

Engaging the Community:
Communications Strategies in Municipal
Sustainability Planning in Alberta

by
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ABSTRACT

The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) has emerged as a Canadian leader in facilitating municipal sustainability planning (MSP) based on The Natural Step framework. In addition to developing a guide and planning tools, it assisted five rural communities in piloting the MSP process. Communication is a critical but relatively unexplored component of citizen engagement in MSPs. Drawing on theories of social networks and a social ecology perspective and using data from a documentary review and stakeholder interviews, I examine and compare communication strategies used by two AUMA pilot communities. Citizens developed a shared vision of a preferred future for their community, requiring shared language, and new information and knowledge. The AUMA and other stakeholders helped the communities to develop bridging relationships that promote knowledge transfer. In soliciting community input, both communities used multiple communication methods. In this paper I describe these methods, community response, challenges, and plans for future engagement. Participants from both communities described that through the MSP process they began to see their community as part of a bigger picture, initiating partnerships with other communities with shared concerns and taking on a leadership role.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Concept of Sustainability

Drawing on 18-century romanticism and nostalgia for the “untouched” frontier, individuals and groups in North America have laboured for more than a century to preserve pristine areas of wilderness, as seen, for example, in the national parks movement. However, until recently environmentalists ignored the growth of agricultural communities, industry, and cities away from these wild places (Brugmann, 2005). As Cronon (1996) observed, “the romantic ideology of wilderness leaves precisely nowhere for human beings actually to make their living from the land” (p. 17), and human activities flourished and spread for decades but remained relatively unexamined until the middle of the 20th century.

Rachel Carson’s (1962/2002) *Silent Spring* was a landmark in raising popular awareness of the unsustainability of Western industrial society, and the concept of finite environmental resources began to take shape as a global issue in the early 1970s, exemplified by the United Nations 1972 Conference on Human Environment (Mebratu, 1998). In 1987 the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland, popularized the term *sustainable development* “as guiding institutional principle, as concrete policy goal, and as focus of political struggle remains salient in confronting the multiple challenges of this new global order” (Sneddon, Howarth, & Norgaard, 2006, p. 253). What that meant, however, has been the subject of debate to the present day (Peterson & Franks, 2006). Since the definition of *sustainable development* as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 8) was articulated, the use of the term in a wide variety of contexts encompassing psychological, cultural, and social well-being, among other concepts, and the significance for political policy of

any accepted definition (Mebratu, 1998) has “led to an array of perspectives on sustainable development rooted in vastly different values and beliefs” (Peterson & Franks, 2006, p. 425). Mebratu has classified definitions as institutional (based on needs satisfaction; e.g., WCED notion of sustainable growth), ideological (e.g., eco-socialism), and academic (e.g., economic) versions of sustainable development, each of which identifies different sources and solutions for the environmental crisis. Almost all authors agree, however, that sustainability relates to the gap between what humans demand of the earth and what the earth can provide, and sustainable development addresses ways of closing that gap (Williams & Millington, 2004).

The term *sustainable* is ascribed various meanings in the literature, including a goal, vision, management practice, and social construct; Sumner (2002) described it as an “emerging concept” (p. 170). Roseland (2005), for example, has differentiated weak sustainability from strong: “Weak sustainability reflects the neoclassical economic assumption that non-natural assets can substitute for natural assets; therefore it is acceptable to use up natural assets so long as the profits they generate provide an equivalent endowment to the next generation” (p. 6). On the other hand, Peterson and Franks (2006) have argued that “organizations ranging from the World Wildlife Fund to the World Bank have embraced the term” (p. 425) and that the word *sustainability* has failed because it has come to mean anything to anyone. Notwithstanding these various conceptualizations of sustainability, the influence of the concept on national and international policy has grown (Mebratu, 1998).

Sustainability and the Democratic Process

In contrast to conventional approaches to growth and resource utilization, which have considered sustainability from an economic viewpoint only, current understanding is based on a holistic, integrated perspective involving social, environmental, and economic criteria. This

requires an inclusive and democratic process of engagement and decision-making relative to planning and development, particularly at the local level, where community decision-making generally takes place: “All forms of sustainability are ultimately local sustainabilities” (Whitehead, 2007, p. 187), an essential part of which involves citizens having the ability “to take control of their own lives, health and environment” (Irwin, 1995, p. 7).

Public deliberation has long been considered a cornerstone of participatory democracy (Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004). Recently dialogue has gained favour both in citizen input to government and in other context involving deliberation among stakeholders (Head, 2007), a change driven in part by the complexity and interconnectedness of issues being addressed (Innes & Booher, 2004) and a growing awareness that governments cannot achieve sustainability alone (Cooper & Vargas, 2004). Communication is central not only to community sustainability planning and decision-making but in establishing the very legitimacy of these processes (Nelson, 2001) as sustainable development is a normative, value-laden concept (Davidson, 2002). For that reason, sustainability initiatives have shared an emphasis on human equality, agency, and participation in the conceptualization and construction of sustainability at the local level.

Public participation is itself a sustainable development strategy. To a considerable extent, the environmental crisis is a creativity crisis . . . Effective and acceptable local solutions require local decisions, which in turn require the extensive knowledge and participation of the people most affected by those decisions, in their workplaces and in their communities. (Roseland, 2005, p. 222)

Democratic participation is viewed as the foundation on which sustainability must be built, requiring communication processes to support the principles of transparency and accountability (Cooper & Vargas, 2004). That being said, it is important to be aware of and examine power relations and how they shape our relationships with one another and with respect to the environment (Bruckmeier & Tovey, 2008).

The New Deal for Cities and Communities (2005)

In Canada, the utilization of a sustainability framework for planning and development has been promoted, and in some cases made mandatory, through recent federal and provincial 10-year (2005–2015) agreements to provide gas tax rebates to municipal governments.¹ Known as the New Deal for Cities and Communities (Finance Canada, 2005), these agreements were established by the previous federal Liberal government as a way to transfer funds to local governments struggling with aging and inadequate infrastructure. To be eligible for this program, administered by Infrastructure Canada, communities were encouraged and/or required to develop integrated community sustainability plans (ICSP), also known in Alberta as municipal sustainability plans (MSPs).

The Alberta Context: The Crisis and the Solution

The situation in Alberta is no different from that in the rest of Canada. The decision of the Klein government to pay off the provincial debt in the mid-1990s meant reduced government spending, resulting in an infrastructure deficit that was felt a decade later (“Klein Declares,” 2003). Between 2007 and 2011 the Alberta government is expected to provide municipalities with \$1.4 billion in support of sustainability (Alberta Urban Municipalities Association [AUMA], 2007), including \$400,000 for 2009–2010, with \$50 million of this allocated to conditional operating funding (Government of Alberta, 2009). The AUMA has emerged as a leader in Canada in adopting and facilitating the process of sustainability planning. They had already begun developing sustainability initiatives (AUMA 2)² and the New Deal for Cities provided impetus to continue. The AUMA quickly endorsed the concept of municipal sustainability (AUMA, 2007) and in 2006 created an MSP guidebook (AUMA, 2006) modelled

on The Natural Step (TNS) Framework for sustainability planning (James & Lahti, 2004), which the AUMA had been exposed to through the ImagineCalgary initiative.³

TNS is an international nonprofit organization that originated in Sweden in the 1980s. Its founder, Dr. Karl-Henrik Robèrt, developed a consensus-building tool that was later developed as a framework for sustainability planning (TNS Canada, n.d.). This framework is a systems-based and participatory methodology that relies on four guiding objectives to define a sustainable system:

1. eliminate the community's dependence on fossil fuel and wasteful use of scarce minerals and metals,
2. eliminate dependence on persistent chemicals and wasteful use of synthetics,
3. eliminate the community's encroachment on nature, and
4. "meet human needs fairly and efficiently" (James & Lahti, 2004, p. 9).

The AUMA developed a pilot project for implementation of sustainability planning based on the guidebook and selected five communities (the towns of Brooks, Pincher Creek, and Olds and the villages of Thorhild and Chauvin) to participate. The pilot project ran for about a year and a half, ending in April 2008 with a one-day conference at which the pilots presented what they had done (AUMA 1). Since then, 11 additional urban areas and municipal districts have reached Phase 4 in their MSPs. Two of these communities, the Town of Olds and the Village of Chauvin, will be examined here. Olds, population 7,500, is located along the Queen Elizabeth II highway corridor (Town of Olds, 2009). Chauvin is an agricultural community of about 320 (AltaPop, 2009) located south-southeast of Edmonton 8 kilometres from the Saskatchewan border (Village of Chauvin, n.d.).

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

One of the basic premises of sustainability planning is citizen engagement (Nelson, 2001); Connelly, Markey, and Roseland (2009) have identified a “culture of community involvement” (p. 4) as necessary in identifying visions and desired outcomes to make communities more sustainable. Despite the centrality of engagement and hence dialogue in sustainability planning, however, communication is still a relatively unexplored aspect of sustainability planning. Furthermore, there are many communication techniques to choose from (International Association of Public Participation [IAPP], 2007), and criteria for judging the effectiveness of participatory processes are not clearly defined (Provan & Milward, 2001), which also speaks to the need for research in this area.

The purpose of this study is to examine communication strategies and processes used in the different phases of municipal sustainability planning through comparative case studies of two of the five Alberta communities that have completed their municipal sustainability plan and are in the process of implementing it and at least considering how to maintain it; that is, they have reached Phase 4 in their MSPs through the AUMA pilot program. (The MSP phases as delineated in the AUMA guidebook are described more fully in Chapter 4.) More specifically, the objectives are to examine communications methods used by the two communities at various stages in the MSP and to illuminate communications networks created or changed as a result of this process. The findings of this study will be valuable to these communities as they continue and develop their sustainability processes and to other communities by providing examples of and insights into the social interactions involved and methods used in community engagement.

The research questions, therefore, were: What are the communication strategies used in two Alberta communities to promote and create municipal sustainability planning? What worked? What did not work? What roles did the various actors play? What are the opportunities? The challenges?

Outline of the Paper

This report includes in-depth, holistic comparative case study narratives of the two communities' communication processes based on interpretive analysis of interviews and documentary data. Evaluations focus on the quality of participatory and cooperative processes and outcomes but also consider organizational factors as inequalities, capability building, and time scales for expecting results. Concepts such as "community partnership" can mean different things in different contexts. The time scale is significant as trust and confidence take time to build. Challenges related to developing a collective process include learning how to develop and refine common directions and objectives, build relationships and trust over time, develop shared leadership, sustain commitment, and deal with problems related to role conflict (Head, 2007).

Chapter 2 contains a review and summary of relevant literature describing communication issues related to public engagement. It is followed by an overview of study procedures, followed by a brief discussion of potential ethical issues and anticipated study outcome in Chapter 3. The results are presented in Chapter 4 and discussed in the context of the literature in Chapter 5, including recommendations for further research. The paper ends with Chapter 6, which contains a summary and conclusions.

Study of the communication processes that foster, or fail to advance, these factors will provide information that will be useful for other communities and organizations addressing issues of citizen engagement. However, qualitative case studies reflect the experience of those

involved in or considering involvement in sustainability planning, and so can provide that person with a natural basis for generalization to his or her experience (Stake, 1978/2000).

Assessment of This Study

This comparative case study reveals important information on communication processes related to community engagement surrounding sustainability planning. Furthermore, the use of two sites that are dissimilar in population and location results in a greater possibility for generalizability than would have been possible with one site. However, case studies are bounded by time, location, and focus (Creswell, 2009). As well, this study relies on research involving a relatively small sample size for qualitative interviewing, targeting only those individuals who had participated in their MSPs or at the AUMA level and were committed to it over the long term. It did not include people who entered later, once decision-making had begun, or people who chose to withdraw from the process. As such, some MSP participants' and nonparticipants' viewpoints are not represented. As well, my status as an "outsider" might have resulted in my missing some nuances of meaning; on the other hand, participants might have expressed their views in more detail and provided more background than they would have with an interviewer with whom they might assume shared understanding (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

Summary

Sustainable development has become a widely adopted approach with the goal of creating viable communities that are economically stable but also incorporate and integrate environmental, cultural, and social criteria. Also critical to this process is the engagement of local citizens, and communication plays a key role in all stages of engagement. As activities toward sustainability take place to a large degree at the local level, community involvement must

take place at that level as well. Alberta has been a leader in Canada in developing the concepts around Municipal Sustainability Planning, moving beyond the pilot stage to more general deployment in urban centres and municipal districts. Communication processes related to municipal sustainability are not well understood. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to illuminate communication processes related to community engagement in municipal sustainability planning through case studies of two Alberta communities, the Town of Olds and the Village of Chauvin. Using the case study method, the researcher can use multiple sources of data to focus on specific aspects of a process such as a municipal sustainability plan, and the use of two sites increases the depth and breadth of the examination. However, this focus means that a case study will be contained within boundaries of time and location, excluding information from other communities (Creswell, 2009).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication in Public Engagement

Community participation, as assessed by Arnstein (1969), consists of an eight-step ladder of increasing involvement, from nonparticipation (including manipulation and therapy), through tokenism (informing, consultation, placation), to citizen power (including delegated power and citizen control). The IAPP (2007) adapted Arnstein's participatory steps into a five-step ladder of increasing involvement—informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, and empowering citizens— and identified different communication methods associated with each stage.

Informing is a first step as engagement first requires information. Studying change in rural development influenced by sustainability discourses, Bruckmeier and Tovey (2008) found lack of information, insecurity about scientific knowledge, and disputes on how to manage knowledge to be central concerns. These were related to

- how different types of knowledge (e.g., expert-lay, ideas of knowledge networks and cultures) are conceptualized;
- the distinction between external and internal knowledge; that is, the degree of embeddedness of knowledge;
- how the communications infrastructure (e.g., Internet access) influences knowledge transfer; and
- the role of “experts.”

MSP funding allows for the hiring of a part-time facilitator to work with the local council, for example. Local resource users are a second type of expert in this scenario.

Consulting might involve public comment, focus groups, public meetings, or surveys, and involves ongoing two-way communication processes in which community input is received

and incorporated into decision-making, and the community is informed as to the effect of its input (IAPP, 2007). In AUMA's (2007) model, dialogue is identified as an important means of resolving issues and refining strategies. Structured communication opportunities, which help facilitate inclusiveness and lasting impact of change, provided a commitment exists to give all participants equal opportunity as stakeholders (Meldon, Kenny, & Walsh, 2004), can vary along a number of spectrums, such as weak/strong, narrow/broad, and episodic/continuing. Weak consultation, however, runs the risk of seeming to potential participants like tokenism. Individuals or community groups can also initiate participation outside formal channels, for example by lobbying, protesting, establishing new forums for dialogue, or creating coalitions and community action plans.

Involving requires direct public involvement in decision-making through such means as deliberative polling and workshops (IAPP, 2007). Communication factors that influence community engagement include social capital (Reddel & Woolcock, 2004), how resources are circulated and the types of interactions occurring within the social network (Franke, 2005), the use of electronic media (Head, 2007), group and individual preferences, accountability and changing goals, and the risks and benefits of expanding participation (Nelson, 2001).

Collaborating entails partnership between levels of government and the public through such means as citizens' advisory committees, participatory decision-making, and consensus building (IAPP, 2007). Interaction and learning processes are ongoing, implying cooperation, but might neglect "problems of inequality, social exclusion, power differences, conflicts and incompatible interests" (Bruckmeier & Tovey, 2008, p. 326).

Empowering involves placing ultimate decision-making in the hands of the public through vehicles such as citizen juries, ballots (IAPP, 2007), or formal and informal discussion (Reddel & Woolcock, 2004).

Interest in public participation has increased for various reasons, possibly including pursuit of legitimate, transparent, and accountable democratic processes; a prevailing view that a “more educated, sophisticated, and less deferential public” (Abelson et al., 2003, p. 239) and greater level of complexity of decision making demand new processes; or a belief that public deliberation might foster or act as a substitute for social capital. In authentic deliberation participants’ views are altered through dialogue and reflection. In all but small communities this will involve representatives of the community rather than the entire community. Abelson et al. have also underlined the role of information both as a tool for informing dialogue and as a tool for power with respect to its availability and use.

People who participate in public deliberation changed their beliefs about the sponsoring government agency and showed greater tolerance for differences in opinions (Halvorsen, 2003), were more likely to become involved in other forms of civic engagement (Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Gastil, Deess, Weiser, & Meade, 2008), and became better able to generate more sophisticated opinions regarding policy choices (Gastil & Dillard, 1999), including heightened differentiation of viewpoints between liberals and conservatives, although the changes that occurred seemed to depend on the composition of the group (Gastil, Black, & Moscovitz, 2008). “Public participation and dialogue processes contribute to the transformation of both individuals and communities” (Barge, 2006, p. 530).

Models of Public Deliberation

There are many models of public deliberation and dialogue practices (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). What they share overall is that citizens are provided with information and an opportunity to discuss and challenge ideas before a final decision is made (Barge, 2006). Waddell (1996), for example, differentiated four models of public participation by the approach taken to information transfer and attitude toward values and emotions on the part of participating experts and the public. In the technocratic model decision-making remains in the hands of the experts. The one-way and interactive Jeffersonian models allow for increased public participation, whereas in the social constructionist model both experts and public have access to all information and policy is constructed jointly.

Barge (2006) has argued that participatory democracy resembles Habermas's (1989) concept of the public sphere but goes beyond as it necessarily involves addressing normative issues (Benhabib, 1992). Therefore, changing opinions requires participants to change identities (Barge, 2006). Barge noted the importance of dialogue so that citizens can "listen deeply to each other's moral orders, to explore the particular rationality that each uses, and to create new categories that allow the competing moral orders to be compared and weighed" (p. 517). In this way, dialogue helps build community and fosters democratic practices. This does not displace elected leadership but changes the relationship of this leadership with constituents (Barge, 2006).

Ryfe's (2002) model highlights conflict between rational, that is, based on argumentation, and relational, that is, based in emotion and narrative, modes of deliberation. In a study of 16 organizations he found that the shape deliberation took depended on such factors as whether the group's goals were defined in terms of actions. He also argued that participants tended to be self-selected. Tyler (2003) described public consultation as usually involving information dissemination, then public input, which precedes decision making, implementation, and

evaluation, and noted that for to be considered participation, the public should be directly involved in decision making. He described a second model in which the public input is followed by a design phase, after which the public is involved in choice, decision making, and, following implementation, in evaluation.

The Language of Public Participation

Pearce and Littlejohn (1997) have defined communication as “anything we might do in the presence of others” (p. 7), and is “a process of making and doing,” (p. 77), and is “a process of coordination” (p. 78). Their third principle is that there is always more than one context. Together these principles offer “hope for change” because “if communication is created by people together as an act of coordination, then third parties can skilfully participate in making new, more productive patterns” (p. 79). Drawing on Kegan’s (1994) levels of consciousness and mental organization,⁵ they have developed a model of transcendent eloquence that is philosophical; that is, aims to uncover assumptions about knowledge and values behind different positions; comparative, in that it aims to create categories whereby differences can be compared; and involves construction of truth through dialogue rather than debate.

Participatory democracy uses the language of problem solving and relationship building rather than winning or losing; it involves community ownership and empowerment, focusing on community assets and a change in power relations (Mathews, 1994). Dialogue provides the opportunity for multiple voices to be heard, helping citizens see the connections between different positions and interests and generating new possibilities for meaning and action. Dialogue does not, however, guarantee participatory democracy (Barge, 2006).

Appreciative inquiry (AI; Barge, 2006) takes an asset-based approach, as opposed to the traditional language of community building, which involved articulating the community’s needs

(Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Mathie and Cunningham have argued that a needs-based approach denigrates community, disempowers citizens, and places the focus outside the community, thereby weakening intracommunity links. In an assets-based approach, participants start with examining what is working well and invites community members to “bring into language their community’s assets, capacities and strengths” (Barge, 2001, p. 95). Methods used include collecting stories of community success and analyzing the reasons for success, mapping community assets, forming a steering group or representative planning group, relationship building among local assets for mutual benefit, and leveraging resources from outside the community (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). It involves the steps of (a) appreciating what is, (b) envisioning a possible future, (c) engaging in dialogue on what should occur in the community, and (d) innovating changes (Barge, 2001).

Micro-level ways of fostering dialogue include creating safe spaces, using effective facilitation skills such as questioning, active listening, topic framing, and reflecting; and increasing personal capacities such as listening, respecting, suspending, and voicing (Barge, 2006). Some practices, such as active listening, “reflect a commitment to effective deliberation”; others, such as creating a safe space, “emphasize the relational elements of dialogue. Dialogic practice is more than simply collective thinking: it simultaneously emphasizes developing collaborative working relationships among participants” (pp. 529–530).

Potential Challenges to Public Engagement

Public organizations and their representatives are accountable to the public and to legislative mandate; on the other hand, collaboration requires trust and accountability to other group members, and takes time to develop (Centers for Disease Control/ATSDR Committee on Community Engagement, 1997). Dilemmas can therefore arise if group goals change as a result

of discussions. Network participants must keep members informed about ongoing discussion but thereby run the risk of frequent interruptions and waiting, which can erode group motivation. The question remains, however, as to when and how soon progress should be reported (Nelson, 2001), given that pressure to report achievement in the short term might compromise the construction of long-term relationships (De Bruijn & Ringeling, 1997).

Motivation to participate in public deliberation will be affected by the expected achievements and the quality of the processes, including communication processes, used to obtain them (Kickert & Koppenjan, 1997), although opening collaboration might also foster unrealistic expectations (Pratchett, 1999).

How relations of power influence community participatory planning processes has received little attention in the literature (Kelly, 2005), particularly in a rural context (Csurgó, Kovách, & Kučerová, 2008). Communicative sources of power include the power to mobilize, organize, strategize, authorize action, exercise influence, or control information (Aranoff & McGuire, 2001), including controlling who is included and whose knowledge and opinions are considered worthy of attention. Head (2007) has stressed the importance of understanding both “standard” and possible underlying motives of government, business, and the community in initiating or engaging collaborative decision-making. Community groups might hope to gain more influence, be involved in issues that affect them, or obtain better outcomes for citizens. Business and government, on the other hand, might have different goals. For that reason, state sponsorship and/or funding of participatory forums might inadvertently undermine the process.

Some issues that might arise in dialogue include veto power, manipulation of weaker partners, and coercion. Furthermore, those holding power might be unaware of it. Reddel and Woolcock (2004) have also noted the “vexed relationship between participatory and

representative forms of democratic organisation” (p. 76) as governmental sponsorship of participatory forums might inadvertently undermine public deliberation processes or negate the possibility of equal voices for all participants (Nelson, 2001). Ivie (2002) has referred to the “illusion of consensus and unanimity” (p. 277), noting that healthy democracy needs conflict as an impetus for change and to avoid reification of the status quo. Furthermore, consensus building usually takes place within pre-existing political structures, so consensus can be shaped by existing power relations (Peterson & Franks, 2006) or by a failure to confront core conflicts over issues such as equity, distribution, and valuation of nature as well as limits to community control because of nested or interdependent relationships (Singleton, 2002).

Challenges to dialogical democratic practice include representation, as some people are more likely to engage than others, participants are often self-selected, and stakeholders might be too narrowly defined. Fairness of process, including competence, defined as “the ability of the process to reach the best decision possible given what was recently knowable under the present conditions” (Webler & Tuler, 2000, p. 568) and management of competing concerns and trade-offs, such as democratic process versus fairness; and bias toward action and creating deliverables (Barge, 2006). Tuler and Webler (1999) identified “good” process as including access to the process, power to influence both the process and the outcomes, access to information, constructive personal behaviours and interactions, adequate analysis, and enablement of future processes. Barge (2003) has argued that appreciative inquiry expands capacity for managing conflicts and problems but notes the risk that critical voices might be silenced and has called for attention to inclusion-exclusion, deliberative-relational, and macro-micro levels of practice, and for community building practices involving affirmative, relational, generative, and imaginative sensibility.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The term *community* can be defined in many ways (CDC/ATSDR Committee on Community Engagement, 1997). From a systems perspective, community can be studied with reference to people, e.g. demographics, socioeconomics; geographical location and boundaries; connectors such as shared values, interest or motivators; power relations involving communication patterns, formal and informal lines of authority or influence, resource flows, and stakeholder relationship (Voluntary Hospitals of America, 1993, cited in CDC/ATSDR Committee on Community Engagement, 1997).

The aim in this study is to illuminate how and why communication strategies were implemented at various points in the planning process in two Alberta communities. This is an exploratory study based on a social constructivist worldview (Creswell, 2009). From this perspective, moral (values-based) differences can be transcended when communicators change their patterns of talk (Littlejohn, 2006). A brief discussion of the theories that have informed this study will be followed by an outline of research strategies.

Theories of social networks and consensus building. Giddens (1984) theorized on how communicators act strategically to achieve specific goals, thereby creating social structures, including rules, that, in turn, influence the possibility of future actions. Organizations operate through networks of individuals and groups that are themselves embedded in larger social processes, which influence them but which they also influence, resulting in disembedding of existing networks such as family and community and reembedding in new networks (Monge & Contractor, 2003). Most individuals have a circle of friends (strong ties), many of whom also know each other, as well as acquaintances (weak ties) who have their own dense circles of friends. These weak ties serve a bridging function between groups of people, so individuals with few weak ties will miss information that is accessible to those with many weak ties. “Social

systems lacking in weak ties will be fragmented and incoherent” (Granovetter, 1982, p. 106).

Furthermore, weak ties are essential for an individual’s integration into society, for the development of intellectual and cognitive flexibility as a result of the complex roles that an individual must fill, and in the diffusion of ideas (Granovetter, 1982). Increased globalization has resulted in a process of disembedding local social networks and embedding of new ones (Giddens, 1984).

Public participation can be driven at the local level by a desire to build social capital (social capital theory; Reddel & Woolcock, 2004), defined as personal and social cohesiveness. Human capital (individual skill and knowledge) facilitates the development of social capital, which, in turn, fosters ongoing development of human capital (Cuthill, 2003). As such, social capital theory has been classified as a self-interest theory on social networks (Monge & Contractor, 2003). Consensus-based models have been linked to community building, with expected greater satisfaction and compliance from citizens because, in essence, some of the payment for implementation costs is in the form of social capital (Peterson & Franks, 2006). Components of social capital include group characteristics, generalized norms, togetherness, everyday sociability, neighbourhood connections, volunteerism, and trust (Claridge, 2004).

Hannah Arendt traced the decline of the political and rise of the social sphere, in which citizens participate in activities such as purchasing but not in decision-making, and defined two types of public spheres, agonistic, in which participants compete for attention and acclaim, and relational, where citizens act together and freedom can emerge (Benhabib, 1992). Habermas (1981) posited that people will participate in issues related to societal well-being. A remedy for lack of trust in the public sphere is strong communicative action, which should guide strategic choices about overall societal directions and priorities, whereas bureaucracy should guide the

tactical, operational choices (Hanson, 2002). Habermas distinguished two forms of rationality, instrumental and communicative. Linked to these are, respectively, ends-oriented and process-oriented action in the world, the latter involving achieving desired ends by reaching agreement based on mutual understanding and respect (Sumner, 2002). Communicative action is social rather than strategic (i.e., related to an individual's personal goals) and is interdependent with the lifeworld (Habermas, 1981).

Habermas considered that democratic engagement requires neutralization of power issues. He argued that the public sphere, in which ideas were presented, debated, and decided on, went into decline as a result of the rise of mass media (Finlayson, 2005), although critics have argued that the ideal exchange of ideas that Habermas described was an oversimplification and that Habermas's privileging of dialogue and reciprocity over mediated, one-to-many communication has not been adequately supported (Thompson, 1993).

Social ecological perspective. This framework, based in the work of Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979) from Lewin (1935) and Hawley (1950), is used to examine the relationships and interrelationships between social elements from the perspective of multiple levels (intercultural/macro, community/exo, organizational/meso, and interpersonal or individual/micro) and contexts, with particular attention to changing relations between the person and his/her environment. This model is portrayed as nested or concentric circles with the individual at the centre. Effects occur at and across contexts, or levels (Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, & Rinderle, 2006), and what takes place at one level can influence other levels, for example the effect of a cultural change on the individual (McLeroy, Bibeau, Stecker, & Glanz, 1988). At the individual level are factors that make up the individual's social identity—"expressed behaviour choices and psychological and cognitive factors such as knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and

personality traits” (Gregson, 2001, p. S12)—which is shaped by the environment and through communication with others.

At the organizational level, the influence on the microsystem/individual depends on the richness of communication at this level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Community-level influence is through established norms and social networks (Gregson, 2001) and can occur even if the individual is not an active participant in these networks. Cultural contexts are the macrosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Isomorphisms are intercontextual communications, where an impact on one level results in impacts in the same direction on another level, whereas discontinuities are effects on one level or group that has a different, for example, opposite, effect on another group or level (Oetzel et al., 2006). The existence of top-down effects is an acknowledgement that environment can shape individual behaviour. Bottom-up effects also exist, as do interactive effects, which occur at multiple levels (McLeroy et al., 1988). The influence of face-to-face versus mediated communication on these effects is in need of study (Oetzel et al., 2006).

Coordinated management of meaning. CMM is a practical theory that examines how actions and interactions are embedded in socially constructed contexts of meaning (Pearce & Cronen, 1980; Littlejohn, 2006). All actions and stories contextualize and are contextualized by others in fluid relationships that produce insights, paradoxes, confusion, or prefigurations; that is, the social environment is constructed through dialogue. Furthermore, each individual’s behaviour is guided by a personal set of rules, but these individual rules can be coordinated with those of others. The theory addresses the tensions between stories lived and stories told, and between the need for humans to try to understand each other versus the inevitability of misunderstanding. These processes imply that social worlds are constantly being re-created (Pearce, 2004).

Framing theory. Frames are mental structures through which we filter and interpret phenomena. Framing involves the conscious or unconscious construction of a phenomenon in a way that encourages a particular understanding of that phenomenon. Goffman's (1974) work on frame theory was seminal in the study of media representations of social issues, which might inform study of MSP-related public awareness campaigns.

Theories on power. Habermas's critics have argued that communicative action theory undervalues the role of power in relations (Fitzpatrick, 2005). In addition to Giddens (1984), Foucault examined discursive structures and how they shape knowledge. The rules of discourse determine what may be discussed, who may engage in discussion, and whose discourse will be taken seriously (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008).

Summary

Community participation can be described along a continuum ranging from non-involvement to empowerment (Arnstein, 1969). To move along that continuum, individuals require information and knowledge (Bruckmeier & Tovey, 2008), which involves community communication processes and often input from experts. The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (2007) developed a dialogue-centred model based on The Natural Step (James & Lahti, 2004) to facilitate this process for Alberta communities related to municipal sustainability planning. These processes involving construction of shared truth through dialogue, rather than debate (i.e., participatory democracy), an assets-based approach (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003), and collaboration can contribute to individual- and community-level transformation (Barge, 2006).

Shared understanding is constantly being constructed and reconstructed (Pearce, 2004). Challenges to facilitating community engagement include finding a balance between

accountability mechanisms with those that foster trust (Centers for Disease Control/ATSDR Committee on Community Engagement, 1997) and between group momentum and community interaction (Nelson, 2001), and addressing what might be unrealistic expectations (Pratchett, 1999). Power relations might also influence who participates and how they do so as well as the role of government, where applicable (Kelly, 2005; Reddel & Woolcock, 2004). Scholars have argued that consensus-based models can be illusory and that conflict is a necessary impetus for change (Ivie, 2002). Dialogic processes also usually entail representation (Webler & Tuler, 2000), management of competing concerns, and trade-offs (Barge, 2006).

This study is an examination of communication processes in municipal sustainability planning, in particular the creation and reconfiguration of social networks (Giddens, 1984) to create sustainable dialogic practices and so relies on social network theory (Monge & Contractor, 2003). In this situation, participants use existing social capital and add to what exists, which facilitates transmission of information and knowledge (human capital; Cuthill, 2003) and promotes a relational public sphere through communicative action (Benhabib, 1992; Habermas, 1981). Through community-level influence based on the establishment of new norms and communicated through social networks, changes at other group levels and in individuals are facilitated (social ecological perspective; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Gregson, 2001). The result can be a change in the direction desired by community representatives or a reaction against the new norms (Oetzel et al., 2006). Influences can be top-down, bottom-up, or same-level interactive (McLeroy et al., 1988).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Case Study Method

This study of communication processes in municipal sustainability planning is exploratory in nature; therefore, a qualitative research methodology was considered appropriate (Creswell, 2009). Comparative case studies are developed to examine communication processes used by two Alberta communities involved in the development of MSPs (Silverman, 2005). The ultimate aim is to produce a comprehensive account of the communication processes through inductive analysis of multiple data sources, both documentary and narrative sources (Creswell, 2009). The case study method is valuable in illuminating how a process takes place (Yin, 2003) and provides the breadth and depth of study that will allow for the possibility of applicability and generalizability to other communities (Stake, 1978/2000).

Including more than one site adds scope to the study. Even if sustainability aims are similar between communities, challenges in communication will differ depending on local geographical or political factors (Head, 2007). In Alberta, for example, both urban centres and municipal districts are adopting the MSPs, which require communication using different scales. Differences might also relate to specific topics being addressed, existing levels of community engagement, current governance situations and related multilevel coordination practices, other historical or practical factors, competing worldviews (Jepson, 2004), or need for capacity building, either individually or on a group level (CDC/ATSDR Committee on Community Engagement, 1997; Druskat & Wolff, 2001; Head, 2007; Pelletier, Dion, Tuson, & Green-Demers, 1999). “Vastly different issues emerge in developing effective approaches for various spatial scales; thus, what is useful and effective at a local or micro level may not be easily

transposed to a broader provincial or subregional level” (Head, 2007, p. 446). In other words, the deliberations cannot be separated from their context.

Data Collection and Analysis

Documentary materials. A literature review encompassed academic and government written reports on communication processes related to community sustainability planning primarily in North America. Also included in the textual analysis were documents produced by the communities or consultants who worked with them related to their sustainability planning, such as summaries of community input, reports, timelines, and PowerPoint presentations. Formal documents for textual interpretive analysis include the MSP guidebook (AUMA, 2006) and microsite,⁴ federal and provincial government documentation, meeting minutes, process explanations, media stories, newsletters, and reports. Informal records include researcher notes. Advantages of textual analysis include that it is unobtrusive, written using participants’ language, accessible, and reflective (Creswell, 2009). It also provides triangulation with interview data (Silverman, 2005).

Interviews. Through interviews with key participants in this process from the two communities and from the AUMA as well as analysis of documentation produced over the course of the pilot projects, communication methods, processes, successes, and challenges will be highlighted that will be useful both to the communities involved as they continue to monitor and develop sustainable processes and to other communities that might be embarking on or in the process of similar community planning. Interview participants were selected purposefully (Creswell, 2009) and included those who have been involved in the planning process.

This study included interviews with 12 individuals (with two interviewed at the same time), for a total of four interviews from Chauvin (5 participants), five from Olds, and two from

AUMA personnel. The interviews were conducted from October to December 2009; two were conducted over the telephone; the rest were in person, held at a location chosen by the participant. Semistructured interviews centred on the communication processes used at different phases of the MSP. Two interviews were conducted by telephone; the rest were conducted in person at a location chosen by the participants. They were audiorecorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher, supplemented by interview notes taken during and immediately following the interviews (Kvale, 1996). The interview guide is in Appendix A. Data were coded and analyzed with the assistance of QSR's NVivo 8 software.

Strategies for Validating Findings

In qualitative research, methodological issues relate to reliability and validity. Reliability was promoted through audiorecording and verbatim transcription of interviews and the use of constant comparison in analysis. I transcribed the recordings personally, allowing me to stay close to the data (Keogh, 2005).

Most interviews were conducted in the local setting, with triangulation based on interviewing multiple respondents on the same topic and on interviews and textual analysis, member checking, the use of thick description in reporting the findings and the inclusion of discrepant data, maintenance of an audit trail through ongoing note taking, and being transparency on my biases and methods of participant selection (Creswell, 2009; Hanson, 2002). The fact that both communities are undergoing the same process promotes transparency in reporting by limiting the amount of information needed by readers to understand the issues involved (Hanson, 2002).

Other issues related to interviews include a possible tendency of interviewees to assume shared understanding, level of recall of past events, and the fact that the relationships among

local participants are ongoing, so recent encounters or occurrences might influence perceptions of past events (Hanson, 2002). Furthermore, as participants have a financial interest in the MSPs and possibly personal relationships with other actors, they might be reluctant to discuss issues that might be perceived as negative.

Ethical Issues

Research participants should be protected from harm, embarrassment, or other negative consequences. A primary potential issue relates to preserving anonymity because of the small sample size. The fact that the study includes more than one site involved in the same processes is an aid to preserving anonymity (Hanson, 2002) as, for example, more than one coordinator was interviewed. During member checking, interviewees will be given the opportunity to request that specific quotes not be included in published reports (Creswell, 2009). Informed consent included advising potential participants of their right to withdraw from the interview and to refuse to answer specific questions. Potential benefits to participants include an opportunity to reflect on an ongoing community process and to generate ideas and options for future actions. This study was reviewed and received approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board.

I did not receive funding from the AUMA. Before beginning the study, I clarified with them ownership of the data and where they are to be kept, and articulated the independence of my findings from the AUMA. The AUMA will receive a copy of my report, but I will not provide them with the names of individual participants or advise them if participants withdraw from the study. I will also advise them of study limitations due to the nature of the study. The initial contact letter and the consent form are provided in Appendixes B and C.

Summary

Because of the exploratory nature of this study, a qualitative research methodology, specifically case study, was employed (Creswell, 2009). Two sites, Chauvin and Olds, Alberta, were included in the study to enhance generalizability. Multiple sources of data were analyzed, including scholarly literature, documents produced by stakeholders in the municipal sustainability planning process, and interviews with 12 purposively selected stakeholders from the two communities and from the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. This study conforms to research ethics guidelines set out by the University of Alberta.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Sustainability planning is meant to be ongoing and iterative; from a social ecology perspective, it should develop momentum, and the complexity of activities involved will be a function of the purpose that serves as a driver (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This was enacted in the MSPs by creating a community vision and then developing actions to move the community closer to that vision (AUMA, 2006), requiring shared meaning, which is arrived at through communication.

Communication is central to community-based construction of meaning and to overcome values-based differences (Littlejohn, 2006), including those related to social and environmental issues. Although participants from both communities described relatively little conflict in the MSP process, they noted the importance of communication and difficulties that had arisen as a result of breaches in communication. Chauvin, with a population in the 300s, is closer to having the possibility of public sphere discussion in the sense of the earliest model, the agora, where all citizens can be involved in the decision making (Goode, 2005). In Olds, on the other hand, with a population of around 7,000 and a catchment area that includes about 40,000 people who use the town's services (Town of Olds, 2008), direct interaction between all stakeholders is impractical. Participants described that "communication was good" within their respective communities (e.g., Chauvin 1), although several participants at Olds, noting community growth, considered that the town was nearing or had reached the point where new communication methods would be needed.

This chapter begins with a description of partnerships that facilitated community MSP processes. This is followed by an overview of the municipal sustainability process as presented in the AUMA (2006) guidebook along with a description of how it was implemented in Olds and

Chauvin, including the local individuals and groups involved. These local agents are then described in more detail. The chapter ends with a discussion of communications methods used by the two communities at various stages in their MSPs.

Partners in Sustainability Planning

Participating agencies in the MSP pilot projects included the AUMA, The Natural Step in the case of Olds, and Alberta Community Development, which provided facilitators for both communities. Participants described the smooth operation of the partnerships:

I'll tell you I thought in the beginning: O my gosh, we're getting federal funding, we've got Natural Step Canada coming in . . . we've got AUMA and council, the municipal. And I thought: Oh, we're getting into a real bureaucratic nightmare here; we're going to get bounced and pulled. That never happened. We were left alone to produce it, and there was never any interference from any one of those entities. Help, yes. Interference, never. (Olds 4)

Provincial and federal levels of government participated as partners indirectly through the provincial Department of Municipal Affairs and federal infrastructure funding and coordination of sustainability planning criteria with the AUMA.

Alberta Urban Municipalities Association

AUMA spearheaded the project, providing funding for consultants and/or arranging for CDOs, and developing the guidebook that delineated the five-step MSP process and that was used by the pilot communities. Its guide incorporated the The Natural Step (TNS) approach in developing an MSP according to the economic, environmental, societal, cultural, and governance dimensions of community sustainability. It developed its own process without government funding, although for their pilot project they had a full-time person seconded from Alberta Environment to “assist and kind of coordinate the pilot process” (AUMA 1), but linked to the federal and provincial programs by making sure that their tools and resources would be accepted

by both. This involved providing both levels of government with updates. The role of AUMA staff was to build the guidebook and tools for sustainability planning, consulting with members in the process to make sure it worked for them. The materials were presented and refined at another president's summit and in a workshop, after which pilot communities were selected (AUMA 1). Although federal and provincial government initiatives were the initial drivers of the MSP process, the AUMA's independent work provided momentum by affording direction and tools that the government funding did not. Furthermore, in both communities the MSP process was raised as a possibility by individuals involved in civic administration, and discussions initially took place between local government and, primarily, the AUMA. As such, implementation was a top-down process that led to changes at the local government and individual levels (social ecology perspective; Hawley, 1950). In terms of the Arnstein's (1969) model, the process was initiated with informing, followed by consulting on the guidebook, with a later aim, through the CDOs at Chauvin, for example, to collaborate with and ultimately empower the citizens.

AUMA sends a weekly digest notice to members of upcoming events; in addition, they directly contacted communities that they "knew had a strong interest" (AUMA 1). This participant described that for communities under 5,000 in population planning "hadn't had a focus for a long time," although some communities had begun initiatives independently. This participant noted that this work was taking place during a time of strong economy in Alberta, so local human resources were often scarce because of high wages available elsewhere. Also identified as possible obstacles were fear of change and lack of unity on a local council, between the council and the mayor, or between community groups and council, which might make it difficult for communities to move forward (AUMA 1). The AUMA had more communities apply

to for the pilot program than they had positions for because of the linkage of the MSP with federal/provincial infrastructure money and because of primarily human resources available to the pilot communities through the AUMA. Selection of the five communities was based in part on size and geographic location as the AUMA wanted a variety of communities represented in the pilot. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the network involved in developing the AUMA MSP process and guidebook.

Guidebook. The steps in the municipal sustainability planning process as set out in the AUMA guidebook are described below, in the section entitled The Municipal Sustainability Planning Process. Participants in both Olds and Chauvin described following the five areas of sustainability as set out in the AUMA guidebook and outlined above (e.g., Chauvin 1). Participants noted, however, that they adapted the information in the guidebook to their needs, for example not taking the steps in order (Olds 1).

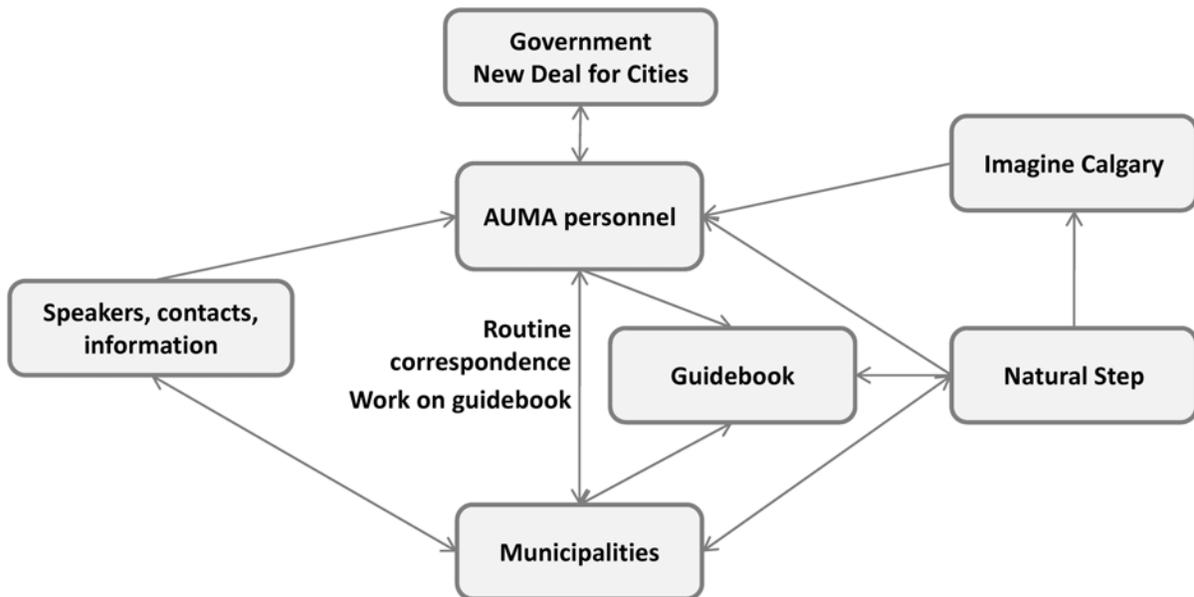


Figure 4.1. Alberta Urban Municipalities Association network.

Human resources. Other resources, including human resources, from the AUMA were described by participants as valuable. The AUMA also arranged for involvement of community development officers from the Alberta Ministry of Municipal Affairs (now Culture and Community Spirit), who were involved with the villages (see below). The towns used staff personnel and/or hired consultants (AUMA 1). The Alberta Environment secondment served as a hub for information, and in the current projects communication goes through the provincial coordinator, although there are regular meetings and conference calls, and some of the local coordinators have set up web pages and online contests to promote interest in the community (AUMA 1).

AUMA staff felt that it would have been better to have someone in place who was at least half time would have been preferable: “We really were dependent on the community development officers, which was excellent. They did a great job. But they almost wore themselves out, I think. It was, like, they have other jobs as well” (AUMA 1). Communication was informal between AUMA and the pilots, and AUMA 1 noted “the pilots have almost become, taken a bit of a leadership role and mentoring role. Especially, there’s a couple that have taken that on more than others” (AUMA 1).

An AUMA participant described the AUMA facilitating Olds’s communication with other communities and outside expertise (AUMA 2). This participant described the event as raising Olds’s profile outside the community as this was the first Canadian-based tour. This participant also was involved directly at Olds, giving an address at the dinner associated with the charrette. He saw the AUMA role as brokering information to the pilot communities by using their wider network but noted that at the time there were far fewer resources available to it was possible to know much of what was going on. He described this role ending abruptly when his

formal role with the AUMA ended. He also described some attempts at establishing partnerships with other organizations such as the International Centre for Sustainable Cities in Vancouver that did not work out.

Other resources. AUMA assisted by providing model press releases or model backgrounders or newsletters, which some communities used and others did not (AUMA 1). This participant considered that smaller communities would probably find word of mouth effective.

Alberta Community Development

Alberta Community Development, which was under the provincial Municipal Affairs and Housing ministry at the time, became involved through an agreement with the AUMA. The CDOs' role was that of facilitator, helping plan consultations, connecting the community with outside expertise, where needed, and, in the case of Chauvin, providing education to the leaders and within the community. CDOs with rural experience were assigned to Chauvin. The CDOs in Chauvin connected the village with individuals and organizations with expertise in areas such as recycling, alternative business models, and grant writing (Chauvin 1). They first tried to identify and locate resources within the community, and then looked for free resources (Chauvin 1).

The Natural Step

Participants at Olds, which was also a Natural Step pilot community, found that organization's online self-paced course valuable, although a participant noted that it does not accommodate different learning styles (Olds 3). Those at Chauvin found the program, which required high-speed Internet access, to be cumbersome and "difficult to take from here down to here" and so hard to make "saleable at the local level," not as usable as it could be (Chauvin 1), although they used the AUMA guidebook, which was modelled on TNS principles.

A participant commented on the unchanging principles of TNS but that “every community can make it unique to themselves” (Olds 3). Another noted the importance of understanding for change: “Once you understand the principle, it’s just amazing how compelling it becomes to make a difference and do something different” (Olds 4). AUMA participants expressed that there was still work needed in Alberta, that not all communities were yet convinced of the “value of going through a comprehensive process” (AUMA 1) and that the “cultural change . . . has not spread like wildfire,” that a “tipping point” had not been reached (AUMA 2). This participant saw this as an issue at the provincial as well as the municipal level and posited, although noting progress, that reaching the tipping point might be a long process.

The Municipal Sustainability Planning Process

The AUMA guidebook (2006) describes a five-step process.

Phase 1: Structuring the Planning Process

This stage involves the formation of citizens’ advisory groups (CAGs). The primary Phase 1 actor is the local council. The goals are to identify a project manager and community champions, create citizens’ advisory groups (described in more detail below), and develop a process for planned development (AUMA, 2006), which will shape the operating context (Aranoff & McGuire, 2001). Activities might include

- *activation* of participants and stakeholders, involving recruiting, nurturing, and integrating but also, if necessary, replacing “weak links”;
- *framing*, that is, establishing the operating rules, influencing group values and norms, and altering the perceptions of the network participants by introducing new ideas and

encouraging participants to look at the problem differently (Goffman, 1974; Klickert & Koppenjan, 1997; Termeer & Koppenjan, 1997);

- *mobilizing* community members, including capacity building for individuals traditionally excluded from decision-making (Druskat & Wolff, 2001); and
- *synthesizing*, find a way to blend participants with conflicting goals, perceptions, and values (Aranoff & McGuire, 2001).

Phase 2: Creating a Shared Understanding of Sustainable Community Success

At this stage the community adopts sustainability principles, and leaders gather community input on vision, with the goal of developing a vision statement, which is then celebrated (AUMA, 2006). Issues here might relate to the fact that *sustainability* can be conceptualized in many ways (Suwa, 2009), the effect of communication infrastructure (e.g., Internet access) on information availability, and the uncertainty of scientific knowledge and the role of “experts,” particularly in relation to the future (Bruckmeier & Tovey, 2008).

Public input process at Chauvin. In Table 1 I have outlined the MSP process at Chauvin, and Figure 4.2 shows the planning network. The community development officers (CDOs) organized the first public meeting as a social function at which community assets were mapped and identified “some things that you wouldn’t change no matter what . . . [and] some things that . . . maybe need to be re-looked at” (Chauvin 1). Council attended educational workshops and planning sessions before input in writing was solicited from the public at large, which, again, took place primarily at a social function, a community-wide barbecue hosted by a major oil and gas company, where citizen advisory group and CDOs solicited input while people stood in line for food (Chauvin 1). The input was diverse, and participants felt that it was representative of the community.

Sometimes we're intimidated. You know, if somebody's been with a group a long time, how do we even—do they even want to hear from us? Well, I think that was completely blown away when they started coming to groups like this saying: “We want your input.” (Chauvin 4)

The solicitation of public input as shown in Figure 4.3 aligns with Tyler's (2003) model of public consultation activities: information dissemination → *public input* → decision → implementation → evaluation. Tyler has presented different model involving increased public participation by increasing public input: information dissemination → *public input* → design → *public choice* → decision → implementation → evaluation.

Table 4.1

Timeline for Municipal Sustainability Planning at Chauvin

Date	Event
November 21, 2006	Applied to be a pilot community for MSP
January 2007	Selected as a pilot community, with the pilot to run from March 2007 to April 2008
March 25, 2007	Order in council legitimized MSP in community
March-May 2007	Orientation: selection of citizens advisory group, meetings with village council, CAG, CDOs, AUMA representatives
April 19, 2007	Council resolution, commitment to MSP
April-October 2007	Education: External training through AUMA, training within community by CDOs, including a workshop on the Five Pillars of Sustainability, May 10
June-October 2007	Public input phase involving village council, CAG, and CDOs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wine and cheese social event with PowerPoint presentation - Talisman barbecue - Input session at school - Survey and input solicitation at restaurant
October 26-27, 2007	Community planning weekend: consolidation of community input by community members with facilitation by CDOs
November 2007	Start of implementation phase
April 21, 2008	Wrap-up session at which pilot communities discussed MSPs and showcased accomplishments

Source: Outline for the report “*Shaping Chauvin's Future*”: *Chauvin Municipal Sustainability Plan as of April 16, 2008*, provided by a participant.

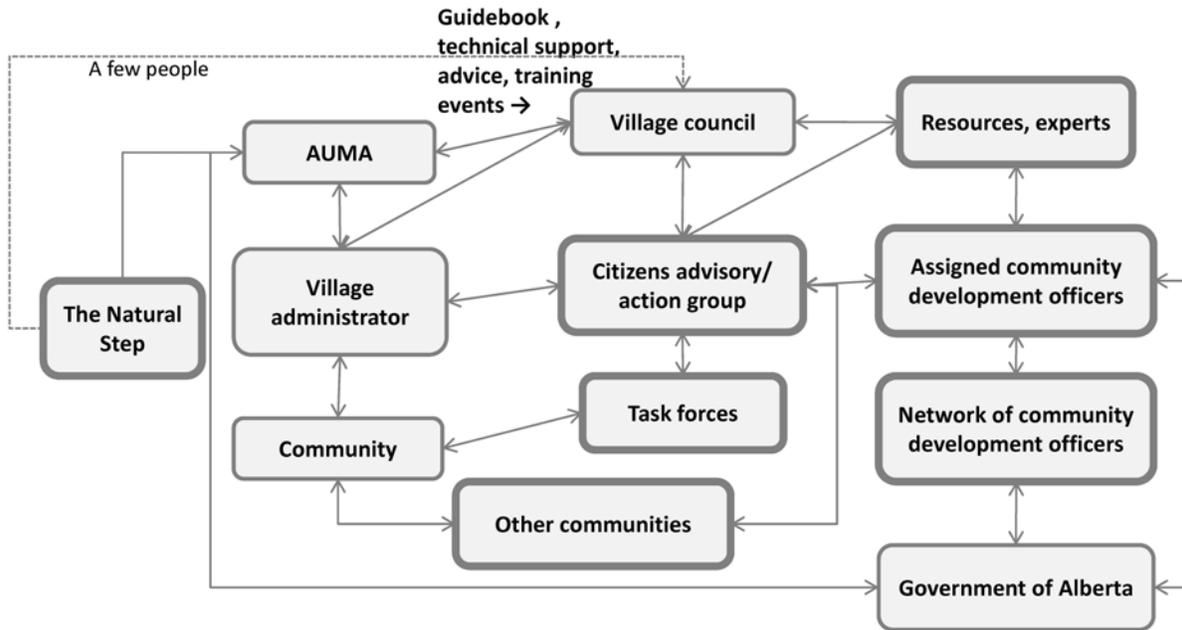


Figure 4.2. Village of Chauvin municipal sustainability planning network. Text boxes with heavy outlines indicate additions to the network as a result of municipal sustainability planning.

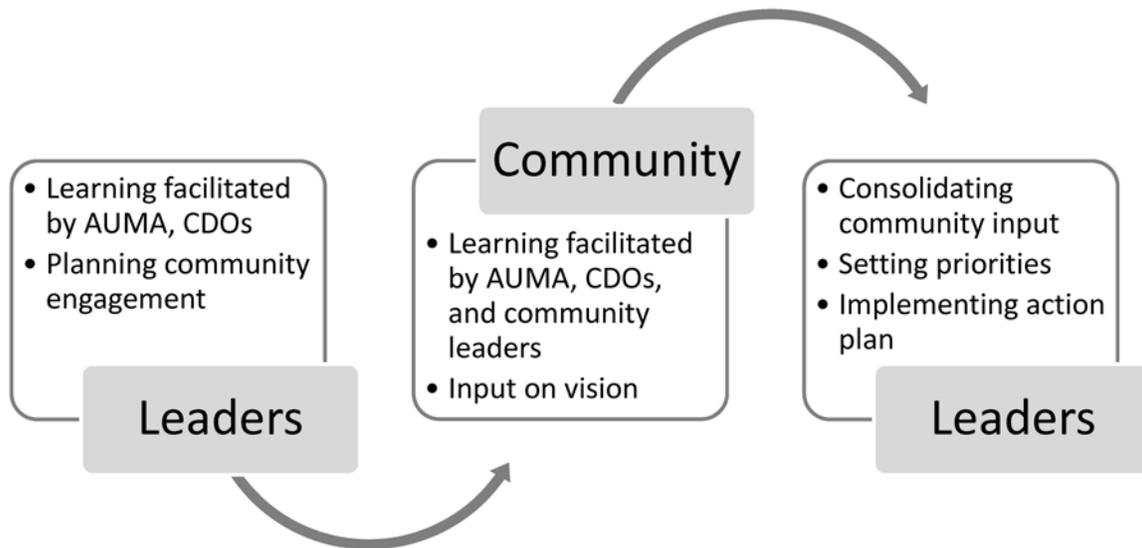


Figure 4.3. Municipal sustainability planning process for the Village of Chauvin.

Public input process at Olds. In Table 4.2 I have outlined the process at Olds, and Figure 4.4 shows the planning network. As at Chauvin, education at Olds preceded community input, the formal aspect of which focused on facilitated sessions (Olds 1). Participants described an iterative process involving “a mini set of phases on every issue that we had in front of us” (Olds 1).

Participants described starting with the Olds Institute, where the citizens’ advisory group (the Olds Advisory Group for Sustainable Living [OAGSL]) was created, then working with a consultant before going out into the community, focusing on age groups and existing social organizations to reach a broad cross-section of people (Figure 4.5). As at Chauvin, input ranged from the “basic and simplistic” to ideas that were “a real stretch” (Olds 4). Because public input sessions also included an educational component, an accomplishment of the community input sessions was increased awareness of the process within the community (Olds 4). Input was gathered without evaluation and without decision-making as important for community buy-in (Olds 5). The process was designed so that input would be received and then analyzed, with a focus on listening to all voices; participants described little conflict at these sessions: “It’s not discussed and decisions made—‘It’s right or wrong’—and evaluated. It is inputted. It is input. It’s all recorded. You get to record it yourself” (Olds 5). This participant described listening as a skill requiring expertise and training (Olds 5).

Table 4.2

Timeline for Municipal Sustainability Planning at Olds

Date	Event
November 2006	Olds applied to the AUMA pilot program
January 2007	Olds was accepted as a pilot community
February 2007	Education started with presentation to town council by AUMA pilot project coordinator Town council introduced pilot program to Olds Institute for Community and Regional Development (OICRD) board, and OICRD committed to being involved in municipal sustainability planning (MSP)
March 2007	Natural Step training for facilitators Local Government Administrators Conference The Natural Step (TNS) e-learning completed Olds Advisory Group for Sustainable Living (OAGSL) established with terms of reference and mandate
March 5, 2007	Open house to introduce consultant David Laing Meeting generated two documents, <i>Olds MSP Development Process Timelines</i> and <i>Resources Available for MSP Process</i> . Responsibility given to OICRD. Approved in motion
March 26, 2007	Town council approved motion giving OICRD responsibility for creating the MSP
Mid-April 2007	MSP process developed, presented to town council (end of Phase 1)
April 2007	Training and planning sessions for facilitators Community vision data analyzed
May 12-June 14, 2007	Phase 2: gathering community input
June 2007	Town council in a resolution adopted the AUMA guidebook philosophy, resolved to make decisions on sustainability principles
September 20-22, 2007	Charrette
November 2007?	Draft of report prepared, presented to OICRD
February 28, 2008	Olds Strategic Sustainability Plan adopted by town council
April 21, 2008	Wrap-up session at which pilot communities discussed MSPs and showcased accomplishments

Sources: Supporting documentation produced through MSP process, including *History of the MSP Process* (Document 1200); *Olds Municipal Sustainability Plan Development Process Timelines* (Document 1218); and *Olds Strategic Sustainability Plan*. All were retrieved from the AUMA MSP microsite (<http://msp.auma.ca/Overview/Resources/Resources2/>).

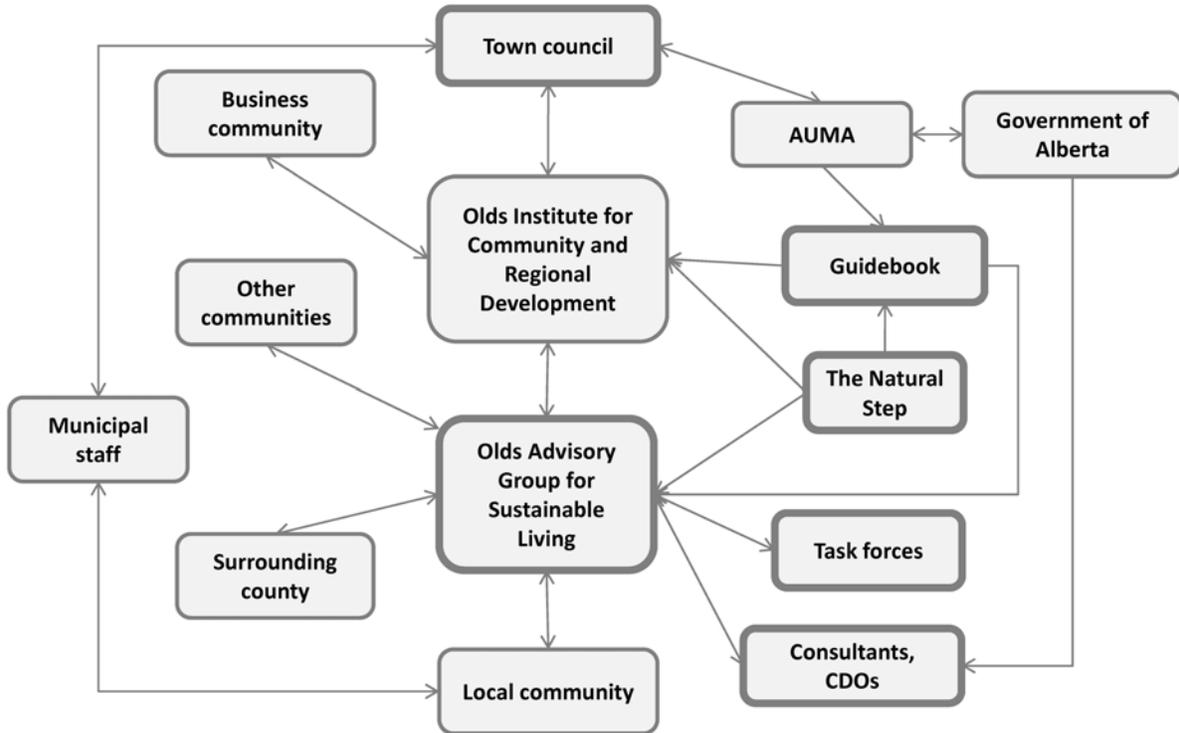


Figure 4.4. Town of Olds municipal sustainability planning network. Text boxes with heavy outlines indicate additions to the network as a result of municipal sustainability planning.

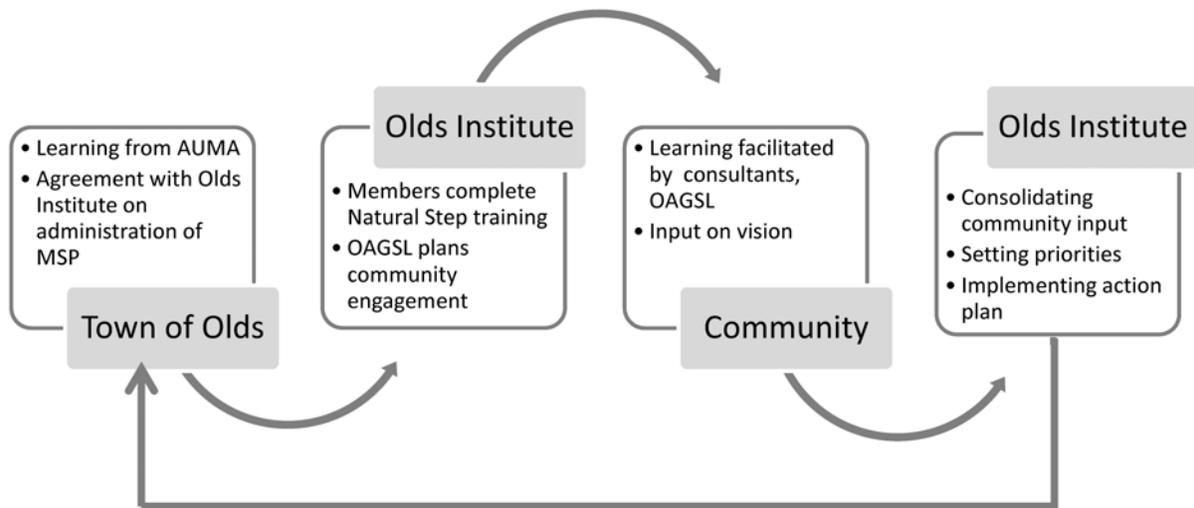


Figure 4.5. Municipal sustainability planning process for the Town of Olds.

Changes in networks. In Figures 4.1, 4.2, and 4.4, the AUMA, Olds, and Chauvin networks are outlined, with additions to preexisting networks shown by outlining of text boxes. This can only be an approximation as particularly informal relationships might not have come out in the written or interview data. Interactions between different contexts are shown clearly, and in most cases, introduction of members into a different context, for example, The Natural Step input to AUMA on their guidebook was made through an existing contact; in this case the president of AUMA and municipalities were familiar with TNS because of its involvement in ImagineCalgary. This can serve to increase the effectiveness of the input within the new context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Following is a discussion of some issues identified by interview participants.

Phase 3: Determining and Analyzing Issues Related to Community Success

Public input was analyzed and consolidated, or synthesized (Aranoff & McGuire, 2001), at a workshop, or charrette. At Chauvin a weekend workshop facilitated by the CDOs was attended by about two dozen people, at which the cards created at the barbecue or other sessions, such as at the high school, were reviewed and sorted into categories based on the five governance areas outlined in the AUMA guidebook. Participants felt that although only about a tenth of the community was present, the rest were represented in the data that had been collected (Chauvin 4).

In Olds sensemaking surrounding community input (Weick, 1995) was handled first through the charrette, which took place over the course of a weekend and involved Olds and regional representatives at which the information collected was analyzed collectively. Participants from surrounding communities in addition to town elected officials and businesspeople were invited to participate. The Natural Step and AUMA also had representation.

A participant referred to this as a “verification step” (Olds 4). Following this weekend, two volunteers, assisted by several others, took over the final step after they found the first process too unwieldy: “We didn’t edit, but we consolidated. We got common links and common things that were mentioned in all of them, and then there were distinctions in the age categories” (Olds 4). The volunteers followed the format set out by the AUMA but still found the process, particularly maintaining consistency, difficult (Olds 5). The text was reviewed by other committee members and then submitted to the OAGSL for further refinement and approval. The outcome at this phase is a clear description of where the community is and where it wants to go. Once strategy areas have been identified, task forces are created and trained on specific issues related to community sustainability, such as affordability and housing, heritage, or water.

Phase 4: Action Planning

The community now identifies initiatives that should move them toward sustainability but be flexible enough for future community leaders to be able to build on or adapt. Initiatives should also generate enough economic return to fund future activities. At the time of this study, communities were involved primarily in this stage.

The process used in the AUMA model is the TNS “backcasting from principles”: using the four sustainability principles as the framework for envisioning a sustainable future as well as the lens through which the current situation is assessed, and then identifying steps that would move the community strategically toward sustainability (James & Lahti, 2004). This process, is useful for complex problems, when major changes are needed, when the dominant trends are contributing to the problem, when a problem is largely a matter of externalities, and when the time frame is long (Robert, Daly, Hawken, & Holmberg, 1997). Common barriers include the

scale, complexity, and open-endedness of the situation; funding challenges; preemptive risk aversion; and uncertainty (Manning, Lindenmayer, & Fischer, 2006).

For backcasting to be effective, all participants must understand the future images and be willing to work with them. Provocative images might be effective at stimulating radical changes in thinking, but participants might find them unattractive. As well, brainstorming might not lead to comparison of viewpoints or analysis of problems. Other risks include too much flexibility (anything is possible given a long enough timeline) or rigidity (nothing is possible) (van de Kerkhof, Hisschemoller, & Spanjersberg, 2002).

Phase 5: Ongoing Monitoring and Implementation

This includes periodic reviews and reporting to and celebrating with the community (AUMA, 2006).

Joining the Network

Volunteers

Both communities relied on volunteers to do most of the work, although Chauvin had the CDOs as resource people, and Olds had municipal staff and, at various times, CDOs and hired consultants. Participants described the importance of key individuals (e.g., Chauvin 1). In the case of Chauvin, the CDOs knew the community and so knew the individuals involved. A CDO said that in other cases, they might rely on their own network in the Community Development branch who could identify key community individuals. Olds relied on volunteers once the MSP was complete (Olds 1). During the MSP community input phase volunteers at Olds connected the OAGSL to the community and to the municipality (Olds 2, Olds 4).

At Chauvin, it took time to identify people with specific skills through asset mapping (Barge, 2006). Recruitment took place primarily by word of mouth, with “treats and gimmicks”

(Chauvin 2) included and events that were strictly social in nature and would not require attendees to commit to something (Chauvin 2). Community members could choose areas to be involved in based on interest. A participant commented on the challenge of getting the community involved (Chauvin 2). Another noted that ongoing recruitment is done informally, primarily through personal invitations and said that it has provided an opportunity for newcomers to become involved (Chauvin 3).

At Olds the volunteer base was largely “baby boomers” (aged 45 to 65, approximately), who used their network for that age group to solicit input (Olds 1). Olds participants also noted newcomers’ involvement in the sustainability group (Olds 1), including taking on leadership roles (Olds 4) and individuals becoming involved because of specific personal interests (Olds 3). Discussions were under way at the time of the interviews in late 2009 on how to expand community participation (Olds 5).

Both communities’ participants described the involvement of newcomers in the MSP and implementation. A CDO described the openness to new ideas of the leadership at Chauvin as providing a welcoming atmosphere that was

very valuable for especially new residents that had something that they were maybe a little scared to give or share as a result of: some people in small towns . . . see things the same way all the time, and sometimes that’s a hard way to break into for others coming new to the community. (Chauvin 4)

However, participants in Chauvin also described some conflict between newcomers, who did not understand some emotional attachments to local heritage, requiring ongoing negotiation; for example, discussion surrounding changing Chauvin’s mascot, which had been created at a time when Chauvin hosted a large softball tournament. On the other hand, newcomers were seen as bringing a different perspective from that of long-time residents as they noticed things that might be taken for granted by the community: “When somebody new comes into the village and

talks about it, it makes them stop and think: Well, yeah, we have got stuff here” (Chauvin 2).

Participants in Olds described people moving to the town because of opportunities that have grown out of the sustainability/strategic plan (Olds 3).

Key Individuals

A participant described needing “to have one person who has the ‘passion’ and knows the heart of the community” (Chauvin 4). Interviewees from both communities described key individuals who took the initiative to present the possibility of the MSP to town or village council and who kept the process moving.

Town/Village Council

Participants from both communities described the importance of council support (e.g., Chauvin 1, Olds 1). In Chauvin the council stayed directly involved to a greater extent than in Olds because of the role of the Olds Institute as separate from town administration and because of the size of Chauvin. The CAG included council members, which facilitated communication between the two groups but would have added to the workload of members on both committees. The AUMA also underlined the importance of council and community working together.

I know for sure that no town council wants to find themselves halfway through a process and the council is filled with angry citizens with a backlash because you’ve gone off in a direction that they didn’t like. . . . It’s an iterative process, so we need both involved to really make this successful. (AUMA 2)

A participant described a situation elsewhere where disunity between the citizens’ advisory group and local council prevented them from moving forward. (AUMA 1)

Citizens’ Advisory Groups

Citizens’ advisory groups or action groups (CAGs) were set up in both communities to coordinate the task forces related to the various strategic areas. The CAGs had similar functions

in Chauvin and Olds, educating the community and receiving and processing community input. Later, they coordinated the individual task forces. At Chauvin it reported directly to village council. At Olds it was under the Olds Institute for Community and Regional Development (OICRD), a nonprofit organization founded in 2001 to coordinate the economic initiatives of the Olds Agricultural Society, the Olds & District Chamber of Commerce, Olds College, and the Town of Olds (OICRD, n.d.). It is “a network of over a hundred volunteers” (Olds 1), a stand-alone organization that has “a mandate for community and economic development . . . with the Town of Olds” (Olds 2).

Olds Advisory Group for Sustainable Living (OAGSL). The OICRD, “a nucleus of intellectual capital” (AUMA 2), managed the sustainability planning process through the creation of a committee consisting of “the combination of elected officials, community representatives, and staff that thoroughly represented the dimensions of sustainability, which are environment, social, governance, culture, and economy” (Olds 1). Following presentations from the AUMA, the OICRD decided that they would take on the MSP, becoming an AUMA pilot, and used a grant to hire a consultant to facilitate the process (Olds 4). The Natural Step also made a presentation, and Olds became a pilot for them in Canada also. The OAGSL, reporting to OICRD, was responsible for handling the process and documentation of sustainability planning. When the advisory group was set up at Olds, leadership “strategically positioned people who had expertise” (Olds 1). The sustainability group and task forces report back monthly, following every meeting, to the Olds Institute, according to one participant, who chaired a task force. Responsibility was divided among the town, the advisory group, and the OICRD, with OICRD as the steward of the plan, OAGSL doing the reporting, and the town “owning” (Olds 2) the plan. The CAG at Olds managed the formal public input processes, but members had also been

selected because of their existing networks, which they could use for informal input (Olds 1). Participants mentioned the need for strong communication between the CAG and local government both from the government and the advisory group perspective (Olds 1). Since the start of the MSP process, leadership of the sustainability group has transferred to younger people, described by a participant as individuals for whom sustainability “is just their life.”

Chauvin Citizens’ Advisory Group (CAG). Chauvin’s citizens’ advisory group was made up of volunteers, as is the village government. In addition to relying on people who stepped forward, the community tried to target recruitment toward individuals with specific skill sets and those who might not usually step forward.

A participant noted that some of the skills took time to emerge as new people moved to the community, heard about the project, and wanted to become involved. For example, a person who could prepare PowerPoint presentations emerged toward the end of the process (Chauvin 1). Asset mapping, described previously, led to participation not only from the “usual” public participants but also from others who might have different skills (Chauvin 4). An example is a resident who was aware of migratory routes for rare birds in the area of Chauvin. The CAG’s role evolved, taking over responsibility from the CDOs, a condition necessary for development of local capacity (Bronfenbrenner, 1979):

After we got by the first stage, the early stage where we were involved more directly doing some of the work, the citizen advisory group took on that role, which is the sustainable way to do it. You talk about sustainability. We are now far from that project, but this group is still putting out education sessions and still doing a lot of work that’s long after we’re gone. (Chauvin 4)

Task Forces

In both communities task forces were created for each goal identified in the charrette/workshop. Task forces, which reported back to the CAG monthly, were created around focus areas identified at the weekend workshop at Chauvin and helped to underscore feelings of

personal responsibility, “making sure they live and breathe it, they feel the weight of it, they feel the responsibility and ownership from week to week to month to month” (Chauvin 4). The task forces included council members, which also facilitated communication (Chauvin 3).

Community members who participated in the weekend workshop signed up for possible areas, with priorities, in which they might be interested in working (Chauvin 2). A participant described the difference between being on a task force and involvement in other types of organizations: “If you go to the arena board meeting, you have to be a president or a secretary. You have to do something. You have to work, work, work, work. Being on a task force is mostly working your mind.” (Chauvin 2).

A participant noted that a “personality conflict” arose because of lack of communication between the CAG and council and that the village was in the process of increasing the CAG’s accountability to council (Chauvin 3).

Participants in Community Input

Both communities considered the response rates to solicitation of community input to be good, although some people in both communities were identified as difficult to connect with using means such as advertising or relying on committee members’ formal and informal networks; for example, younger community members who work away from Chauvin (Chauvin 1), and people with summer cottages in the surrounding area (Chauvin 3). At Olds, in general, young adults were also identified as “underrepresented.” The original advisory group consisted largely of “baby boomers,” and this group was the easiest to reach initially (Olds 5). Also identified as difficult to engage were “stay-at-home moms” (Olds 1), whereas Chauvin participants described how one such woman remained engaged by focusing on activities that could be done over the phone.

People who participate in public deliberations tend to believe beforehand in the value of incorporating different viewpoints (Halvorsen, 2003). Individuals who participate in community dialogues tend to be longer term residents with higher socioeconomic status and who occupy central positions in social networks (Laurian, 2004). Laurian also found trust and resignation to be predictors of nonparticipation, although other researchers have found trust to be positively related to participation (Barge, 2006). Possibly, different scholars are using different definitions of trust; for example, trust in local administration might lead to lack of participation because the citizen sees no need to be involved, whereas trust in the existing processes might encourage participation because the citizen believes that his or her input can have an impact. Existence and extent of bonds of group identity have also been linked to participation in community deliberation but might work to make deliberative groups homogeneous or open to only certain types of participants (Ryfe, 2002).

Input from all generations. Both communities actively sought input from all generations. Olds planned their sessions around generational clusters and assumed that other descriptors, e.g., ethnicity or disability, would be covered in the age groupings. One participant indicated that it would be difficult to target these people as they might not want to be identified, for example, as being on social assistance (Olds 1). Another referred to concerns about “political correctness” (Olds 4) in targeting specific groups. Public input was elicited, first, from five generational clusters and then two groups of Town of Olds staff. Going out and speaking to nonprofit organizations such as service clubs was used to bring people in (Olds 4). Chauvin participants also described working to get input from a range of participants, including the school, and the farming and oil and gas communities (Chauvin 4). Both communities involved

school-age participants. Olds participants referred to mobilizing younger adults around specific issues and to challenges in getting younger people involved.

With respect to older community members, Chauvin held meetings at the seniors' drop-in centre (Chauvin 3), and in Olds the committee went to seniors' residences (Olds 2) and the legion (Olds 5). Personal contact was found to be the best way of communicating with this population: "The older generation, one on one and phone calls, you know, talking works better" (Olds 2). A participant commented on particular challenges in visioning among older people because "they were living the preferred future already" (Olds 4), an impediment to backcasting (van de Kerkhof et al., 2002).

Participants from both communities also talked about accommodating community members with disabilities.

Business community. Through the OICRD businesspeople in Olds were naturally connected with the advisory group on sustainability. Because the oil and gas industry is a major contributor to the economy, Chauvin "wanted to make sure all the oil and gas people were contacted" (Chauvin 4); this same participant noted concerns in the oil and gas community over the inclusion of the term *environmental* in the question asked of the community.

Community groups. Both communities contacted service clubs. Some participants found this useful, but one noted challenges in working some of these groups because of their focus only on specific issues and described having "to get them thinking outside of their own little interest and open up and look at it on a global perspective" (Olds 4).

Local Networks and Beyond

The MSP process involved both leveraging existing networks and creating new ones. Early additions include AUMA, Natural Step in the case of Olds, and the CDOs or consultants who helped start the process. As noted earlier, initiation of the MSP in both communities relied on key individuals who approached council and the AUMA. Participants in both communities described input from numerous people and organizations (see Figures 4.2 to 4.5). A participant at Olds, for example, described ongoing creation of partnerships and action plans (Giddens, 1984), for example Olds College and private training organizations locally and the University of Alberta involvement in distance education, necessitating, according to one participant, a mechanism for ongoing communication with the community because of changes, something Olds was in the process of working out at the time of the interviews (Olds 5).

Both Olds and Chauvin added “nodes” to and reconfigured their existing social networks (see Figures 4.2 and 4.4) to facilitate the flow of information, whether for education, community input, or in reporting progress or challenges in implementation of the community vision. Citizen advisory and action groups were created within a reporting structure, and relationships were developed or strengthened with surrounding communities and more remote ones, with individuals or groups with specific expertise, and with other communities involved in sustainability planning.

Communications Methods

Participants from both communities described specific methods of communication, and both noted the need for and use of multiple methods. At Chauvin methods discussed by all participants included word of mouth and the use of the school newsletter, which one participant said “complemented each other” (Chauvin 4). Olds participants reported reliance on word of

mouth and the Olds Institute personal networks but also on a “fairly extensive advertising campaign” (Olds 1) that involved the town website, newspaper, and radio in advance of the public sessions, although a participant noted that once community input had been elicited, there was “not really a whole lot of exposure” (Olds 1) other than information on AUMA and Natural Step websites or presented at AUMA-sponsored meetings. Several Olds participants noted the need for different ways of making contact for ongoing community participation. Despite this, one noted (Olds 1) that these methods would require funding and that the advisory group would have to allocate resources strategically.

Face-to-Face Contact

Participants described the importance of face-to-face communication (“lots of legwork, lots of voice work, lots of word of mouth”; Olds 3), both one-on-one interpersonal and, more in the case of Olds, presentations to community groups, schools, seniors’ residences, and service clubs. Face-to-face contact has been identified as increasing the potential for individual development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Some Olds participants noted the limits of word of mouth, however, as the community was growing (e.g., Olds 1). The CDOs commented that relying on word of mouth without a process such as asset mapping might result in some people being overlooked. They also noted the importance of creating word-of-mouth opportunities. At Olds the advisory group leveraged the social networks of its members and of the Olds Institute members (about 100 people in a town of 7,500) to contact community members (Granovetter, 1982).

The situation at Chauvin is closer than at Olds to agora, where unmediated communication is possible between villagers (Goode, 2005), which was the primary method of communication. Chauvin participants expressed ease of communication because of the

community's size as being an advantage in planning processes: "They just have a natural web, aided by being a small community" (Chauvin 4). However, the villagers had also begun to see themselves as part of a larger community, requiring different communication methods.

Social functions. Chauvin's information gathering and dissemination were centered on social functions, in which the CDOs participated, for example by bringing food to a potluck. One participant noted: "Anything that's a community meeting in a small rural community is a social function. So we wanted it to be very light" (Chauvin 1). These functions were felt to reach people from Chauvin but might miss the people in surrounding communities. Olds participants described social aspects in terms of leveraging existing networks such as the OICRD. However, they did note initiatives undertaken as a result of the MSP as helping to connect people through shared activities such as meeting at the recycling centre.

Getting people talking. Several participants noted the element of surprise in getting community attention, for example when MSPs were discussed on the radio (see below, under technology). With respect to the collection of input on the community vision, a participant said:

People actually commented long after it was over: "I cannot believe that your whole, the CAG and you guys came out and sat in line and stood in line and had us filling out those cards." You know, that's still talked about, even to this day. And even at Irene's restaurant, when we were in there. I mean, that surprised them, and that communication method worked because it spread like wildfire about what the project was about and what was going on. (Chauvin 4)

Print Media

Olds has a long-established newspaper, and a reporter, Paul Frey, attended meetings and wrote regularly on MSP progress. Initially Chauvin CAG relied on the school newsletter, which was "really their only public announcement system" (Chauvin 1), but had recently begun publishing a quarterly newsletter out of the town office (Chauvin 2). Both communities used

inserts in utility bills. Chauvin participants also noted the use of posters which a participant considered less effective than other methods used.

Chauvin's primary means of gaining written input on the vision for Chauvin was by handing out cards and asking people to fill them in using words, pictures, or both (see under community input).

Surveys

In Chauvin, surveys were tried among students at the library and were also conducted in the restaurant to gain input from people who might not live in Chauvin but who use the services (Chauvin 1). Chauvin's CAG also "did a census, and along with the census we had a questionnaire to see if people were interested" (Chauvin 2). However, council did not want to rely on surveys because they felt they might not reflect the views of the entire community (Chauvin 4). This participant noted that community leaders asking for input "need to be risk takers and not be afraid to listed to the public and get real input," a condition that this participant felt was met at Chauvin.

Technology

At the time of the study neither community had high-speed Internet access to homes or private businesses. Technology included PowerPoint presentations, by development officers in education (Chauvin 1) and by the communities to showcase their accomplishments at AUMA workshops (Chauvin 2). Both communities used their websites to provide information, although in the case of Chauvin, the information was aimed primarily at outsiders. Participants from Olds, which is in the process of rolling out high-speed Internet, mentioned increased use of technology in the future, including Internet applications such as Twitter and Facebook, and the new community television station, particularly to reach younger people.

Participants from both communities found radio effective. Olds participants described the value of OAGSL members providing education to the community on the radio and radio announcements of public input sessions bringing participants in. Chauvin CAG members were also interviewed on local radio because of a particular announcer's interest in sustainability planning, and several participants noted that the unusualness of Chauvin being featured on the radio helped to promote word-of-mouth communication (Chauvin 3).

Summary

Communities implemented an ongoing and iterative sustainability process by creating a community vision, developing and implementing actions, reporting back to the community, and soliciting further input. Communication is central to the construction of shared meaning, and Chauvin and Olds, with different population sizes and situations, had different communication needs and possibilities. Direct communication among all community members was a possibility in Chauvin but impractical in Olds, for example.

The AUMA, The Natural Step, and Alberta Community Development directly participated in and helped to shape the MSP process, with provincial and federal governments involved indirectly through funding or development of sustainability planning criteria. The five-step process developed by the AUMA incorporated TNS principles and entailed

1. Structuring the planning process with the support of community development officers and/or consultants, including the recruitment of volunteers, identifying key individuals, creation of an advisory group, and educating and gaining commitment from local government;

2. Creating a shared understanding of success, involving solicitation of community input, accomplished by canvassing the full community in Chauvin and through workshops aimed at a wide demographic range at Olds;
3. Determining and analyzing issues related to community success through workshops or charrettes;
4. Action planning, using backcasting from principles developed in the previous steps; and
5. Ongoing implementation and monitoring of progress, including reporting to the community.

Both communities used multiple methods of communication, including word of mouth, social functions, and interpersonal networks. In Chauvin, word-of-mouth was complemented by asset mapping to ensure that local skilled individuals were identified. In Olds an advertising campaign involving the town website and the local newspaper and radio was aimed at reaching the larger community. Participants mentioned the importance of the element of surprise in communications to get people's attention. Because of the size of Olds and its catchment area and the fact that it was in the process of implementing its Fibre to the Premises (high-speed Internet to homes and offices) initiative, participants were considering for future engagement the use of social networking software, whereas Chauvin participants saw the Internet and its applications as of more use currently in communication with "outsiders."

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The previous chapter contains a description of the five-step process of municipal sustainability planning as developed by the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association using The Natural Step principles. This process includes education alongside the solicitation of input to create shared language and so the possibility of a shared community vision. In this chapter I will discuss the communication processes involved in citizen engagement as evidenced in the Town of Olds and the Village of Chauvin in their municipal sustainability planning, as well as the challenges faced but also the movement toward community transformation. I will then describe the move from planning to action and close the chapter with a discussion of the communities' plans for ongoing review of their vision and action plans and possible future research.

Communication and Engagement

Knowledge Translation and Mobilization

Participants in both communities emphasized the importance of preparation by those leading the initiative. At Olds this meant putting Institute members through The Natural Step course. Most Olds Institute members, including the board, completed the program, which a participant described as significant in overcoming community disagreement and spreading the message (Olds 4). As well, at Olds part of the process for leadership was learning a new governance model and “trying to help them understand what the true meaning of citizen advisory group was according to the AUMA guidebook” (Olds 1).

At Chauvin, the council had sessions with the CDOs and workshops. Participants from both communities noted that leaders needed a level of comfort in understanding to be able to

promote sustainability concepts both one-to-one and to a larger group such as a service club or in a radio interview (e.g., Chauvin 4, Olds 2, Olds 4).

Chauvin participants considered contact with others an important part of their learning but noted the difficulty of being a fairly remote community with respect to getting to workshops and visiting other communities. The CDOs connected them with individuals and organizations that could provide them with information or expertise they needed. As well, they attended workshops, such as those hosted by the AUMA for pilot communities, which provided opportunities to exchange ideas with other communities (Chauvin 3).

Part of the role of the facilitators was to help the community develop these “weak ties” (Granovetter, 1982) that give access to information and other assistance unavailable within the community. Participants at Olds described making contacts with, for example, the then mayor of Whistler, B.C. In addition to looking at what other communities had done, input was also gathered from people in surrounding communities and areas, for example Mountain View County and Chinook’s Edge school division (Olds 4). AUMA tried to facilitate local communication (AUMA 2). One participant noted possible limitations to what can be learned from another community because of the uniqueness of each situation (Olds 4).

Participants from both groups described education strategies aimed at increasing understanding of sustainability principles and indicated that there was adequate information: “Maybe if we’d have had more information, that might have scared everybody away” (Olds 2). This participant described “an overload of information to digest.” Another commented that there is much more information available than when the AUMA initiated the MSP process (AUMA 2). A participant felt that the in-community education was the more effective because it reached more people.

Education of the wider community. Participants from both communities described the importance of informing the public alongside soliciting input on the community vision (see Tables 1 and 2). Education preceded community input at Chauvin because leadership wanted the community to understand and think about the issues before giving their views (Chauvin 4). This participant described educational material included in the school newsletter but also noted “crossover” between education- and action-focused sessions (Chauvin 4). The CDOs’ direct involvement later came to an end, but “the education part was handled by the group really well by that time” (Chauvin 4).

The community input sessions combined education (“We were actually teaching them about what sustainability was for the first hour and a half of the session”; Olds 1), so that, as noted previously, a by-product of the input sessions was increased awareness and understanding of sustainability issues.

Technical understanding. Participant described a need for understanding coupled with scientific expertise and data, which might be lacking even in a community the size of Olds. For example, a participant expressed that without technical analysis of a water supply, people’s input will be solely based on personal opinion (Olds 1).

Ongoing education. New knowledge is a critical factor in creativity (Sawyer, 2007). Participants at Chauvin described the shift from education by CDOs to community members educating each other: “They were making the connections to maybe if somebody wasn’t seeing something. . . . They were educating each other” (Chauvin 4). This same participant observed that “the group got more creative and more creative as we went along” (Chauvin 4).

Participants at Olds also described an ongoing process of community engagement and buy-in to the vision involving discussion.

“Why do we need to have even and odd watering days? We have lots of water.”
 “Well, let’s sit down and talk about how much water we have. It’s not all about us today, now, and our water. It’s about your grandchildren and their children and what kind of a community do you want them to grow up in? Do you want them to have what you have today?” And then they sit back and think about it a little more. (Olds 3)

This participant described ongoing education processes for newcomers and outside developers becoming involved in the community, for example, through civic administration when individuals or developers bring forward possible initiatives (Olds 3). Others described a need for ongoing education in the wider community on issues such as protection of farmland, indicating consideration of the community within the larger context (Olds 4). Again, the importance of an informed leadership was underscored and of engaging with “learning discussions” (Olds 4) to help change thinking. Informal engagement with community members was seen as part of the ongoing education process; a participant used the example of discussing car engine idling with a stranger at a gas station (Olds 4).

Challenges and Obstacles

The challenges and obstacles to engagement included commitment and recruitment of volunteers, communication, governance, and issues related to time and funding.

Commitment. Participants in Olds discussed the need for commitment on the part of citizens, a commitment promoted through direct involvement in the process (Olds 4). Similarly, Chauvin participants described the community’s process of taking ownership of sustainability planning (Chauvin 3).

Attrition and recruitment of new volunteers. Participants in both communities described attrition in participation over the time of the MSP pilot. Referring to the workshop at which the data were consolidated, a Chauvin participant noted, “I think there was 28 of us at the peak time, and that dwindled throughout the weekend” (Chauvin 2). Reasons for leaving cited by

participants included the “size of the work commitment” and “some people thought where the directions they were going, some of the areas turned out maybe not to be in a line with where they wanted to go.” Participants described many volunteers that had been central to the MSP process as having moved on or settled on one task force to be involved in.

Participants described people’s hesitancy at becoming involved. “You always get a job, so people are very leery of stepping in there. And these are jobs, without a doubt” (Chauvin 2). Another participant described the importance of seeing results: “You need to see the connection between the goal and an action so that you have enough motivation to go to future gatherings to make that goal happen” (Chauvin 4). This participant considered that attitudinal changes in society have resulted in decreased community participation, that in small and large communities people no longer felt obligated to participate. However, with respect to the MSP, this individual added: “I think this whole process has made people see the value and why you want to be, not as an option, that you need to be out there” (Chauvin 4). Similarly, participants at Olds expressed: “People will participate if they want to” (Olds 1). A participant thought the nature of the work involved in an MSP relating to governance, such as writing policies and procedures and discussing roles and responsibilities, was unattractive to some volunteers. As well, many volunteers do not want to take on leadership roles (Olds 2). In addition, one described challenges resulting from bringing new people in mid-process, who wanted to go back and revisit earlier discussions (Olds 4).

Communication and size. Chauvin found informing the community relatively easy, but Olds, which had grown to about 7,500 by the time of this study from 6,500 at the time of the MSP, was finding that “word of mouth that used to work ’cause we were small enough is no longer working, and we’re having to bring into play more sophisticated ways of transferring

information” (Olds 1). Another Olds participant commented, “You know, you’re always going to have the people . . . that don’t listen to the radio or local radio stations, and they don’t read the paper, but they use the website, and they get water bills” (Olds 3).

Governance. Participants from both communities discussed issues of governance and communication between CAGs or task forces and local government. Participants also described the challenge of reaching consensus within a limited time frame of the pilot study (Chauvin 2). An Olds participant described consensus building as the “biggest barrier to overcome” and opined that they would not have been able to produce the plan, at least in the given time frame, “if we hadn’t given it to two or three people to put it together” (Olds 4).

Funding. Chauvin received \$500 from the AUMA toward the cost of attending workshops, which a participant described as still “expensive for us small villages,” in addition to assistance from the CDOs, who secured resource speakers and assisted with advertising and composition, printing, and distribution of reports. Olds, similarly, received assistance in the form of community development officers from the AUMA. The consultant was paid for partially (\$10,000) by the town and partially (\$10,000) through a donor (Olds 1).

Funding was an issue for both communities; the available resources had drawn Chauvin to the AUMA pilot program in the first place (Chauvin 3). The AUMA pilot program facilitated MSP processes but required that participants look at these processes in new ways, including incorporating fund provision into their local plans (Chauvin 4). It was also a consideration in subsequent planning. Sustainable processes required consideration of funding sources for any projects proposed. At Chauvin, the CDOs also tried to locate information and resources that were free (Chauvin 1). Some participants expressed concern about sustaining the process started without ongoing funding (Olds 3, Chauvin 3).

Participants described changes needed for them to accomplish their plans. For example, in Olds preservation of heritage buildings was identified as one of its focuses under the culture pillar of sustainability. This resulted in the development of an Alberta Main Street project.⁶ A participant commented: “It would not have been possible unless we were looking at a totally out of the box, different model for funding resourcing. And that’s been done. Feeling very proud of that” (Olds 2).

Time. Almost all participants said that it was difficult to complete the MSP within the time frame allotted, particularly given the fact that most involved were volunteers. CDOs, as well, had other commitments in addition to work at Chauvin, which was compounded by the time spent in travel because of the location. Participants in Chauvin noted that village councillors are not paid, so their commitment to this process added to their unpaid workload (Chauvin 2). Participants also referred to time required for education. One commented, “That two-year period took a lot out of me. It was constant meetings and meetings and meetings” (Olds 4). Reflecting on the process, however, several Olds participants felt that it probably could not have been speeded up (Olds 4, Olds 5).

Travel. Related to time and funding considerations, because of its location Chauvin faced an addition challenge of having to travel to workshops and meetings. For example, a late snowstorm kept most council members away from an AUMA workshop.

Expertise. Participants from Olds, which is much larger than Chauvin and has a college, an organized business community, and a larger number of people with a wider range of backgrounds, expressed less need for outside resources (Olds 1). In general, participants from

both communities described limited or at least finite resources and, therefore, decision-making and prioritizing on allocations (Olds 1). One participant referred to a need for scientific expertise and monitoring methods that at that point were unavailable (Olds 1).

The Language of Community Transformation

The study communities demonstrated changes resulting from, and creating, communication across contexts/levels (Oetzel et al., 2006), in this case involving federal, provincial, and local governments, agencies such as AUMA and Natural Step, local committees, and individual citizens and citizens' group. Figure 5.1 shows some of the connections cited by participants as providing opportunities for both intralevel and orthogonal (interlevel) dialogue that might promote cultural change. The AUMA process for sustainability planning, based on TNS principles and guidelines, ensured intercontextual dialogue with an aim of promoting changes at multiple levels: individual, municipal, and, ultimately, global.

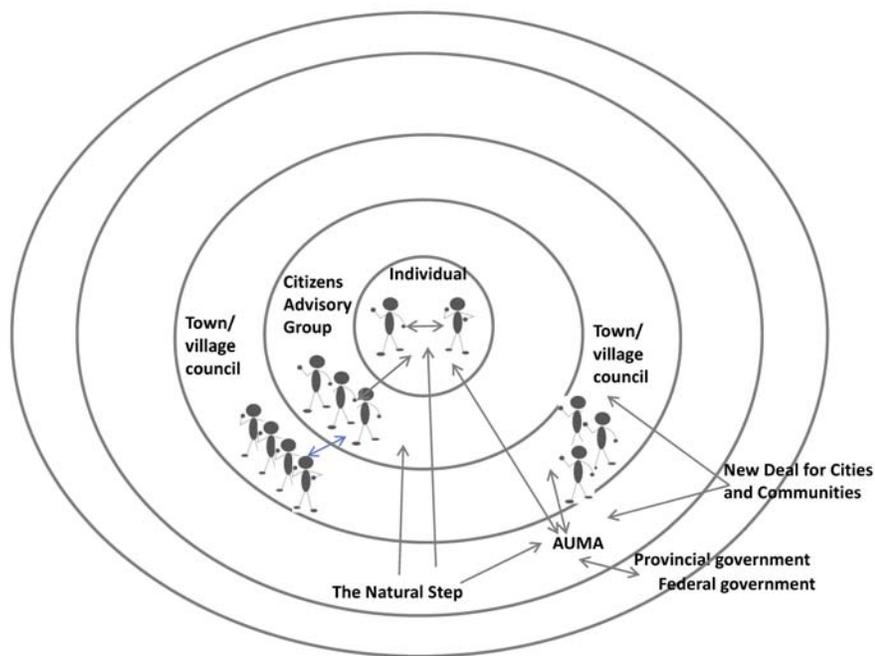


Figure 5.1. Social ecology model for municipal sustainability planning processes.

In moral (i.e., normative) issues, “the language of the two sides will differ, and where similar terms are used, they will probably have quite different meanings” (Littlejohn, 2006, p. 396). The result can be mutual lack of understanding, resulting in frustration and entrenchment of positions (Littlejohn, 2006). Participants described struggling to develop common language (coordinated meaning; Pearce & Cronen, 1980), which required adapting TNS and AUMA terminology. At Olds this took place at the charrette (“We found what worked for the community”; Olds 3) and later when a few individuals prepared the final report (Olds 4).

A participant noted that some communities, such as Thorhild, ran into difficulties in the MSP process because they went into it thinking of sustainability only in terms of economic development (Chauvin 1). Another reported that many Chauvin council members also entered the process from that viewpoint but understood the concepts more broadly after attending AUMA workshops, which were instrumental in this change in thinking (Chauvin 2). CDOs helped promote understanding by linking the concepts of sustainability to things the community was already doing, for example with respect to concerns over their water supply and quality, which was a factor in the village’s decision to apply for the pilot program (Chauvin 4). When the Chauvin council, in turn, went to the community, they decided to include the word *environmental* in the communications to underscore the environmental side of sustainability (Chauvin 4). Their framing of sustainability to include environmental aspects (Goffman, 1974), however, resulted in a negative response to the project from the local oil industry, according to one participant (Chauvin 4).

AUMA personnel expressed the importance of language use in intercontextual communication.

I've always been cognizant of that larger cultural narrative, economic narrative, and try to phrase this stuff in ways that they will be messages that people could hear without being threatened. So I hope that those messages and framing of the issue has resonated enough that we've given enough fertile soil for a few seeds to start sprouting and bringing forward fruit. (AUMA 2)

Community participants also described simplifying language to be inclusive of people, for example, with developmental disabilities (Olds 2).

A participant described how having a "name" helped to publicize the project: "It kind of got the name: that environment project. [laughed] But, on the other hand, if that's what it takes to get people understanding there's a project, then that's, you know, a good thing" (Chauvin 4).

Olds participants also noted the ongoing struggle to create shared language: "That's an ongoing process to get that kind of culture" (Olds 2). Another observed that this language had to be consistent with TNS and AUMA terminology as well.

The thing we did find was the language had to be universal. We all had to be on the same lingo. We all made a real hard effort in being able to have that universal language. Because once you started to wordsmith and change the wording in what you were working on, it became a different meaning. When you're working with The Natural Step and the AUMA, we found a common word that worked for everybody, and we stuck to that. So commonality in wording. (Olds 3)

A participant involved in preparing Olds's Strategic Sustainability Plan (OSSP) remarked on the value of having several people with different backgrounds writing because "we would work hard to choose words that we could both work with" (Olds 5). Another noted problems where common language had not been established: "We would go to their community group meeting and we did a little survey. It didn't work out very well because they didn't understand the questions" (Olds 1).

Making Changes

A participant described the importance of the shared vision to plan implementation (i.e., motivation for momentum; Bronfenbrenner, 1979): “We’ve got to build an answer that’s acceptable to everybody; otherwise, nothing’s going to happen” (Olds 5). This would be a significant issue in terms of personnel turnover, as noted by a participant (Olds 3). This participant noted the importance of having The Natural Step as a common denominator and of having input from the region in addition to from the town. In Olds the MSP was later incorporated into the town’s strategic plan. Participants described a resulting change in town processes, for example having guidelines to discuss with potential developers (e.g., Olds 4) and changing decision-making processes at the municipal level as decisions on proposals are debated in terms of the strategic plan, based on the MSP (Olds 3). Other participants described, similarly, how civic deliberation had become less confrontational in Olds and between Olds and the municipal district, and that town council starting to defend decisions based on Natural Step principles: “It doesn’t mean that some people aren’t unhappy some of the time, but there’s no armed revolts or anything like that going on at all” (Olds 5).

Participants in both communities described the importance of the process in changing what people think and talk about.

I remember one fellow came to me and said: “You know, we’re talking about some things here that we don’t generally talk about in our community, which I think is good. (Chauvin 4)

When we started to roll out the plan, there was a level of familiarity and understanding in our community across all sectors with the language, the principles, the concepts, and it made sense to them. So that’s one of the learnings that we picked up that we didn’t anticipate, which is normal when you enter into a journey like that. The learning is all in the process, not in the final product, of course. And that’s always been the case. (Olds 4)

Looking at the Bigger Picture

Backcasting begins by creating a vision for the future. Participants described thinking about their community in new ways and described the emergence of a shared vision out of the community input. A participant considered that the long-term nature of the visioning facilitated collaboration among diverse people. A Chauvin participant remarked on the change in Chauvin's leadership to looking at the bigger picture and generating more ideas (Chauvin 4).

Participants also described their communities' status as area leaders. For example, Olds personnel who had been central to the town MSP are now involved at the municipal district level in their planning. Participants involved in both communities found that they had begun considering their town/village as part of a larger community and had started pursuing joint projects and efforts. Chauvin had pursued a tourism project jointly with the Saskatchewan government (Chauvin 1). Participants in both communities described new cooperative ventures with their neighbours and others under consideration, such as a seniors' residence that would serve not only Chauvin but also surrounding communities or a recycling partnership with Wainwright (Chauvin 2).

An Olds participant considered the need for partnerships, in particular federal funding (Olds 3). Another noted involvement of the county and the school division through information provided to them and input sought. This participant saw those involved from the county as, in turn, being able to inform others in their network:

They are getting updates all the time, too, and that's really important so that at those organizations, somebody comes and asks questions there, these people can say: "We know about this, and we're involved in this, and this is what they're doing." (Olds 5)

A participant from Olds commented on the contextualization that resulted from working with a plan, which might enable intercontextual influence (Oetzel et al., 2006): "They're starting

to see: ‘Oh, that’s how we fit into the whole town, or our whole community.’ Not the town, not the corporate town, but the whole community” (Olds 5). A participant described the process of the change in thinking, from local to adjacent communities to district-wide (Chauvin 4). Some issues were seen as too big for a small community to handle in the short term, such as the water issue at Chauvin, which would involve the local gas companies because industry is a heavy user of water (National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, 2010) and “take more of an advocacy, lobbying piece” (Chauvin 4).

Referring to sustainability planning, an Olds participant remarked, “Olds is now helping the region to do the same thing as a region” (Olds 1). Beyond the region or even Canada, some Olds participants referred to their community’s place on the world stage, a worldview encouraged by The Natural Step (James & Lahti, 2004). International focus was evident in Olds’s hosting of an international youth leadership conference (Olds 3), invitation of internationally known speakers by the people working in the food safety area, and their Fibre to the Premise (home Internet) that has been central to their sustainability plan. This view was more apparent in Olds, where many volunteers completed The Natural Step program and which is located fairly centrally in Alberta and is in the process of implementing home- and business-based high-speed Internet service, than in Chauvin, where few completed the TNS modules.

Pushback

Although the AUMA MSP process promoted dialogue at the condensation stage among advisory group members rather than at the input stage, participants mentioned the importance of listening to negative input and noted that “it was discussed” at the workshop (Chauvin 3).

Participants from both communities described an overall lack of conflict in the MSP process, describing debate rather than conflict or disagreement. If conflict did occur, it tended to

be at the implementation rather than MSP stage, related to issues such as (at least perceived) lack of follow-through (Chauvin 1), who is responsible for implementation (Olds 5), the effectiveness of a planned action (Chauvin 4), or, for example at Chauvin, disagreement between a newcomer and long-time community members over the community's mascot (Chauvin 2).

At the community input stage, Olds leaders aimed to anticipate and meet opposition by inviting those that they expected to be opposed to the education and input sessions: "Though they didn't necessarily agree, they understood what was going on and felt, I think, secure enough in the process that was occurring to not be in opposition any longer" (Olds 1).

At Olds, again in the implementation phase, a participant described division of responsibility being set by the town and a few Olds Institute people, resulting in what this participant felt to be inappropriate divisions of responsibility (Olds 5). Several participants referred to "challenges between the town and the institute on roles and responsibilities, lines of communication" (Olds 2). Participants referred to the importance of communication to avoid conflict at the implementation stage, for example in the fair trade issue at Olds (Olds 2).

We took the fair trade directly to council, and that's how people learned about it rather than first going to the groups who might feel that they're impacted. So you really do need to stop and ensure that everybody is aware of what you're doing and how you're doing it and why you're doing it before you take it forward. Otherwise, they start pushing back. (Olds 3)

Another noted the role of local government in legislating some changes, for example through fines related to garbage or recycling and legislation related to land development (Olds 3). This presupposes council support.

A participant at Olds, which is in the process of extending sustainability planning from the town to the municipal district, noted that opposition that has now surfaced at the regional level.

I don't know if you're watching the newspapers, but we've got a renegade, runaway vigilante group in the county that are fighting the land development that the county is doing. The county is looking at putting a 50-year land development plan in place, and some of the old guard who are really entrenched in the belief that: "If I own it, I can do whatever the hell I want with it, and I own four sections of it, and I'm going to do whatever the hell I want. No county is going to tell me that I can't do whatever I want with that land." But it's a minority group. I called it a vigilante group that's just reacting to what's necessary in the world. (Olds 4)

From Vision to Action

Participants from both communities described accomplishments and project implementations under all five Natural Step pillars of sustainability: social, culture, governance, environment, and economy. A participant stated that it was important to start actions quickly to maintain motivation of volunteers, who face time constraints (Chauvin 4). Communities described not trying to implement all plans at once and, following the AUMA guidebook and TNS recommendations, picking the low-hanging fruit, such as the toilet rebate program at Olds. Those at Chauvin described adapting the vision to current reality, at times having to scale back desired plans (Chauvin 2). Olds participants described challenges in moving from planning to implementation. One observed that implementation under town administrative control was easier than community-based implementation (Olds 1). Both communities evinced many of the "bridges" identified by Connelly et al. (2009) that could help to span the gap between visioning and implementation, such as community leadership, proactively involving the public, management of engagement cycles, and the use of external actors such as consultants or CDOs.

Ripple Effects

Participants noted ongoing negotiation and discussion resulting from implementations of initiatives. For example, at Chauvin the system for recycling had to be revamped because the centre was not being used properly (Chauvin 2). At Olds the town provided a toilet rebate for

citizens switching to low-flush toilets, but then had to figure out what to do with the returned toilets: It makes your mind work harder. That's all" (Olds 3).

Measuring and Celebrating Success

Participants from both communities noted the successes (Olds 3, Chauvin 2). They noted ongoing reporting of achievements rather than direct monitoring (Chauvin 3), and an Olds participant reported that they did not have a set of indicators for defining success (Olds 1). This participant noted the challenges in reporting given the decentralization of efforts and responsibility (Olds 1). At the time of these interviews, late 2009, Olds was in the process of setting up a process to record achievements, which would apply to partnerships between the municipality and businesses or other organizations (Olds 2). Participants expressed a level of comfort with the notion of ongoing work.

There's always room for ongoing improvement. So we're on a journey of continual improvement, and we're never going to be done. So it needs to always have that total eval and ongoing, you know: how are we doing? (Olds 2)

They observed that 2010 is a renewal year for the MSP, so recording of work done will be built into that (Olds 3).

Celebrating achievements is featured in the AUMA MSP process. Chauvin participants were more conscious of celebrations that Olds participants were, although most from Olds described the charrette as including an "inspiring" (Olds 5) dinner.

Reporting Back to the Community

At Chauvin monitoring progress and reporting back to the community was done face to face at meetings (Chauvin 2). The CAG reported back to the community at the same barbecue where a year earlier they had collected community input (Chauvin 1). Task forces report monthly to village council (Chauvin 1). They also had a potluck dinner, at which "we didn't attract a

whole bunch of new ones, but I think there was about four, which was four more than we had before, so it was great. And it was a really nice evening. It was no training, and you didn't have to take on a position or anything. You just had to come and enjoy yourself" (Chauvin 2).

To report back, Olds "documented it all, again, on the website. One participant noted,

We're still not that big. We're really only about 7,500, and it's very visual, what's happening in the community. And, again, still word of mouth and radio. We have our website, the Town of Olds website. You know, we don't seem to be having a problem about reporting back to the community. People are picking up on it.
(Olds 3)

As well, implementing programs like toilet rebate programs, where citizens received \$50 toward a low-water toilet, and changing water meters served to publicize environmental initiatives.

Revisiting the Plan

At the time of the interviews Olds was "in the report card stage where we're going to go back and say: 'Okay, you said this was the current reality. You wanted this. And here are some of the things that happened. You know, how do you feel about it now?'" (Olds 2). Olds is renewing its plan in 2010, so at the time of the interviews in late 2009 planning was beginning. Chauvin participants also noted plans for connecting with the community through regular drop-in sessions (Chauvin 2), although no plans for active solicitation of input were mentioned. Although plans had not been made yet, participants described a similar process to the first one, a combination of educating and soliciting input (Olds 5). This participant observed a challenge in change processes: that it can be easier to focus on details.

Community input was solicited in such a way as to minimize potential conflict: All input was received and was analyzed and distilled later by leaders and generally self-selected volunteers, who engaged in dialogue, which can lead to community building (Barge, 2006). This reporting stage might provide an indication of community acceptance of the vision created and,

perhaps, an opportunity to engage in debate on the chosen course. With a community cohort having followed through the process previously, rather than having it led by “outsiders,” comes an opportunity to involve more community members through personal contacts and so help develop the momentum needed for a sustainable process (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Future Directions for Research

In both communities, following the AUMA process for sustainability planning, input was solicited from the wider community without discussion or debate and then synthesized by advisory group members. In 2010 both communities are going back to their communities, reporting progress and soliciting further input and feedback on progress and direction. A follow-up study involving those still active as well as members of the larger community might help to identify the extent of community awareness, understanding, and changes in attitudes as a result of town/village level changes in practices. As well, participants from both communities described nonparticipation of some community members as well as citizens who withdrew from participation. Interviews with members from both of these subgroups might illuminate communication processes and methods that might facilitate participation as well as providing insights into processes related to the social networks.

Summary

Successful community engagement required preparation, including education of the leadership. At Olds this involved primarily the TNS online course; at Chauvin community development officers facilitated this activity. Participants were conscious of implementing a new governance model, which required understanding on the part of the leaders. The leaders also needed to be ready to educate the community. Learning also came through attendance at

workshops, discussions with other communities, and input from experts as needed, which was facilitated at Chauvin by the community development officers. However, participants also noted the uniqueness of each community. Overall, they indicated that they had enough information, although some participants at Chauvin noted the challenge of attending distant workshops and one participant noted an unavailability of some specific kinds of technical expertise. In both Olds and Chauvin, education on sustainability issues was a component of the community input process. In both communities the aim was to have community members educate each other, and it was understood that education, often informal, and engagement would be ongoing both within the community and in relation to newcomers, whether individuals or businesses.

Participants in both communities described challenges, including gaining the commitment of citizens, recruitment and retention of volunteers, the time involved, learning a new governance model that involved consensus building, and funding. Olds also noted changes in communication needs as the town was growing. Chauvin participants reported challenges related to travel for workshops and meeting because of distance to travel, winter road conditions, and the fact that its council members are volunteers and so must perform these duties on their own time with only partial reimbursement for expenses. They also described a greater need for outside expertise than did participants from Olds, which has a college and a business institute.

Communication across contexts, which was built into the AUMA five-step process, was intertwined with community change processes (Oetzel et al., 2006). Through this communities developed shared language, which took time, effort, and outside input and required terminology not only acceptable within the community but also compatible with that used by the AUMA and TNS. Consciousness of language facilitated intercontextual communication as well as inclusion of community members with language-related needs. A catch-phrase also helped to create an

image of the MSP in the community. The MSP process also led to changes in what citizens thought about and discussed.

Participants described a shared vision facilitating implementation and resulting in changes in administrative processes, for example in guidelines given to developers and consultation with surrounding communities in the case of Olds, resulting in better intercommunity relations, and incorporation of the MSP into the town's strategic plan, leading to less confrontation in civic deliberation. Sustainability planning also led to individuals looking beyond their group to collaborate with diverse citizens, and to communities looking beyond their town or village to see it within the bigger picture, including the awareness of the possibility of a leadership role.

The focus of the MSP process as developed by the AUMA facilitated the development of a shared vision and language, and promoted debate. Participants described disagreements, where they occurred, tending to arise at the implementation stage over issues such as division of responsibility or insufficient education before the implementation stage. However, a participant also noted that delay at the implementation stage can lead to volunteers losing motivation. Other issues at implementation include prioritization of actions and having to adapt an existing plan to current realities. Both communities "bridged" visioning and implementation (Connelly et al., 2009) through community leadership, public involvement and engagement, and external consultants. They also described ongoing monitoring and adaptation of implemented initiatives, reporting and celebrating of achievements, and a level of comfort with the notion of constant revision of goals, although a participant reported a lack of indicators that would define success.

Both communities were planning to revisit the plan within their communities, with Olds developing a formal process and Chauvin implementing more informal opportunities for the

community to provide input. Where the first “round” in the MSPs relied at least initially on non-community members such as Alberta government community development officers, these subsequent iterations will be primarily community led, allowing greater reliance on existing social networks, giving the process momentum (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A follow-up study of leaders and community members might help to identify the extent of community awareness, understanding, and changes in attitudes as a result of town/village level changes in practices. As well, examining reasons for nonparticipation or for withdrawal from participation might further illuminate social network and communication processes.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

Over the past half-century awareness of the value of environmental resources has increased in Western industrial societies, including Canada, although the concept of sustainability has been debated and no single definition as yet exists (Sumner, 2002; Suwa, 2009). Current understanding is that it is a multifaceted concept involving economic, social, environmental, and economic dimensions (Whitehead, 2007). The complexity of the issues surrounding sustainability and awareness of the need for community involvement has led to an emphasis on dialogue and deliberation among stakeholders (Cooper & Vargas, 2003; Innes & Booher, 2004; Head, 2007). This was manifested in Canada by the advancement of sustainability frameworks for planning and development in the context of federal gas tax rebates to municipalities (Finance Canada, 2005). In response to this initiative and municipalities' need for infrastructure, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association developed and piloted a municipal sustainability planning processes based on The Natural Step principles and five pillars of sustainability: social, culture, governance, environment, and economy (James & Lahti, 2004). It involved five steps:

1. structuring the planning process,
2. creating a shared understanding of success,
3. determining and analyzing issues related to community success,
4. action planning, and
5. implementing, monitoring, and reporting to the community (AUMA, 2006).

Although central to citizen engagement, communication processes in sustainability planning have remained relatively unexplored (Connelly et al., 2009; Nelson, 2001). Therefore,

this study breaks new ground in illuminating communication processes and methods in two of the five Alberta communities that participated in the MSP pilot project sponsored by the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, the Town of Olds and the Village of Chauvin. As such, new knowledge derived from this study related to knowledge development and transfer, community engagement, and communications methods will be useful to these communities as they revisit and revise their MSPs and to others at earlier stages in sustainability planning.

Knowledge Development in Networks

First, the experiences of this study's participants underscore the need for connections based on shared needs and complementary knowledge and for awareness and restructuring of local communication networks. In addition to the communities and their local administrations, the AUMA, Alberta Community Development, and, in Olds, The Natural Step provided direct support and resources. For example, Alberta community development officers provided direct support in terms of education and planning the MSP process but also helped develop the "weak ties" (Granovetter, 1982) Chauvin needed to access resources and expertise not identified locally through asset mapping (Barge, 2006).

Following the AUMA (2006) guidebook, MSPs were created by developing a vision of a preferred future for the community and then backcasting to identify steps that would take the community closer to that future. This required developing a shared language in terms of both educating the community and creating the vision. Public input on each community's preferred future was collected mainly in person at workshops that included information/education sessions (Olds) or through direct solicitation at public gatherings or meeting places (Chauvin). A significant aspect in the development of sustainable processes was knowledge sharing, both within the community, among community members, and between community residents and

individuals and organizations outside the community. Leaders in sustainability planning needed knowledge to be able to engage with the community at large on sustainability issues; this knowledge came from sources such as, initially, the AUMA and TNS and later from, for example, other communities and experts contacted for specific purposes. Both communities also described themselves as taking leadership roles in areas such as sustainability planning in Olds or recycling in Chauvin. The need for community education was seen as ongoing, as a means of helping to integrate newcomers and outside business interests, to increase and sustain citizen engagement, and to increase creativity.

Participants described successful use of backcasting from principles, whereby with a specific goal in mind, they were able to develop creative ways of implementing actions (James & Lahti, 2004); for example Olds's Main Street initiative. A primary stimulus for creativity is the availability of new knowledge (Sawyer, 2007), which through the MSPs was promoted through communication across contexts and levels (Oetzel et al., 2006) involving community members, surrounding communities, various levels of government, and organizations such as the AUMA and The Natural Step. This required the development of shared language (Littlejohn, 2006), which participants described as facilitated by linking concepts of sustainability to activities and issues already known to the community. A participant likened this co-construction of understanding in terms of developing a culture; another noted its importance for sustainability of the MSP in that it is not tied to one person's or group's understanding. Existing networks were used in establishing the MSP process, and new connections/relationships both inside and outside each community provided information and created opportunities for information sharing and access to resources that were not available within the community at that time. Administration and community saw value in continuing to develop these external connections and saw their

community within the context of a wider community. Both communities' participants described their community as taking on leadership roles in initiating partnerships with other communities and various levels of government, thereby extending what was developed in the MSP of working across contexts (Oetzel et al., 2006).

Increasing Community Engagement

An understanding of citizen engagement as a ladder including rungs of increasing participation ranging from nonparticipation to full empowerment of citizens underscores the need for different processes and therefore different communication methods associated with each level (Arnstein, 1969; Bruckmeier & Tovey, 2008; IAPP, 2007). In this study there was evidence in both communities of facilitation of participation at the "lower" rungs of informing and consulting but with opportunities for individuals and groups to move toward involving, collaborating, and empowered participation (IAPP, 2007). This was facilitated in the communities through the availability of community development officers and/or consultants who helped build local capacity for a sustainable process that would carry its own momentum (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The focus was on community-based construction of meaning (Littlejohn, 2006) and understanding, first among community leaders, who then educated the larger community, and entailed a focus on community assets (Barge, 2006) and changes in governance structures (Mathews, 1994).

Engagement of residents is critical in the sustainability of community processes. Both communities used resources such as CDOs (Chauvin and Olds), consultants (Olds), and paid municipal employees (Olds), but relied primarily on volunteers for their citizens' advisory group and action groups. Participants from both communities described the importance of identifying key individuals and of the importance of local town or village council support to the smooth

implementation of an MSP. In addition, Olds had the OICRD (Olds Institute for Community and Regional Development), which oversaw the MSP process, whereas the advisory group at Chauvin reported directly to village council. For implementation, both communities relied on volunteer task forces. Participants at Chauvin referred to the social nature of all interactions in small communities, including those related to MSPs. Both communities' processes involved accessing personal and group networks and reconfiguring them by adding "outsiders" or strengthening bonds with them, facilitating the flow of information and therefore knowledge creation (Sawyer, 2007).

Participants from both Olds and Chauvin described aiming for direct input from all sectors of the community and described strong response rates in community input, although both communities had some subcommunities that might have been more difficult to engage. Examples include young adults, who in the case of Chauvin often work away from the village and in the case of Olds are busy commuting for work and/or school. The community input was used to develop a vision for the respective communities and to identify priority areas, through backcasting from the vision (James & Lahti, 2004), requiring further education and task forces to implement selected sustainable strategies (Phases 3 and 4). The final phase includes reviewing and reporting to the community, and celebrating successes (AUMA, 2006). At the time of this study the communities were basically at Phase 4 and preparing for Phase 5 in 2010, although participants described the process to be less linear than that outlined in the AUMA guidebook because every initiative requires a cyclical process of providing information and getting community feedback, and different task forces proceed on different timelines.

Communication Methods

Communication methods depended on the scale of communication required and the target audience. Because communities are diverse and therefore community engagement entails reaching a wide range of people, multiple methods will usually be required. Word of mouth was central in both Olds and Chauvin, although Olds, which is larger, also used a newspaper- and radio-based advertising campaign. Olds had an advantage of the OICRD, which provided an existing network of individuals who are active in their community plus a well-established local newspaper. Chauvin had an existing news outlet in the school newsletter, which residents already looked to for information on local issues. Participants described the importance of unconventional methods as well in “getting people talking.” In this first MSP cycle, neither community relied on new media as neither had home- or work-based high-speed Internet. Olds did use its website to inform residents on the MSP and at the time of this study was considering using social media in the future, whereas Chauvin used its site primarily to communicate with those outside the community. Participants from both communities found radio effective. They also noted that because education was incorporated into the community input process, that also raised residents’ knowledge of sustainability issues.

Participants described the AUMA (2006) MSP process as promoting dialogue rather than conflict-oriented debate as all input was received without comment. They said that where conflict occurred, it tended to be in the implementation phase, such as disagreements from the community with initiatives, or within the task forces or citizen advisory group on responsibilities or perceived lack of follow-through. This spoke to a need for ongoing communication, but participants noted the balance needed in keeping the community informed and allowing the task forces to develop momentum. Communication was also central to prioritizing plans, as neither community could implement all plans simultaneously because of resource constraints. Both

communities actively “bridged” visioning and implementation through such means as managing the engagement cycle and consulting experts (Connelly et al., 2009). They also described monitoring progress and recording successes or else adjusting plans when necessary. Some participants described difficulties in defining and documenting success but also reported a level of comfort with the idea of ongoing improvement and evaluation, the notion that “we’re never going to be done.” At the time of the interviews, both Olds and Chauvin were implementing action plans developed through the first round of community input, so it is possible that in 2010, when the plan is to be revisited, the advisory group, particularly at Olds, will gain a fuller sense of the degree of community understanding and commitment. Chauvin planned to continue its focus on communication through social avenues by initiating drop-in sessions with village council. As this round of engagement will be community led, a sense of the momentum might also be obtained (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Both Olds and Chauvin faced challenges in engaging their citizens, including the level of commitment required by volunteers, communication, learning new governance models, and issues related to time and funding. Participants from both communities cited the amount of time required for meaningful community engagement, and both described some volunteers leaving the project and others’ hesitancy at becoming involved. One considered that this was a reflection on society in general and not an issue specific to the community. Olds is growing and is finding that multiple methods of communication are needed. Because of the decentralized nature of sustainability actions, participants described struggles related to new governance models and needs to restructure communication and reporting channels. The defined time frame for the pilot meant that consensus building processes had to fit within those windows, which participants described as translating to a heavy workload. Related to time, as most participants at Olds and

almost all participants at Chauvin were volunteers, personal time was used for such essential activities as education, and the funding did not cover all of individuals' costs. Chauvin participants also described travel to workshops and meetings as placing a burden on the individuals attending. Participants also expressed concern about developing long-term fully sustainable project (i.e., without grants or government funding).

Concluding Remarks

Sustainability requires a new way of looking at things (Roseland, 2005). The communities in this study, Olds and Chauvin, Alberta, have different resources available and different needs. Olds is a growing town on Alberta's primary economic corridor with a college and a thriving business sector. Chauvin is a village in a more remote area of the province that relies on the agriculture and oil industries. What they share is a willingness and ability to re-examine their respective communities and their role in the larger world and to consider new possibilities. With the guidance and support of agencies such as the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and The Natural Step, they have embarked on a process of social engagement in planning and action that is essential to creating more sustainable and democratic communities.

NOTES

1. Integrated sustainability plans are mandatory for local governments in British Columbia either individually or as part of a regional strategy (Canada, British Columbia, & Union of British Columbia Municipalities, 2005). They are also mandatory in Alberta (Government of Alberta, 2009) and Manitoba (Infrastructure Canada, 2009), but not in Saskatchewan (Government of Saskatchewan, 2009).
2. Individuals who were interviewed for this study are identified by the organization or community with which they were primarily associated in the MSP process, in this case the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, expressed as AUMA 2.
3. ImagineCalgary was an 18-month public engagement project begun in January 2005 aimed at developing a vision for Calgary for the next hundred years, the year 2005 being the centennial of Alberta (<http://www.imaginecalgary.ca>).
4. The AUMA's Municipal Sustainability Plan microsite is <http://msp.auma.ca>.
5. Kegan (1994) described human psychological development in terms of individual awareness and mental organization ("categorical consciousness") that, on a higher level, allows for reflection and changing of viewpoints through dialogue.
6. The Alberta Main Street Program (<http://www.albertamainstreet.org/default.aspx>) provides resources to help communities preserve historic places.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

All questions will not apply to all participants. MSP coordinators were hired between approximately October 2008 and April 2009 and so had varying amounts of input in the earlier phases of planning. I will have a chart or graph available at the interview to clarify what each phase signifies, with reference to specific documents or other products produced by the community group, where available. By “community” I am referring to individuals or groups not on the governance council or the MSP advisory committee.

Pre Phase 1: Getting Started

1. Please tell me how you found out about your community’s decision to do an MSP **or** Please tell me about how your council decided to do an MSP.
 - a. Were there any obstacles to getting started? What were they?

Phase 1: Structuring the Planning Process

1. Please describe your role in Phase 1.
2. (*For council*) Describe how you chose your advisory board/champions.
 - a. How did you identify them?
 - b. What information did you give the community? In what format? (Invited to council meeting, written material, newspaper ad, e-mail, web link, etc.)
3. Please describe the process used for finding a project manager.
4. (*For advisory council/champions*) Please describe how you got involved in the MSP.
5. Tell me about how the development plan was created.
 - a. How was the community notified?
 - b. Please describe community input.
 - c. What format was the plan in? (Written report, pdf online, website, PowerPoint)
 - d. Did you let the community know about the plan? If so...
 - i. How? (Newspaper article, website, town hall meeting)
 - ii. Tell me about the community response.

Phase 2: Creating a Shared Understanding of Sustainable Community Success

1. Please describe the visioning process.
 - a. How did you advertise the process?
 - b. How did you receive input from the community? (Meetings, web postings, blog)
2. Was there conflict? Please describe what arose and how it was handled.
3. How was the community informed of the vision?
4. How might the process have been improved?
5. Did the community celebrate the vision? Please describe what took place.

Phase 3: Determining and Analyzing Issues Related to Community Success

1. What was the process for describing where the community wants to go (future)?
 - a. How did the committee solicit community input?
 - b. How was community input used?
2. What was the process for describing where the community is?

3. Please describe how your community determined the areas of focus.
4. How did you proceed with each focus issue? [*Discuss individually*]
 - a. Did the specific issue influence communications (either to the public or from the public to the committee)? If so, how?

Phase 4: Action Planning

Note: Communities are just beginning this process.

1. Please describe the process so far.
2. How do you measure your achievements? How do you report them to the community?
3. What would you consider the best way of communicating this process to the community?
4. Can you give me an example when there were disagreements, either within the planning committee or between the committee and community members? How were they handled?
5. Do you plan to broaden community participation? (Nelson, 2001)

Phase 5: Maintenance and monitoring

1. Please describe your plan for ongoing monitoring and adjusting, and reporting to the community.

General Questions

1. What information might have made your job easier if you had had it at the start of the process?
2. What else could make your participation easier?
3. What do you think would improve decision-making or increase productivity of the group? (Aranoff & McGuire, 2001)
4. Please describe your role from the beginning of your involvement.
 - a. Has your role changed? If so, how?
5. How are new people being brought into the process? How might they be?
6. What do you consider the most successful communication strategy used so far. Why do you think it was successful? Please describe it. What was the least successful? (Hanson, 2002)

APPENDIX B: INITIAL CONTACT LETTER

Moira Calder
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Phone: 780-436-0772; 780-964-2093
E-mail: mjcalder@ualberta.ca

[Date]

[Potential Participant]

[Address]

Re: Research Project
Municipal Sustainability Planning

Dear [Name],

I am a student at the University of Alberta in the master's of education in communications and technology (MACT) program. I am writing to invite you to participate in a study on municipal sustainability planning. The purpose of this study is to examine communication processes involved in the municipal sustainability planning (MSP) consultations in your community.

Participation will mean an in-person interview of about 45 minutes at a time and location that you choose. The interview will include questions about what processes were used and how they worked. Any information you provide will be kept anonymous, and you may choose not to answer any questions that you don't want to answer. I will not include your name or information that might identify you in my report.

This study will provide you with a chance to reflect on your experience. The report will also be useful for your community as a record of past activities and will also be helpful to other communities just beginning the MSP process. From my perspective, the research and report will fulfill part of the requirements for my master's degree.

I was given your name by [contact person] and was told that you have been involved in your community's MSP. But the decision to participate or not is up to you. I will not tell [contact person], the AUMA, or your local council whether you participated in the study or not.

If you would like to be interviewed or want more information, please feel free to contact me at the phone numbers or e-mail address below. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Mary Beckie, whose contact information is also below.

Thank you for considering this.

Yours truly,

Moira Calder
Phone: 780-436-0772
E-mail: mjcalder@ualberta.ca
Cell: 780-964-2093

Mary Beckie, PhD
Assistant Professor, University of Alberta
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APPENDIX C: CONSENT LETTER

Information Letter for Research Project on Alberta Municipal Sustainability Plans Conducted by Moira Calder (Mary Beckie, PhD, Supervisor) September-December 2009

The purpose of this informed consent is to make sure that you understand the purpose of this project, what I am asking you to do, and what your rights are.

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project on the recent municipal sustainability planning (MSP) in your community. The purpose of this research is to learn more about what communication methods were most useful at each stage. Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) staff members Joanne McGill, Sustainability Coordinator, and Sue Welke, Director, Policy and Advocacy, have approved the study. The AUMA Board of Directors has also given permission.

The Research

I, Moira Calder, a University of Alberta student in the master's of arts in communications and technology (MACT) program, am conducting interviews with people involved in their local MSP.

Your involvement will be participation in an interview of about 45 minutes. It will be conducted in person at your choice of time and location or, if that is impossible, by phone. I might ask you to be interviewed a second time. Your participation in this research is totally voluntary. You can say no to this if you choose. I will *not* tell Joanne McGill, Sue Welke, other AUMA staff, council members, or other participants or potential participants whether you are being interviewed.

I am working under the supervision of Professor Mary Beckie, PhD, to fulfill the requirements for my master's degree. I will use the data only for this research. This research is not funded. I will conduct this research in compliance with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants,
<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/gfcpolicymanual/policymanualsection66.cfm>.

The AUMA and Alberta have been leaders in Canada in the area of sustainability planning. A possible benefit is that this study will identify communication processes that might be useful for your community or for other communities that are preparing or planning for MSPs. A possible benefit to you is an opportunity to think about and reflect on your experience.

If do not want to answer a question, you may simply refuse to do so, and you may end the interview at any time. You may withdraw your interview from the study by contacting me within 3 days (72 hours) of the end of the interview. I will record these interviews and transcribe them for the purpose of research. You will not be identified individually in any reports.

Although I will do everything I can to keep results anonymous, because the communities involved in the study are relatively small, there is a risk that people reading the report could perceive the identities of participants, so total anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

Verification/review:

Dr. Mary Beckie will oversee this research.

Your Rights

You have the right to choose not to participate in this study. Your decision will not in any way affect your involvement and participation in municipal sustainability planning and will in no way affect the services offered to your community by the AUMA.

If you choose to participate in this study, you have the right:

- *To protection of privacy and confidentiality.* All possible steps will be taken to minimize risks. You will not be described individually in reports or other publications, and specific information will be concealed where necessary. (For example, you won't be identified in the report by gender, age, or other identifiers.)
- *To safeguards for security of data.* Data will be kept in a password-protected account on my computer for the duration of the project. They will be stored for 5 years following completion of the research project in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Alberta, with identifying information stored separately from audio and printed transcripts. When appropriate, they will be destroyed in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality.
- *To disclosure of the presence of any apparent or actual conflict of interest* on the part of the researcher(s). I am aware of no conflicts of interest.
- *To receive a copy of a report* of the research findings if you wish to have one. Simply let me know at the time of the interview or e-mail me (mjcalder@ualberta.ca).

Uses of the Data: The Report

I will use the data collected in a report that I will submit to Dr. Beckie as part of the requirements for my master's degree in communications and technology. The AUMA will receive a copy of this report. Findings from this study might also be published in a peer-reviewed academic journal.

Informed Consent

By signing the attached form, you are indicating that you understand completely the information in this information sheet. If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please feel free to contact me (Moira Calder) or Mary Beckie.

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Mary Beckie, PhD
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Ethics Approval Statement

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (780) 492-3751.

I have read the information sheet, and I understand the contents of it. I am willing to be interviewed for this study as described.

I am aware that I can end my involvement in this study at any time during the interview. I can also withdraw my interview from the study up to 72 hours (3 days) after the end of the interview by contacting the researcher, Moira Calder, by phone (780-436-0772) or by e-mail (mjcalder@ualberta.ca).

I have been given two copies of this information sheet, one for me to sign and return to the researcher, Moira Calder, and the other to keep.

Date: _____

Name: _____ Signature: _____