of ethics (see (Howe 1994)). Susan’s careful construction of third party avenues for resolving staff grievances particularly when her own position of authority would likely undermine fair resolution is an example of ethical sensitivity to power. Johnny for example was very clear with his Board of Directors about

the potential risks of public participation even when his portrayal of the process was unlikely to win him much needed support. *I've been quite honest with them and said, sometimes, which is an image I like, one I got from a colleague down in California. Once you start this process in motion of involving influential motivated people from other sectors to discuss what we are doing here, it's kind of like dancing with a bear. We can decide when we're going to start it, but once it's started, the bear will decide where it goes. The bear will lead and the bear will decide when it stops. You know you just can't disengage all of a sudden or decide, "well I don't really want to go down there." If you get enough momentum in a public process that says we want to investigate a regional drug strategy, or deal with that as an issue [you cannot stop it. If people say,] "we want to really look at economic strategies or whatever it is, and we really think you got to pay attention to that," then you probably have to pay attention to it. You're not going to be able to shrug it off once it gets to a certain point. Which is what, I think, some of them were concerned about, that they might be led down avenues of sustainability that they're really not comfortable getting involved with as the GVRD (Carline 2003a).*

### Power and Strategy across Organizations

After securing support for the sustainability vision within an organization the next scale of intervention is across organizations. While much of the Empathic Leadership framework is cyclical and iterative in terms of temporal sequence, sustainability planners have always sought to garner internal support before venturing out to interact with others in search of a shared mandate. Johnny, Sebastian, Bruce, Cheeving and Larry all started with establishing strong internal support with a clear vision and then moved on to strategize externally. Johnny describes how he sought progressively wider partnerships and an information campaign with prospective partner organizations. *Once I was reasonably comfortable that I had my Board on board... I moved out into the Council of Councils which is all the municipalities coming together and I've done two or three presentations now to the Council of Councils. Usually every time I do one of those I try to get two or three other people to do presentations for a broader perspective and a broader validation of what we are doing and we got very positive feedback from them and then I took the show on the road and did presentations to individual municipal councils and organizations like the Board of Trade, or some Local Chamber of Commerce or Rotary Clubs or Parks Boards. I'm using things like this to sort of start to sow the seeds in the community that this is happening (Carline 2003a)*

Bruce invests considerable energy linking to other organizations and establishing partnerships that would be mutually beneficial. Michael Costello describes Bruce's initiative in this regard. *The work Bruce is doing now, which is with Johnny Carline and a whole bunch of people on the GVRD and the airshed, it's really remarkable how he has infiltrated all of those various actors and taken a leadership role, which you wouldn't normally expect from the executive of a utility to be doing that (Costello 2003).* The following statement by Bruce demonstrates how he thinks about compatibility with potential partners. *The Canadian Confederation of Municipalities has a strong sustainability focus that gets enhanced by the fact that we have signed on to Kyoto. Then you look at that and say given the business we're in, is there a fit here between what we do and those trends and the ability to provide our customers with low cost energy? Low cost reliable energy at sustainable prices, and I think that fed into the development of the energy policy, which I think provides a great platform for us in British Columbia (Sampson 2003).* Bruce therefore pursued partnerships and joint projects that would advance the sustainability agendas of both organizations.

The practice of using a range of community and committee activities to help advance the planner's particular vision is evident with all the sustainability planners. Cheeying, for example, capitalizes on her work as a member of the Board of directors of VanCity<sup>52</sup>. *I'm on the VanCity Board but I'm also on the VanCity enterprises Board, which is the development wing. What I've been talking about at the VanCity table is VanCity playing a larger part in shaping community. It's a very important player in the community. I don't think right now it's proactive enough in shaping community so when I say I want to be a developer, sort of flippantly, but... if developers can play a larger role in how we define and build communities that would be really interesting. It would be coming from building communities in a very different way and that's my point to the VanCity Board as well, using financial resources to make community change happen* (Ho 2003a).

Larry sought out collaborations with multiple and often adversarial partners. *I was over working on the large mega-projects where we're having to do the very same thing. We're having to build a very different relationship with the developer who is very powerful but faces the City who's very powerful and all having to figure out what to do. Our relationship with the community, we have some strong aspirations for that, and frankly our relationships in our departments who have to find a way to work together, because if they don't work together we would be kind of used against one another in the negotiations that go on. So again there was this imperative to collaborate* (Beasley 2004a). Ignoring the stereotypes of conflict between the interests of various parties helps Larry construct a culture of collaboration that brings together the various interests instead of pitting them against each other. His success is evident in the physical form of the city centre and its ability to deliberately steer developers towards high density housing while simultaneously securing considerable community amenities such as community centres and parks.

In some cases external partnerships and collaborations are intended for internal rather than external strategy. Much like BEST's use of an external consultant to review their work, BC Hydro invited the Pembina Institute to help them audit the sustainability of their practices. Michael Costello was visibly excited as he described the effectiveness of this group. *About two or three years ago, or four years ago, we brought in someone from the Pembina Institute in Edmonton. They're a very effective group working out of Alberta... They're a very interesting small group that are committed to sustainability and the environment, and they are in your face as a company if you are operating in a way that is completely adverse to those objectives. On the other hand, they, as very knowledgeable and articulate people, sell their services to companies on contract to help them move forward on the sustainability agenda. So on the one hand there's a group of them out there that is pounding away criticizing companies that are way off the mark. On the other hand they will work with you, come in and help you in a really win-win sort of way... They'll come in and say look, we're willing to work with you to get a project approved that might have a certain environmental or sustainability dimension that you may not have thought of but it's the right thing to do, so we'll show you how to get from A to B* (Costello 2003)

Sebastian's use of outside expertise is more metaphoric and theoretical but no less significant in introducing different perspectives. *It was so important for getting me going in this area and what I did, and I did this with CEOs of major corporations of British Columbia and*

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<sup>52</sup> VanCity is a community-based, member owned financial institution based in Vancouver.

community groups and local grassroots meetings over at Strathcona, and students at UBC in landscape architecture, and other faculties, and I've done it with heads of community groups and it always worked as well. It always worked and what it did was gain me a whole lot of trust and get people willing to work towards doing something, leadership really. So I would play this game and it would literally have me switching hats sometimes, or scarves, or I'd have photos and I'd play three different men. I'd say these are three heroes of mine I've read their work and I love what they do and I'm going to play each one of them in sequence... Murray Bookchin, Paul Hawkin, Herman Daly (Moffatt 2002). By passionately taking on the intellectual persona of each of these people, Sebastian would sequentially seek to convince his audience that each theory was the most accurate depiction of how the world works. The three thinkers represent social, economic and ecological sustainability respectively and collectively they demonstrate the imperative of taking a balanced approach to sustainability.

Much of Susan's work is very much about inserting different personas into planning processes to introduce a different and often forgotten perspective. In her case however, the personas are real people who are otherwise marginalized and left out of conventional planning work. *They pass judgment on what they see. But it's not always bad, a lot of people [say], "oh yeah that's interesting."* Roger, from Merrick Architects,<sup>53</sup> was fantastic in this meeting we were at yesterday. Amy and I went and there were all these suits and it was the greatest thing to be a part of. He really saw that it was uncomfortable and awkward and that we were very much a marginal part of the whole scene and he really reached out to say OK well we want you guys to be a part of this (Kurbis 2003a). This is an occasion in which Susan had an ally who was part of the establishment but she often does not. Her presence, and that of the youth on her staff, and their intelligent, respectful and effective participation serves to add legitimacy to their work and to the voice of youth in general.

No one group or organization can reach out and foster collaborative partnerships with groups representing every interest in society. As much as collaborative work brings people together, it also leaves people out. Each of the sustainability planners studied reaches out to some outside groups and constituencies in some way but also leaves out other groups and constituencies depending on their own vision as leaders within their respective organizations. The practical necessity of finite time and resources requires planners to seek out certain groups over others. Landmark theorists such as Forester, Sandercock and Flyvbjerg have written a great deal about power and how marginalized groups are left out of conventional planning processes and are not invited to participate in partnerships and collaborations. While the choice of who to seek partnerships with is inherently complicit in perpetuating status-quo power structures, it is also a strategic choice connecting an organization's vision to its need to expand its capacity to achieve that vision. The following section traces some of the strategic action undertaken by planners to advance their vision across a range of perspectives.

### **Power and Strategy across Society, across Perspective**

*Working with growing non-profit organizations that are advocacy oriented you just have to think really strategically about political messaging (Ho 2003a).*

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<sup>53</sup> Roger is an architect who was at the meeting Susan was describing.

Political messaging as Cheeving describes it is the public face of the organization that invites people to agree with, adopt and ultimately champion the organization's vision. It builds legitimacy, support and power in the political environment of the region. The manner in which support for a particular vision is increased varies with every planner and every organization and often changes over the life of a single project. This entire research project includes various stages and mechanisms of turning a vision into reality. In this section planners talk specifically about how they try to spread their ideas across different perspectives in society.

Johnny's entire approach with the Sustainable Region Initiative has been to instigate a networked sharing of vision and responsibility. *I don't think you can turn around and say oh well it's all to do with individual behaviour, and so we'll turn it over to the education department to educate people, and in the meantime we'll all do something else. It's got to be all the levers you could bring to bear on this and education is one of them and obviously financial levers, regulatory levers, technological levers that you could bring to bear but the success of it will come to the degree that you have built an urban regime. Not only the government agencies, private firms, non-profits and community groups, when they come to their own particular agenda, they would have this sustainability screen or a framework in which to say this is how we frame our goals. These are the kind of constraints or opportunities for our strategic functions (Carline 2003a).*

Johnny goes on to describe a collaborative approach that would achieve a set of outcomes which can be tackled individually by respective organizations but which are collectively beyond the capacity of any one organization or institution. *We don't have the responsibility for education, which is going to be really critical for all this stuff. We don't have the responsibility for health. We peripherally have an impact on it through air quality management and so on, but we don't have direct responsibility. We don't have direct responsibilities for social issues even though what we do implies a certain social quality of life and has an impact on [social issues]. The third level was the notion that we would facilitate a process that recognizes that regional government in this region is highly fragmented. There are all kinds of different agencies and levels of government involved and we're not advocating that a new form of government take responsibility for the sustainability of the region. In the absence of that [we could] try and facilitate a process where people from all these agencies and groups come together, including representatives of the business community, and non profits and regular community groups, come together and define some kind of collaborative process (Carline 2003a).*

This is an ambitious undertaking replete with political hurdles. According to Patrick, the kind of planning necessary to create integrated and shared delivery of sustainability initiatives requires political skills. He describes the work of a well known and successful planner as being effective because of his political savvy. *There's one side of it that's about planning theory and economics but the real nuts and bolts of it is that the guy is a good politician. He knows what to say and who to say it to and where the weak points are and how to pull the weight of the system. What he can do and what he can't and those are all political skills rather than planning skills...More and more they should be planners' skills (Condon 2004a).* Political strategy requires reaching out beyond traditional allies to network with groups across the political spectrum. Cheeving describes the necessity of transcending partisan politics in getting her message across. *With Smart Growth BC we sit at the table with the Business Council of BC and the Board of Trade and that is how you have to make things happen. You have to work with everyone otherwise you just never make this happen and you're just preaching to the converted. I'm hyper, hyper-*

*sensitive about partisan stuff... because I don't want us to be seen as some lefty socialist organization, and people perceive me as leaning left anyway (Ho 2003b).*

Reaching out beyond traditional allies included traversing ideological as well as political boundaries. The business sector has often been maligned by the environmental, and in turn the sustainability movements. In every case, sustainability planners had formed some kind of collaboration with organizations who are primarily concerned with generating capital and maximizing financial growth. In some cases the collaborations are no more than that of a donor-donee relationship, such as the Environmental Youth Alliance and VanCity. In other cases, such as with the GVRD and various business councils in the region, the relationship is one of ongoing mutual benefit stemming from a common vision for the region. Johnny describes how the business sector finds his vision for the region attractive. *If there has been support for a uni-city, mega-city in Vancouver, it's generally come from the business community, and secondly they will try to press for efficiencies. The development community, for example, will look for standardization of zoning by-laws and building regulations to try to take as much discretion away from local authorities and get them into more standardized approaches. Or in fact move towards depoliticized systems, they will advocate business cores. [They will advocate for] the airport authority governance model for things like transportation because they sense that the two tier system leaves regional decisions vulnerable to too much local parochial interests. They are, ironically in a sense, more supportive to a regional approach to things like sustainability but with a little caveat on the end. They've got a particular interest in one leg of the stool and the other two legs, yeah they support environmental and social well being but, don't get those ahead of the economic prosperity (Carline 2003a).*

Another barrier Johnny faces in getting full participation in his broad sustainability vision is in the reluctance of politicians to embark on a journey of change that might ultimately lead to them losing their job. Fear of change and how organizations might manage anxiety in the face of uncertainty is well documented in the business organizational behaviour literature particularly as it relates to structural adjustments and downsizing. In business organizations the needs of shareholders as represented by the Board of directors drive change irrespective of the hopes and fears of the organization's personnel. The change can be quite unsettling and can have deep costs on the persons and communities affected. Critics of corporate hegemony place their sympathies with the disaffected communities and displaced workers. However, when it comes to the potentially equally destabilizing domain of regional politics in a considerably redesigned sustainability governance system, fear of change, especially at the higher levels of power, is ignored. The seeming moral superiority of the public good of sustainability trumps structural adjustments at the political level and in effect delegitimizes both voters' and politicians' fears.

Any kind of realistic sustainability strategy cannot afford to fall into this trap of self-righteousness and must address people's reluctance and the root causes of that reluctance to change. Johnny describes how some of the various constituencies he has worked with are hesitant to accept structural change. He begins with some of the municipal politicians on the GVRD Board and their nervousness about a regional sustainability strategy. *If they see the ultimate path down which something like a strong region would take them would be to a uni-city structure then the best they might be able to hope for is to be an alderman, a representative from a ward, sitting on a large Board, as opposed to the mayor of the same ward. If you treat the municipalities as wards of a larger city, they would be [alderman]. They would have much less*

*influence within their own domain. They would simply be subject to this larger government. Someone would obviously be the mayor of the big city, but there would only be one of them instead of twenty one. So yes there's a loss of prestige there. You'd become a smaller fish in a bigger pool and maybe there is also some suspicion that the power of the bureaucracy increases the more you go into a bigger government. In a local government, local politicians can get right into the public works and all kinds of stuff, and it is very hands on politics. At the regional level a lot more trust has to be put into the bureaucrats' hands to deliver those services. So there's a loss both ways (Carline 2003a).*

Suspicion of big government extends beyond simple self-preservation to a genuine belief that local autonomy and control is the most effective governance structure for urban regions. *I think there's a genuine fear of big government starting to get involved with decisions that will no longer be within the grasp or control of local political processes. Just like senior governments are perceived to be, depending on your point of view, within the control of party operatives in the political structure, or the major funders of parties with their unions or big business or whatever. [There's a perception] that local political processes have very little implications for federal decisions or even provincial decisions. I think there's a genuine fear of big urban government finishing up in much the same way. So that if you went to a mega city, or even a strong regional government on the two tier system that we've got now, local processes would lose their influence and with them local politicians would lose their influence. But I think for many of them, for some undoubtedly there may be a self-interest in this, but I think for many if not most of them, there's a genuine belief that the best urban systems come from strongly localized control. Therefore their approach to this is to try and insure a region that is either weak in power or limited in scope so it doesn't get too influential (Carline 2003a).*

Johnny sites the example of a particular Board member's reluctance to shift to a wider and more value-centred perspective on his own vision for the GVRD. *I was dealing with an experienced and very bright Board member who I am sure intellectually understands sustainability but is nonetheless still mainly concerned that the biggest challenge we should be focused on is building the capital works we have to build at an affordable price. That's the main [purpose] and environmental and social and economic strategy and how these things connect are secondary issues. There are certain functional obligations that we have to do as major utilities like filtering the water and treating the waste and to be able to do those to the level required by law and keep the taxes down to something he can live with, that should be our major challenge, and this other stuff is maybe peripheral extras. I'm quite certain he understands intellectually sustainability, but I don't think he necessarily understands or agrees that it is a fundamental objective and transcends this second thing, that you're actually trying to tell him. Are we building these facilities in the first place because we want to achieve these sustainability goals, social welfare and public health and so on? I think he sees that probably as window dressing. He sees the other side roles as being tangential and the central goal being, in the case of water, to provide safe drinking water at the minimum cost, and if you do that, that's it. The environmental side effects, conservation and all those things are going to be relatively minor issues. (Carline 2003a)*

Johnny also found suspicion of big government to be prevalent amongst members of the general public. *I think the general public at large also has a very comfortable feeling, partly rooted in tradition, history and fear of change, partly in terms of a closer and more positive relationship that they have with their local government than they have with any remote government. The more remote the government is, not only the less direct experience you have with it, but the worse the experience is, or the worse the perception of it is. So there's a universal perception that the federal government is*

*totally wasteful... By the time you come down to the local level, they may not be heroes but at least people do sense, oh yeah, they run the local swimming pool. They deliver these recreation programs they do kind of clean the streets and the sidewalks and do these local improvements, they can tangibly see and tangibly influence what goes on. So I think the general public certainly would be quite reluctant to give up this local government and doesn't see a lot of frustration in resisting a regional government (Carline 2003a).*

These instances of reluctance to adopt new governance structures are made all the more pronounced when fear of lifestyle and behavioural burdens are added to the palette of changes that are expected to be accepted with a regional sustainability strategy. The chapter on emotions discussed various emotional responses to sustainability visions with fear of change being a significant one. What arises here is a fear of a broad institutional change exacerbated by the relative uncertainty of sustainability governance. Beyond the general notion of participation and collective decision making how would regional decision making actually function. How would the balance of power evolve and how far removed will the average resident feel? How would democracy operate to prevent the tyranny of dogmatic hegemony? These questions are profoundly important for people to first trust and then desire the onset of change for greater sustainability. As important as the questions are, there are no comforting answers. Speculative scenarios abound and narratives of imperative action pervade sustainability discourse, but models of wide scale participatory sustainability governance are scarce. The relative novelty of a planning epistemology as ambitiously all-encompassing as sustainability planning demands that theorists be somewhat patient in their expectations for a workable action plan. Members of the public, however, who are asked to uphold a sustainability vision and engage in processes of change need to be able to trust that the outcome will not leave them disaffected.

Each of the planners studied had some mechanism through which they guide stakeholder groups towards appreciating the significance and worthiness of their respective vision. No approach is entirely effective in communicating or demonstrating the desirability of the implemented vision in terms of ongoing citizen participation and perpetual empowerment. Planners are nonetheless working tirelessly at raising awareness about sustainability issues and are attempting to lay the foundations for broader public engagement across different perspectives. The following sections demonstrate the kinds of strategies planners are employing for cross-societal engagement.

Beginning with an ideological and philosophical discussion, Sebastian uses people's own values as a hook through which he sparks their interest. *One of the most effective things I did was an actual role play literally in front of people and it just was fun for everybody... I said there are three spheres of sustainability and I'd like to argue which sphere is most important, and in the end I'd like everybody to vote for which sphere they feel most comfortable with as the important sphere that envelopes the other two. Well that did two things in one kind of sneaky tricky way in that it got the issue off of are we sustainable or are we not, or is this important or is this not, into why aren't we sustainable and all of a sudden the group was interested in inquiry instead of in debate (Moffatt 2002).*

A markedly different approach is Johnny's eventual shift to communicating the mundane effects of sustainability on people's lives. What are the practical changes that would take place and how could individuals begin to envision the change. *I tried to get some media*



*attention to this. I was modestly successful in local community papers, totally unsuccessful in the mainstream papers. They couldn't see that this was an issue yet and even the local papers said, well isn't this just sort of planning theory. If you do this what is really going to be different tomorrow? What could I tell the community you'll see as different tomorrow, and that I thought was a very fair question. It resonated with me, it also seemed to be echoing the kind of questions my staff, some of my operational staff would say, "well, so what? How's my job going to change? How am I going to run this plant differently if you adopt this sustainability thing? Why should I even pay attention if I'm just going to do the same job in the same way, who cares?" And so that really then focused my attention to the point that said, this isn't just a planning exercise. This has got to be something that is affecting day-to-day decisions in an ongoing basis, and one that actually produces visible measurable, observable changes and starts to do that relatively quickly (Carline 2003a)*

With the communicative turn in planning and the rise of the planner as facilitator of public engagement and convener of participatory process comes a tendency to view public participation as the underlying indicator by which planning will ultimately be judged. Several Sustainability Planners expressed the sentiment that some sustainability measures would give rise to such a degree of personal inconvenience for residents that regional populations would never willingly choose to adopt them. This raises a plethora of issues regarding science, knowledge and power and who owns them. Chapter three explores these questions. In terms of strategic action another concern arises. How do you engage the public in an ambitious participatory process without being able to guarantee some continuity of engagement? How do you avoid letting people down. Johnny, for example, has launched an ambitious project with the Sustainable Region Initiative and acknowledges the difficulty he faces with raising people's expectations. *This is an old fashioned concern in a sense but it's one I'm familiar with. It's one thing for a political body to generate some policy proposals and tell the staff to go out and consult with people, because at least you are in control about what's on the table sort of. It's entirely different to sort of say alright go out and get a whole bunch of people out there to figure out what we should do and then come back tell us, cause now you're really wide open. You're not in control at all and you don't know what's going to come back at you and you might be in a position where there's a lot of momentum for this. If you have to say no, then you're facing expectations that you didn't mean to raise (Carline 2003a).*

Expectations cannot help but be high. Among certain groups in the region, the hunger for greater sustainability is so strong that every new initiative brings a renewed promise that the elaborate imaginings of sustainability theorists might finally come to fruition. I spoke to several people who were engaged in some way with the Sustainable Region Initiative; academics, members of NGOs, citizens and architects and all started out being cautiously optimistic but had become skeptical and disappointed. People closer to the project, however, are far less jaded. They seem optimistic and have greater trust in the capacity of the seemingly slow pace of change to make a difference and to accelerate over time.

Building trust around a vision is essential for it to survive the trials and tribulations of fluctuating political support. Faith in the vision and trust in an organization's ability to maintain the vision gives supporters the stamina to endure setbacks and disappointments. The Environmental Youth Alliance (EYA) relies heavily on trust that has taken years to build. *We as individuals go out and talk to youth workers and try to get them to recognize people to come, and through years and years of working in a certain community you start to build relationships and trust and then it becomes a word of mouth thing. Somebody who's worked here, who was youth*

*at risk, would tell their friends and then everybody who was living with them would apply to get into the program* (Kurbis 2003a). Having the ability to employ thousands of youth over the years through six month internships enables EYA to engage youth in a way that mere invitation to participate in a decision making process would not. When you have to invest time and energy into a process whose outcome seems questionable your incentive to continue to become engaged diminishes. I am in no way judging the Sustainable Region Initiative and indeed comparisons between the GVRD and EYA seem ludicrous considering the difference of scope and mandate of each organization. What is informative here is that for both organizations, having implementable projects with tangible results, and demonstrating the capacity to continue doing so is a strategic imperative for maintaining a strong base of support outside the organization.

One of EYA's strategies for supporting as many youth groups as they can, is to provide mechanisms through which groups of marginalized youth can be active. A group of First Nations youth, with membership from communities across three provinces, who would otherwise be unable to secure funding or have a voice, have been able to produce a publication with ongoing help from EYA. *They don't have to write a sixty-page contract and sit down with our lawyer so that they can get this grant to set up their program. So that part that exists, I think, is one of the things about us that makes us really unique and really able to continue to do this huge range of stuff and be relevant to young people and I think as soon as you start to bureaucratize it too much, it can kill it. Really it can. So the lawyer guy that we have working with us, he knows us very well. Hopefully, he's quite good with young people, and hopefully we'll be able to implement it without killing it* (Kurbis 2003b).

Critical to the survival of a vision and indeed, an organization, is the realization that the environment within which planners have to work is not benign. It is not simply a matter of sparking the interest of a neutral or indifferent public. When ideologies clash the planning context often becomes hostile. Cheeving's endurance of aggressive personal attacks intended to undermine her move to alter the vision of BEST is mild in comparison to what EYA had to endure. By deliberately choosing to leverage their own legitimacy as a sanctioned, funded and supported organization to help empower youth on the margins of mainstream legitimacy, EYA members left themselves exposed to sabotage. They were reported to federal authorities as being a Charitable Organization that contravenes the Charities Act. They had posted the activities of marginalized groups they are affiliated with on their website and therefore appeared to be endorsing all their activities. The offending piece was a posting of notes from a brainstorming session in which tree spiking was mentioned as one of many possible forms of protest. *It's such an easy way to get rid of charities if they post everything up on their websites. But if we just clandestinely operate and make sure we have a lawyer checking things out for us, so that if we get audited again, we can be protected, which is going to cost more money at the end of the day, because we'll have to. I don't have the technical ability to write those types of contracts. The Charities Act is a beast, so you really need someone who knows what they're doing and is a total professional, otherwise something is going to slip through the cracks, so that's a pain* (Kurbis 2003b).

Ultimately the favoured strategy was not one that would have their support for other youth groups diminish. EYA's vision and mission demand that they be supportive of marginalized youth. The solution was therefore to adopt an approach of scrutinizing the legal relationships that they strike with other organizations and to be more careful about

what appears on their website. One of the costs of this strategy of continued support is to discontinue certain activities that might jeopardize EYA's ability to support a host of other activities. The First Nations Youth magazine is one such activity.

Another of EYA's practices is to simply give youth the experience of being empowered. Providing youth with the opportunity to be in roles in which they feel as though they are legitimate participants in society has the potential to change culture on both sides of the unconventional exchange. *Amy and I went and met with Larry Campbell<sup>54</sup> last week, and it was like OK Amy what are you thinking and she's sitting at this huge Board table. There's all these people there, dressed in suits, a lot of power, and she's expected to say something and talk about what she's doing and how it relates to the meeting and people can kind of be stunned in that kind of situation but it's great. Why shouldn't she be in there talking to the mayor? She has every right to be there he's her servant really. So we kind of try to shape those minds and say you know this is the way it should be really. People go yeah, yeah I guess you're right* (Kurbis 2003a).

Susan had a chance to travel to Brazil with members of a UBC team working on participatory watershed planning. She found the youth in Sao Paulo to be much more aware of issues of power and politics than the youth in the Vancouver region. Local municipal and regional planners, she claims, fail to recognize the importance of involving youth and ignore them when they are targeting different stakeholder groups. *The youth are completely politicized. I was absolutely impressed. They're more politicized than young people here. And we're able to do all sorts of things with them here even though they're not politicized. There they're wow, off the scale. I was so impressed. Articulate and know what's going on and not putting up with anything, not intimidated by authorities, so I think they could do a lot... children and youth environmental education from the GVRD is not great. But the grass roots are fantastic* (Kurbis 2003b).

Youth, of course, are not a homogenous group. Susan's experience with youth groups reveals a tendency for marginalization to occur within groups of youth based on societal power structures. Strategic intervention and a deliberate reconstruction of what constitutes legitimacy serves to empower the disempowered. *In my opinion, when divisions come and [sub] groups end up together, it's usually based on class. We work with them, try and work it out, and really work hard on class education...with working class people they need to feel legitimized, especially because our culture is so dominated by educated people, and people with more money. So if you can legitimize them by making them important, and powerful, and knowledgeable, and that they have a lot of things to contribute, [then you've succeeded]* (Kurbis 2003b).

Susan bridges the class divide by demystifying it. *One of the things that I like to do, is say, OK we're all different, we all have something to contribute to this group, because of our experiences and to basically demystify university educated people, and not raise them up. Kind of try and level the playing field through dialogue about what actually happens and why. Give each of the young people in the group an opportunity to teach what they know. So they can choose a topic that's of interest to them, and it can be anything and they can run a little workshop on it. And it gives them this feeling of oh, I have something to teach and to share and I'm important* (Kurbis 2003b).

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<sup>54</sup> Mayor of the City of Vancouver.

Sebastian employs a similar strategy with adults. *You find a hook and every lesson you teach to adults first of all begins with honouring and recognizing the strength that they are bringing to the room, what they already know* (Moffatt 2002). Recognizing the contributions that people are able to make no matter what their background is necessarily a part of any kind of participatory decision making. For people to continue to be engaged in a planning process they must feel that their contributions are valued.

Johnny is optimistic that widespread participation with the requisite valuing and integration of the public's contribution will ultimately take place and migrate upwards to include those holders of power who are currently reluctant to allow public participation to affect public policy. *I think the system we've got can work, and can work by and large through the consensus building process we're going through now and will be stronger and will lead to better results if we do that, than if we go to a highly centralized powerful remote regional government. I do believe in this bottom up system but it really does have to have some strong mandates to carry out these regional responsibilities and at the moment you could look in the legislation of the Growth Management Act, and say potentially they're there. If the region wants to take advantage of them or there's no real obligation to do that. So I talk about reluctant, I don't know if I've used this phrase with you before, but in my presentation to people about the history of the GVRD, I take the principle of subsidiarity, this pushing down, pushing down responsibility to the lowest level, I talk about the GVRD of having the principle of reluctant upward subsidiarity. It's down at the bottom already and it only migrates up to a regional level, when people see that there is a genuine benefit to be gained from collective action rather than separate action* (Carline 2003a).

### **Communicating Vision and Generating Culture**

Expanding the support base of a sustainability vision necessarily requires planners to communicate across diverse perspectives and multiple professions. Daily planning tasks also require the planner to have the capacity to communicate with diverse individuals about diverse topics. Susan describes the range of communication contexts within which she works. *Most of my job is communication. There's all this negotiation that goes on with government, municipalities and funders, and there's communicating with participants in the programs and then there's communicating with other staff like the accountant who comes in. So there's communication on all these different levels. You shift gears every time, and even kids, children, working with kids, we did a presentation at an elementary school, because we're working with them on a park. We're redoing a park, China Creek Park North. Kind of reclaiming it and redoing it and they've been involved primarily with the day care and the elementary school that are really close to it to try and get children and youth from those areas really involved in this park reclamation and designing it. So we're working with that and talking to them and then you come here and you have an accounting, financial meeting and then you're talking to the business developers in Gas Town* (Kurbis 2003a). Far from being happenstance, these interactions are integral to Susan's attempts to expand her vision and to enable youth to be active and involved in environmental projects in different parts of the city.

Bruce talks about wanting to promote his vision with the provincial government and to be able to accordingly influence their policy decisions. *If you have the vision in your crown corporation, if the province gets the vision it just makes the job that much easier because they are our shareholder and you can run into road blocks if they are off on a different tangent and you're going down the sustainability path. So part of my covert mission to do what I can to help the province get that mission* (Sampson 2003a). Bruce said "covert" with a joking tone but he was very clear

about having to be aware of the balance of power and how he might have to strategically act to facilitate the implementation of his vision.

Bruce, Johnny and Larry all make use of their senior positions to exert influence on individuals in similar or more senior positions of authority. The clout of each of their offices affords their respective visions a degree of legitimacy and resilience in the face of opposition. They use their clout internally and externally to add prestige and trustworthiness to certain messages. Johnny describes why this was important to him particularly in building early support for the Sustainable Region Initiative. *Being the face of this initiative to the staff, to the councils and to the community rather than have other staff, who might normally do this, was very important. This had to be seen as a very senior initiative. I had to use all the credibility that I built up over the years in this community to do it and to some degree I had to disassociate it with any of the particulars, whether it's the LRSP or the Air Quality Management Plan or the utility management plans. This was something bigger and broader than this and people had to see that it had my total personal commitment* (Carline 2003a).

There were many cases, however, in which being the sole promoter of a vision was often seen as a liability especially if you are thought to have an inherent bias or a personal agenda in advancing a particular vision. Each of the Sustainability Planners I talked with had, at some point, brought in outside expertise to provide unattached arms length advice on the benefits of moving in a certain direction. Rob Macintosh from the Pembina institute was brought to give presentations on sustainability by both BC Hydro and the GVRD. Rob's presentation seems to have been critically important as a catalyst for change at the senior level at BC Hydro. *I had Rob Macintosh<sup>55</sup> from Pembina Institute come in and give a presentation and Rob is very effective and part of the exercise here is thinking through out of the box what will convince, in this case the CEO, that the mission is right. I gave him my blurb but sometimes you need others to come in. So I thought let's get Rob to come in. Rob had his ponytail and he came in. He's a very intelligent guy and a very effective speaker and I can't even remember what year it was. It was a June meeting and Michael said I like it. Let's prepare a presentation for the Board in September so we did that and actually it was a very satisfying exercise because we did the presentation and the Board said yeah we agree with that and then you need to put an action plan in to make it happen. So that's how we started with the vision... and our vision is to be North America's leading sustainable energy company* (Sampson 2003a).

Bruce's strategy from that point onwards was to always use the rationality of environmental sustainability as the singularly resilient way to tackle the growing demands and environmental constraints facing power utilities. Irrespective of the foundation or ecological epistemology upon which Bruce places his vision, his rationale when communicating his vision both within BC Hydro and outside is that it is the best approach given the context. *The sustainability path appears to me to give you that robust strategy under a range of different scenarios, with the eco-efficiency piece basically helping you and your customers get more competitive and it's also reducing the impact on the environment. In almost any of the scenarios you are likely to have an increased focus on the environment given the challenges we're facing* (Sampson 2003a). Bruce goes on to talk about having to be somewhat skeptical of scenario modeling but that the scenario methods are constructive in pulling together all the different parameters affecting the provision of energy. Having decided on a particular

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<sup>55</sup> Rob Macintosh is a consultant on sustainability strategies in organizations.

direction based on the vision and guided by scenario modeling Bruce uses targets to start turning the vision into a set of performance outcomes. *You just look at what you need to be. And we did that with some work with the World Business Council where we did a gap analysis. We'd work with a group of utilities showing the triple bottom line. What we should be doing and then we mapped that to what we were doing and we actually had a pretty good mapping but where you have gaps you try and fill the gaps and one of them was renewable energy. So we came up with a voluntary target of 10% of new generation would be from renewable. It's close to the "eco logo" definition of renewable but we have our own definition of renewable energy but it was our own* (Sampson 2003a).

The use of scenarios and quantitative targets works well for Bruce and would probably work well for some aspects of Johnny's work but it does not translate well into all the areas of sustainability that planners tackle. While Larry and Patrick's goals have physical manifestations in the design of communities, they are difficult to measure. Daryl's success with achieving consensus across diverse groups of stakeholders is likewise difficult to measure unless you simply count the number of times consensus is reached. The quality of consensus is subjective and feelings of satisfaction differ. Susan's work is even more difficult to measure because it seeks the wide scale empowerment and engagement of youth and their involvement in the ecological workings of urban life. While not completely irrelevant, targets are less meaningful as a way to communicate the specific action plans of the various sustainability visions.

What is required is a message and a strategy through which people from a range of perspectives can identify with the sustainability vision and some of the steps suggested for its implementation. Cheeying for example does not talk about sprawl any more. Her work and indeed the mission of Smart Growth is very much about fighting sprawl, but they refrain from making it the focus of their discussions, positions, policies or projects. Cheeying casts her message in a form that would have wider appeal and seem less confrontational as an ideology. *The issues we talk about are not sprawl in general. It's always affordable housing, preservation of green space, sustainable transportation so it's the linking of all these things together that make it livable. A compact complete community has good access to public transit, affordable housing, green space agricultural land is preserved and always effective citizen engagement... Often we talk about more sustainable communities... Smart Growth seems to be a strategy and a process, whereas sustainability seems more like an end goal. It's hard to define sustainability because people use it so loosely, and that's why we use Smart Growth more than sustainable communities* (Ho 2003a).

Strategic thinking about how to best communicate an idea is not exclusive to content. Each planner has her own style of delivering the message in a way that seeks to engage her audience. After years of presenting, communicating and discussing, planners naturally develop a style of delivery that is unique to their particular strengths and appropriate to the audience and the occasion. As important as sustainability is to the planners I studied, the manner in which they communicate it is rarely one of insisting upon its gravity or moral necessity. What seems more important than the message is the capacity to keep people interested in the message. Both Larry and Sebastian talk about keeping people engaged by keeping them entertained. *Talking to a larger group of people is much more about entertainment than communication because people really zone out so quickly... The second thing that every lesson has is the hook. Get them genuinely curious, you can do that in a lot of different ways, trick them, ask*

*them strange questions. Demonstrate how little they know or what's wrong. Show some myths and explode them. Get them wanting to know what you are about to teach... You know engagement is so critical when talking to a large group whereas with an individual you are kind of engaged anyway, but with a larger group I think there is a huge amount of entertainment value. So if you can be an entertaining speaker one way or another, telling stories, or cracking jokes, or just being incredibly descriptive, then people stay awake and they stay listening to you (Moffatt 2002).*

Larry makes a similar point when he describes having to compete with whatever else might be tugging on people's time and attention when they are at a planning meeting. What else could they be doing with their time and how does the experience of being engaged in a planning process compare. You must compete to keep people interested enough to have them forego other choices during their evening or weekend hours, and to be competitive you have to be dynamic, efficient and entertaining. These are not professional attributes that are readily acknowledged as being essential tools of the trade but they are essential to participatory planning given the current mechanisms of public engagement.

Emphasis on the mode of delivery and the tailored content of a planner's message does not negate the significance of interactive communication and feedback. Interactive iterative processes build a stronger message with broader appeal as they allow for the inclusion of the education, experiences and perspectives of many minds. Building a message collectively is particularly important for those occasions in which a planner has limited opportunities for delivering the message. Both Bruce and Johnny have had to convince their respective Boards of Directors about a sustainability vision through such limited opportunities of delivering a message. Bruce describes how he prepares his message. *Before going to the Board we do a dry run with the management team. Here are some of the thoughts, here's the framework and here's the main message. What do you guys think? So they'll provide feedback and you adjust the presentation to reflect some of their comments and take one piece of it and say I think you're missing this piece or that you might want to emphasize this point so you just refine it that way (Sampson 2003).*

In addition to self-reflection and refinement specific to a message, sustainability planners also learn from specific individuals with whom they work and interact for months or years. Larry describes how he has learned both from prospective partners and from mentors. *In the private sector we will all collectively say that we've learned a lot from Stanley Kwok<sup>56</sup>, who is a developer but who approaches relationships in a philosophically very interesting and non-North American way. In North America we live a world of individualism, which can lead to a lot of confrontation. Stanley comes from a different culture, who by the way has lived here most of his life, so he's bringing the roots with him and merging it with a long experience in North America but brought a different attitude about relationships, and about the notion of being able to understand and having a lot of people that could learn. The same was true with who we all consider as our Godfather, who is Ray Spaxman, who started his life as a highly confrontational Englishman, and who has learned through his life experience and through his own intellectual exploration, a much more zen-like way to deal with things, and much more sensitive way to deal with things and people and all of that (Beasley 2004a).* Johnny also cites Ray Spaxman<sup>57</sup> as one of the strongest influences on

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<sup>56</sup> Stanley Kwok is a resident of Vancouver who is originally from Hong Kong. He is a former executive for Concord Pacific, a major developer in Vancouver's downtown, Director of Husky Energy Inc. and President of Stanley Kwok Consultants.

<sup>57</sup> Former Director of Planning at the City of Vancouver.

his own evolution towards a more participatory planning approach. I was surprised to find planners with markedly different approaches and styles, working in different planning contexts to have found initial inspiration in the same mentor. Bill Rees<sup>58</sup> was also cited by both Sebastian and Johnny as someone who inspired deep questions about ecological sustainability. The work of Bill Rees also happens to be my first exposure to planning beyond issues of urban design and inspired me to pursue a career in planning.

### Alliances and Coalitions

*The point isn't that there is a fundamental way of looking at it. It's that there are different ways, each of them valid and we still have to learn how to build an alliance and work together (Moffatt 2002).*

A core need of any budding group with a vision for affecting change is to join other groups and individuals to gain increased power and broader influence. Sustainability planning in Vancouver benefits from having multiple champions working in multiple arenas and it is logical that they would collaborate on projects and initiatives. There are many examples of partnership such as the CitiesPlus competition, which involved Sebastian, Johnny, Patrick and Cheeving to some degree. The Sustainable Region Initiative brought together Johnny, Cheeving, Bruce and Sebastian. Smart Growth on the Ground is a series of partnerships between Smart Growth BC, Patrick's Sustainable Communities group at UBC and a number of individual municipalities.

The positive side to strategic alliances is obvious. You gain strength in numbers and you can unite to press for an issue from many sides. Bruce talked repeatedly about John Robinson's building. John, who was previously the Director of the Sustainable Development Research Institute at UBC, has for many years been promoting the idea of a pioneering green building that would house the Institute and would function as a laboratory of green design. The building would be a net energy producer and would adapt to always employ and showcase the most efficient building performance technology possible. Through working with John on energy and sustainability issues, Bruce and several other planners became infected with John's enthusiasm about the project and joined him in championing the cause. *On the building that John and I are working on, you have to really want to get something done. We all want to get this building done, so when I'm back in Ottawa I'll be talking about it there. That leads to another meeting out here and this morning I was talking to Larry Bell (BC Hydro CEO) and he's quite keen on it (Sampson 2003a).* Bruce also talked about a member of a Board he is on also became enthusiastic and he is taking the idea to other boards of directors to the point where the idea has many supporters in influential places who are keen on raising sufficient funds to make this project a reality.

The Sustainable Region Initiative was a much more formal strategic partnership that brought together different organizations. It went beyond mere alliances to bring together different perspectives to develop a joint mission that Smart Growth, United Way, the Business Council of British Columbia and the GVRD took on the road as a presentation, which they made to the region's municipalities and business councils. Johnny describes what they did. *Just before the election we were invited down to Langley township to do a presentation and the whole quartet came down, Ron couldn't make it, he sent his deputy but other*

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<sup>58</sup> Bill Rees is a professor at the School of Community of Regional Planning at UBC and developer of Ecological Footprint analysis.



*than that it was myself and Cheeying, and Jock and someone from the United Way, and by this time the presentations had evolved considerably and more positively from what they were back in February. [It was] eight to nine months of interaction. We meet about once a month to keep tabs on where this is going and there's a real growing sense that this is a team working together and wanting to support and gain from the different perspectives (Carline 2003a).*

The negative side of these alliances and coalitions is all about who is included and who is excluded. Opaqueness is damaging in terms of people's trust in what is transpiring but also in terms of further alienating groups who have been traditionally left out of planning processes. It was great to see so many of my research participants working together on various projects and joining forces to affect change. At sustainability roundtables and meetings I would see familiar faces and increasingly they became acquaintances and friends, but it also started to feel like an exclusive club. Knowledge, enthusiasm and expertise in sustainability might well be the membership requirements of the club and that would partially explain its relative insularity. However when sustainability is being discussed as a major issue on the agenda of municipal authorities and international initiatives it is no longer a fragile idea that needs to be guarded and carefully nurtured lest it over reach capacity. How is the full diversity of the residents of Vancouver being represented when sustainability is being discussed and promoted? Where is the voice of the poor and the disenfranchised, the youth and the immigrants who make up 37.5 percent of the population?<sup>59</sup> I know through discussions with sustainability planners that their aim is to ultimately be more representative and more inclusive, but eventual inclusion is neither sufficient nor in line with predominant visions of sustainability.

In talking about power, empowerment and disempowerment, Susan claims that of all the forms of abuse of power she has had to deal with, subtle exclusions are the most difficult. *Things that are more subtle, people talking behind people's backs, forging allegiances and alliances, alienating certain members of the group. I find those way harder (Kurbis 2003b).* While Susan was talking about conflict within her organization and within groups inside the organization, her words wring with a poignancy that resonates up to larger contexts at the scale of the entire region.

### Developing Strategic Capacity

Much like other attributes of leadership, the ability to employ strategic thinking and the capacity to intuitively act strategically varies. Some people seem to have an innate ability to think and act strategically while others struggle. *Thinking strategically is something you can develop but it is also something that some people have and some people don't. Some people just get it and some people will never get it... I think to be an effective executive director and grow an organization to make it relevant in the community you have to be pretty strategic (Ho 2003a).* So if some people start off better equipped for this role, what can others do to improve?

Whether formal or informal, a conversation is the learning vehicle whereby the group adjusts to a new worldview to enable strategic plans to be developed and implemented. The sequence is: shared conversations and shared learning

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<sup>59</sup> 37.5 percent of the residents of Greater Vancouver in the 2001 census were born outside of Canada GVRD (2003).

become the vehicles for changing one's mental maps, and then for developing better strategic plans (Abraham 2003).

Larry advocates using personal experience to expand the boundaries of what is imaginable and ultimately possible in terms of urban design. *I sit on a lot of juries, urban design juries, and awards juries and that is always an incredible learning experience, because you usually bring great brilliant talent together. I don't know why I am there, but you bring other talent together, and you're looking at great stuff and you're then spending several days talking about what's good and what's not so good, and what could be better and it's an incredible learning experience* (Beasley 2004a).

The starting point of any strategic action and a critically important attribute for planners is the ability to sense, analyze and interpret the context within which planning is occurring. Knowing who to partner with, and how, in order to expand the numbers of supporters behind a vision is important but it is not enough to meet the challenges of sustainability. Planners need to have the ability to sense who else is out there residing in the city and not included in the creation of a so called participatory collective vision. Whether they are thriving or merely surviving the totality of voices need to be sought out, enabled to participate and ultimately included in any visioning and implementation.

While strategy and strategic thinking originated in the military and then management sciences, they are now applied to every endeavour in which reaching specified objectives is fraught with obstacles and uncertainty. In military discourse strategy is a way of exercising forethought, deception and comparative advantage to outwit your opponent, and successfully predict their own forethought, deception and maneuvering for comparative advantage. In business the competitive component of strategy has endured and firms use market and resource assessment in their constant race to find advantage and be in a position superior to their competition. In business management environmental scanning is the first step in strategic planning (Kaufman and Jacobs 1987). Kaufman and Jacobs (1987) borrow from Sorkin et al. (1984) to lay out 7 steps of strategic planning: scan the environment; select key issues; set mission statements or broad goals; undertake internal and external analysis; develop goals, objectives, and strategies with respect to each issue; develop an implementation plan to carry out strategic actions; monitor update and scan (Kaufman and Jacobs 1987). The exact order of these seven steps varies with different organizational contexts. It seems ineffective for example to scan the environment before establishing a mission or a goal. In a market context when profit is the motive it makes sense to try to uncover a niche market and a competitive advantage before articulating the goal of filling that niche. In sustainability planning however, the niche, or relative position within society, is implicit in the sustainability vision.

Organizations dedicated to advancing a sustainability agenda will necessarily begin with a goal and set out to analyze the setting in which they would have to work to achieve that goal. The order of the steps becomes less significant when the steps undergo constant iteration and operate as a cycle of perpetual refinement. The setting of goals and priorities has already been established as the primary and fundamental leadership activity of having, creating and cultivating vision. In a sense this research is, in its entirety, concerned with a particular kind of strategy sustainability planners employ in promoting sustainability: Empathic Leadership. Within that larger strategy are many components such as managing

emotions and building community support as I discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. In this chapter I have taken a much more pointed look at strategic action.

“Strategy is the act of mobilizing resources toward goals. It includes setting goals and priorities, identifying issues and constituencies, developing an organization, taking actions, and evaluating results... strategic planning is action oriented, considers a range of possible futures, and focuses on the implications of present decisions and action in relation to that range.” (Stead 2004:38) There is nothing inherently dogmatic, exploitative or exclusionary about this description of strategic planning. The abuse occurs when strategic plans are created in the absence of an active inclusion of diverse perspectives and epistemologies.

Sustainability Planners have to guide the priorities of urban regions in allocating resources and deciding on how cities would grow. Unlike decision makers and politicians they are operating with little power and influence so their need for strategic action is considerable. They are not simply choosing between different courses of action, but have to first empower themselves and their visions with sufficient political influence in order to pursue a particular action.

Strategic management has developed a methodology of self-assessment in the area of strategic advantage analysis in which an organization’s strengths and weaknesses are assessed to determine its core competencies (Stead and Stead 2004: 78). Emphasis on the organization’s own resources has evolved to include four stages of assessment; data gathering, analysis of data using internal and external criteria, determination of core inimitable and superior core competencies, and understanding the composition and relationships of their stakeholders. This process can be imported directly into the area of governmental and non-governmental organizations conducting planning work.

Most public institutions have a natural monopoly or exclusive responsibility for providing a specific service, which may confuse or detract from the institution’s ability to self-assess its core competencies. However, the magnitude of any long-term quest for sustainability requires organizations to look beyond those services that they have traditionally provided. Organizations, whether private, governmental or non-governmental, assess their strengths and weaknesses in relation to a broader mission of sustainability that is articulated by sustainability planners. The NGO’s, Smart Growth BC and EYA are continuously forced to situate themselves relative to others as they compete for funding. BC Hydro has to situate itself regionally and internationally as a generator, provider and trader of power. The GVRD has to compete for influence over regional decision making with its member municipalities. Whatever the arena, strategy is a necessity in mapping out a plan of action and charting a course to achieve a vision in a competitive environment.

As this chapter demonstrates, I have mixed feelings about strategy. It is natural in that it is what people do to successfully make progress across barriers of perception, inertia and deliberate opposition. It is, nevertheless, an approach mired by stigma. It traverses behavioral space that is dangerously close to actions of manipulation, selective disclosure and deception. The nature of the strategy being employed and the ethics surrounding its employment at any given time are contentious. Transparency therefore becomes increasingly critical as a procedural imperative when dealing with public processes or inter organizational alliances. Otherwise power and opportunity can be traded away between parties in back room deals, all for the sake of sustainability, but it would be a corrupt

sustainability that would take us back to the dark ages of comprehensive exclusionary planning.

There are other considerations regarding the ethical merits of a strategy. In the absence of real power, individuals and groups strategize to find other ways to gain or temporarily borrow power. During participatory processes planners often spend considerable time informing and educating participants. The length and intensity of that education is a subjective decision that requires the planner to personally decide when they have crossed the line from informing and educating to manipulating the process to advance their preferred agenda.

As planners gain position and stature in roles of leadership they also gain power and with power comes the opportunity to exclude and to be self-satisfied and comfortable. It may become increasingly difficult to relate to constituencies who are far removed from the life experience of the planner. In making decisions about a strategy of participation, to what degree are planners being pragmatic and practical in designing a process versus perpetuating the status-quo power structures that provide them with stature and comfort? As visions move forward to gain wider and wider appeal there is a danger that the values of the initial vision are being compromised to accommodate an increasingly larger and diverse group. To what degree is the vision compromised and rendered ineffective in tackling deep problems? Or has the vision simply evolved and changed to include a more pluralistic understanding of the world?

These questions are, of course, context specific but they would be difficult to answer for most situations. What is needed is a sense of ethics and a deep capacity for self-reflection and self-evaluation. Honesty about the ethics of specific actions regardless of the nobility of the ultimate goal is essential. In some instances the Sustainability Planners made tradeoffs where public input and participation was compromised to achieve other sustainability objectives. A highly developed and refined awareness of ethical conduct is needed to ensure that planners are fully cognizant of the implications of their actions and take steps towards correcting the imbalance of favouring one component of sustainability over another.

Theoretical engagement of planning practice would benefit from a selective utilization of the work of other disciplines to fill the ethical needs of planners working in the complex public interest of sustainability. The enormity of the psychological burden of acknowledging that the future of the human species might be in jeopardy requires planners to incorporate new areas of knowledge that have previously been outside their realm of professional needs. Theorists have a natural role to play here in the search for relevant knowledge and in the incorporation of that knowledge into the work of planning for a public interest.

In defining the public interest, Bookchin (1992) traces back the evolution of social allegiance to the transition from the parochial preliterate tribal societies which were inherently xenophobic and conservative, to citizenship in forward looking and future building urban settlements (Bookchin 1992:58). While this distinction seems far less defined in today's theory and practice of citizenship, it seems to have been much clearer for the Ancient Greeks. One of the objectives of citizenry was individual character growth and development, education and ultimately a contribution to the life of the city (Bookchin

1992:60). Direct citizen participation occurred in the Greek agora, in which politicians intermingled with artisans, crafts people and women selling farm produce. The agora served as the work place of most of the citizens of the city and exchanges with its daily inhabitants gave politicians access to the issues and needs of their constituents. (Bookchin 1992: 61)

The contemporary equivalent would have civic politicians making the rounds on the Internet, local factories and farms, retail and wholesale outlets as well as the transportation networks themselves. The significant factor here is not the accessibility of politicians, which is in itself an issue for the modern citizen, but the fact that the onus is on politicians and not the citizens to instigate and maintain communication. This sense of responsibility of representation acknowledges the time constraints that the working person faces in becoming engaged in the day-to-day mechanics of democracy. The complexity and variety of the modern economy make it difficult for the politician to be thus engaged. Connecting citizens with their political representatives is a role well suited to the participatory planners.

The ethical dilemma facing the sustainability planner is whether to exercise her influence over her constituents to favour environmental and social concerns or to allow individual citizens the autonomy to identify their own concerns and to decide how best they might go about achieving them. Shouberg likened psychologists' intervention on behalf of the environment to Orwellian dogma and control (Shouberg 2001:458). Similar self-reflection is necessary within the planning profession. Sustainability carries with it many ecological imperatives that deem current consumption to be undermining our ability to inhabit the Earth. Sustainability planners have to rely on literature and assertions made from experts and specialists that often inhabit a culture different to that of planning. How equipped are planners at assessing this literature against literature coming from fields such as economics that counter the threats with optimism in the capacity of the market to substitute for lost resources? The interdisciplinary training and practice of planners equips them to take a stand in this kind of ideological debate, but how self-reflective are planners that this is in fact what they are doing, and how often do they communicate this activity with citizens? In Oskamp's rebuttal he argued that no one discipline possesses the capacity to tackle or solve environmental problems but that many professions must come together to tackle the complexity of global environmental issues (Oskamp 2001). The fundamental ethic that he posits is that at stake is the habitability of the planet and the destruction of all of human life.

In some of the rhetoric promoting sustainability there is a tendency for nostalgia and for returning to more innocent and pristine times. This is neither useful nor accurate. We tend to romanticize past eras as ones in which we were free from whatever problem we believe to be oppressing us at the moment. Historical analysis however, invariably reveals that there were no such times of purity (Foucault 1984). Yet sustainability's most basic message is that current practices are unhealthy and unfair and cannot last long because they are damaging.

At a fundamental level sustainability is similar to planning in that it concerns itself with the malaise of the status quo and is striving for a healthier existence. What complicates sustainability is that it touches on every aspect of human life. It was made urgent by the growing incidence of ecological destruction around the world. The sense of urgency is not the ethical call to sanctifying nature that accompanied the environmental movement, but

rather an economic rationale for preventing the decimation of non renewable resources upon which whole economies are dependent.

Embedded in the “sustainability ethic” is continued, and increasing, concern about the basic problems initially put forward by Meadows et al. in *The Limits to Growth* (1972). Corson (1996), Marion (1996) and Brown (1999) have shown that little progress has been made in curbing the consumptive and destructive patterns of human habitation on the planet. These assertions ought to be cause for considerable concern to planners. If a generation of scientists has been publishing on the inevitable collapse of ecosystems and current research suggests that the only change we have achieved is that we are heading towards that inevitable outcome at a faster rate than before, then a universal public interest is born.

The aversion of catastrophe is a public interest. An impending ecological disaster is a public interest. The certainty of disaster cannot be assured, but planners would be denying both the role of communicative actor, and that of comprehensive rationalist, if they waited until ecological or social collapse became a certainty before they made it integral to their work. Disaster preparedness cannot be disputed as a public interest. Distributions of wealth alter the measure of risk to which particular segments of the population are exposed, and the receipt of preparedness services might vary, but planners cannot simply ignore the risk because many scientists assert that an earthquake, for example, is extremely unlikely in the next hundred years. Planners cannot ignore the possibility of a global disaster. Planners not only have an obligation to facilitate a dialogue that informs the public of future risks, but also have the added responsibility of planning for the possibility of such an outcome. Even without disaster, our consumer societies have a moral responsibility to not harm others in their pursuit of their consumptive lifestyles. As Maser et al. simply yet powerfully claim, we must acknowledge that “we are not the centre of the world, that we cannot with impunity lay waste to other countries and the future for the sake of our insatiable material appetites.” (Maser et al. 1998:150).

The ethic of democratic and inclusive decision-making must also be added to the ethic of global citizenship and responsibility. Most of the ethical quandaries I came across in the work of the Sustainability Planners, which cannot be addressed by close adherence to professional codes of ethics, have to do with degrees of inclusion, participation and transparency. This issue is critically intertwined with sustainability for parallel reasons, as Baum illustrates.

For those who consider community and democracy ends in themselves, participation in planning is intrinsically ethical. Furthermore, community and democracy in the planning process increase the likelihood that all or most participants will affect outcomes in ways that serve their interests. Broadening participation increases the power of groups that have had little. Thus participation can be considered instrumentally ethical as well. (Baum 1998:20).

Forester, Flyvbjerg and Howe have each given planners insights into ethical dilemmas and have guided them by setting parameters of conduct through their analyses of various cases. They have provided markers in the landscape of ethical conduct to help alert practitioners

and theorists alike to the potential pitfalls of certain types of action. Most importantly, Forester, Flyvbjerg and Howe have helped create an ethic of desirable and purposeful planning action (Forester 1989, 1998, Flyvbjerg 1998, Howe 1994). Theorists can then draw on the logical and philosophical substance of this discourse to inform their own analyses of their own cases. Practitioners, however, may not be able to readily apply these parameters to their own situations. Without more concrete principles and clear demarcations of how to decide, planners may be lost in the specifics of their own cases. Thacher sets out to address this need by using the example of ethical case analysis in medicine and law (Thacher 2004). Without a higher authority in planning to adjudicate and determine ethical conduct, the burden is on theorists to develop a body of cases in which planning conduct is dissected and analyzed for its ethical implications.

Planners need to move iteratively from deliberation to strategic action, not just to advance their broad vision but to specifically address those aspects of the vision that are being compromised for the sake of implementation and strategic alliance. Reflection, critical self analysis and honesty will reveal what interests will be served in what way. Ethical deliberation becomes especially important in the context of strategic action aimed at advancing a sustainability vision through power relationships. An awareness of the centres of power, and a strategy aimed at tapping into that power, must be tempered with an understanding that strategy itself is power.

The most powerful people in the world today are strategic managers in business organizations. These are the people who guide the world's economic machine, deciding what to produce and how to produce it, how to distribute it, where to distribute it and so forth for all the world's economic products and services" (Stead and Stead 2004:12).

Understanding different strategic approaches to gaining support and affecting change is an essential tool for the sustainability planner. From the simple exercise of making people feel heard to the wholesale embracing of an idea by a large public constituency, understanding the terrain within which action has to take place is fundamental to knowing how to proceed. Knowledge of where the power lies and what the opportunities and challenges are is essential for the implementation of any plan. The degree and manner in which such contextual conditions are manipulated is very much an ethical issue.

There is a danger that empathic relatedness can be manipulated for opaque agendas. Relating to people and understanding their priorities and how they see the world is not necessarily an exercise of compassion, nor is it one of benevolence. Espionage is an extreme example of seeking to understand the motives of others in order to undermine their position and defeat them. If the stakes are high enough, planning too could become an arena for extreme manipulation in order to win the rights to diminishing resources or contested spaces. Ethics, ethical reflection and ethical conduct are the self-induced restraints that keep sustainability planning from being the newest dogma that imposes its will on citizens of our cities. Given the paucity of emphasis on ethical self-reflection in planning curricula and the complete absence of a governing body that enforces ethical planning conduct, Sustainability Planners face increasing personal pressure to uphold sustainability's own internal values of inclusion, equity and participation.

### 7 – ACTION

*Dialogue is action. Conversing, communicating, connecting, and creating a bond of common understanding is action. Action is about bringing people together so that they can move forward as a more empowered self-directed entity. Action is about taking all the aspects of Empathic Leadership and attempting to instill them in a group rather than an individual.*

*As I look back with the benefit of research informed hindsight, I see that we instigated two separate but related arenas of communicative planning at the University. We hosted the Canadian Association of Planning Students 2000 “Planning a Sustainable Millennium” conference, and we began a movement to oppose what we considered to be mediocre campus development. The first effort, the conference, was a partial success and the second effort, opposition to development, was a partial failure.*

*The conference was an ambitious undertaking with many overlapping objectives, many of which we achieved. To us Vancouver seemed bejeweled with exemplary sustainable planning practice and we wanted to create a collaborative interactive experience that both celebrates and nurtures this practice. We had an ambitious agenda: we wanted to provide a means of drawing attention to all the little projects from which we drew our inspiration as students; we wanted to proclaim the significance and appeal of sustainability planning in its various manifestations; we wanted to make a statement about power, privilege and equity that countered mainstream sustainability with a focus on the underprivileged; and we wanted to demonstrate to the University administration that the planning program is exemplary and that the planning profession is profoundly valuable.*

*The conference itself was a great success and surpassed our expectations in almost every way. Participants went on field trips all around the region to visit exemplary projects and heard directly from practitioners both during the field trips and during on-site conference workshops about their work in many areas of sustainability. Individual youth from the Downtown Eastside attended and participated in the conference. Beginning with a theme of Ways of Knowing on the first day, we moved to Physical Knowledge, and Social Knowledge on days two and three respectively. Chief Jill Harris was our first plenary speaker, we conducted trips to two local First Nations communities and we hosted a traditional “sweat” on campus. We strove to represent the cultural, socio-economic and ideological diversity of Vancouver and, though we may not have captured it all, we managed to include a broader audience than is typical in “sustainability” events in Vancouver. Others around campus spoke highly of the conference and we succeeded in catching the eye of senior administrators who were impressed with the professionalism of our student event.*

*While we felt like we succeeded in the events of the conference itself, we failed in continuing any kind of lasting interaction. We left no legacy of relationships. We did not build any networks of mutually supportive activities that would carry forward our inclusive, interdisciplinary and equity-minded ethic of collaborative building towards greater societal sustainability. It’s not that this long-term goal was completely absent from our planning for the conference, but it became less of a priority as the logistics of hosting a couple of hundred participants and running dozens of events loomed large. We were just preoccupied with the basics and once the conference was over we became preoccupied with creating a document that would somehow reflect the event itself. The proceedings themselves became a gargantuan task of coordination, writing, editing, graphic design and production. It was a certainly an exercise in human interaction but only so far as the proceedings team went. Lost were*



*all thoughts of continuing and building on the relationships we had striven so carefully to cultivate leading up to the conference. That is why the conference seems like only a partial success.*

*One event stands prominently in my memory and is perhaps symptomatic of our deeper affliction of disconnection from the ideal of long-term relationship building. Months before the conference began, I began making inquiries about the possibility of hosting a traditional First Nations sweat as part of the Ways of Knowing day. The task proved to be a greater challenge than I had anticipated for obvious reasons. The sweat is a highly spiritual ceremony and the last thing any prospective leader of the event wanted was to herd a gang of disrespectful attendees who might disrespectfully miss the significance and reverence of the occasion. After several unsuccessful attempts, I finally met John O'Leary who was willing to pursue the matter further. John is an elder who counseled male students at the University's First Nations House of Learning and guided them through the challenges of life. He also conducted a number of workshops in traditional First Nations practices. John invited me to attend moccasin-making classes as a way to get to know him. It was also a way for him to gauge my commitment and integrity. My having attended sweat ceremonies in the past was not at all the issue. My "credentials" were not the issue. I had to take the time to build a relationship with this human being and that would be the basis for our continued collaboration.*

*The moccasin project went well and John complemented me on my facility with leather. I grew to appreciate his wisdom and to draw inspiration from his humility and patience. As the conference drew nearer, and my stress level multiplied, I could not wait to get to those Friday afternoon sessions. After debriefing with a group of First Nations Students about our personal trials for the week I would join John, his wife and a number of students to work on our moccasins. The routine was meditative and grounding in a way that seemed to bring to the fore the preciousness of human interaction. It did not take long for John to agree to lead the conference sweat. It was just a matter of working out the logistics and finding a female counterpart to lead the women's sweat. I left the matter in his capable hands and was not disappointed. We also agreed to have an orientation session immediately before the sweat in order to communicate the intent and significance of the ritual. The event was popular and had a profound effect on those who attended. The initiation ritual that was months in the making amplified my own experience, and I felt a deep gratitude towards John and his wife.*

*I had been planning to go to Egypt after the conference and asked John if there was anything specific he would like me to bring back as a token of my appreciation. I wanted to give him something in addition to the impersonal honorarium. He declined but his wife, whose name I cannot recall, asked for a wooden spoon. I found no tradition of wooden spoons in the old town in Cairo but plenty of copper and brass varieties. I picked one out and bought John a pair of traditional leather slippers with hieroglyphic imprints that I thought he would appreciate. I liked the idea of sharing with John a moccasin tradition from my own culture.*

*Upon my return I couldn't wait to go see John and I went to the First Nations Longhouse the first Friday I was back. I passed by his wife on my way in and gave her the spoon. I opened the door and was about to walk in when I sensed a great tension inside. I have no idea what was being discussed but I retreated out of respect for the circle of sharing that was clearly well under way before I got there. I hovered around outside for a while but felt awkward and out of place. John's wife signaled that I should go in, but I couldn't. I am ashamed to say that it wasn't the prospect of interrupting them that kept me from entering: it was knowing that I was in too much of a hurry to be able to stay long enough to deal with the heavy topic being discussed. I would return another day. My feeling of being in a hurry was with me for weeks so I decided to wait until I had more time to have a proper*

*visit with John. Five years later I still have those slippers. This failure of communicative interaction feels like a miserable surrender to selfish pursuits. My work, my studies, my family and friends, were a revolving door of excuses that kept me from making the time to speak to a man who had helped me when no one else would. I neglected to act in the way that I knew and felt I should. As I think back, this was a significant shortcoming in the relational realm of Empathic Leadership.*

*Student organizing can be both incredibly powerful and totally ineffective. On one end of the spectrum Berkeley's antiwar student protests come to mind. They played an important role in US national politics and the campaign against the Vietnam War. On the other end of the spectrum I recall learning on my campus visit to Singapore that the Government has to approve the appointment of the President of the student association. The position is too powerful; I was told, to risk having an activist student government. Aside from this wider political context, which obviously greatly affects students' ability to have a voice is the challenge of organizing students. Cultivating interest beyond a passing curiosity is a real challenge.*

*When it came to organizing the communities in and around campus to rally against the monolithic imposition of campus development, we failed. Several opportunities presented themselves early in the creation of a Comprehensive Campus Plan in which we could have forged partnerships with other groups but we never acted decisively. We spoke repeatedly of the need to join forces with others but we never really wanted a collaboratively derived vision. We thought our vision too pure to be corrupted by other members of the campus community whose motives seemed selfish and solely rooted in NIMBYist concerns. Our "action", however, seems like only a partial failure because our efforts did result in some attempt on the part of senior administration to bring together different perspectives on campus development. Although we didn't do it ourselves we created a need for multiple perspectives because our own was too radical for the University to entertain. So they chose to bring in other voices to dilute our own and that was the beginning of a culture of multi-stakeholder interaction that continues to some degree even today.*

*This chapter presents those actions, initiatives and processes that bring people together in an attempt to implement some form of sustainability. Everything discussed so far is a component of implementation and it is impossible to differentiate between preparation and implementation, between evolutions of process and relationships, and the physical and policy manifestations of those collaborative processes. The distinction is artificial but it serves to inform us of the challenges, and opportunities, of bringing people together for the specific purpose of embarking on the implementation of sustainability.*

*If you're going to be North America's leading sustainable energy company you don't do that by sitting in your office (Sampson 2003a). So what is it that you do? For Bruce, interaction comes in the form of networking with passion at all levels within his organization and at senior policy levels outside it. The organizational action comes in the form of an increasingly ambitious series of targets that British Columbians would meet. As this research demonstrates, an important area requiring action is working on improving personal, organizational and societal abilities in each of the four parts of Vision, Emotion, Community and Strategy. When it comes to vision, Bruce describes a desire to constantly improve. You can always improve [your ability] and there are always ways to improve it. I don't think you ever feel like you know enough. There's never enough time to try and keep learning so part of me wants to go back and take a Masters at Royal Rhodes University just to keep upgrading. But there's not enough time and you're on too many Boards and the job itself takes up so much time. So*

*that is a tension. You are always trying to keep up with the latest developments and to focus on your thinking. [Internal to BC Hydro] there's a whole leadership program and we try to have managers take time and go to courses and get up to speed (Sampson 2003).*

Time seems to be a universal limiting factor. From my interviews I learned that planners would be more inclusive, more communicative, better listeners, more attentive, more participatory and generally better at Empathic Leadership if time allowed. Given more time, planners would be more able to live up to the ideals they uphold. It would make sense then to include in every planning schedule sufficient time for the communicative actions which theorists and practitioners agree to be important. Allocating time for visioning might well be standard practice but creating visions in a participatory way and enriching the visions with emotional resolution, community building and strategic deliberation need to be considered essential for planning processes. This research suggests that those interactive actions are essential for upholding and practicing both the communicative planning and sustainability ideals. Learning from processes in which planners engage the public in their visions allows us to better appreciate how planners approach participation within the reality of limited time. The participatory work that some Sustainability Planners have undertaken in the Greater Vancouver region has been recognized internationally and has been lauded as pioneering in the global sustainability movement. The following sections illustrate some of this work and explore the challenges of ever growing community involvement.

### **From Vision to Action**

*We are getting results so that validates the vision. You can't hold the vision for very long, nor should you, in my opinion, hold a vision, if you can't show results. If you can't show results then either something is wrong with the vision, or you are going about it the wrong way. But you have to stop at some point and say which of those is happening (Fields 2003a).* Action is obviously necessary to move forward in implementing a vision but it is also necessary for the sustainability of the vision itself. Without action that reflects and exemplifies the vision, sustainability becomes stale and increasingly difficult to support. Daryl almost stumbled upon a process that ended up being exemplary in many ways both for her own work and for all of BC Hydro. Bruce spoke glowingly about Daryl's work. *It really is an excellent model for stakeholder engagement and resolving conflict and tradeoffs. Daryl Fields, the whole Water Use Planning team, has done a great job. That is really sustainability in action (Sampson 2003).*

A key factor in Daryl's success was her unencumbered creativity. She thought that her relative ignorance, naïveté and idealism helped her experiment in ways that she might not have. *I think there were... two things... One is, I was blissfully ignorant of some of the cultural dynamics of the corporation. I'd been in Hydro three or four years. I didn't necessarily have the understanding of how engineers approached things and specifically how the operations people approached things. So there was an element of blissful ignorance on understanding the organizational cultural context for Water Use Planning. There was also, I don't know if it was blissful ignorance, but I always approached the very first water use plan, the Alouette Water Use Plan as an experiment. I always kind of thought of it in those terms. This is an experiment and I don't know to what degree we sold it as an experiment, but it was always clear in my mind that it was. We were breaking new ground and [knew] it may not work (Fields 2003b).* Without the

pressure of having to succeed Daryl was able to be more daring in contravening conventional practices.

The circumstances surrounding experimentation at the time were also fortuitously ideal. There seemed to be no alternatives for achieving any kind of agreement around shared resources. *With respect to water use planning, with respect to managing fish-power conflicts, or power-water conflicts, there weren't a whole lot of alternative approaches being suggested at that point in time* (Fields 2003b). The experiment turned out to have exceeded expectations both within BC Hydro, and amongst the various stakeholders who participated in deciding on water flows through the dam to achieve a combination of energy yields, flood protection and sufficient flows for a healthy fish habitat. According to McDaniels and Gregory, who reflected on this process as decision-aiding consultants, “[i]ncluding learning as an explicit objective of risk management policies enables participating stakeholders, institutions, and decision makers to recast difficult policy choices in a way that increases the opportunities for successful deliberation.” (McDaniels and Gregory 2004).

Daryl and her consultants learned as they went along. I will return to Daryl's process later on in this chapter. Here I would like to contrast it to Larry's view of the process of making Vancouver. It is in stark contrast, in terms of scale and objective, to the multi-stakeholder process that Daryl undertook. His is a deliberate and explicit attempt to go about creating a specific kind of city. He speaks with pride and authority about implementing his vision of the City of Vancouver as an intentionally designed city. *We probably have brought urban design more aggressively into the public objectives and public management of development than any city, in Canada, and maybe even throughout North America. Although there are probably a couple of exceptions where cities have had the same idea as us and have brought urban design into the equation. [Some] realized that their whole thing is tourism, so urban design became very big to them. Santa Barbara, in California, or Charleston in South Carolina knew that the future of their inner city rested on heritage preservation and urban design so they really went to town on that. We can even match that in terms of how much urban design has become a part of our management equation. How we've adjusted our very expertise here at city hall to do that. How we've engaged the design community to do that and to emphasize that, and how we continue to work with alternatives to the kind of standard approach to city building* (Beasley 2004b).

*We have transportation plans for example that are absolutely contrary to most other cities. We're saying no increased capacity to the inner city. We're saying congestion is our friend. We want congestion. It will motivate people to get out of their cars and get out of the suburbs. Come live in the inner city. And then when you get to the inner city, we have motivated through a collaborative process with the people, the citizens and the development community, and marketing community, to generate lifestyle choices that are very wide compared to most cities... That's all been through public policy and it hasn't happened by accident, and it hasn't happened because the developers decided that they would like to do that. It's happened through public policy and a very strong collaboration with developers to motivate them* (Beasley 2004b).

As seductive as this image of the city is, and as collaborative as it appears to be across different sectors and professions, it is not driven by sustainability in all its spheres. The power of this action is that it has helped make Vancouver become a vibrant and inhabited downtown and a favourite international destination for travelers and immigrants. It is action that has realized a strong vision and the effect is indeed more sustainable than the

conventional alternative of urban sprawl. A shortcoming of this implemented vision is the degree to which it is imposed as opposed to collectively derived. The intent, as is evident below, is that this was to be a participatory process of imagining and creating the city. Yet ownership over the vision seems to reside solely with the city.

*We planned this city in a huge conversation, in a sustained widespread richly diverse kind of conversation with thousands of our citizens. When we did the new plan for the downtown, where we established housing as the priority, we must have talked to ten thousand people. When we did the new plan for the rest of the neighbourhoods, which was called CityPlan, we know that we talked to over a hundred thousand of our citizens and that's how we do it. We don't go out and say the plan is this. We go out and say what do you want your world to be? What do you want your city to be and then our citizens help work with us, and collaboratively we invent that image (Beasley 2004b).*

Collective visioning was clearly the intention but there is considerable disagreement amongst planners and community residents about the effectiveness of the process. Particularly in neighbourhoods that saw substantial change in urban form, the attitude amongst some residents is that the City had a vision which they set out to promote in various parts of the city. When residents disagreed, they proceeded to impose the vision.<sup>60</sup> What is most telling is that it is not clear how citizen input was incorporated exactly. How was balance of perspectives attained? How were ideas sifted and how were some chosen and others neglected? The process was so ambitious and its perceived outcomes so varied that it is worthy of its own dedicated study. Suffice it to say that if it is not clear how the thousands of ideas and opinions elicited through CityPlan translated into policy then there is either a problem of transparency or one of communication.

It is never easy to break with convention and take risks. Sustainability directives are so numerous and varied that attempts to implement them en masse are invariably faced with opposition. In my own advocacy work I have faced consistent opposition based on the argument that the ideas I was proposing were too risky. In the face of uncertainty and a seemingly endless series of unproven practices, the natural reaction is to resist. A common approach aimed at mitigating risk is to do things incrementally by starting with pilot projects and showcasing small pieces. Coupled with adaptive learning the project would serve to inform subsequent action. This is precisely the purpose behind a project intended to be an exemplary sustainable community, known as Southeast False Creek.

Larry speaks with pride and confidence about this community. *We're putting together the first, I think the first model in the world, for an urban neighbourhood, high density neighbourhood, that will be pressing all the buttons on sustainability: managing water, managing waste, managing energy, managing urban agriculture, managing environmental education (Beasley 2004b).* Larry's focus continues to be on environmental sustainability. When I pressed him on his definition of sustainability to determine the degree to which socioeconomic issues are included, he gave the following response. *My take is that we are nowhere near, in terms of cities, the level of compatibility with the natural environment that we have to be. So the models from the past don't help us. We have to reinvent everything about our infrastructure of cities. We're starting. So the first thing we did is we did what we called a precedent study. We looked everywhere in the world and we said, on managing waste who's doing the best in the world and what are they doing and what's*

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<sup>60</sup> The Dunbar Residents Association is an example of a group of residents who specifically resisted the city's vision and lobbied to gain support and strength by partnering with other neighbourhoods (see <http://www.dunbar-vancouver.org/dra-aboutus.htm>).

*their standard? And then we say what's our standard and then on managing energy, who's doing the best in the world on managing energy? What we found is that there would be one place doing kind of interesting things on managing waste through recycling and all that, but they weren't doing anything else. We found some other place where they're doing some really interesting things on managing water. They weren't doing anything else. So we brought all that together and then we said well how could we move from where we are here to at least where they are and then having some scientists and others tell us "this is where you really need to be" (Beasley 2004b).*

This casts a very positive light on the developments at South East False Creek. It is part optimism and part boosterism. The performance of the built neighbourhood will be the ultimate arbiter of the degree to which such claims of exemplary and pioneering integration of best practices are justified. In the meantime there are many criticisms from a design and sustainability perspective that cast doubt on the sustainability of the project. Youth at EYA for example have the impression that the city sold out to corporate and development interests by continuing to push for the high-rise model. Patrick Condon published a pragmatic critique of the current plans as being too energy consumptive and ineffective as a pilot project for other contexts because it relies too heavily on high rises as the primary form of densification (Condon 2004).

When you describe a neighbourhood as being sustainable you expose it to failure. It is extremely difficult to live up to all the demands of sustainability. A typical bias that continues to permeate most discussion on sustainability by all the planners I researched is an emphasis on environmental issues. While economic sustainability is usually discussed in broad terms particularly when politicians or business representatives are present, social sustainability is only discussed in policy reports and definitional statements. It is not that sustainability planners miss the issues altogether but the integration of issues is lacking. The City of Vancouver has an award winning Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams program that uses creative participatory problem solving to address community needs. This collaborative and participatory approach to decision making serves to empower residents and introduces a measure of social equity in the planning process. However, because it is not integrated into larger visions of the City and sustainability, participatory neighbourhood planning continues to be isolated from larger projects and interdisciplinary urban resource management.

It is easier to achieve visions and goals within an organization than without. The City of Vancouver, for example, has launched a campaign to transform its internal operations to be more sustainable, including greater energy and resource efficiency and greater use of electric cars. Likewise at the GVRD, internal sustainability projects have been much easier to achieve. By encouraging a spirit of collaborative innovation and organizational unity in supporting model projects the GVRD started to realize some of its sustainability vision within the scope of its traditional mandate of sanitary service provision. *[My staff were doing things ranging] from eco-smart concrete to vegetated roofs to salvaging the vegetation in the area they cleared, involving local social capital people, and having people coming in to salvage the vegetation... They dug up the vegetation and replanted it wherever they wanted to in their own organizations and constituencies. I was just absolutely taken with all this kind of approach and completely motivated in seeing and feeling what they were doing, and getting done, together (Carline 2003a).*

Demonstration projects are powerful tools in fueling people's imaginations with actual examples of visions in action. They ground esoteric theories and lofty goals in the reality of day-to-day experience and immediately broaden the appeal of a vision and its capacity to draw people into its fold. Participating in design charrettes has a similar effect on people wanting to grasp abstract theories. The results are a few steps short of actual change but the product is a discernible physical form with spatial and land use relationships that people can relate to. Charrettes also enable collective decision making in ways that are directed at creating recognizable change in the physical functioning of neighbourhoods and communities. *We do charrettes because we are operating in conformance of the principle that people collectively have the capacity to come up with good solutions to complex problems. [This works] through their collective engagement intuitively with the problem in real time... [using] the aggregate value of their collective experience on a particular issue. So you bring in people who know about a place, who have a variety of skills and a variety of orientations and they are the ones at the table (Condon 2004a).*

*We have enough people who know enough stuff about the site, based on their own understanding of the site, to operate collectively, and intuitively come up with a solution. And that's a very radical statement because it opposes this idea that we make major decisions in culture by very carefully and scientifically analyzing all the pieces to a problem. So if we have a pollution issue like we did at Britannia<sup>61</sup> we've got reams and reams, and millions of dollars worth of studies on pollution, millions of dollars worth of studies on transportation, millions of dollars worth of studies on tourism or whatever it is. Those are analyzed sequentially and somebody at some point makes sense of it and comes up with a plan, step-wise, and it takes a tremendous amount of money and a tremendous amount of time and the results are always awful in my view. [Charrettes] are a radical departure from that model... If you just get people in a room, for a week and tell them to finish the whole bloody design by Friday, you're not going to get everything, and it's not going to be perfect but... God damn-it, it's going to be pretty good, and they do it. That is 100 times more efficient than the other model and always produces better results than the other model, and it is precisely because it eschews the need for perfection that you get something that's better (Condon 2004a).*

Daryl's experience with multi-stakeholder decision making can also be characterized as giving decision makers the freedom and flexibility to explore ideas without judgment. In launching the first water-use plan Daryl describes the general attitude of her team. *We weren't really prescriptive. We let things happen and so that loosened up some of the tension, and then I think two other things happened: one, I really felt it was the right thing to do. I guess my personal values around it as a public resource [were important]. It is water. It is fundamental. It is public. Even though somebody has a license to it, I think of that as more of a privilege than a right. There is a responsibility to manage a public resource in a public way. So that's part of the core values that drove me on this. Secondly, I truly do believe in diversity. It's one of my core values and I think, you know if you allow it, diversity stimulates innovation, and we needed some innovation to deal with the problems. Also from an ethical perspective, procedural justice, if you're talking about a public resource, the public and a variety of interested parties have ideas, have value to bring to the table, and have both a right and a responsibility to bring to the table (Fields 2003b).* These are powerful ethical statements that combine ideas of sustainable resource use with the process of achieving that sustainable resource use. Participation is more than a utilitarian

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<sup>61</sup> This is a charrette I observed and partially participated in. It is an old mining community that is no longer mining and is seeking to revitalize its centre with a tourist and scientific research destination.

imperative of making sure that sustainability visions get implemented. It is an ethic unto itself.

EYA takes the participation ethic further to target specific groups who are normally left out. The organization operates on the fringes of society and its method of increasing participation and involvement is to deliberately choose individuals from marginalized groups and to give them the opportunity to integrate into the mainstream economy. Susan describes the team of young women who built the Strathcona Community Eco-Pavilion.

*[There were] aboriginal women. There were a lot of lesbian women in that program, none of them had a background [in construction]. A lot of them didn't have high school... There were 10 of them. There were two girls on there who were previous sex trade workers. So we specifically targeted this group of women to hire and they were all women too, to work on this kind of project. So that fulfills a social component. They were working on an environmental project... I kind of throw economic into social. It is really the poverty part of it that we try to do. So in the garden we do the same thing. We work with inner city schools and that kind of thing where this is really low income and try and bring some sort of environmental component to whatever is going on. School gardens, we've done a lot of that. With Grandview Elementary we helped them build their school garden. Right now we're working at Queen Alexandra Elementary just on Broadway and Clarke [streets]. It's a really nasty corner. It's a super poor school and we're helping them get something going. We're doing park development all focused on the inner city (Kurbis 2003a).*

The Sustainability Planners here demonstrate courage, tenacity, risk taking, commitment and optimism. Once they embark on a project they pursue it with resolve and conviction. This is not the balanced, cautious progression of academics committed to weighing the relative merits of proposals through different perspectives. This is a systematic aversion to pessimism and a fundamental belief that sustainability visions, as they continue to craft them, are profoundly important. The Sustainability Planners are stubbornly optimistic in their area of work. They may have little patience for sustainability efforts in other arenas but they are absolutely committed to their own visions. Empathic Leadership is still very much at play here. It shifts from being a general receptivity and awareness of external messages, to having a strong sense of one's own message and an awareness of the relative position of those others who are the potential recipients of that message.

### Communicating Sustainability Issues

We saw glimpses throughout the last four chapters of planners actively engaged in educating others about sustainability issues. Beginning with self awareness and expanding out to affect others within organizations and further still to create a culture of change, communicating sustainability is the single most prevalent activity performed by all the planners I worked with. The manner of education varies depending on the task and the context, from broad campaigns targeting all voters to one-on-one conversations. This section illustrates some of the ways in which planners engage in communication as they elicit public participation. *[During] last year's voter education campaign, we ran the Provincial Campaign Network, the tabloid type thing to get people up to speed on what Smart Growth related issues are municipal responsibilities. [We said] these are the 6 areas of land use that municipal elected officials are responsible for. Here is some background. Here are some questions to ask your candidates before you vote for them. It was a non-partisan thing. We printed seventy thousand of them and distributed them in communities around the province. We targeted communities where we have done some work in workshops, and community groups that we've partnered with on educational*



*stuff... We talked about sprawl, why is sprawl an issue, affordable housing, preservation of agricultural land and green space, sustainable transportation, water, civic involvement and civic engagement in land development processes (Ho 2003a).*

Communicating ideas is clearly essential to gain support for new visions, but communicating stories of success or of inspiring projects has the power to appeal to emotive, experiential and intellectual reason. Daryl uses examples of successes both internal and external to her organization to communicate the feasibility of the sustainability vision. *It wasn't a leap into 'this is sustainability and it's the right thing to do.' So if you think of where they might have traditionally gone in their thinking and where water use plans was, we didn't ask them to make that full leap based on it's the right thing to do. We basically closed the gap in terms of showing some prototypes that were successful [She showed a space between her hands indicating status quo versus sustainability. The action of building on successes made the space smaller and the final leap towards sustainability was smaller and less risky as a result] (Fields 2003a).*

Moving across different entities to communicate a vision to the point of affecting a decision can be complicated and laborious. Patrick describes his work in aiding and facilitating movement along the political process. *You have to elicit community interest and then you have to present to the council and the council has to authorize staff to explore it. Staff explores it and they report back to council and council has to vote to do it. Then you have to negotiate with staff again about the specifics of the memorandum of understanding, which is, in effect, a contract that takes a month or two. Then at that stage you're in a position to begin planning the public education and outreach part of it. The first kick of that tonight is a big open house basically where we'll talk about the charrette and the principle for sustainable communities. How it has worked so far? Why we're in Maple Ridge, will it cost the taxpayer any money, and all those kinds of questions. When will it be, who will be involved, what will come out of it? How do we know it's going to work...? (Condon 2004b).*

Cheeying, Daryl and Patrick's examples of communicative action are illustrative of the importance of Empathic Leadership in affecting action. Planners do not impose their visions, for they cannot. They engage in processes of relating to people by finding a language and a currency that appeals to them and then enter into an exchange suitable to the system within which they are working. It is only after gaining people's trust and winning their confidence in the vision that they are able to begin partnerships of implementation.

### **Participatory Visioning and Decision-Making**

As predefined as planners' sustainability visions seem to be, based on the discussion in Chapter 3, by the time they begin to seriously engage the public there continues to be room for a collective refinement and development of those visions. The charrette process holds a promise of collective visioning that begins with the very conception of a project. Cheeying describes her aspirations for a relatively new partnership with Patrick's charrette facilitation team. *Our first project is Maple Ridge and the redevelopment of the downtown including Haney Place Mall, West Coast Express Station. We will be basing it on the charrette principle for the design and implementation plan. UBC's role will be doing the public part. We won't be leading the charrette but we will be getting the public involved and the public education and insuring it was*

*community involvement and ongoing community legacy that will keep pushing Smart Growth stuff (Ho 2003a).*

In addition to being a prized ideal for democratizing society and redressing social injustice, participatory decision-making improves the process of implementation. Through broader input, decisions are improved and the likelihood of implementation is increased. *There are gems [of participation]. You just have to look at it. We've had four or five plans where, we've actually increased power generation as well as improved environmental and social values. [We did it] just by looking at it more creatively and asking good questions. That was one of the most inspiring things about it. The other is how neat it is to see people making collective decisions, or what I'll call "connected decisions", which is the concept of bringing all sorts of different things together. I think it can be done. I think it's hard work. I think there are a lot of things that have to be put in place to make it work. But yeah that's the other inspiring thing. The not so inspiring things that I learned [are] that we really still fall so short of appreciating that we can, and we need to, make collective decisions (Fields 2003b).*

Questions about who gets to participate and the effectiveness of their representations do not trouble any of the planners who convene public processes. For them openness to participation is the best form of inclusion. *They were self-identifying. There were a couple of plans where it wasn't exactly self-identifying. In Checkamus, for example, we had a whole bunch of people come and a whole bunch of environmental groups and so we just said how about you guys amongst yourselves figure out [a representative]. Pick two people to represent you as a group. That was fine. There were no problems there and there was still a lot of environmental representation. At Coquitlam we had forty people who were interested in being on the consultative committee, and this is where I talk about experimenting. I sat down with the person who was overseeing the public affairs for [the project] and said, "We can't do it with forty. We've got to reduce it down. It's not going to work with forty." She argued that we should try it. So we kept with it. It got reduced down to a smaller really core group. But it was still a big group of thirty people and we tried it with that. In most of the other ones they were essentially self-identifying. I can't recall anywhere where we said; no you can't be on the committee. I can recall places where we had to beat the bushes, because we perceived a certain interest that wasn't represented at the table... So it was self-selecting, self-identifying (Fields 2003b).*

Daryl trusted that representation was being conducted in an effective and conscientious manner. *We just said you come. If you say you're representing your group we'll assume your representing your group and you're doing whatever you need to do. In Alouette, we did do a little bit of [checking] because we had some pushback that the riparian owners weren't comfortable that the flood interest was being well represented. So we, in fact, had an additional open house specifically for that interest group to explain what we're doing. But with the other ones, no we didn't do that check-back. I was involved in a long-range energy plan for BC Hydro back in 1995 where we were very deliberate about that. We set up shared [computer] drives, and we would set up conference calls and things so that the representative at the table could actually get back to their constituency but we didn't do that to any significant extent in water-use plans (Fields 2003b).*

Patrick has a similar approach to participation in charrettes. He views participants as being representatives of communities of common interest. *We have a strategy around stakeholder groups, what we call communities of interest, and we try in any community to identify who the players are and categorize them by community of interest... In the case of Maple Ridge, working*

*with their city staff, we identify what the most appropriate communities of interest are and then involve them all, everybody that wants to play within those communities. But then because we can't have a million people around the charrette table, [we] have those communities of interest groups delegate one or two of their members to represent them at the table. So they essentially elect a representative to participate at the design table. Then at the design table there's a break point in the middle of the process, where they go back to their constituency group and say; here's what's been done, what do you think so far? (Condon 2004b)*

Patrick goes on to describe what he sees as an active task of public engagement. *You have to work at it, you have to be open to people coming in and you have to talk to people in the city who know what's going on, talk to city staff... is there anybody out there [for whom] it really would be a problem if we didn't involve them? Who would show up at a meeting later and say I wasn't asked and you should have asked me... I own that land or I'm the fire chief and no one asked me (Condon 2004b). I asked Patrick if he has ever encountered conflicts with First Nations communities. I keep kind of panicking that we will, because that one quite honestly confuses me. That's quite a confusing one for me. I'm much more comfortable personally dealing with issues of suburban sprawl and Anglo culture... the First Nations own land and that's a kind of unresolved background issue for all urban development. That's the eight hundred million pound elephant in the closet. In the charrette you need to acknowledge all the rights that are obvious, but that implies that rights have been figured out. You have such and such a right and you have such and such an obligation. Charrette implies that all of that is transparent and open and that everybody agrees on that but the area where we don't have regional agreement is on First Nations. What are the rights of First Nations and what exactly do they own in the whole mix (Condon 2004b).*

Patrick's definition of openness and transparency is significant across any type of public process. When the balance of power is unknown the process becomes deceptive and manipulative. Without knowing who is the ultimate arbiter of the worth of ideas generated in a communicative process, participants will have no reason to trust that their time and effort are well spent. Empathic Leadership demands that power and authority be understood to enable effective action.

Success of course, cannot be guaranteed. The more open and inclusive a participatory process is, the greater the risk that it might fail. Participant input cannot be predicted and, even with strong direction and good facilitation, if the decision is really up to the group then the group could decide to stop, backtrack or abandon the process altogether. For charrettes to be successful they too have to be open to malfunction. *You have to allow for the possibility of a disaster in a charrette. You can't structure it such that it won't go off the rails, because if you do that it's not really a charrette. You've already decided what's going to happen and people don't really have the power. If people have the power you have to allow for the possibility of it blowing up in your face. That is what's both fun and dangerous about charrettes. But on the other hand we have been quite successful in reducing that tendency. [We ensure] that the basic framework for the charrette, the elaboration of the goals and the objectives, the principles which lead to the design brief, are very carefully done and operate within the framing of existing policy and previous initiatives, and the ecological, physical and cultural realities that exist on the site (Condon 2004a).*

The parameters laid out ahead of time for most of the charrettes that Patrick works on in the Vancouver region include a set of guiding principles. These are used as a starting point to enable expediency and explicit engagement of sustainability issues. While this allows the

group to work efficiently in the limited time they have, and gives them direction and purpose, it clearly limits the capacity of participants to create their own sets of principles. But for Patrick sustainability is a condition that has to be agreed upon for a charrette even to take place. *Our key sequence is to get communities to agree they want to be sustainable...at the very beginning if they want to work with us at all, the first thing they see is these principles and they have to be prepared to buy into them. The principles are: each community complete; options to the car emphasized; work in harmony with natural systems; building and infrastructure are greener, smarter cheaper; housing needs to meet the whole community; good jobs are close to home; spirit of each community is honoured; and everyone has a voice. The principles are laudable and seem fairly inclusive, albeit less explicit on social sustainability, but what if a community has very strong feelings about an issue that isn't sufficiently represented by these principles? It would seem that the last two principles would require that at least some opportunity be given for the list to be altered, amended, or enhanced in some way. So that's step one, getting people to buy into that and then educating people into what that means. In our region, people are quite sophisticated about what [sustainability] means compared to other parts of North America. A lot of discussion [already takes place about these] bread and butter sustainability principles so that it's not that hard to sell (Condon 2004b).*

When I asked Patrick what happens if the eight principles appear to be insufficient, or if something comes up that needs to be added, his reply was surprisingly self-assured. *The principles end up being sufficient, what's difficult is applying or figuring out the contradictions between one and the other... It ends up being those design problems of resolving the contradictions between the different principles that are at the essence of a charrette. The other one that is at the essence of a charrette is risk issues... we've never used pervious concrete in Maple Ridge. In fact no one has used it in all of the Lower Mainland. We don't know if it works. We don't want to take the risk of change and so that becomes another issue (Condon 2004b).*

Daryl's approach is markedly different. For her the mere gathering of people to discuss an issue or a decision provides a great opportunity for reexamining assumptions and creating new tradeoffs. She describes the kinds of breakthroughs that occurred in the water-use planning multi-stakeholder process. *One of the key things is that people walk into the room thinking they know what their relative values are because they think that these are the choices that we have. So they've done their work and they've figured out amongst those choices this is what's important to me. They come in and they know exactly where they want to go. What this process did is it essentially broke down that choice set. And it created a whole different choice set. So somebody may walk into the room thinking this is the choice set, and in fact after we've gone through the analysis and done objectives, and done some research, in fact the choice set is this. So now they may not know clearly what their relative values are. There may be a whole other set of tradeoffs that they haven't even thought of before. I'm a personal believer that people don't actually know these things. They can't go into a file folder in their head and pick them out (Fields 2003b).*

Comparisons between Daryl's multi-stakeholder decision-making and Patrick's charrettes are not entirely fair because of enormous difference between the scope and mandate of each forum. Multi-stakeholder processes may take months and sometimes years of group work with meetings and sub committees and testimonials and information gathering and education sessions. The range of possible outcomes, and the very definition of problems through the collective identification of goals and objectives may vary widely depending on the relative power of the ultimate decision made by the stakeholders. The process is long

and often transformative. Charrettes, as Patrick describes them in the next section, take months of preparation but the actual group work occurs in the space of four days. The objectives of each approach are different and logically so too are the outcomes. The comparison does, however, reveal the strengths and weaknesses of each approach and that perhaps a process that combines charrettes with multi-stakeholder processes may achieve the benefits of both immediate efficiency and the lasting achievement of collective visioning and implementation.

### Participatory Implementation

This section reveals in detail, through Patrick's words, how the charrette process works. My emphasis on the charrette here is not the result of an empirical finding that charrettes are indeed the most inclusive or most effective method for involving people in visioning and implementation processes. Rather it is a reflection of the relative popularity of charrettes amongst the Sustainability Planners. With the exception of Daryl and Bruce, whose work at BC Hydro tends towards policy decisions rather than design decision, all the Sustainability Planners have been involved in design charrettes in one form or another. Cheeving, Sebastian and Patrick's involvement is stronger still. They have used charrettes as a major element in the process of involving diverse groups in envisioning sustainable communities. Patrick, with the help of his team of associates and assistants, has become the local expert at orchestrating charrette events. I focus on his work here, not to favour him over others, but to better understand the functioning of this popular process.

The most significant defining feature of any charrette is the limited time in which individuals or teams are required to generate a design product. The time constraint can vary from a few hours, to a few days. In the design charrettes I participated in as an architecture student, we had 24 hours to produce a design which was then be judged against other participants in a competition environment. In addition to the standard intensity of design competitions charrettes had the added challenge of having to make an impression and produce a remarkable design in a matter of hours. Sleep was a luxury and so too was the ability to think through or develop ideas in a thorough and comprehensive way. The time pressure fostered an environment of creativity and daring that challenged traditional ways of thinking. Working in teams also helped embolden participants to take risks that they may have been unwilling to take on their own. The results were always thought provoking.

The degree to which charrette products are useful, practical and constructive, rather than simply stimulating, is the degree to which the parameters of design, produced ahead of time, are integrated into the reality of existing systems. As the following paragraph illustrates Patrick spends considerable time and effort ahead of the charrette in creating a framework that would produce constructive results. Irrespective of how much preparatory time is required to produce contextualizing design parameters, the charrette itself is always conducted in a limited amount of time, requiring a relatively small time investment. Patrick's charrettes tend to be two to four eight-hour days with a presentation of in-process results at the half-way mark.

*We frame the problem as much as we can by providing the context, which is always controlling in a policy environment, and then working with the same people who will participate in the charrette. We spend some time ahead of the charrette working carefully in workshop situations on the goals and*

objectives, so by the time you get to the charrette all of the fundamental things have already been agreed on. An obvious example is the [the directive that the] community will accommodate all modes of transportation but will give priority to pedestrians. That is something that happens ahead of the charrette. Then, since you've kind of already decided something that is very crucial from the design perspective, and has huge implications about what your streets are going to look like, and what your highways are going to look like, the charrette in a certain sense becomes the time at which you elaborate on stuff that you've already collectively decided upon. You don't get into huge debates about fundamental issues, hopefully, at the charrette itself (Condon 2004a).

What we find is the clock ends up being compelling. That's how I manage it at my tables, but different people have different strategies but you just kind of let it go and eventually you just kind of get going. People will start to get nervous about it and somebody will say, it can be me but it's often others, who say we've got to do something on this. Where does that building go or what is the street going to look like? We've got to do something, so you know, come on what's it going to be? Somebody is usually busy drawing it up. Most of the time people end up agreeing on it in a general way, and it's just kind of the time that drives it. It's a very human thing, and that's why we stress the principle that charrettes need to be long enough for people to move from being stakeholders to being team members. Because at a certain point you move away from having any particular allegiance to a predetermined ideology to wanting the team to be successful (Condon 2004a).

You're human you sort of go along with the collective after a while and you start to say maybe I'm not right about that building and I'm part of this team so they're at least listening to me so I guess that must be OK since twelve people think it's OK. So I'm OK I guess. My experience is no one ever loves the design totally because there is always some stuff there that they didn't think was particularly great. But they always end up feeling pretty good about the design, pretty good about the way that it evolved and feeling some degree of ownership over it (Condon 2004a).

Sometimes you'll have teams that will compete with each other in a certain sense, so you'll have different designs come out at the end. That's what this one is (points to the Surrey charrette drawings). Mostly these days we've been doing charrettes where you get one design output, because you really want to get the thing built. If you're going to have more than one design come out, it's good for giving people a sense of the breadth of vision possible, but if you're moving towards an implementation you don't want to leave people with four choices. You might as well incorporate that choice into the charrette... We build in points of connection where the different groups come together and talk as a large group rather than just going into their own room and never talking to each other. That's key and it comes together better than you think it's going to (Condon 2004a).

There are certain things that design can do and certain things that design can't do. One of the things that I instruct staff to do and what I try to do is when we're going through policies, we don't use all policies, we try to assess the policies that have any kind of formal consequence whatsoever. We make a decision at the beginning when we're looking through the policy pile. One of our first steps is to look at the policy pile which is anything that pertains to a particular site that has ever been written, either scientific information, engineering information, policy information, economic information or tourist information. Whatever it is we call it the policy pile and we go through it and try to tease out those things that have any kind of formal implication, so that leaves stuff behind (Condon 2004a).

But having said that I think generally the power of physical design, there's a lot of debate on this point, on a lot of social issues is understated. For example going back to this question of people who

*look at the problem of housing the poor. Thinking that the solution is government money to build housing or subsidize it so that the poor have housing overlooks the other avenues to doing that. Simple things such as allowing secondary suites, creating a block configuration, and zoning bylaws that allow diversity rather than require homogeneity [could work] (Condon 2004a).*

*I talk about the ecology of the bungalow, which is like the way the system operates in Vancouver. Because land prices are high the bungalow ends up costing a half a million dollars. That exceeds the amount that people can generally afford. Therefore they are forced to rent out a piece of their bungalow to someone who makes a whole lot less than them but can come up with the 8 or 9 hundred or a thousand dollars a month rent. So what's happening really is that you're starting to get an ecology of the household. The means of the one are supported by the other, and the needs of the other are supported by the one. It's interesting to examine that phenomena as it relates to block configuration and street configuration, to transit, to regional land values and the cost of producing the house... so if you have a system where you do allow secondary suites in the context of a house price which is just a little bit beyond the reach of the average, the people making 50 to 60%, that makes an incentive for them to supply housing for people at the 30% level. They form a partnership between each other, which is nice. It's better than the other models of, there's people over here who are middle class, and there's people in the projects who are poor and they have no interaction (Condon 2004a).*

While Patrick's explanation of his approach to the "housing" problem seems tangential to the process of facilitating charrettes, it is an example of how he introduces policy issues into design environments. Integrating policy directives into proposed designs allows participants to tackle a broader set of social and economic sustainability issues. Suggesting attractive, practical design solutions to policy interventions makes the proposed policies seem that much more feasible for policy makers and decision makers. Policy suggestions on their own may never be acceptable without the benefit of innovative design alternatives that seem to add aesthetic, functional and economic value to a neighbourhood. By the time policy ideas surface as an integral component of design proposals they will have been exposed to the technical expertise of interdisciplinary teams and the political and practical litmus test of community residents. Implementation therefore becomes less of a risk.

*After the charrette is over, like in East Clayton, things kind of degenerate back into the same old-same old. The things that change after the event are usually [minimal]. The gravitational pull of the status quo exerts itself after the charrette is over. One of the challenges of the charrette design is to strategize how can we keep, metaphorically, the table active as the work unfolds and that usually takes years. Everything that happens out there takes at least a year and often five or ten and so that's a challenge. Lately our strategy recognizes that to insure the success of the charrette the idea is to stay involved at least until the first construction project is on the ground... The charrette will occur two or three or four years before you actually have the bulldozers arrive at the site so you really have to stay involved for that long. So the Smart Growth on the Ground project, which we're actually launching tonight at Maple Ridge, the community of Maple Ridge, and anybody else who participates, has to sign a Memorandum of Understanding committing themselves to maintaining the partnership from the charrette all the way through the first construction project (Condon 2004b).*

### **Developing Capacity for Participatory Action**

Having participated in a couple of Patrick's charrettes I was both impressed by its capacity to elicit excitement and generate discernible outcomes. I probed deeper in my discussions

with Patrick, wanting to discover the extent to which charrettes could be used for decision-making and the degree to which charrettes might perpetuate existing hierarchies of power and privilege. *Because of the way society is organized you don't always get to charrette everything all the time all the way through all this stuff. So the difficulty is that inevitably you'll have to be in a world that is non-charrette. Like East Clayton, for example, is beyond charrette. It's on its own and some of the dysfunctional thinking that characterizes our world is definitely back... To expect a huge paradigm shift where design with a capital D is not this isolated thing the way we have it now, sort of an embellishment of stuff basically, but as really being synonymous with public process and democracy, [is unrealistic]. While that is very appealing an idea for designers, it's unrealistic to expect the culture to change radically enough so maybe... more modestly I think, what we're talking about is being at the bleeding edge of a larger cultural shift around the globe where problems are solved in a more integrated way (Condon 2004a).*

*We think that the conditions here in Vancouver are so much similar to the rest of Canada and even the United States. Houston seems like a totally different place but it's not. Similar culture and market conditions [exist] such that what we do here in Vancouver is something that could be applied to the rest of North America. We don't really think that it's easy to imagine it being applied to Asia or applied to Europe or applied to Africa, but we think the work we do here and the advances we do here could be picked up on in time, in ten years, or fifteen years or twenty years in other parts of North America (Condon 2004a).*

My concerns about the inherent bias in the charrette process were not allayed. I observed on several occasions a level of frustration amongst charrette participants whose voices did not seem to carry equal weight or legitimacy. Their attempts at articulating their thoughts were repeatedly truncated and interrupted. They did not fare as well and I clearly saw an imbalance of ability and opportunity to participate. *The people with those communicative skills and the wherewithal to use them, whether it is through drawing or through debating or through just arguing your point, tend to get more of what they want out of life than others... and so I think that that's to some degree inevitable. I think, the charrette is more so than any other kind of group, the kind of cultural, social situation, the kind where the bully or the fast hand doesn't get everything that they want because its long enough that other people will eventually get their chance. It's also structured in a way that it doesn't move forward, unless you get consensus. If the bully and the fast hand have been doing all this stuff but they haven't been talking to the quiet one over in the corner, at some point there's going to be a problem. The discussion is going to be; is everybody on side, does everybody agree and it is at that point that that person, shy as they are, is going to go no, I don't like it. And they're going to go "well, what's wrong?" And that's when you get that correction and I've seen that happen. So then the bully and the fast hand have to back up and listen again and sometimes that's a frustration point in the charrette but a healthy one (Condon 2004b).*

Here I interrupted Patrick and said "or they can run circles around the person and leave them confused," which I have witnessed many times. *They can, and sometimes that happens and I think the shy person gets a little bit run around. But I just think again, it's long enough and you're in the same room for four days. An atmosphere of mutual respect has to emerge. If I'm across from you for four days, I have to acknowledge you as a human being and at some level, either explicitly or implicitly, I have to know that your opinion is equal to mine no matter what your skills are because you're part of the team. That's the idea of having the charrette go long enough so people move from stakeholders to teammates. So I think it's about as good as it can be in terms of a public process, in terms of overcoming that problem. The other evidentiary thing is that in the charrettes*



*that I've done, I've never had anybody come to me and say, "I was ignored." I've had people walk out, that's the worst, but if they last to the end, I've never had anybody come at the end and say, "My opinion was ignored. This was a sham!" It's much more frequent that people say "that was great" (Condon 2004b).*

Despite their shortcomings charrettes appear to be ever more popular particularly in the sustainability circles of the Vancouver region. Charrettes have almost become synonymous with community engagement around sustainability issues. They are effective at bringing people together to work as teams within a strict timeframe. At the end of the exercise their work as a group will be on display for all to see. The incentive to band together as a team and produce a workable result is enormous and so people end up being engaged. The demands of time, and the fear of having only disagreement to show for all the time spent in group work moves people from being personally wedded to a particular issue to being strongly committed to the team's success, even if it is at the expense of their personal issues. The disadvantage of the short time frames is the group's inability to delve deeply into issues and concerns. Movement from concepts to physical forms is often too fast for critical reflection or thorough analysis of alternatives.

Multi-stakeholder processes on the other hand offer all the time needed for reflection and deep questioning and analysis. While their results might be limited to policy directives, they enable true consensus to develop and the result is more likely to reflect the views of all participants. The longer time frame also allows for a more personalized attention to the different styles and needs of participants. With good facilitation, differences in types and levels of expertise and differences in communication styles can be better bridged to help reduce imbalances of power and privilege. I saw no evidence, however, to indicate that such imbalances are ever completely eliminated. The mere ability to participate in a multi-stakeholder process, which typically convenes in the evenings and weekends, requires freedom from the constraints of time and money. Without compensation, day-care and flexible scheduling participation and engagement continue to be easier for those in positions of power.

Action is not new to this chapter. Creating a vision, harnessing emotion, cultivating community and strategizing to expand the vision all require action. What is specific to this chapter is the deliberate engagement of a wider public in the exploration of the sustainability vision. This is a broad public with no special kinship to the ideas of sustainability, nor a powerful presence with whom a strategic alliance would be favourable. Engaging the public can occur in countless ways: citizen surveys, review boards, advisory boards, random interviews, neighbourhood meetings, parents advisory meetings, community meetings, public hearings, public information programs, interactive computer simulations, advertising campaigns, educational programs and focus groups (Sanoff 2000), but the charrette and the multi-stakeholder process appear to be particularly effective in truly engaging people's imaginations.

Literature on participation continues to be divisible into two categories depending on the degree to which participation is sought. Some seek to remove all barriers to participation and all hierarchies of power and knowledge (see Forester, Sandercock) and others continue to uphold hierarchies of knowledge and competence as necessary for reaching desirable and meaningful outcomes (Sanoff 2000, McDaniels and Gregory 2004). I found the Vancouver

Sustainability Planners to lean towards the latter. Fear of chaos and a lack of trust in participants' ability to independently make decisions are holding back the planners as they tenuously hold on to alliances and coalitions. The charrette and multi-stakeholder processes are both methods of conducting participatory processes in a structured manner that relinquishes decision making while simultaneously providing parameters for directing and guiding the process.

Designing and conducting a participatory planning process requires all the strategic savvy that is used for broad coalition building discussed in Chapter 6. In this case power realignments must occur, or must at least be attempted, at every stage of the process. Otherwise the experience will be meaningless for those without power. Strategic thinking must therefore be employed to identify the most effective means for reaching out to disenfranchised populations, to convince them that their participation will not be in vain and, most importantly, to deliver on that promise.

Flyvberg brings into planning theory one of the most enduring philosophical debates about the nature of power and empowerment: the debate between Foucault and Habermas and relativism and universalism respectively (Flyvbjerg 1998). Foucault's contribution to political philosophy is in our understanding of power, authority and truth. His systematic historical analysis of power illustrates the perpetuation of culture and values through the exercise of power. For him any kind of citizen participation or deliberate inclusion of different voices or multiple truths cannot be devoid of power imbalances. There will always be hierarchies of power, which will always maintain hierarchies of knowledge and values, thereby privileging some groups and oppressing others. Seen in this light, groups cannot arrive at consensus through rational discourse because the conditions for fair discourse are impossible to achieve (Foucault, 1984).

Habermas rejects the notion that arriving at a universally constituted understanding of society is unattainable. He does acknowledge that subjectivity precludes the possibility of arriving at universality but that inter-subjectivity makes universally applicable "constitutions" possible. Communication, he contends is the natural impetus and mechanism through which action takes place. Therefore, according to Habermas, discourse and argumentation can lead to validity and truth if exercised within certain parameters. These parameters include a balancing of power differences, which would tend to silence already powerful voices while amplifying others (Habermas, 1994).

Egalitarian participation continues to be an elusive ideal. In the absence of a definable group or interest, the disenfranchised person remains an unrepresented interest in most sustainability discussions. Participation also demands time and energy which precludes the participation of those who have neither to spare. The voiceless remain voiceless and engagement remains confined to privileged groups. Communicative processes, whether they are multi-stakeholder processes or design charrettes are inherently discriminatory against certain types of communicators. Those who are shy, or uncomfortable in public settings or cannot articulate their thoughts are at a disadvantage. The necessary progressive action by planners that Forester (1987) describes is all but absent. In the planning work I observed, the visions seem too large and the issues too important to worry about truly egalitarian participation. So while sustainability has an inclusive vision, it is often exclusively derived and exclusively practiced. Empathic Leadership applied towards

expanding a vision beyond the community scale to society provides an emphasis on inclusion, relatedness and relationship building that illustrates deficiencies in action and methods for addressing the problem of exclusivity.

Community participation as a component of collective action can be traced back to preliterate societies, but contemporary theory positions community participation as a counter balance to bureaucratic and political exploitation of communities. A central tenet of community participation is therefore a reclamation of the territory of self-determination (Sanoff 2000:1). Not only does participation occur on uneven ground in which parties yield different levels of power, but it also has to wrestle away influence and a legacy of domination away from powerful institutions. There is no blank slate in community participation. Inescapable power and structural imbalances are inherent barriers to inclusive, transparent, egalitarian and fair participation. Participants are also differentially burdened by their participation. Community residents have to volunteer their time while bureaucrats and professionals are paid for their efforts. These barriers to perfect process notwithstanding, the rewards are attractive enough to render participation worthwhile and certainly more desirable than its absence (Sanoff 2000:37).

According to Portney (2003), a communitarian approach to sustainability planning is necessary both as a way of empowering residents and achieving sustainable outcomes. As we discussed at the end of the last chapter, open, inclusive and full participation is an ethic in itself and planning action must uphold that ethic before it can claim to be democratic. The barriers to participation in the planning projects I observed are not impenetrable and although complete inclusiveness and fairness are likely unattainable, their occurrence to some degree is certainly possible. While Sanoff states that “[t]he goal of participation is to encourage people to learn as a result of becoming aware of a problem,” (Sanoff 2000:37) all the sustainability planners I interviewed have the additional goal of involving people in decision making.

Processes, projects and plans can only hope to achieve participation if they provide rewards to the participation. The most attractive reward is a set of discernible outcomes that directly affect the quality of life of community residents, and that is what would keep them engaged (Sanoff 2000). Charrettes may not ensure the realization of a plan but at least the outcome is discernable, explicit and inspires the imaginations and captures the hopes of participants. The product is also a physical creation. It is personal in that it is the result of personal labour, time and energy, and it is the product of a set of relationships that have formed to bring about its fruition. Nothing I saw in the public processes I witnessed suggests that the problems of exclusiveness and unequal access to meaningful participation have been eliminated.

Charrettes are too fast and intense to accommodate diverse styles of contributing and communicating to the process. The fast, loud, articulate and extroverted is privileged. Multi-stakeholder processes can accommodate greater communicative diversity but demand a much longer commitment of regular meetings and workshops. The professional, wealthy unattached male is privileged. Those with evening jobs, family commitments and inability to pay for daycare are underprivileged in such a process. Susan’s approach at EYA is certainly engaging and inclusive of the truly marginalized, but it is exclusive to small teams of youth who are able to take six months to work on a project. EYA probably

achieves greater ethnic and socio-economic diversity than any other group, but does not achieve cultural or generational diversity. Imperfect participation, however, does not totally nullify the power of the youth team, charrette or multi-stakeholder processes. All three processes cultivate Empathic Leadership by causing participants to be self-reflective and to relate to others through an articulation of what matters to themselves and an understanding of what matters to others. This Empathic Leadership can be further cultivated to increase the circles of inclusion within and around each process. Successful action is that which provides opportunities for the greatest range of individuals to form relationships of common understanding. Creating relationships through opportunities for egalitarian dialogue and a collective harnessing of individual knowledge is the only way sustainability visions can truly be representative of the communities they are intended to serve. It is the only way sustainability visions will themselves be sustainable.

### 8 – CONCLUSION

*I began this journey with trepidation. I was hesitant and unsure of my path at the beginning. Similar to many whose paths I've crossed, I believed strongly in what I was doing. I had a vision for combining my longings for social and environmental responsibility with my intuitive sense that there is much to be learned about the manner in which people relate to one another. That much I was sure of. What tormented me was whether this pursuit could pass as planning; whether it would be accepted as a legitimate pursuit in planning research and, most importantly, whether it would be of any worth to planners and planning theorists. For most of the time I spent immersed in research and writing I only had a vague impression of what I might ultimately be saying. Occasionally I would stumble upon glimpses of novel findings but they always seemed obvious in retrospect. It is only in hindsight that I can see that I have learned a great deal. The following pages elaborate on these lessons. But there are also the more personal and the less discussed intellectual and emotional transitions that occur through this kind of process.*

*I am both inspired and jaded by what I have found. I feel deeply conflicted. There is no question as to my deep admiration of the planners I researched and the work that they do. But at the same time, I am frustrated by its insufficiency. I said at the beginning of this work that the problems we face are profoundly complex and are deserving of heroic effort. What bothers me now is that even if we begin to approach heroic action, it does not seem to be enough. Perhaps my realization is the typical coming of age insight that comes with understanding how society functions and how systems of power operate. My optimism was initially tempered, not by the planners as individuals but by the inability of their collective efforts to significantly reduce the social injustices and the environmental destruction I witness every day. My idealism was also dulled by the realization that the seeming nobility and purity of the sustainability cause was insufficient to have it prevail.*

*Many of my colleagues, myself included, had implicitly presumed that success would eventually come our way because we were fighting the good fight. We were somehow on the side of all the admirable qualities of goodness, justice, equality, openness, fairness, healthfulness, humility and cooperation. It was not so much that the sheer righteousness of our cause would entitle us to win, but that eventually others, all others, would come to see that our way, the sustainability way, was the best way. I realize now that there are as many "sustainability ways" as there are people to imagine them. The path converges for some to reach a seemingly similar goal. But for others it diverges significantly even if the ultimate destination seems to be vaguely congruent. In the abstract it seems simple enough to assign prescribed roles for nameless masses to help us all become more sustainable. But when those masses take on identities and those identities become animated with the stories and relationships of life, the collective path that was once clear becomes murky. I feel older in that I now have a deeper respect for difference and complexity and contradiction. I have come to embrace the struggle for sustainability in a different way. I don't see it as a futile battle in a losing war. Choosing to work towards a more sustainable world is not contingent upon the prospect of winning the war against social and environmental injustices. This path is simply a matter of maintaining a personal consistency between belief and action, between purpose and manner, between values and behaviour. Ultimately, for me, it is about exercising empathy towards those with whom I happen to share this slice of time and space, whatever side of whatever argument they happen to be on.*

*While I often miss the simplicity of absolute conviction and the feeling of knowing exactly who is right and who is wrong on any given issue, I revel in the privilege of being able to now look at the range of participants in a planning process and see people. There was a time when all I could see*

*were caricatures and stereotypes. Developers and entrepreneurs were simply wealthy privileged men in suits with nothing but profit and exploitation on their minds. I saw them as cold calculating automatons interpreting everything they encounter through the calculus of development potential. Now I see them as human beings. I still know them to be privileged and they might draw meaning from their experience of the world in very different ways to my own, but they too have fears, hopes and aspirations. They too want their children to inhabit a healthy hospitable world. I gladly and willingly give up the certainty of dualistic judgment for the wisdom of appreciating diversity in all its forms. Being able to understand people's values and motives and to be able to relate to them through their own epistemologies is indeed a privilege. My own transformation has allowed me to appreciate my research in a way that I could not have anticipated. I have personally experienced the power of Empathic Leadership. If I were to follow in the brave footsteps of Vancouver's sustainability planners my challenge would be to step out of the relative shelter of academic detachment, and to allow others to relate to me through my own epistemology of social and environmental justice.*

### **Empathic Leadership**

I set out to discover how planners exercise Empathic Leadership to advance sustainability. I found that Empathic Leadership permeates every aspect of sustainability planning and that planners possess many of the skills necessary for being exemplary leaders. I also discovered that their work is an iterative pentad of visioning, engaging emotions, building community, employing strategy and implementing action. The visions are compelling, seductive and infectious yet dynamic and vague. Emotions are strong and recognized as being significant yet poorly integrated into the remaining elements of the pentad. They are nevertheless essential for developing capacity in each of the areas of visioning, community building, strategy and action. The communities that form around sustainability are cohesive, fluid, diverse but context-specific, and largely untested. The strategies are political, relatively transparent but rarely uphold the participatory values of the vision. Actions are varied and innovative, democratizing, yet implicitly homogenous and classist.

I found ample evidence of Empathic Leadership throughout the work of the Sustainability Planners. Each of the components is practiced to varying degrees. The most obvious and openly acknowledged are the relational qualities of understanding others, communicating with others and building relationships. It is also apparent, however, that many of the attributes of Empathic Leadership are conceptually understood and theoretically appreciated yet only selectively employed. The entire set of attributes (Table 2, p. 35) is rarely explicitly acknowledged throughout planning processes.

### **1. Personal Actions**

The personal realm of Empathic Leadership is well developed in the Sustainability Planners. They are all self-aware and engage in self-reflection in varying degrees ranging from immediate and ongoing reflection to long-term retrospective reflection. They exhibit self-regulation although do not do so constantly. The degree to which the Sustainability Planners engage in self-reflection is apparent in the stories they recount about past events. They consistently show evidence of having thought about how their actions affect others. Knowledge about their personal effectiveness in conveying a message allows them to improve and they acquire that knowledge through self-reflection. Self-regulation is very much linked to the ability to be self-reflective. This is evidenced in the Sustainability Planner's own individual evolution in terms of behaviour and conduct. Several talked

about how they used to behave in ways that were less tolerant of others, or other modes of conduct or other perspectives. They see themselves as having changed to be much more open and capable of interacting with others. Some Sustainability Planners talk about working on modifying their own conduct to be more effective communicators. Each of the planners saw the worth of personal development and understood the value of improving but not all of them were able to dedicate sufficient time and energy towards it.

The ability to articulate a personal vision is perhaps the strongest attribute of Empathic Leadership that the Sustainability Planners exhibited. Through the course of the interviews and my observations of their work it was very clear that each of the Sustainability Planners was able to articulate, at any time, what their vision of a sustainable future is. In most cases that vision of a sustainable future for society was very much in line with their own personal values. It is this congruence of values that allows them to work so diligently and persevere in the face of setbacks. The only exception to this alignment of personal, organizational and societal visions, was in the manner in which personal politics became secondary to organizational politics. In every case, the Sustainability Planners chose to maintain working relationships with a broad spectrum of political orientations, which precluded their own personal positions from dominating. The ability to craft an inclusive vision is therefore central to being able to engage others in the relational actions of Empathic Leadership.

### **2. Relational Actions**

Most relational actions are highly prevalent amongst the Sustainability Planners. Everything from being compassionate and understanding others, to communicating and building relationships, to engaging in collaboration and inclusion, is an integral part of the planners' regular activities. Compassion is difficult to measure but all the Sustainability Planners displayed some degree of compassion towards others. Members of the immediate family of each of the participants are obviously the greatest beneficiaries of compassion and compassionate reflection. Close friends and colleagues follow. There was also ample evidence of compassion towards others with whom the planners may share little but to whom they have to be able to convey their message of sustainability. This was most evident as an appreciation of the kinds of challenges faced by people for whom sustainability would bring about radical professional and career upheaval. There was also a general appreciation by all participants that some sacrifices of convenience would likely be required to fulfill some components of the sustainability vision. A broader understanding of the existence of multiple perspectives on any sustainability planning issue is integral to all the approaches used by the Sustainability Planners.

From understanding comes the ability to communicate with respect in a way that allows parties to relate to the experience of the other. All the planners clearly exhibited the ability to communicate with groups and individuals with wide ranging perspectives. They have the ability to speak about the sustainability visions in terms that are accessible and amenable to the worldviews of diverse audiences. However, devoting time to truly understanding the perspectives of others and expending energy to draw out the values and aspirations of diverse groups was not commonly practiced. Time and resource constraints meant that the Sustainability Planners learned enough about the perspectives of their constituencies to be able to address them and not enough to truly get to know their core values and detailed aspirations. There are exceptions to this generalization for each of the planners with some deliberately engaging the values and experiential contributions of every participant of a

planning process. The multi-stakeholder processes that Daryl facilitated, the charrette processes that Patrick conducts and that Cheeving, Sebastian and Johnny partnered on are all important attempts to engage the values of participants more fully.

Each of the Sustainability Planners spoke explicitly about the importance of building relationships. It is a major finding of this work that relationship building is absolutely central to the work of advancing sustainability planning. The greater the sphere of influence of an organization and of the planner working in the organization the greater the significance of relationship building in their work. Johnny, Larry and Bruce working for GVRD, City of Vancouver, and BC Hydro, respectively, all spoke directly about the importance of building relationships with individuals with whom they could increase their learning, increase their reach and advance the sustainability agenda. Those who spoke least of relationship building were those in the private sector and those in small organizations. For them the most valuable relationships seemed to be within their organizations and with other organizations working on some other piece of the sustainability vision.

Participation and collaboration occurred in two distinct ways amongst the Sustainability Planners; with the broader public and with other organizations concerned with sustainability. Most of the Sustainability Planners had, for example, at one time or another during my research collaborated with each other on a project or initiative. It was not uncommon for three or four of them to be present at the same event. Formal collaborations typically occurred around planning processes and design charrettes. Engagement of a broader public was less common and was undertaken by those working for organizations that specifically sought to address the public at that scale such as Smart Growth's municipal voter education campaign. The Vancouver Citiplan, which Larry talked about but in which he played a secondary role, is another attempt to engage the entire citizenry of a region. The most dominant form of engaging the public was selective in that it only allowed for small groups working around specific projects. The charrette processes, the multi-stakeholder processes and EYA's youth projects all sought to include diverse worldviews and diverse life experiences and did so by using representative individuals.

Resolving conflict was one of the two attributes of Empathic Leadership that I did not find strong evidence for. It was difficult to measure this quality particularly if I did not have occasion to witness a conflict in the presence of the research participants. Both Susan and Sebastian talk about specific methods for resolving conflict and misunderstanding in Chapter 5, but I did not have the opportunity to observe them in doing so. There were occasions when I did encounter conflict in group settings and saw no evidence of conflict resolution skills. The Staff and Colleagues Survey also revealed that those planners for whom respondents completed questionnaires were not particularly effective at resolving conflict compared to all the other skills they exhibited. In fact, from my observation, inherent in the work of agitating for change was the creation of conflict. Nevertheless, creating conflict does not preclude a planner from being able to resolve it.

The background research that led to my choosing the eight Sustainability Planners was one of the avenues for learning about the degree to which they inspired others. The conversations with other planners and other activists in the areas of sustainability led me to choose the eight research participants and those conversations were informed by the opinions of others. There were also several occasions in which I heard about the



Sustainability Planners from each other. In interviews and in conversations they brought up each other's work and spoke about the influence of that work and that person on them. In some cases the Sustainability Planners themselves seemed to inspire others and in other cases it was their work that captivated the imagination. There were also occasions when I heard negative comments that would suggest that the opposite of inspiration was in fact taking place. One of the limitations of this research was that I was not able to interview the staff and colleagues of the research participants to gain a more nuanced picture of the perceptions of those with whom they work most closely. The questionnaire results themselves however showed a consistently very high mean score across all respondents for the question about the Sustainability Planner being an inspiring leader.

Visioning and creating culture is one of the strongest attributes of Empathic Leadership that the Sustainability Planners displayed. Similar to their capacity to articulate a personal and societal vision, they are all able to engage in processes of collective visioning in which they inspire those around them to buy into a vision and to believe in it strongly. The cultures that have formed around each of the visions are strong and resilient leading to expanding mandates and growing fields of influence. This comes as no surprise since each of the Sustainability Planners was pre-selected for their ability to attract attention through their work. A deeper probing of this particular attribute of Empathic Leadership could be achieved by selecting a range of planners, some of whom may not be well known or highly regarded for what they do, but who simply work in the area of sustainability.

As the above discussion illustrates the Sustainability Planners selectively engage in relational actions. As is the case with any finite resource, they have to allocate their time and energy strategically to achieve the maximum benefit for their sustainability agenda. This deployment of effort is most evident in their relative lack of attention to conflict resolution internal to their organizations. Nevertheless, the Sustainability Planners do succeed in inspiring others and creating culture. Their collective visions are more resilient within their organizations than without. It is perhaps not surprising that much of their relationship building efforts are directed across organizations.

### 3. Developmental Actions

Given that most of their time is spent in meetings and group settings the Sustainability Planners have little time to read, let alone acquire new skills. It is very clear however, that a great deal of growth occurs in the form of on-the-job experience coupled with self-reflection that enables the planner to learn from past experiences. These lessons are further enhanced for at least three of the planners by more explicit learning opportunities in the form of coaching and workshops. Some planners also make time to read about contemporary research in the areas of management and planning. Formal training through courses and professional development seminars is less popular but not completely absent.

Like visioning, understanding power and influence is one of those areas of Empathic Leadership that is so important that it grew to become one of the five components of the pentad. The planners work in competitive environments in which they are calling for changes of a magnitude that could potentially affect entire sectors of the urban, regional and global economy. Active and destructive opposition is inevitable. Any group that is accruing financial reward from status-quo operation will exercise its economic power and influence to oppose changes that might diminish that reward. Sustainability Planners are

therefore very savvy in terms of knowing who wields power and how they might use it. What I found was less a case of knowing how to oppose those powers head on, but rather how they might operate without awakening those giants of power and inciting their wrath. It is a delicate act of navigating around areas of conflict and explicitly focusing on potential common goals.

When it comes to empowering others the Sustainability Planners are varied in their success and their ability to truly contribute to the ability of citizens or citizen groups to play a role in decision making. Once again the most notable examples of truly engaging citizens in participatory processes, in which the participants actually have power to make decisions, are the Water Use Planning multi-stakeholder processes that Daryl facilitated at BC hydro, the community design charrettes that Patrick coordinates with various community groups and the youth projects that Susan runs at the EYA. Participants in each of those processes are empowered to make decisions within the process, but it is not clear whether power within the process translates into broader empowerment in society. This is an area that would require further research with a specific exploration of the question of power in a pluralistic society.

Healing and confronting pain occurs when it arises, sometimes in an ad hoc way, and sometimes it instigates a process. It is not, however, integrated into the visioning and implementation of the visions of the Sustainability Planners. Change is necessarily disruptive and all the Sustainability Planners acknowledge that change towards sustainability may be conflicted or even traumatic. Perhaps this change is still in its infancy and as it matures so too will planners' inclusion of space and time for healing.

Even the developmental actions of Empathic Leadership are affected by the need to be strategic. On the whole knowledge of power and influence is extremely well honed relative to the empowerment of others. Healing and confronting pain are only exercised when necessary and are not, for the most part, systematically conducted as a matter of course. The acquisition of knowledge and skills is somewhat biased towards technical skills as opposed to relational skills even though relationship building is acknowledged across all the Sustainability Planners, as well as their staff and colleagues, to be very important.

This research shows the work of the Vancouver's Sustainability Planners requires acts of leadership. Planners require leadership skills to move from mere visions to the evolution and implementation of their visions. The ability of planners to succeed in implementing sustainability is enhanced by their capacity for Empathic Leadership. They exercise Empathic Leadership by creating and articulating visions of sustainability that address a set of societal needs. They then confront emotion, first their own, and then that of those with whom they interact. They cultivate passion, optimism and excitement and harness them to persevere through fear, anger and frustration. They build relationships to create a sense of community first within their organizations, then between organizations, and then with the public to increase the scale and magnitude of their sustainability visions. They strategize to overcome institutional and political hurdles and to gain power and advantage in a competitive societal structure. They undertake action that seeks to increase the capacity of community residents to participate in creating a collective vision. Ultimately, Vancouver's Sustainability Planners use Empathic Leadership as a means of cultivating the capacity to be self-reflective, to relate well to others, and to build mutually empowering relationships in all

## Chapter 8 - Conclusion

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the residents for whom they are planning. Planners exercise Empathic Leadership to build its likeness in others.

A fundamental tension exists within Empathic Leadership, with its components of inclusion, relationship building and collective visioning on the one hand and its pursuit of a particular vision on the other. The stronger the vision and the more compelling its justification as a legitimate and desirable pursuit the less tolerant it will be towards embracing the totality of visions held by all the members of society. Self-reflection and ethical reflection have to become a component of critical analysis in planning deliberations to mitigate the potential abuse of strategic action and the dogmatic exclusive assertion of particular visions.

While the Empathic Leadership framework proved useful in describing what Sustainability Planners do, it did not adequately describe how they do it. The pentad of process introduced in Chapter 2 and illustrated through each of the subsequent chapters is a more accurate depiction of the sequence of activities that move sustainability from a vision towards becoming a reality.

### **Vision**

The pursuit of a sustainability vision cannot help but be ambitious. The problems that sustainability planning attempts to alleviate are profoundly complex. Everything from poverty to environmental degradation, to oppression, to exploitation, to globalization, to genetic modification, to extreme wealth and luxury, to war and terrorism can comfortably be brought into a sustainability critique of current societal practices. Every threat to health and happiness is a threat to the creation of a healthy vibrant society. Lest the quest for change in one arena negatively affect the human condition in other arenas, what began as an urgent appeal against environmental depletion grew to include a struggle against an increasing array of social ills. It also became increasingly apparent to those studying these problems that reductionism and the seeming isolation of particular problems is illusory. Everything is intertwined. Systems connect and overlap and factors affect one another. Nothing short of holism could ever be sufficient. Sustainability planners struggle with achieving this holistic perspective. The fundamental driver in a place like Vancouver is a growing concern for ecological health and integrity yet the Sustainability Planners all recognize the necessity of simultaneously addressing social and economic health. The visions that each planner holds are grand and ambitious and tend to be dogmatic. With the weight of explicit inclusiveness and the moral stature of pursuing justice in all its manifestations how could sustainability not become dogmatic? How could you oppose an ideology that purports to represent all justice against all injustice? You cannot, and because you cannot the ideology verges on dogma. Dogmatic assertions are implicit in sustainability planning and proponents self-consciously stress the importance of collaborating with others and engaging citizens to arrive at collectively derived visions.

### **Emotion**

The interdisciplinary, inter-agency, multi-cultural, and communicative work of sustainability planning requires a kind of leadership that is self-reflective, empathic and emotionally aware. The untapped potential for training planners as Empathic Leaders is significant. Developing the capacity for self-reflection and emotional sensitivity to the actions and reactions of others would magnify the effectiveness of the array of technical and

conceptual skills that planners traditionally employ. Indeed these skills are abundant amongst planners and are already a part of their palette of intuitive behavior, but the intent, consistency and continuity of action need reinforcement. There is no evidence that the presence of emotions displaces rationalism in planning decisions. The discourse continues to be rational but the presence of emotional content adds another form of rationality. Emotions are either actively acknowledged or intuitively managed. The results of this research show the intimate connection between emotion and communicative and relational work, and how emotion could be harnessed to better serve the planners and those for whom they are planning. This research departs from the foundational work of Forester and Sandercock and begins to explicitly study the range of emotional conditions that affect the advancement of a particular vision. The dominant emotion I encountered amongst the Sustainability Planners is passion. It overrides the oppositional power of fear and anger, both of which are significant, to provide the planners with resilience and strength. It is passion that keeps them motivated and it is passion that draws others to join them in their quest for sustainability.

### **Community**

The abundance of a sense of community was evident throughout my research. I found a new form of community that rallies around the various sustainability visions as championed by Sustainability Planners. Community changes and morphs depending on the demands placed on it by external circumstances. The exact composition of the members of the community varies according to the issue being defined or decided upon. I saw evidence of resilience on the part of core communities but I also saw unpredictability on the part of politicians and interest groups. The ultimate power of the bond that binds communities of sustainability is untested. In a couple of cases where the tests were difficult, particularly around regional partnerships, the sense of community seemed to be tenuous. The regional transportation authority's failed vehicle levy, or the new GVRD Board's questioning of the Sustainable Region Initiative, are powerful reminders that communities of sustainability have yet to permeate mainstream culture. New initiatives require a recasting of the ultimate benefits and a sustainability vision and reaffirmation of support, cohesiveness and community around a vision

### **Strategy**

In the rough and choppy waters of creating and maintaining a culture that understands and supports sustainability strategic planning is alive and well. Planners use strategy to make alliances, partnerships and collaborations for the sake of gaining political power and wider popular appeal. In some cases the alliances might seem suspicious to outside observers, or for puritan activists who would never accept collaborating with the perceived perpetrators of environmental and social destruction. However if the sustainability visions are ever to gain popular appeal, or at least enough appeal for them to affect social change, then planners must be able to work with every group and every individual. Partisan politics is an ideological distraction and each of the Sustainability Planners works with individuals and organizations from across the political spectrum. They all stress the importance of being able to converse and communicate the vision across party lines and political affiliations. Deciding on how to approach an issue, how to inform interested parties and how to engage them is necessarily a strategic decision. Decisions have to be made about how best to achieve the desired results of participation and engagement and decision making within a limited time frame and a finite budget. That manifestation of strategy is

practiced by all and accepted by all. However there is a type of strategizing that seeks to achieve certain ends through questionable means. The acceptability of the means will always be a subject of debate but what is patently unacceptable is secrecy. Lack of transparency is the killer of trust. Relationships become jeopardized and the visions compromised so strategic action needs to be imbedded in ethical deliberation.

### **Action**

Participation in creating and implementing can only occur if it truly empowers participants to create and implement their vision. Seeing their expressions understood and their ideas integrated is the best reward for participation. Charrettes may not ensure the realization of a plan but at least the outcome is discernible, explicit and inspires the imaginations and captures the hopes of participants. The product is also a physical creation. It is personal in that it is the result of personal effort, time and energy, and it is the product of a set of relationships that have formed to bring about its fruition. Multi-stakeholder processes, on the other hand, are much more likely to proceed to implementation because of the longer-term commitment that they require. Parties at the table are invested in the outcome and, because of their long duration, are able to work out all the details and barriers of implementation. Both charrettes and multi-stakeholder negotiations create opportunities for people to build relationships. The act of having to work together towards an end goal creates a bond of common purpose and allows individuals to appreciate the common humanity of team members with whom they would have never had reason to interact with. Worldviews that are otherwise completely alien become nuanced with the story of the human being who upholds them. It is through these kinds of interactive processes that differences of perspective could be bridged to culminate in collectively derived visions of sustainability that are truly inclusive.

Planners are not enlightened beings who are blessed with the sublime abilities of transcending difference and building relationships across difference. They work hard at knowing themselves and improving on their abilities. Learning from their example informs us that Empathic Leadership can be cultivated and nurtured. Some are naturally more capable in some areas than others but with a heightened capacity for self-reflection, each of the Sustainability Planners better understands and improves her and his personal, relational and strategic capability. Emotion and empathic ability is a sensor for relational activity and is the foundation of all efforts at self-improvement in each of the areas of visioning, community building, strategic thinking and action.

This research makes several significant contributions to the fields of sustainability and communicative planning. The following two sections summarize these contributions and lead to the final section discussing the implications of my research and findings to the teaching and practice of sustainability and communicative planning.

### **Contributions to Sustainability Planning**

Using Empathic Leadership to study the practice of sustainability sheds light on several important issues affecting the discourse in the sustainability literature generally and in the sustainability planning literature specifically.

### **1 - Vision is Paramount in Sustainability Planning**

It is becoming increasingly difficult for theorists to encapsulate the entirety of sustainability in a definition that captures the complexity and the competing imperatives inherent in the condition. Sustainability Planners are not deterred. They embrace the quagmires and the paradoxes and cull the multitude of directives to sculpt a compelling vision. This vision fuels them. It inspires them, and becomes a rallying cry that draws others to the cause. The vision is also an ideological foundation from which the Sustainability Planners derive purpose. It is an epistemological lens through which they assemble meaning and an emotional spring from which they draw passion. The precision of the vision is not important, but it works best when it strikes that balance between capturing people's imaginations while resonating with their hopes and fears, and being grounded in sufficient reality that it could guide action on the ground.

### **2 - Sustainability Planning is Biased Towards Environmental Issues**

The common core of the visions amongst the Vancouver Sustainability Planners is a mixture of distress and apprehension about a deteriorating global ecology and a determination to work against further deterioration. Concern for the environment is sometimes closely coupled with social and economic concerns but those continue to be secondary. The most developed ideologies and the most refined policies are those relating to environmental sustainability. Perhaps it is the environmental genealogy of sustainability that continues to cultivate this bias. Perhaps this bias stems from the Modern prejudice that has us thinking that we can manipulate the physical world and mold it to our needs but that achieving social justice and economic parity is beyond the limits of our imagination. Whatever the case this imbalance is undermining the ability of sustainability visions to reach and resonate with the entire spectrum of Vancouver's diverse constituents.

### **3 - Sustainability's Inclusive Vision is Exclusively Derived**

Vancouver's Sustainability Planners do subscribe to social sustainability's directive of participatory and open process but the planners' visions, with all their calls for participatory process, tend to be exclusively derived. The vision of inclusive process in which all the stakeholders and constituents affected by a decision are invited to attend is not commonly upheld. The planners design the processes with little or no contribution from community members or potential participants. Clearly the process of being open has to begin somewhere, but when a consistently small group decides on the timing, the manner, and the extent of participation, then it becomes increasingly difficult to achieve meaningful participation. To insure greater participation by a larger cross section of society, greater inclusion is necessary from very early on in the design and implementation of planning processes.

### **4 - Sustainability Verges on Dogma**

An internal tension exists in sustainability planning as it does in Empathic Leadership in relation to strong and unwavering visions. Sustainability can verge on dogma when its champions persist with their version of the vision despite the suggestions, feedback and influence of a larger constituency. In the case of Vancouver's Sustainability Planners, their visions become imposed when they are not infused with the full participation of their constituencies. There is no question in their minds that their work is for the ultimate benefit of the majority of residents of the area, if not, by extension, the world. In the absence of a broad consensus about their sustainability mandate, however, this attitude of knowing

what's best for everyone is dangerously similar to the dogmatic approach of rational comprehensive planners of the Modernist era. We need to be cautious as practitioners, as teachers and as writers to not inadvertently adopt sustainability as the new "truth" that we uphold as a sacred doctrine. No matter how malleable its definitions are, sustainability will not be the last word on urban planning.

Yet, ironically, sustainability may not be dogmatic enough. There is a running joke amongst sustainability students that what we really need is a sustainability minded benevolent dictatorship. There is a parallel worry that we as human beings will always be reluctant to choose a course of action that will cause us any kind of deviation from our lives of luxury and enjoyment. We would therefore need to be forced to make the difficult lifestyle choices that are thought to be necessary to avert ecological disaster. This research did not set out to assess Vancouver's overall sustainability, or its sustainability relative to the other cities. Based on the slow and variable progress towards the visions of Vancouver's Sustainability Planners, I could subjectively assess Vancouver's success in achieving sustainability as marginal. On Pearce et al.'s scale of measuring sustainability in terms of achieving economic and natural capital over time, Vancouver would likely earn a score of weak sustainability (Pearce 1993). This does not denigrate the work of the Sustainability Planners I studied; rather it highlights the magnitude of the challenges they face and amplifies the need for cities and urban regions to support their kind of work.

### **Communicative Planning**

Empathic Leadership's contribution to communicative planning is self-referential in the sense that much of Empathic Leadership is derived from communicative planning theory. However, by infusing the descriptive theories with prescriptive ones, and by integrating theories from related disciplines I was able to apply a new perspective to analyzing the work of planners. My findings therefore add another layer in understanding the work of communicating planning, particularly as it relates to contested public resources and competing ideologies, as is the case with sustainability planning. My results and their implications reaffirm the groundbreaking research of John Forester, Leonie Sandercock, Patsy Healey, Judith Innes and James Throgmorton. My research also makes important contributions to their work in the five following areas.

#### **1 - Communication Is Constant In Planning**

Many authors have long established the prevalence of communication in planning work. It is no longer useful to ask if planning work is communicative work. Communication is constant. The vast majority of work done by Vancouver's Sustainability Planners is communicating. It is not even a question of when it happens, for it happens all the time. The pervasiveness of communication demands that we explore deeper questions of process. How does communication happen? How does it vary with varying contexts? How can its success be measured and improved? The answers to these kinds of questions are essential for aiding planners in enhancing their capacity to engage citizens more effectively and to engage an increasingly broader cross section of society.

#### **2 - Emotions Are Recognized As Being Important But Are Poorly Integrated**

Another area demanding reciprocal learning between theorists and practitioners is in the management of emotions in planning work. Vancouver's Sustainability Planners are quick to acknowledge the presence and effect of emotions in their work, but they do not seek to

uncover them or understand their subtle workings in an ongoing or systematic way. Those planners who deliberately incorporate emotional content into their projects do so by investing tremendous amounts of time and energy. Although emotional self-awareness and expression will always require time, space and energy, further research is necessary to help guide planners to more effectively integrate emotions into decision making processes.

### **3 - Conflict Management is Strategic and not Constant**

Conflict management faces similar challenges to emotional inclusion. It requires time and energy and is quick to suffer in the absence of either. When the conflict threatens progress or when it is very much a part of the planning decision then it is formally addressed and afforded its due attention. The ongoing day-to-day conflicts, particularly those internal to an organization, are less readily resolved. They are not afforded the same level of importance as broader stakeholder conflict, or inter-organizational conflict. This is not surprising given the limitations of time and resources but these conflicts do build up, and, as Frost's research suggests, can negatively affect the productivity of an organization (Frost 2003). Planning theorists and practitioners can benefit from making stronger connections to conflict management literature and draw lessons for incorporating mechanisms for systematically removing toxicity from the planning environment.

### **4 - Communicative Planning is Subsumed in Relational Planning**

The above weaknesses in communicative practice reveal the importance of contextual conditions that significantly expand our understanding and analysis of communicative planning. Planners build relationships over varying periods of time with individuals and organizations. They build rapport and trust and rely on them to achieve the kinds of breakthroughs of understanding that communicative planning suggests. The communication, in its dynamic forms and multiple components, occurs over long periods of time. Any single communicative act does not carry the burden of having to be ideal in its openness, respectfulness, fairness, inclusiveness, equality, clarity and use of different types of knowledge. It is free from the demands of ideal communication and frequently fails to achieve anything remotely resembling the ideal. It is merely an instant in a longer, larger relationship comprised of countless communicative exchanges and it is the quality of the relationship that affects the ability of parties to work together.

### **5 - Communicative Planning Requires Creativity to Enhance its Inclusiveness**

The communicative ideal fails in another important dimension. Communicative planning, by definition, favors those who have been privileged enough to develop communicative skills. Facility with language and debate is not equally distributed in society. Those who are skilled tend to already be privileged. They are highly educated, they are professionals and they have been socialized into thinking that their voices are important and that people will listen to them when they speak. Those for whom life has been a process of being socialized into thinking that their voices do not matter, and that they are incomprehensible when they speak will naturally be less capable of expressing themselves. These challenges cross over to different modes of expression including artistic or graphic expression. This finding is not new but has significant implications for the democratization of decision making processes across multiple segments of a pluralistic society. There are numerous examples of creative planning processes that have deliberately sought to include eclectic forms of communication to allow for personal and cultural idiosyncracies. The work of Wendy Sarkissian is an excellent example of creative process design that draws out deep



prejudices through interaction, action and ritual (Sandercock 2000, 2003). The use of public art to foster community pride and healing, as exemplified by the work of Lily Yeh (2004) is a creative and successful form of engaging participation in areas of extreme poverty. These examples provide important lessons for sustainability planning. The challenge is to expand the use of these kinds of creative processes and to integrate them into broader sustainability visioning exercises that typically target mainstream society.

### **Implications for Teaching and Practice**

All the elements of Empathic Leadership and indeed the entire framework can function as a curriculum for teaching and a guide for practice. Each of the actions can be viewed as a learning objective around which pedagogical and practical programs can be structured. The three areas of action - the *personal*, the *relational* and the *developmental* - can all be applied back to the disciplines that helped define them in the first place. This research has taken small steps in a new direction for leadership research. It explicitly set out to provide a parallel perspective to that of the leaders by surveying those who are being led. The inconsistencies between the leaders' verbalized perceptions, my own perceptions as an observer and the perceptions of the staff and colleagues of the leaders, suggest that research conducted through the perspective of the leader alone is not enough. There are countless studies that analyze leadership actions in terms of performance outcomes but very few have included the voices of those who were being led. The Staff and Colleagues Survey was a small step in that direction.

The survey was an important source of information for highlighting the significance of certain attributes of leadership and their importance relative to other attributes. It was through the Staff and Colleagues Survey that strategy and relationship building first appeared as major components in the manner in which Empathic Leadership is practiced. That finding was very much supported by the words of the Sustainability Planners themselves. The questionnaire also revealed that the planners were not as well connected to their staff as they thought, or as they might like to be. Many acknowledge the importance of relating to different personalities in different ways but they also simultaneously acknowledge that in times of stress they are less likely to exercise empathic relatedness. Further research is necessary to reveal the degree to which the Sustainability Planners' self-perception matches the perceptions of their staff and colleagues about them. How might that match be improved? How might we develop strategies to address the tensions and the traumas that might arise after times of stress? It was not within the scope of this research to pursue these avenues but future research can offer important insights in this area.

### **Implications for the Teaching and Practice of Sustainability Planning**

Empathic Leadership contextualizes every interpretation of sustainability planning as one of numerous competing interpretations. The broad actions of Empathic Leadership with their focus on relating to others and understanding their perspective removes the tendency to revere sustainability as an imperative ideology uniquely equipped to save life on planet Earth. This detachment from the dogma, coupled with the analysis of the overall progression of sustainability planning action as presented through the pentad, allows us to see where sustainability planning has fallen short. The following three points seek to address key shortcomings in the current practice of sustainability planning, and areas of potential focus in the teaching of sustainability planning.

### **1 - Develop Ethical Reflexivity to Avoid Coercive Conduct**

The manner in which sustainability planning is championed, promoted and negotiated, sometimes in conditions of total transparency, and other times in relatively exclusive circumstances, demand that we pay much more attention to the ability of planners to engage in ethical self-reflection and deliberation. Behind-the-scenes maneuvering cannot be entirely eliminated but when such dealings occur in the context of grand visions of the perceived public good of sustainability, there is a danger of coercion and dogmatic manipulation of power and influence. Planning students need to be exposed to the kinds of dilemmas that they might come to face and they must do so in an environment that encourages ethical analysis and self-reflection. Researchers and teachers can lead the way by recording and documenting case studies and developing a language of ethical case analysis of personal deliberation on the part of the planners.

### **2 - Emphasize Inclusion and Diversity**

Sustainability planning must directly and fully acknowledge the challenges of stakeholder inclusion and the need to bring greater diversity into the process of developing and implementing sustainability visions. From the initial rise of social sustainability as an equal partner to environmental and economic sustainability, there has been a general awareness of the importance of diversity. The difficulties faced in achieving a commitment on the part of constituents who would have to help implement sustainability policies further highlight the importance of inclusiveness in decision-making. This inclusiveness, however, is proving difficult to achieve. Discussions, visioning and decision-making about sustainability in Vancouver, for example, continue to occur without the participation or representation of significant segments of the population. This shortcoming can be deliberately addressed through direct partnership with diverse groups and a reliance on these partnerships for the design and implementation of participatory processes.

### **3 - Emphasize Balance of Sustainability Spheres**

Practitioners can benefit from focusing their attention on the task of balancing the environmental, economic and social spheres of sustainability. Almost two decades have passed since the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987) popularized sustainability, and we have the benefit of being able to assess a variety of attempts at implementing sustainability. We are able to recognize and learn where and how the practice is falling short of the theory and a consistent shortfall is in the balancing of the spheres of sustainability. Researchers must either reassess the utility of the theoretical framework they are using to conceptualize sustainability or they must discover new ways of achieving this theoretical balance. In the absence of a perfect balance, theorists, practitioners and students need to be acutely aware of the tradeoffs they are making in foregoing balanced treatment.

### **Implications for the Teaching and Practice of Communicative Planning Practice**

Empathic Leadership is necessarily a set of actions designed to facilitate and improve communicative action. Every result and every finding in this work has implications for the manner in which communicative planning is practiced.

### **1 - Develop a Pedagogical and Professional Practice of Self-Reflection**

Following the above recommendation that we devote considerable attention to ethical self-reflection, a similar pedagogical and professional emphasis needs to be placed on self-reflection and self-awareness. For the Vancouver Sustainability Planners, self-reflection is

the seed of action, interaction and strategic development. It is an analytical tool used to assess the successes and failures of communicative work. By developing the capacity to mentally notice and record interactions and reactions in planning processes, students and practitioners would be routinely able to access information about their own communicative performance as well as that of others around them. By developing the capacity to reflect on that information and analyze the relationships between intention and outcome, and cause and effect, students and practitioners would be better able to improve on their own communicative work. A planner's capacity in each of the activities of visioning, engaging emotions, building community, employing strategy and implementing action, can be developed through the ongoing practice of self-reflection.

### **2 - Recognize and Promote Relational Skills**

The degree to which professional interpersonal relationships and relationship building are integral to planning work is the degree to which we must expend time and energy in planning curricula to develop relational skills. We need to recognize and promote relationship building skills as being critical for planning professionals. Exploring and analyzing the conditions through which relationships are built in planning practice would help students be better prepared for professional relationships. Students would also benefit from critically analyzing different scenarios and from practicing and working through difficult exchanges.

### **3 - Design Processes to Include Relationship Building**

Concern and inclusion of relational development need not be solely confined to educational experiences and needs to cross over into the design of planning processes. To enable bridge building across diverse perspectives, designers of process need to build resources and activities into their programs for building relationships between parties, particularly when none exist. Planning processes also need to be designed to be flexible enough to accommodate difficulties of communication and interaction as they arise. Self-reflection, emotional reflection, emotional expression, trust and relationship building all take time. They will not necessarily be a central component of every process but when the planners anticipate conflict they need to confront it through an extended design of the process and a creative engagement of the areas of conflict.

## **Implications for the Teaching and Practice of Planning Theory**

### **1 - Communicative Action is Embedded in Relational Action**

We need to begin systematically embedding all our analysis and exploration of communicative action in the larger temporal and situational context of relationships. Our research on planning work needs to consider how the relationships between the individuals engaged in communicative work affect the quality of the communication. How might relationships make our prescriptive and normative directives less relevant in the immediate context of every individual interaction? How does a communicative deficiency in specific exchanges rely on the reserves of trust and understanding that have developed in a relationship between two parties? How does this deficiency affect other parties in a communicative exchange that may not be privy to the larger relationship? Much of this happens at an intuitive level with seasoned planners who simply "know" how to behave in varying contexts, but if we are to understand and build on this intuitive knowledge we have to direct our critical gaze in its direction.

Communicative planning theorists have, from the outset, been self-conscious about the pitfalls of disengaging communicative acts from the systems of authority that shape social relationships (Healey 1992). Critique of communicative planning has centred around its seeming indifference to the political economy of interactions. Participants' connections to their socio-economic positions in society, and the degree of enablement that such positions enjoin, can not be severed through communication (Lauria 2000). Yiftachel and Huxley are also critical of concentrating on "micro-level" processes, communication and ethnographic descriptions (Yiftachel and Huxley 2000). They emphasize that these should always be understood within the larger "networks of power involved in the transformation of urban and regional geographies" (Yiftachel and Huxley 2000). This potential oversight of communicative planning is well understood by its proponents (Innes 1998; Forester 2000; Healey 2000). I am adding to the calls to contextualize communicative planning within socio-economic and political power structures, a call to contextualize communicative planning within relationship structures. The depth, strength and resilience of relationship bonds have just as much influence on communicative planning as do singular acts of communicative interaction.

### **2 - Communicative Planning Continues to be Selective and Strategic**

Planning processes continue to privilege certain forms and styles of communication, as well as gregarious and argumentative personalities over others. Theorists, such as Forester (1989, 1999) and Innes (1998), have explicitly acknowledged the challenge of accommodating diversity in communicative practice and have suggested methods for correcting power imbalances across stakeholders but the challenges of practice remain. We need to develop a wider set of tools and approaches to assist planners in being creative and dynamic in their accommodation of communicative diversity. Within the understanding that communication is central to action in planning work, is a related understanding that the currency of exchange is information (Innes 1998; Forester 2000). The production and transmission of information are imbued with judgments of authority and legitimacy. It is the planner's role, communicative theorists contend, to give value and authority to information and knowledge produced by the less powerful. Planners should likewise recognize the inherent biases of communicative exchanges towards those who are socialized, educated and trained to be experts at expressing their needs: the privileged.

### **3 - Renewed Emphasis on Ethical Deliberation is Critical**

The expanding domains of interaction and relationship building in planning work require planners to make ethical judgments about how they conduct themselves and how they maintain fairness, equality and transparency. Planners also have to traverse the fine line between legitimately building consensus in support of a collectively derived vision versus manipulating constituents into adopting the planners' own visions. The very act of determining the side of the ethical line on which the planner is operating, becomes particularly difficult around impassioned concerns over sustainability and social and environmental justice. Self-reflection will provide some insight to help planners' navigate this murky territory but theorists also have a role to play in providing ethical guidance. Analyzing and contextualizing actual, as well as hypothetical, case studies with the specific motive of dissecting the ethical implications of various courses of action would help emphasize the importance of ethical deliberation. Repetition of this intellectual exercise would also provide students and practitioners with the ability to engage in their own deliberation when facing difficult ethical choices.

Several questions about planning process would benefit from future research. One of the major findings of this research is that Sustainability Planners have to mediate between diverse perspectives and their own sustainability visions. That iterative process of cycling back and forth between a singular vision and plural or collectively derived visions is not very clear. How do Sustainability Planners make specific decisions about the inclusion and exclusion of the products of participation? Does everything produced out of participatory processes become an ingredient in the sustainability stew? How does this occur without diluting the sustainability vision to the point at which it becomes ineffective? There are also questions of process that have to do with the details of running participatory planning events that celebrate diversity. How would epistemological diversity be truly accommodated? What physical and procedural environments would be most welcoming to the greatest range of life experiences and perspectives? Answers to these questions are central to our ability to make planning processes truly participatory and democratic and would have a significant effect on the inclusiveness of sustainability visions.

The iterative relationship between theory and practice, and between knowledge and action, requires us to perpetually reassess our processes of training and socializing planners. For this research to have any effect it cannot simply remain in the realm of theoretical discourse that is read and understood. It has to be integrated into teaching curricula and to a lesser extent, professional development requirements for practicing professionals. Empathic Leadership provides us with a framework within which we can assess the details of communicative planning, and examine the capacity of practitioners to work across interpersonal, inter-organizational, interdisciplinary and intercultural contexts. The planning profession as a whole can benefit from exercising Empathic Leadership in reflecting upon its own position in society, and in building mutually enriching relationships of intellectual and pedagogical collaboration with related fields of knowledge, expertise and action.

Models of Empathic Leadership would vary depending on the environment in which planning or leadership is taking place. The attributes of Empathic Leadership can be emphasized in different ways depending on the cultural and institutional context. In the context of planning for sustainability in Vancouver, planners use Empathic Leadership by articulating a strong vision, engaging emotions to evoke passion and allay fear; building increasingly larger domains of community; strategizing to build empowerment and overcome obstacles; and acting to involve community groups in the creation and implementation of collective visions.

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### APPENDIX A – ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILES OF PLANNERS

The following are the mission statements of the organizations for which the sustainability planners work. Each statement is a reproduction of original content presented on the internet by each organization. It represents the face and the identity with which each organization chooses to relate to the public. Each of the Sustainability Planners has a graduate degree in subjects ranging from mathematics to economics to environmental science to education to urban planning and landscape architecture.

#### Larry Beasley: The City of Vancouver

The Current Planning Division provides professional planning services including urban design, development planning, rezoning and heritage management throughout the city as well as neighbourhood and project planning for the inner city. It is made up of the Current Planning Initiatives Branch (which includes Urban Design and Development Planning Centre, Heritage Group, Rezoning Centre and Current Planning Major Projects Group) and the Central Area Planning Branch (which includes Central Area Major Developments and Downtown Neighbourhoods Groups). Services and functions provided by the Division and the Director of Current Planning include:

1. preparing land-use and development policy, including conceptual plans, policy statements, official development plans, zoning and guidelines and rezoning analysis for approval by Council to implement Council directives and objectives;
2. providing information to property owners and other interested parties on Council policies and City by-laws;
3. exercising Charter Authority of the Director of Planning; and,
4. providing voting Member to the Development Permit Board.

(from <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/commsvcs/currentplanning/index.htm>)

### **Johnny Carline: The Sustainable Region Initiative at the GVRD**

The Sustainable Region Initiative (SRI) will provide a framework, vision, and action plan for Greater Vancouver based on the concept of sustainability that embraces economic prosperity, community well-being, and environmental integrity. The intention is for the GVRD to be the catalyst for a process which has many owners and many actors who are engaged in the task of providing for a better region for this and future generations.

#### **Introduction: What is the Sustainable Region Initiative?**

The Sustainable Region Initiative (SRI) is a comprehensive approach to building a pleasant, prosperous, and resilient future for the citizens of Greater Vancouver. Although begun by the Greater Vancouver Regional District, the SRI is not intended to be a single agency initiative, but is meant to be undertaken by everyone concerned with the future of this region. There will be roles for citizens, governments, business groups, social agencies, academia, and others. The SRI is not a single-purpose plan or strategy, but a conceptual framework-a management philosophy-that will determine how plans and strategies will be developed, adopted, implemented, and evaluated.

#### **What is sustainability?**

A new or region-specific definition of sustainability has not been proposed for the SRI. Since the late 1980s, when the term came into common use, literally hundreds of definitions have been broached. For simplicity, the SRI has adopted the World Commission on Environment and Development's 1987 definition: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Three key sustainability themes are:

1. a desirable long-term future, and the short- and medium-term steps needed to support that future;
2. an integrated approach that recognizes the need for mutually-reinforcing economic, social, and environmental considerations; and
3. the need to go beyond government and to engage a broad cross-section of regional society in the enterprise

#### **Why sustainability?**

First, sustainability integrates economic, social and environmental perspectives. Greater Vancouver enjoys many social, economic, and environmental advantages in the modern global context: a pleasant natural environment; clean air and water; a diversified and resilient regional economy; a global trade and tourism gateway function; a diverse and tolerant society; fair laws and sound institutions; well-designed and functional communities; and more. In effect, these qualities produce both a head start towards sustainability, and a responsibility to make it work.

Second, sustainability is a simple and prudent attitude towards long-range planning. For example, a secure and resilient future is a primary concern of the regional district in its role as a provider of major infrastructure services. The region invests hundreds of millions of dollars per year in maintaining and enhancing systems to provide drinking water, solid waste disposal and recycling services, wastewater treatment, air quality monitoring, regional parks, and more. The replacement cost of these systems is hard to calculate, but is certainly in the multi-billion dollar range - and some parts of these systems are probably irreplaceable. Our cities couldn't function without these systems. From a risk-management perspective alone, it is valuable to invest a bit of time and energy thinking about how we might keep these systems working properly over the long term.



## Appendices

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Third, sustainability links to a global movement that is transforming the perspectives of governments at all levels, international institutions, private corporations and non-governmental organizations. These transformations are a response to a number of significant social, environmental, and economic problems that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century-e.g., rapid population growth, atmospheric change, persistent pollutants, the beginning of the end of the oil economy, loss of species and habitat, and, primarily in the developing world, poverty, war, disease, and general social instability. The attempts to solve these problems will be mainly focused on the management of cities, since that is where half of the earth's population now lives, and where three-quarters or more will live by mid-century.

(from <http://www.gvrd.bc.ca/sustainability/>)

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### **Patrick Condon: The James Taylor Chair in Landscape and Livable Environments**

#### **THE MISSION OF THE UBC JAMES TAYLOR CHAIR**

We are a research and outreach organization that demonstrates how to design and build affordable, equitable, and ecologically healthy communities. We work with citizens and public officials to incorporate new and emerging policies for sustainable development into community plans.

#### **WE BELIEVE THE LANDSCAPE SITE IS TO THE REGION...**

##### **WHAT THE CELL IS TO THE BODY**

Just as the health of the human body is dependent on the health of the individual cells in it, so too is the urban region dependent on the health of the individual sites that comprise it. Yet this self evident fact has received little attention within a research culture more focused on problems than on places. We hope to partially redress this imbalance. As such we are exploring how site and neighbourhood design can influence the ecological, social, and economic health of the region.

#### **DESIGN IS OUR METHOD**

We have found that design can reveal then resolve the contradictions between competing sustainability imperatives. Design may not always be capable of producing the one "correct" solution to a problem; but design is an especially useful method for arriving at good solutions. Our world is in dire need of good solutions to the interrelated problems of environmental and social sustainability. We feel that the site is the best place to start.

#### **WE HAVE ADVANCED THIS METHOD THROUGH A SERIES OF EVENTS AND PROJECTS**

The design events and research projects described in this web site provide a number of potential solutions to the problems spawned by un-sustainable urban growth. We hope that these potential solutions will help the citizens of British Columbia and beyond create a more sustainable future for their children.

(from <http://www.sustainable-communities.agsci.ubc.ca/about.html>)

### **Daryl Fields: Water Use Planning at BC Hydro**

BC Hydro has embarked on a new program focusing on water management at BC Hydro facilities. Water use planning was developed by the BC government in response to ever-increasing competing demands on the province's abundant water resources. The overall goal is to find a better balance between competing uses of water that are socially, environmentally and economically acceptable to British Columbia.

BC Hydro is among the largest power companies in North America. More than ninety per cent of its electricity is generated by water powering turbines at 30 hydroelectric facilities on 27 watersheds around BC. The dams and reservoirs, used to store and regulate water at these facilities, affect fish and wildlife habitat, cultural resources, recreation facilities and water levels. They also provide benefits in flood management and economic development. Because effective use of water is such a fundamental part of the company's success, BC Hydro is highly committed to the water use planning process.

WUPs will be developed through a consultative planning process designed to consider economic, social and environmental values. Participants can include government agencies, First Nations, local citizens and other interests to ensure that water uses such as hydroelectric, industrial, recreational, community, flood management, and fish habitat are considered in reviewing facility operations. Those involved in developing a water use plan will assess competing alternatives addressing these interests to create recommendations regarding water management at BC Hydro facilities. Each water use plan, once authorized under BC's Water Act, will bound operations for each licensed facility.

(from <http://www.bchydro.com/wup/>)

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### **Cheeying Ho: Smart Growth BC**

Smart Growth BC is a provincial non-governmental organization devoted to fiscally, socially and environmentally responsible land use and development. Working with community groups, businesses, municipalities and the public, we advocate for the creation of more livable communities in British Columbia.

Smart Growth BC was created as a joint project of the University of Victoria Eco-Research Chair of Environmental Law and Policy and West Coast Environmental Law Association. The smart growth project aimed to nurture and mobilize a growing citizen movement addressing growth and sprawl issues around the province, and to provide sound alternative policy solutions to these issues. Smart Growth BC was incorporated as an independent non-profit society in December 1999, and received federal charitable status in January 2002.

We work with communities to:

1. Avoid urban sprawl by promoting compact human settlement that avoids unplanned growth and ensures efficient development
  2. Minimize the use of cars by encouraging walking, bicycling and public transit
  3. Protect the ecological integrity of urban and suburban areas
  4. Maintain the integrity of a secure and productive agricultural land base
  5. Promote adequate and affordable housing
  6. Preserve, create and link urban and rural open space
  7. Promote alternative development standards
  8. Ensure an early and ongoing role for citizens in planning, design and development processes
- (from [http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/index.cfm?Group\\_ID=3384](http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/index.cfm?Group_ID=3384))
-

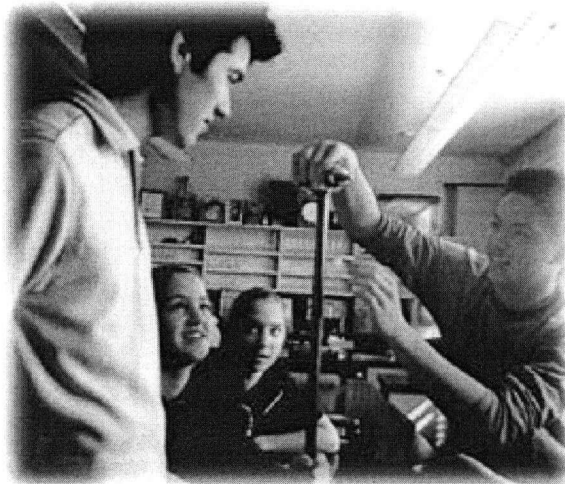
### Susan Kurbis: Environmental Youth Alliance

Environmental Youth Alliance is a non-profit, non-governmental charity dedicated to creating sustainable living alternatives. Our work consists of building rooftop gardens, developing urban agriculture options, environmental building projects and creating education strategies.

We believe that youth are a cornerstone of our community, and we promote this through programs focused on youth community involvement.

#### *Environmental Education*

Young people grow up in an environment saturated by advertising. Compelling stories promise us love, happiness and purpose, all for the mere price a consumer product. At EYA our goal is tell stories that instill a sense of respect for our interconnectedness with nature. Our hope is that young people will re-define their "success" as something other than material consumption.



#### *Greening Communities*

We grow up in cities, over 75% percent of us in Canada. We relate to concrete, supermarkets, indoor spaces. Everyday life disconnected from the seasons and the processes of nature. Our goal is to reconnect urban communities with natural spaces and techniques of food production. Our hope is that in the future, young people will start demanding clean organic food, and unspoiled natural spaces both within urban areas and without.



### *Youth in Governance*

Governments at all levels often make short-sighted decisions, that can obstruct future progress towards a sustainable society. Young people have a large stake our future and historically have and will continue to be a driving force in social change. Our goal at EYA is to provide young people with skills, contacts, and entry points to make a meaningful contribution to decision making processes.



(from <http://www.eya.ca/>)

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### **Sebastian Moffatt: Sheltair Inc.**

Through application of a Adaptive Management Framework, we assist communities / cities in identifying priorities and aligning their visions with their policies in a transparent way that allows for continuous feedback and monitoring. This results in more integrated planning solutions. Sheltair's application of this approach to the Greater Vancouver urban sustainability plan (citiesPLUS) won the gold prize on the world stage in 2003 and it has raised the benchmark for sustainability planning internationally.

Key services areas include:

- Long Range Planning for Urban Sustainability
- Benchmarking, Indicators and Target-setting
- Scenario Analysis
- Risk Management
- Integrated Infrastructure
- Consultation & stakeholder engagement

#### Greater Vancouver Regional District (2003)

In 2002 and 2003, the Sheltair Group led the development of a 100-year plan for a sustainable Greater Vancouver. This prestigious project was part of an International Urban Systems Design Competition, in which the Canadian team won the Grand Prize. The goal of the challenge was to look ahead 100 years, in order to better plan cities so that they can become sustainable over the long term. The project is a cornerstone for helping the GVRD update its Livable Region Strategic Plan and for the preparation of their Sustainable Regional Initiative.

Please visit the CitiesPlus website at [www.citiesplus.ca](http://www.citiesplus.ca) for further information.

(from <http://www.sheltair.com/urbanplanning.html>)

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### **Bruce Sampson: BC Hydro**

#### **Meeting the Challenge**

The North American electric industry has experienced dramatic changes in the past several years. Today, there are regional shortfalls in energy supply, wholesale electricity prices fluctuate daily, demand for electricity is increasing and deregulation continues to be a major issue in the energy industry. While British Columbia is blessed with an adequate supply of energy and BC Hydro has been able to maintain some of the lowest electricity prices in North America, predicting the future has never been more challenging.

BC Hydro will meet the challenges ahead. We are committed to our vision of being a competitive, commercial Crown corporation that provides superior value for our customers and our shareholder. As a result, the changes we have made and are making now are part of a long-term plan to ensure British Columbians have the energy necessary to meet their demands. With a commercial and business focus, BC Hydro will continue to provide our customers with superior service in the distribution of low cost, and reliable power now and into the future. BC Hydro management operates using several key policies. It is these principles and underlying values that will help us plan for the future.

#### **Meeting a Growing Demand, Efficiently**

British Columbians pay less for electricity than most areas in Canada and yet we use more energy on average. At the current forecast of future demand growth, British Columbia will increase its energy demands by approximately 1.7% per year for the next 10 years.

BC Hydro forecasts demand using population and economic forecasts as well as outlooks for BC Hydro's major business and commodity sectors.

BC Hydro is looking at a number of ways to meet this increased demand for energy. Our goal is to have the most economic and environmentally friendly resource acquisition program in North America in the next five years. We will do so by meeting new demand requirements from a combination of Resource Smart, Power Smart, Green and Alternative Energy and Customer Generation.

#### **Three Bottom Lines**

BC Hydro is accountable to British Columbians to take care of the environment, meet community needs and deliver excellent financial results. As such, we are committed to a path of sustainability whereby we balance, track and measure our performance along environmental, social and economic bottom lines. We believe better business decisions result by looking at these three bottom lines together and understanding that what happens in one area has effects on the others.

Our environmental bottom line looks at how we manage impacts from our operations, weigh environmental values with economic ones and plan for a future with more green energy in our system.

Our social bottom line includes how we ensure the safety and well-being of people – our employees, customers and the general public – and the health of the communities in which we live and work.

Our economic bottom line means making it possible to stay in business forever, by being an efficient, productive and profitable company and by providing value to our customers and the province.

(from <a href="http://www.bchydro.com/policies/tbl/tbl1263.html">http://www.bchydro.com/policies/tbl/tbl1263.html</a> )	
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### APPENDIX B – STAFF AND COLLEAGUES SURVEY

#### Sustainability Planner Questionnaire

The following survey was sent out to staff, colleagues, associates and board members of organizations for which the sustainability planners work. The respondents were identified through discussions between the planners and myself. Of the 76 surveys mailed out, 54 were returned. The surveys were sent by post with an accompanying self-addressed stamped envelope to ensure anonymity. Individual surveys were not identified in any way except by the name of the sustainability planner about whom the respondent is responding. Respondents had the option of self-identifying, by answering the last questions on page 4, if they were willing to be interviewed.

The questions were composed to reveal how the respondents viewed, interpreted and assessed the work of the Sustainability Planner about whom they were responding. They were also intended to reveal the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Sustainability Planners and to determine the relative significance of different aspects of leadership. Some questions were a rewording of other questions, especially in those cases that an issue was thought ahead of time to be significant. Multiple questions on the same issue allowed for multiple opportunities to ensure understanding of the question and a way of determining continuity of responses. The starting point for the questions was the Empathic Leadership framework and the different attributes of leadership that the framework suggests.

The questionnaire was revised in consultation with my supervisory committee and I conducted two test focus group surveys in which I asked individuals to fill out the questionnaire about an individual they knew, whom I named, and timed them. I then discussed the questions with the individuals and used their feedback to improve the clarity of the questions and the overall format of the questionnaire. On both occasions the respondents completed the questionnaire in 7 minutes or less.

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This is an anonymous survey about the work of **Jane Doe**

It should take no longer than **7 minutes** to complete

Please choose only **one** box that is the closest to what you think about each statement

**She strives to maintain a balance between social, economic and environmental sustainability**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She works well with different types of people**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She understands your perspective on the projects you are working on**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She knows her staff's strengths and weaknesses**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She resolves conflict**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She is an inspiring leader**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She can handle high levels of stress**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She is a good public speaker**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She is a good communicator**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She is a good listener**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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**She knows her own strengths and weaknesses**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She tries to build on her strengths**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She works on remedying her weaknesses**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She is aware of the personal struggles of her staff and colleagues**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She relates well to people**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She is approachable**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She relates well to people with different ideas and values**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She is self-reflective (shows evidence of having thought about herself in past situations)**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She can relate to different perspectives on sustainability issues**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She is aware of people's hopes and fears about trying to become more sustainable**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She is knowledgeable about the scientific issues related to sustainability**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She knows if you are upset**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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**You know when she is upset**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She controls her anger**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She apologizes when she makes a mistake**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She is open to suggestions**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She invites feedback**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She gives feedback**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She creates a positive work environment**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She motivates you to work harder**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She supports you in meeting your project objectives**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She is more effective than others in a similar position**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**She is effective as a champion of sustainability in the Vancouver region**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Which of the following characteristics are important in her doing her job?

**1** Please check as many boxes as you want

<input type="checkbox"/>	Knowledge of science and engineering	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Willing to take risks	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Having a strong vision	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Having a clear message	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Good decision making skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Good communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Good relationship building skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Critical thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Knowing one's own strengths and weaknesses	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Knowledge of economics	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Having a positive outlook	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Technical expertise	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Standing up to injustice	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strategic thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Delegating responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Knowledge of staff's capabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Making strategic alliances	<input type="checkbox"/>

**2** Please rank your top five choices starting with number one for the most important and number five for least important

**Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.**

### OPTIONAL

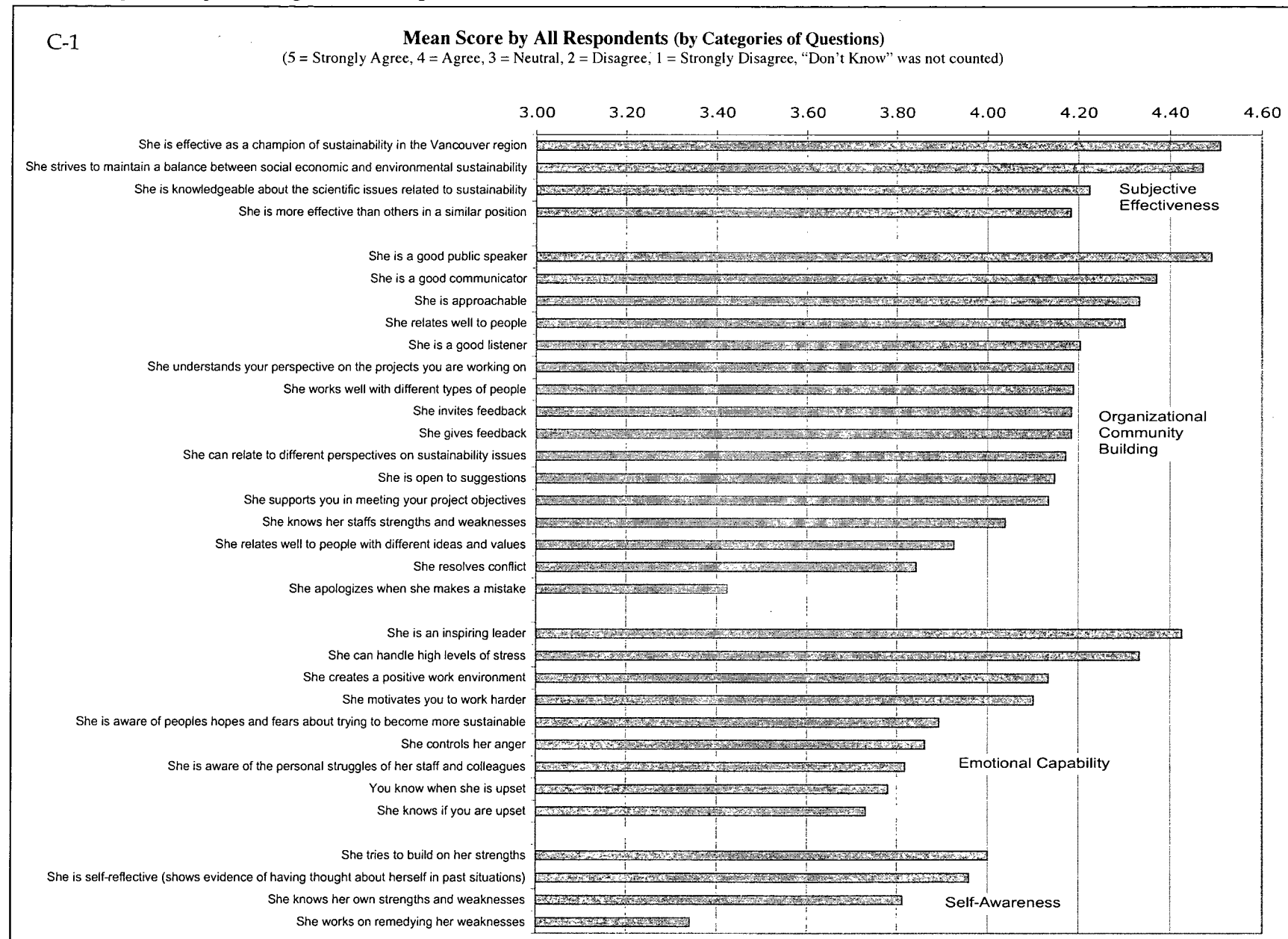
If you agree to being contacted for a short confidential interview  
please write your contact information below

Name
Email
Telephone
How would you like to be contacted
If you prefer you can contact me by telephone at 604-827-8205 or by email at senbel@interchange.ubc.ca

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### APPENDIX C - QUESTIONNAIRE DATA SUMMARIES

The following data outputs were generated using SPSS

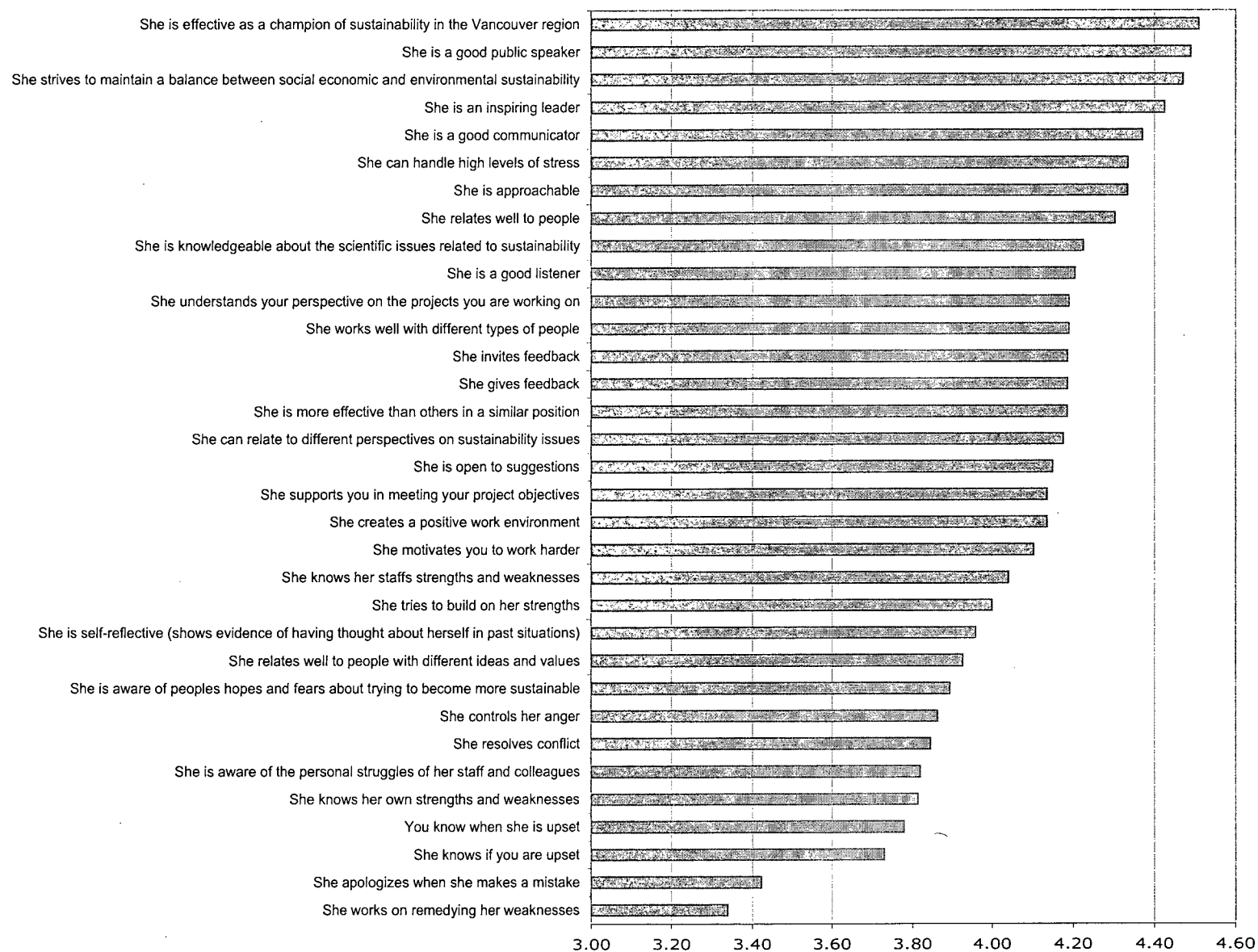


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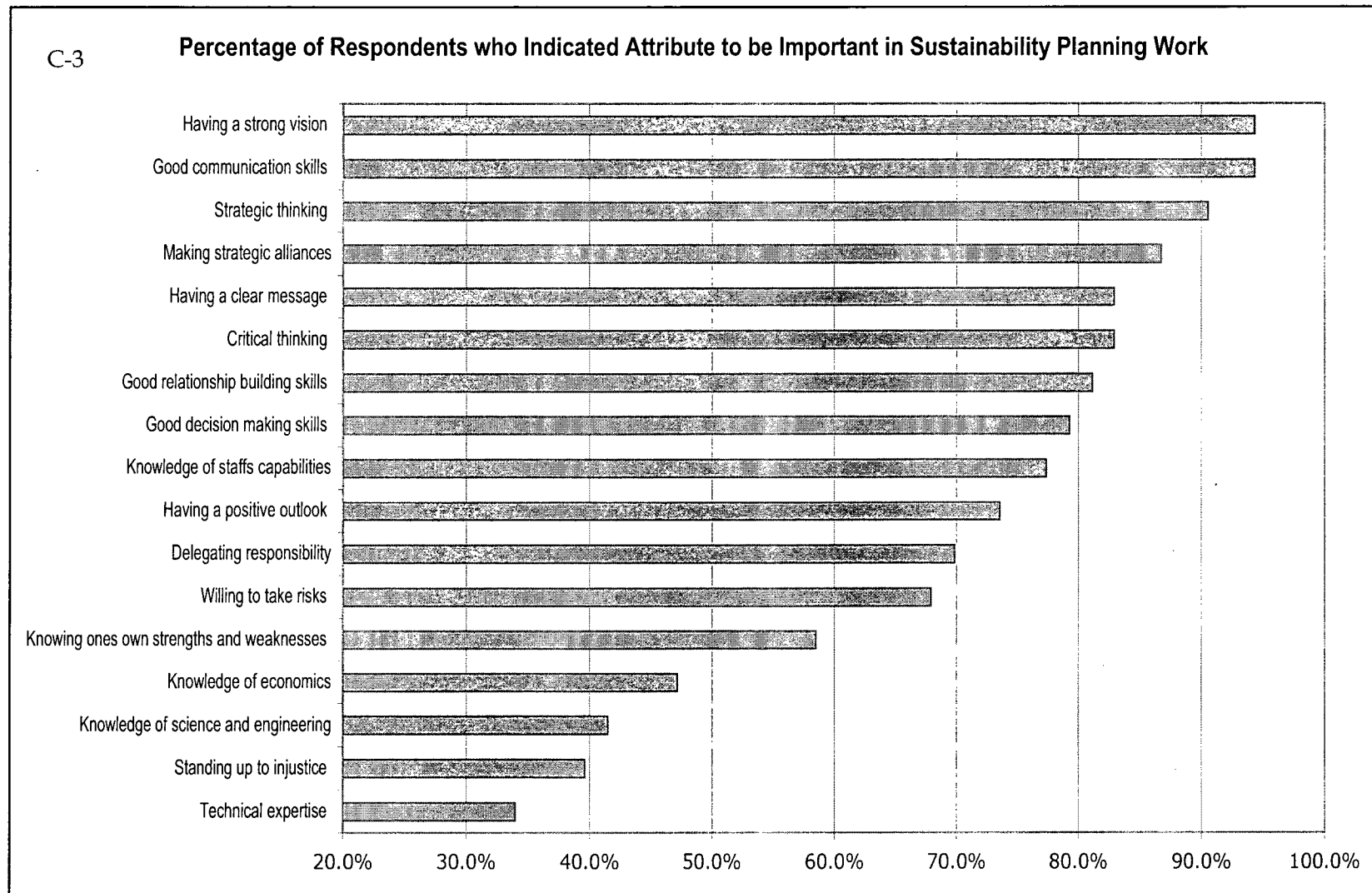
C-2

### Mean Score by All Respondents (descending order across all questions)

(5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree, "Don't Know" was not counted)

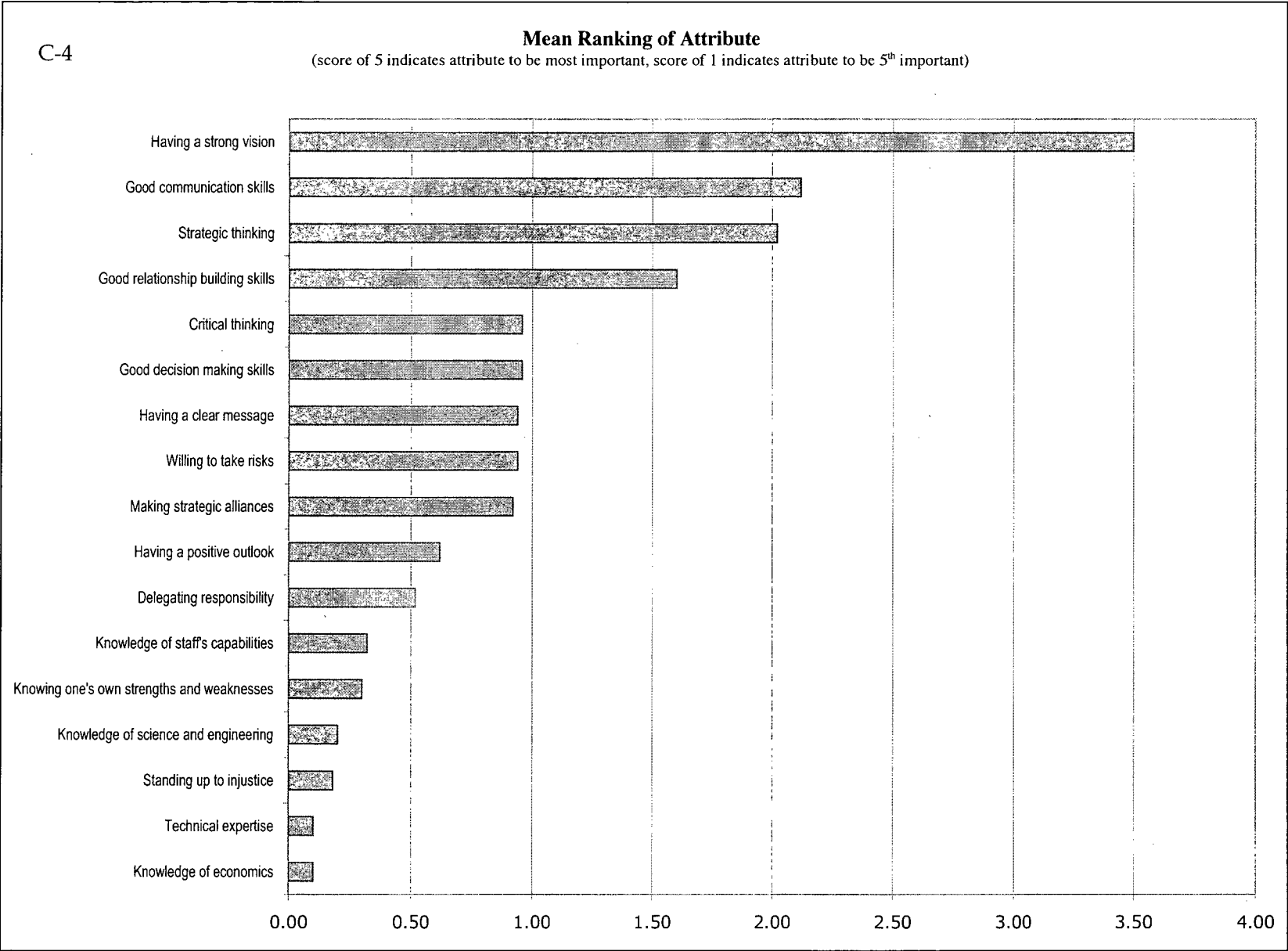


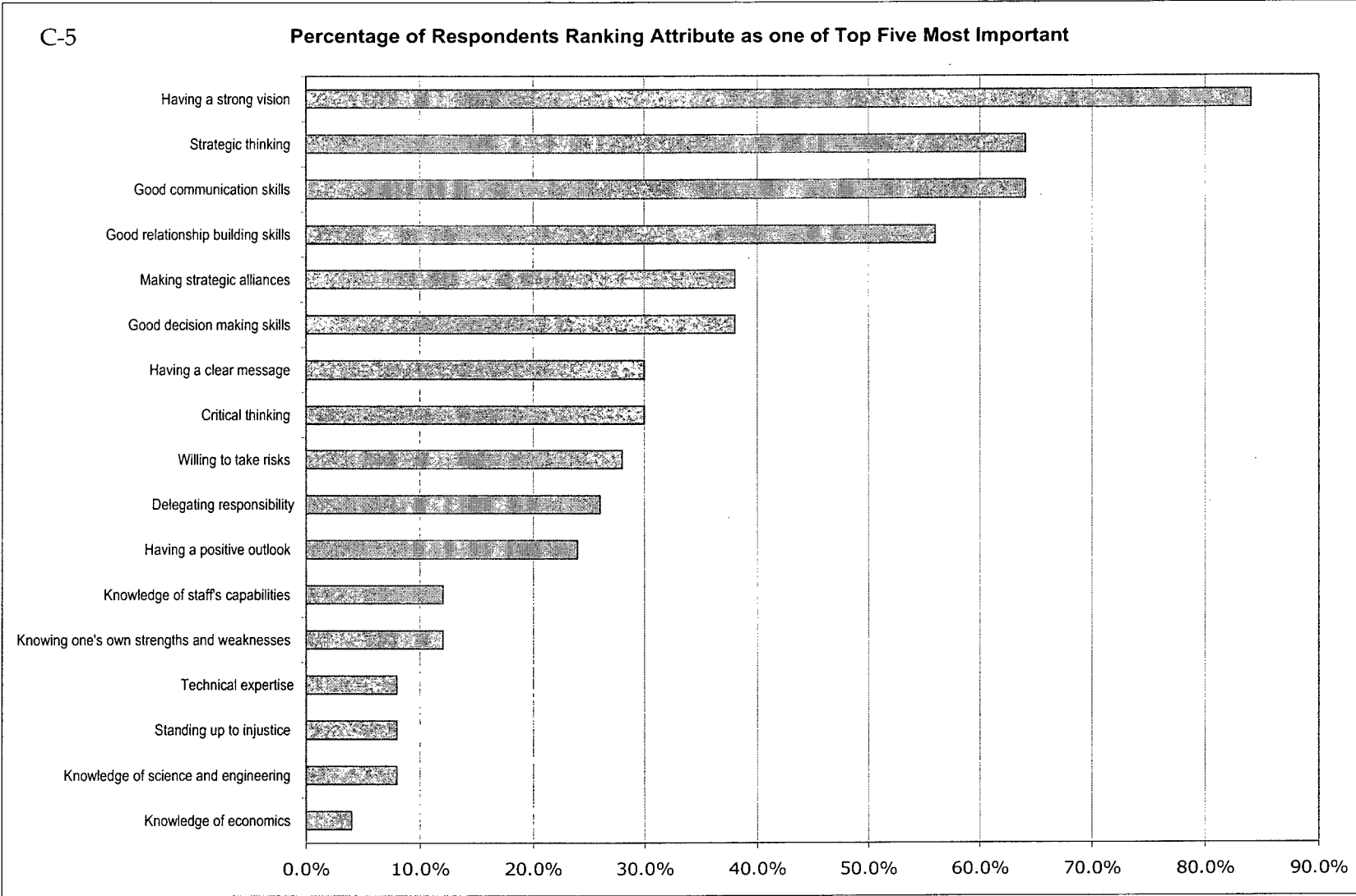
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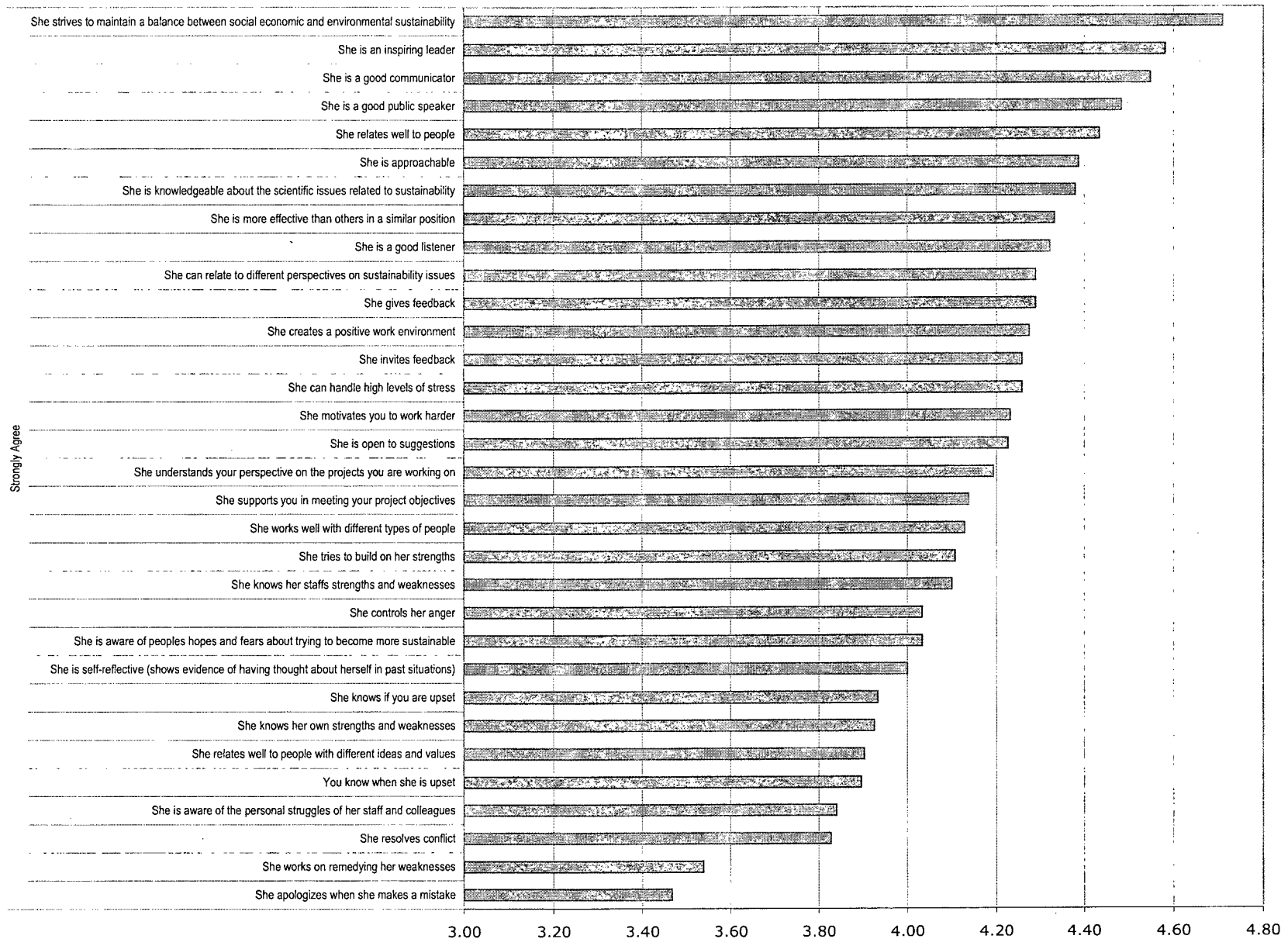




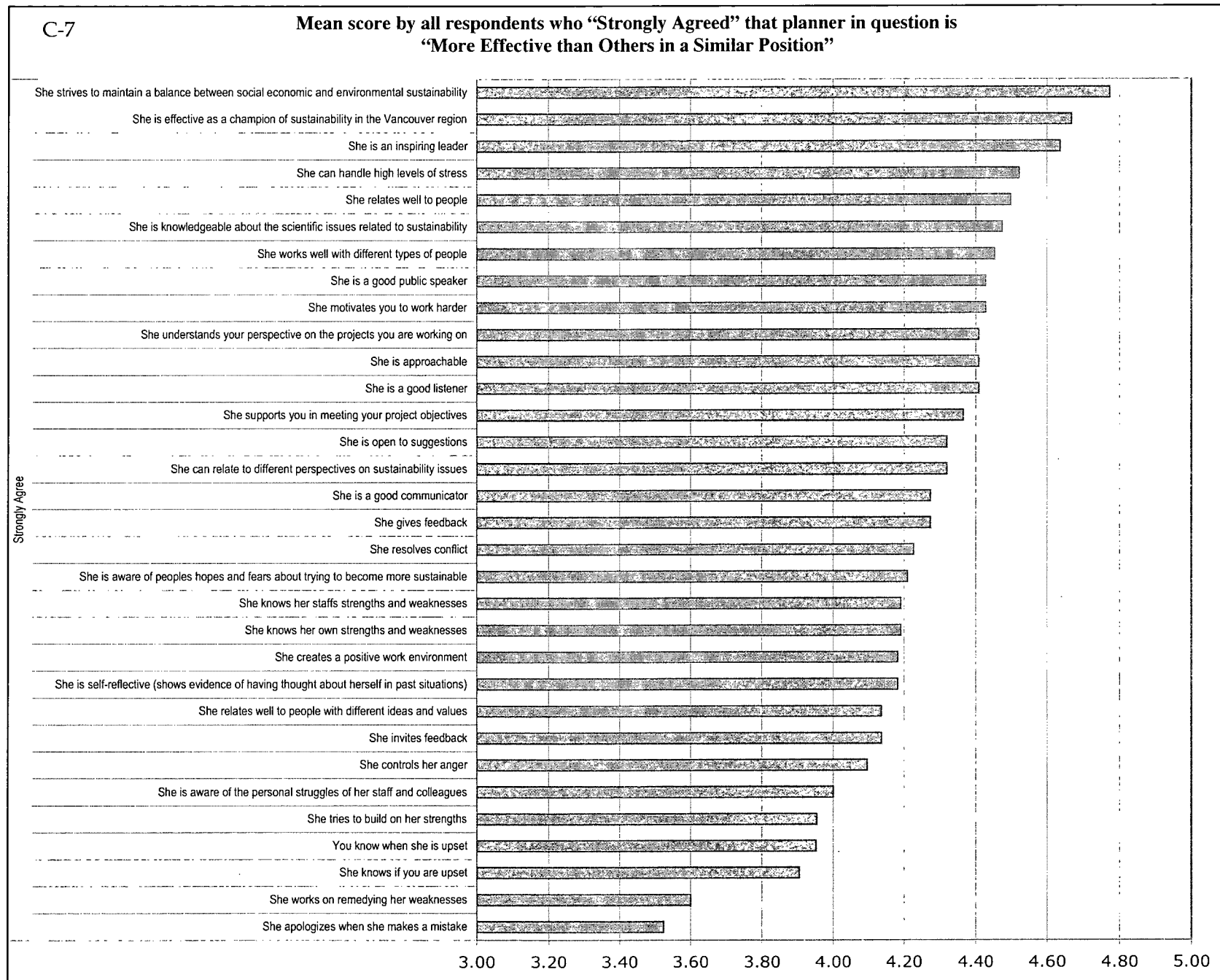
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C-6

### Mean score by all respondents who "Strongly Agreed" that planner in question "Effective as a Champion of Sustainability in the Vancouver Region"



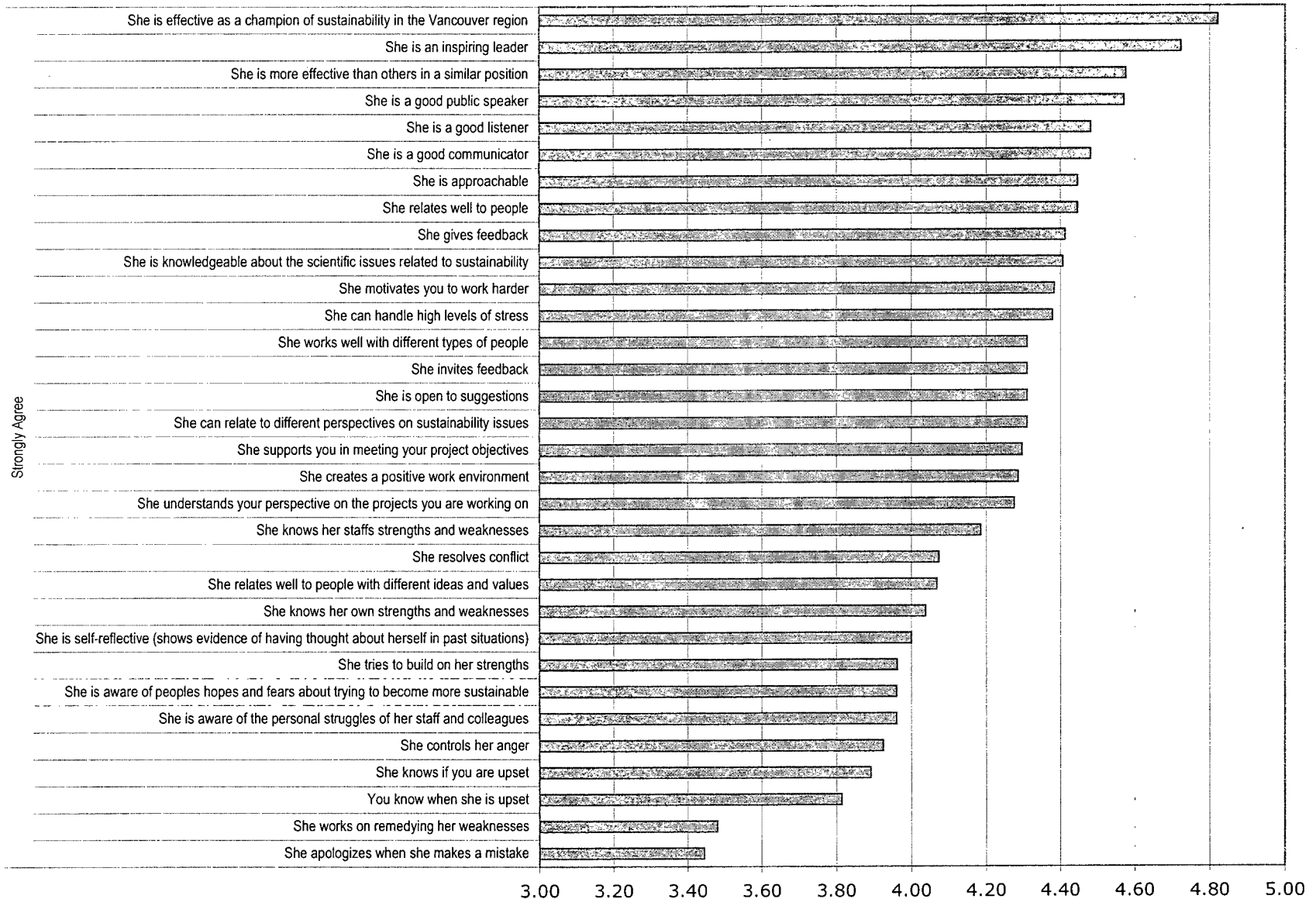
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C-8

**Mean score by all respondents who “Strongly Agreed” that planner in question strives to maintain a balance between social, economic and environmental sustainability”**



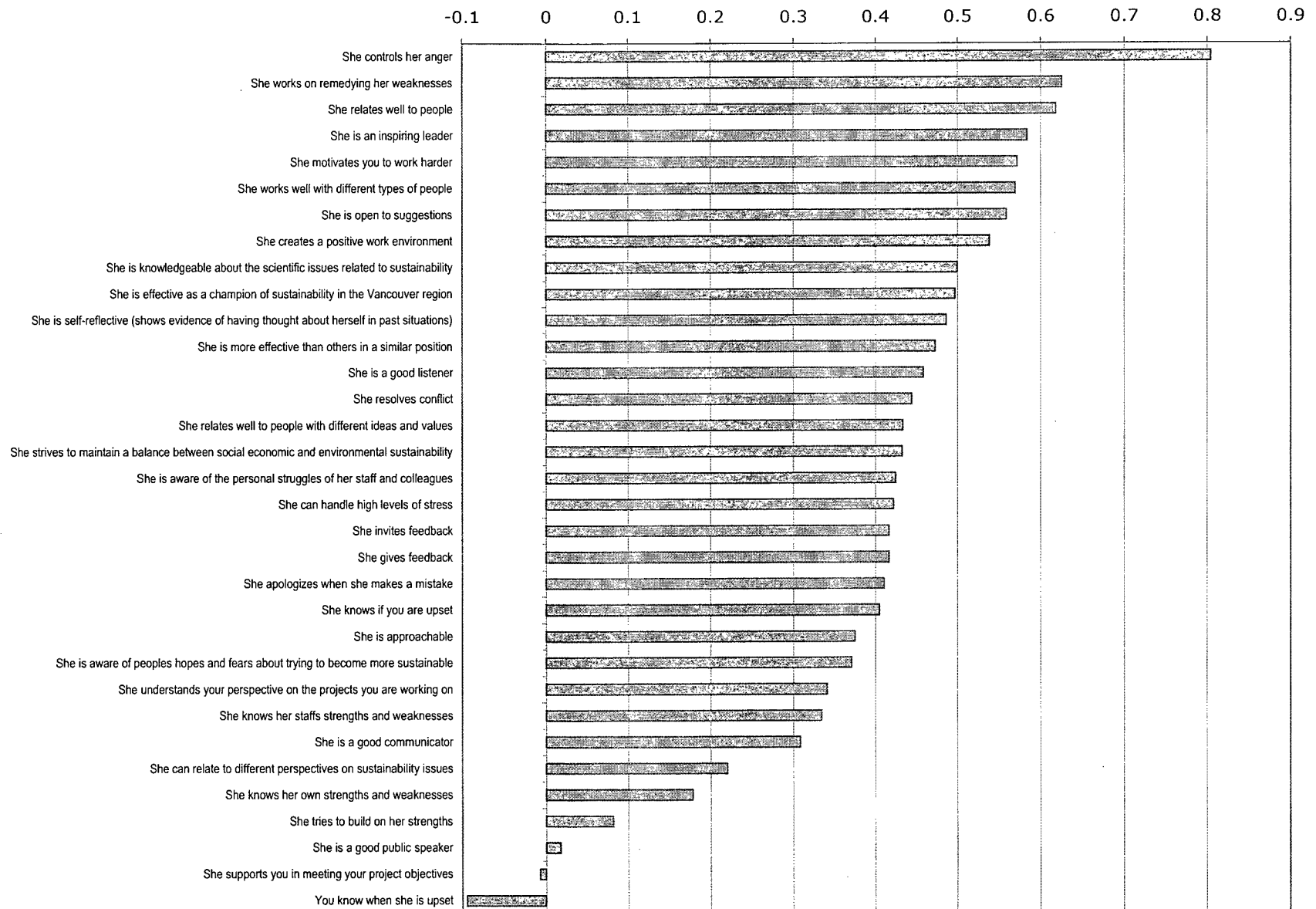
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### Effect on Average Score of Respondents Revealing Identity

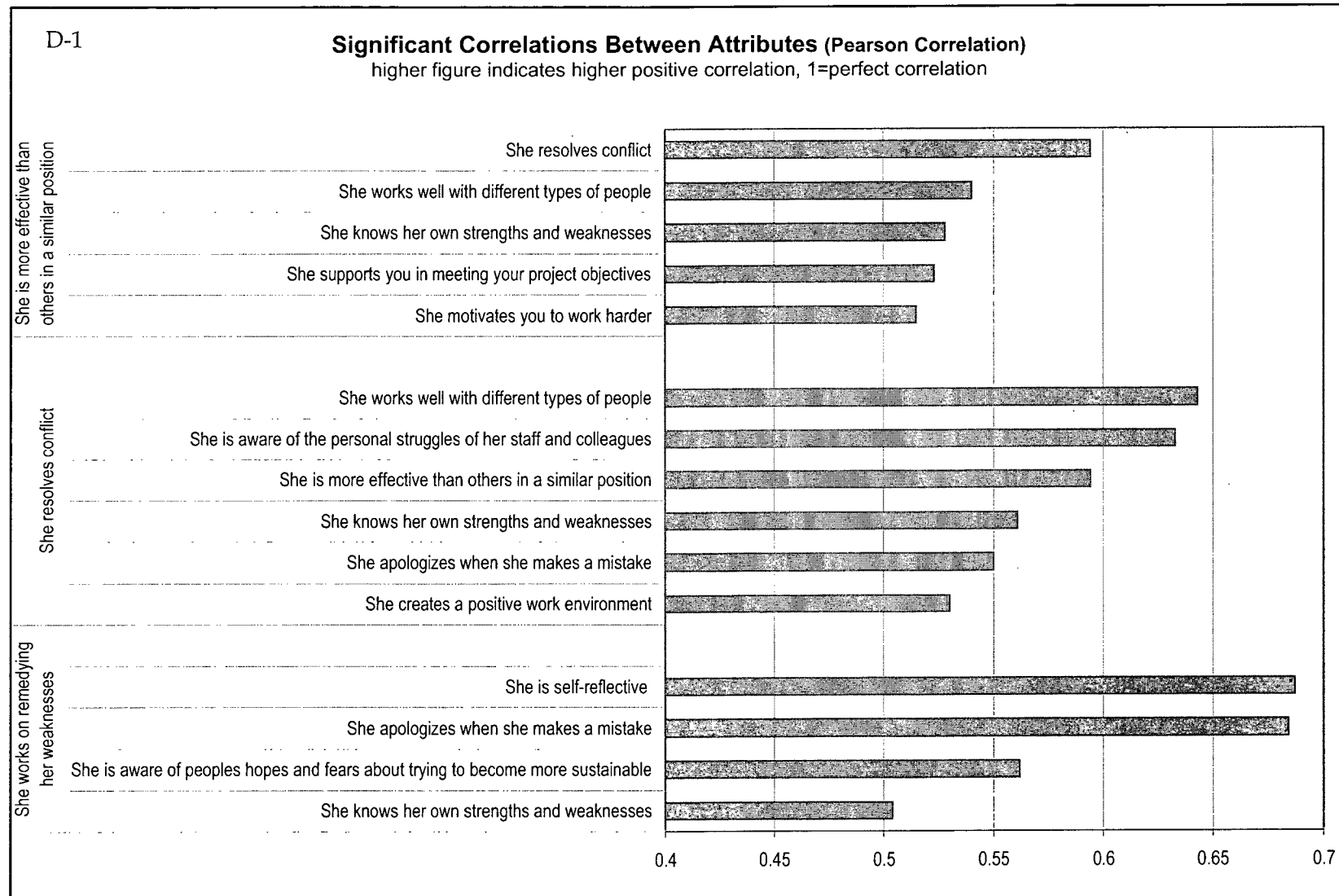
Mean affect for every question

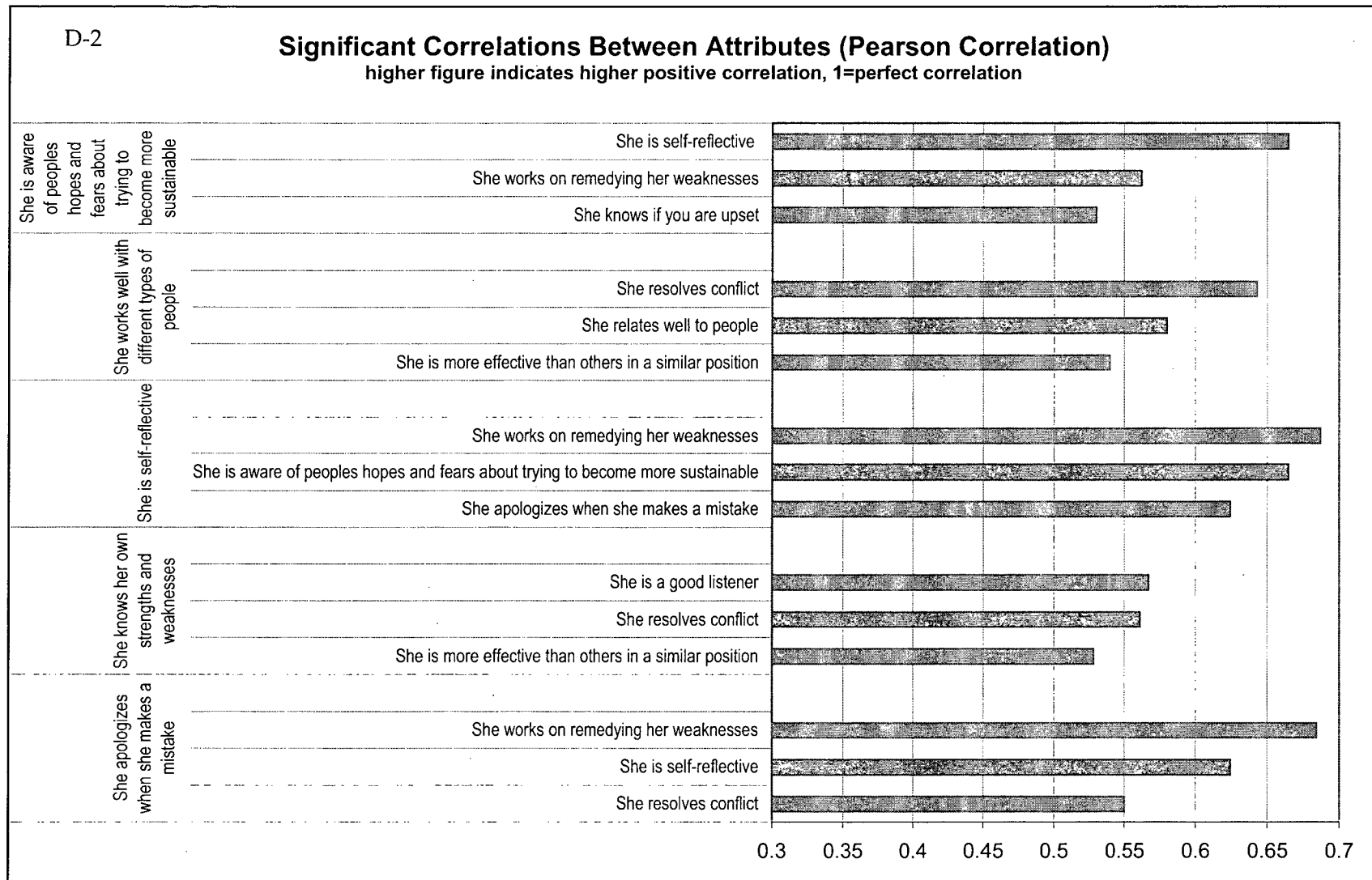
28 did not reveal identity and 23 revealed



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### APPENDIX D – CORRELATIONS BETWEEN VARIABLES







## Appendices

