

The Liminality of everyday life – Creatives in the context of the Islands Trust

by

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A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
Planning

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2023

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The Liminality of everyday life – Creatives in the context of the Islands Trust

Abstract

Creative communities excite and invigorate individuals and may also provide opportunity for some local economies. Although desired, this creative community profile is not to be taken for granted and may not be the right pursuit for all settlement areas.

Soon after the millennium certain urban theorists describing the shift of western economies from industrial to knowledge based, prescribed the use of culture-led initiatives focusing on artistic presence as an economic development strategy to attract knowledge-based workers. But such a strategy, using artists as an economic development tool, has proven to be more suitable to large urban regions than smaller, remote communities. In smaller settlements artists have a substantive role, making significant community contributions as opposed to just being part of an attraction strategy.

This research investigates the social, cultural and environmental planning context of Gabriola Island, a successful rural creative community, with special attention to the Islands Trust regional planning framework. The co-methodologies involved three years of ethnographic embeddedness relying on phenomenological hermeneutics. These embedded and interpretive methodologies yield very different results from previous studies and assisted in determining if any urban creative community traits shifted to the rural context.

Overall findings were captured in three analysis discussions. The Gabriola creative economy depends on a concept I introduce as community vernacular - which encourages creative communities to be built from within. This inquiry also suggests the presence and role of 'distinct place', a concept which captures the spirit of the community. The findings in relation to local governance point to a disjunction between the Islands Trust and the lack of planning instruments required to adhere to their 'preserve and protect' mandate. The Trust has failed to foster a planning and governance model for its rural communities, where the arts and creative industries can continue to thrive. The Islands Trust planning toolkit, service, scope and approach must be

updated with ecological and environmental best practices to fulfill its mandate thereby preserving and protecting distinct place and retaining the creative population. This important relationship between inhabitants and the region's natural features explains why islanders become islanders.

In summary, the embedded and interpretive methodologies contributed to the research by facilitating relationships with creatives in the community and allowing personal observation to experience the liminal nature of the planning and governance system. The theoretical concepts of community vernacular and distinct place will be developed further and ultimately contribute to rural cultural sustainability.

Acknowledgements

To my Committee:

Professor Pierre Filion (Supervisor)

Professor Kieran Bonner

Professor Dan Murray

Professor Angela Specht

A heartfelt thank you for your experience and insight into community life... and how academia will help articulate and address challenges for distinct place.

To Gabriolans:

Liz Ciocea

Thank you for being a tireless champion for animal rights, wildlife and island life.

Debra Shogan, Donna Kydd

Thank you for the numerous conversations and orientation to island life.

Gini Eder, Gloria Filax, Heather Menzies, Jude Briscoe and Sheila Haniszewska

Thank you for your moral support and help with housing.

Gabriola Interview Participants

Thank you for your time and insights to your life on Gabriola and why life here is so exceptional.

The professionals at the University of Waterloo Writing Centre

Nadine Fladd, Jane Russwurm, Elise Vist and Emma Dunn. I couldn't have done it without you.

To my four-legged partners in crime:

Kitties: Frisco (dear spirit) and Zoe (enduring spirit), and beloved Australian Cattle Dog: Haida

They made the cross-country move possible and embraced the west coast with noses in the air.

Dedication

To my parents

– Olga and Walter aka Ollie and Wally –

True champions of rural community development.

Table of Contents

<i>Author's Declaration</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Abstract.....</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>The Liminality of everyday life – Creatives in the context of the Islands Trust.....</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Abstract.....</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Acknowledgements.....</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>Dedication.....</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>viii</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>INTRODUCTION.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>What are the Linkages between a Creative Community, Distinct Place and a Planning Framework tailored for Rural Cultural Sustainability?</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>The Problem</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Background.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Focus of Research.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>The Case Study Context.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Methodological Value of Embeddedness.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Research Aims and Objectives.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>LITERATURE REVIEW.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Art, Artists, Culture-led Initiatives, Creative Industries, Local Governance, and Rural Cultural Sustainability.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Unpacking the Creative Economy Theory</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Seminal Culture-led Thinking.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Cultural Economics, Convention, and Gatekeepers of Art Worlds.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Concentration of Artists, Power and Research Directions.....</i>	<i>16</i>

<i>The Creative Economy and the Arts Deconstructed</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Community Uptake on Culture-led Initiatives and “Bandwagonism”</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>The Creative Economy Beyond the Metropolitan Area, Globalization and Identity.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Culture-led Initiatives and Local Governance.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>The Rural Artist and Creative Industry Workers</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Rural Cultural Sustainability and the research community - Gabriola Island.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>The Path of the Creative Economy.....</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Research Methodology.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Methods for Exploratory Inquiry in a Rural Creative Community</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Rationale and Research Gap</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Study Objectives</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Contemplating the Methodology</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>The importance of Transdisciplinary study of everyday life for Planners.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>The Research Design</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>Ethnography.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>The Embeddedness of Ethnography.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Interpretive Phenomenology.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Methodology and Data Collection</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>Archival Research concerning the Gabriola Island Petroglyphs.....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Document Analysis and Official Community Plans Comparison</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Primary Research: Semi-Structured Interviews</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>Participant Recruitment.....</i>	<i>55</i>
<i>Coding, Themes, and Phenomenological Hermeneutics</i>	<i>56</i>

<i>Participant Observation at Public Governance Meetings and Cultural Events</i>	57
<i>Limitations of Methodology</i>	59
<i>Presentation of Findings: The Data Analysis Papers</i>	59
<i>Cultural and Creative Strategies – Paper #1 (Section Four)</i>	60
<i>Place and Distinct Place – Paper #2 (Section Five)</i>	62
<i>Methods: Place and Distinct Place</i>	63
<i>Governance, Planning Systems and Rural Cultural Sustainability – Paper #3 (Section Six)</i> . 64	
<i>Section Three Summary</i>	65
<i>Creative Activity Strategies. A Rural Creative Economy Exploration.</i>	67
<i>Abstract</i>	67
<i>Introduction</i>	68
<i>Background</i>	70
<i>Researching and Analyzing the Creative Activity Context</i>	74
<i>A Varied, Cause-driven Culture of Creative Spirits</i>	75
<i>Creative Activity Strategies: Existing, Proposed and Potential</i>	79
<i>Long-lived Creative Activity Strategies and Doubting Thomases: the Isle of the Arts</i>	81
<i>Example arising from Community Vernacular – the Gabriola Commons</i>	82
<i>Home-based Businesses in the Islands Trust Region</i>	84
<i>Considered but Unadopted Exogenous Creative Activity Strategies</i>	85
<i>Local Creative Activity Summary</i>	86
<i>Sustainable Strategy: Community Vernacular and Slow Culture</i>	87
<i>Creative Activity Strategies -Conclusions</i>	90
<i>The Ecology of Distinct Place</i>	92
<i>Considering the liminality of land/sea/nature/genius loci and Creatives.</i>	92

<i>Abstract.....</i>	<i>92</i>
<i>Introduction.....</i>	<i>93</i>
<i>Background.....</i>	<i>94</i>
<i>Uncomfortable Knowledge and the Crafting of Distinct Place.....</i>	<i>97</i>
<i>The Methodology of Studying Interrelatedness in an Ecological setting.....</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Historic Art Forms on Gabriola Island.....</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>The Theorists and the Truths from Gabriola Island</i>	<i>103</i>
<i>Commonalities, self-expression, supportiveness and spirituality.....</i>	<i>106</i>
<i>Threats to Gabriola Island.....</i>	<i>108</i>
<i>What makes a place a place like no other?</i>	<i>112</i>
<i>Conclusions</i>	<i>115</i>
<i>‘Preserve and Protect’ – a salient strategy for nurturing rural creative communities?</i>	<i>118</i>
<i>Crafting a suitable Planning Framework for Rural Cultural Sustainability.....</i>	<i>118</i>
<i>Abstract.....</i>	<i>118</i>
<i>Introduction and Background to Study Region.....</i>	<i>118</i>
<i>Research Methodology.....</i>	<i>122</i>
<i>Four Claims about The Islands Trust of British Columbia</i>	<i>123</i>
<i>Claim 1: The priorities of the Islands Trust Planning Unit are dated and not structured to ‘preserve and protect’ as emphasized in the Islands Trust Act.....</i>	<i>123</i>
<i>Willful Blindness, Using Planning Tools and Clear Cutting</i>	<i>125</i>
<i>Claim 2: The operations of the Islands Trust organization concerns itself more with administration than with Land Use Planning best practices.</i>	<i>129</i>
<i>Claim #3: Local Planning Services (LPS) tasks are set by Local Trust Committee (LTC). Without an ecological planning framework ‘preserve and protect’ is not assured.</i>	<i>134</i>

<i>Claim #4: The Official Community Plans in many Islands Trust Area communities are outdated and are not written as comprehensive, visionary documents.....</i>	<i>140</i>
<i>OCP Components One and Seven – Housing.....</i>	<i>143</i>
<i>OCP Component Two - Land Uses and Public Utility.....</i>	<i>144</i>
<i>OCP Component Three - Public Facilities, Schools and Parks; Waste Treatment, Disposal Sites.....</i>	<i>144</i>
<i>OCP Component Four - Sand and Gravel Deposits.....</i>	<i>144</i>
<i>OCP Component Five – Major Roads and Water Systems.....</i>	<i>144</i>
<i>OCP Component Six - Hazardous Conditions and Environmental Sensitivity.....</i>	<i>145</i>
<i>OCP Component Eight - Reduction Targets: Community Greenhouse Gas.....</i>	<i>145</i>
<i>Conclusions.....</i>	<i>145</i>
<i>DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS.....</i>	<i>148</i>
<i>What are the Linkages between a Creative Community, Distinct Place and a Planning Framework tailored for Rural Cultural Sustainability?</i>	<i>148</i>
<i>The Problem</i>	<i>148</i>
<i>The Inquiry.....</i>	<i>149</i>
<i>The Research.....</i>	<i>151</i>
<i>The Research and the Findings overall</i>	<i>151</i>
<i>Concise Limitations, Problem Complexity and Research Design.....</i>	<i>152</i>
<i>Discussion and Conclusions.....</i>	<i>157</i>
<i>Creative Activity Findings.....</i>	<i>157</i>
<i>Creative Activity Summary</i>	<i>158</i>
<i>Distinct Place Findings.....</i>	<i>159</i>
<i>Distinct Place Summary.....</i>	<i>160</i>
<i>Governance Findings.....</i>	<i>161</i>

<i>Governance Summary.....</i>	<i>163</i>
<i>Concluding Statement.....</i>	<i>163</i>
<i>References</i>	<i>164</i>
<i>APPENDIX 3.A - Semi-structured interview questions</i>	<i>179</i>
<i>APPENDIX 3.B – Semi-Structured Interview Summaries</i>	<i>180</i>
<i>Appendix 6A - Islands Trust Governance Structure.....</i>	<i>197</i>
<i>Appendix 6B – British Columbia Official Community Plan (OCP) Components</i>	<i>199</i>

List of Figures

Figure 1 - Research Methodologies and Methods chosen for the Study.....	49
Figure 2 - The Gabriola Petroglyph	50
Figure 3 - The Gulf Islands of British Columbia - Islands Trust Area.....	52
Figure 4 - The Four Primary Research Groups for the Gabriola Study	54
Figure 5 - Relationships between Gabriola Bricks and Mortar Culture-led Initiatives	61
Figure 6 - Components of Rural Cultural Sustainability	77
Figure 7 – Elements of Community Vernacular for Building and Sustaining a Rural Creative Community	88
Figure 8 - Legislation and Policy Statements of the Islands Trust	133
Figure 9 - Islands Trust Governance and Planning Services	137
Figure 10 - Gabriola Island Hording Site - April 2018.....	138
Figure 11 - Three Overarching Questions in relation to the research inquiry.....	149
Figure 12 - Three Areas of Research Inquiry.....	150
Figure 13 - Exploratory Research Outcomes.....	152
Figure 14 - Areas of Research - Interchangeable.....	154
Figure 15 - Areas of Research - Interaction	155
Figure 16 - Research Areas – Distinct Place forms essential relationship.....	156
Figure 17 - Research Areas - Governance prioritized.....	157

List of Tables

Table 1 – Partial Census Profile of Gabriola Island. (Statistics Canada 2021).....	32
Table 2 - Profile of Interview Participants	55
Table 3 - Creative Activity Strategies and Creative Individuals on Gabriola Island	81
Table 4 - Research Findings Tabulation.....	153

INTRODUCTION

What are the Linkages between a Creative Community, Distinct Place and a Planning Framework tailored for Rural Cultural Sustainability?

The Problem

In the past two decades academic theorists have positioned the presence of artists in a community as an urban economic attraction strategy to coax knowledge-based workers, dubbed as the creative class, to a locale (Florida 2002). These initiatives to attract artists became known in the literature as culture-led initiatives. Many global communities rushed to create an art scene without analysis. This bandwagonism caused internal community tensions by haphazardly shoe-horning culture-led strategies for the purposes of urban regeneration and creative class labour force attraction.

Not all artists or creative workers wish to live in an urban environment. Certain artists and creative industry workers have a propensity toward non-urban environments offering the opportunity to regenerate in nature daily. With the internet allowing wider geographic communication the idea of non-metropolitan creative activity is an area of research to be investigated. What ideas from the urban creative economy model translate to rural or non-metropolitan contexts? To explore nonmetropolitan areas a different approach looking at an already vibrant arts community, in the rural context and working backwards provided some insight. In the literature review it was important to include scholars deeply reflecting on the relationships between art and artists, and between artists and city planning since the mid-20th century, not just those theorists who considered artists as economic development pawns. Literature from Canada and northern England illustrate the local cultural ecology being taken for granted. Clear examples of bandwagonism began to appear in the literature about a decade after the initial reactive response to the creative class appeared (Vinodrai et al. 2012; Waterloo Regional Record 2014; Comunian & Mould 2014). Concepts of creative class attraction and implementation of flagship arts facilities took precedent over analysis and retention strategies of the local cultural ecosystem, its condition and sustainability.

This approach by community decision makers suggests that not all communities, regardless of context, have the foundation to nurture the arts. Furthermore, any thinking that art, culture and creativity are limitless resources available to all jurisdictions stands in question. This early observation ultimately led to a pivotal question: Which communities are well positioned to be culture-led? The idea that certain community characteristics shape the potential for art, culture and creativity led growth demanded further research.

To capture the rural arts in their purest form it was important to select an appropriate case study site. The intent was to find and conduct research in a rural location already thriving in arts and culture. The first research location considered was the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia, Canada with its historic context and creative economy demographic¹. Subsequently it became evident that Gabriola Island, British Columbia, a thriving rural creative economy, with the sixth largest rural concentration of artists in Canada (Hill Strategies Research Inc., 2010), had relevant research dimensions to offer². These dimensions involved the unique governance model of the Southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia, namely the *Islands Trust*. The study area offered a rich context for a planning dissertation. The combination of a thriving rural arts community with a unique governance model (with a mandate of ‘preserve and protect’) raised the third overarching research question. How does local government contribute to sustaining a thriving rural arts scene? What can we learn about this problem from the Gulf Islands case study?

Background

Artists and creative workers have long been contributing to their communities and regions alongside urban development. During the Great Depression (1929-1939) the social standing of the artist and craftsperson improved. After the war, the way artists lived ultimately changed priorities in North American city building (Becker 1982, 2008; Zukin 1982; Throsby 1994). New York City artists inadvertently created a cultural movement in the 1960s when they began living and working in industrial buildings. In response, the middle class became interested in loft living, subsequently largely displacing the artists; nevertheless, the impact of artists’ choices had

¹ The researcher visited the Annapolis Valley twice prior to finding the Islands Trust Area.

² The researcher lived on Gabriola Island from mid-May 2016 until mid-May 2019. This period is, therefore, considered the ethnographic research period for this study.

already influenced form in city planning. Policies related to the arts had become a national priority (Zukin 1982). Early in the millennium there has been a renewed movement to implement art and culture or culture-led initiatives, as it has become known in the literature, in every global community. This call to action to create an arts scene, by academic theorists (Florida 2002, Florida & Stolarick 2009, Currid 2009) was attractive to politicians and policymakers seeking a panacea for growth. As a result, there was limited critical thinking to discern if culture-led initiatives were a fit for individual communities, but instead the considerable reactions by city officials and planners to quickly implement the initiatives met with local concern.

With such an overwhelming response to the urban theorists assertions (Florida 2002, Florida & Stolarick 2009, Currid 2009, Sacco & Crocciata 2014) it was important to understand how these ideas might manifest in non-urban areas. In their study of Canadian non-metropolitan artists Bunting and Mitchell (2001) found that some artists prefer to locate in rural areas adjacent to urban centres. To date, however, the idea of artists and creative workers in a rural context has been addressed sparsely and, in some cases, superficially. Since early in the 2000s both urban and rural settlements have tried to implement culture-led initiatives to enhance their communities, yet not all have been successful (Peck 2005; Blum 2010; McGuigan 2007). A lack of understanding of the cultural sector has become evident. The rural creative sector is still not well understood. (Fleming 2009).

Focus of Research

The overarching pursuit that informed the research direction related to an alternative context for the creative economy. Would ideas from the creative economy be transferable from the urban context, where they were developed, to the rural context? The literature review yielded a second question. Should every community expect to be culture-led?

The outcomes of the embedded ethnographic inquiry may be amplified through the investigator's own lens – experience in land use planning systems and social entrepreneurship in the arts. This capability was supported by the literature review. Further exploration of the literature resulted in assertions that every community should not expect to thrive when attempting to implement culture-led initiatives. A community predisposed to creative activity success likely has a strong

foundation and support in the community for the arts, whether a deep history of the arts and culture, a vibrant art scene, or a combination of both. Has the relationship between local community, governance structures and the exploration of characteristics and attributes that encourage success in culture that economies, local community and governance been due to the governance policies or took place in spite of them?

The Case Study Context

One of the central themes of the creative economy theory suggested that the quality of the art scene in a community, a thriving presence of artists, was a magnet for creative economy workers. The next step in the research design was to select an appropriate rural research case study. The intent was to find and conduct research in a rural location already thriving with arts and culture. Gabriola Island, British Columbia, a thriving rural creative economy with the sixth largest concentration of artists (Hill Strategies Research Inc., 2010), would have relevant research complexities to offer³. These complexities involved the unique governance model of the Southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia, namely the *Islands Trust* (hereafter referred to as the *Trust*). The Trust was created by the Province of British Columbia in 1974 in response to the runaway subdivision of land in the region. The study area offered matchless context for a planning dissertation. The combination of a thriving rural arts community with a tailored governance model naturally raised additional research questions.

With creative people wishing to be surrounded by the natural world that rejuvenates them daily (Bunting & Mitchell 2001; Florida 2002) it was no surprise that artists had long been part of these rural island communities. The question remained about the linkage between the artists and their engagement and understanding of local governance, the Islands Trust. The Local Planning Services (LPS) is one of three operational units of the Islands Trust. Examining the state of the LPS became a key component of this inquiry to determine if rural cultural sustainability was possible under the 48-year-old Islands Trust model.

³ Gabriola Island is part of the Islands Trust, a land trust in British Columbia's Salish Sea, which was granted land use planning authority in the 1970s.

The object of the Trust is to preserve and protect the trust area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the trust area and of British Columbia generally, in cooperation with municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, other persons and organizations and the government of British Columbia.

(Islands Trust Act, 1996).

The robust intent of ‘preserve and protect’ was of significant interest for this research program. The Trust ‘preserve and protect’ declaration that presumably guides local government enables the study of an explicit intersection where creative activity and land use planning meet. Certainly, a jurisdiction with this level of commitment to the “unique amenities and the environment” (ITA 1996 part 1, item 4) could lead global thought on retention of a creative demographic tied to a concomitant willingness to steward the environment. The landscape and marine features of Gabriola Island offer such natural attributes desired by working artists.

The focus of creative economy research has been on the attributes of the creative economy and the needs of creative economy workers. What is seldom discussed in this creative economy development literature, however, is how a local government might prioritize and structure its land use planning functions to facilitate the attraction and retention of artists and creative industries. For instance, thoughtful local governance may encourage rural cultural sustainability when globalization has homogenized many treasured locales (Bonner 2012). There are only a few examples where those writing about the creative economy even mention jurisdictional governance. The need to raise the awareness of interrelationships among elected officials, community leaders, planners and the arts community exists (Lewis and Donald 2011; Cruickshank 2016; Fleming 2009).

The intersection of the arts, creative industries and planning is a recent concept. The parties involved have different life priorities. Since planning and making art involve different skill sets, it is not surprising that a planner in Fleming’s rural study asked, “Art is transformative, while business is a transaction, can the two ever meet?” (Fleming 2009, p. 72). In the same study artists speculated “that they differed from economic development actors because they did not prioritize economic success” (Fleming 2009, p.73). Taking up the complexities of culture-led directive in one’s community is a step that most communities have not identified and still do not understand (Grodach & Loukaitou-Sider 2007; Fleming 2009).

Methodological Value of Embeddedness

Since the idea of art and culture as a driver of economic development is not well understood, study of the phenomenon in a small community context would be undertaken with the commitment of embeddedness. The community was chosen for its population of artists, but little was known of its connection to knowledge-based work, known as the creative industries. It was important to me to separate artists and creative industry workers (i.e. web designers, architects, animators) into their own categories since artists do not always have the same earning capacity as those in the applied arts.

The ethnographic case study in British Columbia's Gulf Islands involved day-to-day observation of the rural island which had an established arts ecosystem: literary, performing, and visual, and a growing population of creative industry workers. Researching lived experience was important to the inquiry and helped to shape the research paradigm guiding this research. The process of getting to know the complexities of the island community was multi-faceted. The rural location had a plethora of characteristics that formed its creative context. These included (1) the geography and natural features; (2) the creative demographic and the ensuing networks, and (3) how the creative community identified the importance of natural features. Two overarching research findings were brought to light. The first involves the potential translation of creative activity elements from urban to rural and responding to uniformity in communities being culture-led. The second concerns the aspirations of the Island Trust governance model versus its reality.

The first findings illuminated the complexity and importance of social networks on the island and by example, Gabriola Island illustrated why not every community can be culture-led. Second, the Islands Trust has no consistent approach to 'preserve and protect' the Southern Gulf Islands. The threats, both exogenous and endogenous for the archipelago of islands are eminent.

Within the rural context the path to creativity is a sensory divergence from the urban context. This inquiry carried explicit concern for the artists as part of a creative economy, not as an attraction strategy for the creative economy and provided in-depth case study of how and where they made their lives in an island community beyond the Metro.

Research Aims and Objectives

The main research aim was to ascertain what urban creative economy attributes (Florida 2002) might translate to a rural creative economy. This overarching motive, to ascertain characteristics that support a creative economy within thriving rural communities, was broken down into three different areas of inquiry: determining Creative Activity Strategies, defining Distinct Place and examining Governance and Planning Systems for Rural Creative Communities.

The setting of the inquiry was an already thriving rural creative economy. The fact that this community had a unique governance system, where the island regional communities had been granted land use planning authority, allowed the research to take place at the intersection of creative activity and land use planning. This rural context offers elements so different from the urban context: in scale, geography and the environmental surroundings of rural islandness. The inquiry also encompassed finding insights and characteristics of rural culture-led communities. Finding the relationship between local governance and natural features was driven specifically by the research community. In the context of our rural island case study it was important to understand how planning systems impact the rural creative economy.

With the main research objective in mind, discerning if any attributes from the urban creative economy translated to the rural creative economy, the sections were set out: literature review, methodologies, creative activity strategies, distinct place, and governance systems for rural creative communities. Summaries of each section follow. The final three sections are those of research analysis for this dissertation.

The first section, the Literature Review, set out to understand the history and current status of how artists and creative workers function to sustain their lifestyle in first the urban context and then in a rural culture. To set the course of the discussion work of seminal theorists in the practice of art, cultural economics, and art as a change agent were examined. These works shaped the framework of the discussion to understand the artist's point of view in business, the struggle by economics to characterize cultural products and the contribution of choices made by artists. The current movement on the creative economy's impact on cities and current theorists work on the creative economy followed.

The purpose of this inquiry was to understand the rural creative's values and how they differ from those creatives in the urban context. As a result the second section, the Methodology, involved an in-depth case study of a rural Canadian island community teeming with creative activity, in the context of a local land use planning governance model. The combination of two qualitative methodologies, *Ethnography and Interpretive Phenomenology and Hermeneutics*, emerged as the approaches best suited to explore the life of creatives on a small island.

While the findings of the three analysis sections were being synthesized each evolved and was then developed with a specific theoretical focus.

The research objectives of the Creative Activity Strategies portion of the inquiry was to determine if any aspects of the urban creative economy would transfer to the rural context. Ultimately it was determined that there were very few similarities between how the urban and rural creative economies functioned and as a result there was very little knowledge to transfer between the urban and the rural context. Urban areas witnessed communities jumping on the creative economy bandwagon, trying to adopt an arts scene at whatever cost, demonstrated in their approach to amped up community arts programming to the promotion of building flagship arts facilities. Conversely, the rural community studied had its own creative life centred around respect for nature, purpose-driven livelihoods and local networks. The rural creative economy could best be operationalized by considering the principles of 'community vernacular' the theoretical framework emanating from the research findings.

The idea of a rural creative community being housed in a locale with 'distinct place' attributes originates theoretically from both the natural surroundings and the relationships of people that maintain the community. These residents value the notion of genius loci, the spirit of place, which is evident in both their respect for island history and natural surroundings. This type of rural cultural sustainability linkage, so tied to the land, does not often register on the creative economies in the urban context.

And finally when exploring the case study community with an existing unique governance system that envelops a creative population, it is important to ask how a planning and governance

model might be fostered for rural creative communities. There is significant intertwining between a creative community and the existing governance model detailed in the case study inquiry. These relationships are, in fact, a more accessible and important factor in small communities.

These valued and often elusive community characteristics are at risk. Without the artists and creative economy workers working toward a deep understanding of their unique local governance and its impacts, the actual attributes of the rural creative economy that drew them to the island communities may disappear.

This ethnographic research was conducted from May 2016 to May 2019 and will assist in identifying what factors are different in the urban and rural creative contexts and will bring life to the statements within.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Art, Artists, Culture-led Initiatives, Creative Industries, Local Governance, and Rural Cultural Sustainability

The broad motivation for this thesis has been to explore which ideas from the creative economy, an urban construct, might translate to the rural context, and if so, how? Gabriola Island, British Columbia was chosen for the research setting. (The study region has been introduced on p. 4.). This island represents a long thriving creative community with a unique governance model not found anywhere else in Canada (Guiled, 2014). The overarching purpose of this dissertation has been to identify and build a deeper understanding of the linkages and interactions that exist among culture-led initiatives, creative industries, local governance, and rural cultural sustainability. Taking the time to identify linkages and interactions helps to solidify the pathways to successful culture-led initiatives. The exploration was to confirm that culture-led initiatives cannot simply be dropped into a community, instead an investment must be made to build a rural creative community from the ground up. Gabriola Island provided a case study lens to weigh what attributes contribute to a successful rural culture-led community.

This section presents review of the relevant literatures and offers foundation for understanding how artists and creative workers function to sustain a lifestyle in a rural culture under a local, non-municipal governance model. Presented in three sections, first, in [Unpacking the Creative Economy Theory](#), we explore what is meant by the *creative economy*, a relatively recent theoretical framework in urban regeneration. Creative economy theory advocates for culture-led initiatives, namely the arts and presence of artists, as an economic development attraction strategy for creative workers; however, this approach has not been accepted as consistent or applicable in communities of all sizes. Included in this conversation are the voices of selected seminal scholars who contemplated art as work. The context is that of creative economy at the intersection of planning and cultural economics.

The second section, [Creative Economy Beyond the Metropolitan Area](#), presents responses to the creative economy framework, with scholars making a case for creative activity, set beyond

Metropolitan areas, in the rural context. Findings convey the power of the natural environment for creative people and the potential role local governance plays in preserving that relationship. The emphasis is on investigating a creative community fueled by a natural context—which represents a gap in the scholarly conversation.

[Gabriola Island, B.C. as a Rural Creative Community](#) comprises the third section of the literature review and is followed by [Section 2 Summary](#).

The literature review accommodates the wider conversation around creative activity that must be considered if the existing urban theoretical framework is to be translated with impact into an alternative context (i.e., a rural landscape). Resituating the ideas around culture-led initiatives and creative industries and reviewing a range of relevant academic, government and journalistic sources allows for a roadmap to be set for the detailed considerations involved in exploratory and observational research.

[Unpacking the Creative Economy Theory](#)

Unpacking the creative economy paradigm helps to understand how the idea spread quickly across the globe, with little critical analysis by the communities adopting it. The lack of analysis for suitability by the adopting communities explains how it was doomed to fail.

With a research focus on creative activity in the rural context, the literature review first required examination of concepts emanating from the creative city and creative economy literature (Landry 2001; Florida 2002). This evolved to engage scholarly responses to the creative city and the creative economy literature (Blum 2010; Peck 2005; Fleming 2009; Currid 2009; Comunian 2011; Donald & Hall 2014; Sacco et al. 2014)—an auspicious undertaking given that global response to creative economy theory has been widespread among scholars and the public. In overview, one of Florida's (2002) key directives to urban communities, specifically that they use art and culture as a strategy to attract a knowledge-based labour force, emerged as a critical driver. Scholarly response to Florida's call to action came from a range of disciplines: sociology, cultural and economic geography, anthropology, the political economy, management, economics, planning, community development and economic development.

Through examination of the literatures, it became evident that global interpretation from elected officials, community leaders, and planners demonstrated a lack of critical thinking and evidence-based grounding in proportion to the aggressive new programs and community infrastructure that were hurriedly initiated. Indeed, a movement to quickly and competitively implement creative strategies ensued among locales (Vinodrai et. al 2012; Comunian & Mould 2014). Many urban communities struggling with economic resurgence invited Florida (who commanded a five-figure fee) to speak at their booster events. The numerous reactive creative economy initiatives in global cities met with varied degrees of success and failure. Of note is that in 2017, 15 years after publication of his book *Rise of the Creative Class* (2002), Florida apologized for having played a role in inciting disparity among cities and city regions (Florida & Mellander 2018). He subsequently published a 2018 article that acknowledged creatives in the rural context (Florida 2018).

The following sections demonstrate the importance of revisiting and following the scholarly conversation around the relationships between art and planning. Florida, and the scholars who worked with him, considered those practicing in the arts to be part of a strategy yet never really invested in the trajectory of artists (Florida 2002; Florida & Stolarick 2007).

Seminal Culture-led Thinking

To try to make sense of the actual accounts of artists, their worlds and economic impacts, the work of three seminal researchers was explored. Two sociologists and an economist contributed to the discussion. The work of these three scholars constructs a foundation for relationships among artists, planning, and the economy that well preceded Florida's popularity and their work reflects early 'creative economy' thinking. First is Howard Becker, an American sociologist, known for viewing the cooperative nature of art as daily work (Becker 1982; 2008). Next is Sharon Zukin, also an American sociologist, who focused on the artist's social position, their housing choices and social change, all relevant to the planning perspective (Zukin 1982). Finally, is Australian economist David Throsby, who introduced cultural economics, thereby allowing the literature review to capture the ongoing struggle economists have with the idiosyncrasies of the cultural and creative sectors (Throsby 1994).

The three points of view often clash. While Throsby (1994) holds fast to the popular idea that “art is distinguished from other goods since it is created only by individuals” (p. 4), Becker (1982; 2008) revealed the myriad of activities and division of labour required, often including a range of players, to bring art forms to market. History informs us that during the Great Depression (1929-1939), both artists and craftspeople were recognized as part of the American labour force for the first time. Their social standing improved as a result of their involvement in the Work Projects Administration (WPA) during the second world war when they created unions for themselves (Zukin 1982).

The collective work of these three scholars demonstrates that art (and artists) are both a function and a driver of societal reform. It is often not clear to the general population that, in certain instances, art requires the division of labour (for the time needed to invest in its production). Another significant contribution that is often undetected is that art and the artist’s ideas shape urban form and evolving lifestyles (as others emulate the ‘cool’ lifestyle of artists).

The way artists think and where they lived challenged prevailing norms of work and location, thereby changing priorities in North American city building (Becker 1982, 2008; Zukin 1982; Throsby 1994). New York City artists inadvertently created a cultural movement in the 1960s by living and working in converted industrial and warehouse buildings, ultimately known as lofts. As the middle class became interested in loft living in the 1970s, many artists were displaced from their homes but not before “public discussion transformed policy toward the arts into a national priority” (Zukin 1982, p. 82). In the 21st century a third wave of artist impact aligns with the prevalence of a knowledge-based economy emerging and being articulated in North America (Florida 2002; Currid 2009). This relationship between the knowledge-based economy and the positioning of artists by theorists called for further detailed investigation. In the age of rapid technological and communication shifts, the range of locales where artists and creative workers can permanently locate has expanded (McGranahan and Wojan 2007; Fleming 2009).

Cultural Economics, Convention, and Gatekeepers of Art Worlds

This section is detailed to emphasize that the art world is often complex and structured, not an individual creative enterprise but instead art worlds are the creative component of a much larger machine – a collective creative force that is a massive economic driver, and one that comes with

social components like conventions, gatekeepers and tastemakers. It is a complex system that does not lend itself to simply be ‘dropped in’ to new places as city leaders had hoped.

Art has been distinguished from other goods, in the economic sense, largely because it is created by individuals rather than through industrialized processes (Throsby 1994; Currid 2009).

Difficulty remains, however, in defining boundaries around the arts industry and its contribution to a country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Stepping away from the economic lens, Becker (1982; 2008) reminds us that the inherent purpose of art is to invoke a response... an emotional or intellectual reaction for the work of art to be rationalized. Here the economist and the sociologist agree that “art is an extreme case of heterogeneous commodity since each unit of output differs from the other” (Throsby 1994, p. 4). Of importance is that getting an artwork to market involves a more complex supply chain than typically recognized, even by economists.

The fictional solitary genius, often associated with the production of art or the artist, is unrealistic (Stillinger 1991). For example, in the visual arts the creative process runs from the extreme of one person attempting to address everything—the inception of an idea, the production, the marketing—to the converse where each step in the process is done by different people. Given the potential for the division of labour, the obvious question becomes, “What is regarded as the irreducible core of what an artist must do?” (Becker 1982, p. 19). While this is not a question to be answered in the dissertation, the reality of complex production and supply chains in the art world must be acknowledged.

Becker (1982; 2008) suggests that in the art world conventions are often viewed like a framework. An artist’s participation is essential to the provenance of their works and is part of these conventions. “The artist works in the centre of a network of cooperating people, all of whose work is essential to the outcome” (Becker 1982, p. 25). On the other hand, departure from conventions may increase the artist’s freedom to choose unconventional alternatives and diverge from customary practice. An artist’s sales history, achievements, formal education and stage of career are attributes that contribute to success in their practice and in the marketplace. The art market, however, is a competitive and sometimes fickle entity. Its variables are numerous and inconsistent. In the mid-1990s Throsby identified the visual art market as having a series of

connected submarkets: the primary market which is highly decentralized and utilized by emerging and local artists; the secondary, including markets in significant global cities; and the highest level which includes an international market involving the major auction houses (Throsby 1994). Artists with a gallery relationship experienced normalized remuneration conditions for the first time (Zukin 1982). This hierarchical framework of visual art markets is useful for identifying the impacts that artists have on both local and global communities. Where artists locate not only affects a region from a cultural economic perspective, but the artist's choice of neighbourhood has been demonstrated to impact real estate economics. Zukin's research, for instance, showed how the artist's choice to live and work in New York City lofts influenced urban planning decision making.

Museums and galleries can and have played a primary role as gatekeepers in the presentation of culture and the marketplace of visual art, yet the interactions between artists and consumers of art are tightly bound to specific changes in urban planning principles in North America. When artists began to think outside the gallery setting and create large installation pieces, they formed cooperatives confirming a need for a collective alternative marketplace. Once the power of the artist's loft became ascendent (Zukin 1982), "[n]ewly affluent art collectors understood going to the artist's studio as a symbolic entrée into the upper class" (p. 93). As they became a part of this circle, art collectors themselves decided they wanted to live among the artists.

The literature review identified a number of ways in which the concentration of artists in a region has a tangible impact on revitalization, and in turn, on the type of research which needs to be undertaken to assist decision makers. The art scene in 1960s New York City supplies a quantifiable example. At that time, estimates of artists working in the city ranged up to 35,000. Census data one decade later, in the 1970s, indicated significant growth with 100,000 artists living in New York City (Zukin 1982)⁴. As the population of artists in the city increased, so too did the power of the arts in Post War America, transitioning from the aesthetic to the economic. During the same period the warehouses that had been artist's lofts became homes of the middle class. Now, in the 21st century, there is a renaissance associating artists with urban revitalization

⁴ The 2016 Canadian Census records 183,200 people in Canada who spend their occupational time at art over other forms of work.

(Currid 2009; Fleming 2009; Markusen & Gadwa 2010). In their appraisal of contributions that artists make to communities, Markusen and Schrock (2006) suggested that local policymakers have considered the arts a panacea for economic development since the 1990s. Conversely, as Elizabeth Currid (2009) maintains, although artists have been viewed as agents of change, little is known about *how* art works as an industry. To Markusen and Schrock (2006), the artists' contribution includes mainstream business. They describe the artist's influence in product innovation and determined that an artist's attention to detail raises the bar in the areas of design, production, and marketing. Artists' contributions have been recognized in scholarly work, but how do communities support the artists, and the arts and cultural sector? This area of knowledge is lagging.

The complex and structured art world is a significant economic driver with intricate social aspects. This system does not lend itself to be 'dropped in' to new places. Instead it is a complex socio-cultural ecosystem - one that must grow these relationships, supply chains, conventions, and rules of engagement. This ground up approach will be subtly different in each individual location.

Concentration of Artists, Power and Research Directions

Academic exploration in the creative activity literature and local governance is one of intersecting origins. Markusen and Schrock (2006) assert that local policy makers have considered the arts a panacea since the 1990s. Since relatively little is known about how art works as an industry (Currid 2009) or how rural creative communities come together (Fleming 2009) Gabriola Island provides an example of a celebrated rural island centre of the arts. It provides an apex for many of the loose ends found in the literature. Regional emigration by those in the creative industries has been observed as a steady trend since the 2016 commencement of my research. Gabriola provided a rich site not only for observation of rural creative activity but, as importantly, a model of local governance focused on preserving and protecting the very context that fuels artists and creative minds.

In the *Creative City* (Landry 2001) and *Rise of the Creative Class* (Florida 2002) the authors viewed the role of artists differently. The theorists often forgot about the agency of artists - that

artists have free will. The original value of artists creating art in their neighborhoods (Landry 2001) turned into a commodified cultural experience for the purposes of attracting a skilled labour force to cities and for entertaining visitors (Florida 2002; Currid 2009; Bonner 2014). Markusen and Schrock (2006) found that certain artists valued the cultural milieu in urban communities. In comparison, McGranahan and Wojan (2007) found that a region's natural amenities encourage the rural creative class to choose and locate in a specific community.

A 2010 study by Markusen and Gadwa, focused on reviewing arts and culture in urban planning through a research lens, highlighted three significant shortcomings:

- i. Knowledge in relation to what works in the creative city and cultural economy at various scales of community is sorely lacking (p. 379).
- ii. In most regions, cultural industry members have not banded together around public policy or planning issues (p. 380).
- iii. Much research remains to be done on constituents' roles in cultural planning and how the outcomes reflect their interests and access (p. 380)

Jim Lotz (1986; 1998) and Markusen and Gadwa (2010) agreed that artists often sought out communities that showed authentic support to those living an artistic lifestyle. These researchers concluded that committed decision makers and elected officials are in the position to craft policies to help organizations that support working artists, their training, and networks. The body of literature detailing connection between local governance and successful culture-led initiatives is thin, however. These shortfalls identified in the literature provided rich grounding for this thesis, situated in a creative rural context (Gabriola Island, B.C.) where a unique form of regional land use governance (The Islands Trust) is in effect.

The Creative Economy and the Arts Deconstructed

The popularity of the creative economy challenged ideas in relation to artistic creativity. The creative economy theory unwittingly moved the local and unique activity toward homogeneity. Some scholars insisted that those in the arts maintain their coveted position as society's creatives (Markusen & Schrock 2006), yet culture, cultural policy innovation and intellectual property prompted new conversation. The contemporary terms 'cultural industries' and 'creative industries' are not interchangeable (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt 2005). The definition of 'cultural industries' which included all the arts—literary, performing and visual—was expanded late in the 20th century, ultimately shifting to the new moniker 'creative industries' that now includes creative economy work activities. In turn, the term culture-led often refers to a range of development models and programs of varying scales (Sacco, Ferilli & Blessi 2014).

Creative work such as media and communication are presently included among the 'creative industries,' a clear marker of the changing notion of cultural industries, cultural policy and the creative sector. These transitioning definitions in the creative sector began in the mid-1990s (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt 2005). The primary changes in the cultural industries to the widening definition of culture made no mention of the pervasive work of Florida (2002). In fact, the term 'cultural industries' (Slaby 2011) was first renamed the 'creative industries' in the United Kingdom and Ireland during the period of Ireland's Celtic Tiger⁵ economy (Dowler 2004; Hesmondhalgh & Pratt 2005; Slaby 2011). The rise in creative activity during this period in Ireland was accompanied by Arts Council funding increases as high as 400% as cultural provision was promoted as one of the strong points of daily life (Slaby 2011). When describing the funding policy, Slaby noted, "as early as the 1990s the British Arts Council used the word 'investment' rather than 'subsidy'" (2011, p. 81).

Towards a much-needed comprehensive view of creative activity two examples can be explored to demonstrate the pitfalls of rapid adoption and the importance of considering the complexity of the phenomenon. Researching the rapid adoption of global communities mobilizing creative activity, Sacco et al. (2014) took a broad view, identifying three types of

⁵ Celtic Tiger Economy in Ireland mid-1990s to late 2000 (Slaby 2011).

fallacy in what they characterized as culture-led development. The first fallacy is the notion of Instrumentalism, originating from the artist attraction approach outlined in the Creative Class theory (Florida 2002). The second fallacy, Overengineering, is based on Porter's theory of Competitive Advantage. The third, Parochialism, derives from Sen's notion of Capacity theory (Sacco et al. 2014). The authors argued against the mono-causal nature of these culture-led development schemes and registered concerns about the lack of dynamic complexity thinking in considerations of culture.

Roberta Comunian focused on Complexity Theory in her analysis of the Creative City to provide an understanding of "connection between the urban space and the systems of local cultural production and consumption" (2011, p. 1157). She argued that the "cultural development of a city is a complex adaptive system" (Comunian 2011, p. 1157). Both Sacco et al. (2014) and Comunian (2011) emphasize the multiple views and consideration of systems in a creative culture and community. The transition of ideas synthesizing the creative economy and a focus on art and culture has not been seamless. Hesmondhalgh and Pratt (2005) identified tensions in the arts and culture sector around the insertion of commercial and industrial activity into traditional cultural policy regimes long characterized by legacies of romanticism and idealism (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt 2005; Markusen & Schrock 2006). In a comparable manner, Kieran Bonner (2011) used the term 'ethical collisions' (p. 53) when describing the loss of Irishness to global homogeneity which occurred during the Celtic Tiger period. The idea of 'ethical collisions' may be a useful rationale for those who support the conceptual separation of culture from the creative industries. The term 'creative industries' sought to establish a broadened nature of cultural and creative economy work that also included aspects of intellectual property. The Canada Council for the Arts, for instance, has included the creative industries in its arts mandate and funding programs. It departs from the context of scholarly literature and includes administering award funding for Architecture, a creative industry profession in the creative economy model⁶. The recognition of the need for articulation of the term 'creative industries' has, therefore, become an important idea in global cultural policy (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt 2005; Markusen & Schrock 2006; Slaby 2011), quite separate from the narrow culture-led initiatives of Florida (2002), with the "shifting

⁶ Canada Council for the Arts website (canadacouncil.ca)

boundaries between culture and economics and between art and commerce” (Hesmondhalgh & Pratt 2005, p. 1).

Community Uptake on Culture-led Initiatives and “Bandwagonism”

The synergies that laid the groundwork for the creative economy movement were diverse. Technological advancements of the 1990s had increased communication scope and capacity. The internet connected people across the world with a keystroke. As a result, the nature of work was changing. Those who sought alternatives to the urban environment became able to move further afield, away from congested areas, often fulfilling their location and lifestyle preferences (Mitchell 2004; McGranahan & Wojan 2007). Business could be conducted beyond the metropolitan areas in settings that had previously been considered rural or recreational. This migration was perfectly timed to rethink rural areas that were experiencing transitional pressures: the decline of family farming, rural school closures, and loss of local rural employment sources (Duxbury & Campbell 2009).

Alongside the discourse on culture-led initiatives that developed among scholars to describe Florida’s (2002) call for communities to engage use of arts and culture as a creative labour force attraction strategy (Sacco et. al 2014)—despite culture-led initiatives remaining a theory (Peck 2005)—literature review uncovered repeated examples of ‘bandwagonism.’

Bandwagonism is a term derived for this research from the bandwagon effect (Leibenstein 1950; Barnsfield 2020)—a term introduced through economics and adopted by psychology and political science.

By the **bandwagon effect**, we refer to the extent to which the demand for a commodity is due to the fact that others are also consuming the same commodity. It represents the desire of people to purchase a commodity in order to get into “the swim of things”; in order to confirm with the people they wish to be associated with; in order to be fashionable or stylish; or, in order to appear to be “one of the boys.”

(Leibenstein 1950 p. 189)

In practice, bandwagonism has been used to describe numerous situations wherein well-intended business and community leaders, elected officials, and planners took up the culture-

led directive by jumping on the bandwagon without having first articulated their own community's needs or employed evidence-based consideration of their local cultural ecosystem. Two examples of bandwagonism follow: one in the Waterloo Region in Ontario, Canada, and the other in Newcastle Gateshead in the United Kingdom. In both instances, researchers noted that community leaders moved on their own agenda without effectively engaging their own local cultural ecosystem of artists (Vinodrai et al. 2012; Comunian & Mould 2014).

Having become familiar with Florida's (2002) claims, the Waterloo Region Prosperity Council rallied for a new community organization for culture-led initiatives. They called this organization Creative Enterprise Initiatives (CEI). In 2010, the Region of Waterloo suppressed its Arts Council⁷ in favour of CEI. They considered this action an attraction and retention measure for their labour pool of technology talent based on an American consultant's report⁸. The Prosperity Council Task Force's pitch on CEI included language "reminiscent of the power of positive thinking" (Blum 2010, p. 76), and in 2011 they hired a CEO, called on private sector support for the arts, and gained access to all levels of government funding. Three years and 4.1 million dollars⁹ in spending later, local politicians and citizens cried for accountability for CEI expenditures. Vinodrai et al. (2012) concluded that Waterloo Region used an 'amenity perspective' in relation to their cultural sector, thereby creating a loss of social cohesion in the Region. "There remain issues and tensions related to differences between the traditional arts community and broader initiatives focused on the creative economy" (Vinodrai et.al 2012 p. 49).

Comunian and Mould's (2014) longitudinal study in Newcastle Gateshead, UK provides another research response to Florida's work and is suggestive of bandwagonism. Their findings attributed some disturbing disruptions to the local cultural ecosystem to lack of consultation with the community's working artists. In particular, their fieldwork identified that

⁷ The Waterloo Region Arts Council (2010) maximum operating budget was \$50,000. / year.

⁸ Model Communities Research, Janet Meredith Consulting and Westerfield Consulting

⁹ Kitchener Post 2014, *Waterloo Region Record*, 2014

The Baltic, a flagship art gallery with national objectives, illustrated a lack of focus on the region.

The Baltic really, tends to take a lot of regional money, but don't really invest in local people. The careers structures that they promulgate tend to be London bound, but the fact that we have the Baltic here, it's a question of how it is managed, what role is it expected to play...they haven't been focused regionally, London is the model, here are the stars we have to work with...it's not really thought through, that role of encouraging and developing local artists.

Artist and University Lecturer (Comunian & Mould 2014, p.6).

The expectation that investment in flagship cultural attractions will ramp up the local economy has the potential for adverse impacts on local cultural producers and their communities (Vinodrai et. al 2012; Comunian & Mould 2014; Sacco et al. 2014). If the local cultural ecosystem, inclusive of local professional arts practitioners, is not involved, then the positive impact on the local creative economy and its growth is likely to be limited (Comunian & Mould 2014). The study also found that the gaps between new cultural investments, institutional stakeholders, and the local ecosystem of cultural producers was not anticipated nor were they addressed when revealed.

Florida's (2018) "apology" acknowledged that his call to action *did* inspire the creative class but not a culture of diversity. Instead Florida situated his creative economy theory within the ideas of neoliberal shifts which was substantiated by the shift of the manufacturing sector out of North America.¹⁰ Part of the challenge, as Wethrell (2017) noted, is that "[t]he 50 largest Metropolitan areas house just 7% of the world's population but generate 40% of its growth" (p. 2). Hence, limited diversity, a crisis in the suburbs, and Florida's next solution: "Empower communities and enable local leaders to strengthen their own communities" (2018, p. 2). In short, the argument can be made that Florida's first set of recommendations to communities was not universally applicable, and his next set was more a generalized issuance lacking in a solid recovery strategy. Both sets of recommendations invited flawed interpretations and, not infrequently, hastily undertaken initiatives. As a result one would ask: What communities are best placed to be culture-led? Should there not be an authentic foundation for the arts in

¹⁰ In the Pacific Northwest these neoliberal ideas shift away from the resource economies of logging, milling and mining.

communities that pursue this direction rather than on-going responses to largely untested theory?

The Creative Economy Beyond the Metropolitan Area, Globalization and Identity

There is a lack of published examples of the relationship between jurisdictional governance and the context it sets for the creative economy and local creative activity. The researchers of smaller communities have realized that the language and indicators used by Florida (2002) supported metropolitan areas and suggested that smaller centres do not have the same attributes as metropolitan areas (Lewis & Donald 2010). Rural communities are different. Defining the term rural begins with the Canadian census which offers a definition that rural is anything that appears outside the metropolitan area¹¹. As one drills down into the census information the population size of 10,000 people and under is suggested as rural. Population density is also discussed when characterizing a rural community as is the level of servicing to an area. For instance although most rural communities will have hydro and communication networks, but they still may rely on wells for their water and septic fields to dispose of household waste. It is in small communities, however, where close social networks allow for both formal and informal interaction with elected officials (Bratton & Garrett Petts 2005).

Many artists and creatives are attracted to landscapes and natural amenities. Cultural development is a quality-of-life attribute; however, since the paths of artists, politicians and planners rarely cross in daily life an effort must be made to raise awareness to better understand the rural artistic lifestyle and what may make it sustainable. Rural creatives live in and transform communities with other sectors and, as a result, referring to successful communities as ‘rural havens’ seems a bit dismissive to their true nature. Since much of the discussion on the role of the creative industries as a driver of economic development is focused on urban and metropolitan areas, the rural communities have been left out or neglected in the conversation. The topic of the arts and its own governance comes up frequently in the literature, with adequate reflections offered on arts organizations and their policy and governance models, and on how the arts are funded and programmed at federal,

¹¹ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/92-195-x/2021001/geo/ra-rr/ra-rr-eng.htm>

state or provincial, and regional levels (Markusen & Gadwa 2010; Nelson, Duxbury & Murray 2012).

Florida's (2002) claims about relationships among cultural facilities, industries, workers and successful economic development remain largely unsubstantiated by others. Researchers emphasize the weak and taken-for-granted connections between public investment in culture, cultural facilities and regeneration (Peck 2005; Markusen & Gadwa 2010; Comunian & Mould 2014). Given the tentative nature of Florida's statement, a gap remains in understanding the degree of support for art and cultural talent and how best to harness growth in the sector. There is evidence that many local governments do conduct some form of cultural planning and cultural policy making (Markusen & Gadwa 2010) and it can be expected that every community "has some modicum of talent among its residents" (Markusen & Schrock 2006, p. 1683).

The governance gap in relation to the three identified rural enticements of urban market adjacency, natural surroundings (Bunting & Mitchell 2001; Lewis & Donald 2010; Donald & Hall 2014) and a supportive community (Lotz 1989; 1998) calls for local governments to prioritize and structure their planning functions to protect the natural amenities important to those in the arts and creative industries (Fleming 2009). Local government support for these important quality of life aspects (Lewis & Donald 2010) was not often discussed in the literature or included in research programs. At a different community scale Bratton and Garrett-Petts (2005) brought the linkage between art and community governance into their argument, "Small city settings narrow this divide between art and work: social proximity affects political realities including access to exhibition and performance spaces, funding, media attention and active participation in decision making (p.112)." These researchers raise awareness that comprehensive local governance with focus on the preferences of creatives may encourage rural cultural sustainability in times when globalization has homogenized many treasured locales, neighbourhoods and mom and pop restaurants (Bonner 2012). Social proximity can also give way to sensitive policy in rural island communities and can be tailored to protect rural landscape amenities (Dunster 2004).

When considering the creative economy beyond the metropolitan areas, Markusen and Schrock (2006) posited that “a lower cost of living, less congestion, recreational opportunities, alternative health care and a diverse artistic culture are among the features that draw artists away from the super arts cities” (p. 1683). It would follow that the approach to success must be one where the local cultural ecosystem does not feel left out and disenfranchised (Vinodrai et al. 2012; Comunian & Mould 2014). In Newcastle Gateshead, their flagship art gallery, the “Baltic,” was built without working artists living in the area being included in the program development for the facility. Historically, flagship facilities have been considered an agent for engaging those external to the region and may represent the external vision. Taking up the culture-led directive in one’s community and advancing it is a step that most communities do not adequately understand (Grodach & Loukaitou-Sider 2007; Fleming 2009). The conversation around the relationship between a flagship cultural facility and the local cultural ecosystem continues.

Furthermore, the word ‘development’ requires closer and more transparent articulation for those in rural communities. Fleming (2009) found that both the artists and the planners had prejudged each other in her rural North Carolina study. The term ‘development’ was a source for ongoing confusion. In this context the term is frequently interchanged between community development, seeking to increase capacity in community, and land development synonymous with real estate development. Since planning and making art involve different skill sets, it is not surprising that a planner in Fleming’s study asked the following relationship-based question: “Art is transformative, while business is a transaction, can the two ever meet?” (Fleming 2009, p. 72).

With art, perception is that creation takes place in the time frame chosen by the artist and their collaborators (Becker 1982, 2008). Planning, however, follows a process with a regulatory framework and may involve the participation of many. Feedback from artists included speculation “that they differed from economic development actors because they did not prioritize economic success” (Fleming 2009, p.73). Can transformation and transaction meet? There is a gap in understanding the degree of local support for art and cultural talent and it is different for every community. The expectations that the art and cultural sector could provide

amenity and development potential may have been overstated (Florida 2002). With the hurried pace these initiatives took on, the lack of artist engagement between institutional stakeholders and the local cultural ecosystem of producers creates a significant void illustrated by research in three different countries: The United States, Canada and England (Fleming 2009; Vinodrai et al. 2012; Comunian & Mould 2014).

An overview of the following sections raises the scholarly conversation around local governance and rural creative activity. There has been much written about governance within the arts but little around the relationships between jurisdictional governance and cultural sustainability. Grodach and Loukaitou-Sider (2007), among others, have suggested that cities use cultural projects and flagship arts facilities to improve their brand. However, as the preceding discussion has indicated, these decisions often disenfranchise their own cultural ecosystem (Vinodrai et al. 2012; Comunian & Mould 2014). Moreover, this push toward branding of locales and tourism flagship facilities can be looked upon by those in the rural context as a sort of manipulation. Crawshaw and Gkartzios' (2016) recent inquiry on the effects of art and visitorship in a rural island community yielded this insight from a concerned shop owner:

“I don't want this island to be spoilt by signs. I don't think people should be told what to do. People should have their own experience. Just because they've got the money, we don't want to change things” (Crawshaw & Gkartzios 2016, p. 138).

The notion of branding rural communities must be cautioned and considered as an inauthentic pitfall to be avoided entirely. The above quotation provides an example from a small island in Northern England that points to an incongruity or lack of homogeneity of experience between the rural cultural context and the urban context. It is important to identify the extent to which cultural activities become catalysts for rural cultural sustainability. The findings of Fleming (2009) and Escalona-Orcao (et al. 2016) indicate that there is limited research on creative activity in rural areas. Crawshaw and Gkartzios (2016) reported that their research workshops attracted few participants.

Scholars remind us of 'art for art's sake' amidst this commodification of the arts. “Cultural agendas are traditionally concerned with culture's contributions to nation's social and artistic

dimensions than economic development” (Brault 2010 as found in Nelson, Duxbury & Murray (2012)). Soini and Birkeland (2014) and Duxbury (2014) examined culture and discourse within the context of sustainability. The idea of cultural sustainability or cultural resilience is considered, “The systematic inclusion of culture within sustainability frameworks must build on conceptual and practice-based strategies for cultural governance systems” (Duxbury 2014, p. 167). What will culture actually look like as a contributor to sustainability in the rural context?

Culture-led Initiatives and Local Governance

The creative economy model originated in an urban context and examination of fit or transferability to non-metropolitan areas, specifically rural areas, has not been fully elucidated. The literature weighs in on the opportunity for urban local governance to use local attributes to craft their own creative economies. The opportunities in rural communities appear to demonstrate equal rigor but are often fueled by a very different set of values and indicators. Accordingly, Gabriola Island as a research site offers complexity to a study into culture-led initiatives. Identified as the sixth most densely populated community for artists in rural Canada (Hill Strategies Research 2010), the community is governed by a unique Land Trust with local land use planning authority, and the geographical setting is recognized for its ecological and cultural significance.

When considering culture-led initiatives it is important that rural communities are investigated differently than urban or metropolitan areas. Time must be taken to explore the attributes that sets them apart and facilitates success in a local creative economy. There are very few examples, in the relevant body of literatures, on the creative economy which mention relationships with jurisdictional or local governance. The scholars who have broached the subject beyond Metropolitan areas (where Florida (2002) concentrated his creative economy work) did so in smaller cities and rural communities, e.g., Fleming (2009); Lewis and Donald (2010); Lysgard (2016); Cruickshank (2016). While Fleming (2009) suggested raising the awareness of interrelationships among elected officials, community leaders, planners and the arts community, Lewis and Donald (2010) addressed the link between sustainability and livability in a community. “Sustainability, while still a separate objective for Canadian cities,

can also be conceived as complementary to livability” (p. 38). This emphasis on including quality of life is important. The first of the two contrasting perspectives begins with the facilitation of successful approaches while the latter examines whether the approach is in the best interest of a community and questions whether the idea should be pursued at all.

The indicators Florida (2002) used in his creative capital model focus on social and cultural assets in metropolitan areas. Lewis & Donald (2010) argued that the creative city language highlights metropolitan attributes which do not apply to small communities, leaving them in a less favourable light. For these reasons, they posit that the creative capital model sets a “psychology of failure” (p. 30) for smaller cities. They suggest that focus on slower growth and quality of life factors offers a successful, sustainable platform presented by smaller cities. Likewise, in her study of rural Chatham County, North Carolina, Fleming (2009) found that “[c]reative economy projects appear appropriate for sustainable rural development” (p. 61). Small and remote communities also have agility in demonstrating truth to power. That is, social proximity in this type of community can influence land use planning decisions, potentially allowing support of creative activity. In their discussion of using a community’s own advantages toward livability, Lewis and Donald (2010) claimed that “[p]olicy makers can successfully change the physical and social character of smaller Canadian cities using appropriate land use controls” (p. 49). Rural and urban area are much different in their ideas of sustainability. “A rural landscape is a place of imagination and idealized lifestyles, resulting in complex layers of urban to rural migration class conflict and land use change” (Fleming 2007, p. 62).

In Norway, two colleagues studied the same rural region in a rigorous dialogue of culture-led strategies and culture-led development (Lysgard 2016; Cruickshank 2016). Lysgard (2016) presented policy and although he acknowledged local narratives, he emphasized the increased importance of networks. He found that policy construction was influenced by neoliberal, consumer-based cultural policies: “the cultural policies of small rural communities are embedded in heritage and tradition based on practices of participation mobilization and social coherence” (p. 1). On the other hand, Cruickshank (2016) asked the localized question, “Is culture-led redevelopment relevant for rural planners” (p. 1)? He argued that culture-led

redevelopment strategies may not be relevant for Norwegian rural planners and may even present risk in the rural context. “When measured by the common goals for rural development in Norway, the cultural strategy has only been a success in one of the four cases” (Cruickshank 2016, p. 1). He noted that implementing culture-led redevelopment strategies has not prevented decline in the other three rural municipalities. Taken together, these works provide a valuable comparison of methodology in relation to studying rural culture-led initiatives. With both scholars focused on the Agder region of Norway, Lysgard (2016) emphasises global policy mobility whereas Cruickshank (2016) effectively presented the detailed challenges of the region in relation to rural planning theory and cultural planning discourse. Both researchers have articulated reasons *why* culture-led initiatives in the non-metropolitan area bear their own investigation.

The Rural Artist and Creative Industry Workers

Although much of the research around the creative economy is centred in the urban context, there are a sub-set of studies aimed at less densely populated areas beyond the urban setting. In their study of where Canadian non-metropolitan artists locate, Bunting and Mitchell (2001) found that artists locate somewhat adjacent to cities and in areas where there are inspiring landscapes and proximity to nature. Other researchers have accepted those findings as continuing to be relevant (Lewis & Donald 2010; Donald & Hall 2014). McGranahan and Wojan (2007) found that creatives were attracted by a region’s natural amenities. Markusen and Schrock (2006) determined that practicing artists have different location and spatial patterns than the creative industry workers. Furthermore, Duxbury and Campbell (2009) have argued that artists and the creative industry workers are not the same group—although in the rural context “the idea of the attraction of artists or the creative class is enabled by broadband, and the presence of either group would be considered as economic diversification” (p. 31). Accordingly, both artists and creative workers may be found in the rural context.

While Bunting and Mitchell’s (2001) study did not distinguish between rural places attractive to artists and rural places that facilitate tourism-based sales (Mitchell 2004; Bakas, Duxbury & de Castro 2018), Currid’s (2009) study did find strong links between the rural artistic community and tourism. Duxbury and Campbell (2009) took a broader approach on

revitalization in the rural context than most other researchers, ultimately representing two countries (Canada and the United States) and two continents (Australia and Europe) (Overton 2009; Dunphy 2009; Varbanova 2009). They suggested that cultural development should be looked upon as a quality-of-life attribute, cautioning decision makers about the adoption of culture-led initiatives solely for economic development purposes. More pointedly, in her rural North Carolina study, Fleming (2009) discovered that in the pursuit of the rural creative economy, the paths of municipal planners and working artists rarely crossed, emphasizing the disconnect. The lack of motivation to connect with the artistic population and the day-to-day reality of an artistic life provides little opportunity to interact with politicians and staff. To circumvent this situation and begin to integrate the true nature of artistic work and an authentic rural creative economy, Currid suggests that “planners should understand how cultural industries and labour pools work” (2009, p. 376).

Towards understanding potential creative economy strategies in a rural community context, a range of methodologies has been employed and a variety of issues selected for study (e.g., McGranhan and Wojan 2007; Wojan, Lambert & McGranahan (2007); Fleming 2009; Lysgard 2016; Cruickshank 2016.) Fleming (2009) has called for a challenge to the universal status quo development practices and the elite-centred politics in the urban creative economy rhetoric. McGranahan and Wojan (2007) concluded that players in the rural creative economy are different from those in the urban creative economy, namely they tend to be older, married, and settled. In a parallel study Wojan et al. (2007) characterized American rural communities with a concentration of artists simply as rural artistic havens. They suggested that these communities foster thicker markets for rural art products and services. *Debate around rural creative community as rural artistic haven—or not—continues*. This classification of the capacity of rural communities in relation to the arts appears, overall, narrow in analysis, lacking dimension in research methodology and reported findings.

A study by Huggins and Clifton (2011) supported the aspect of rural capacity from a perspective of creative work, detailing the migration of productive younger workers (although not always artistic) to rural areas. The authors also determined that certain rural areas of the United Kingdom have a higher proportion of artistic workers found in areas of outstanding

natural beauty than in other rural regions. Bunting and Mitchell (2001) and McGranahan and Wojan (2007) also emphasized natural landscapes as requisite for artists settling in the rural context. Lotz (1998;1986) documented the Nova Scotian rural regional propensity to attract and retain artists. Those who moved to the eastern Province were lured by a supportive arts community, the natural landscape, and the opportunity of land ownership (Lotz 1986; Lewis & Donald 2010). Land ownership while certainly an important factor in the development of non-metropolitan areas is itself an area of study beyond the scope of this literature review.

Rural Cultural Sustainability and the research community - Gabriola Island

Creative activity in the rural context is, overall, an emerging research area despite the long-standing conversation among scholars in relation to the arts and culture. Extended conversation in relation to ‘creative activity and planning’ is most certainly in its fledgling state. The idea of rural cultural sustainability by Soini and Birkland (2014) has been tailored for this discussion by considering two of the seven indicators they identified and their political context: cultural vitality (conservation) and eco-cultural resilience (environmental) (p. 220). To achieve rural cultural sustainability, both indicators require a commitment to policy with concomitant planning practice.

With a population that respects natural features and the slow life, the Gulf Islands, and Gabriola Island specifically, are well-positioned to lead thought and governance for communities steeped in a rural artistic and knowledge-based economy. Gabriola Island, the most northerly of the Southern Gulf Islands, is rural, both in population density and levels of service¹². It has been identified as Canada’s sixth most densely populated rural locale for those who identified as artists (Hill Strategies Research Inc., 2010); and the community is shaped by a unique form of land use governance. The island is recognized for having ecological and cultural significance. Among those who sought out the Gulf Island life over the recent years are artists and creatives of varying disciplines. Residents include Order of Canada recipients, commercially successful writers, musical performers, and visual artists. A range of

¹² Gabriola Island is east of Nanaimo by 5.8 kilometres, a 25-minute ferry ride from the city. It is 58 square kilometers and is one of the 450 islands in the Salish Sea. It is approximately 1.5 1/2 square kms smaller than Manhattan.

creative people, in varying stages of career, have found their way to the archipelago. There is little challenge to the fact that a range of artists are attracted to and have settled in the rural Gulf Islands. These artists and/or creative art workers fit the attributes needed as defined by academic researchers. Given that exogenous and endogenous pressures both wax and wane over time, the investigative and scholarly interest in rural sustainability of small island culture such as Gabriola's arise endemically.

Characteristic – Gabriola Island (Canadian Census 2021)	Total	Men	Women
Population 2021	4,500		
Population 2016* *For comparison	4,033		
Population 2011*	4,045		
Population percentage change 2016-2021*	11.6		
Population percentage change 2011-2016*	-0.3		
Total private dwellings	3,062		
Population density per square km	77.4		
Land area in sq kms	58.19		
Age characteristics			
Total population	4,500	2,130	2,370
Household and dwelling characteristics			
Single detached house	2,220		
Income of Individuals in 2020			
Median total income in 2020 among recipients	33,200		
Household characteristics Total – Private households by tenure (25% sample data)	2,375		
Owner	2,100		
Renter	270		

Table 1 – Partial Census Profile of Gabriola Island. (Statistics Canada 2021)

Researchers Soini and Birkland (2014) were interested in further refining categories of sustainability. Their relevant work developing the idea of *cultural sustainability* identified seven aspects that contribute to the concept of cultural sustainability, two of which are inextricably linked to the Gabriola Island context. First is ‘Cultural Vitality.’ By this, Soini and Birkland mean that cultural sustainability is based on local culture and is dynamic, constantly changing due to external influences and the work of artists (2014). The second powerful aspect is ‘Eco-cultural Resilience,’ which depends on “[h]uman and [c]ommunity-nature relationships within various contexts, landscapes and ecosystems seeking a balance between humans and nature” (p. 218). The authors believe that “[p]olicies that promote ecological and cultural sustainability require collaboration between natural and social scientists at the territorial regional level” (p. 218). These ideas, still in development in the planning domain, require not only collaboration with natural and social scientists but also commitment from communities interested in implementing the concept.

If we continue to study the ecological and cultural significance of cultural sustainability, then human sensibilities are part of the work and arguably lead to consideration of aspects of the emotional content of a place, or, of Place. One individual whose work preceded this dissertation research but nevertheless contributed to it is J.F. Gerald Hodge. Hodge is among the planning scholars who found their way to the Gulf Islands. In 2004, his thoughtful essay, *An Island’s Edges* (from the ‘Islands of British Columbia 2004’ conference proceeding), delivers a concise reflection on small islands. He viewed an island “as complete as it can be, but its edges cannot sustain this” (p. 11) and specifically detailed the synergy of the shoreline:

Two claimants for an island's edge, the land and the water, each is vastly different; not only in its composition, but in the way it lays claim to the edge. The land, soft and peremptory, yet vulnerable and yielding. The water, soft and sinuous yet persistence and wheedling. (Hodge 2004, p. 16).

This connection between land and water leads to an emotional description of *place*. Place must be considered as part of the scholarly conversation towards sustainable, rural, creative communities. In effort to represent this same sentiment, one Gulf Island is presented in a video entitled “A Time for Making” made by married academics Vannini & Vannini (2019). The video comprises a compilation of narratives interspersed with landscape shots. Many of the 13

people interviewed produce craft. Also present are the executive director of the Arts Council, the newspaper editor, a local community organizer, and a post-secondary educator who reflect on buying locally. What “A Time for Making” does *not* do is reference or review contemporary literatures or make cogent arguments, claims or content beyond the bucolic. There is no discussion or detail of the challenges of working in the island context. Moreover, statements are made by some of the interviewees that do not concur with published facts. The piece ultimately serves as a 58-minute promotion for the island in stark contrast to Hodges’ meticulous essay.

The fine-grained and often sensitive challenge of trying to present research findings without migrating towards a consumptive or tourism-like perspective can be circumvented by deliberately attending to the importance of local knowledge. In the Gulf Islands, as a region of ecological and cultural significance, local knowledge is one premise upon which the Islands Trust governance model is based. Briony Penn, Sheila Harrington, and Judi Stevenson, the organizers of the “Islands in the Salish Sea: A Community Atlas,” understood that they “held the local knowledge of our home places that governments may not have or consider when making decisions about planning and development” (Harrington & Stevenson 2007, p. 11). Likewise, Katherine Dunster (2004), in the text from her conference presentation for ‘Islands of British Columbia 2004,’ writes pensively of the slow life experienced in the Gulf Islands... “Slow is a still summer afternoon so still that you can hear your slowly beating heart” (2004, p. 209). Dunster also shares the struggle for cultural survival felt on the islands:

During the winter of 2003 concern was triggered throughout the islands in the Salish Sea that **planning models and policies were not working to preserve and protect the islands** [emphasis added], the concerned included farmers, writers, artists, musicians and craftspeople. Islanders that depend on the rural landscape and a slow lifestyle for their livelihoods (p. 217).

This literature review is best concluded with the preceding local reflection of the case study region and what remains at stake.

The Path of the Creative Economy

The global response to the creative economy theory has been one of both action and reaction. Researchers in the United Kingdom evaluated creative work alongside of traditional arts and culture jobs. The nomenclature changed from the cultural industries to the creative industries, growing to include business related creative work such as advertising and web design.

Reactions came from a cycled response to regenerating cities. Many global locales, especially those struggling to find their next economic panacea, responded to the notion of an infused art and culture scene. Depending on the support garnered, communities moved forward with rapidly implemented, though not always carefully considered, initiatives that included flagship facilities and brought a substantive shifting of local cultural ecosystem priorities. Many examples of bandwagonism across the globe have resulted in fractured relations in community art scenes.

In this Literature Review, the urban construct of the creative economy was unpacked and examined focusing primarily from the mid-twentieth century onwards. Before the internet, groups of cultural and creative workers, specifically artists, had been associated with the changing nature of work, housing, urban revitalization and gentrification (Currid 2009; Fleming 2009; Markusen & Gawada 2010, Zukin 2008). In their study of Canadian non-metropolitan artists Bunting and Mitchell (2001) found that many artists prefer to locate in rural areas adjacent to urban centres. The creative sector, however, is still not well understood in relation to the rural context (Fleming 2009). The idea that art, culture and creativity could act as a panacea in every community globally is one that demanded further exploration. Any thinking that art, culture and creativity are limitless resources available to all jurisdictions is questionable.

The need for strategic planning involving dedicated time for thoughtful development delineated specifically for the cultural sector is a critical step for community leaders, planners, cultural institutions and special interest groups. Focused engagement of local cultural producers is paramount in this process. A community that jumps on the culture-led bandwagon frequently experiences little more than wasted resources and the alienation of local cultural

ecosystems (Vinodrai et. al 2012; Comunian & Mould 2014). Artists were typically looked upon only as an aggregated part of an attraction strategy—if they were consulted at all (Vinodrai et. al 2012; Comunian & Mould 2014). This negligence on the part of decision makers illustrates that not all communities, whether rural or urban, have the foundation to nurture the arts and creative workers.

The research question concerns this phenomenon beyond metropolitan areas. Questions arose in relation to transferability of ideas from urban to rural contexts. Which culture-led development strategies, originating in the urban context, can be successfully transferred to non-metropolitan areas? Conversely, what cultural and creative development models might be gleaned from the vernacular of rural communities and rural island communities?

Research Methodology

Methods for Exploratory Inquiry in a Rural Creative Community

Introduction

This dissertation pursued the overarching question, “What are the Linkages between a Creative Community, Distinct Place and a Planning Framework tailored for Rural Cultural Sustainability?” The inquiry involved in-depth study of a rural Canadian island community teeming with creative activity, in the context of a local land use planning governance model.

The discipline of Planning engages a comprehensive area of research and practice that considers the political, social, cultural, ecological, environmental, and technological aspects of a population. The demographics of any population are constantly evolving. Since my inquiry was to be in-depth and community based, qualitative research methodologies were considered as the primary approach for this study. In overview, the combination of two methodologies, *Ethnography and Interpretive Phenomenological Hermeneutics*, emerged as the approaches best suited to explore the life on a small island with a creative population towards understanding the dynamics and opportunities for cultural sustainability.

Ethnography, being embedded in the research community over a period of three years, allowed access to day-to-day life and its trials in the island community. Throughout the research process the positionality I presented was that of a doctoral candidate. Four data collection methods (archival, document analysis, 20 semi-structured interviews and observation at art events and governance meetings) were conducted. Concurrently, a radical interpretive approach (combining phenomenological and hermeneutic interpretation) was used. The work of Bonner (1997) and van Manen (1997) were relied upon significantly for expressing and writing about phenomenological hermeneutics in this dissertation. Since previous academic work saw the phenomenon of governance in the research community so differently it was important to use a methodology that looked to lived experience as much as possible without presuppositions to really allow the phenomenon to emerge. Van Manen (1997) explains the approach to lived experience research focusing on six research activities. The methodological

structure of human science (hermeneutic phenomenological) research may be seen as a dynamic interplay among six research activities: 1) turning a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world; 2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it; 3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon; 4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting; 5) maintaining a strong and oriented pathological relationship to the phenomenon; 6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.

Texts generated from local newspapers, government documents, letters and semi-structured interviews were selected and analyzed through the lens of phenomenological hermeneutics. As van Manen (1997, p. 29) articulates, ‘The methodology of phenomenology is such that it posits an approach toward research that aims at it being presupposition less; In other words this is a methodology that tries to ward off any tendency towards constructing a predetermined set of fixed procedures techniques and concepts that would direct the research project’.

The work of Bonner (1997) helped with the description of my research undertakings. The descriptive aspect of phenomenology privileges the experience of the inquirer, in my case that of an experienced land use planner embedded in the community of study. The interpretive side of hermeneutics is drawn on to assess the meaning (through selection and analysis) in the data that has been collected, whether through archival research, document analysis, semi-structured interviews, or observation at art events and governance meetings.

During the research project my own lived experience and observations on Gabriola Island included some informal community-based conversations with community members over the course of three years. These discussions included conversations in grocery aisles and, of course, the recorded semi-structured interviews with 23 people. The difference between the recorded conversations and the informal conversations with others is that the interviews ranged from just over 1/2 hour to nearly two hours and was devoted to pre-established questions consistent for each interviewee. All of those selected for the interviews were able to express their lived experiences and opinions clearly. They knew me as a graduate student who located to Gabriola Island to do research on the rural creative economy in the context of a

unique governance system. I had met each of them by introduction from someone in the community. Although those introductions may not have been face to face, I reminded them of our mutual connection when requesting their participation.

Recent quantitative data for the community was available (GICC 2016). Specifically, in 2015 (the year before my research commenced) a survey of the Island population commissioned by the Gabriola Island Chamber of Commerce had captured numerous relevant community statistics (GICC 2016). These quantitative outcomes informed my inquiry. In addition, Hill Strategies Research Inc., a private arts sector company with expertise in statistical analysis of the Arts in Canada, had situated Gabriola as the place sixth-most densely populated with artists in the rural Canadian context (Hill Strategies Research Inc. 2010).

Rationale and Research Gap

In the Literature Review (Chapter Two), the urban construct of the creative economy was unpacked and examined focusing primarily from the mid-twentieth century onwards. Before the internet, groups of cultural and creative workers, specifically artists, had been associated with the changing nature of work, housing, urban revitalization and gentrification (Currid 2009; Fleming 2009; Markusen & Gawada 2010; Zukin 2008). In their study of Canadian non-metropolitan artists Bunting and Mitchell (2001) found that many artists prefer to locate in rural areas adjacent to urban centres. The creative sector, however, is still not well understood in relation to the rural context (Fleming 2009). To assist in understanding the creative sector, attention to language may be helpful as it is an important aspect of expression (Tuan 1991). Within the vocabulary emerging around the creative community, the term ‘creative activity’ provides coverage for the pursuit of arts, culture and creative work.

Since the millennium a new wave of theorists posited that art and culture, or culture-led initiatives as coined in the literature, should be introduced into urban communities for the purposes of an attraction strategy for creative workers (Florida 2002; Florida and Stolarick 2007; Currid 2009). The idea that art, culture and creativity could act as a panacea in every community globally is one that demanded further exploration. Any thinking that art, culture and creativity are limitless resources available to all jurisdictions is questionable.

In the past decade-and-a-half, both urban and rural settlements have tried to respond to the theorists' call to action to implement culture-led initiatives to enhance their communities—but not all have been successful (Peck 2005; Blum 2010; McGuigan 2007). A lack of understanding of the cultural sector was evident at the time of the theorists' call to action. This research agenda has been driven by the tensions that developed from this lack of understanding of the cultural sector and the accompanying waste of resources expended by communities haphazardly exploring and implementing the culture-led ideas (Vinodrai et. al 2012; Comunian & Mould 2014).

The need for strategic planning involving dedicated time for thoughtful development delineated specifically for the cultural sector is a critical step for community leaders, planners, cultural institutions and special interest groups. Focused engagement of local cultural producers is paramount in this process. A community that jumps on the culture-led bandwagon frequently experiences little more than wasted resources and the alienation of local cultural ecosystems (Vinodrai et. al 2012; Comunian & Mould 2014). Many communities that rushed into trying on culture-led action faced push-back from working artists. In the planning stages, specifically the development consultation process, citizens who work in the arts sector and identify as artists were often either not considered or not engaged appropriately by community leaders and planners (Fleming 2009; Waterloo Regional Record 2014; Comunian & Mould 2014). Artists were typically looked upon only as an aggregated part of an attraction strategy—if they were consulted at all (Vinodrai et. al 2012; Comunian & Mould 2014). This negligence on the part of decision makers illustrates that not all communities, whether rural or urban, have the foundation to nurture the arts and creative workers.

There were two conclusions from the literature review. Although communities across the globe jumped on the culture-led bandwagon cities cannot take up culture-led regeneration ideas without taking detailed local factors into account. In other words culture-led initiatives cannot be generally applied. Secondly cities and metropolitan areas have a multiplicity of differences to regional and rural contexts. The distinctness of a rural context has not been considered in the current scholarship in relation to the creative economy. As the creative economy theory cannot be transferred to just any city neither can it be transferred at will to a rural context. A

rural setting must be understood in its own terms. The idea of the creative economy will not only be different in a rural rather than urban setting, but it will also be different in each rural setting.

The research question concerns this phenomenon beyond metropolitan areas. Questions arose in relation to transferability of ideas from urban to rural contexts. Which culture-led development strategies, originating in the urban context, can be successfully transferred to non-metropolitan areas? Conversely, what cultural and creative development models might be gleaned from the vernacular of rural communities and rural island communities?

Study Objectives

This inquiry involved a detailed, day-to-day study of a rural island community with an established association with the arts: literary, performing, and visual and a growing population of creative industry workers. The researching of lived experience was central to shaping the research paradigm. Furthermore, the opportunity to observe a rural community strong in creative activity with a unique governance model, the Islands Trust, does not exist anywhere else in Canada. Therefore, for the original thesis question —What are the linkages among culture led initiatives, creative industry initiatives, local governance, and rural cultural sustainability?—three research objectives were conceived, each guided by a core question. These objectives extended my effort to identify the attributes of rural creative community in the case study as an intrinsic goal of the broader inquiry, namely, to address the (over) expectations that literature review indicates have inadvertently been placed on the arts and cultural sector by community leaders, economic developers and planners. (Chapter Two-Literature Review.)

The thesis purpose has been met through completing the following **three objectives**:

1. Identification of the research community's approaches to Creative Activity Strategies.
2. Formulation of a refined idea of Distinct Place.
3. Assessment of the local Land Use Governance Model's planning system

Each research objective had at its axis its own questions. The **three respective research areas** that emerged:

1. What culture-led initiatives and cultural strategies are transferrable and may be successful for other rural communities? For island communities?
2. What makes a place, a place like no other? (Bonner 2002, p. 1) and, specifically, what makes a rural place, a place like no other?
3. How do local community and local government interactions shape creative communities?

The internet has changed the rural landscape since the inquiry period of Bunting and Mitchell (2001), enhancing their assertion that rural areas are home bases not just for artists. Presently, cultural workers, creative industry workers and entrepreneurs may be counted in healthy numbers among the traditional rural dwellers in the Gabriola Island research community.

Contemplating the Methodology

The combination of two methodologies, Ethnography and Phenomenological Hermeneutics, emerged as the appropriate approaches to craft a framework of long-term observation of the community and to allow lived experience of those in the community to contribute to the investigation. I came to realize that these refined reflexive methodologies mimic the design process I had become familiar with when completing a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture. The use of these methodologies resonated for an inquiry into a creative community. A good example demonstrating design process and reflexivity is Donald Schon's (1984), "Problems, Frames and Perspectives on Designing." He emphasizes the similarities between design process and reflexivity in a discussion between a design student and their professor. The need for a hierarchical approach to problem solving is highlighted. In characterizing the decision-making process in design, Schon writes, "When (design) moves function in an exploratory way, the designer allows the situation to 'talk back' to [him/her], causing [the investigator] to see things in a new way – to construct new meanings and intentions" (1984 p. 132).

In a parallel manner, Max Van Manen (1997) outlines how interpretive models are positioned in his book *Researching Lived Experience*:

Researchers in professional domains such as education, nursing, medicine, law, psychiatry, counselling and psychology increasingly are becoming aware of the importance of interpretive models which place human situatedness central and are based on the belief that we can best understand human beings from the experience reality of their lifeworlds.

(1997, Preface)

The argument often presented against reflexive, interpretive methodologies is that these methods do not “offer a procedural and reproducible system; rather they require an ability to be reflective, insightful, sensitive to language and constantly open to experience” (Van Manen 1997, preface). One need not preclude the other.

When data collection methods are combined, the research is often referred to as ‘mixed methods.’ Little is written about specific combinations of methodologies, however. In this dissertation, where a combination of ethnography and interpretive phenomenology has been employed, it is useful to recognize what the two methodologies share:

They are both exploratory, they both use the researcher as the data collection instrument and they both emphasize the need to take a self-conscious approach to research.

(Maggs-Rapport 2000 p. 219)

In these methodologies it is the role of the researcher that differs. In ethnography, views and values of a culture form the emphasis for an observer. With interpretive phenomenology, the researcher studies the “reflective understanding and fine textual features” (van Manen 1997, p. 77) of participant text. One must look beyond the description’s face value for meaning. It is this level of detail sought for examining the phenomenon of living a creative life on a rural island. Most planning data are aggregated, and for this reason a different research approach to a small rural community was chosen. Indeed, the scale of community should match the intimacy of understanding when environment and ecology, daily life, and rural cultural sustainability are being explored. The combined methodology used in this dissertation holds promise to address policy and decision making in communities beyond the metropolitan areas. Mixed methods of data collection and the use of more than one methodology are intended to support the validity and trustworthiness of the data. Moreover, small community research is complex when different aspects of community are investigated. It is possible that a single methodology in research of this nature would be incomplete.

Tuan's interest in language is especially relevant for small community studies where textual data from interviews offer nuanced interpretation possibilities. Similarly, Max van Manen reminds us that language, meaning and method interconnect. With the addition of interpretive phenomenology to an ethnography, an additional aspect of analysis is included that moves from the thematic, adding a dimension of the expressive. van Manen asks, "how does the text speak?" (1997 p. 345). In my dissertation analysis, this "imagery of language" (p. 345) comes from participant experiential accounts and the examination of both primary and secondary meaning of text.

The importance of Transdisciplinary study of everyday life for Planners

The planning profession, in most contemporary societies, continues to assign framework on our land use, our communities, our transportation systems, and our engineering and cultural infrastructure. In this way, planning is one of the professions that has the greatest impact on everyday life. John Forester (1979) details the difference between listening and hearing. He emphasizes the importance of hermeneutics, "the study and practice of interpretation of meaning beyond the surface" in the planning discipline (1978, p. 8).

To illustrate the importance of hermeneutics in planning I compare the approach of two planning academics, Susan Fanstein (2003) and Jill Grant (2006), with that of Kieran Bonner, a radical interpretive phenomenologist, on the topic of New Urbanism. Susan Fanstein offered a view on the design-led planning framework in her essay, "New Directions in Planning Theory" (2003). She cast the New Urbanism efforts of only one controversial architecture firm, Duany and Plater Zyberk, leaving out other practitioners including architect, urban designer, and planner Peter Calthorpe, a founding member of the Congress for New Urbanism. Calthorpe himself interpreted and prioritized the design paradigm differently than Duany and Plater Zyberk, for example.

Grant (2006) also questioned these components of planning and architectural practice in the preface of her book, *Planning the Good Community*. She states, "I also acknowledge a certain suspicion that New Urbanism represents an architectural movement seeking to displace planning" (Grant 2006, p. XVII). This statement, even in the specific context of a discussion

on New Urbanism, is one to reflect on. It might be prudent to examine the tools as they are presented, a design language to illustrate design policy in the context of New Urbanism. Suggesting that an ‘architectural movement’ will displace planning may be a generalization.

Fainstein and Grant’s ideas on New Urbanism are compared with that of sociologist, Kieran Bonner:

Another element comes from taking pride in the distinctiveness of the design and plan of the environment. In this case form is privileged over function. Yet, as we know, we live in an economic and political system that privileges work over life and function over form (Bonner 2006, p.283).

Bonner’s pointing out of the option to “tak[e] pride in the distinctiveness of the design and plan of the environment” (2006, p. 283) sets a normalizing context for New Urbanism. He moves away from the narrower views about design-led planning paradigms, thereby dropping the topic into the broader economic and political context.

With their discussion of a design-led movement like New Urbanism, Fainstein and Grant reveal a different perspective with the synthesis of architectural and planning professions. Irrespective of which planning paradigm we are analyzing, as planners and scholars, we are tasked to represent the public interest which ultimately relates to our quality of being in the world. This contrast of interpretation of the same topic by planning and sociology scholars illustrates why the planning discipline should be open to a range of research methodologies and contributions from other disciplines. The implementation of ideas from a range of disciplinary sources is essential to planning scholarship and practice.

The Research Design

A combination of two exploratory methodologies was chosen to gain insight into the complexities of the Gabriola Island research community. Ethnography and Phenomenological Hermeneutics were combined with four data collection methods: archival research, document analysis, 20 semi-structured interviews, and community observation at meetings and events. Ethnography, an embedded framework, will yield comprehensive data for the analytical process of interpretive phenomenology. The rural community chosen has long-standing

culture-led initiatives. Capturing the creative activity and lived experience of creative residents is integral to determining cultural sustainability of a place. (See Appendix One – Semi-Structured Interview Questions and Appendix Two – Interview Matrix).

Ethnography

Ethnography is not typically a methodology used in the planning discipline. Often planning research limits the study group to include only professional planners. In this community-centred research on Gabriola Island a range of participants were engaged. An ethnography is generally described as a first-hand observation of a community and participants for the minimum of a year. Hammersley (in Suryani 2008, p. 121) suggested, “Ethnography is a study at first-hand about what people do and say in a particular context,” and Flick (in Suryani 2008, p. 123) allowed that “ethnography is a method to explore the nature of a certain social phenomenon and it tends to use unstructured data.”

Ethnographic Case Study

A case study is described as a method which incorporates a depth of observation of an individual unit such as a person, a group or a community. Robert Yin (2003) identifies a case study as “an empirical enquiry to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear” (p. 13). This is certainly true in exploratory research and especially apt for the dissertation wherein one goal is to try to determine the transferability of ideas between urban and rural.

In his study of an Irish Technology company Sean O’Riain chose the term ethnographic case study to describe his methodology. He suggests that an ethnographic case study emphasizes the intimate tie between the ethnographer and the case study (O’Riain 2009). O’Riain asserts that in an ethnographic case study “[t]heoretical questions shift and so does search for empirical evidence” (2009, p. 4). When considering intimate ties and networks of people O’Riain wrote,

“... this ethnographic case study has been significantly extended from that first month. It had been extended in space as I followed the networks of my co-workers and interviewed other workers like them. It extended in time as the dynamics of the project unfolded and I realized that the starting point of this ethnography lay somewhere in my own personal history...” (2009, p. 5).

Just like O’Riain’s, my research significantly extended as the complexities of the community unfolded. I strove to find a balance with the intimate ties and the community networks on Gabriola Island.

The Embeddedness of Ethnography

Being embedded in a community for research purposes requires the researcher’s relationship to those in the community to be one of simultaneous authenticity and distance. I found Bent Flyvbjerg’s study of local government and planning in Aalborg, Denmark both informative and closest to my own experience.

In doing the Aalborg study, I tried to capture the rich ambiguity of politics and planning in a modern democracy. I did this by focusing in-depth on the events that made up the case and on the minutiae that made up the events. Working with minutiae is time consuming, and I must concede that during the several years when I was toiling in the archives, doing interviews, making observations, talking with my informants, writing, and getting feedback, a nagging question kept resurfacing in my mind. This is a question bound to haunt many carrying out in-depth, dense case studies: 'Who will want to learn about a case like this, and in this kind of detail?'

Flyvbjerg (2004, p. 135)

A researcher’s clear and honest voice is what advances empirical research findings. Local governance was one of the four groups included in my semi-structured interviews. The Islands Trust, focused on land use planning, is part of the local governance structure for British Columbia’s Southern Gulf Islands. One of the research goals was to illuminate the relationship between creative activity and this local governance model which makes a claim to ‘preserve and protect.’ As my research progressed, findings emerged that clearly did not uphold this mandate of the Trust. After realizing the situation, which helped explain why the community was in long-term stasis, I was relieved that Flyvbjerg encountered a similar situation during his lengthy research involving local governance and a planning department.

...I had been trained in the neoclassical model of 'economic man,' competition, and free markets. As I dug into what happened behind closed doors in Aalborg, I found that economic man does not live here. The local business community were power mongers who were busy negotiating illicit deals with politicians and administrators on how to block competition and the free market and create special privileges for themselves.

Flyvbjerg (2004, p. 126)

As difficult as it may be, researchers must continue to assert their voices in relation to the imbalance of power and the impact of politics and planning in sensitive environments.

Interpretive Phenomenology

As O’Riain (2009) suggested, personal history is a bias that every researcher involved in exploratory, interpretive methodologies must be willing to acknowledge and place in context. This is the foundation of reflexivity in interpretive phenomenology.

As a person from a small community and one deeply involved in the arts, I carry first-hand knowledge which allowed me to shape the inquiry in a manner that many others could not. With interpretive phenomenology, it is through the interview narratives that the researcher uncovers hidden meaning. Having a background in land use planning also assisted me in formulating the questions for participants. Since all researchers have a bias, mine will be to critically examine the planning deficits of the Islands Trust. After all, a governance model which is accountable to ‘preserve and protect’ in its legislative act must implement all knowledge and best practices available in the field of planning to uphold that very serious claim of sustainability.

Methodology and Data Collection

The data collection process for the dissertation research was designed under a systematic framework that allowed multiple data sources into the process. This ethnographic and interpretive phenomenological study was bounded by:

1. Archival research into the historic indigenous Petroglyphs on Gabriola Island.
2. Comparative analysis of three *Island Trust* Community’s Official Community Plans, provincial legislative/organization documents and regional journalistic sources. Interpretive phenomenology addresses all texts whether government, journalist documents or interview transcript.
3. Twenty semi-structured interviews of four specific creative groups on the Island.
4. Observation and research notes from meetings, event attendance, and living in the community over three years.

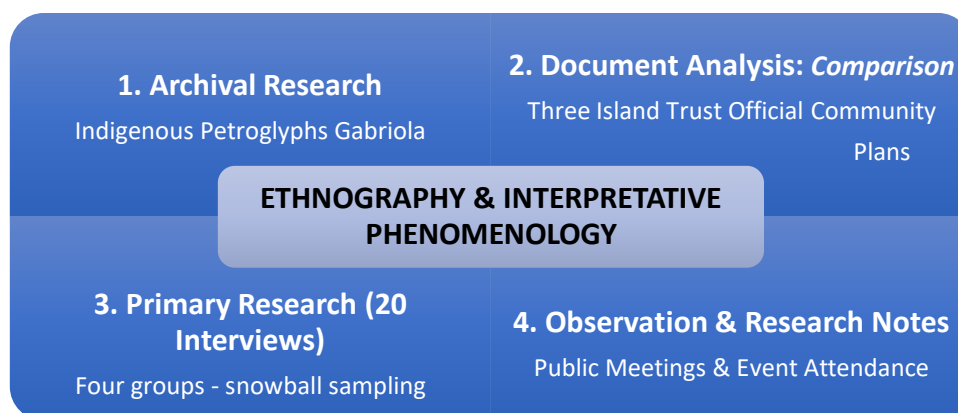


Figure 1 - Research Methodologies and Methods chosen for the Study.

First, to understand the distinctiveness of an island community (vs non-island communities) as well as to situate the historical nature of art in the chosen community, time was spent in the Gabriola Museum Archives. The objective was to review written material specifically on the relationship of petroglyphs, the indigenous rock art, to the contemporary Gabriola Island community. There has been significant documentation on the local petroglyphs by academic inquiry and community researchers. There were two central questions explored here – the first around local culture, history of the petroglyphs specifically and their impact on the modern-day island art community and secondly what makes a place, a place like no other – certainly the complexity around indigenous rock art advances the idea of Distinct Place.

Next, document analysis was undertaken to establish multiple layers of background information about the Gulf Islands broadly and Gabriola Island intently. Given that the planning discipline often relies on comparative analyses, three Official Community Plans of the Islands Trust communities of Denman Island, Gabriola Island, and Salt Spring Island were compared. Analysis of the research community’s approach to local governance helped answer where they were collectively and advance objectives in relation to the general understanding of local governance.

The bulk of the primary research took the form of 20 semi-structured interviews wherein qualitative data were gathered as responses to the questions put forth and also in the form of

stories. From the interviews, the core of the material applied to three topics: creative activity strategies, distinct place and local governance formed the nexus of the texts used and analyzed. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Analysis of the texts gave rise to the second methodological approach of phenomenological hermeneutics to ascertain deeper insights of participant lived experience. Finally, across 36 months (mid-2016 through mid-2019) a range of events and meetings were attended on Gabriola Island, and the observations and notes from those experiences, both cultural and political, co-informed the inquiry. Over the three-year ethnography there was a significant amount of data collected and lived experience to sort through. I kept journals and visited with arm's length professional colleagues to manage my thoughts and feelings about life on Gabriola Island during the process. In the end the three areas of focus – Creative Activity Strategies, Distinct Place and Planning/Governance helped channel the case study data to the appropriate sections for discussion. An under-the-magnifying glass accounting follows, detailing methods used and the accompanying step-by-step processes.

Archival Research concerning the Gabriola Island Petroglyphs

The Archive is housed at the Gabriola Museum and maintained by Janet Stobbs, a meticulous archivist. Archival research on the petroglyphs, an historic indigenous art form in the Gabriola Island vernacular, was carried out at Gabriola Island Archives in 2016. The purpose was to understand the relationship between the contemporary community and this historic art form.



Figure 2 - The Gabriola Petroglyph

Map Credit: *The Gabriolan.ca* - AG Archives: SNUNEYMUXW at <https://qmackie.com/tag/snuneymuxw/nds>.

Multiple materials concerning the Gabriola petroglyphs were reviewed. Notes were prepared on community interaction with the petroglyphs. The *Shale* newsletter provided information in relation to citizen and scholarly interest in the petroglyphs. *Gabriola: Petroglyph Island* (Bentley & Bentley 1991) provided a rich source. This book, authored by the Bowen Island couple who uncovered many of the local petroglyphs across a 30-year period, includes detailed description and interpretation of the petroglyphs.

The community primarily engages with the petroglyphs in two specific ways. First, the Gabriola Museum has petroglyph images cast for display on the museum grounds. Second, music promoters have taken a commercial approach, using an image of the indigenous rock art to promote *The Dancing Man Festival* on Gabriola Island¹³. This music Festival offered multi-days of musical performances in various venues. Some of the performers are award winners and include both local and visiting talent. Noteworthy is that the Snuneymuxw First Nation experienced use of The Dancing Man image as appropriation and, after taking the matter to court, won the legal rights to the image (Bell & Napoleon 2009).

Document Analysis and Official Community Plans Comparison

Document analysis conducted for this research included digital, online and print formats. The researcher also monitored social media focused on Gabriola Island from mid-2014 to 2019. Government, journal, and newspaper documents in both digital and hard copy formats were used. Analyses also looked to quantitative sources from Statistics Canada, Hill Strategies Research Inc., and local economic reports. Data from the GICC–State of Economic Readiness Study (2016) provided additional cross-validation of Statistics Canada and Hill Research Strategies Inc’s data. Collected issues of Gabriola Island’s weekly newspaper, *The Sounder*, were especially valuable for relevant community stories.

Government of British Columbia legislative documents relevant to the Islands Trust and the Regional District of Nanaimo included the *Islands Trust Act*, *The Local Government Act*, and the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) Bylaws. Islands Trust documents available from the

¹³ The Dancing Man Festival (1999-2004 approximately).

Trust website include the trust organization, the Islands Trust Policy Statement (ITPS), Local Trust Committee (LTC) business, and trust-wide Official Community Plans. Local journalistic sources included the *Gabriola Island Sounder*, the *Nanaimo News Bulletin*, Salt Spring Island's *Gulf Islands Driftwood*, and Victoria's *Times Colonist*. Coverage of websites and social media of individual artists and, when identified, creative industry websites provided insight into the arts, culture and creative enterprise of the Island's current inhabitants.

Three Gulf Island Official Community Plans (OCPs), Denman's, Gabriola's, and Salt Spring's, were compared in depth. Each of the selected islands is connected to a different Regional District on Vancouver Island. Their respective locations and the broader geographical locale are shown in Figure 3 below.



Figure 3 - The Gulf Islands of British Columbia - Islands Trust Area

Map Credit: Islands Trust Website.

The three islands used in the OCP comparison were chosen for adjacency to their urban centres: Courtney/Comox, Nanaimo, and Duncan/Victoria respectively. Each island has a number of people who commute daily to the city or towns opposite. For instance, Denman Island is close to the settlements of Courtenay and Comox and the Comox Regional District. Gabriola Island is opposite the city of Nanaimo and is within the Nanaimo Regional District. Salt Spring Island has two ferries on opposite ends of the island and is within commuting distance to Duncan, a small city within the Cowichan Valley Regional District and North Saanich, greater Victoria within the Capital Regional District. The Gulf Islands rely on the regional context for employment and delivery of services such as garbage pick-up, recycling, and environmental programs including rural water supply review and bylaw enforcement.

Primary Research: Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews included participants of varied age and gender from Gabriola Island. Participants were engaged from July 31, 2017, to September 30, 2017, and chosen via snowball sampling. Twenty interviews in total were completed with 23 participants.

Participants included self-identified heterosexuals and homosexuals; some single, some married, and some living common. Participants comprised people employed full- or part-time and people retired. Four groups (Artists, Creative Industries, Cultural Institutions, and Local Government) were represented Figure 4 – The Four Primary Research Groups for the Gabriola Study. A few people overlapped into more than one of the four groups. The interviews were digitally recorded on a cell phone and transferred to a laptop hard drive using Android File Transfer to ensure no data loss, data integrity of file format, and to maintain confidentiality. The researcher manually transcribed audio file interviews to text from December 2017 to May 2018. The file format of the text file is PDF. Audio files ranged from 33.5 to 110 minutes.

All interviews were recorded, unrushed in a location agreeable to each individual participant. The researcher took notes as well and made observation of participant level of comfort during the course of the interview. Appendix 3.1 is a matrix displaying all the interview questions. There were three introductory questions then three sets of questions (between six and eight), each of the three categories represented one of the objective areas previously discussed:

creative activity strategies, place and governance. There were two open-ended summary questions.

I made up an example template for each one of the categories and filled it in by hand. After I filled in the short answers from the transcripts, I analyzed for emerging themes. Then I recorded those for each category. I diagrammed the themes. Then I looked for overlap.

The research design comprised four participant groups. As Figure 4 illustrates, individual artists (self-identified) were represented in one group. In another group, the art and culture institutions on the island were collectively represented by Gabriola Arts Council and The Gabriola Museum. A third group focussed on participants actively engaged in creative work (i.e., the creative industries sans artists). A fourth group sought to represent local governance: local representatives or past representatives from the Islands Trust and the Regional District of Nanaimo. Conducting interviews on Gabriola Island provided clarity and feedback in relation to the participants' understanding of their community and its governance system. The participants' perceptions and ability to correlate the state of their governance and physical environment with the Islands Trust planning framework were illuminated.

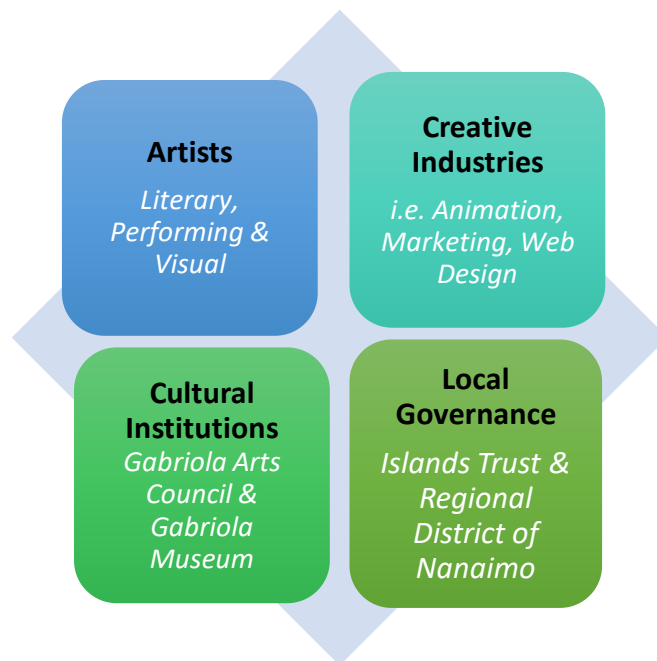


Figure 4 - The Four Primary Research Groups for the Gabriola Study

Participant Recruitment

Recruitment for the semi-structured interviews involved selecting a complementary sample of four to five people for each of the four representative groups through snowball sampling. The embedded nature of the research allowed the researcher the opportunity to informally identify and meet a range of arts-related, creative industry, cultural institution, and governance-affiliated participants. Examples of initial “meet” with participants include meeting on the ferry, during a hike, or standing in a line at the theatre festival or grocery store. The creative industry workers could not be identified (were not apparent) in any listings or business directories. The approach used for participant recruitment was approved through the University of Waterloo Ethics application process. The sample selection considered the subject’s length of time on the Island, age, and livelihood. Some participants held dual membership in the four groups; for instance, a working artist/elected official could represent groups A and G, or a Governance related/Creative Industry businessperson could represent groups G and CI although only their primary identity is only recorded once in the table total participants.

<i>Age</i>	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	70s	80s
<i>Gender</i>							
Female	1 - I	1 - CI	1 - A 1 - CI 1 - G 1 - G/CI*	1 - A 2 - I	3 - A 1 - I 1 - CI	0	1 - A
Male	0	2 - CI	0	1 - A 1 - CI	1 - A/G* 1 - G/A*	1 - G/A* 1 - I/A*	0
Sub-totals	1	3	4	5	7	2	1

Table 2 - Profile of Interview Participants

Participants by profile included eight Artists (A); five Institutions (Arts Council & Museum) (I); six Creative Industries (CI); and four Governance (G), where * represents inclusion in > than 1 group. Total participants = 23 people.

Table 2 – Profile of Interview Participants provides a summary of the participants: age, gender, and the group(s) they represent. It should be noted that after the interviews took place, more participants shifted their activity to represent inclusion in more than one group.

Coding, Themes, and Phenomenological Hermeneutics

Primary data collection involved conducting the 20 semi-structured interviews and audio recording them for transcription purposes. The interviews took place between July 31 and September 30, 2017. Interviews were conducted in both the interviewees home or studio (15) and the interviewer's home (3) depending on the participant's preference, in a business office (1) and a public library meeting room (1). No one was present besides the participant(s) and the researcher. The general atmosphere of the setting was quiet and undisturbed in all four types of settings. The candidates were contacted by email to introduce the study, the meeting times were set up by email, and a meeting reminder email was sent. Interview questions followed a standardized format.

After the interviews the recordings were transferred to the researcher's laptop and reviewed in full after all interviews had concluded. The recordings were organized to prepare for the lengthy task of transcription. In late Fall 2017 through Winter 2018 the recordings were transcribed by the researcher. All records and recordings have been kept confidential, stored safely, and will be destroyed if/as prescribed in the appended Ethics Application. Responses, researcher notes, and content were arranged to reflect emerging themes, general themes, then deeper meaning in the texts, potential typologies and frameworks.

Transcripts were first reviewed (listened to) as they were and initially considered at face value. Thereafter, coding analysis of the semi-structured interview questions was undertaken numerically, question by question. The researcher reviewed answers to see what ideas were emerging. Themes were identified using keywords and frequency counts. Coarser coding was viewed against fine-grained coding in effort to ascertain dominant themes and allow for merging of categories/codes. The process required multiple iterations of mappings. The next deliberative round of data analysis involved exploring meaning beyond the spoken word and double-checking some of the points and remarks identified during the coding as significant

and representative. With respect to the phenomenological interpretation, transcripts were examined for embedded texts and phrases used with frequency and phrases were compared, counted, and linked by keyword to other phrases.

A salient finding that emerged in early coding pre-transcription during the interview discourse was that a portion of participants (26%) who were engaged in actively questioning the prevailing messaging about arts on the Island. In particular, questioning presented about the use of Isle of the Arts, which is one of its monikers. Some participants argued that the idea is a construct only. Another participant remarked about the number of real estate agents on Island who hold Fine Arts degrees. Others maintained that the marketing stance of 'Isle of the Arts' was clearly "kitsch." Other participants (13%) fully bought into this identity for Gabriola Island. These responses directed my attention to explore possible disconnect between the mythology of the Island and the lived experience of the participants (residents).

Once themes were coded, organized and compiled the texts were analyzed slowly and with care. Deeper meanings of the text were extracted, the analysis summarized. Additional returns to the literature helped inform and refine the interpretations. The data produced formed the nexus of the three scholarly articles that comprise the analysis sections of this dissertation.

Participant Observation at Public Governance Meetings and Cultural Events

Participant observation is a key research method in an Ethnography. Indeed, observation and embeddedness during my three years of residence on Gabriola Island allow for findings that depart from most previous research undertakings (M'Gonigle 1989; Stinchcombe 1999). Event attendance included Gabriola Local Trust Committee (LTC) business meetings; Gabriola Planning Advisory Commission meetings; and Islands Trust Council meetings (26 elected officials and staff covering all 13 islands) held on Gabriola March 14-16, 2017, and March 12-14, 2019. Additional meetings included discussion forums with Provincial Member of Parliament, Doug Routley. I also attended *Earth Day* 2017 with Elizabeth May, Green Party Leader representing Saanich Gulf Islands; community town halls with provincial and federal members of parliament, and *Camp Gabriola* 2016. Culture-specific gatherings included the Isle of the Arts Festival 2018; the Gabriola Theatre Festival in 2016 and 2017; the Gabriola

Studio Tour in 2016, 2017, and 2018; and performances, fundraisers and book launches of organizations and literary, visual and performing artist residents. I also observed a number of activist events or marches including several demonstrations and vigils to defeat the Trans Mountain Pipeline (2017-2018). There were also many casual meetings with artists and creative industry workers at Gabriola craft fairs and markets.

Being embedded in a new community can prove overwhelming for a researcher unless they follow a timeline, such as a community calendar, to collect observational data. Aside from informal conversations on the ferries and grocery store line ups, it was helpful to attend forums that also followed a framework, such as an agenda, and meeting minutes associated with them. Follow up on agenda topics often included another viewpoint which could usually be found in the community newspaper. Towards this immersion, I attended national-themed Art and Cultural events such as the 2016-2018 annual Canada Day celebrations at The Gabriola Museum and the 2016-2018 Remembrance Day observations at The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Station where the community war memorial is located. The Remembrance Day event comprises two distinct ceremonies. The first is the traditional observation of fallen soldiers; the second has a special Gabriola touch as it remembers fallen animals in service.

The Gabriola Arts Council has held three key events annually over the past decade: The Isle of the Arts Festival in April, The Gabriola Theatre Festival in August, and The Annual Thanksgiving Studio Tour. I attended all three, in whole or part, from 2016 to 2019.

As a result, the arts and creative workers community unfolded in a guided yet informal manner for the researcher. The community at large was introduced in the first year, discussions with other attendees were undertaken in the second year, and in April of 2018 I participated in workshops during The Isle of the Arts Festival. The popular Gabriola Theatre Festival was discontinued after its ninth year in 2017 in favour of a hybrid festival of music, family events and theatre in an alternate location on island at the Gabriola Commons instead of the Village.

Limitations of Methodology

The research design articulated four research methods of data collection. While these methods were designed to complement one another to fill in any gaps of information and to triangulate observation, the research design was nevertheless bounded by the decision to divide participants into the four groups. While undertaking day-to-day activities and observing events provided a significant grounding in the characteristics of the community, it could not fully inform the historic aspects of the island's indigenous art form, hence the scoped archival research. Nor did it give voice to lived experience as did the semi-structured interviews. The document review provided community background, governmental framework, and an opportunity for comparative analysis with other islands. Local journalistic sources provided an additional voice as well as amplification of current narratives.

Methodologies such as ethnography and interpretive phenomenology are deeply qualitative and explorative research methodologies. These methodologies are often criticized for their inability to be precisely duplicated and generalized in other studies. These methodologies do not and are not expected to produce the general and empirically verifiable conclusions that more quantitative methods produce. As a result the role of artists and creative workers in Gabriola Island will not necessarily apply to all rural communities in Canada or even communities in a portion of Canada. On the other hand, what is lost to generalizability is more than made up for by the clarity and picture of diversity and uniqueness, an understanding of the local situation that necessarily applies whenever general knowledge is applied in particular situations. As a result, case studies, whether they are ethnographic and potentially used with other interpretive methodologies are extremely important to identify phenomenon. These methodologies often serve as a stepping off point to further research.

Presentation of Findings: The Data Analysis Papers

In this dissertation, three data analysis sections are presented, each prepared in article format. Section Four, Creative Activity Strategies explores aspects of the history of creative activity in the research community. Viewing the community as a naturally evolving, successful rural creative economy, with currently thriving arts and creative industry workers, the research

pursues the attributes that make the island thrive. Section Five, Discussion of the State of the Term Place, both through existing scholarship and the priorities and physical attributes of the research community leads to crafting the notion of Distinct Place. Section Six explores the condition of the land use planning foundation of the case study region's local governance model – The Islands Trust.

Consolidating the original qualitative data resulting from four methods of collection has demonstrated the systematic rigor sought by a multiple methods approach. These data were analyzed and synthesized with an eye towards not only replication (in so far as ethnographical and phenomenological research can be “replicated”) but also publication. The challenge was, therefore, how best to animate research findings into articles that scholars and professionals in the discipline, or collection of disciplines, may want to read. Each article is fashioned to tell the story of the research community and what aspects of creative activity, distinct place, local governance and cultural sustainability that a rural, creative island might contribute to knowledge and practice.

Cultural and Creative Strategies – Paper #1 (Section Four)

The purpose of this section is to recount both the successful and challenged aspects of culture-led initiatives and creative industry strategies observed on Gabriola Island. Community development was privileged over any ideas of destination marketing. This design choice was largely in response to both the sensitive ecological nature of the Gulf Islands and the researcher's commitment to not only seek out but expressly investigate community voices of artists and creative industry workers. In Figure 5 we see relationships between community development, creative activity, culture-led initiatives from the bricks and mortar institutions. The hope for this section is the identification and use of community vernacular instead of importing hopeful models of exogenous development.

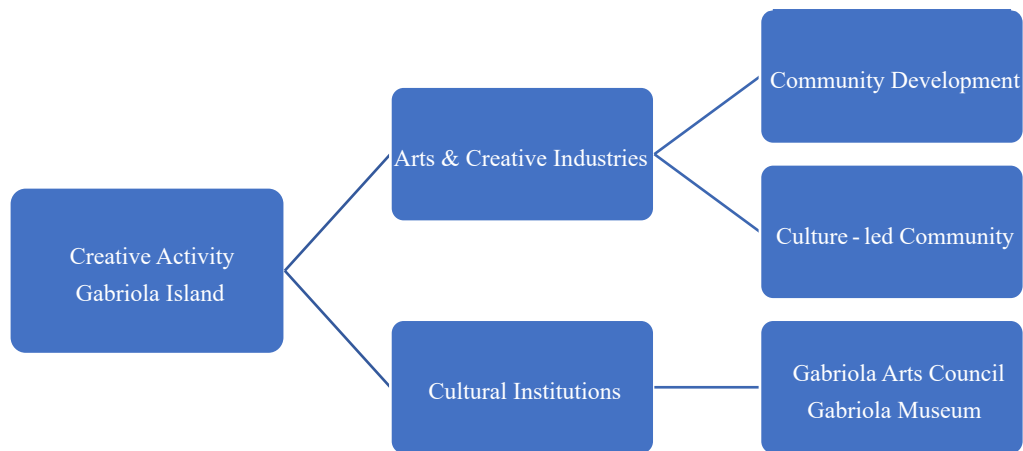


Figure 5 - Relationships between Gabriola Bricks and Mortar Culture-led Initiatives

Promotion of a place’s art and culture is one well-known mechanism employed in effort to grow tourism. Local communities may default to tourism promotion when they are unable or unwilling to confront the precise dysfunctional components of the political economy within which they exist. These deep-seated issues may be best addressed by considering change rather than through jumping on the bandwagon¹⁴. Most communities, however, opt for the short-term panacea: layers of distracting projects that often excite the community in the first year, confuse the community in the second, and certainly have divided the community by the third year (*Waterloo Regional Record*, 2014). These projects often take the form of revamped programming or, in a much more expensive scenario, the creation of flagship facilities.

The Gabriola Arts Council and The Gabriola Museum are Gabriola Island’s two key bricks and mortar cultural institutions. Their organizations both have undergone one, if not two, Strategic Planning processes and the organizations adhere to their respective Strategic Plans. The Gabriola Arts Council has been a driving force linking endogenous and exogenous development on Gabriola Island for over twenty years.

The archival research into the Petroglyphs aimed to establish a history of art on the Island and link it with the strong historical Indigenous presence and is the only direct gesture in this

¹⁴ Bandwagon Effect (Leibenstein 1950).

research project to the Coast Salish people. The study is intended as a first step towards establishing possible elements that comprise the foundation of all the creative work that continues in the Gulf Islands of British Columbia. It was designed to identify, establish and commence exploration of the un-paralleled richness of quiet creativity happening among individuals living there. The inquiry emphasizes the resident artists and creative works—not tourism, not festivals or special events, not seasonal residents.

Findings from the semi-structured interviews and the collaboration with the interviewees provided the core of the data linking individuals to the key cultural institutions on the island. These data were interpreted in light of the discoveries made through attending art-specific events such as fundraising collaborations between the artists. Moreover, from the over 100 community organizations, in one case an animal rescue, a view into the tremendous synergy and level of support between organizations on the island emerged. Gabriola Island has some rigorous grass roots organizations that contribute greatly to the cultural and creative strategies of the island; yet the actual cultural and creative sector is experiencing the creep of business organizations into its realm, which changes the dynamic of the effort entirely.

Place and Distinct Place – Paper #2 (Section Five)

The term ‘place’ has transitioned over the past decades from a noun to its status as a verb with commercial connotations. The word may be rendered over-used if not ineffective. In preparing for a recent presentation, 25 versions of the word ‘place’ were recorded:

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Place based | • Place marketer | • Imagined Places |
| • Place brands | • Place marketing | • Marketing Places |
| • Place branding | • Place marketing practices | • Populated Place |
| • Place brand management | • Place mix | • Organic Place Branding |
| • Place geography | • Place promotion | • Sense of Place |
| • Place identity | • Place strategy | • Space and Place |
| • Place maker | • Census-designated Place | • Staging Places |
| • Place makers | • Geographic Place | • Strategic Place Branding |
| • Place making | | |

The work of Edward Relph¹⁵ who thoroughly examined the phenomenon of place, provides a contrast to commercialization. According to Relph (1976), “place is not rationalized, commercialized or disneyfied, it is an essential relationship (p. 128).” This attitude by Relph is pivotal. The principles of his work still hold true today for unspoiled global landscapes, and the attitude may also be applied to inhabited areas which hold fast to the balance between ecological, environmental (built) and economic factors... the weight of any decision clearly in favour of natural ecological systems in the specific locale.

The *purpose* of this manuscript is to consider the attributes of place and consider a new scholarly lexicon to describe important areas such as the Gulf Islands of British Columbia... a term that recognizes exclusive geography, a legislative commitment to preserving and protecting natural features and the spirit of a place. A term to capture these characteristics is Distinct Place. Not *a* distinct place but Distinct Place. It also is time for decision makers, elected officials and planners, to understand that the development of all places need not be to a nebulous highest and best use. Furthermore, best ecological practices build sustainable value in sensitive areas of our country. This will thus seldom encompass a short-term viewpoint towards development of all waterfront everywhere for single users.

Methods: Place and Distinct Place

The first method employed in the research program in relation to Distinct Place was that archival research and was purposely scoped to focus only on the indigenous rock art, or petroglyphs, found on different sites around Gabriola Island. There are clusters of petroglyphs found in communities along the west coast of North America. The objective was to become familiar, in a general sense, with not only the petroglyphs, but how contemporary, non-indigenous islanders, identified with this historic indigenous art form. To do this I focused on two main sources of information in The Gabriola Museum Archives: the first, a series of articles in the Museum publication “Shale” which was available for over a decade but is no longer published. The second is a book of scholarly research and record by Ted and Mary Bentley first published in 1981 and in 1998 titled, “Gabriola: Petroglyph Island”. The Bentleys had lovingly uncovered

¹⁵ 1973 dissertation, The Phenomenon of Place – An Investigation of the Experience and Identity of Places,

petroglyphs at no less than eight sites across the island over a period of years. Their work provided a new dimension to island life.

In the twenty-two years since our discovery, petroglyphs have become an important identity for the island. They have re-emerged as a cultural component and are a source of pride and inspiration for modern-day islanders. Interest in the carvings has crossed over from a small number of professional archeologists and dedicated amateurs to the general population.

Bentley & Bentley (1998, p. 12)

Important aspects of place, and in turn Distinct Place, were prevalent in the semi-structured interviews and were often expressed in relation to the importance of natural environment and landscape. Document analysis in relation to place was primarily within the scholarly literature and revealed ideas considering genius loci or spirit of place, the natural environment, islands, and the slow movement, which considers the nature and culture of a locality.

Governance, Planning Systems and Rural Cultural Sustainability – Paper #3 (Section Six)

Only a few smaller communities on both coasts of Canada would be an appropriate fit to exemplify rural creative activity. For instance, at one point the Annapolis Valley in Nova Scotia was considered. However, only one region in Canada, the Southern Gulf Islands, and one rural island, namely Gabriola Island, offers opportunity to study non-municipal governance concomitant with creative activity. The Southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia's governance is mandated to focus on land use under its 'preserve and protect' directive. This idea of environmental protection aligns with the findings of Bunting and Mitchell (2001) and Lotz (1986; 1998) where the context of natural landscape has been identified as daily inspiration for artists and creatives. With Gabriola Island ranked the sixth densest rural community for artists in Canada (Hill Strategies Research Inc. 2010) made it the perfect choice for this research project.

The *purpose* of this article is to assess and explain the existing governance framework and the linkages to the context that artists and creative industry workers were drawn to.

For this article three data collection methods were used. Semi-structured interviews; document analysis, including preparation of a comparative analysis of three Official Community Plans (OCPs); and attendance at regional and local governance meetings. Interviewees were asked an identical set of questions. Their responses assisted in gauging the participant's interest in, contribution to, and knowledge of the Islands Trust and its relationship to the community. The comparative analysis of the three OCPs delivered meaningful insights into how each island presented itself, highlighting some of what may make Gabriola Island unique. The Province of British Columbia asks for these OCPs to be updated every five years, however smaller communities often go ten years between updates. Denman Island and Salt Spring Island last updated their OCPs in 2008. Gabriola Island has not had a comprehensive review of its OCP since 1997. If an OCP consultation process is not conducted on a regular basis, the impact filters down in each decision made by the Local Trust Council (LTC). Subsequently, from a planning perspective, out-of-date OCPs are not as likely to reflect the voices of the contemporary thought and best practices in community and ecological planning.

Section Three Summary

In relation to the creative economy the literature and global behavior of communities has demonstrated that culture-led initiatives have been pursued as a panacea for growth, yet art is not a limitless resource. This strategy has been pursued in an ill-informed manner by communities who have ended up alienating their local cultural ecosystems. We may conclude that an arts infrastructure is important in communities that are suited for or will be successful with this type of strategy.

Ethnography and interpretive phenomenology as combined methodologies have not been written about exhaustively, however, they hold promise for planning. Areas beyond the metropolitan require a detailed understanding of community, not aggregated analytics; and will constitute a basis for policy formulation tailored to the values and needs of rural communities. Interpretive methodologies for planning inform different elements of community for those involved in policy and decision making.

Our case study community provided an opportunity for a broad look at the Southern Gulf Islands region comparing three island communities and their counterparts on Vancouver Island. These islands are unique in Canada since without municipal structure, community networks within individual islands and inter-island are the foundation of rural cultural sustainability. There is something to be lost in a region of this nature if standard planning practices are implemented and evolving local knowledge and best ecological planning and design practices are not implemented.

Creative Activity Strategies. A Rural Creative Economy Exploration.

Abstract

After the millennium urban theorists prescribed the use of culture-led initiatives, focusing on artistic presence, as an economic development strategy. In contextual contrast, it's unlikely smaller, remote communities purposely fuelled the creative economy buzz. This study deconstructed rural creative economy attributes to determine knowledge transferability between urban and rural context. This work may interest smaller ecologically sensitive communities, with the propensity for arts, culture and the creative industries acknowledging the low impact of creative activity on the natural environment. It may also provide insight to sustainable creative strategies for urban communities.

Gabriola Island, British Columbia has boasted the sixth highest concentration of artists in rural Canada. In concurrence, these Gulf Islands govern through the Islands Trust, a regional land use planning framework. The question arises, In the absence of a municipal structure what can islanders attribute their creative activity success to? This paper examines the existing, proposed and potential creative activity strategies on Gabriola Island.

Methodological foundation included three years of ethnographic embeddedness with co-methodology of interpretive phenomenology for description and analysis. Larger centres may be preoccupied by consumption, but on the island, residents discuss their purpose driven livelihoods and community contributions. Artists and creative workers appreciate the intermingling of generations and socioeconomic status which provides unparalleled interpersonal connectivity. Many attribute their individual creativity to the island's natural context. These four values: appreciation of the natural world, community contribution, networks and individual creativity define the lifestyle found here. The characteristics of the region are defined by values which provide the catalyst for bespoke creative activity strategies. The foundation for the success of the rural creative economy depends on this community vernacular - which encourages creative communities to be built from within.

Introduction

Early in the millennium urban cultural theorists (e.g., Florida 2002; Florida & Stolarick 2007; Sacco & Crociata 2014) prescribed the use of culture-led initiatives for attracting the creative class of workers and furthering economic development. Large North American cities or regions like Silicon Valley/San Francisco, Seattle, and Boston personified and, in some cases, exacerbated these initiatives by “hid[ing] rather than reduc[ing] urban inequalities and reproduc[ing] similar problems across different places” (Gerhard et al., 2017; found in Grodach 2017) suggesting the idea that these creative economy programs could potentially create problems in other locales, including the rural context.

There are non-metropolitan communities that have unwittingly nurtured conditions for creative people. An effectual Canadian example is that of Gabriola Island, British Columbia. One of the southern Gulf islands, it is situated in an ecologically significant region three miles off the east coast of Vancouver Island, opposite the city of Nanaimo. With a population of just over 4,000 people Gabriola was ranked sixth in rural Canada for concentration of artists (Hill Strategies Research Inc. 2010). Those living on the Gulf Islands guide their communities with seemingly strategic initiatives through the Islands Trust¹⁶. These small island communities proceed without municipal governance (as commonly understood in the planning lexicon). In the absence of a municipal framework and the associated policy and support in areas such as comprehensive planning, economic, community and tourism development, to what can islanders attribute their creative activity success? Questions in relation to place, contributions, creative practice and understanding of regional governance were asked of the Gabriola semi-structured interview participants. Four values: appreciation of the natural world, community contribution, network and individual creativity appear to be the glue to the authentic creative lifestyle found here.

¹⁶ The Southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia have a unique governance model. The Islands Trust, found only in this region in Canada, asserts a mandate of ‘preserve and protect’ through its legislation, The Islands Trust Act. The Islands Trust Act asserts two key aspects for the Trust – the granting of land use planning authority and second the Trust object to preserve and protect. Over the years the mandate has been interpreted and applied differently in all 13 jurisdictions, often yielding to development over proper environmental planning. As a result the effectiveness of the Trust is called into question.

This paper will show that rural contexts have their own interpretation of the creative economy. It is vastly different from the urban creative economy since rural communities are shaped by their very context, inviting a new term - community vernacular. Instead of Florida's economic centric model (Florida 2002; Florida & Stolarick 2007; Currid 2009), the idea of community vernacular suggests a comprehensive community profile rather than focusing on the economy alone. These attributes of community vernacular can be seen or unseen.

There are a number of overlapping and contributory aspects for vernacular contexts that are relevant to that of community vernacular's 'seen' characteristics. For instance, The Cultural Landscape Foundation identifies landscape vernacular to harbour traits of evolution; use, activity and occupancy; social or cultural attitudes of collective or individual everyday lives. Abdel-Azim and Osman (2018) expand further and discuss vernacular societies and vernacular environments in terms of meaning for conservation processes. Like the ideas of vernacular landscape, vernacular societies and vernacular environments, the new concept of community vernacular reads like a hierarchy, one that you can see – like environmental quality evident at the regional level, the functional characteristics of a settlement like circulation, the built environment and scaled measures of community economic health. At the regional level consider natural features that define the area like that of a watershed: the topography, the waterbodies and wetlands. Next, the settlement hierarchy begins with circulation components: road character and path placement which create interest when travelling. Observation of community vernacular shifts to understanding patterns of the built environment including building massing, placement and local materials used. Cues on the health of the economy involve architectural quality, building repair and street level initiatives like lighting, planters and clean garbage receptacles. Perceptible qualities of community vernacular lull the participant to welcoming situations.

Unlike other vernacular contexts, community vernacular has strong components that are unseen which allow creative activity strategies (CAS) to be tailored based on the attributes of individual communities. For instance, a visitor may or may not be aware of intra-community cooperation which drives special initiatives, local networks which reflect the community demographic and the long-standing contributory nature of a community. Those from outside the community will likely not have local governance on their minds.

In summary the defining context of community vernacular is ecologically unspoiled comparatively, the built character is unique rather than homogenized and there is a strong local influence demonstrated in the businesses. Community cooperative spirit, strong networks and contributory nature that mobilize the community may remain hidden to outsiders, but it will impact their experience. With a governance model that is unique to the context, local political complexities evade most residents let alone visitors. An undercurrent of a strong creative energy in the population contributes to the bespoke creative strategies, attributes that may be promoted to the outside world. Strong social and cultural community traits assist in developing a strong economic profile in the community. In the case of island communities strong networks are the basis of preservation of a unique lifestyle.

If a village or town is not aware of its own community vernacular it is more likely to struggle with identifying its planning priorities and gravitate toward bandwagonism. Strong understanding of community vernacular promotes a resilience based on what is, not unattainable aspirations. This research was designed to assist with articulating the understanding of community vernacular and also illuminates the characteristics of cultural sustainability in a rural context. It did so by examining the existing creative institutions on the island, various proposals for the creative sector and possible approaches to creative activity for the island. This examination of different strategies, what works and what does not, may inform the creative sector in other small communities and facilitate the discussion of potential transferability of strategies from the urban to rural context.

Background

The literature indicates there are two broad camps in creative activity strategies: those communities or individuals who see the arts as culture led initiatives strictly through an economic development lens (Florida 2002; Florida & Stolarick 2007; Currid 2009), and others who are mindful of community development and artist development (Lotz 1989, 1998; Fleming 2007). Since the release of Florida's book, *Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) artists of every ilk were looked upon as currency to create a local community arts scene which would attract those workers regarded as the creative economy labour force. This differs from development of the artists themselves which, in turn, would contribute to the overall profile and development of the

community. These divergent emphases are raised in response to the highly publicized call to action to use culture-led initiatives for workforce attraction (Florida 2002; Florida & Stolarick 2007). With no real commitment to the artist Florida's ideas left the artist behind. Despite the fact that Florida's creative economy and creative class was only theoretical, well intended business and community leaders, elected officials and planners across North America and the United Kingdom jumped on the creative economy bandwagon without really defining the problem (Peck 2005; Blum 2010), or appropriately engaging their cultural ecosystem (Vinodrai et al. 2012; Comunian & Mould 2014; Waterloo Regional Record 2014).

This bandwagonism has been harmful in many instances to artist communities. It's a case of top-down governance activity vs bottom-up arts organizations. A lack of comprehensive data gathering by governance from the local arts sector can be found in two clear examples. The first, the Waterloo Region in Ontario, Canada; and second, Newcastle Gateshead in the United Kingdom (Vinodrai et al. 2012; Comunian & Mould 2014; Waterloo Regional Record 2014). In 2010, the Region of Waterloo suppressed its Arts Council funding, local players commissioned a report¹⁷ and made way for a new organization called Creative Enterprise Initiatives (CEI). The initiative which was led by the local Prosperity Council (made up of primarily the professions and local businesspeople) who took on the ideas of Florida (2002) then convened with, "project stakeholders and community leaders" (Meredith & Westerfield 2008, p.8). Taking up the culture-led directive was considered an attraction measure for technology talent by many (Florida 2002) which fit with the profile of the Waterloo Region which is home to numerous technology companies including Blackberry (formerly Research in Motion – RIM), Open Text and Desire2Learn. The pitch for CEI by the Resources Task Force of the Prosperity Council included language "reminiscent of the power of positive thinking" (Blum 2010 p. 76) and included only those arts organizations with a significant operating budget (WR Prosperity Council 2009). Three years and 4.1 million dollars¹⁸ after CEI opened its doors local politicians and citizens cried for accountability for CEI expenditures (Waterloo Regional Record 2014). Vinodrai et.al (2012) studied this phenomenon in the region and concluded, "There remain issues and tensions related

¹⁷ American Consultants Meredith & Westerfield 2008

¹⁸ Waterloo Regional Record 2014

to differences between the traditional arts community and broader initiatives focused on the creative economy” (p. 49). The same sentiment was evident in the community.

As long as the answer from council is not put more funds into the money trench of non-starters like CEI or the so-called pillars, that would be a start. A worrying phrase in the post, “... meet the high expectations of our high-tech industry” is the sort of rubric that saw the direction of culture left in the unqualified hands of the Prosperity Council, wasting a million good dollars in the process. The arts community has had enough of consultants and the presumption that we exist and persist for the amusement of “talent”, which has come to mean coders and their ilk. The tech corridor between Toronto and Waterloo region has long been an exit strategy for local creative talent for decades and that bleed continues.

(Lindsay Stewart April 26, 2016, Facebook)¹⁹

Not only did the Prosperity Council mis-read the pathway for culture-led change, with no roadmap for CEI and without critical analysis, the short-sighted undertaking caused palpable divisiveness in the Waterloo Region. Perhaps the best approach when considering culture-led initiatives is one where the local cultural ecosystem does not feel disenfranchised.

The arts community in the North-East Region of England, like Canada’s Waterloo Region, also felt disenfranchised and tried to make sense of the gap between the local artists and the great undertakings, in their case, flagship arts facilities. United Kingdom researchers Comunian & Mould (2014) undertook a longitudinal study related to the creative industries and flagship projects for urban regeneration purposes in Newcastle Gateshead since manufacturing in the region waned. The researchers solicited feedback from interviewees in relation to the recently established art facility and concluded that there were “no aims to link the establishment of a new flagship development with creating value and opportunities for the local creative economy” (p. 6).

... my worries is that then the public starts to consider culture just as the big shiny buildings . . . there are fantastic things happening in pubs, there are fantastic things happening in workshops, in the middle of nowhere, there is some great work which is not see by the public, which should be seen by the public.
(Comunian & Mould 2014 creative sector support manager p. 6)

In this example the research participant expresses that there is more to the local creative economy than high-ticket flagship facilities. Local decision makers, however, seem to translate culture-led initiatives to significant change without consideration of their own

¹⁹ Facebook screenshot

cultural ecosystem. Interviewees in the two-year longitudinal study included artists, arts and media managers, academics and arts/design businesspeople. They all expressed disappointment around the disconnect between those working artists in the region and the flagship facility BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art.

The Baltic really, tends to take a lot of regional money, but don't really invest in local people. The careers structures that they promulgate tend to be London bound, but the fact that we have the Baltic here, it's a question of how it is managed, what role it is expected to play [. . .] they haven't been focused regionally, London is the model, here are the stars we have to work with [. . .] it's not really thought through, that role of encouraging and developing local artists.

(artist and university lecturer p. 8)

This second quotation moves from critique of the flagship facilities to the lack of investment in the local cultural ecosystem and specifically how local artists have been passed over. This trend can be identified in other examples²⁰. Unfortunately the outcomes in both the Waterloo Region and Newcastle Gateshead could be viewed as a gateway to economic diversity instead of the crafting of an economic sector. The disconnect between the local cultural ecosystem and those championing change and economic development has missed not only the opportunity for community development but has exacerbated the growing concern of equity for working artists. Often the local artists working in the region do the legwork in championing the sector – or the work from the bottom up. Unfortunately the authenticity of artistic life and expression can easily be lost amidst community leaders looking for a panacea. It seems apparent that taking up the culture-led directive and advancing it is a step that most communities, whether rural or urban, do not understand (Grodach & Loukaitou-Sider 2007; Fleming 2009). On the other hand, a region of mindful leaders that truly supports its artists learning about the artists role in community through careful research design will generate data to inform a mindfully scoped direction to support the merits of their own creative community (Lotz 1989; Soini & Birkland 2014). Leaders that are in touch with the comprehensive realities the different sectors in the community must face have a better stepping off point for community development than those who simply react to new and often inappropriate ideas.

²⁰ Fogo Island, Newfoundland.

Discussion with artists at Small Island Cultures Research Initiative (SICRI) Conference 2017.

Researching and Analyzing the Creative Activity Context

Rural communities are different in scale than metropolitan areas. Aggregated data is currently used to plan metropolitan areas. The interactive nature of smaller communities, however, means that we can easily talk to networks of people. To understand the intersections of local culture, ecological context, and the dynamics in rural communities, an in-depth study was warranted (Flyvbjerg 2004) to gain familiarity and talk to residents. Flyvbjerg (1998; 2004) wrote about the uncertainty of spending time researching the minutiae that often plagues communities. I would argue that sorting through the minutiae and embracing the components of slow living outweigh the embarrassment and superficiality of bandwagonism.

The two models, Florida's creative economy perspective, which gives an instrumental role to the arts, and a community vernacular model, where artists are integrated into the population serve as a hypothesis to understand where communities like Gabriola Island fit given the case study outcomes. The research undertaking is methodologically different from most planning and community economic development research studies. Here in the rural and non-metropolitan context details about people, places and language are important. On Gabriola Island creative people constitute a significant portion of the economy²¹ and local society. Instead of having a purely instrumental role demonstrated in Florida's creative economy, artists and creative workers are seen as a major part of the Gabriola community and the political decision-making process.

Ethnography (embedded study of the culture of a community) and phenomenological hermeneutics (looking beyond what is being said) emerged as the appropriate methodological approaches to craft a framework of long-term observation and allowed the lived experience of people in the community to be expressed. These methodological approaches complemented one another, one focuses on the process of daily research and the other is honed to the data and textual analysis (VanManen 1997). Data collection methods included scoped archival review to understand certain aspects of island history, extensive document analysis to build context, semi-structured interviews for the voice of local people, and attendance, over a 36-month period, at events and meetings relating to the arts sector and the Islands Trust local governance. During the

²¹ GCC Economic Study 2016.

semi structured interviews questions in relation to place, contributions, creative practice and understanding of regional governance were asked of the Gabriola participants. Recent economic quantitative data for the community was available (GICC 2016) for use as pre-design foundation. The island context presented an opportunity to combine the embeddedness of ethnographic research with a phenomenological interpretive approach to what was being said in the community. This was far different than previous studies on the island (M’Gonigle 1989; Stinchcombe 1999) which focused on the Islands Trust governance model. Therefore in an embedded approach to study on Gabriola provided an opportunity for findings that identified the relationships between creatives and the governance model.

A Varied, Cause-driven Culture of Creative Spirits

Gabriola research participants asserted that the island is an exemplary supportive arts community. One of the key differences, from that of other communities, is that the culture of Gabriola Island’s own culture centres around cause related investment rather than being preoccupied with consumer consumption found in larger centres. Many of those causes relate to the environment (Dunster 2004). With no large-scale sporting facilities, like ice arenas, aquatic centres or curling clubs the culture of culture on this Gulf island provides an enviable quality of life for those who choose to live there. Here nature forms part of the ethos, the pace and the leisure class. Even “mad men living in the woods” (Male 50s, Artist) focus on creative pursuits. The aspect of human connectivity here is likely matchless in an urban setting, as is the role that nature plays for residents, the mixing of generations and socio-economic profiles and the concentration of high-quality cultural offerings in a community of just over 4,000 souls.

The musings from research participants were informative on unspoken issues. One participant, a long-transplanted Vancouverite, focussed on the relative isolation of the island as a buffer from the mainland which “creates enough of a division from the outside world that people are allowed to get away with thinking for themselves” (Female 60s, Creative Industries). This sentiment may be an idealized version of living on an island. In another instance, the moniker of ‘The Isle of the Arts’ came up frequently in the semi-structured interviews. One person declared, “Gabriola is the art school, and the island is the campus” (Female 50s, Institutions). In contrast, many in the community believe the phrase to be little more than a kitschy marketing scheme with one

established artist remarking, “Isle of the Arts? You don’t want to be painted with that brush” (Female 60s, Artist). The notion of living a creative life on an island means different things to different people and islanders are not afraid to express themselves.

With the internet enabling the opportunity to work remotely the island has seen a demographic shift to include singles and young families. Once living on the island urban migrants are tickled to think much of “the networking happens by word of mouth” (Male 30s, Creative Industries). In every artistic discipline nationally recognized people, who have an association with or moved to the island, contribute back to the community. This is only one of the many reasons for the high-quality creative offerings. Gabriola is about the same size as Manhattan²², and one participant asserted the art found on island “can stand up to that of the Big Apple” (Female 50s, Artist). There’s also an unparalleled mixing of generations happening – at the elementary school, with the Gabriola Players Theatre group (Female 40s, Governance) and in the Gabriola Museum. Artists and creative industry workers alike, are excited to be among kindred spirits. When one attends an art opening or a book reading it is evident that there is connectivity between people in the island cultural world. Some creatives, however, prefer isolation and don’t have much contact with others. According to a participant, “contact with other creatives comes through shared interests, like ocean swimming, rather than anything to do with work” (Male 50s, Artist). There are many creative personalities on island, ranging from hobbyist to professional status, and they can choose to be as connected or unconnected as suits them.

The creative spirit is one of the significant identities on Gabriola Island. The participant interviews reflected an overall sentiment that the island is a magnet for creative people. Verbs describing creativity on the island include ‘unbridled, dynamic and rampant’ but opposing terms like “homogeneous” and “diverse” were also used to describe the population. Resident research participants revealed their community support as donors, volunteers or participants. “There are many exciting conversations going on all the time,” (Female 60s, Artist). She relocated to Gabriola Island, drawn to the natural surroundings, from a Canadian urban centre over 10 years ago. A mid-life couple characterized the island as having many “leap of faith people” (Male 50s, Female 40s, Creative Industries). After a ten-year acquaintanceship with the island they

²² Manhattan – 59.1 sq. kms, Gabriola Island 57.6 sq. kms – a difference of 1.5 sq. kms.

purchased a house to renovate and sell. Instead, that house is now their home. The opportunity to acquire a successful niche business came their way. The business provides work for Gabriola artists and that, they find fulfilling. The synergy between the people on the island, their creative spirits and economic activity is evident.

To fully articulate the capacity for people in an island setting to enable creative activity is difficult. One explanation is the prospect to embrace the creation of specialized intentions may be a characteristic of islandness. As Chatterton (2000) in Lewis & Donald 2010, p. 37 suggest: “That opportunity to look internally, test and thoughtfully apply principles that might work locally puts community success more firmly in their own hands”. Lewis and Donald (2010) refer to fundamentally changing “the parameters of creativity” (p. 29), thereby removing the inequalities of community size. As a result the process of taking ideas, now identified with the creative economy, into the rural context appears to have evolved naturally on Gabriola Island.

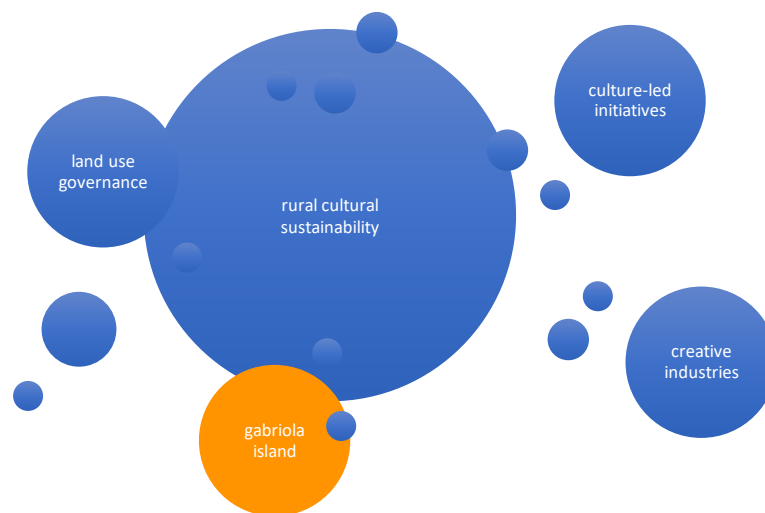


Figure 6 - Components of Rural Cultural Sustainability

In a context like Gabriola Island it is straightforward to articulate the main components of rural cultural sustainability since they have fundamentally developed without an intentional strategy other than home-based business. The culture-led initiatives include the literary, performing and

visual arts – which can be found in abundance on Gabriola. For instance, not only are there writers in a range of genera there are also creative industries like publishing companies²³ operating from the island. The challenge of cultural sustainability on the island will depend on the comprehensive land use governance strategy to maintain the quality of the natural and landscape features (Dunster 2004, p. 204) that originally attracted the artists and creative workers. In the semi-structured interviews, creative workers were delineated as “consultants and businesspeople whose clientele is often not on Gabriola Island” (Male 30s, Female 30s, Creative Industries). One new resident had an interesting take, “It feels more like the Borg²⁴ there is no one industry that is dominating” (Male 30s, Creative Industries). A father of three children, he manages a creative industry located in Vancouver from his Gabriola home and described their new life on the island:

It allows you to reinvent yourself. Lots of enthusiasm. You meet people who are doing creative things that you are interested in doing and you can learn from them. And they're right on your street... not a Skytrain ride away. (Male 30s, Creative Industries).

The participant expressed gratitude for the opportunity to buy a home and move his family to a place with this type of connectivity. Although he still works 40 hours a week, he can regularly take his kids to community events. The range of creative opportunities presented on Gabriola Island for his entire family have made it the perfect move for them.

The supportive arts community on Gabriola Island has its underpinnings in the island's own vernacular. The relative isolation focuses the community on its own attributes: natural features, no large sport facilities and few outside distractions. Growth and transition have taken place slowly until 2016, and although demographically diverse, the island has its share of strong networks and cause related residents. Traditionally it has been a rural place and although some new residents may have an adjustment curve to live within the tempestuous aspects of island life, such as downed trees, power outages and water rationing, if they reach out for support, they will likely be aided by their neighbours.

²³ New Society Publishers has been operating on Gabriola Island since 1990. <https://newsociety.ca/pages/our-roots?sitedomain=ca>

²⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borg>; A collective. The Borg's main goal is achieving perfection.

Community vernacular is a term introduced in this paper with application intended for small and rural communities. The phrase brings one of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary definitions of the word, vernacular: “of, relating to, or being a nonstandard language or dialect of a place, region, or country”²⁵ together with a nonstandard language like the one Christopher Alexander and his design team (1976) developed for regions and communities. When synthesized these bodies of knowledge form the basis for community vernacular. In this elucidation community vernacular describes an area rich in natural features and a relatively unspoiled ecological setting. It is used to define a small scale or rural community. There is character in the built environment, it does not appear commercially homogenized. There is local influence in business. A cooperative spirit drives the community, a slow attitude is apparent (compared to the fast attitude of Florida’s model) as is an altruistic nature. There are strong work networks and a contributory nature in the population. The governance model is highly reflective of context. There is strong creative energy in the population which in turn provides an evolving creative economy.

Every rural community has its own vernacular even if it has been disrupted by development. In smaller settlements community vernacular may be identifiable, even if done so unintentionally by creative groups such as artists and creative industry workers. It is unlikely that community vernacular is still authentic and definable in larger centres since there are so many influences that have altered the original context. This research aims to demonstrate that strategic concepts derived from community vernacular are essential for a tailored, sustainable approach to creative activity strategies. Although it is important to understand what factors are influencing exogenous locales, the factors are not necessarily applicable in other contexts and success from importing such strategies is not guaranteed.

Creative Activity Strategies: Existing, Proposed and Potential

Successful creative activity is not a straight line. Even communities with desired attributes, like Gabriola Island, may be tempted to look for solutions outside themselves only later to find their strengths within. Examining local creative activity strategies will give context to the creative island life, and according to (Female 60s, Creative Industries) it is a life of more independent

²⁵ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vernacular>

thinking. The move away from a populous area pares down the urban white noise. One research participant (Male 40s, Creative Industries) emphasized that people on Gabriola Island maintain a different, quieter existence to those living a creative life in large cities. Because of the difference in scale to a larger centre it was easy to articulate creative strategies on a rural island. Examined in this section: three abiding local creative activity strategies, two strategies proposed and not adopted, and finally, a discussion of how the islands own vernacular melds with the popular ‘slow movement’²⁶.

Research findings revealed that there are three economic categories of those people involved in creative activity on the island: those making a living as working artists; those who work at a range of jobs to fund their artistic practice or who have a supplementary source of income; and those knowledge-based workers (creative industries) who consult on- and off-island or operate a niche business from the island.

There are three long-lived creative activity strategies on Gabriola Island that are championed with three different emphases. The first strategy, the Isle of the Arts moniker emphasizes the arts, the Gabriola Commons is second and focuses on the collective effort and the third focus is on Home-based business. A range of research data collection methods used in this study yielded a view into creative individuals on the island. One may interpolate that the artists may have interest in the Isle of the Arts and the knowledge workers are focused on home-based business but, in fact, there is a lot of cross pollination. For instance, there are artists who do not align with the Isle of the Arts... they believe the phrase to be little more than a kitschy marketing scheme. There are those who moved to Gabriola Island because of the home-based business opportunities. The long-lived creative activity strategies and the categories of individuals involved in those strategies do not have a consistent relationship or connection.

²⁶The slow food movement began in Italy in response to American Fast Food locating in the country. The formalized organization, ‘Cittaslow’, has a high standard of planning guidelines for prospective member communities to consider.

Long lived Creative Activity Strategies on Gabriola Island	Categories of Creative Individuals on Gabriola Island
Isle of the Arts – the arts.	Working artist: literary, performing or visual. Able to sustain oneself financially.
Gabriola Commons – the collective effort.	Identify as artist: working a range of jobs or have supplementary income.
Home based business – the local economy.	Creative Industry workers or operate a niche business on/and or from island.

Table 3 - Creative Activity Strategies and Creative Individuals on Gabriola Island

Long-lived Creative Activity Strategies and Doubting Thomases: the Isle of the Arts

The three long-lived creative activity strategies which form local discourse: The Isle of the Arts moniker; the Gabriola Commons which is both studied by scholars and celebrated by the community; and finally, home-based business which has been supported by the Gabriola Local Trust Committee for decades. First, the Isle of the Arts moniker. Everywhere one looks there is evidence of creativity on Gabriola. Whether it is a telephone pole painted as a coloured pencil or a sculpture at the end of a driveway, an effort has been made (Dunster 2004). But is the Isle of the Arts an oversold concept? There are different sides to this debate in the island community. “I can’t take it seriously,” said one participant (Male 50s, Artist). There are certainly different viewpoints on the tagline. An arts promoter used a team analogy to describe the situation and inadvertently reinforced the emphasis of sales and the intentional arts branding of the island:

And so, if we had a winning team that anybody could get behind it would be the artists. They sell real estate, they sell lifestyle, they sell ferry tickets. People come because people believe that locals believe wholeheartedly in the art scene.
(Female 50s, Institutions).

This statement raised the question, do the locals actually believe in the arts scene on Gabriola Island or is it a construct? Certainly marketing takes all shapes. On Gabriola Island there is creative activity and the claim – Isle of the Arts – plays to an existing strength. There was an assertion that the local real estate industry is a participant in this branding of the island:

“...so the fact that every second real estate agent here has an MFA²⁷ is interesting to me,” suggested a participant (Male 50s, Artist). There may be a cooperative spirit that the community finds attractive, yet there are still internal tensions. One musician raised the point that “touting to the artistic creates its own problems” (Female 40s, Artist). This is because not all people on the island are artists. Another participant suggested the Gabriola Arts Council placed the emphasis on commodification, specifically sales which shifts the emphasis from creativity to commerce. One participant unconsciously confirmed that claim stating that a supportive arts community was simply “buyers” (Female 80s, Artist). This may be an overly optimistic view for a small island economy. The contrarian voice to the Isle of the Arts concept is evident. The debate ranges from those who believe, those who don’t take the Isle of the Arts seriously and those who find the branding both distasteful and the cause of discontent.

There is also evidence of a knowledge-based labour force on Gabriola working from home (GICC 2016), commuting on the ferry to Vancouver Island or by float plane to Vancouver, but this demographic is rarely mentioned. One interviewee suggested there are several cultures on Gabriola which are vertically stacked (in relation to income). During my informal visit to Gabriola one artist stated, “there are people here with million-dollar properties and people who are living on fumes” (key informant, December 2015). Still, the community intermingles. Artists, pensioners with volunteer energy, a growing population of young families, and farmers who produce local food. A research participant (Male 30s, Creative Industries) suggested island culture was more about creativity, interacting and supporting one another and less about money. Examples of creative activity have flourished on the island for decades (Weller 2017).

Example arising from Community Vernacular – the Gabriola Commons

The story of the Gabriola Commons is a good example of taking cues from the community vernacular. The Gabriola Commons (The Commons) is a grassroots effort which began as a legacy for local peace and environmental activist Jay Mussell. In 2005, Jay’s dedicated friends decided to move his agenda forward and buy 28 acres known as ‘the goat farm’ not far from the

²⁷ Master of Fine Arts

‘village’ shopping area. Canadian author Heather Menzies wrote about her weekly experiences of working at the Gabriola Commons in *Reclaiming the Commons for the Common Good* (2014).

In less than 10 years the financial legacy of a dying man has become a thriving community within the community of Gabriola, a small island off the coast of British Columbia Canada, with a population of around 4000 it embodies what activist geographers champion as “participatory spaces of action that are inclusive and non-hierarchical”²⁸ and at least one community development theorist has identified as the “entrepreneurial social infrastructure”²⁹ that community-based action requires. (Menzies 2014, p. 68).

Indeed Gabriola community members collectively held the mortgage until 2018 when it was paid off. According to one long-term resident,

Things like ‘The Commons’ to my mind is a fascinating example of what an island culture can produce... and I don’t think that would work in Surrey easily, or as easily. It requires something like this nominal or this notional boundary, that makes an island, an island. The madness that we somehow all agree to share.

So, as far as I know it’s the only instance, where in Canada, a group of people, and not a named group of people, but “the community” holds a mortgage. This is communism in true form. So there is... there are opportunities here where a culture has been... what I think of as actually a culture as opposed to habits or modes of dress or whatever you do with your socks...

(Male 50s, Artist)

The Commons houses facilities for collective site work to allocated gardening plots and a summer mid-week farmer’s market. There is a well-used commercial kitchen, a workshop, and a timber frame donated by the Island School of Building Arts³⁰. The ground floor of the main house on the property provides space for a community non-profit agency. There is a flexible outdoor area at The Commons which promotes gathering, accommodates a range of events and its central island location make it perfect for a few hundred Gabriolans. The accommodation of initiatives like the Tool Library and the Cultivate Festival not only facilitate networks coming together but allows for artist related proposals and creative economy outreach for visitor related experiences.

The Commons is a concept which illustrates an idealized version of common space, self-organization and stewardship. To have a working Commons in a community like Gabriola

²⁸ P. Routledge. “Activist Geographies” in R. Kitchin and N. Thrift, eds. *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, Vol. 1. Elsevier, 2009, P. 7.

²⁹ Jan L. Flora. “Social Capital and Communities of Place.” *Rural Sociology* Vol. 63#4 (December 1998) p.482.

³⁰ On occasion, The Island School of Building Arts offers a Timber Frame to not-for profits on Gabriola Island.

illustrates not only collaboration but shared values for the management of the land in question. This example is an embodiment of community spirit and sustainable collective effort that is transferrable to a willing parallel group such as local artists and creative industries for their own development efforts. There is evidence through the words of the interview participants that this attitude exists on island.

Home-based Businesses in the Islands Trust Region

The final example of creative activity on Gabriola Island provides a salient reason for artists and creative industry workers to locate here. Home-based business has been encouraged by the Gabriola Local Trust Committee (LTC) for decades (Gabriola OCP 1997; Male 70s, Artist; Male 60s, Artist). There is a synergy between home-based work and creative industry workers. People who work from home typically have a low environmental footprint. Creative industry workers locate close to nature to regenerate after a long day of cognitive work. This forms a labour force typology perfect to inhabit the environmentally sensitive Gulf Islands. One semi-structured interview participant shared his experience.

... we stopped by an Islands Trust meeting. And this was just in the very beginning of the Islands Trust (1974), and they were just doing a home occupation by-law which would allow me to have a studio on my property... and allow me to have a certain sized studio depending upon the property. Would allow me to vend my... whatever I make from my home, and they didn't require any permits other than in my case, because I'm a potter, a kiln. So then I had to get a permit from the fire department. And I thought, "wow, this is a community for me...we looked around a bit more... found a place and then moved. It was really quick.

(Male 60s, Artist)

This narrative from a research participant suggests that he understood that the Islands Trust accepted home-based business without a zone change (which is not only expensive and time consuming it may happen uncertain outcome). The pro-home-based business Trust removed traditional planning barriers which signals flexibility and may attract alternative thinkers. It makes a case for consultation with artists to assist in setting the planning rules in communities that are interested in attracting artists. This approach to planning policy can foster rather than attempt to control outcomes.

Considered but Unadopted Exogenous Creative Activity Strategies

The following two unadopted creative strategies illustrate that even communities with all the operational attributes for successful rural creative communities may still go through their process of discovery only to realize they had to look within for solutions for their community. The first undertaking was by the Gabriola Chamber of Commerce. The second by the Gabriola Arts Council (GAC) looking to further champion the artists on the island.

The first underutilized effort was the inability to meaningfully include data from the Gabriola Island Chamber of Commerce's (GICC 2016) survey report in 2015 on the state of the island's economy³¹ in a subsequent economic development strategy for the island. The survey outcomes confirm Gabriola's leading sectors to be in Arts and Entertainment (21%) and 15% Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (GICC 2016). A total 36% of the Gabriola economic activity parallels the definitions of the Creative Economy (Florida 2002). The data from this well-articulated community survey was not applied to any creative economy strategy. In 2017, the GICC proposed to take over the Tourism and Economic Development portfolio from the defunct Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation (GICC 2017). The GICC championed the subsequent Economic Development Strategy (2017) for Gabriola but missed the creative economy mark and did not acknowledge or design itself around the representative creative economy data from Gabriola Island. In fact, this subsequent strategic plan reads as a boilerplate economic development plan for Anytown Canada. It would appear to be a missed opportunity for positioning Gabriola Island as a leader in rural creative communities.

The second aborted proposal to showcase Gabriola's creative capacity was consideration of an established exogenous model, known as Economusee, which originated in Quebec in 1992. Gabriola Island was earmarked to become the first Economusee community. This represented a departure from the Economusee model which had focused on individual artist's studios. On their website, Economusee International Network³² describes their "Artisans at Work experience" from a perspective of "history, past and present". The not for profit was started in Quebec over 25 years ago and currently includes over 100 members, all artisans, who are recognized for the

³¹ Gabriola Island Chamber of Commerce (GICC) – State of the Gabriola Economy Survey (2016).

³² Economusees.com

quality of their work. I first heard the term “Economusee” during my December 2015 reconnaissance trip to Gabriola Island. I met my second key informant, a visual artist in his 60s, who outlined the initiative and discussed it with me.

An Economusee turns an artisan’s studio or agrifood boutique into a living museum, conserving a heritage of traditional skills and agricultural practices while promoting the growth and development of artisanal businesses.

Gabriola Arts Council (2018) Gabriola Sounder

Initially the Gabriola Arts Council (GAC) considered this model and hosted a team from Economusee B.C. in May 2015. It was not until August 2018, however, that the concept re-emerged relative to the Gabriola Community in the form of a press release in the Gabriola Sounder. At this juncture the idea was for an island-based consultant to engage local artisans and farmers to get their input on the Economusee framework. Subsequently the GAC provided their notes entitled, ‘Update on Gabriola Artisan Community Project Feasibility Study’ (February 2019) to aid in this research. It detailed that six artisans were interviewed, 18 participants were involved in a Gabriola Arts Community meeting, two visits to Economusee sites on Vancouver Island and contact with Gabriola's Community Economic Development Officer and the Gabriola Agricultural Association Co-operative transpired. Gabriolans liked aspects of the Economusee, aside from the rigid framework for the artesian hosts and limited scope outline by the Quebec organization, but in the end the model was not broadly supported. Paying to use this external model caused fiscal concern and it was important to the group that financial benefit from any initiative stay within the local economy. The GAC Board decided to table the idea (GAC 2019).

Local Creative Activity Summary

These two unadopted strategies demonstrate that organized, creative activity warrants time and commitment to consider the components of rural cultural sustainability. The two unsuccessful exogenous proposals discussed here, one from the Gabriola Chamber, and the other, an external framework, were not tailored for the community. Neither proved to be the proper fit for Gabriola Island. Examination of ways to strengthen the local art scene and set a trajectory for rural cultural sustainability are salient steps to building a rural creative economy. The successful creative activity strategies, the Gabriola Commons and Home-based business reflect the

community vernacular and involve the community from the bottom up in terms of attitude, organization and collaboration.

Sustainable Strategy: Community Vernacular and Slow Culture

The ideas of community vernacular and slow culture may appear different at first glance however their principles are the same. The Gulf Islands of British Columbia have been identified as a place where slow living has occurred naturally but must now be preserved mindfully. “Slow paced change allows people to identify what parts of the landscape should be protected, and what parts of the landscape must be protected to preserve ecological integrity and cultural continuity”. (Dunster 2004, p. 203). Cittaslow, a well-accepted model of slow living provides a framework in which to reflect on the slow culture of the Gulf Islands and the community vernacular of our research site Gabriola Island.

A community vernacular may create a foundation for relationships important to the rural creative economy. Example components of community vernacular were previously introduced as relationships to land, networks, house clusters, local roads and pathways, open land and gathering spaces (Alexander et al. 1976). These components bring together the physical features of the landscape, the built environment and the social aspect of community. What are the elements of community vernacular important for building a rural creative community?

When a rural creative community utilizes community vernacular there are certain components to be considered. Setting objectives for the community within the context and capacity of the community vernacular is the first step. The cues for the objectives of the community will come from the physical and social fabric of the community. In order to accomplish the objectives for the community, the governance and planning model must correspond to the objectives in order to succeed in reaching those objectives.

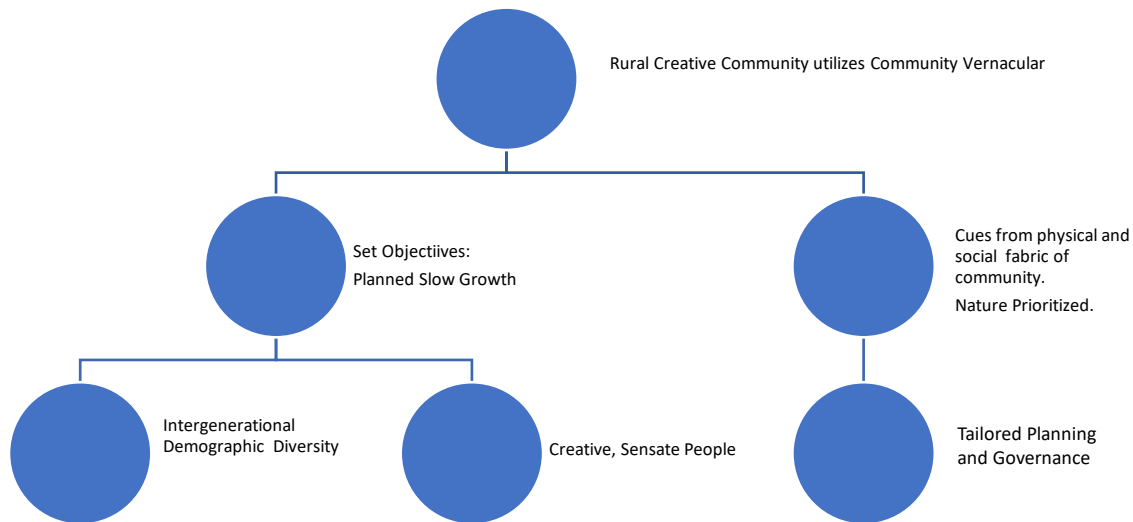


Figure 7 – Elements of Community Vernacular for Building and Sustaining a Rural Creative Community

Components of the physical fabric of a community are relevant at any scale: the region, the natural resource and agricultural areas, the settlement area, pedestrian and vehicular circulation, the commercial area and the neighbourhoods that surround it, and the currently metamorphosing location of work. To look at the physical attributes of your community and the relationships they create, and could create, seems simple enough. Identifying the community vernacular, however, takes time. The key is to know one's own small community, the contribution of natural features, built features and social patterns which translate to elements like the twists in the road and the location of the public facilities, and gathering places.

On the Gulf Islands there is evidence of slow living, and commitment to slow growth principles. The settlement by creative people on Gabriola Island may have happened organically and may be attributed to the existing conditions: a picturesque island easily accessible by ferry, a supportive community for artists and the innate opportunity for networking. There is also a unique local government framework with an objective to ‘preserve and protect’ the environment.

Quality of life on the islands in the Salish sea has often been linked to a slower pace of living.
(Dunster 2004, p. 203)

Local slow culture is the reality on British Columbia's Gulf Islands and, specific to our case, on Gabriola Island it demonstrates the intersection of rural character and creative spirit in the region. That mindful and intentional condition has allowed the rural island community to excel in culture-led initiatives and develop its own successful practices complementary to the slow vernacular of the island. That condition is not without threat. Moreover, one must take care not to romanticize any slow conditions that exist. After all, the first concern for those living on the island is to balance lifestyle and environmental resource expenditure. Managing one's daily life is linked to basic needs such as water supply and waste management on a Gulf Island.

Cittaslow is an examination of the idea around slow living management amongst a global community. This may be of interest to those living on the Gulf Islands with the cues around their slow culture and the ecological sustainability. Cittaslow identified 72 requirements in their Charter (2017) distilled here to seven areas as "Requirements for Excellence" (p. 25):

1. Energy and Environmental Policy
2. Infrastructure Policies
3. Quality of Life Policies
4. Agriculture, Turistic and Artisan Policies
5. Policies for Hospitality, Awareness and Training
6. Social Cohesion
7. Partnerships

Ideas from Cittaslow inform rural places. The local sense of place in many locations is at risk if it is not properly sustained (Mayer & Knox 2010). Cittaslow is an alternative development strategy, away from corporatization, that focuses on the vernacular of a locale: its culture, local economic strengths and resources. The strategy focuses on interdependencies between economic and environmental goals with equitable development outcomes (Mayer & Knox 2006).

With slow living comes the responsibility of how to transfer the knowledge with an equitable attitude. Identification and evolution of well-considered components to an ecological planning framework will retain a creative population. A shift away from the obsession with growth to a slow growth governance model (McKibben 2007 as found in Mayer & Knox 2006) to a comprehensive governance model for 'preserving and protecting' regions like the Gulf Islands of British Columbia must be entertained not only for current residents but for generations of British Columbians to come (Islands Trust Act 1974; Ipsos Reid 2011).

Creative Activity Strategies -Conclusions

This article examines a successful rural arts community informed by urban cultural theorists on the creative economy. An important aspect of this inquiry was the in-depth methodologies to respectfully investigate the rural research community. These co-methodologies of embedded ethnography and phenomenological hermeneutics allowed identification of the fundamental differences between rural and urban and confirmed that the rural creative economy is unique to that of its urban counterpart. Little can be translated from the urban creative economy to the rural creative economy. It was important to pursue the fundamental differences between rural and urban creative economies, and what was unique to the rural context, in order to perpetuate rural creative communities. If the objective is to sustain a creative population, then articulating contributory attributes of rural living may propagate rural cultural sustainability. Flyvbjerg (1998) detailed how studying minutia uncovered a community's assets. These methodologies confirmed that creatives are not only present in the research community but that their interaction is vital to keep the community functioning.

It is the community vernacular which provides the foundation for the creative economy. These underlying physical and social drivers exist in every small community but present differently in every community. The importance of facilitating community networks, protecting the creative spirit in a place can be supported by tailored local governance – with intentional ‘slow’ growth.

The Case Study community vernacular is that of an island where the natural resources and remoteness play a part in holding history and agriculture close. There is an active creative population here. Aspects of the vernacular mean more to the population than a consumer-based lifestyle. Placing success in the hands of the local people through appropriate vernacular frameworks like the commons, home based business and dovetailing economic activity with a sustainable strategy and slow culture supports and nurtures small, sensitively situated communities. Community leaders who are intrigued by trends, like the call for culture-led initiatives, may alternatively take the time to analyze their own community and understand that successful communities are not built through bandwagonism but by bottom-up cues.

For example, the Gabriola vernacular, as described by the research participants, is rich in natural features, agricultural history and island attributes like slow living. These attributes give way to supporting values like human connectivity, demographic and intergenerational integration which are waning in North American culture. The linkages between creative activity and land use planning in rural communities provide a unique opportunity. Aspects of connectivity on a Gulf island, such as demographic and intergeneration integration is a point where ideas can be explored, and tensions deconstructed. It is a moment when people come together. Consider the physical, social and ensuing economic aspects of the community vernacular - the people who live and create their livelihoods there.

A supportive arts community, where tailored governance and planning policies co-exist to enable bottom-up success, forms a confluence where conversations about greater things commence. There is something to be said for looking deeply within and supporting each community's individual vernacular.

The Ecology of Distinct Place

Considering the liminality of land/sea/nature/genius loci and Creatives.

Abstract

Place is one of the foundational concepts in planning. This paper will argue that ‘place’ has become a taken-for-granted and poorly articulated idea robbed of its resonance and pleading for fresh thought and diction. A new conceptual framework, Distinct Place, is offered following an ethnographic study period of 36 months on Gabriola Island one of British Columbia’s Southern Gulf Islands.

This article concerns itself with better understanding place and constructing an argument for Distinct Place. Matters of community governance; local cultural sustainability including creative activity; and genius loci, will be examined as the basis for Distinct Place. Findings revealed important linkages between creative activity, self-expression, and the diversity of supportive voices (which converge with respect to appreciation for natural surroundings).

The objective of ‘preserve and protect’ captions the description of the Islands Trust local governance model in the Southern Gulf Islands region. Unfortunately, the Trust has failed to meet its object resulting in threats to island life. Despite this many people in the Gulf Islands are unusually attached to the concept of self-governance. This governance framework provides a helpful example to understanding the complexity of place and its importance in relation to local politics. The theories of seminal place by T. Relph, of self-governance by W. Magnusson, and local governance by B. Flyvbjerg are considered.

The research findings emphasize Distinct Place as an essential experience and are presented in a reflexive manner including personal anecdotes and storytelling. The pivotal relationship between Distinct Place and the region’s natural features explains why islanders become islanders.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to accentuate the meaning of the term ‘place’ associated with the essential relation between man, the land and in this case the sea. This essential relationship emerged in the Gulf Islands research region and the case study community of Gabriola Island through its context and its people. With the art and culture sector under great scrutiny as an economic development tool in metropolitan areas, exploring how and why a rural island community like Gabriola Island has quietly thrived in the cultural sector was an important research objective. Here the commitment to place is related to human experience rather than to a proliferation of hyperactive verbs with planning professions adopting and marketing the word ‘place’: place-making, place-marketing, place-based. It leads one to ask, has the term ‘place’ been rendered ineffective? I argue that it has lost its resonance, and that, to articulate the purity of place, it is critical to consider the term “Distinct Place.”

Any loose application of the word ‘place’ confuses the operational emphasis of the word and diminishes its value. This article draws on findings from an ethnographic study in British Columbia’s Gulf Islands to refine a conceptualization of Distinct Place that considers community governance, local cultural sustainability, and genius loci as its basis. The study involved linkages between natural features, creative activity, and extant theoretical reflections on place. The theoretical foundations for Distinct Place incorporate subjects observed during the research process, namely the importance of natural features, the collaborative energy around culture-led initiatives and the creative industries, and the importance of preserving and protecting the land, air and sea—all of which have been found to contribute to cultural sustainability (Soni & Birkland 2014). A question found in the literature matches these theoretical foundations. In the 2002 introduction to the *Culture of Cities* collaborative Bonner asks, “what makes a place a place like no other” (p. 1)? There is a purity of intent in this question. The term ‘place’ has been effectively used across disciplines and practices and over time (Relph 1974; Relph 1976; Bonner 2002; Blum 2010). The overuse of the word ‘place’, however, is evident in both planning practice and academia with limited new critical thought emerging for this seminal concept. It is a similar situation to Landry’s concern about the overuse and ineffectiveness of the word ‘creative’ (2000). Unfortunately the word ‘place’ and its derivatives now range from a foundational concept in the geography and planning disciplines to homogenized real estate marketing

language (Relph 1974; Relph 1976; Bonner 2002). Essential experience from the case study community, Gabriola Island, will remind of deep connections to the spirit of place.

The research literature and research data also revealed how unusually attached the people of the Gulf islands are to the concept of self-governance. By self-governance is meant, “an old idea: the thought that people could actually come together in their own communities and decide for themselves how things ought to be” (Magnusson 2015, p. 3). At the same time, however, both empirical evidence and observation garnered during the study suggest that self-governance is not effective in the Islands Trust local governance model as it may be for local projects such as Gabriola’s ‘Gertie’ bus service. Where a governance model may have the opportunity to craft Distinct Place if the principle behind it (self-governance) is not effective than it will have little impact on the sustainability of place but rather may have the inadvertent power to destroy a pristine context. As a result this paper makes observations on self-governance, the challenges the concept faces in the context of the Islands Trust governance model and how it may impact “a place like no other” (Bonner 2002, p.1).

Bonner also advanced exploration of this evolving concept of place with temporal reflection, asking “What about place persists and what changes over time?” (2002, p. 1). He poses questions that challenge the nature of planning thought. Exploration in this research suggests that the relationship between human experience and nature forms the foundation of what makes Gabriola Island, perhaps all the Gulf Islands, a Distinct Place. Research findings, from the ethnography, are written in a reflexive manner using personal anecdotes, storytelling and describing situations where natural components of place provide essential experience.

Background

Contrasting points of view are not uncommon when considering subjects such as governance and planning of ‘place’. Theorists like Warren Magnusson (2015) have encouraged local communities to embrace idealism, participate directly in their affairs and not to yield too much power to the state (p. 7). While it is true that ideas of self-governance will succeed on a project basis in the Gulf Islands this has not transpired to date with the Islands Trust. A contrasting notion to Magnusson’s view is presented by Flyvbjerg in his (1998) study of community

governance in a Danish municipality. Observing the local governance in Alborg, Denmark over a period of years, Flyvbjerg asserted ten propositions around rationality and power. His original project was "...based on rational and democratic argument. During implementation, however, when idea met reality, the play of Machiavellian princes, Nietzschean will to power, and Foucauldian rationality as rationalization resulted in the fragmentation of the project" (2003, p. 318). The contrast between the ideas of these two theorists, one which aspires to do good and the other which recognizes abuse of power, reflects contested space in the literatures. Magnussen (2015) represents the positive views of self-governance. His values recognize one's responsibility to others (p. 27). He also assumes that people will "act in good faith" in the context of neighborhood democracy (p. 14). Flyvbjerg (2003), on the other hand, holds no opportunity for self-deception. He decided after many years studying Aalborg that those in power acted in their own self-interest and not for the community. As a result, the impacts of Magnussen's ideal of self-governance and Flyvbjerg's concerns of self-interest motivations must be considered when analyzing governance.

When we concern ourselves with place it is important to consider the work of 'place' theorist Edward Relph who demonstrated innovation and rigour when synthesizing ideas from multiple disciplines, including geography, philosophy and environmental design, for his seminal articulation of *Place and Placelessness* (1976). We can be inspired by the staying power of Relph's work. He has left us with an enduring idea that 'place' should not be "rationalized, commercialized or disneyfied" (p. 43); it is an essential relationship in human experience. There is support of Relph's work throughout the subsequent literature in a range of disciplines. Place as an essential relationship grounds the original academic concept of the term. The literatures, however, highlight a shift of the term 'place' from its correlation to authentic human experience as found in anecdotes, storytelling (Sandercock 2003) and humanist geography (Tuan 1991), to a term currently used loosely in professional practice as a marketing verb and in educational branding to situate theory. This grappling with the word place is not just the work of practitioners such as planners, land developers, politicians and policy makers. Manipulating place occurs in the work of scholars as well.

As researchers and educators we must be prudent to design our research programs responsibly and be mindful that our own purposes, such as educational branding of place, are not exploitive. Those in tourism branding and marketing assume a relationship between culture and place. It was Relph who identified how a tourism mass market mentality eroded “diverse and significant places” (1976, cover) . In contrast, current researchers pursuing the branding of creative tourism (e.g., Bakos, Duxbury & de Castro 2018; Duxbury, Silva & de Castro 2019) have extended this erosion to allow the appropriation of generational skills. In the work of Bakos et al. (2018) on master craftspeople, older craftspeople were portrayed as unwilling participants to champion development of the researcher’s concept. In other words, the researchers appear to have set a program with an expectation that master craftspeople or artists would simply become a part of their creative tourism concept. This assumption evokes an unawareness in relation to research ethics. In their 2018 article on artisan entrepreneur-mediators, Bakos et al. remark that “...the creative tourism workshops often feature ancient techniques and the know how lies mainly in the hands and minds of the elderly...” (p. 740) . The descriptions of the local craftspeople continue in a manner suggestive of a lack of awareness of ageism and equality discourse, complaining about age-related issues of the artisans: “transport must be arranged for them; they can’t teach or lead on demand,” and “delivering workshops is challenging and outside their comfort zone” (p. 740).

A ‘place’ related researcher responds to this injustice with an appropriate question: “What legitimate reasons would lead researchers to assume that anyone, let alone Indigenous elders, would aspire to teach painting or a carving workshop to a busload of tourists seeking a consumption experience?” This style of research not only contributes to a new colonialism³³, but it also promotes a certain placelessness while investigating how best to appropriate local cultural knowledge. The design of such studies that attempt to brand creative tourism while using master craftspeople and the concept of place, certainly risks compromising both the elders and the idea of place.

³³ Characterization of ‘new colonialism’ identified by Dr. Nadine Fladd (University of Waterloo Writing Centre) during a consultation appointment.

Uncomfortable Knowledge and the Crafting of Distinct Place

When working in the field of planning and governance it is not uncommon to come across uncomfortable knowledge – abuse of power, aspirations and greed. During the 36-month period of my ethnography on Gabriola Island, British Columbia, I found the assertions of Magnussen and of Flyvbjerg to both hold true. The people of the Island would like to be in control of their own destiny; however, the model of the Islands Trust does not provide the appropriate planning and legislative instruments to meet Trust aspirations. Furthermore, there is much of Aalborg on Gabriola... individuals and special interest groups influencing decision making that addresses only short-range outcomes for the good of few rather than for long-term stewardship of the Gulf Islands for all British Columbians (Islands Trust Act 1974; Ipsos Reid 2011).

Despite falling short with planning infrastructure, life is different... slower on the Gulf Islands from most settlements. The island context gives way to the need for patience for the slower aspects of life. The linkages among the Island's natural features, the creative activity occurring, and the fine-tuning of governance are crucial for realizing the long-term cultural sustainability of life here. There is an emphasis on the natural components of place as an essential experience. The lived experience and scholarly writing about the Gulf Islands (e.g., Dunster 2004) reflect this culture of slow living. Aligning these reflections with the work of Meyer & Knox (2006; 2010), the Slow Food Movement, and the governance aspects put forth by Cittaslow³⁴ suggest that Cittaslow might be a good model for articulating community direction during planning and regulatory goal setting. The Cittaslow organization has identified 72 requirements in its Charter (2017). For this paper these have been distilled to a seven-point framework characterized as “Requirements for Excellence” (p. 25):

1. Energy and Environmental Policy
2. Infrastructure Policies
3. Quality of Life Policies
4. Agriculture, Turistic and Artisan Policies
5. Policies for Hospitality, Awareness and Training
6. Social Cohesion
7. Partnerships

³⁴ Cittaslow Movement of Italy has 140 global partners. A global organization that started over two decades ago in Italy, celebrates many aspects of the Slow Movement. Cittaslow has its basis in the Slow Food movement created as a response to American food chains which compromised the Italian culinary celebration.

Ideas from Cittaslow may play a role to inform rural places about how to define growth in ecologically significant communities like Gabriola Island. With slow living concepts also comes the wholistic idea of how to transfer the attitude to new places (Mayer and Knox 2010). The presence of natural features, indigenous history and art forms and contemporary creative activity on the islands sets the stage for realizing the long-term cultural sustainability of life here.

There are world renowned natural features on Gabriola Island like the Malaspina Galleries, a sandstone rock formation that curls like a wave. Other features include three provincial parks each individually breathtaking and sandstone beaches with tidepools to fascinate the most experienced beachcombers. There is a clear indigenous history with accompanying art forms on Gabriola – the petroglyphs telling early island history. Herein is a central, interconnected relationship that can be understood as *genius loci*. As Norberg-Schulz (1980) wrote: “a space with a distinctive character,” *genius loci* seek to represent the reality that people experience and live in everyday life. It is “a set of concrete things with their material substance, form, texture and colour. All together, these things define an “environmental character” that is the essence of the place” (p. 10). This character or essence may be described above in urban lexicon, but the term *genius loci* holds a similar position in any location as an essential relationship as described by Relph (1976).

Attracted by this slower pace of life, and distinctive natural features, a creative work force and those involved in the arts: high quality literary, performing and visual arts now make Gabriola Island their home.

Well it offers here... seclusion, privacy if you want. And we only have about six cars going past a day. Silence, really quiet and green... we needed desperately to be nourished.

Well we live on it... Gabriola, cause it's the right environment to encourage our creativity. It has a very supportive community, and it has that necessary alternate choice of isolation because you can't work in public. I don't care how many people sit in cafes writing their great memoirs. For discipline you need to write every day and you need to be isolated. (Female, Artist, 80s)

The essence of this Gabriola Island research recognizes the step beyond *genius loci* to non-urban Distinct Place, demonstrating the power of natural features, island people, their creative livelihoods and their contributions back to the island. While determining *genius loci* cannot be an exact science, Distinct Place as a concept can be both inferred and demarcated qualitatively.

Towards this aim, the ethnography undertaken combined two co-methodologies³⁵, four data collection methods and included the critical thinking of key theorists discussing place and local governance. The research design sought to implement embeddedness as integral as Relph's (1976) idea of essential relationship. This framing is critical to unpacking the quality of the essential human relationship and the natural environment. In order to establish Distinct Place, in the context of Gabriola Island, the connection to the natural environment must be rich and complex, involve the creative human experience and a commitment to balancing ecology and growth.

I'm inspired by nature so again it's really easy to access creativity...because you have that distance to kind of think and be beyond what is right in front of you...so... I find when I have to design sessions and stuff like that, I want to be here to do that, I don't want to do that when I'm in the city.
(Female, Creative Industries, 50s)

The Gabriola Island case study research represents a significant effort to situate components of Distinct Place through exploration of a rural creative community without the weight of commercial obligation or motivation of brand identification. For instance, on rural Gabriola Island there is no shortage of physical and virtual organizations and groups providing imaginative support to artists and creative workers. The two bricks and mortar organizations that envelop most of the creative community are the Gabriola Museum and the Gabriola Arts Council. The Gabriola Island Museum houses all historical island information and artifacts. Both have active Board of Directors and Strategic Plans. Board members are also likely to be artists or creative industry workers contributing both to the island and their own professions.

...and there's been some voices on this island... that, uhm they keep on mapping back to the sustainability of a **rural** identity. And I know that we live very closely to Nanaimo which is more of a city... but it seems that a lot of the issues are... they get translated from the city to our island versus really taking a look at our island... and what are the needs to create the uniqueness that we have here and how to we preserve that? (Female, Creative Industries, 50s)

In this approach, the aim is to reintroduce aspects of purity³⁶ into the scope of discussion about "place." The voices of current Gabriolans reflecting on their community are data points (or colours) essential to the painting of the picture.

³⁵ Detailed description of Co-Methodologies follow.

³⁶ Purity infers essential relationship components of place, not driven by neo-liberal principles.

The Methodology of Studying Interrelatedness in an Ecological setting

The methodologies chosen for studying creatives in a small island community must ably respond to the rural conditions on the ground to best uncover the non-urban spirit of the place or its genius loci. Relph (1976) acknowledged the work of Edith Cobb in relation to children and nature: Cobb conceived of genius loci as: “[a] living ecological relationship between an observer and an environment, a person and a place” (Cobb 1959, p. 540)³⁷. This thinking is fundamental to the genius loci of rural locales and building an argument for Distinct Place. Investigating the intersection of three vital aspects of the community—creative activity, governance, and rural cultural sustainability—demanded a thoughtful approach to the case study research. Although the inquiry originates in the planning discipline, the overarching research question, *What are the linkages between culture-led initiatives, creative industries, local governance and rural cultural sustainability?* synthesizes issues related to a range of disciplines.

To fully appreciate the context of the island four methods of data collection were implemented: scoped archival research; extensive document analysis including local government, local news and social media documents; 20 semi-structured interviews; and attendance over a 36-month period, at a range of events and meetings primarily relating to the arts sector and the Islands Trust. A balanced snowball sampling included attention to representation in age and gender of those in four groups: the arts, creative industries, cultural institutions and local governance. As a result the study was informed not only by the previous work of planning theorists (Flyvbjerg 2001); the theoretical framework also draws heavily from art, sociology, economics and community development (Becker 1982; Tuan 1991; Bonner 2002; Lotz 1986, 1998). Those who may find this work informative include those in small community governance and development, culture-led initiatives and creative industries, cultural sustainability, rural and island studies. This inquiry intentionally does not engage in any discussion or practice of the recent trend of municipal cultural planning.

³⁷ Cobb asserted time spent in nature during mid-childhood to be a source of self-knowledge providing personal stability and creative renewal throughout life (Cobb 1959).

There was an opportunity to emphasize the observer and the environment and in turn to marry the embeddedness of rural ethnographic research with a phenomenological interpretive approach to data analysis. This technique of observation in ethnography is not a rushed or invasive methodology. The time invested in the community allowed significant understanding of the local culture, its ecological richness, exposure to the range of creative people living on the island, and the environmental challenges of everyday living and development pressures potentially altering Gabriolans way of life. “The interpretive approach to data analysis allows for a number of realities to exist” (vanManen 1997 p. 27) and the ability to articulate emerging aspects of the inquiry. The study findings are a plethora of interrelatedness between creative activity, genius loci, and local governance on Gabriola Island. Appropriate research methodology, rigour and range in data collection methods, and the contribution of theorists were considered together during data interpretations and thematic coding. The refined idea of Distinct Place emerged from the history, the genius loci and the physical attributes of the island, and the unique contributions of its creative people and their essential relationship with the island. The ever-evolving model of governance, the Islands Trust, also represents an effort to govern a Distinct Place in a manner tailored for the Gulf Island context.

Historic Art Forms on Gabriola Island

When considering any ethnographic research in a community it is important to be aware of history relevant to the topic at hand. A pre-study reconnaissance trip in December 2015 to the Gabriola Archive and Museum revealed contemporary interest from non-native people in Gabriola Island’s first known art form – Petroglyphs. The island’s historic carvings by native people in the surface of rock were detailed in a book by Mary and Ted Bentley, a couple from Bowen Island, who discovered and documented Gabriola’s indigenous rock carvings since the late 1960s (Bentley & Bentley 1998).

Perhaps it was only a matter of time before someone peeled away the sandstone’s mossy cover to reveal its secrets and return the mystical carvings to human experience.

(Bentley & Bentley 1998, p. 11)

This work by the Bentleys was a step to engaging the community on the Petroglyphs. Scholars and local people contributed to quality research and reflections on the subject in Gabriola Museum’s newsletter, *The Shale*, from January 2005 to June 2014. There were five articles in all

including one special issue solely dedicated to Gabriola's Petroglyphs. In September 2007 Amanda Adams summarized her master's thesis in the special issue and suggested, "an individual specialist, small group or family of trained carvers produced the bulk of well-crafted petroglyph panels located on both Gabriola and Vancouver Island" (2007, p.12). This work by Adams confirmed the significance of the historic art form and skill set of the creators.

The interest in the Petroglyphs continued to grow and before long local non-native people were using the images for commercial purposes. In response, the Snuneymuxw First Nations used intellectual property law to protect the petroglyphs. After qualifying as a public authority the Snuneymuxw First Nations retained the right of exclusive use for ten of its most popular cultural images found in the rock art (Bell and Napoleon, 2009). These petroglyphs demonstrate an unprecedented essential relationship that native people had with place centuries ago on Gabriola Island. Their rock art articulates a strong *genius loci* for the island. The petroglyphs continue to provide essential experience for those who are fortunate enough to find them and appreciate them in situ. They provide a significant connection of the islands creative and communicative past to its current creative status and perhaps a careful reminder toward preservation for the future.

In detail there are no less than eight sites on Gabriola Island where the rock carvings can be found, some fish-like and whimsical, some with identifiable human form. Like primitive line drawings these rock carvings are deeply moving. The historic petroglyphs, and their relationship with the contemporary community, informed the research of the styles of interpersonal interaction here.

In the 22 years since our discovery, petroglyphs have become an important identity for the island. They have re-emerged as a cultural component and are a source of pride and inspiration for modern day islanders. Interest in the carvings has crossed over from a small number of professional archaeologists and dedicated amateurs to the general population.

(Bentley & Bentley 1998, p. 12)

Given the Gabriola community's current status as the Isle of the Arts the question arose, Was this native historic rock art a precursor for Gabriola's love and support for creative souls?

As the Bentley's work continued, the community relationship grew with the indigenous rock art. The Bentley's believe the carvings found on the island to be among the most unique in the world. "While the precise meaning and exact age of most petroglyphs can only be surmised by today's experts, the elegance of design and mysterious atmosphere of isolated sites compel our admiration and respect" (Bentley and Bentley 1998, p. 140). In October 1996 the Bentleys discovered a site with over 50 carvings in the south end of Gabriola Island. They continued to record four new sites which included 30 additional petroglyphs.

What can we learn about their thoughts, dreams and aspirations? As with many art forms, the carvings are abstract and do not document in realistic fashion the details of the lives of these early inhabitants. Rather the mythical creatures and human forms reach out in spirit to touch timeless emotions shared by all of us.

(Bentley and Bentley 1998, p. 12)

With detailed investigation of a historic aspect relating to the arts, this investigation of Place, Placelessness (Relph 1976) and development of the concept of Distinct Place, a self-reflexive approach is adopted to deal with the profundity of meaning. While spending time engaged in the solitary research program one can only grow closer to island life. It is a world where there is little outside white noise, a welcome absence of visual clutter and any need to 'keep up with the Joneses' unlikely. It is a different kind of community; it is a different kind of place.

The Theorists and the Truths from Gabriola Island

The manner in which theorists described place is rarely succinct in real life. That is why the truths from real places like the Gulf Islands of British Columbia must be clearly identified and ultimately respected. The need to support the future of fragile and sensitive environments, like those found in the Islands Trust area, is beautifully illustrated in a local community-based mapping effort, *Islands in the Salish Sea, A Community Atlas (2007)*. Canadian geographer, naturalist and artist, Robert Bateman makes his home on one of the 450 islands of the Salish Sea. He reflects on the state of conservation in his contribution to the book.

In our global, packaged world we are losing a sense of our place. This is a philosophical tragedy. It results in a lack of caring, a lack of sense of community and a neglect of civil responsibility. It is also an environmental and human tragedy. For this loss of knowledge of and intimacy with our home place, we are also losing our sense of spirit.

Robert Bateman (Harrington & Stevenson, 2007 p.7)

In addition to Bateman's reflection, many authors and theorists have discussed the spirit of place: Lawrence Durrell (1969) wrote letters and descriptive essays on the spirit of place based on his travel; Christian Norberg-Schultz (1980) discussed the role of the architect and *genius loci* to help people to create meaning where they dwell and Yi-Fu Tuan (1989; 1991) has written tirelessly about spirit of place and relationships with nature, perception, experience and how one uses language as description and expression of landscape. Tuan's work clearly supports articulating ideas of place with appropriate diction. Each of these authors lends their voice to the power of the essential relationship, *genius loci* and importance of Distinct Place. Furthermore, the health of ecosystems is important to those living in the Gulf Islands (Islands Conference 2004; Harrington & Stevenson 2007) and may find support to retain those ecosystems within the spirit of place. The illumination of contemporary values legitimizes how low and slow physical growth can positively impact community development success. So when engaging a demographic sample of those in the arts, creative industries and governance community for the 20 semi-structured interviews, balance in the participant sampling was a clear objective. There were three broad themes that rose from the semi-structured interviews. There were responses that addressed the social context of the island, the non-heteronormative make-up of the population, and the commonality of an orientation to nature and the natural world. The social make-up of the island, including a range of social groups and an emphasis on the importance of the natural world to island inhabitants, provides a further cue for Distinct Place.

One key question posed to the semi-structured interview participants was what Gabriola Island offered and what the island lacked? The three recurring answers to this question involved the social profile, economic opportunities and the geographic and physical make up that engaged the residents. Very few people thought the island lacked anything and most were happy to give up urban amenities such as restaurants and offerings of urban culture. An interesting finding was that some 25% of the respondents indicated that they feel that the island lacks racial diversity. In addition, the majority of participants commenting liked the gender diversity and the non-heteronormative nature of the island residents.

...there's a lot of people here that are just not heteronormative and that's really nice. That's a cool part of the island. And you have people... you have lots of gay people, you have lots of people who are non-binary, and you... not lots but way more that you do in a normal sample size of 4,000 people in Ontario.
(Female, Creative Industries, 30s).

Gabriola Island is identified as non-heteronormative, but it also is experienced as a safe place for gay and non-binary people. One artist expressed her gratitude.

Well, I found a kind of home here that I had never known, the sense of community here is palpable... and I had always lived in a kind of lesbian ghetto wherever I was in cities where lesbians' kind of ran to each other's homes in the maze of the city. It's totally different here... lesbians are very out in this community, so it is very non-homophobic. (Female, Artist 60s).

Gabriola Island embraces a range of people, their artistic and creative expressions and their connection to nature. Supportiveness nurtures cultural sustainability, and cultural sustainability is a component of Distinct Place.

Many interview participants celebrated the attributes of Islandness. Comments in relation to being part of nature, inspired by nature, close to nature, was the number one response to questions around place with 70% of participants.

The relationship between community and place is indeed a very powerful one in which each reinforces the identity of the other, and in which the landscape is very much an expression of community held beliefs and values and of interpersonal involvements (Relph 1976, p.34).

This expression in which the landscape becomes an expression of community values emerged in practice for me: while living on the island my choice of footwear changed from fashion to utility, reflecting these new values. My first month on the island in May 2016 I gained insight into why 'Colleen's', an island purveyor of personal items as Irish woolens, brand name socks and hiking boots, is always humming with activity. A year and a half later my now very worn purple Merrill hiking boots, purchased there my first month and worn daily, had to be replaced. A new pair of boots were purchased at Mountain Equipment Co-op while visiting Victoria. These gray suede water-proof beauties, self-christened my Gabriola stilettos, brought to mind a humorous story my Vancouver Island optometrist told me. Originally from New Jersey, on a recent shopping trip back east, she steered her mother and sister away from the Christian Louboutin store in the Big Apple. It was her challenge to explain to them why the red-soled high heels were not essential in her new Vancouver Island context. Values shift. So does community-based footwear.

Commonalities, self-expression, supportiveness and spirituality

The research focused on identifying what community cultural attributes might be present in a rural context that were different from an urban context. One central theme was the special relationship between the creative individual and their surroundings placing emphasis on the social and environmental/ecological attributes of the community. The importance of location can be confirmed by the literature. Bunting and Mitchell (2001) found that rural artists locate adjacent to larger markets. Gabriola has easy access to three significant urban markets: Nanaimo, Victoria, and Vancouver, British Columbia. With the increasing commercial activity on the internet, the once remote Gulf Islands are option for artists and creative workers.

Gabriolans have a lot in common according to research participants. Interview participants noted that artists and creative workers tend to work alone. Two potters (Male, Artists, 60s/70s), suggested that although they knew the other potters on the island, and could rely on them if they needed anything, when they actually bumped into each other they'd catch up on other aspects of island life than talking shop. One interview participant commented to that end, "Gabriola was self-selecting" (Male, Artist, 70s). And this idea was not a new one. The Gulf Islands recent history was one of migration to a lower density way of life (Dunster 2004).

By the early 1960s the population began to increase with a part-time residence seeking recreational respite from the cities. Many city dwellers moved to the islands in the 1960s and 70s in search of alternative lifestyles, spiritual fulfillment, creative inspiration, rural community and a slower pace of life...
Dunster, (Harrington & Stevenson 2007, p. 47).

Gabriola provides the opportunity for home-based occupations and producing artists' works on the island. The idea of home-based occupations were conceived decades before by the Local Trust Committee (LTC). The opportunity to design, live and work in a self-conceived space was attractive and discussed by many as contributing to their creative practice.

Well living here sort of allows my creative practice really... you know I've, I've. Because I could afford the property, because I'd never built anything before... but you know, that was sort of allowed as opposed to, you know, trying to do it on a street in Vancouver somewhere... uhm, you know so I was able to create this workspace around myself that uhm, you know I just... I mean I'm totally in love with my workspace. I love it, I love it!
(Male, Artist, 70s)

Many research participants identified a clear connection to nature as their basis for living on Gabriola Island. This extended to an understanding that their neighbours, for the most part,

shared this value system. Those that did not share values of respect for the natural environment could find themselves quietly chastised or left out. A research participant, who has been part of Gabriola for well over a decade, has experienced change and expresses a sense of loss of the wildness of the island.

... when I first came here it was magical. There was enough wildness left on the island that you could really feel the sense of the heart of Gabriola. The spirit of Gabriola. And what I used to say about Gabriola is: “Gabriola is a bitch. And she either likes you or she doesn’t like you. And if she doesn’t like you, you’re not going to be here very long.” So that’s kind of the way it was for me. I just had this personal relationship with the island. I loved it. I loved the land.

(Female, Creative Industries, 60s)

Those artists and creative workers who found themselves on Gabriola repeatedly emphasized the openness and support for new ideas from their peers. The importance of peers and community was established by Jim Lotz years before in Nova Scotia. He spoke to many artists from around North America who had found their way to rural Nova Scotia in search of a supportive arts community. In *Head, Hands and Heart* (1998) he detailed their stories linking spirituality to place, similar to stories on Gabriola.

Spiritual practice was explored with Gabriola research participants. Those 85% of interview participants who acknowledged spirituality linked it to living on the island. One artist correlated her time in the forest on island with Japanese Forest Bathing (Female, Artists, 60s). Another participant who travelled routinely to the British Columbia mainland for work commented that time on the island puts one in a spiritual mindset, “you wake up, you look out and your obviously connected to something bigger right away”, (Female, Creative Industries, 50s). An artist summarized her experience of living on the island as a positive shift in her life.

Yeah, well... it’s a sanctuary here for me. I have done so much spiritual work since I’ve been here... particularly the last ten years... and it is partly because of that safety I’ve been talking about and the sense of letting down guard. You know. Relaxing enough into the present moment that I could explore it more... and understand my role in it and what was going on for me. So it’s been an amazing impact for me spiritually to live here. (Female, Artist, 60s).

The spiritual aspects of living on the island has created a shift for those who have chosen to inhabit it whether it be meditation, a conducive environment to work or letting your guard down and feeling safe, the context these people live in has had a positive impact on their lives.

The central message emerging from this analysis reveals that Distinct Place is derived through interactions of multiple conduits: social, natural, historic, cultural and is not able to simply be created or recreated through marketing or branding effort and may not simply be attained by government policy initiatives to support the arts. The ethnographic research process confirmed this plethora of linkages between creative activity and nature in the rural context. Nature sustains those involved in the arts and knowledge-based work. Unfortunately as Flyvbjerg (1998) indicated, there are individual agendas at hand which will threaten life as it is currently experienced on the island. The next sections will make explicit the importance of genius loci to creative residents on the island. These concepts are not to be taken for granted under a ‘preserve and protect’ mandate.

Threats to Gabriola Island

No superhighways, hockey arenas or billboards. No urban din. The island has an abundance of marine and natural features: bays, inlets and narrows. Open sky. Gabriola would appear to be a context with local home-based business policies which support a low environmental footprint. The island, and other islands like it, provide attributes of Distinct Place. Gabriola ‘place’ can be conceptualized in relationship with human settlement, yet the preserving and protecting of the natural ecology must continue as a priority as set out in the Islands Trust Act (1974).

Respect for the natural world must be systematic and development consideration weighed with a best practices’ ecological framework, not short-term political satisfaction, or economic gain for few (Flyvbjerg, 2003). The elected officials of Islands Trust too often default to short-term political solutions that conflict with provision of the long-range vision for all British Columbians, the original intent of the Trust (Islands Trust Act 1974; Ipsos Reid 2011). This does not align with the hopes Magnusson (2015) had for self-governance. There are often opportunists, people with significant financial resources, who have relocated to the Gulf Islands with an agenda. These particular newcomers do not have the essential relationship with the islands, being focused on financial opportunity, and wish to realize their development plans changing the long-term trajectory of the region. Ultimately, they may impact the culture of a community before the average citizen realizes the affect.

The strategic dismantling of community character can happen behind closed doors for some time before it sees the light of day. I attended an Islands Trust meeting on Gabriola Island, in June 2016, where a development application was being presented. The applicant was Williamson & Associates-Potlatch Properties and Pilot Bay Holdings (Sunder News; January 2, 2018). Their proposal for 25 luxury lots had been submitted to the Gabriola Local Trust Committee (LTC) in Spring 2016 and approved by the Gabriola LTC in less than one year in a Quid Pro Quo decision. Over the last decade this savvy consortium, with off island money, had donated four acres of land for the Island's new Community Health Care Facility (2012 completion) while also acquiring strategic land parcels on the island. The locally derived Density Transfer³⁸ process was applied to this project, unfortunately nicknamed "Potlatch", wherein the developer provided parkland in exchange for development rights. Contradictorily, the current Gabriola Official Community Plan (OCP) stated that no additional lots were required on island. In fact, an adequate inventory, in excess of 500 lots³⁹, existed on the island at the time of this application (Gabriola OCP 1997 p. 13). Nevertheless, despite over 150 people attending a public meeting Wednesday March 29, 2017, on the 'Potlatch', many of them presenting salient points (detailed below) on why approval should be deferred. In a pre-scheduled meeting two days later the Gabriola LTC voted to approve the unneeded development.

"The transfer is not in accordance with the provisions of the OCP."

"The public hearing is taking place without a covenant in place."

"...objects to by law 289 because it does not follow The OCP, and changes are being sought for the benefit of a single development."

"There are hundreds of existing lots to be developed."

"If the density transfer cannot be done as per OCP policies then this section should be removed from the OCP, and the future Parkland should be paid for in cash rather than densities."

"Regardless of legal opinion the density transfer does not comply with the OCP. Legal opinions only stand until they are challenged."

"...concerned about the effect on local water as well rates have decreased in the area and the hydrological survey used old information and did not test current wells."

³⁸ A former Islands Trustee takes credit for formulating the Density Transfer process, not a professional planner. It is not a transparent procedure.

³⁹ This inventory of lots is provided to local Fire Departments by B.C. Assessment who issues an annual update of lots and improvement districts on island. (Gabriola Island Sounder 2021).

“The OCP should be re-examined, and a decision should be deferred while public consultations about the OCP and a housing strategy are addressed.”

“...concerned about amenities zoning because it is not being done as per the OCP and exceptions should not be allowed.”

“There has not been enough information provided to the public to make a decision.”

Islands Trust Public Meeting notes (March 29, 2017)

There are those living on Gabriola Island with important expertise who understand the long-term benefits of community building. Nick Doe, Editor of the Gabriola Museum’s newsletter, *The Shale*, carefully monitored the application submitted by Williamson & Associates-Potlatch Properties and Pilot Bay Holdings. Nick Doe has resided on Gabriola for two-and-a-half decades and is a professional engineer and technical writer (so, his expertise and interest in land division are likely both greater than that of the “average Gabriola citizen’s”). Doe prepared two correspondence packages addressed to The Islands Trust, dated June 26, 2016 (25 pages) and April 10, 2017 (82 pages) expressing a number of concerns regarding the ‘Potlatch’ application. After diplomatically and systematically requesting follow up to his concerns, his concluding correspondence with the Islands Trust captures sentiments that parallel the findings of this paper.

... My experience at the executive committee’s [sic] on June 7, 2017, was unpleasant, the ITEC⁴⁰ seemingly disinterested in the issues and more interested in protecting the reputation of staff and trustees, and unappreciative of the attention of the time, cost, and energy that delegations had put into their submissions, and were brusque in their manner are almost to the point of rudeness. I am left with *a loss of faith in the Islands Trust organization’s resolve to fulfil its mandate* (emphasis my own). There is no reason why this application could have not been renegotiated to make the stipulation of the island’s OCP either by changes in the application or well thought through amendments and improvements to the OCP after public participation. Instead, the policies of the OCP have been wondered of questionable value despite all the hard work and time that goes into agreeing on its policies. Ecologically the whole land has been unnecessary [sic] compromised. A sad, frustrating, disappointing ending indeed.

Doe, June 2017

When a researcher comes across a relatively pristine place like the Gulf Islands, there is a realization that there is still wonder in the world. When that place has a ‘preserve and protect’ mandate... even more so. Unfortunately the findings of this research corroborate Mr. Doe’s claim, namely that The Islands Trust organization⁴¹ in practice, places more emphasis and

⁴⁰ ITEC - Islands Trust Executive Committee

⁴¹ granted land use planning authority by the Province

resources on administration than a land use planning best practices framework. As a result, they don't meet their object or mandate of 'preserve and protect'. In addition, without a municipal government many supportive functions on Gabriola run on the volunteer efforts of the residents. And politics among residents working in volunteer organizations have no shortage of conflict.

As a result, threats to Gabriola Island's homeostasis comes not only from developers but also from internal organizations. Organizations like the local Chamber of Commerce may fall within this scope. The Chamber, after many years of being sidelined, ramped up its efforts in the last few years but now proceeds without prioritizing the arts and creative industries which make up a large percentage of the economic activity on and from the island⁴². This appears to be quite a departure since it was their in-depth research project (conducted in 2015, published in 2016) that conveyed the findings of *The State of the Gabriola Economy*. Their subsequent economic development strategy was derived like it would be in any urban area. Their recent Strategic Plan appears to be economic development boilerplate (GICC 2018) and when the organization took responsibility for economic development from the defunct Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation (NEDC) there was little tailoring to the community of artists and creative workers that make up a significant component of the work force on the island (GICC 2016). It appears a missed opportunity to position Gabriola as a rural creative community.

The ability to see one's own community as distinct seems to be at issue. Since the Chamber of Commerce organizational culture is based on business promotion, it may fail to identify and implement preliminary community development steps of capacity and relationship building between existing organizations toward an end goal of economic development. Recently the Gabriola Chamber of Commerce was canvassing opinions on light industrial zoning for Gabriola⁴³. This runs counter to the home-based business scale of operation supported by the Islands Trust for decades. Light industrial development has not been an option on the Southern Gulf Islands under the Islands Trust and was not an identified land use in a comparative analysis of three Gulf Islands Official Community Plans (OCPs).

⁴² GICC – Economic Survey (2016)

⁴³ Gabriola Chamber of Commerce website 2021

Threats to Gabriola Island's homeostasis are both exogenous and endogenous. The island's visioning and regulatory planning documents are dated and often in conflict with one another (Gabriola OCP 1997). Land use planning here is best compared to regulatory processing so the opportunities to 'preserve and protect' are slim. Local agencies, like the Chamber of Commerce, have commissioned salient community-based research but somehow their plans moving forward are not being informed by that research (GICC 2016).

The key identified tension goes back to the long-standing, artificial approach to 'place'. This top down, marketing based, place-making agenda versus the timely argument for Distinct Place which comes from that subtle combination of historic, cultural, natural and social components found so readily on Gabriola Island. Choosing suitable research methodologies, like the co-methodologies of ethnography and phenomenological hermeneutics provides a patient and committed way of understanding the community. The message emerging from this analysis reveals that Distinct Place is derived through interactions of multiple cultural conduits, cannot be created or recreated through marketing efforts and may not simply be attained by government policy initiatives to support the arts. The ethnographic research process confirmed this plethora of linkages between resident's creative activity and nature in the rural context. Nature sustains those involved in the arts and knowledge-based work.

This situation is, however, not just a local and outsider tension but a frame of mind involving one's perspective on development, islandness and sustainability. Unfortunately as Flyvbjerg (1998) indicated, there will always be individual agendas which will threaten life as it is currently experienced on the island. The special characteristics of the Gulf Island communities and their ways of life are at stake.

What makes a place a place like no other?

Bonner (2002) has asked a question relevant to the concept of Distinct Place: "What makes a place, a place like no other?" (p.1). If the idea of place is allowed to develop as originally intended "expressions of deeply felt commitments to particular environments" (Relph 1976) and another local publication, *Islands in the Salish Sea, A Community Atlas* (Harrington & Stevenson 2007) will provide a germane example. This community mapping project, with over

3,000 participants, confronted some heart-wrenching realizations for residents tasked to share on paper their special places. Deference; Fear of Loss; Fear of Discovery were three detailed apprehensions experienced during the Active Mapping Stage (p. 29) of the publication. The organizers addressed participants overwhelm in relation to the ‘discovery’ aspect of their communities during the active mapping and publication. The community were looking for assurance that their place is protected. The editors gave a somber summary.

Our answer: it is too late to avoid discovery. We're more in danger of being loved to death than bypassed. One of the goals of the project is to convey to newcomers and visitors how vulnerable these islands are, in order to help inspire respect and good stewardship: if other people see the reverence and love we put into these maps, perhaps they will be influenced to join us in protecting them.

(Harrington & Stevenson 2007 p.29)

Can Distinct Place include the emotion of a fragile archipelago so loved? In his article *Language and the Making of Place*, Tuan (1991) argued that “... people have the power to build, they also have the power to destroy, and on the whole, it is easier to destroy than to build” (p. 693). Distinct Place, as conceptualized, is where people choose not to destroy nature. It is abstractly a locale where genius loci, the spirit of place translates to action by local people guiding the conservation of land, air, and sea—prioritized by legislated commitment to ‘preserve and protect’ in perpetuity. With a mandate such as ‘preserve and protect’ the Gulf Islands attract many newcomers.

My introduction to this Distinct Place was both ordered and unanticipated. As a researcher I was organized and systematic but nonetheless I had many unexpected experiences during my pre-investigation and during the ethnography. My pre-investigation trip set the stage. I took my first float plane ride from YVR Terminal South on the Fraser River in Richmond, British Columbia to Gabriola Island on a drizzly December 27, 2015. I was beginning a 10-day pre-field work reconnaissance. That morning I had flown to British Columbia from Ontario and deplaned a WestJet carrier at Vancouver International. In contrast, the de Havilland Beaver in front of me had a capacity of seven souls. I assisted a 94-year-old Gabriolan onto the ramp crossing the wharf to the bushplane, now fitted with amphibious floats, and guided her onto the benchseat in the middle of the aircraft. After take-off this nonagenarian woman entertained me with stories the entire flight. She calmed me and helped me appreciate the magic of the unspoiled landscape as

we drifted slightly above the open waters of the Salish Sea towards the massed conifers of Silva Bay at the south end of Gabriola. With preliminary impressions of the island as an appropriate research community confirmed by the winter reconnaissance, in mid-May 2016, I packed up three animals and drove cross-country to Gabriola Island. That summer, during a full moon in early July, my dog and I joined Gabriolans for a night walk around the island. The gathering of nocturnal hikers, which commenced at 10:00 p.m., was quite enchanting. I was managing plantar fasciitis and set my objectives for just one quarter of the 28-kilometre loop. We glided through the darkness. It was peaceful with sounds of footsteps and quiet conversation. A month and a half prior I had settled into a rental home in the north end of the island, updating my literature review and revising my research proposal. Time was spent weekly in the Gabriola Museum Archive, attending culture-led events and Islands Trust meetings. Work continued with time spent understanding provincial and local legislation. My revised research proposal was approved and following three conferences in Spring and Summer of 2017 primary research commenced. For a change of pace during the primary research interviews I engaged in local activities assisting a 30-year resident of Gabriola for an evening bat count. ‘Gabriola Bats’, one of many volunteer groups, started the Bat Monitoring Project to record any indication of White Nose Syndrome a disease which caused decline in the North American bat population. The Gabriola community champions the natural world and contributes to place in many ways inexhaustibly⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ Gabriola Island provided unique experiences related to the natural world during my three years on the island. Unfortunately, there were many disruptive experiences to my research program, usually in relation to housing. Rental accommodation is scarce and often of poor quality and certainly not effectively legislated and monitored by local and regional government. I moved eight times over three years. I had monitored the Gabriola Facebook Bulletin Boards, over a year prior to relocating, but the housing market heated up in early Spring 2016 changing the rental housing landscape. Over the next three years I came to know the island landscape and communities well. I saw the greedy and unaccountable side of Gabriola landlords. I also experienced profound generosity. For instance, when my original six-month rental was up, and I was having trouble finding housing on island mid-Fall 2016, two Canadian scholars offered my pets and I domicile. I continued to look for housing and two months later signed a lease for an advertised long-term rental home mid-island. Having moved in, it became obvious during the winter of 2017 and well below average temperatures that the structure was not as advertised but rather a seasonal dwelling: moldy and uninsulated. It was impossible to stay warm inside that snowy winter even with a woodstove. That Spring a noted Canadian writer offered me her cabin for the upcoming summer, in a glorious location by a north end sandstone beach. The end of August 2017 I moved into my final, electrically heated, home on Gabriola Island. I was a long-term south end tenant to unaccountable, absentee landlords. That would prove to have additional challenges with the coastal rain and windstorm of December 2018. The wilds of Gulf Island living were forcefully emphasized with hundreds of felled trees and week-long power and communication outages. With no way to heat my rental home, a friend with a log home complete with a propane generator and pellet stoves took us in and ensured a cozy and memorable Christmas. After the windstorm subsided, I was reminded that I was living in a rainforest. When I moved back into the south end dwelling I did so with a dehumidifier. For two weeks I emptied gallons of water daily within the home which had no heat for a week. My only conduit to report and try to improve living conditions were a provincial tenancy related tribunal.

Dunster (2004) summarizes many of the characteristics of the Gulf Islands beautifully and recognizes the pressure on sustainability of lifestyle here.

The islands have held on to their rural identities for the past 125 years but are now under increasing development pressure as more people arrived seeking a different way of life than can be found in cities or suburbia.

Unfortunately, many of these same new settlers are bringing with them the fast landscape habits that are threatening the continuity in existence of slow island landscapes, slow lifestyles, and slowly evolving island cultures. The legislation that should be working in favor of protecting the islands is now rarely used effectively to counteract the constant pressure from the development industry. (Dunster 2004, p. 214).

Dunster paints a comprehensive picture of development pressure on the Gulf Islands and the fact that protection measures are not being effectively mobilized. It is important that the legislation related to evolving local culture be revisited frequently to remain relevant.

Conclusions

Distinct Place can be found in few situations. It is a careful balance of historic, cultural, natural and social attributes and how they function together. A suitable research perspective, like the co-methodologies of ethnography and phenomenological hermeneutics, it takes the time to really understand the community and its people. Distinct Place cannot just be recreated through top-down policy initiatives. This balance of Distinct Place can be eroded over time when, for instance, economics are privileged over social tensions like clear cutting and housing affordability. There is constant tension in what can make a Distinct Place – a place like no other - lose its balance. There are manageable tensions between what makes a place, how to keep that place, and the role that politics, economics and community development plays in maintaining or eroding place.

Place is a foundational concept in theoretical planning. This essential relationship in human experience may be diluted in our society as a result of appropriation of the term ‘place’ for business and educational branding purposes. The seminal theorists uphold the concept of genius loci, spirit of the place, as being the essence. The idea of the spirit and the notion of the spiritual contribute to the concept of Distinct Place. These contributions must be accompanied by the

legislated commitment to prioritize the preservation of land, air and sea. These combined principles may be upheld in perpetuity by a sensate local population to achieve Distinct Place.

The case study community has many traits contributing to its spirit: the attributes of islandness; the non-heteronormative makeup of the population; the opportunity to design, live and work in a self-conceived space; and a model of local alternative governance. A place where native petroglyphs still speak to those who seek them out. On the island there are also tangible threats to the concept of both place and Distinct Place. The Islands Trust does not incorporate a planning system let alone an easily understood ecological planning framework. Nor does it represent self-governance as outlined by Magnusson (2015). Rather resources are expended at an increasing rate on administering the elected body, the Islands Trust Council. With Gabriola's antiquated OCP, dated 1997, the islands ecological and environmental planning matters still sit in a cue of 'to do' projects nearly a decade after initiation. It is rather as described by Flyvbjerg (2003), where so many projects on the Gulf Islands satisfy a few influential current beneficiaries.

People in the Gulf Islands and other areas of Vancouver Island are unusually attached to the concept of self-governance. This appears to be an aspiration. In all its complexity the Islands Trust, the governance model crafted by the province of British Columbia in 1974 for the southern Gulf Islands, foregoes any semblance of a true land use planning system. This is problematic for a local governance model with an object to preserve and protect. There is no doubt that Gabriolans would step up if they could easily understand the Islands Trust governance. The Trust, however, has not changed much since it began in 1974 with the exception of an increasing web of administrative rules complicated by local politics. Since there is very little evidence of design and ecologically based land use planning the fragility of an island's natural assets, both natural and social begin to erode. Without a clear land use planning roadmap with regular comprehensive community consultation and updates, real estate speculators creep in and with their objectives inappropriately regulated the essential relationships to land and the community fabric shows signs of wear. Having heard from residents through many channels they support the claim that the Gulf Islands are a place like no other. The intent of a slow life is an appropriate fit for these places of ecological fragility: the land, sea and air. Distinct Place with its

ecological, cultural and social attributes needs to be protected. We may look to the governance principles found in the Cittaslow mandate for guidance (Mayer & Knox 2006; 2010).

The editors of 'Islands in the Salish Sea' (2007) placated their map making participants around the notion of discovery of the Gulf Islands. They conveyed that the islands are "more in danger of being loved to death than bypassed" (Harrington & Stevenson, p.29) and they hoped by the publication of a book with 3000 contributors they could influence people to protect the Gulf Islands. However, wishing don't make it so. It is important for clearly communicated, legally binding planning parameters to be in place. It is not reasonable to think that, as worthy as it may be, instilling a sense of wonder and love, will protect the uniqueness of Distinct Places.

Governance (particularly at the intersection of political and economic) privileges private property rights within a contemporary neoliberal framework. Where ecology is fragile, where the voices of sensate people express how they care deeply about the health of the natural world and where a unique, governance model has been conceived with good intentions, it makes sense to focus on the purity of land use planning objectives. This means commitment to implementation of a transparent planning system, with both current and advanced (long-range) planning instruments sealed with appropriate legislative tools to preserve and protect a very Distinct Place.

‘Preserve and Protect’ – a salient strategy for nurturing rural creative communities?

Crafting a suitable Planning Framework for Rural Cultural Sustainability

Abstract

Fostering a planning and governance model for rural communities, where the arts and creative industries might thrive, is a tailored approach responding to the specific needs and long-standing values of a locale and its people. Through a case study set in the southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia, Canada this paper explores an arts, creative industry and an environmentally minded constituency which has a significant presence in the research community. This population has not been able to translate a balanced vision for the island because of the absence of an effective planning system. The regional governance model, the Islands Trust, and its Local Planning Services (LPS) have not been able to operationalize the Trust mandate of ‘preserve and protect’.

Three topic areas addressing the effectiveness of the Trust Local Planning Services (LPS) were explored. The first involves examples of land use planning limitations from the primary case study community, Gabriola Island; the second, analysis of the Trust’s Local Planning Services (LPS); the third, an island-to-island comparison of three Gulf Island Official Community Plans (OCPs). Although the existing (but dated) scholarship suggests the Trust is an acceptable model, current findings reveal that the Islands Trust planning toolkit, service, scope and approach must be updated with ecological and environmental best practices to accomplish the ‘preserve and protect’ mandate to retain the creative population found here. Each of the thirteen islands implement the Trust mandate through their Local Trust Committees (LTC) and staff.

Introduction and Background to Study Region

This paper examines a successful rural creative economy in the context of a unique governance model crafted nearly five decades ago specifically for the Gulf Islands of British Columbia. The research question is straightforward – Is that governance system, the Islands Trust, effective and addressing its mandate of ‘preserve and protect’ today? A detailed introduction to the Islands

Trust is found in Appendix 6A - Islands Trust Governance Structure and 6B - British Columbia Official Community Plan (OCP) components. This information is presented in an appendices as detailed background information.

The governance body is a coalition of 13 incorporated local governments and two incorporated Trust administrative bodies, set in an archipelago west of the city of Vancouver, charged with preserving and protecting the southern Gulf Islands in the Salish Sea. The Act states:

To preserve and protect the Trust area and its unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the Trust area and of British Columbia generally, in cooperation with municipalities, regional districts, improvement districts, persons and organizations and the government of British Columbia.

Islands Trust Act 1995, p. 5.

With each southern Gulf Island community conducting its own business and planning⁴⁵, with little oversight, interpretation of the Islands Trust Act is often inconsistent. According to local Gabriola Island author Fielding Sweet, residents of the islands “enjoy a Democratic local government that allows them the opportunity to influence land use decisions based on their sensitivity to the environment” (Fielding Sweet ed. 1988, p. 8). The Trust was conceived in the mid 1970s in response to an influx of proposals for land division in this ecologically sensitive area. Shortly after its inception, the Islands Trust commenced encouraging home-based economic activity (Artist, M, 70s; 2nd Artist, M. 60s). Since most Creatives generate knowledge-based work and by-products from their work is little more than household waste, they have a small ecological footprint and many mindfully work toward it.

The tensions between this formal island governance body and informal actions is clear within the research community with similar stories on adjacent islands. Historically, the few people unsympathetic with their natural surroundings on the Gulf Islands have not liked to be told what they can do with their property and assert what they consider to be their private property rights. This attitude has created tension in an ecologically sensitive area and certainly has been in conflict with the Islands Trust mandate. As Salt Spring Island writer Frants Attorp wrote, “The

⁴⁵ The Islands Trust currently operates out of three offices. High-level administration, Trust wide functions and The Islands Trust Conservancy is located in the Victoria office, Local Planning Services are operated out of Gabriola Island and Salt Spring Island. The Trust employs approximately 55 people.

rules be damned, culture runs the attitude is deep on the islands, but there are consequences: lawlessness makes a mockery of planning ...” (Times Colonist 2020, p. 2). So the question must be asked, how specifically does the Trust address ‘preserve and protect’ in matters of land use planning?

Given the ‘preserve and protect’ mandate of the Islands Trust Act it is paradoxical that people living on and moving to the southern Gulf Islands would not expect a rigorous level of land regulation from the Islands Trust Local Planning Services. A governance claim like this is so rare that it must be carefully crafted and clearly communicated. As a result four claims about the Islands Trust have been identified and discussed. The results are assimilated into two themes: the first - a critique of the Trust in terms of its local planning services and operations and the second theme – the need for protection for Distinct Places like Gabriola Island and the consequences of the failure to provide an appropriate planning framework.

The Trust’s ability to ‘preserve and protect’ on the ground may be in question for two reasons. First, as mentioned, some property owners on the Gulf Islands do not appear to follow environmental rules. Unfortunately, this can go on to the detriment of ecosystems unless a complaint is made against the property owner. Whistle blowing falls to residents against other residents, creating an uncomfortable dynamic in an isolated context. Second, the Islands Trust has not been given the same powers as municipalities in British Columbia (for instance, the opportunity to curb logging on private property), so the opportunity to ‘preserve and protect’ wanes. In an article discussing ecosystems at risk in the Trust area, former Islands Trust Chief Administrative Officer Linda Adams suggested, “I think people often agree in principle with some of this stuff, but then when it starts affecting their own property, less so” (Nolan 2019, p. 13). With an attitude passive to the mandate of ‘preserve and protect’ coming from high-ranking Trust staff it is not surprising that inconsistencies across the Trust area are tolerated and will be explored in detail.

There are those, like artists and creative industry workers, who do move to the Gulf Islands for the natural context in order to fuel their everyday efforts. There are few rural Canadian communities like Gabriola Island that boast one of the highest concentration of artists in the

country (Hill Strategies Research Inc. 2010). The creative economy theory asserted that artists have tangible impact on a region's economic success (Florida 2002), so a small community with this declaration and a unique model of governance bears further investigation. This culture-led demographic is what dreams are made of for decision makers (Florida & Stolarick 2007) since most visual artists, literary artists and performing artists have few adverse impacts on the natural environment. For the most part these creatives work from home and by-products from their work generate little more waste than their normal household. Also considering the diversity of creative industry occupations – careers like animation, web design, graphic design, architecture, landscape architecture, fashion design, music and film production and post-production, publishing companies, copywriters, content writers and product/industrial designers and patent holders – the overall community profile is of a well-educated, ecologically sensitive, low polluting population involved in knowledge-based work and the arts. This profile describes a large percentage of people living and working on the Gulf Islands of British Columbia, Canada; in this study, attention is focussed on Gabriola Island specifically.

A question evolved, What role has the Island Trust played in the creation of a creative community on Gabriola Island and what are the challenges associated with maintaining this community vernacular? “The literature tells us that creatives who locate in this type of rural environment are seeking natural landscapes to sustain them daily (Bunting and Mitchell 2001).

The Islands Trust of British Columbia theoretically provides those living in the Trust area with opportunity for input in relation to land use planning at a local level. The province of British Columbia delegated this authority to the Islands Trust in 1977 (Islands Trust Act 1996). Over the years, however, questions have continued about the effectiveness of the Trust. In particular, during the broader research from which this study (section) draws, a question came up in an informal discussion: “Would the Gulf Islands situation be better with or without the Islands Trust?”⁴⁶. This is not a question easily answered. The ethnographic research in the Trust area, however, has provided opportunity for both informed discussion and data collection. Detailed descriptions of the Trust structure are provided in Appendix 6A as a basis for evaluating the

⁴⁶ British Columbia Registered Planner

complexity of the changing organization, its policy hierarchy, and how the power dynamic affects local decision making.

In a 2014 article, titled *The Islands Trust Experiment*, Salt Spring Island resident Brenda Guiled declared that “a federation of local governments with land-use authority, tasked with preserving and protecting the area’s unique amenities and environment” (p.1) is so rare that internet searches will not yield another case of a trust integrated into government. As a result of this rarity Guiled asked, is the Trust, “a 45-year experiment?” (Guiled 2014).

The Trust governance works with Vancouver Island’s Regional Districts (Capital, Comox Valley and Nanaimo Regional Districts), the Metro Vancouver Regional District, Sunshine Coast Regional District, and the qathet Regional District (formerly the Powell River Regional District). The Regional Districts that are adjacent to the southern Gulf Islands provide services including solid waste and recycling; strategic planning, building inspection, recreation, water management and emergency services. Provincial local operations oversee education, roads and transportation and health care. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) are responsible for policing. These relationships provide well serviced rural, low density and ecologically rich life to those who can comfortably afford it or to those who just manage to make ends meet islander style.

Research Methodology

The research inquiry was designed to address three areas of island life: creative activity strategies, place and local governance. The co- methodologies implemented in this research are intertwined. Ethnography, being embedded in the research community over a period of three years, allowed access to day-to-day life and its trials in the island community.

Four data collection methods were used in the study (archival, document analysis, semi-structured interviews and observation at art events and governance meetings) were conducted. Local newspapers, government documents and semi-structured interviews are the source of the data. Gathering statistical information about the non-urban arts sector is easier to obtain now than it was when Bunting and Mitchell (2001) conducted their study on artists in the

rural context. A recent economic survey of the research community, commissioned by the Gabriola Chamber of Commerce (GICC 2016), was also consulted.

The intention was to undertake a qualitative approach that could lead to in-depth and community-based representation of peoples' experiences. These methodologies contribute to a detailed analysis and allow the rich aspects of living on a small island, with a creative population, to be captured. For this paper on governance specifically, three of the four data collection methods were employed: document analysis of (i) legislative and local government materials and correspondence and (ii) journalistic documents; 20 semi-structured interviews with representatives of four groups; and community observation reflecting attendance at community meetings and events over 36 months.

Undertaking examination of the Islands Trust Local Planning Services (LPS) included a combination of document analysis and embeddedness in the community. The LPS presents as a regulatory processing service with a public administration foundation. There is concern that the LPS lacks a proper land use planning system and has a narrow scope of service.

Four Claims about The Islands Trust of British Columbia

The Islands Trust is a unique, regionally complex form of land use governance. Findings are presented as four claims relating to the state of the Islands Trust in relation to its mandate of 'preserve and protect'. The natural disposition of the islands was of great importance to the majority of participants in this study and was also found as a reoccurring theme in the literature. In line with Bunting and Mitchell (2001) and Florida (2002) the Creatives interviewed for this study chose to live in the rural island context to take advantage of the natural island attributes and regenerate daily. Therefore, how the Islands Trust governs will have an impact on Creatives.

Claim 1: The priorities of the Islands Trust Planning Unit are dated and not structured to 'preserve and protect' as emphasized in the Islands Trust Act.

The object to 'preserve and protect' is straightforward in its meaning since the Islands Trust Act identifies the "unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the Trust area

and of British Columbia generally” (1996). This is an overarching principal. To ‘preserve and protect’ the delicate ecosystems of this archipelago both ecologically and culturally is implied but not clearly articulated. As a result there is rhetorical uncertainty introduced by local interpretation on how ‘preserve and protect’ is defined and if given much weight can disrupt balancing planning efforts. For instance, a research participant asked the rhetorical question, “Preserve and protect for whom?” (Artist, Male 70s). While the goal of self-governance is admirable, clearly the Islands Trust has limitations. The Trust has only been granted land use planning authority by the province and the Trust framework is already so fragmented in its understanding of planning, let alone ecological planning, that fully defined self-governance is overly ambitious. A mandate cannot retain its integrity when it is being constantly questioned and reinterpreted by a range of opinions, often extreme, without the guidance of knowledgeable experts.

As a result, a governance culture promoting a ‘preserve and protect’ mandate must be prudent in its moves. This does not appear to be the case with the Gabriola Local Trust Committee (LTC) where the projects selected, and decisions made prioritize local politics over preservation. The detailed descriptions of the Islands Trust structure (Appendix 6A) establishes a basis for evaluating the complexity of the changing organization, its policy hierarchy, and how the power dynamic affects local decision making. Observation of Islands Trust meetings and review of meeting minutes and other Trust documents revealed that the organizational structure does not allow for achievement of its environmental mandate. This is a result of missing planning instruments and the tendency for ad hoc local planning decisions. Trust may aspire to a ‘preserve and protect’ mandate, however the obligations of best practices in planning are not met. There remains a disconnect between the Islands Trust LPS, the organization and its mandate. One interview participant asserted this disconnect.

Uhm, I’m a little bit disappointed in what I’ve learned where they spend their time. Because I thought the Islands Trust was really to preserve the biodiversity and health of the Gulf Islands in terms of the land and how the people connect and habituate on the land to preserve the health of these islands. ...So I thought... that there would be that stewardship and duty of care for these islands because they are incredibly special in their uniqueness, in their geography but they are also extremely fragile, and they do need that protection. ... I don’t see them participating in the protection and stewardship of the health of these islands, I find they get drawn into... things, like sandwich boards...

(Cultural Institutions, Female, 50s)

The Islands Trust organization does not appear to prioritize growth and evolution in its planning unit. So the LTCs don't focus on actual land use planning concerns – they get drawn into minor grievances like sandwich boards signage. This Trust budget in 2019 showed that costs to administrate the Trust Council and Trust Conservancy grew year over year. Yet advancement concerns for the actual land use planning unit remained low. At their quarterly meeting in March 2019, on Gabriola Island, Trust CEO Russ Hotsenpiller presented the Islands Trust Budget through March 2020. Hotsenpiller's message to the Trust Council was that costs for the Islands Trust Council and Islands Trust Conservancy had been going up. The rising costs were verified by completing a review of the Islands Trust Financial Statements from 2016-2018. Costs to administer both the Trust Council and the Conservancy increased year over year and that neither the Council nor the Conservancy generate any income for Trust operations. The only unit of the Islands Trust to generate revenue is that of Local Planning Services (LPS) and no residents seem to be monitoring the spending.

Willful Blindness, Using Planning Tools and Clear Cutting

There is concern about negligent local governance activity and willful blindness in the activities of the Local Trust Committees (LTS) on the islands. This is demonstrated in practice by the selection minor of projects versus implementing a salient planning system for the Islands Trust. Take for instance the issue of vegetation management on slopes and the available planning tool of mapping the steep slopes on the Gulf Islands. In the Islands Trust Act there is little attention to environmental planning or design best practices which could help accomplish the 'preserve and protect' mandate. Regulation around fundamental land use planning and conservation practices, like building on slopes and actually using the mapping of vegetative cover for retention, cannot simply be passed over by local elected officials is salient land use planning practice. It is imperative to recognize the intersection of the built and the natural environment on the Gulf Islands.

A case study on steep slopes is illustrated by referencing the Vegetation Mapping in a Steep Slope Area and therefore a demonstration of willful blindness by the Gabriola Local Trust Committee. In early 2016 households from the north end of Gabriola, one which was included in the technical mapping boundaries in a designated steep slope area, watched as their adjacent

neighbour began to clear-cut his lot. His property appeared just outside the steep slope boundary lines on a map, but his lot topography was similar to theirs. The mapping is delineated at a large scale, possibly informed by aerial photographs which should be verified in the field before any land development in the area is discussed (McHarg 1969). Neighbours on each side of the lot, where trees were being removed, appeared before the LTC seeking to stop the clear cutting on the slope. Instead of coordinating with the Regional District of Nanaimo, where the Steep Slope Mapping is based, inventorying the situation, or activating a review of the Hazardous areas/Steep Slope policy, the Gabriola LTC allowed the adjacent homeowners to present their concerns at a monthly meeting but ultimately did nothing. When Gabriola Islands Trust planning staff were later asked about this particular file, they said the LTC felt that the issue (mature tree cutting on private property) was too controversial and decided not to act on the complaint of multiple neighbours. During the semi-structured interviews a participant, who had once served on an Islands Trust advisory committee, stated:

...an Island's Trust planner can do anything but plan. They're not planners, they're plan reviewers...
Artist, Male, 60s.

It is a planner's job to advise elected officials on matters of land use through a professional planning lens. In the case of the Islands Trust, where there is a 'preserve and protect' mandate, aspects of ecological planning should be asserted. It would appear that in this Gabriola case both staff planners and the Gabriola LTC ignored the fact that Steep Slope mapping is primarily illustrative and should be professionally field checked prior to any development activity on a site in a steep slope area. Certainly slope conditions for side-by-side property owners are unlikely to vary – but mapping may. Sadly, the owner of the property under site development continued to clear all the trees from his sloped lot and ignored potential adverse erosion impacts. Despite repeated requests from the neighbours, to have him stop removing trees, no leadership came from the Gabriola LTC or the Regional District of Nanaimo. This example highlights a tendency of failing to 'preserve and protect'. For a regulatory body not to verify conditions of special topographical mapping is ignoring a key item in a toolkit of land use planning best practices. Furthermore, for a jurisdiction with a 'preserve and protect' mandate, to ignore inappropriate site development practices invites third-party due diligence and critique. The Steep Slope Mapping for the Islands Trust area needs a set of corresponding policies. If these are not identified as a

land use planning priority by a LTC, then clear-cutting of valuable tree cover will continue. Where there are no policies decision making is left to the individual property owners who often work in their own best interest. When inappropriate vegetation removal or tree cutting occurs, the unprotected slope is subject to erosion. This will impact conditions to the base of the slope, possibly causing impact to infrastructure and to other properties.

There is a sad history of willful blindness by the Gabriola Local Trust Committee (LTC) on the issue of steep slopes. The Hazardous areas/Steep Development Permit Area policy on Gabriola Island has been waiting for priority project status, yet it has sat in the project queue since 2013. Earlier, in 2012, an article relating to the Gabriola Islands Trust consideration of Steep Slope regulations appeared in the *Nanaimo News Bulletin* and states,

The aim is to make it clearer for landowners about their responsibilities and the process for removing trees or vegetation from their property. It also attempts to identify hazards to help protect developers who are contemplating building on steep slopes.

October 12, 2012

Further document analysis revealed that in early January 2013, the last time the Hazardous areas/Steep Slope regulation was reviewed, the Gabriola Island LTC amended the proposed Development Area regulation in relation to Steep Slopes. It would appear that the community was not consulted. On January 21, 2013, the *Gabriola Sounder* published the news.

The Local Trust Committee voted in favour over the weekend to remove low hazard and moderate hazard terrain from the proposed development permit regulations on steep slopes. The removal was announced through the Trust Committee's website gabrioladpa.com which is dedicated to informing the public about Development Area Permits (DPAs). The statement posted on January 19 said, "The Gabriola Island Local Trust Committee passed a resolution today by Resolution without Meeting (RWM) acknowledging that while it is intent of draft Development Permit Area 6 – Steep Slopes to regulate the use of land that is subject to hazardous conditions, regulation beyond that which is necessary to protect steep slopes 80% and greater is not generally supported by the affected landowners.

Within the timeframe of just over four months, October 12, 2012, to January 21, 2013, definition of the Steep Slope regulation on Gabriola Island had changed from the inclusion of landowner's responsibilities in relation to vegetation erosion management on steep slopes to a Development Permit Area (DPA) only dealing with slope slip (on slopes over 80%) leaving a significant regulatory gap for development on slopes under 80%. The Trust often does not effectively use the powers they have.

This previous example describes the issue of clear cutting across the Gulf Islands. The Province of British Columbia has not allocated the Islands Trust authority in relation to logging concerns. The province does allocate that authority to the British Columbia municipalities. Protecting forests, and other forms of protective vegetation, on the Gulf Islands is an urgent matter and one that the provincial government, in this case, should align the Islands Trust power with that of the municipalities in an expeditious manner.

... these Gulf Islands are even more unique than the Jasper/Banff area, every bit as deserving to have been made a national park and left unsettled. Much too late to do that... therefore the idea was to do what I've been talking about "Forest residential" but the Islands Trust was never given any powers...

Artist, Male, 60s.

Fielding Sweet (1988) said that the Islands Trust provides those living in the Trust area with opportunity for input in relation to land use planning at a local level. This long-standing tension between ecological planning practices and the history of natural resource extraction in British Columbia is not new. On the Gulf Islands, however, clear cutting takes place unnecessarily as described in the Gabriola Island example and on Salt Spring Island where a situation of logging on private land occurred, illuminating a "provincial blind spot" (Nolan 2019, p.1). After mourning the loss of 200-year-old cedars, many with trunks five to six feet in diameter, on an adjacent property, Salt Spring Island neighbour Peter McAllister stated, "We're going to take the legal action that is the responsibility of the Trustees to undertake. But since they're abrogating their responsibilities, we're going to have to do it" (Nolan 2019, p. 3). These issues are contrary to the 'preserve and protect' aspiration set out by the Islands Trust Act. The Act appears to be straightforward in its commitment to "unique amenities and environment for the benefit of the residents of the trust area and of British Columbia generally" (1996). For a governance body tasked with only land use planning authority there should be little question how 'preserve and protect' is defined.

From reading and analyzing documents of the Islands Trust to observation of the Trust in action, the disposition toward 'preserve and protect' showed little change. During attendance at LTC meetings it became evident that focus of the Islands Trust LPS is on bylaw-related and current planning issues, or to clarify, development-related issues.

Current Planning operates on a business model that sees all fees for service applied to the cost of delivering service. It is a model that contributes to long-term financial sustainability as well as enhanced service levels for clients. (City of Edmonton 2015, p. 355)

The Islands Trust Planning Service mimics only regulatory and application processing, not important long-range planning. For instance, in 2015 and 2016 Gabriola Island's LPS spent time sorting out issues around doggie daycare properties rather than undertaking an ecology-related Eelgrass study on their to-do list from years before (Gabriola LTC 2015).

Oddly enough, with the demand for planning services the LTCs have adopted restrictive parameters wherein only three planning projects can be active in each LTC at any given time. The idea was not to overtax staff, and the rationale can be found in a Gabriola LTC Planning report (Gabriola LTC 2014). This limit to number of active planning projects has resulted in advanced or long-term planning functions, like OCP comprehensive reviews and community consultation, which the Province requests every five years, going unprioritized (Stantec 2007). Therefore, the 'preserve and protect' aspirations of the Island Trust quickly devolve and are illustrated by examples and citations throughout the narrative.

Claim 2: The operations of the Islands Trust organization concerns itself more with administration than with Land Use Planning best practices.

The Islands Trust Act holds the intention to 'preserve and protect' the islands' unique ecological nature. A significant amendment to the Islands Trust Act occurred in 1977 whereby land use planning authority was given to the Islands Trust – in practice to the Islands Trust Council—an elected body. The definition of land use planning authority for the Trust area is found on the Islands Trust website. The definition of land use planning for the Trust is narrow in scope and shallow in practice.

Local trust committees and Bowen Island Municipality handle land use planning & regulation. Responsibilities include preparation & adoption of official community plans, zoning & subdivision bylaws, regulation of soil removal & deposit, and authorization of permits.
(<https://islandstrust.bc.ca/island-planning/>)

The power of the Trustees is of concern. Of the 26 elected officials making up the Islands Trust Council, at any given time, it is unlikely that any of them have experience as an accredited land

use planner. Yet, since the inception of the Trust, they have been drafting the policies, at the local level, often pushing planners aside. This practice originated from long-standing skepticism of planning circulating in the Gabriola community as submitted by an interview participant:

“Rural planning’s not the same as city planning. And uhm, environmental planning’s not the same as city planning. And The Islands Trust is supposed to be about a connection of those two things first as far as I’m concerned.”

(Female, Creative Industries, 60s).

The election of two Trustees for each of the 13 island jurisdictions occurs on a four-year election cycle. The priorities of an island can change overnight with the election of new Trustees. With the varying backgrounds and experience levels of Trustees, adherence to the ‘preserve and protect’ claim is and to due process inconsistent. An upper tier local elected official explains:

“The previous Trust Council I would go to all their meetings. I would give a report and there would be an exchange. And their meetings were run very efficiently, and I would look at the Agenda and see when I was on. I could show up at 10 o’clock and 10:30 would be my time. And they would be ready. The present Council I could go and sit for three hours and get nothing.”

(Male, Artist, 60s)

This type of professional inconsistency may explain why administrative practice from the Islands Trust Council and the Islands Trust Executive Committee drain resources from the day-to-day planning matters of preserving, protecting and monitoring the Trust region. From the lack of LTC punctuality to organization-wide meeting expenditures⁴⁷, comes a suggestion that monies might be sustainably spent on hiring widely experienced professional planning staff.

Two scholarly works have characterized the Islands Trust as a Public Administration institution (M’Gonigle 1989; Stinchcombe 1999) which would explain why the planning unit of the Trust takes a back seat. Although there is evidence in the literature around Public Administration approaches to land use planning, “there is no harmonized criteria for assessing the efficiency and effectiveness” (Chigbu & Kalashyan 2016) of the approach. Furthermore, the Islands Trust with a component of development planning requires greater attention to detail in their planning

⁴⁷ The entire elected body of the Trust (26 Trustees) and support staff came together face to face four times a year, over a period of days in a different location for each quarterly meeting. Expenditures would include travel, meeting rooms, hotel rooms and meals. The Trust finally began using electronic conferencing after March 2020. Without the pandemic they might still be spending thousands of dollars on quarterly face to face meetings.

system. Trust planners may work between regional and site-specific scaled applications, indicating the clear need for detailed design and site planning guidelines. At present Salt Spring Island is the only LTC to have developed design guidelines.

There is a clear disconnect between the aspirations of the Trust and how planning services are structured. The Islands Trust Act (1996), which provides the Islands Trust with land-use planning authority, has less than one-and-one-half pages dedicated to the land use section of the Act. There is no text to describe land use planning best practices which would assist Trust Council and Local Trust Committees in their decision-making processes. The Islands Trust Act references the Local Government Act which cites both regional growth strategies and provincial policy guidelines in its content describing Official Community Plans. Regional growth strategies, however, do not apply to Trust areas. Although the Trust has crafted its own policies, the Local Government Act still guides its governance. As a result, there must be a continuing interpretation of policy generated by the Islands Trust Council. In the Islands Trust Act are specific definitions for Trust Council, Local Trust Committees, and the Islands Trust Conservancy. The Act provides guidelines around Trust business, operations and financial reporting. When policy is being formulated, the Islands Trust Act must be used by Trust Council in orchestration with the applicable sections of the Local Government Act. The result – the Islands Trust Policy Statement (ITPS), an overly complicated policy structure rendering it inaccessible for practical use.

Given that the ITPS is policy, not law, a rewrite of the 120 ITPS policies that uses accessible language and offers a comprehensive (and even indexable) presentation would encourage greater use. At present the ITPS is written in a regulatory language. The current strategy of the Islands Trust, the ITPS demonstrates the level of inefficiency, and for those involved in land use planning and site-specific design, may illuminate the gaps and opportunities for the Islands Trust to update its approach. The ITPS is said to be the operations underpinning of the Islands Trust. On the Islands Trust website the use of the ITPS is described:

It guides the development of land use planning and regulatory bylaws of local trust committees (LTCs), and Bowen Island Municipality as well as Trust Council's strategic plan and advocacy program. In some ways it is similar to Regional Growth Strategies that guide land use planning documents in other parts of British Columbia.

ITPS (1993, Consolidated 2003)

With a new Trust Council elected every four years the ITPS is susceptible to political bias not consistent with an on-going environment favourable for consistent land use planning. Moreover, the ITPS shies away from using plain language, which limits its accessibility and functionality. The ITPS is also not accessible for the range of professionals who may need to use it. The ITPS is, in fact, so laborious that Trust Council found it necessary to establish policy and procedures for the ITPS in a 10-page Policy Statement Implementation (PSI) document (Islands Trust 1994). This PSI document provides a Policy Statement Directives Policy and a Policy Statement Directives Checklist. For the ITPS to be more broadly understood and accessed by those who live in the Trust area, rewriting at least its most often-used sections in plain language would offer a strong start.

At the time of this doctoral research (2016-2019), the ITPS was 25 years old. With a ‘preserve and protect’ mandate, it is surprising that the Trust has not been methodical with their planning toolkit. North American planning practice has included ecological design-based approaches for land use planning through to environmental design details for decades (McHarg 1969; Relph 1976; Alexander et al. 1977) yet this practice seems to have eluded the Islands Trust. A good example of championing ecological planning principles comes from McHarg’s Plan for the Valleys in Baltimore, Maryland where landscape analysis was conducted on how best to accommodate 150,000 people over approximately three decades while respecting natural features (1970-2000). Alexander et al. (1977) and the two complementary volumes that stem from the team’s research are timeless examples of regional planning through site detailed design. The Islands Trust, however, continues to be guided through its decades-old approach, privileging public administration, which misses so many opportunities to address and take up specifics of the ‘preserve and protect’ mandate. As a member of Trust Council Executive Committee stated in an Islands Trust video (2018), “...we have to adapt; we have to keep looking at what's going on in the world finding ways to really preserve the beauty of the islands...”

One way to understand what is going on is to compare the ITPS and the provincial OCP content guidelines. The TPS has 120 policies and the provincial guidelines for OCP content lays out eight concise policy areas with five optional areas. The ITPS is the work of the Trust Council (IT 2015). It has been drafted and adopted with intent to assist LTCs write their Official Community

Plans (OCPs) and Land Use Planning bylaws (LUPs). However, the ITPS is so prescriptive that it may limit the visioning intent of an OCP. The ITPS does not clarify that the content in OCPs is overarching and the content in LUPs deals with specificity. This can be problematic where these two documents become overlapped, which is evident in Gabriola Island’s OCP, making discussion between guiding policy and bylaws difficult.

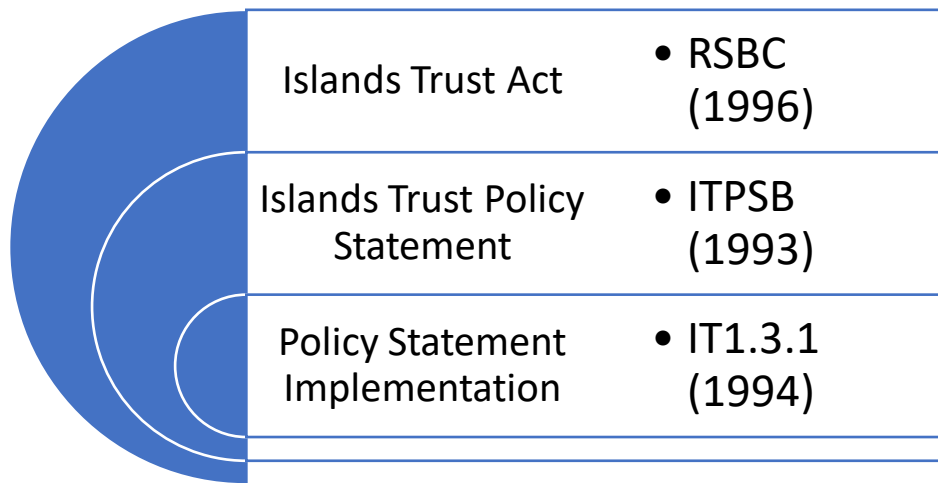


Figure 8 - Legislation and Policy Statements of the Islands Trust

When the ITPS is compared with the OCP content guidelines from the Province of British Columbia, the disparity becomes evident. To understand what content should be in a Trust Area OCP it would appear that one must read through the ITPS and harvest components one by one. An OCP’s intent is not to have content prescribed by elected officials, rather, to give a community opportunity to engage and update every five years. The Islands Trust and its ITPS appear to use the OCP differently than other jurisdictions in B.C. As a result, governing by Committee (like the Islands Trust) proves to be difficult and inconsistent especially when it comes to interpreting provincial legislation.

The purpose of an OCP is to *guide* future land use and development in a given area. They contain comprehensive and integrated policies providing direction, setting out community priorities, and providing a level of certainty for what will happen in your community. OCPs are not another kind of zoning bylaw and are not regulatory; rather OCPs are *visionary – they deal more with the future as opposed to the present* - and focus on a specific geographic area.

North Thompson, B.C.

An example of a thoughtful OCP in the Trust area is that of Denman Island, last updated in 2008; members of the community presented information in a thoughtful and coherent manner, complete with illustrations and photographs – a process that contrasts positively with an unimaginative shoehorning of Gabriola’s community profile into overregulated language.

If the individualism of each southern Gulf Island is important to islanders, the OCP is the place to start. Ideas which align with the Islands Trust aspirations may be crafted into long-term visions. This process is a cornerstone to engaging the community with a precautionary voice and may eliminate an observed pattern of ad hoc decision making. When the policy framework is not accessible and being administered in an ad hoc manner the ability to maintain island identity and, in this case, around the ability to maintain a creative community in the face of development pressure is in jeopardy.

Claim #3: Local Planning Services (LPS) tasks are set by Local Trust Committee (LTC). Without an ecological planning framework ‘preserve and protect’ is not assured.

A consistent ecological planning framework for the Trust area would deter individual agendas on each island and strengthen the object of ‘preserve and protect’. The 13 southern Gulf Island jurisdictions in the Islands Trust have physical variation from one another. These differences run from their north to south location to where they sit in the Salish Sea geographically in relation to the flanking larger bodies of land to their geology and geomorphology. There will likely be social cohesion and autonomy on the individual Gulf Islands (Dunster 2004), yet there are systems, both ecological and administrative, that if implemented would support land use planning to be more responsive to island needs and less susceptible to individual agendas (e.g., unneeded luxury lot creation and development has occurred on islands with dated OCPs (Gabriola Island OCP 1997; Dole 2018; Islands Trust Public Meeting Minutes 2017)).

In 2007 there was a review of the Local Planning Services commissioned by the Trust awarded to a national consulting firm based out of Vancouver. After receiving the Consultant’s report, the Islands Trust Council asked the current Director of Planning to comment. The rigorous opposition to the Consultant’s report by the Trust’s Planning director was based on the argument

of Trust cultural change. At the time the Islands Trust employed staff for the provision of LPS for the Islands Trust Area based out of the three current Islands Trust locations in Victoria, Salt Spring Island, and Gabriola Island. Trust staff may travel to adjacent islands to provide services. The Planning staff, however, are not leading the planning unit at the Islands Trust – and the mandate is not being served. These staffers do not have to have a degree in planning or experience in planning (other than the Trust) which may account for the lack of awareness of best practices and urgency around change.⁴⁸

Planners from Stantec Consulting Ltd. of Vancouver came to the Trust region and worked side-by-side with Trust staff on applications in 2007. Stantec delivered a concise 13-page report to the Islands Trust in March 2007, detailing the shortcomings and dated nature of the Islands Trust planning services, its framework and allocation of resources in the LPS. The consultant also provided actionable recommendations for new planning frameworks, responding to best practices in the field and tailored to the Islands Trust needs (Stantec 2007). The key takeaways were (i) the need for the Trust to deliver a salient suite of planning services and (ii) the need to be mindful of staff retention and overhead. Included were suggestions on how to accomplish these tasks and deliver the ‘preserve and protect’ mandate.

After receiving the Stantec review of LPS the Islands Trust Council asked Senior Planning Staff to offer a response. In other words, they wanted an internal review to comment on their own commissioned and be paid for external review! The response, authored by the Islands Trust Director of Planning at the time, was 75 pages long, and discussed at length *change management, not local planning processes*. The Executive Summary shirked the task at hand, which involved planning process review, and instead began with:

This report is intended to provide Islands Trust Council with an understanding of the reasons why the Local Planning Services (LPS) is not providing optimal levels of service...The process of improving service delivery is nothing short of a cultural change in our workplace...

Islands Trust (2007 p. 3)

⁴⁸ A Trust Organizational Chart was compared with staff profiles from LinkedIn during the research period 2016-2019.

The level of understanding of land use planning and the LPS function varies across the 13 offices at the time of this research. To complicate matters, members of the elected Trust Council allowed their perceptions of LPS functions to cloud delivery of professional planning services (Islands Trust 2007, p. 10). The items in the text below are abbreviated from three dozen comments found in the response document, with both Trustees and LPS unit staff answering the question asked.

This text appears in the internal report (Islands Trust 2007, p. 10):

Delivery of Land Use Planning Services

1. What are the most pressing concerns with respect to the unit and the services it provides to the LTCs?

The following improvements were identified by Trustees:

- adopt a more comprehensive planning approach
- fear of bureaucratization of the Islands Trust
- benefit for a planner to be part of both current and long-term planning
- more good staff
- re-focus on Island Planners as primary service providers

The following concerns and comments were received from the LPS unit staff:

- came to serve the mandate
- development applications are robbing resources for advancement of mandate
- concerned with direction directly from Trustees to staff rather than through LTCs

With the LPS function inconsistent across the Trust and 26 Trustees in office at the time of this research without a clear planning system, decision making appeared ad hoc. For instance, the Gabriola Trust Committee spent months on a file related to tertiary housing on Agricultural Land Reserve parcels despite such planning activity having negligible impact regarding the pressing housing needs of the island (Islands Trust 2018). An argument can be made, then, that planning per se is not adequately addressed. Islands Trust Council (ITC) have proved unable or unwilling to respond to the call to update their planning system despite the update in planning framework called for back in 2007.

The natural environment cannot be protected without clear communication. The staff of the LPS have expressed significantly more clarity in relation to the pressing concerns and the fact that the mandate is not being served. The concern is that the administration of the Islands Trust Council (ITC) takes valuable resources from the very important function of the Local Planning Services (LPS). There appears to be tension, demonstrated in the text, that the Local Trust Committee (LTC) does not allow the planning staff to lead the professional aspects of planning. When current and advanced planning are not in balance in a regulatory jurisdiction the ability for governance to operate effectively, negotiate development parameters and ultimately steward a region like the Trust area is in jeopardy.

In addition the staff of the LPS, there are Advisory Planning Commissions which are volunteer based appointments on each island. Each of the 12 Gulf Islands LTCs and Bowen Island municipality may appoint an Advisory Planning Commission (APC). The APC would be made up of community volunteers appointed for a set term. The LTC can ask the APC for their opinion on planning matters at hand. Meetings of the local APC are open to the public. The public, however, is limited to attendance and observation at meetings. There is not opportunity at APC meetings for the public to give input.

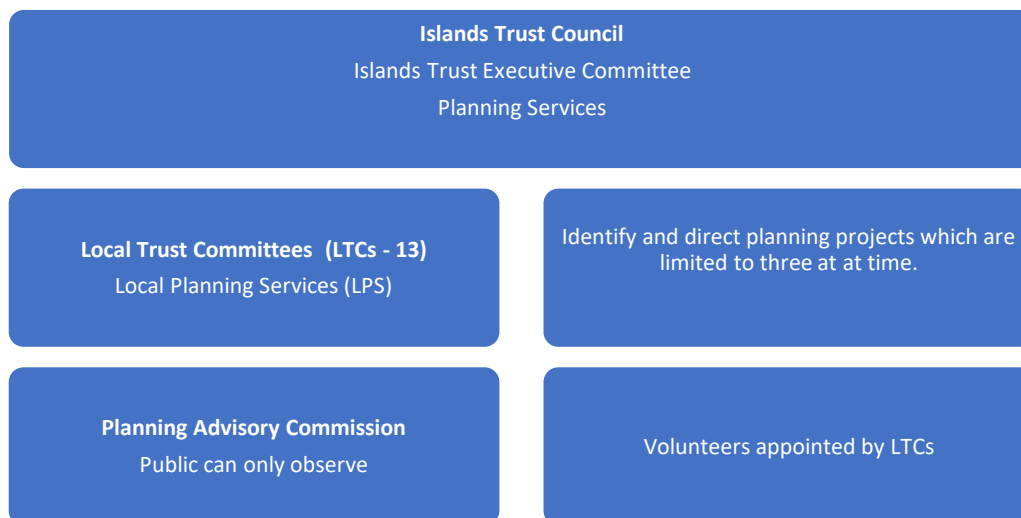


Figure 9 - Islands Trust Governance and Planning Services

Land Use Planning does not only come in the form of new development applications. The following is an illustrative case study of Latent Solid Waste Tolerance with adverse impacts on land use, conservation and ecology. The case study also describes the barriers to addressing this issue on Gabriola Island. In August of 2017 a Duty Officer of the RCMP arrived at a five-acre property. The resident, who had not been seen over a period of days, had been reported missing. The officer made the decision to engage a neighbour to accompany him onto the missing person's property. Once on the property, belonging to a hoarder, the RCMP officer's comment was, "I have to call in HAZMAT"⁴⁹. In a discussion with levels of local government it was determined the house and the outhouse at the rear of the property cannot be confirmed as condemned ⁵⁰. Visible from the road are numerous derelict vehicles, a travel trailer, filled green garbage bags, a burn pit, newspapers stacked and scattered across the property (photograph below). The presence of human waste and unsanctioned disposal of automotive waste are of concern here. The RDN Bylaw Department does not have a file on the offending address.



Figure 10 - Gabriola Island Hording Site - April 2018

⁴⁹ HAZMAT – Hazardous Materials Team.

⁵⁰ Regional District of Nanaimo Building and Bylaw Department Telephone Inquiry – Thursday August 29, 2019

The RDN offers Bylaw Services to Area B (Gabriola, DeCourcy and Mudge Islands) and the Islands Trust also has a Bylaw Enforcement Team. The RDN responded to the complaint in relation to this property under Bylaw No. 1073, which is a Bylaw to regulate ‘Unsightly Premises’ in all their Electoral Areas, including the Gulf Islands, in their boundaries. In a telephone conversation on Thursday August 29, 2019, the RDN Bylaw Information Officer shared that in many cases the Unsightly Premises Bylaw involves property occupants with mental illness. RDN Bylaw officers work with this situation on a case-by-case basis and order clean-ups based on the neighbourhood standard of property maintenance. In such situations, the RDN Bylaw officers respond only if a complaint had been made. They do not involve themselves with environmental concerns, only those of unsightly premises – pursuant to their regulatory parameters.

The Islands Trust Bylaw Officers serve a different function to their counterparts at the RDN. A specific role for Islands Trust Bylaw Enforcement is gleaned from a 2018 pamphlet publication of Islands Trust entitled, *Bylaw Enforcement, Frequently Asked Questions*. Unlike the visual nature of the RDN Bylaw, triggered only upon complaint, the pamphlet provides a situation that suggests a mechanism by which Islands Trust Enforcement might initiate a site visit:

Trust Council’s policies also allow a bylaw enforcement officer to initiate an investigation without a complaint if the situation involves damage to ecosystems...

Islands Trust 2018

Gabriola Island’s Local Trust Committee (LTC) has not designated hording sites, through one of their planning tools, Development Permit Areas (DPAs) as suggested by their Bylaw Officer. Neither has the LTC discussed Disposal of Solid Waste or accumulation of solid waste in relation to hoarders under the island’s Official Community Plan (OCP), as requested in the ITPS. If an Islands Trust land use planning best practices framework were implemented Trust area wide, then Trust Council, Bylaw officers, planning staff, residents, visitors and elected officials would not have to concern themselves with a score of individual solid waste bylaws across the Trust area for each island and LTC. Moreover, waste issues could be dealt with in a consistent manner. If the objective is to ‘preserve and protect’ the natural environment of the Gulf Islands, the ecology of the Islands must be addressed in all cases. Solid Waste management is a land use planning issue. It is critical for the Trust and each of their LTC implement environmental and

land use planning policy consistently across all islands. An organization like the Islands Trust must simplify their communications to emphasize Environmentally sound Land Use practices (Fleming 2007).

The final Islands Trust administrative practice of concern is the limit placed on the number of projects undertaken by planning staff at any given time. This limit is quite restrictive given practice rigour in the outside world. Three projects can be worked on at a time (Gabriola LPS 2015). All public planning jurisdictions juggle numerous projects. Often projects naturally rotate when activity on the file may slow and another file is handled concurrently. This limit of three active projects per LTC is arguably out of step with most public planning jurisdictions and certainly consulting practice. Planning staff and enforcement staff have been often put in a position by elected LTC members on addressing matters of local political priority before those of environmental planning (Gabriola Sounder 22/12/2015; Gabriola PAC 25/02/2016).

The three-project limit for Planning Staff needs to be rethought with priorities given to projects, not reactive bylaws. Having a framework or hierarchy that balances both advanced (long-term) and current planning projects for undertaking by LPS would better address the preserve and protect mandate, properly utilize the professional scope of a planner, and result in more effective actions by enforcement—all opportunities beyond the limited planning instruments, the OCP, and LUP bylaws currently used by the Islands Trust.

Claim #4: The Official Community Plans in many Islands Trust Area communities are outdated and are not written as comprehensive, visionary documents.

A Comparative analysis of three OCPs was undertaken to ascertain how each island interpreted the ‘preserve and protect’ object. The province of British Columbia asks local jurisdictions to produce an Official Community Plan (OCP) although it is not necessary for a community to do so. Once implemented, the request is for the OCPs to be updated every five years. The OCP’s purpose is to be a guiding document towards advancing eight over-arching objectives set by the province of British Columbia (Appendix 6B) with five additional policies that are optional (B.C. OCP Guidelines).

Since the province of British Columbia lays out the OCP criteria and the Islands Trust Council's Islands Trust Policy Statement is to be synthesized into the OCP, it was informative to decipher how each island community used the OCP visioning objective, responded to the provincial parameters, and viewed themselves. Through the content, precision and presentation of each plan, each island revealed who they were as a community.

The three Trust Area communities selected for study are adjacent to urban areas (as identified in the pre-study phase). Islands chosen were Denman Island, Gabriola Island, and Salt Spring Island. These island communities are adjacent to Vancouver Island, and each has people moving between their island and a corresponding city on Vancouver Island daily. For instance, Salt Spring Island has commuters to both greater Victoria and Duncan. Denman Island has people commuting to the communities of Courtney and Comox. Gabriola Island has a similar relationship with Nanaimo. All these commuters go to Vancouver Island by way of BC Ferries.

Results from the comparison of OCPs in the Islands Trust area underscore the problems identified under the claims that emerged. We recall that the ITPS contains 120 policies, and that the province of British Columbia's OCP requirements cover eight areas. With one exception (the five-year projection of housing), these eight areas are included in all three OCPs selected for comparison. None of the Trust area OCPs included the five-year housing projections. At first glance the lack of housing projections may make sense since builders more often proceed on projects for specific owners (custom built) rather than building on speculation. Lot creation was done some time ago in the Gulf Islands, and the local fire department receives an inventory of undeveloped lots annually from BC Assessment. An existing inventory of lots does not provide an overview of residential planning.

Unfortunately, under the Islands Trust, there is no set format to address the provincial requirements of an OCP, and these inconsistencies in formatting make it difficult to follow the lines of thinking from island to island. An island can still maintain its autonomy even if the Trust required a consistent formatting for the OCP.

The Islands Trust model of governance allows the Local Trust Committee (LTC) of each of the selected-for-study islands to operate independently while following the ITPS. With respect to this study, it was critical to understand how similar Trust area islands approached this important task. Through the content, precision and presentation of each plan, each island revealed who they were as a community and ultimately how they were committed to the provincial mandate of ‘preserve and protect’. Although every island has the same ITPS to start from, and the same requirements from the provincial government, the priorities of the individual community vary.

Allowing multiple document formats and an inconsistent community engagement process is highly inefficient. Many OCPs in the Trust Area are over ten years old. Communities need to keep their OCP and associated consultation with the public ongoing to facilitate collective discussion (Stantec Consulting 2007). Given that the three OCP documents have been reviewed by their own LPS, the LTC, and in some cases the ITC, it was assumed that they would meet all the 120 policies found in the Islands Trust Policy Statement (ITPS). As in-depth comparison using all 120 ITPS policies exceeded the scope of this research, the documents were evaluated and compared under the following parameters: document disposition, which included the tone and organization of the OCP, and the elements of content in the eight OCP components required by the Province, seven of which were discussed in the context of the Trust. When comparing three OCPs of the Islands Trust region it is important to understand who does what well. This summary shows how each island engaged their community and how they interpreted British Columbia requirements. Overall, Denman Island commits to the process well and makes their OCP their own by use of language and illustrations. Salt Spring is a solid example of a planning document and supplements detail with Community Design Guidelines. Gabriola does the minimum and no tailoring to reflect the community is evident. Denman and Salt Spring Islands bring a clear reflection of their communities in their OCPs. What follows is the comparative analysis in greater detail.

The Denman Island Official Community Plan 2008 (OCP) provides an example of a strong document put together by community members. As with the other two OCPs, its Table of Contents, which communicates the organization of the OCP document, is informative. The Denman Island OCP document is thoughtfully laid out, illustrated and written. For example, it

includes seven out of the eight policy areas requested by the provincial government in an integrated fashion, choosing topic headings like “Families and Individuals” when organizing the required areas of Housing, Economic Activities, Conservation/Recreation, Resources and Crown Lands.

Salt Spring Island’s Official Community Plan 2008 (OCP) describes “a wide range of community objectives” (SSI OCP 2008 p. 8). It is divided into two volumes, the first dealing with Land Use and Servicing Objectives, and the second detailing Development Permit and Heritage Conservation Areas, Temporary Commercial and Industrial Use Permits, Appendices and Attachments. The Table of Contents reveals documents crafted with concise planning terms. Salt Spring’s OCP also includes design guidelines and recognizes the interface between the built and natural environments.

The Gabriola Island Official Community Plan 1997 (OCP) is an example of a dated document that follows only the provincially prescribed topic areas. Little has been done to tailor this OCP to its community of Creatives, who contribute considerable energies to the island. Little involvement of community members, let alone the artists, seems reflected in its text. Its table of contents uses headings like Land Use and Development, and Economic Activities compared to Denman’s topic descriptors, The Natural Environment and The Social Fabric. The Gabriola OCP has no planning vision to it. One reads from bylaw to bylaw. The only visioning provided is a three-line Vision Statement (Gabriola Island OCP 1997, p. 9).

It was important to also compare the documents with respect to the specific requirements of the Province of British Columbia. This part of the review is broken into the seven out of eight component requirements that each island addressed.

OCP Components One and Seven – Housing.

Denman and Salt Spring Islands state clearly that their objective is to accommodate a range of housing types and in turn a range of residents with different economic profiles. Gabriola Island focuses only on single family dwellings on partial and large acreages, thus failing to address the housing needs of the service providers on the island (Gabriola OCP 1997, p. 18). This type of

exclusive policy suggests that those involved in formulating the Gabriola OCP continue to view lower income residents as life-long renters by not providing a range of housing types with opportunity for them to buy their own homes.

OCP Component Two - Land Uses and Public Utility

Excluding residential, both Denman and Salt Spring Island use accepted planning language such as subdivision, density, and siting in their descriptions. Gabriola Island presented this Land-Use section of their OCP under the heading of 'Economic Activities' (Gabriola OCP 1997, p. 20).

OCP Component Three - Public Facilities, Schools and Parks; Waste Treatment, Disposal Sites.

The Solid Waste Disposal from residential areas appears to be in hand on all three islands. Salt Spring and Gabriola use the pick-up services of their corresponding Regional Districts, the Capital Regional District and the Regional District of Nanaimo. Denman Island uses a private contractor. Salt Spring Island addresses their on-island liquid waste processing and sewer service in their OCP (SSI OCP 2008, p. 86). The other two smaller islands rely on septic fields for waste treatment. The issues in relation to hoarding sites on the islands, defunct structures, vehicles, and human waste (see Case Study above) are not included in any of the three islands' policies.

OCP Component Four - Sand and Gravel Deposits

This section was discussed in each OCP but primarily in relation to mapping limited and exhausted pits. Denman has two active pits soon to be exhausted (Denman Island OCP 2008, p. 63) and Gabriola will allow temporary use permits only (Gabriola OCP 1997, p. 42).

OCP Component Five – Major Roads and Water Systems

One item that all three communities hold in high priority is the preservation of island rural road character. Walking and cycling are forms of transportation in these islands which each island wishes to continue to support.

In the OCPs all three islands view their water systems primarily in relation to capacity of ground and surface water. There is little discussion or policy formulated in relation to the much-needed water collection systems.

OCP Component Six - Hazardous Conditions and Environmental Sensitivity

In a planning system with a mandate to preserve and protect it is alarming that preservation of vegetative cover is not more of a concern. Both Denman and Gabriola Islands have viewed regional steep slope policy established only through the lens of hazardous conditions addressing slopes of 60% and over and 80% and over respectively. The policy formulation on protection of vegetative cover in mid-range slopes is ignored. This leaves the opportunity for clear cutting. With respect to environmental sensitivity both Denman and Salt Spring Islands are specific about protecting the integrity of their natural ecosystems. Denman states this objective should be the highest priority in land-use planning whereas Salt Spring Island endeavours to secure at least 30% of the island base for conservation.

OCP Component Eight - Reduction Targets: Community Greenhouse Gas

This item addresses climate change on the local level. Denman and Gabriola Island focus their OCP discussion, outside of discussing prescribed targets, on supporting local and small-scale food production. Gabriola and Salt Spring Islands request that their Local Trust Committees (LTCs) approach land use planning decision making and review proposed developments in relation to well-defined aspects and markers of climate change.

Conclusions

To maintain the Trust area natural context and delicate ecosystems that attract rural artists and creative industry workers, the Local Planning Services (LPS) must play a greater role in the Islands Trust organizational objectives. This includes attention to environmental and long-range planning and the ability to operationalize the mandate ‘preserve and protect’ for each island in the Trust. The balance between island preservation and indiscriminate development waned during the research period (2016 – 2019). This is likely explained by the fact that planning projects are identified, and decisions are made based on ad hoc local politics rather than a prioritized and informed ecological planning system.

The present Public Administration framework for the Islands Trust is no longer tenable. The scope of an updated ecological planning and community design framework for the Islands Trust must be entertained at the provincial government level (McHarg 1969; Relph 1976; Alexander et al. 1977). Advocacy for change in the Trust planning unit should focus on a middle ground approach with a clear philosophy and accompanying objectives, planning processes and plans designed to be achieved, not aspired to.

This need for organizational and operational change in the Islands Trust can be addressed by shifting the emphasis of the Islands Trust Planning Services to rely on the skills of professional land use planning staff. The 13 LTCs shall rely on staff and appropriate consultant input for all technical and planning processes. Staff will, however, engage the community with ongoing systems-based analysis. For instance, the island communities, with their population of creative workers including architects, landscape architects and engineers, could easily add a Tree Management Plan and a Tree Saving Site Plan submission requirement utilizing a volunteer Site Plan Review Committee.

The importance of the Official Community Plan (OCP) for each island must be elevated, relying only on the Islands Trust Policy Statement is insufficient. A Trust-wide response to the Province of British Columbia's requirement for OCP updates should be considered every five years. The objective of engagement is to include island voices in visioning for their communities within the guidelines of planning best practices. Specifically, the Islands Trust should consider allocating two designated teams of two planners each to rotate among the 13 LTCs with the sole purpose of updating OCPs. This recommendation aligns with the Stantec Consulting review of the Islands Trust LPS which emphasized the importance of keeping the OCPs updated (2007).

Respecting the autonomy of each Southern Gulf Island shall be maintained as a priority. For instance, if each island's OCP were uniform in organization, with consistency in section titles and content location, the ease of day-to-day comparison and potential for collaboration Trust area wide would be improved. With a consistent document format, Trust staff, elected officials, other agencies and residents would also be able to navigate information for 13 jurisdictions faster and more effectively. The Islands Trust organization must be encouraged to balance resources to

allow Local Planning Services (LPS) to be the priority unit of the Trust and encourage change at every level.

Finally, the most important future step is to emphasize the provincially legislated object of ‘preserve and protect’ with respect to land use planning in the Trust area. Those considering relocation to the Gulf Islands should get a clear message that ecological planning is a priority here. Attention to this element benefits future generations of British Columbians (Ipsos Reid 2011) but is not consistently observed across the island communities in the Trust Area. Now, more than ever, with many new residents employed in both the arts and creative work, seeking rejuvenation in nature, the hope of sustainable livelihoods in previously unattainable locations, these Islands—and perhaps all islands globally—must be stewarded and governed with land use best practices in mind. Local knowledge may feed into a community, but it does not create a planning system. A consistent, updated approach to planning on the Gulf Islands, including ecological best practices in planning, must govern all community engagement.

It is critical to realize that archipelago sites like the Islands Trust area of British Columbia, with its mix of sensitive terrestrial and marine ecology are, for the most part, populated by sensate beings who support the retention of natural landscapes. It is this natural context that supports their creative activity. It is a Distinct Place not ever to be taken for granted. Land use planning process that is based on preserving Distinct Place, anchored with community input guided by a sound conservation framework, will yield desired results.

This examination of the Gulf Islands governance system reminds us of the importance of matching governance aspirations with the planning tools that will allow objectives to be met. As a result, those residing in the area will thrive. Conception of a governance model with a mandate as rigorous as the Islands Trust ‘preserve and protect’, must include specific thresholds rather than vague aspirations. North American land use planning practices have been solidly linked to ecological planning for over five decades. With these facts in mind, no jurisdiction with an important conservation mandate, like the Islands Trust, need ever separate the planning function from an attitude of conservancy again.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

What are the Linkages between a Creative Community, Distinct Place and a Planning Framework tailored for Rural Cultural Sustainability?

The Problem

The original overarching intent of this study was to ascertain what aspects of the creative economy theory would translate from the urban to the rural communities. The findings of the study, broken down into three areas of inquiry – creative activity strategies, distinct place and tailored governance and planning systems - indicate that very little translates from the urban to the rural with the exception of the importance of interpersonal and sector-related networks. This is likely a result of the different scale of communities. For instance, the urban creative economy suggested using artists as an attraction strategy to lure a creative economy labour force (Florida 2002; Florida & Stolarick 2007; Currid 2009; Sacco & Crocciata 2014) and is regarded as opportunist since little consideration is given to the artists themselves. The reactive movement by jurisdictions to implement art and culture in urban revitalization may be viewed as bandwagonism. This lack of critical thinking by city officials and planners meant that the concept is still not well understood (Fleming 2009). Still, this call to action to mobilize art and culture was attractive to jurisdictions seeking a panacea for growth.

Not all artists or creative workers, however, wish to live in an urban environment. With the internet allowing wider geographic communication, the idea of locations beyond the Metro for artists and the creative economy workers was a salient area of research.

Finding an appropriate case study site to observe and analyze how the creative economy ideas might transfer to the rural context required certain criteria. The case study community, in British Columbia's Salish Sea, registered sixth in the country's concentration of rural artists (Hill Strategies Research Inc. 2010), and after field reconnaissance was chosen as the research site. Not only did the island community attract a great number of people who identified as artists, but the archipelago of the Southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia boasted a regional land trust governance model unlikely to be found anywhere else in the world (Guiled 2014).

The Inquiry

The first research question in relation to alternative contexts for the creative economy was clearly: What ideas might transfer from the urban creative economy context to the rural creative economy context? The literature review, which also provided case studies, yielded another question. Should every community expect to be culture-led? And through setting the ethnographic inquiry in a southern Gulf Island community, the third question arose. How does a local government, like the Islands Trust of British Columbia's southern Gulf Islands, mandated to preserve and protect, contribute to the retention of natural features that attract the creatives? Does the governance model operationalize a goal so important to the creative demographic? Do their aspirations differ from their reality?

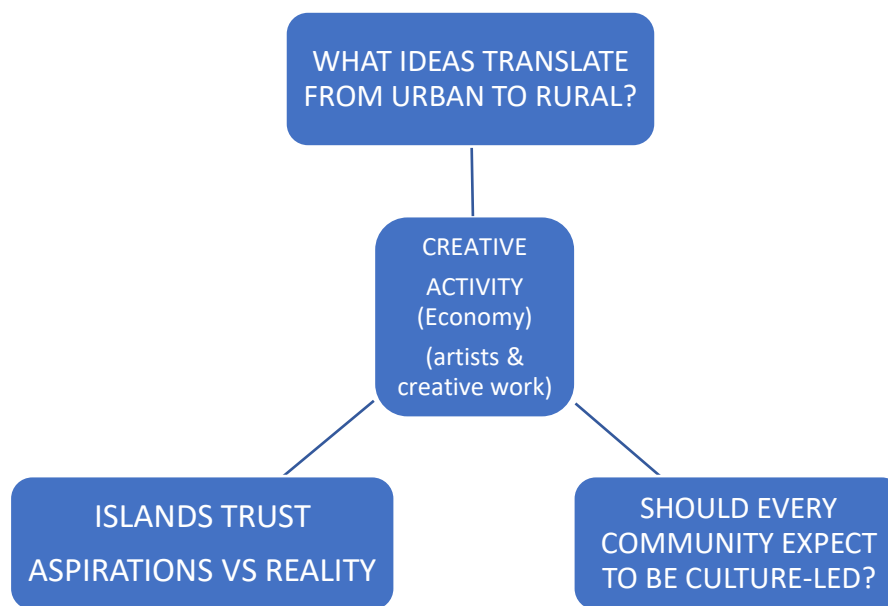


Figure 11 - Three Overarching Questions in relation to the research inquiry.

The case study region's governance institution, the Islands Trust, offered additional complexity for a planning research inquiry. The operations of the Trust are critical to preserving and protecting the environment that attracted its creative inhabitants. The embeddedness of the researcher over time, in the Gulf Islands, revealed disconnects between residents, their interest and understanding of the Trust, and the lack of focus on the Local Planning Services (LPS) by

the Islands Trust organization. The overarching concern with the Trust’s planning function is in relation to aspirations of the Trust vs its day-to-day reality. It was clear that small community research required a thoughtful, non-invasive approach. It was evident that each aspect of the inquiry had its own intricate story: the tender relationships of creative activity within the fragile ecosystem, the unique components of the place itself and the bespoke governance model easily swayed by internal politics rather than an ecosystem-based planning model.

The research period for this ethnography is delineated as mid-May 2016 to mid-May 2019 the full period of the researcher’s residence on the island. The findings were organized into three categories: building the economy with creative activity strategies, the evolving construct of distinct place and the issues in relation to the planning aspects of the governance model. These categories served as frameworks for the preceding articles.

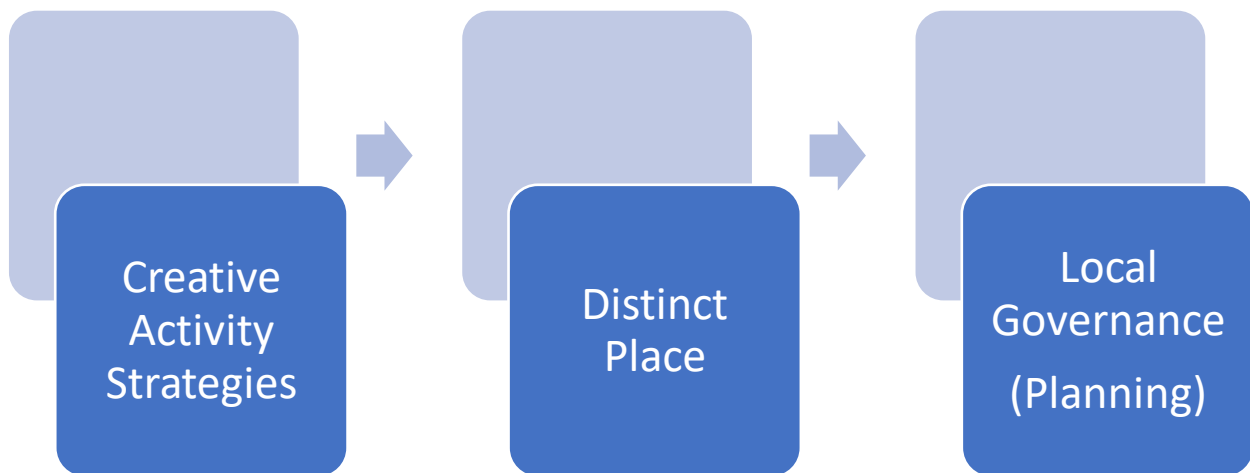


Figure 12 - Three Areas of Research Inquiry

Although all research was complete prior to the official onset of the Covid 19 pandemic in British Columbia, such an event emphasized the need for careful consideration of planning systems in areas which formerly considered the regional scale, with rural conditions. Emigration to the Gulf Islands was already underway but the urban exodus during Covid 19 put significant pressure on a system not fully developed in an already ecologically stressed context (Attorp 2020, Times Colonist).

The Research

The ethnographic research case study involved an exploratory day to day embeddedness in a rural island community. The three defined categories that the inquiry covered:

1. Analysis of the research community's approach to Creative Activity Strategies.
2. Formulating the idea of Distinct Place with Genius Loci, Spirit of Place.
3. Assessing the Island's Trust Local Planning Services in relation to the 'preserve and protect' claim since the natural environment is so important to islanders.

Within these categories a key question was inspired by the literature and the document analysis:

1. What creative activity strategies were considered and what new ideas emerged that may be successful for rural communities?
2. What makes a place, a place like no other? (Bonner 2002, p. 1).
3. How do rural creatives engage with local governance and planning? What do they identify and value?

The planning discipline is a comprehensive area of research and practice considering the political, social, cultural, ecological, environmental and technological aspects of a population. With the inquiry being in-depth and community based, qualitative research co-methodologies, ethnography and phenomenological hermeneutics were considered as the primary approach and basis of analysis for this study.

The Research and the Findings overall

The research process and findings of this inquiry are complex and nuanced. It had been suggested by a key informant that the creative aspects of the island have come from within, and the island creative successes emerged organically. I set out to answer questions grounded in the creative economy movement but with exploratory research and embedded methodologies I actually ended up with answers to additional questions, around sustainability of the natural context. The embedded and interpretive nature of the research methodologies provided different results around environmental sustainability than previous inquiries involving the local governance model, the Islands Trust. The arm's length inquiries of M'Gonigle (1989) and Stinchcombe (1999) wrote favourably of the Islands Trust. Unfortunately my in-depth research could not align with the overall optimism of decades before.

A researcher who aligns their professional experience with research may be considered to be engaged in praxis. Findings in this study emerged through different channels: the academic literature review, the ethnographic inquiry and the phenomenological hermeneutic inquiry and analysis. With exploratory research the area of study may be set in one direction, but other variables may emerge and topics in the research shift their priority. While the creative economy and in turn the creative activity it yields remained the basis of the study, issues around the unique governance model provided tension and complexity. The research methodologies chosen really provided insight to the complexity and gaps in the governance model and planning systems which impact both creative activity and the creative economy.



Figure 13 - Exploratory Research Outcomes

Concise Limitations, Problem Complexity and Research Design

The unique governance and planning model of the Southern Gulf Islands was explored to understand how it could give shape to the picturesque communities that attracts creative people. Data was collected with the commencement of the ethnography – time in the archive, document analysis, attendance at events, observation in the community and informed the phenomenological hermeneutic approach in the participant interviews and analysis. There were three main categories identified at the start of the research program where themes that emerged, and these categories provided the framework for the three analysis articles.

These nuances in the three areas came with the embeddedness of ethnography, professional experience in the research areas and a co-methodology of phenomenological hermeneutics (VanManen 1997). With interpretative methodologies there is an opportunity for multiple

realities to emerge. The semi structured interviews revealed that the participants had general to operational knowledge of the governance model, and a few did not engage with government at all. In fact, one artist made it clear that they pay no attention to local politics (Artist, Female, 60s). This reflects differences across dimensions: tensions around development objectives; a range in resident demography and attitudes; how the creative sector perceives the local land use governance model and the commitment of the majority to the environment.

	Findings
Literature Review	• Culture-led initiatives cannot simply be dropped into a community. There must be conditions to allow them to be built from the ground up. • Previous research about the Islands Trust by M’Gonigle (1989) and Stinchcombe (1999) (different methodologies were used) produced significantly different discussions around governance. • There is little written about the relationship between local governance and creative activity in communities.
Creative Activity Strategies	• The arts evolved here - the success of community led creative activity vs. exogenous strategies. Even so, the community still explored additional exogenous creative activity strategies. • It’s bottom-up synthesizing a community’s own history, its natural features, it’s built context and it’s social and cultural life. • Communities are unaware of the concept of ‘community vernacular’ and as a result it is a new opportunity.
Distinct Place	• There is tension between who defines place... the economic/political institutions or community members? • The natural environment is coveted by the creative community. • Islands Trust doesn’t provide a planning framework to meet aspirations of ‘preserve and protect’ and to retain Distinct Place.
Governance	• Administration takes priority over a salient land use planning framework within Islands Trust. • Official Community Plans in the Trust area: their format, process and longevity is inconsistent. • Self-governance is an objective, but the basic land use planning functions of the Islands Trust are not even in place.

Table 4 - Research Findings Tabulation

The three articles, which represent research findings of this inquiry, contribute to advanced knowledge on the arts-oriented communities in multiple ways. Although the articles were written to stand alone, they tell a comprehensive story when read collectively.

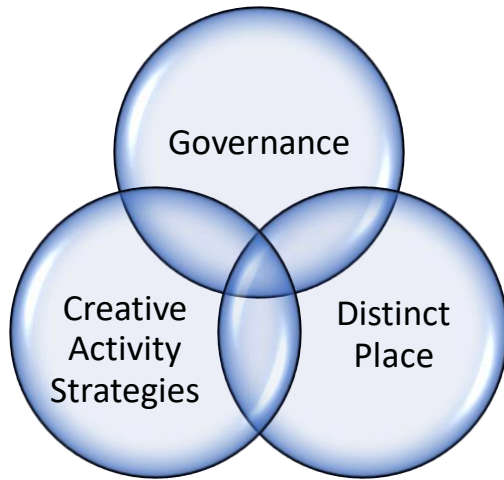


Figure 14 - Areas of Research - Interchangeable

A community of artists and creative workers in rural British Columbia, Canada was the subject of the research inquiry looking to determine the transferability of ideas from the urban creative economy to the rural. Here there is a unique model of governance found nowhere else in the country. The context (Distinct Place) of this successful creative community, its governance and its creative population all play interchangeable roles in day-to-

day life. The research community, Gabriola Island, was identified as the sixth densest art community in rural Canada (Hill Strategies Research Inc. 2010). The governance model in the region, stemming from a land trust, has a mandate to preserve and protect. In the semi-structure interviews all interviewees overwhelming stated that qualities like the natural and/or safe environment that originally attracted them to come and live on the island.

The population of the island, both artists and creative workers, are involved in a strong network. The Gabriola Arts Council and the Gabriola Museum both have impressive built cultural facilities which envelop and showcase the activities of their populations. In the recent past members of the creative community have tried exogenous strategies to enhance their profile, all of which were ultimately rejected by the community.

With the creative community on Gabriola Island citing the natural environment as one of their greatest inspirations it is important that the Islands Trust understand that its mandate of preserve and protect is one of its greatest retention measures for a creative population. It is critical to impress upon small communities that understanding their own vernacular will serve them well in community development undertakings. Rarely do they need to look beyond their own assets. Collectively the findings published in the articles introduce us to key concepts.

Distinct Place, a region or locale with natural features, governance tailored to sustainability, and a sensate conservation minded population, can be at risk if planning best practices are not followed. Regions need to design their localized form of governance with a lens that includes comprehensive aspects of land use planning. Planning is for people – especially the seminal design considerations of land use planning.

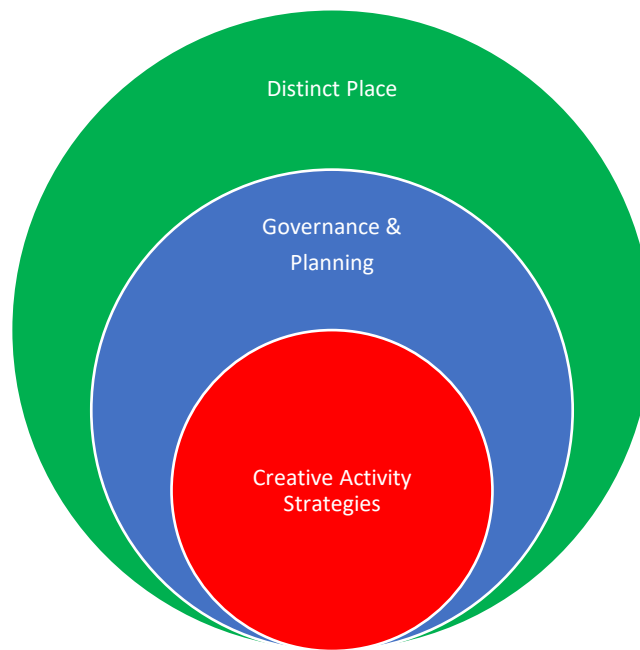


Figure 15 - Areas of Research - Interaction

Governance sets the context for the preservation or loss of nature. The aspirations of the Islands Trust governance model versus the threats, the gaps that encourage abuse of intent of the Trust mandate, threaten the legacy of ‘preserve and protect’. Often those in governance tend toward popular trends rather than taking the time to analyze the components and understand their community’s health and prosperity. The process begins with the inventory and analysis of the community vernacular.

Creative activity strategies are illuminated by people and supported by articulated governance, ecological and environmental planning best practices. Successful creative activity strategies find their roots in community vernacular. Each article contributes to advancing this knowledge by

drilling down and advancing the parameters of the subject, Distinct Place. The literature defines place as an essential relationship (Relph 1976) rather than a buzz word or marketing term. The articulated term Distinct Place provides a moniker for a natural environment in an unspoiled, spiritual context which is stewarded with appropriate governance concerned for the sustainability of nature and culture of community. The discussion around governance illuminates that the aspirations toward self-governance may appear as the stewardship mandate but the corollary is provincialism. This is a tendency toward narrowmindedness and a lack of understanding in the scope of best practices in planning.

Creative Activity Strategies. Understanding the local vernacular is key to maximizing relationships and presenting attributes of the community. Ideas, whether those of the creative economy or other arts community models, cannot be shoe-horned in. Reading the community landscape is the foundation of this essential relationship. The concepts in the articles are in relationship rather than that of a hierarchy. Arguments may be made, however, as to which concepts are context for the other (as noted in the diagrams). If we are prioritizing ecology, and the natural context then Distinct Place forms the overarching context for the governance model, and in turn, where the creative strategies take place.

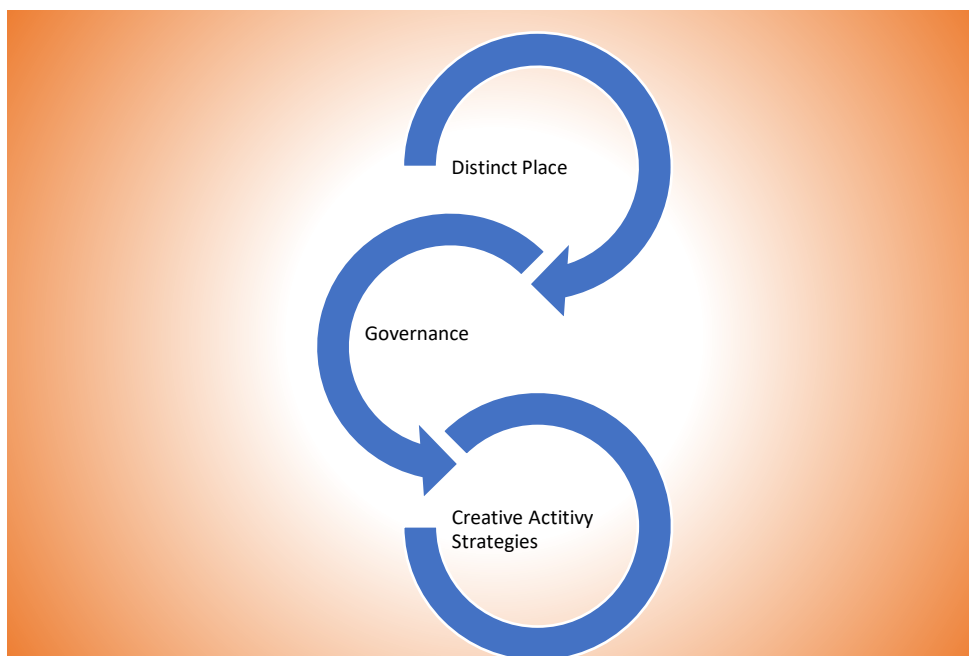
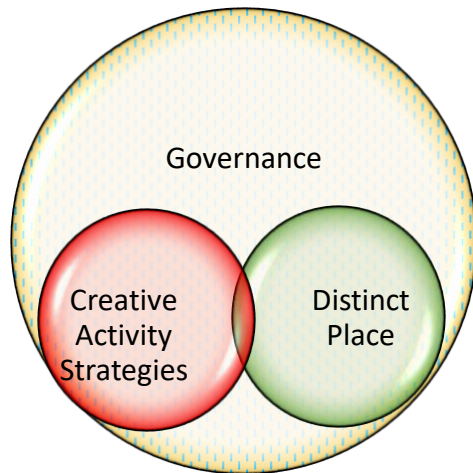


Figure 16 - Research Areas – Distinct Place forms essential relationship



If we prioritize the governance, then politics form the context, guiding impacts on distinct place and creative activity strategies.

The concepts are interchangeable and priorities change depending on the level of commitment to sustainability.

Figure 17 - Research Areas - Governance prioritized.

A Distinct Place enveloped in nature can be a sustainable context for creative minds and achieve rural cultural sustainability. To support and retain nature that stimulates creatives is an undertaking which must be supported by a sympathetic governance model. Governance with a mandate to ‘preserve and protect’ is a step in the right direction. When developing the local creative economy, the context where artists and creative workers make their living, understanding the local community vernacular is key to successful community development undertakings. Rarely is looking beyond local assets a place to start.

Discussion and Conclusions

The discussion and conclusions will reflect the three areas of research: building the economy with creative activity strategies, the evolving construct of distinct place and the issues in relation to the planning aspects of the governance model. At this juncture it is important to review the important and key findings of the research project. This review will revisit the main research question of creative economy idea transferability and other questions that arose through the research and writing process.

Creative Activity Findings

When researching and analyzing creative activity I found three closely linked outcomes in the case study community: the first, the research community, Gabriola Island, has tried on many

strategies. The second finding revealed that islanders have not comprehensively considered using their own vernacular. Finally, we know that the arts and now the creative industries have evolved here naturally but how to attain rural cultural sustainability is at question.

Exploration of community vernacular can ground a locale. Once the components of a community vernacular are properly sought out, identified and understood then the next steps, developing a suitably designed program for any project, may be considered. With the case study, the settlement by creative people may be attributed to the existing conditions: a picturesque island locale easily accessible by ferry, a supportive community for artists and the innate opportunity for networking. A local slow culture is apparent on British Columbia's Gulf Islands and specific to our case demonstrates the intersection of rural character and creative spirit in the region.

Quality of life on the islands in the Salish sea has often been linked to a slower pace of living.
(Dunster 2004, p. 203)

Creative Activity Summary

The research community has tried on many strategies both exogenous and endogenous. The Isle of the Arts moniker is often the topic. "I can't take it seriously," said one participant (Male, Artist, 50s). A musician raised the notion that "touting to the artistic creates its own problems" (Female, Artist, 40s). One participant unconsciously confirmed the claim by stating their view of a supportive arts community was simply "buyers" (Female, Artist, 80s). This is overly optimistic view for a small island economy. The role of the local real estate industry as a participant in branding the island is often part of the discussion. "...so, the fact that every second real estate agent here has an MFA⁵¹ is interesting to me..." (Male, Artist 50s). An arts promoter used a team analogy to describe the supportive arts community, the statement inadvertently reinforced the emphasis of sales:

And so, if we had a winning team that anybody could get behind it would be the artists. They sell real estate, they sell lifestyle, they sell ferry tickets. People come because people believe that locals believe wholeheartedly in the art scene.
(Female, Institutions, 50s).

⁵¹ Master of Fine Arts

The question should be raised, do the locals believe in the arts scene on Gabriola Island or is it all a construct? This point continues to be debated. Clearly there are tensions arising from both exogenous and locally derived marketing schemes. This is where understanding the vernacular of the community comes in. In a rural community the vernacular of the landscape, the local economy and the origins of people are important pieces of information. Once the components of a community vernacular are properly sought out and understood then the next steps, developing a suitably designed program for any project, may be considered. This mindful and intentional condition has allowed the rural island community to excel in culture-led initiatives and develop its own successful practices complementary to the slow vernacular of the island.

There may be opportunity to synthesize existing thinking with community vernacular. Cittaslow is an Italian global organization started over two decades ago celebrating the Slow Movement. Knowledge from Cittaslow may play a role to inform rural places, but ecologically significant communities like the island also have much to share in relation to sustainable strategies. With slow living also comes the question of how to transfer the attitude (Mayer & Knox 2010). In a sensitive context like the Gulf Islands will a slow growth governance model evolve from well considered components of ecological planning to retain the creative population. Can there really be a shift away from the tendency toward growth? (McKibben 2007 as found in Mayer & Know 2006).

Distinct Place Findings

The term Place has been commercialized and commodified. In contrast Relph emphasized that place was “an essential relationship in human experience” (1976, p 128). Instead there is overuse of the word Place in both planning practice and academia. This must be considered carefully. With Relph’s idea in mind there should be no question that there is interrelatedness between creative activity, genius loci (the spirit of place) and local governance and planning in an archipelago with natural attributes like the Gulf Islands of British Columbia. The findings indicated that the local population values the natural context of the island, in fact, citing that it invokes a spirituality within them. It is the natural environment that attracted them and now retains them.

Is there an opportunity for the consideration of the slow living aspects of the Gulf Islands translating to slow governance for distinct place? The most important step moving forward is to emphasize the provincially legislated object of ‘preserve and protect’ with respect to land use planning in the Trust area. This is for the future generations of British Columbians (Islands Trust Act 1997; Ipsos Reid 2011). This is a point that is not consistently observed across the island communities in the Trust Area.

Distinct Place Summary

The term ‘place’ has been commercialized over the past decades. Ralph emphasized that place was “an essential relationship in human experience” (1976, p 128). This essential relationship was evident on the case study community of Gabriola Island illustrating that these types of relationships still exist between people and nature, and between each other creating the basis for distinct place.

The Gulf Islands are treasured as a slow community not to be frittered away (Dunster 2004; Harrington & Stephenson Eds. 2007) and it would be prudent for all levels of government to observe new and articulate slow values in policy making (Artist, Male, 60s). The Slow City Movement (Mayer & Knox 2009) aligns with protection of local culture, a relaxed pace in life and promotion of a distinct place. It is committed to systems of sustainability and articulate policy. In fact, the movement promotes a slow attitude which may be translated to local governance and policy. A synthesis between the Islands Trust origins and the slow governance principles would reflect local values while associating the Trust with a progressive global model that fits. Questions arose in academia of how the ideas of the creative economy would work outside of the large North American metropolitan areas. When a community jumps on the culture-led bandwagon it results in little more than wasting resources and alienating local cultural ecosystems (Vinodrai et al. 2012; Comunian & Mould 2014).

In my research I attempted to untangle a rural culture-led community with a unique system of local governance and in turn, land use planning. The case study island was a landing spot for artists in every discipline, craftspeople and recently those in the creative industries who have brought their transportable jobs and are working primarily from the Gulf Islands. After being

embedded on the island over time the gaps in the governance model and the planning framework revealed themselves. Of the twenty participant interviews (three with couples), the perceived gaps were discussed at some length in seventeen of the semi-structured interviews.

The land use planning strategy of the Islands Trust is a series of overarching policies, community plans suggested by the province, bylaws and administrative tasks. With a ‘preserve and protect’ mandate it is surprising that the Trust has not been more circumspect with their planning toolkit. Knowledge around ecological design-based approaches for land use planning have been successfully implemented for decades (McHarg 1969; Relph 1976; Alexander 1977; Steiner & Fleming 2019). Assessing the any governance system in an ecologically sensitive area under a best practices lens for ecological planning and community design framework must be entertained (Stantec 2007, McHarg 1969; Relph 1976; Alexander et al. 1977; Steiner & Fleming 2019). An approach to long-range planning is essential to balance the needs of sensate artistic and creative worker residents, in an area of outstanding beauty, with sensitive land development practices.

Governance Findings

In this research project I have three key findings which relate to local governance. The first involves the lack of policy measures by local government to retain their creative populations; in the second I purport that the Islands Trust model of governance is based on a platform of Public Administration, and as a result, the Trust’s Local Planning Services (LPS) falls short on planning best practices. The third reveals a lack of commitment to the province of British Columbia’s Official Community Plan objectives, which in turn, creates chaos for those living in the Gulf Islands and those who wish to stay true to the Island’s Trust object of ‘preserve and protect’, which after all, was the reason for the establishment of the Trust over forty-five years ago. Local governments must make a comprehensive effort if they want to attract and retain creative activity. Although rural creative activity has been examined in the literature (Duxbury & Campbell 2009; Fleming 2009; Mayer & Knox 2010; Lewis & Donald 2010) specific ideas of how local government might design their land use planning policy to encourage the attraction and retention of artists and creative industries is not. There are, in fact, only a few examples where those writing about creative activity mention any relationship to planning or governance (Lewis and Donald 2010; Cruickshank 2016; Fleming 2009).

The Islands Trust is rooted in Public Administration, not Planning. The Trust has continued on with its Public Administration model (M'Gonigle 1989) often missing opportunities to engage residents and address its mandate of 'preserve and protect'.

Governance organizations located in natural contexts must be encouraged to balance resources. To elevate a mandate like 'preserve and protect' must be a transparent undertaking. A model of Public Administration, in this context with the population, is no longer tenable. There is need for organizational and operational change in the Trust to shift the emphasis of the LPSs to rely on the skills of widely experienced professional land use planning staff. In addition, the island communities, with their population of creative workers including architects, landscape architects and engineers could create a volunteer Site Plan Review Committee. Each island's LTC would expand their plan review resources and include valuable ecological additions like a Tree Saving Site Plan. There is a need for local governance policies to address and be based on what is on the ground, rather than aspirations.

Official Community Plans updates in the case study area must be taken seriously and their process and presentation be made consistent. In this case regular cyclical updates to the Trust area OCPs are important to capture the local knowledge on issues of the Southern Gulf Islands within the objective of 'preserve and protect'. The recommendation would be for the Islands Trust to allocate two teams of two planners to rotate between the 13 Trust Area jurisdictions with the sole purpose of updating OCPs as close as possible to the province's requested five-year timeframe. The thirteen islands of the Islands Trust could still retain their autonomy with a consistent OCP format. There are extreme cases of negligence in different LTCs. During the analysis of the case study community's OCP (Gabriola Island OCP, 1997) it was noted that a comprehensive update has not been finalized since the late 1990s. Although a review was initiated in the 2010's, it was a significant departure from a comprehensive community engagement. There has been no effort to reach out to the creative sector on the island and although they were cited issues few interview participants indicated much interest in the Trust.

Governance Summary

There are critical concerns emerging from the research program with respect to local governance. The first is the disconnect between the creative sector, local governance and a comprehensive land use planning system . Either there is apathy from creatives, they don't care to engage with the Islands Trust, or they take it for granted the trust is protecting their environmental concerns. The Trust has done little to engage with targeted sectors. The second lies with the Trust itself. There is a high level of disfunction internally. The administration of elected officials is trumping the actual ability to do proper land use planning.

Concluding Statement

Creative economies whether they be rural or urban have much to offer their communities. They are, however, in fact very different. The idea around this is simply that of community size and scale. Other than the importance of interpersonal and sectoral networks there is little evident in an urban community that will be transferred to a rural community. Attributes of the creative economy in the rural context shine on their own and provide successful models of ground up efforts as demonstrated in our research community.

Our rural island case study community taught us that the relationship between creative people - artists and the creative economy workers - are very much intertwined with their natural environment. Although they may value their sectoral networks, they are often content to work alone and relate directly to and be fueled by the natural environment around them. This relationship to the land, air and sea means that those resources must be highly respected and handled with intent. Any governance model with the object to 'preserve and protect' must face that claim directly and seek out every possible planning instrument to attain that admirable goal.

A rural creative economy relies on its natural environment. With a proper land use planning system privileging planning ecological practices (McHarg 1969) no creative jurisdiction with an important conservation mandate like 'preserve and protect' needs to separate the planning function from conservancy again. To ignore our duty of care to these distinct places and the creative people that animate and operationalize them would be willful blindness.

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APPENDIX 3.A- Semi-structured interview questions

Jill Yuzwa - Methodologies

What are the Linkages between Culture-led initiatives, Creative Industry Initiatives, Governance and Rural Cultural Sustainability

	Question one - Place	Question two – Cultural and Creative Strategies	Question three – Governance and Cultural Sustainability
1. Do you want to be identified in this research? 2. If you are you open to stating your name please do so. 3. If you are open to stating your age and gender please do so.	1. How long have you been on Gabriola Island? 2. Where did you come from? Why did you leave? 3. What does the island offer that the other did not? What does the island lack? 4. Why do you live on Gabriola Island? How much time do you spend here annually? 5. How is your spiritual practice affected by living here? 6. How is your creative practice affected by living here? 7. Who do you interact with in your creative life on island? Why?	1. Please describe how you earn your primary income. 2. How do you contribute to the cultural initiatives or creative industries and community on the island? 3. How do you participate in the cultural initiatives or creative industries here? 4. What does a supportive arts community look like to you? 5. Describe creativity on Gabriola Island. 6. Describe the culture of Gabriola Island. 7. Describe the culture of creative industries on Gabriola Island? 8. Compare or contrast the culture of culture on Gabriola Island to Vancouver or other Metropolitan areas.	The Islands Trust is a unique approach to land use regulation in the Gulf Islands of British Columbia. 1. What did you know about the Islands Trust when you moved to Gabriola Island? <i>Present participant with copy of the Island's Trust Mandate.</i> 2. How did the Islands Trust mandate influence your move to Gabriola Island? Gabriola Island has a Local Trust Council made up of two elected officials from Gabriola and a one from another Island. 3. How often do you participate in Local Trust Council matters? 4. What meetings do you attend? Why? 5. Please give your views on the relationship between this governance model and creative activity. 6. Describe the relationship between this governance model and cultural sustainability?

Summary Questions

Describe rural cultural sustainability in an ideal community.

Please give your opinion on the present and possible future cultural policies in the community.

APPENDIX 3.B – Semi-Structured Interview Summaries

Place

What does Gabriola Island offer? Lack?

How is your spiritual and creative practice affected by living here?

Creative Activity Strategies

How do you contribute or participate in the cultural initiatives or creative industries here?

Describe creativity and the culture on Gabriola Island

Local Governance

What did you know about the Islands Trust when you moved to Gabriola? Did the mandate influence your move here?

Describe the relationship between this governance model and creative activity? The model and cultural sustainability?

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
One F, 52.	<i>Offers</i> • beautiful landscape, • escape busyness • shared values • lifestyle <i>Lacks</i> • adequate ferry service • convenience for work <i>Spiritual</i> • a slower pace • connected to something bigger. <i>Creativity</i> • Inspired by nature	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> • create space in the process to build their ideas together. • bringing those networks together... helping them create plans - possibility into reality. <i>Creativity</i> • being able to start with a possibility or to reinvent something in a meaningful way	<i>Trust Knowledge</i> • to preserve the biodiversity and health of the Gulf Islands • impressed that there would be that stewardship and duty of care for these islands. • they are incredibly special, but they are also extremely fragile, and they do need protection. <i>Mandate influence?</i> • learned about after the move <i>Relationship with Creative Activity?</i> • potential to engage with communities... don't see that, see them asking for feedback or input, not create a new perspective. <i>Cultural Sustainability?</i> • mapping back to sustainability of a rural identity.
Two F, 67	<i>Offers</i> • escape busyness, air pollution • visually quiet • safety • sanctuary <i>Lacks</i>	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> • At market every Saturday. • Thanksgiving tour every year... believe it's important to do the events that are offered <i>Creativity on Gabriola</i>	<i>Trust Knowledge</i> • The barest. I knew the Gulf Islands were covered... • it talks about culture here... don't see them involved in culture at all... see them as Environmental Protection.

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
	- movie theatres, cultural food <i>Spiritual</i> - amazing impact to live here <i>Creativity</i> - living here – base of apex	- people do wacky things here.... <i>Gabriola's Culture</i> - It's very homogeneous in some ways and diverse in others - It's eccentric at times we have some wing nuts	<i>Mandate Influence</i> - prevent a certain amount of development, keep it more rural... <i>Relationship with Creative Activity?</i> - do not think of the Islands Trust as having anything to do with creativity. I have a blind spot about what they do. <i>Cultural Sustainability?</i> - don't really follow any much of what they're doing. I think what they're doing is trying to keep us sustainable.
Three M, 58	<i>Offers</i> - intensity of focus <i>Lacks</i> - diversity <i>Spiritual</i> - non-spiritual <i>Creativity</i> - aspects of my creative life are rooted here	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> - been part of, in collaborative way, little organizations. <i>Creativity on Gabriola</i> - There is individual creativity... and there's these marvelous places hidden in the forest where people have explored every conceivable kind of madness. - Sadly words like creativity have been so overused... a language, you find it in planning, in academia... it valorizes and completely flattens what creativity is.	<i>Trust Knowledge</i> - observed how people on different islands came to grips with it... different forces shape them. <i>Mandate Influence</i> - If this is an ecosystem unto itself, if it's left to the Audain's of the world, it will turn into a kind of gated community for the super-rich. I think this is its long-term fate unless there is some way to maintain something like the Islands Trust. Actual power to prevent it. - Its uniqueness depends on being preserved and protected.

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
			<i>Relationship with Creative Activity?</i> <i>Cultural Sustainability?</i> <i>I don't think of cultural or creative industries as separate from other forms of activity.</i>
Four F, 81	<i>Offers</i> <i>seclusion</i> <i>Lacks</i> <i>money to support artists</i> <i>Spiritual</i> <i>non-spiritual</i> <i>Creativity</i> <i>just blossomed</i>	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> <i>Belong to the Arts Council, the museum... paying toward the mortgage at the Commons, the piano at the community hall.</i> <i>Creativity on Gabriola</i> <i>Sixth most creative community in Canada ... more PhD's/sq in than university town.</i> <i>Gabriola's Culture</i> <i>rednecks, born again Christians, hippies from the 70s, a degree of racism... We have the seven deadly sins here.</i>	<i>Trust Knowledge</i> <i>Absolutely nothing. I had no idea how we were governed.</i> <i>Mandate Influence</i> <i>Not at all. I didn't know about them.</i> <i>Relationship with Creative Activity</i> <i>They realize this is important for people who want solitude... they do very well in trying to balance the economic needs of the developers with our needs, we really do need to keep this tranquil and green.</i> <i>Cultural Sustainability?</i> <i>Don't know if there is any because sustainability doesn't just depend on providing creative atmosphere or supportive atmosphere it depends on tourists and getting people with money to the island.</i>

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
Five M, 69 F, 67	<i>Offers</i> • forest... paradise, good climate <i>Lacks</i> • a swimming pool • a very white community • not intolerant place <i>Spiritual</i> • greatly...spiritual practice is about staying in touch with nature <i>Creativity</i> • career of painting... between Gabriola and Tofino.	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> • the coffee house... the Film Festival. We put on art shows. • After 9/11... one of the information disseminators • When first here people laughed at the idea of anybody being an artist. <i>Creativity on Gabriola</i> • a lot of it... all over the place. • popular destination for the lesbian community. <i>Gabriola's Culture</i> • it's largely artists. A few young people farming, a lot of retirees • I think it's tolerant... • haven't been tested on the racial front... definitely tolerant on the gay...	<i>Trust Knowledge</i> • <i>These Gulf Islands are even more unique than Jasper/ Banff area, every bit as deserving to have been made a National Park and left unsettled.</i> <i>Mandate Influence</i> • It didn't exist. We were here at the birth of the Islands Trust. • The Islands Trust was never given any powers. • It didn't, because we were here but we definitely thought it was a great idea, I think we all did. <i>Relationship with Creative Activity?</i> <i>Cultural Sustainability?</i> • The governance model itself was supposed to be creative. • It wasn't really creative because an <i>Islands Trust planner can do anything but plan. They are not planners, they're plan reviewers.</i> • We have the same problems since 1974.
Seven F, 62.	<i>Offers</i> • easy access to many outdoor activities	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> • singing in the church choir • accompanying... committee to find musicians.	<i>Trust Knowledge and Mandate Influence</i> • Nothing. Since I didn't know about it... it wasn't part of the decision.

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
	<i>a way of interacting with people more frequently and closely than in a big city</i> <i>I'm actually needed and depended on and have friends it's just a feeling of contribution</i> Lacks <i>don't miss the things that it doesn't have here</i> <i>We don't worry about crime, we communicate</i> Spiritual <i>... just being outside in the beauty makes you feel closer to the creator and size I think a sense of gratitude</i> Creativity <i>a lot of inspiration around. In other people.</i>	<i>we go to concerts and events.... guests - we take them around and brag about the arts here.</i> Creativity on Gabriola <i>art builds community, the community supports the art... that's the heart of Gabriola.</i> Gabriola's Culture <i>about the people... interacting and supporting one another...</i> <i>compared to other places it's less about the money and more about the creativity</i>	<i>The fact that we have this beautiful space that is protected creates an environment that is at least conducive... it's beautiful and conducive to living here.</i> Relationship with Creative Activity? Cultural Sustainability? <i>... by preserving and protecting the environment you're creating the space and the inspiration that underlies a lot of the artistic and creative endeavors here.</i> <i>A good role for the Internet and widening the scope of the market...especially the masters in our crowd...</i>
Eight F, 42	Offers <i>like minded peeps</i> Lacks <i>recreational infrastructure like a pool</i> Spiritual <i>art is my spiritual practice</i>	Contribute or Participate <i>join boards. The Arts Council</i> <i>hire Gabriola kids. marching band. Poetry Gabriola.</i> <i>By playing, by encouraging. Networking.</i> Creativity on Gabriola <i>Is there a word such as facilitational? cool artists that have</i>	Trust Knowledge and Mandate Influence <i>the island's trust is unique. It did not.</i> Relationship with Creative Activity? <i>Creative activity hasn't been affected as much except in the status of studios. Complaints based.</i>

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
	<i>friends are spiritual. It's not a practice it's a lifestyle.</i> <i>Creativity</i> <i>hugely so... my creative practice is 100% formed from here...</i>	<i>changed their career and still be supported here.</i> <i>Gabriola's Culture</i> <i>hang out with people who have been here a long time... in their 60s seventies. People my age are filtering away.</i> <i>changing. option to integrate or not. Pretty inclusive in general.</i>	<i>Cultural Sustainability?</i> <i>Talk lately about removing the Islands Trust. That vote has come up before. They have referendums rather than decision making... Let's have some decision making rather than involving everyone.</i>
Nine M, 74	<i>Offers</i> <i>proximity to a market Nanaimo. Possibly a job market.</i> <i>Lacks</i> <i>ten years ago young people. School numbers growing again.</i> <i>Spiritual</i> <i>Not spiritual</i> <i>Creative</i> <i>I'm a songwriter, I write poetry. What I do at any differently if I were anywhere else? I'm not sure I would.</i> <i>Living here allows my creative practice...</i> <i>I could afford the property, I had never built anything before... that</i>	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> <i>Any type of fundraiser I get asked for pots and I give them.</i> <i>member of GAC from the beginning</i> <i>an excess of a couple of 100 of kids ... kids' lessons... classes would walk down from the school, and we do something... that's gone on for years</i> <i>I was a trustee for 27 years...</i> <i>Creativity on Gabriola</i> <i>Rampant. it's a self-fulfilling prophecy... the Isle of the arts.</i> <i>Gabriola's Culture</i> <i>when it started and it was a pretty sparse place.</i> <i>the festival theatre wouldn't been conceivable 25 years ago</i>	<i>Trust Knowledge and Mandate Influence</i> <i>Nothing. Zero. It didn't take me long though.</i> <i>Governance, wasn't long before people were telling me about the Islands Trust... this unique thing...</i> <i>The Island's Trust was not well received by the establishment on Gabriola... they perceived it like the ALR (Agricultural Land Reserve) was perceived... we've worked our lives in poverty. Land rich, but income short. Now at the end when we're about to sell out to developers you're telling us we can't...</i> <i>I don't think it did influence my move to Gabriola Island, it was like in its infancy then...when I did get here, you know, I bought into this hook line and sinker.</i> <i>Obviously as a Trustee, particularly in my, our first term, where we wrote</i>

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
	was allowed as opposed to trying to do it on a street in Vancouver. - I see pots of mine all over the place... that date back 30 years. It's a wonderful feeling! - There's... there's way too much music really. It is overwhelming	- last 15 years it started to change again, we're going upmarket, expensive houses built... a gated community. - IT professionals... it's not like there's a whole lot of work here.	the first community plan. You know, all of this was big. Look the Islands Trust is a land use model. It doesn't really say much about people, not really, it's about land. Relationship with Creative Activity? Cultural Sustainability? - the ability to have a home-based business is certainly encouraged, an enhanced by the bylaws. That's about it though... from the Islands Trust. - Right it's a bit controversial... preserve and protect for whom? Find two Gabriolans and you have an argument.
Ten M, 38	<i>Offers</i> - an incredible community - weren't as many families here, 10 years ago as there are now... - Parents modeling a lifestyle as an artist. That's not very common. <i>Lacks</i> - same amenities as a city... you usually just have one choice. That's not a sacrifice	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> - did a couple of talks to contribute what I know to the community. - Interacting with the events here and I take my kids to them. - I'm engaging with the community. <i>Creativity on Gabriola</i> - creativity is expressed in many ways. It feels more like the Borg, there is not one industry that is dominating	<i>Trust Knowledge and Mandate Influence</i> - I knew nothing... and I probably would say I am I still know very little about it. How they operate, what they are in charge of. - In some trickle-down way... quite a bit because being an Isle of the arts. that is one of the things that got us interested in trying to live here. - I didn't read this mandate until this second. I kind of know that's what they're all about... keeping Gabriola like it is.

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
	- access to a wider breadth of human beings... lots of white people here. It's missing ethnic. Spirituality - It's improved. I'm outside in the woods a lot. Access to the church I love - nature. People do healing on the island...better to go to someone's house than navigate city streets. Creativity - I work remotely. Still connected to the city at this point. - Don't want to work full time for companies that aren't on Gabriola island. Feel connected in just one year... inspired me to do something else.	- you can be a chameleon on the island because it does promote that kind of creative diversity Gabriola's Culture - amazed how many young families there are on the island - a wealth of different communities who intermingle - The senior population is putting a lot of volunteer energy to make the island what it is - I think farming is a culturally significant part of life...	Relationship with Creative Activity? Cultural Sustainability? - If their goal is to keep a community unique and environmentally stunning... if the goal is to make a unique place because it's a small town it's easier to be aware of what people are doing in the community and what they're interested in... and how they want to change it. - it's easier to know how a community functions when it's smaller. People who live on your street will be at the meeting... you'll be familiar with who's doing what and you'll know it quick.
Eleven F, 48	Offers - East Vancouver less safe... a safer place to raise the kids. - ferry to gabriola was this incredible sense of familiarity. Lacks - some businesses/services... don't find that a drawback	Contribute or Participate - Working at a publisher. - The library is a resource for creative people, the creative space in the island. - The Trust I think is woven through; it keeps one active in the community. - I definitely participate as an audience and a consumer. Creativity on Gabriola	Trust Knowledge and Mandate Influence - When I moved to Gabriola I was raising small children... I became more involved. <i>I became aware of the role of the trust - it separates out land use planning from other government responsibilities.</i> <i>There is not that opportunity for a developer to dangle a carrot. There's a certain purity in removing the land</i>

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
	<i>Spiritual</i> - spiritual practice is one with the rest of my life...it's enhanced because of the natural beauty... <i>Creativity</i> - don't really have a separate creative practice.	- Very dynamic, very nature based <i>Gabriola's Culture</i> - we're pretty open. - growth of our transgendered community...people are engaging... sign of our inclusiveness. - local agricultural movement... our strong local food movement actually feeds into our culture	use planning function. It's a very unique system. <i>Relationship with Creative Activity?</i> <i>Cultural Sustainability?</i> - why islands are such special places and why they are attractive to those who want to change and get out of the urban environment. - the islands provide a nurturing space for creative activity. It's about the type of community character we support through our decisions. - The relationship is more of creating a supportive environment rather than direct dollars.
Twelve F, 63	<i>Offers</i> - close to nature - observe daily changes and be aware of impact on the land... - in a city garbage seems to disappear, water automatically comes out of tap <i>Lacks</i> - movie theatres, entertainment. <i>Spirituality</i> - Japanese practice of forest bathing... I forest bathe.	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> - member of GAC - to donate is not a way I wish to participate anymore. I want to help out volunteer and contribute. <i>Creativity on Gabriola</i> - people are drawn here for the aspects of the actual island somehow are a magnet for creative people. - people are driven to do things here. <i>Gabriola's Culture</i>	<i>Trust Knowledge and Mandate Influence</i> - there's an Islands Trust book produced including the American islands as well. I knew about the Islands Trust mostly on the idea about protecting the islands so they would not become... victims of condo developments... <i>Relationship with Creative Activity?</i> <i>Cultural Sustainability?</i> - I would say that it had a positive influence... That the area would be protected.

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
	- quietness watching natural movement... tracking the traces of water. - Erosion... sandstone. Creativity - it has been greatly influenced. - look at the world, interpret it in an observational way... impact on the change of my work.	- An island really is an island. If I had moved to the shore of Vancouver Island, I would not be experiencing life the way I am experiencing it here. - Island culture really doesn't engender community - individuals who are recognized internationally tend to be... not reclusive, they just do their work privately. And live here. - Gabriola tries to sustain itself on fund raising... and it's on the backs of the artist generally. - Gabriola is the volunteer capital of Canada.	
Thirteen F, 29.	Offers - diverse range of personalities... community support. Lacks - demographics, younger people Spiritual - hugely...not a spiritual person... people here have been inspiring Creativity - artist turned into artist supporter	Contribute or Participate - planning art events, festivals - support artists on this island. Creativity on Gabriola - people are hearing that artists are supported by the Arts Council and the community...they're moving here because of that. Gabriola's Culture - Gabriola is one of the lower income islands out there....	Trust Knowledge and Mandate Influence - nothing. It didn't. - learned that the Islands Trust does nothing if there are no complaints... Relationship with Creative Activity? Cultural Sustainability? - there isn't sustainability when your event could be cancelled last minute or when you're not allowed to do it again.

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
Fourteen F, 47 M, 58 <i>The three couples spoke about earning a living</i>	<i>Offers</i> <i>more affordable places to live</i> <i>community minded people surrounded by nature</i> <i>Lacks</i> <i>difficult to earn a living here</i> <i>Spiritual</i> <i>spiritual practice has become less attached to anything outside ourselves and more attached to our experiences with nature</i>	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> <i>being able to hire other artists</i> <i>Make sure that the voice of a business like ours is heard</i> <i>we love our community, so we want it to thrive.</i> <i>Creativity on Gabriola</i> <i>how do you make a living? That takes creativity.</i> <i>The lifestyle of living on a Gulf island.... no one telling us what our creativity looks like....</i> <i>Gabriola's Culture</i> <i>Culture - off centre, diverse... not racially diverse but diverse by age diverse by occupations.</i>	<i>Trust Knowledge and Mandate Influence</i> <i>I knew nothing. That particular line in there uses the word 'amenities' for the residents and that's what we're losing because... You need to have affordable places for people to live because not everybody is going to arrive having a chunk of retirement money.</i> <i>... Home business is allowed so for the creative part of it I mean it shouldn't affect most people... But, like if that's part of their governance</i> <i>Relationship with Creative Activity?</i> <i>Cultural Sustainability?</i> <i>We draw a lot of our creative inspiration from where we live and how we live, and it may not explicitly look like its nature based but our creative drive comes from living here.</i>
Fifteen M, 64	<i>Offered</i> <i>home occupation... I could sell from my home.</i> <i>Lacked</i> <i>at that time was any kind of services...</i> <i>Spirituality</i>	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> <i>the ability to move some of these things forward.</i> <i>part of the Arts Council ... Thanksgiving tours....</i> <i>Creativity on Gabriola</i>	<i>Trust Knowledge and Mandate Influence</i> <i>Nothing. I stopped by a meeting... that one meeting I went to. It just happened about the home occupation study... this is a place for me.</i> <i>I do support it but that wasn't the influencing factor that brought me here. I could buy a house here that I</i>

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
	- depends on version of spirituality on Gabriola there's a number. Creativity - affected by the environment you're in.	It's everywhere. here on Gabriel island so many people who are creative...	couldn't get elsewhere. It was important for me to be able to have a studio. Relationship with Creative Activity? Cultural Sustainability? - Governance model and creative activity I think there's a good fit between them... it does draw in certain kind of people. - Governance model and cultural sustainability, I'm not sure there's a connection.
Sixteen F, 55	Offers - community... creative thinkers and weirdos, crazy people, fun people, and artistic people. Lacks - education. Spirituality - expanded exponentially. On Gabriola always seemed to be a natural tendency to share. Creativity	Contribute or Participate - brainstorming. I think that's my biggest contribution, I think. Creativity on Gabriola - Gabriola is the art school in the island is the campus. - An educated audience is willing to participate, they understand why art or performance costs so much. Gabriola's Culture - culture is the pastime there... The arts are the past time	Trust Knowledge and Mandate Influence - a lot. I don't think it was a significant impact at the time. Relationship with Creative Activity? Cultural Sustainability? - They can only regulate land use, that's the reason for existing. So as it impacts artistic endeavour, it means but there can't be any... I know this because we have tried this... public art there is a no go. - governance is a huge can of worms- 'preserve and protect'

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
	very working-class artist collective... go to their studios on Monday come out on Friday.		
Seventeen F, 55	<i>Offers</i> - open mindedness. - people are excited to hear new ideas. They are excited to see art that they haven't seen before. There's just so support. <i>Lacks</i> - diversity. a lot more colours... of people <i>Spirituality</i> - it's steepened it for sure, more at the forefront of my life <i>Creativity</i> - super stimulated by living here... in a day I can talk to any number of artists	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> - contribute by doing my work - showing what is possible. - donate a lot - I go to lots of events <i>Creativity on Gabriola</i> - first in my mind - unbounded. <i>Gabriola's Culture</i> - Highly engaged.... curious - people learning to work with their minds and their hearts	<i>Trust Knowledge and Mandate Influence</i> - I didn't know that much... I knew there was something protected on the island. I learned pretty quickly - I love living somewhere where the awareness of environmental and ecological and preservation is on the agenda... felt like moving to Gabriola that it would remain rural. <i>Relationship with Creative Activity?</i> <i>Cultural Sustainability?</i> - There is a feeling of safeness and respect. And protection. Creativity can be a really, really tender place too. - I think this governance model to me promotes sustainability. Sustainability for creativity and sustainability for natural environment. I need to see trees.
Eighteen F, 30 M, 34	<i>Offers</i> accessibility of nature was a big thing. can get to pristine, natural settings without a vehicle... was a big draw	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> - volunteering... donating money, resources, donating goods - participation... go to the market a lot. Food, farmstands...	<i>Trust Knowledge and Mandate Influence</i> - nothing. Nothing. Not at all. - I could say what I really found I love the mandate to preserve and protect. I find people use the by law enforcement in that branch of the

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
	<i>Lacks</i> - diversity of people <i>Spirituality</i> - Spirit brought us here. a huge part of being here... we see the sunset every day. We're connected with the stars, the moon, the water, the trees, our food, where our water comes from. where are waste goes, grounds us in our reality... <i>Creativity</i> - having the physical, the mental and the human consciousness space is very beneficial. - There's a different way that people do things here...than other parts of the country.	- attendance - at the dance, there were all ages. All ages! <i>Creativity on Gabriola</i> - creativity comes in many forms ... from the way people try to live, that's a very creative aspect, - alternative housing... just that kind of spirit. - very strong arts community enriches the area you live in. - You have you kind of have to be a bit creative to live here <i>Gabriola's Culture</i> - definitely is a culture... isn't that easy to identify - there's a culture of natural products. Eco... ecological sustainability, growing your own food... are valued here.	islands trust in a negative way to suppress creativities or different ways people make a living. <i>Relationship with Creative Activity?</i> <i>Cultural Sustainability?</i> I would say one thing... I think... maintaining a level of decommercialization, maintaining that, allows... there's more space for artisans and individual people to make a living and make businesses.
Nineteen F, 42,	<i>Offers</i> - less costly real estate... quicker access to rural lifestyle choices <i>Lacks</i> - demographic diversity... access to cultural; food diversity and recreational diversity. <i>Spirituality</i>	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> - don't think I contribute... did some workshops on our farm... - minimally. maybe once a year. <i>Creativity on Gabriola</i> - amount of hidden talent... the authors that you didn't know - you need to be a creative problem solver to deal with living in a rural community.	<i>Trust Knowledge and Mandate Influence</i> - Quite a bit. I knew what its mandate was. - confirming that the governance of the community was closely aligned with my overall stewardship ethic <i>Relationship with Creative Activity?</i> <i>Cultural Sustainability?</i>

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
	<i>the natural environment feeds the spiritual practice</i> <i>Less distracted by urban lifestyle challenges... Congestion, commuting... elements that take away minutes or dampen the ability to think</i> <i>Creativity</i> <i>Putting our hands in the dirt is a creative endeavour ... it's not typical</i>	<i>Gabriola's Culture</i> <i>I mean it's very fiercely, independent.</i> <i>a tricky one... a lot of entitlement comes with having lived here for 25 years or having had a vacation rental or property for three generations.</i> <i>the cultures shifting... it's changing. there's never been more people than there is now on Gabriola... even I think in First Nations history. It's such a baby culture right now. It's just so new and shifting in terms of its permanency as a community. Now it's a full-time residential community.</i>	<i>part of the mandate is to preserve the culture... of the communities in the care.</i> <i>that's a tricky one... because we haven't defined that. It means, the culture, if there is such a defined thing on each of these communities... is shifting what does that look like? People don't know... people are scared. Does it infringe on their private property rights? Does it change the way they use and enjoy their property? So we're at the beginning of a new era.</i> <i>Equally difficult since the sustainability model was based on having some assumptions that we don't even have embedded in our object yet</i> <i>Our role is sustaining culture is in flux as we navigate what it means when we have not just the people of British Columbia, who are interested in vacationing here, but the people who live here and the First Nations who want to come back.</i>
Twenty F, 63	<i>Offers</i> <i>When I first came here it was magical... enough wildness left on the islands that you could really feel the heart of Gabriola. The spirit of gabriola. I kind of feel like either</i>	<i>Contribute or Participate</i> <i>long-term gabriola events like the salmon barbecue, were solidly Gabriolan reported on those kinds of things</i> <i>I'm in two choirs.</i>	<i>Relationship with Creative Activity?</i> <i>Cultural Sustainability?</i> <i>Nothing. I do know lots now.</i> <i>In terms at preserving unique amenities I haven't run into any other governance model that privileges that.</i>

Participant	Place	Creative Activity Strategies	Local Governance
	<i>that spirits been diminished or is harder to find...</i> <i>Lacks</i> <i>the willingness to defend the island is replaced by people who want to use it</i> <i>Spirituality</i> <i>when I first came Gabriola certainly had an openness.</i> <i>Creativity</i> <i>everything I ever wrote started out in the yard while I was working there...</i>	<i>Creativity on Gabriola</i> <i>creative industries was the first one of those is farming.</i> <i>Gabriola's Culture</i> <i>people are able to get away with thinking for themselves.</i> <i>Which one? There's an intensity of interaction here. the culture in creativity too.</i> <i>The fact that there are a lot of very creative people on this island... I would say probably more than maybe other of the islands and trusts.</i>	<i>Well to me this is the heart of the issue here. Because we have an undefined unique amenities.</i> <i>Relationship with Creative Activity?</i> <i>Cultural Sustainability?</i> <i>People come to an island... They don't go to inter island meetings. They don't know how the islands trust works. They blame the islands trust but they don't understand the model. Decisions made in camera. Have generations who don't know the history of the islands trust fights and decisions.</i>

Appendix 6A- Islands Trust Governance Structure

The *Islands Trust* and the *Islands Trust Act* (1974) were created in response to an influx of subdivision applications on the southern Gulf Islands of British Columbia. The Islands Trust is made up of 15 distinct corporate identities as shown in Figure 6.1.1. These identities are the Islands Trust Conservancy Board (not critical to our discussion focused on island land use planning); the Islands Trust Council and its Executive Committee; and 12 island Local Trust Committees (LTCs) plus the Bowen Island Municipality.

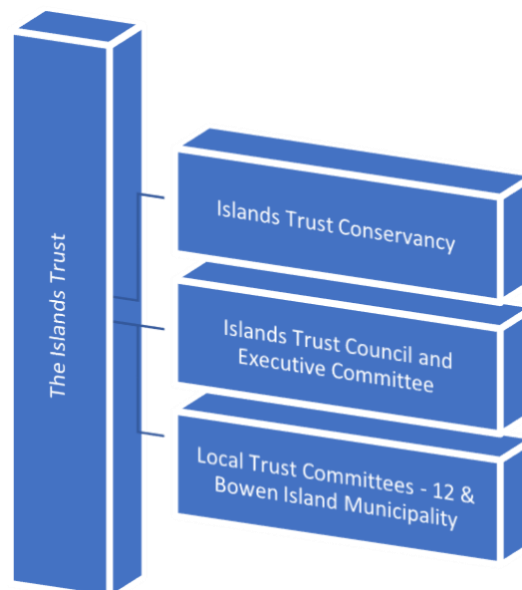


Figure 6A.1.1. The Islands Trust Fifteen Corporate Identities

The Islands Trust Conservancy, one of the three components of the Trust, serves as a regional conservator for Canada’s islands in the Salish Sea. The Conservancy’s Board of Directors is responsible for managing land and monies gifted to the Conservancy. It shares a mandate with the Islands Trust. The Conservancy initiates programs encouraging landowners to protect their private lands and offers information on tax exemption programs.

The Islands Trust Council, another of the three components of the Trust, is an elected body of 26 officials representing the 12 Gulf Islands and one island municipality in the Salish Sea of British Columbia. The Trust Council includes an Executive Committee, which the Council votes for, responsible to conduct the daily business of the Council in the periods between the quarterly in-person meetings of all 26 representatives⁵².

Local Planning Services (LPS) and Local Trust Committee (LTCs) are encompassed in another of the three components of the Islands Trust Corporate Structure (Figure 6A.1.2.). The LTCs are made up of two local elected Trustees and a Trustee from another island, who will act as Chairperson for regular meetings. The LTCs are responsible for the land use planning on their island. There are planning staff allocated to each of the three Islands Trust offices which make up the Local Planning Services (LPS) and cover the entire Trust Area.



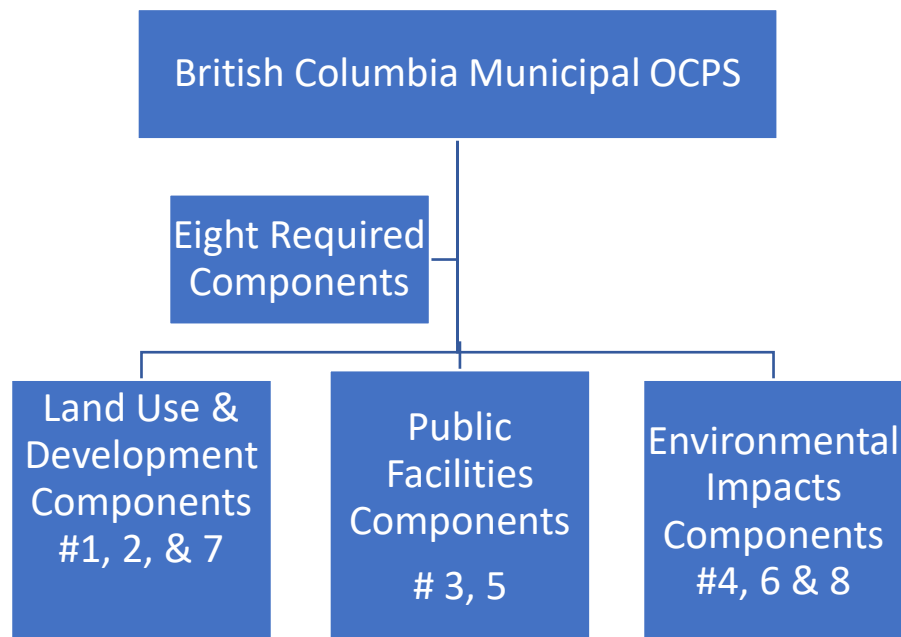
Figure 6A.1.2. Three Operational Components of The Islands Trust

⁵² Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic.

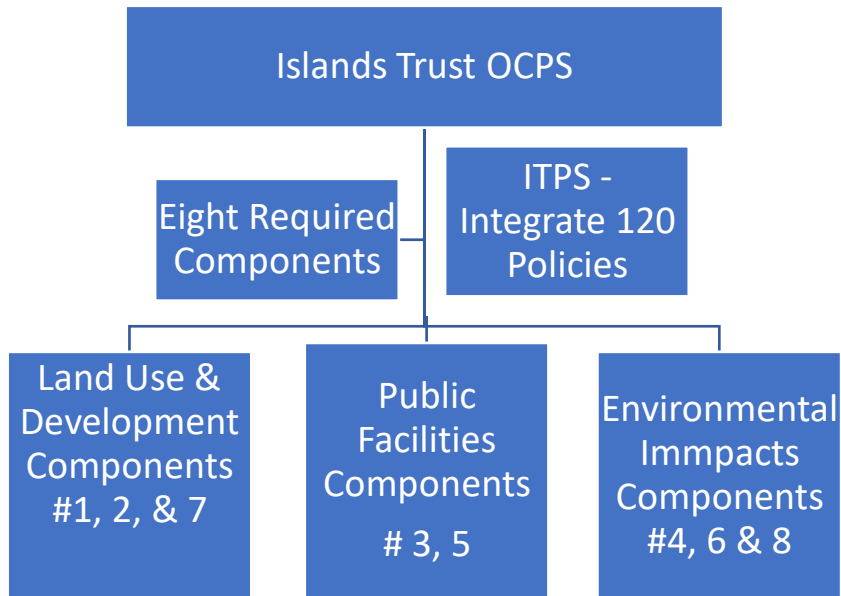
Appendix 6B – British Columbia Official Community Plan (OCP) Components

Eight required Government of British Columbia OCP Components

1. Residential Development to meet housing needs for five years
2. Present and proposed land uses: commercial, industrial, institutional, agricultural, recreational, and public utility
3. Present and proposed public facilities: schools, parks, waste treatment and disposal sites
4. Sand and gravel deposits for future extraction
5. Major road, sewer and water system phasing
6. Land use restrictions on lands with hazardous conditions or environmental sensitivity
7. Housing policies: affordable, rental and special needs housing
8. Reduction Targets: Community Greenhouse Gas



Guidelines for Official Community Plans in British Columbia – Figure 6B.1.1.



Guidelines for Islands Trust Official Community Plans – Figure 6B.1.2.