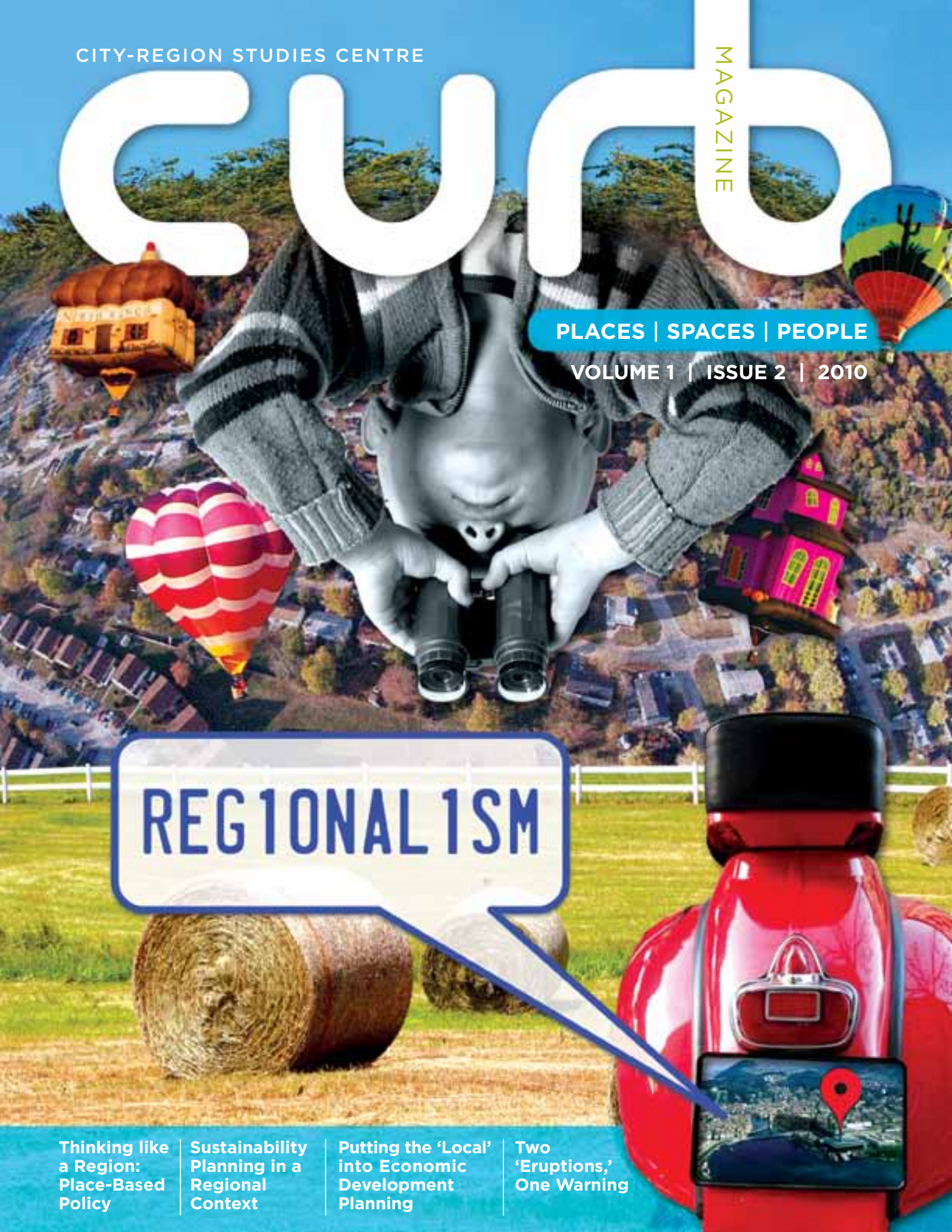
CITY-REGION STUDIES CENTRE

CRS MAGAZINE

PLACES | SPACES | PEOPLE

VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 2 | 2010



Thinking like a Region: Place-Based Policy

Sustainability Planning in a Regional Context

Putting the 'Local' into Economic Development Planning

Two 'Eruptions,' One Warning

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Cover design: Carolina Cambre

CURB MAGAZINE

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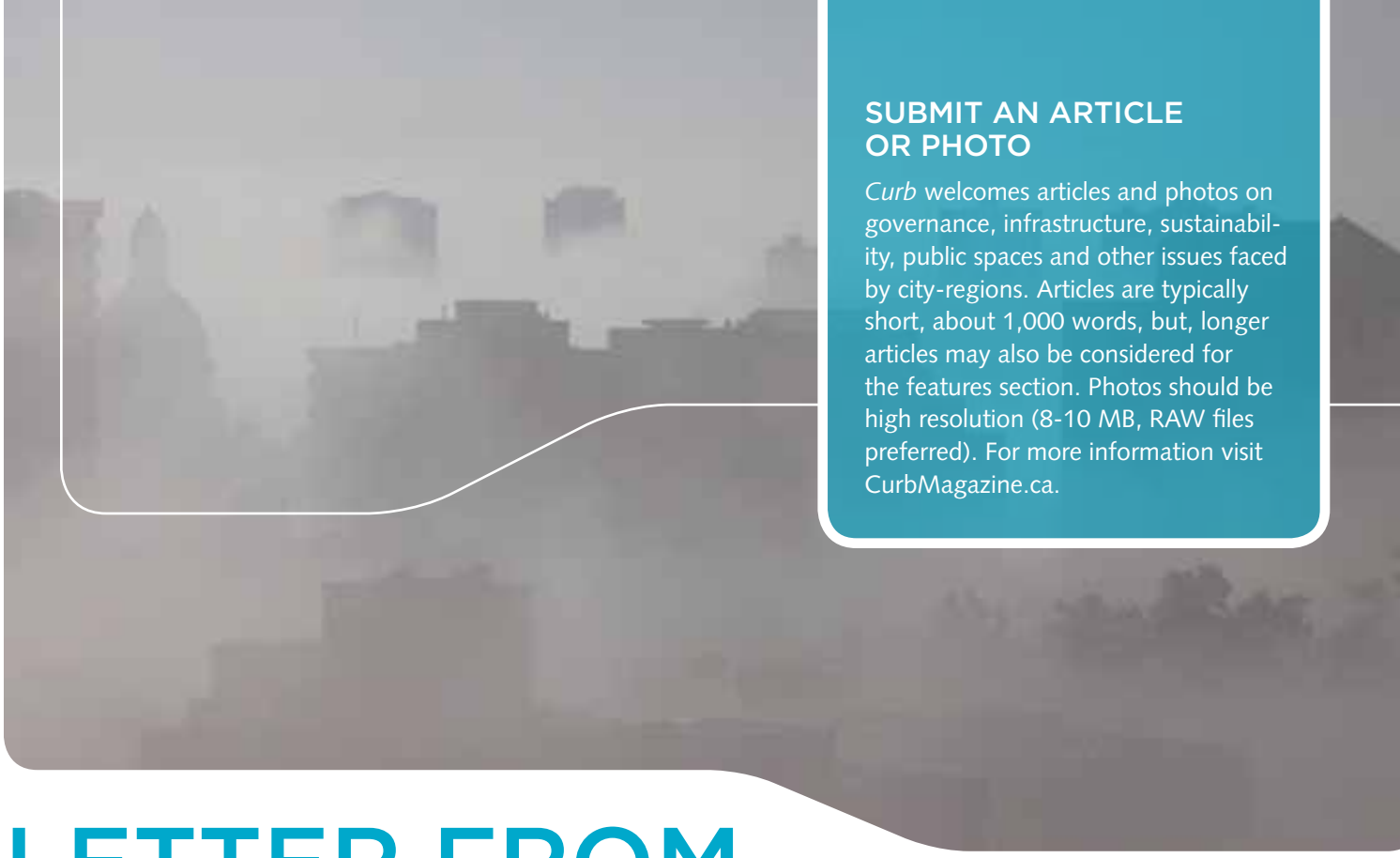


Edmonton, Canada | Nelson Webb

SUBMIT AN ARTICLE OR PHOTO

Curb welcomes articles and photos on governance, infrastructure, sustainability, public spaces and other issues faced by city-regions. Articles are typically short, about 1,000 words, but, longer articles may also be considered for the features section. Photos should be high resolution (8-10 MB, RAW files preferred). For more information visit CurbMagazine.ca.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Howie Phung

Dear Readers,

Our inaugural issue of *Curb Magazine* brought comments from many readers about the striking cover image — a spiral parking lot ramp marred by weeds, overlooking grey and brown buildings. If you guessed the image was from downtown Edmonton, you were right. The parking lot is on 104th Street, just two blocks from the University of Alberta's new downtown campus. That photo, like most of the images and articles in this issue, was submitted by a reader. That's the idea behind *Curb*: it's a forum launched by the City-Region Studies Centre (CRSC) to spur lively discussion and debate about the current challenges faced by cities, towns and regions. Anyone is welcome to join that discussion — elected officials, students, professionals, academics, members of the public — anyone who is interested in city-regions. In other words, you.

This issue of *Curb* looks at regionalism. Rob Shields kicks off the discussion with definitions of regionalism and why it's back on policy agendas. He argues that using a regional approach to frame policy and programs enlarges their scale and scope so they can better address overarching environmental concerns, large-scale infrastructure projects and affairs that cross disciplines and jurisdictions. Collaboration, obviously, is a key ingredient in the success of a regional approach. Kevin Jones addresses this theme in "Putting The 'Local' into Economic Development Planning," which argues that the community has a key role to play in such planning. Stephen Hill and Natalie Napier further this argument with their case study of regional collaboration in the Greater Peterborough Area, where different stakeholders have joined forces voluntarily to put sustainability on the political agenda. To round out the feature section, the CRSC's Urban-Rural Interdependencies Research team's "How to Make Regional Collaboration Work" outlines best practices in creating partnerships.

Collaboration is, of course, not just a political strategy. In "Creative Communities," Chiara Camponeschi talks about social collaboration, grassroots projects that contribute to urban sustainability and social inclusion. Similarly, in "How a Decade is M.A.D.E.," Tyler Vreeling and Shafraaz Kaba look back at how a small grassroots movement, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, became an integral part of the architecture and design scene in Edmonton. Another anniversary is coming up: 2011 marks 100 years since the birth of Marshall McLuhan in Edmonton. The connection between McLuhan, the prophet of technology, and Edmonton is explored by Marco Adria and Gordon Gow in "Understanding the Communicative City."

Reading *Curb*, you'll see that collaboration and community are common themes. That's not a coincidence, since these are key values of the City-Region Studies Centre and the Faculty of Extension. In fact, *Curb* is an acronym for "community-university research bulletin," a title that recognizes the partnership — and the desire to further the partnership — between the University of Alberta and the greater community. We hope you enjoy this issue and consider collaborating on the next one.

Thinking like a Region: PLACE-BASED POLICY

Rob Shields

Regions of different types and sizes are again on the policy agenda. Why? The driving factors include environmental issues from disasters to everyday pollution concerns, which have spurred a public interest in things like alternative fuels, conservation and a demand for visible moves toward a greener society. This shift can be seen in a broad consensus in favour of "sustainability," even while most are unclear about the details of what this catchphrase means. Coordinating policy regionally responds to these environmental and political pressures by enlarging the scale of infrastructure to make more environmentally and socially sustainable projects viable, such as light rail. Regional approaches also allow programs to be more effective by expanding their scope to address problems and issues that cross disciplines and jurisdictions. Integrated ecosystem management and watershed authorities are good examples. Thinking regionally offers expanded capacities and resources that can recognize and address the enlarged scale and scope of pressing contemporary issues.

Another impetus for the resurgence of interest in regions has come with attempts to distinguish and "brand" areas for competitive advantage in what is being touted by many economists and developers as a flattened global economy of attention and innovation. This is especially true of rural tourism initiatives, which, for example, market otherwise fragile single-industry regional economies as distinctive tourist experiences (think agritourism or, especially, oenotourism). Regional approaches ensure impacts are managed and benefits are shared by neighbours.

Defining region

If "place" is cultural and subjective, understandings of "region" are tinged with the sense of a political and administrative division. Place has an empirical reference: this place, that spot. Region is a geographical concept: an area of land or unit of territory. It is fundamentally governmental and difficult to reduce to a single object that one can reach out and touch; it has to be imagined. The Finnish geographer Anssi Paasi notes that region is about drawing boundaries, a process that is increasingly fraught and contested, adds the German sociologist Ulrich Beck. This is why watersheds, which are often summed up by pointing to a single river and therefore appear to be defined obviously and naturally rather than by an interpretation that is open to disagreement, are successful (or at least uncontested) regions. Practitioners should bear in mind that there are strong differences between disciplines. Political science and geography disagree with history and anthropology over whether regions should be treated as cultural or natural. That is, are regions socially constructed outcomes, or are they material environments?

Our approach at CRSC is to acknowledge both versions of considering regions – and to balance an approach between defining it conceptually (by language, history, customs, etc.) versus defining it by a shared physical environment such as a watershed. We have found that there tends to be both a cultural and economic, as well as a natural and ecological, rationale to the strongest regions.

Region and Place-Based Policy

Social scientists' interest in regions parallels policy researchers' interest in "place-based decision-making." In this model, all relevant jurisdictions and policy-makers come together to coordinate policy responses to problems in an area. "Thinking like a region" allows for coordination across urban, suburban and

Current Research

Global Suburbanisms | Project examines the growth of cities and the demands suburban development places on systems of government and infrastructure.

Rebirth of Mini-malls | Research investigates how to support environmentally and socially sustainable, local community development through the revival of already existing urban and suburban retail places.

Partnership, Governance and Capacity Building | Researchers are seeking to understand and assist communities in developing cultures and practices of collaboration.

Innovation in the Community | Research addresses the relationship between techno-scientific innovation and community.

The City-Region Studies Centre (CRSC) is a University of Alberta research unit that engages with communities to explore the nature of towns, cities and regions. For more information contact **crsc@ualberta.ca**.

CITY-REGION STUDIES CENTRE

Chicago, USA | Chuck Olsen

surrounding county boundaries. It offers a path to sustainable development. However, it requires physical practices, concrete objects and actual environments in which regional ideas and policy are embedded and take on a physical life. Inter-agency committees are a simple example; differentiating urban and rural programs in policy-making is another. Regional approaches can ensure that social programs or affordable housing are located across an entire region, not just in a few neighbourhoods, while avoiding duplication and contradictory policies that disable each other. More elaborate approaches include institutionalized agencies that pursue integrated ecosystem management and formal partnerships among different federal, state or provincial, and municipal authorities. The region, as an appropriate scale for place-based decision-making, allows citizens and stakeholders to get involved and tailors regulation to regional circumstance with more flexible programs.

If, as in the current dominant neoliberal definition, nations are understood to be conglomerations of regional economies, ecosystems and cultures, it makes sense that communities should be enabled to identify and address distinct needs and that these initiatives should be coordinated across jurisdictions. This is especially true of large countries such as Canada. The challenge is to "put regions in their place" by maintaining a sense of their grounded relationships to locality. This also is advantageous to any partnerships that can be embedded in a regional logic. However, in Canada, as Mississauga mayor Hazel McCallion recently pointed out at the CRSC's Shaping Our Region symposium (see the resources available at http://www.crsc.ualberta.ca), municipalities lack not only sufficient funding but also the status and authority to play their role as true partners with the provinces or the federal government.

"Lightweight" regional institutional structures such as boards and alliances have been proven to function at many scales, provided that there is a strong set of procedural rules to compensate for an absence of a specific, regional level of government with jurisdictional powers. The European Union is the largest-scale example of this approach.

In and around cities, regional approaches correct the tendency to subtract suburbia from the ways cities are understood both in shared imaginaries of cities and in development policies. Often suburbs and adjacent urban municipalities have been annexed or amalgamated. There is pressure to shift the burden of costs for core city services and inner-city revitalization to wider populations. This leads to fears of loss of identity, suburban lifestyle and autonomy in areas such as taxation. However, the City-Region Studies Centre's (CRSC) research shows that identity is not lost if regional partnerships can be crafted between municipalities. History does not vanish. While regional partnerships can be controversial because they tend to push debate over competing interests out into the open, this may be a better approach than amalgamation, which can often simply gloss over important differences and entrenched disputes rather than acknowledging and working to resolve these.

Rob Shields is Henry Marshall Tory Chair at the University of Alberta and the academic research director of the City-Region Studies Centre. His books include Ecologies of Affect: Placing Nostalgia, Desire and Hope*, co-edited with Tonya Davidson and Ondine Park;* What Is a City? Rethinking the Urban after Hurricane Katrina*, co-edited with Phil Steinberg;* Building Tomorrow: Innovation in Construction and Engineering*, co-edited with André Manseau; and P*laces on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity*, which won the Library Choice Outstanding Book Award. He is the founder and editor of* Space and Culture: International Journal of Social Spaces.

TWO 'ERUPTIONS,' ONE WARNING

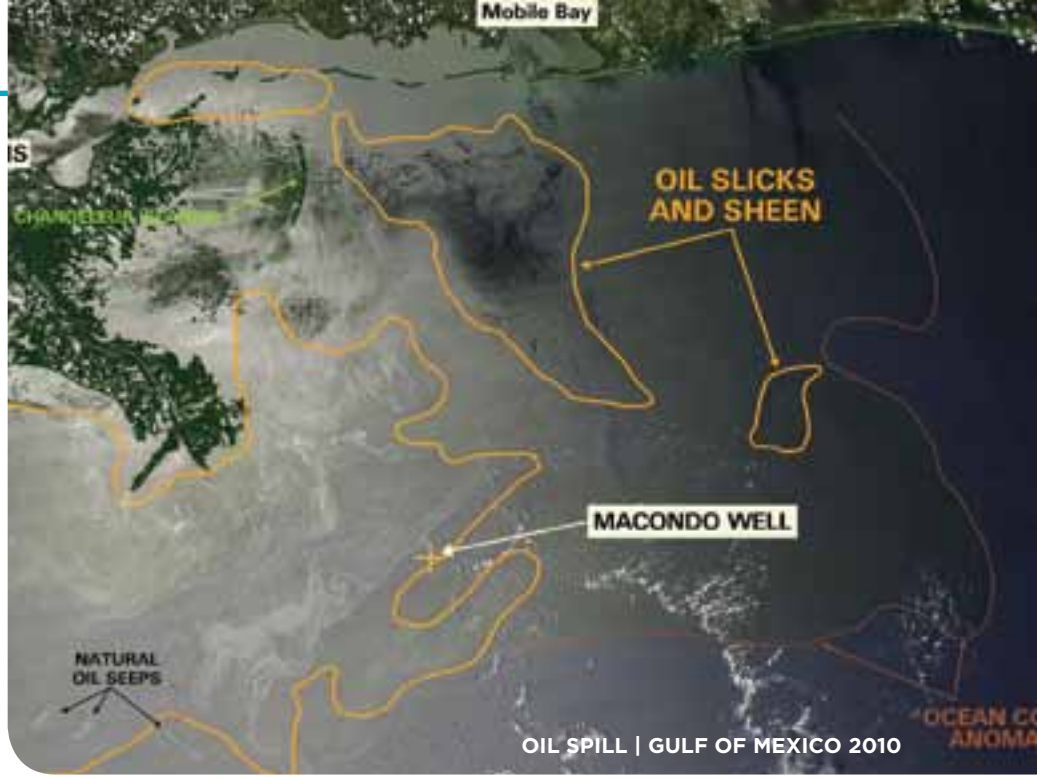
Michael Dudley

Eyjafjallajokull, Iceland | Baldvin Hansson

In April 2010, the world witnessed two dramatic environmental disruptions — one natural, one anthropogenic — of international environmental and economic significance. Both events challenge us to face some fundamental questions about our built environment and the technologies we use to make it function.

On April 14, the eruption of the Eyjafjallajokull (pronounced ay-yah-FYAH-plah-yer-kuh-duhl) volcano in Iceland began sending massive plumes of ash across the North Atlantic and over Europe. Air traffic across most of Europe was grounded, stranding hundreds of thousands of travellers as well as cargo. The airlines were soon losing hundreds of millions of dollars a day, foodstuffs began to run out and economists worried that the crisis was threatening to drag down Europe's economic recovery. Fortunately, the eruption petered out quickly enough for air traffic to resume six days later.

Just as that crisis began to ease, a tragic but preventable industrial accident on April 20 destroyed BP's Deepwater Horizon oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico, claiming 11 lives and swiftly turning into an unprecedented and terrifyingly unpredictable ecological disaster. This oil "volcano" has the potential to destroy coastal and deep ocean habitats, including coral reefs, and extirpate hundreds of species in the Gulf of Mexico and beyond. What the loss will mean for the ecology of the whole



Skytruth/John Amos

continent can at this point only be guessed at. The economic impacts of the leak will also be enormous. With the economic value of the Gulf region estimated at over $230 billion, the long-term losses could be staggering.

These two events carry a warning. They demonstrate that our overreliance on any one technological system — be it for energy, transportation, shipping or agriculture — is reckless, short-sighted and potentially catastrophic. Our dependence on oil-intensive economies and transportation systems makes us extremely vulnerable to unexpected disruptions and, in the case of the Gulf oil disaster, can endanger communities, public health and global ecosystems. They reveal the degree to which our highly interconnected and globalized urban society lacks resilience.

As C. S. Holling articulated in 1973 in "Resilience and Stability Of Ecological Systems," resilience is the degree to which a complex system is flexible enough to respond and adapt to an externally imposed force or change, thus persisting over time while retaining its structure and functions. Such resilience requires diversity, redundancy and learning capacity. (For an excellent summary of these principles, check out the February issue of *Alternatives*, http://www.alternativesjournal.ca/articles/resilience-101.) What our cities and our energy and transportation systems are presently dependent upon is quite the opposite: highly vulnerable systems of resource extraction, throughput consumption and infrastructure in which conditions are inflexible, monocultures dominate, there is little learning capacity and choices for addressing crises are constrained. Continuing to build our cities around aging, fossil fuel-dependent energy grids and freeway networks, to say nothing of massive "aerotropolis" developments that have no long-term future when jet fuel is no longer affordable or available, only deepens our vulnerabilities.

By contrast, system diversity offers the opportunity for self-correction and adaptation. In the case of the halt in jet travel after the volcanic eruption, Europeans were fortunate that transportation disruptions were mitigated to some extent by their relatively advanced high-speed train networks. Had this plume come from a volcano in North America, where rail service has been denuded dramatically over decades and new investments in high-speed rail are only now being proposed and debated, conditions would have been more chaotic by several orders of magnitude.

A diverse mix of transportation options provides badly needed resilience and helps ensure stability in the host of other systems with which it interacts, including food, business, tourism and social networks. As transportation also represents some 30 percent of global fossil fuel use, investing in a mixed transportation system built around electrification, human power and other alternative energies would allow us to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, the price of which can no longer be measured in dollars per litre but in entire ecosystems.

The alternative is to continue on a course that makes us all culpable for environmental catastrophe. As author and liberal political activist William Rivers Pitt points out in "Our Fault, Too," posted June 11 on the website Truthout, ultimately, we are all to blame for the BP disaster:

"We are learning a savage lesson in the Gulf. We are witnessing the end of a way of life we have become all too deeply accustomed to. We drive, we eat, we fly, we vote, and in doing so, we share the blame for what is happening and what is to come. We have gone to sleep each night deliberately oblivious to the deadly nature of the fossil fuels that power the way we live, because it is too hard to even think about living a different way."

They demonstrate that our overreliance on any one technological system — be it for energy, transportation, shipping or agriculture — is reckless, short-sighted and potentially catastrophic.

We must all contribute to finding this "different way." These two disasters, while very different, both warn us that planning for a long-term future dependent on cheap fossil fuels is no longer tenable.

Michael Dudley is a research associate and library coordinator at the Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Winnipeg. He blogs for the Planetizen website at http://www.planetizen.com/blog/29.

CREATIVE COMMUNITIES
AND THE RISE OF PLACE-BASED CREATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING

Chiara Camponeschi

Portland, USA | Donkeycart

Just a few years ago, before the advent of the ubiquitous smartphone, collaboration was more readily associated with volunteering or office teamwork than with surfing the Net. In a matter of years, however, mobile communication platforms and greater Internet access have transformed the very way we conceive of collaborative interaction and problem-solving.

Take, for example, See Click Fix, an online platform and mobile application that helps residents in cities around the world signal instances of neglect and degradation so that city officials can rectify them. Operating on the principles of empowerment, efficiency and engagement, See Click Fix allows anyone to report and track non-emergency issues, providing the impetus to improve one's neighbourhood and the platform for making connections that can lead to change. In Philadelphia alone, the website was used by a city-wide advocacy group to mobilize citizens and document instances of vehicle idling, leading to new inter-stakeholder initiatives to help clean the air.

Another example is Share Some Sugar, a Web 2.0 inventory of community tools that is the equivalent of the old-fashioned knock on a neighbour's door. Registered users can browse for items to borrow or rent by neighbourhood, or even by street or building. Users can send in a request to borrow a neighbour's item, and if the request is accepted, the two parties meet in person for the hand-off. Small deposits and contracts are options to ensure security, and, similar to eBay, users can leave feedback on their neighbours' profiles so others can learn more about their sharing history.

In the age of connectivity, collaboration is increasingly seen as a design principle, a style of thinking and acting that elevates the practice of problem-solving from a managerial tool to a way of thinking about participation itself. For Yochai Benchler, Harvard law professor and co-director of the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, social co-operation is an opportunity to introduce greater flexibility in the design of human societies — to carve out a space to collectively brainstorm solutions to the problem of how to live together in a just and sustainable fashion.

Often referred to as co-design, social collaboration is at the heart of a growing movement of "creative community" social innovation — grassroots projects that contribute to urban sustainability and social inclusion in interactive and participatory ways. Initiatives range from establishing community gardens or farmers' markets to place-making projects that challenge the traditional public-private divide. Neighbourhood-based communities are, in fact, the fulcrum of most of the innovations being spearheaded by creative citizens. They are a vantage point from which dialogue and collaboration take place in ways that are locally relevant yet widely significant for other communities. By articulating their vision of the city and using neighbourhoods as a unit of action, creative communities introduce a slew of new values and priorities into the larger discourse of urban development and public space.

In the age of connectivity, collaboration is increasingly seen as a design principle.

In Portland, for example, hundreds of neighbours, students and volunteers meet every year at various city intersections armed with brushes and buckets of paint ready to take back their streets and make them more liveable. Known as Intersection Repair and now mirrored in other places such as Ottawa and Seattle, this citizen-led conversion of an urban street intersection

into a public square is a program of City Repair, a volunteer-driven non-profit group. Acting under the assumption that localization — of culture, of economy, of decision-making — is a necessary foundation of sustainability, City Repair helps residents reclaim urban spaces in order to create community-oriented places, planting the seeds for greater neighbourhood communication, community empowerment and cultural sustainability.

When the community is directly involved in "social entrepreneurship," where profit is not the main driver for innovative ventures, collaboration often takes on the characteristics of self-development projects, creating spaces for local organizations to make substantial investments in local resources, resulting in economic development and enhanced local problem-solving capacity. By joining forces, actors learn to collaborate with one another and promote community resilience, strengthening the social economy and adding a dimension of public value to often underutilized local resources. The benefits are multiple, ranging from increased local job generation to greater citizen voice in local decision-making and increased social cohesion.

Of course, collaboration is not free of frustrations. Without a clear process design, it can be hard, slow and ineffective. Making the most of the wide variety of skills, backgrounds and perspectives present in any given group can lead to important breakthroughs and innovative solutions. Collaborative design is also not intended as a substitute for government intervention, but it is another way to shed light on what it is that government is doing — or not doing. By organizing around values rather than profit, the social economy sphere forces institutions to rethink their roles and increases people's confidence in employing their own know-how and resources.

Place-based creative problem-solving is a quiet movement, one of pragmatic idealism and obstinate belief in the ability to turn problems into opportunities. It's an empowering movement, an everyday movement — and it starts in our backyards. Creative citizens, through their involvement, show us that citizenship is so much more than duties and taxes; it's about outcome ownership, enablement and the celebration of the myriad connections that make up the collective landscape of the places we call home.

Chiara Camponeschi holds a Master of Environmental Studies from York University and has been involved with creative communities in Italy, Canada and Sweden for the past five years. Her latest project, The Enabling City, can be found online at http://www.enablingcity.ca.

Portland, USA | Donkeycart

Creative Communities Projects

Not Far From the Tree is a network of citizens and local food enthusiasts who help make the most of natural resources in Toronto. Fruit tree owners can register with the organization, which then dispatches volunteers to harvest the trees for them, picking fruit that would otherwise go to waste. At the end of the process, one-third of all fruit goes to fruit owners, another third to volunteers and the remaining third is delivered by bike or cart to community organizations in the neighbourhood.
http://www.notfarfromthetree.org

ChangeCamp is an event format, an open community and a set of tools and ideas designed to enable citizens and governments to collaborate in addressing real-world challenges in local communities. A ChangeCamp event is a creative face-to-face gathering that is citizen led, non-partisan and social web enabled. The program is focused on two goals: helping governments become more open, transparent, participatory, innovative, efficient and effective; and helping citizens become more connected to each other around their civic passions in the place they call home.
http://www.changecamp.ca

Timeraiser began in 2002 as a way for a group of friends to find meaningful volunteer opportunities in the community. Today, Timeraiser links organizations with prospective volunteers through silent art auctions where, instead of money, participants bid volunteer hours in increments of 5. So far, the events have generated over 51,000 volunteer hours and have invested more than $300,000 in the careers of emerging artists, linking 5,000 Canadians with more than 250 charitable organizations across the country.
http://www.timeraiser.ca

HOW A DECADE IS M.A.D.E.

Tyler Vreeling and Shafraaz Kaba

Edmonton, Canada | Howie Phung

This is a year to celebrate design in Edmonton.

Design has had a long and remarkable history in the city, and Media, Art and Design Exposed (M.A.D.E.) in Edmonton has played a strong role in that history. Without an architecture school, there is no institution or facility to foster a public dialogue on urban design or the built form. Now celebrating its 10th year, M.A.D.E. in Edmonton has helped create a close-knit and vibrant community of designers committed to bringing design, and the appreciation of its process, to the public. The variety of designers involved in the organization creates a unique agenda for public programs. M.A.D.E. encourages collaboration and hosts events that showcase all aspects of design.

Designers take root

Thirty years ago, Edmonton was primarily a government town where oil and gas industries were its hallmark. It is now a burgeoning metropolis of a million people with a diversified economic base. Biotechnology, software development and even innovation in waste management contribute to the local economy. Alongside these new industries, designers of all stripes have decided to make Edmonton home, adding to the rich visual culture of the city with their contributions to furniture design, graphic design, architecture and urbanism.

In the fall of 2000, Karen and Gerry Derksen, Emily Gordon, Jay Sylvester and Shafraaz Kaba met to try to revive a previous organization focused on promoting design in Edmonton; not all were designers, but all shared a keen interest in learning more about design. In the 1980s, the Design Workshop and the Edmonton Society for Urban Architecture Studies emerged with the aim of inspiring professionals and citizens alike about architecture and design issues. These two predecessors of M.A.D.E. dissolved when their core volunteer boards could not find new blood to carry on. Out of a series of brainstorming sessions and inspired by its predecessors, the non-profit society M.A.D.E. in Edmonton was born.

Spreading inspiration

In its first year, M.A.D.E. hosted two exhibitions, two fundraising parties, four lectures and its first annual Street Furniture Competition. Its early success was due largely to a dedicated cadre of volunteers and the partnerships forged right from the start. The Works International Visual Arts Society, the Edmonton Art Gallery (now the Art Gallery of Alberta) and the University of Alberta Department of Art and Design were instrumental in the success of the first M.A.D.E. events.

There is a profound desire in the design community to seek out interesting ideas, bring in inspiring speakers from afar and learn how Edmonton can evolve around those great ideas. Over the past decade, M.A.D.E. has hosted dozens of lecturers, from Karim Rashid, an industrial design superstar based in New York, to Lawrence Scarpa of the firm Pugh + Scarpa, recent winner of the American Institute of Architects Best Firm Award. The ideas and cutting-edge projects that guest speakers present go a long way in fuelling creativity among local designers. The summertime Street Furniture Competition is still going strong in its ninth year. The event, which challenges teams to design and build ideas for urban environments using scrap wood and common tools, is

held in Churchill Square, where the public can watch the process. The annual outdoor film screening is another highlight of the summer. Films such as C.R.A.Z.Y., waydowntown and King of Kong: A Fist Full of Quarters have entertained crowds outside, in the middle of the urban core.

> There is a profound desire in the design community to seek out interesting ideas, bring in inspiring speakers from afar and learn how Edmonton can evolve around those great ideas.

Drawing on the best

M.A.D.E. has hosted two symposiums with the help of the Canada Council for the Arts. In 2004, the Big Design in Small Cities symposium explored how architects working in cities of fewer than a million people can produce high-quality, inspiring architecture. Presentations by architects practising from Whitehorse to Winnipeg showcased great design in small communities. The Capital Modern symposium in 2007 topped off an exhibit at the Art Gallery of Alberta that brought the brightest lights of Canadian architecture to Edmonton to discuss the legacy of modern architecture across the nation. The symposium highlighted for many the value of various Edmonton buildings that are understated and unappreciated. In 2006, M.A.D.E. also hosted the exhibit 41 to 66 degrees: Regional Responses to Architecture, a survey of architecture across Canada, which was shown at The Works Art & Design Festival and went on to represent Canada at the prestigious Venice Biennale.

Looking ahead

There is still much work to do in developing a greater appreciation of design in the greater Edmonton region. This is an incredible moment in M.A.D.E. to make things happen. In association with other organizations and businesses, such as the Edmonton Design Committee, Edmonton on the Edge, the Public Art Council and many, many others, M.A.D.E. will continue to raise awareness of the positive impact of critical design thinking with respect to our urban environment and the importance of dialogue among Edmontonians about how art, media and design affect our society.

Tyler Vreeling is founder of Fat Crow Design and the 2010 chair of M.A.D.E. Shafraaz Kaba is an architect with Manasc Isaac and a founding member of M.A.D.E.

Edmonton, Canada | Howie Phung

Edmonton Design Exposed: How a decade is M.A.D.E. October 14–23, 2010

To celebrate the past 10 years, M.A.D.E. in Edmonton is throwing the design bash of the decade! Over the course of 10 days, there will be myriad M.A.D.E. events, including architecture and design lectures, design exhibits, film screenings and other happenings involving public participation. A highlight will be a mashup exhibition of two industrial design powerhouses that have brought the Edmonton industrial design scene to the international stage: Hothouse versus Pure Design. The two had intertwined beginnings, and their eventual parting of ways led to a healthy rivalry in the world of industrial design. Don't miss this exhibit of new works from founders and collaborators, including Tim Antoniuk, Dennis Lenarduzzi and Geoff Lilge.

M.A.D.E. is calling on artists, designers and architects in and around the city to join and host events in a spirit of collaboration. We hope the partnerships forged during this special design week will lead to establishing an annual event. Edmonton Design Exposed will celebrate the past and look forward to the future and the potential of this city.

Find more information about this event, including a full schedule, at http://www.madeinedmonton.org.

M.A.D.E. IN EDMONTON

Putting the 'Local' into Economic Development Planning

Kevin E. Jones

Across the globe most of us now live in or around cities, with urban areas continuing to expand and, in many cases, growing together. Traditional boundaries between towns, and between town and country, are eroding. And it is not only lines on maps that are shifting; changing flows of people, goods, capital and knowledge are altering the social and cultural landscapes in which we live out our lives.

Processes of urban growth and the growing importance of life in the city have a long history. As early as the late 1800s, planning scholars such as Patrick Geddes were concerned with issues of "conurbation" — that is, with the fusion of metropolitan areas caused by sprawling housing development and industrial growth. Geddes, dealing with themes familiar to today's city-regions, described regional agglomerations as characterized by economic interdependencies, competition over resources (water, in particular) and the loss of access to green space and the rural environment.

While Geddes was principally concerned with the fusion of adjacent municipalities, city-regions today are also part of globalized networks of social, economic and environmental relations. City planners and municipal policy-makers must operate in a way that combines an appreciation of the needs and character of the local community with an awareness of the larger global networks in which they are situated.

NEW FOCUS ON CITY-REGIONS

This globalized context has put pressure on city-regions and the communities, planners and municipal officials drawn together under that banner. As the United Nations agency for human settlements, UN-HABITAT, notes in its 2009 report "Planning Sustainable Cities," the growth of urbanization and globalization have outpaced our ability to plan and govern these new urban spaces. It is anticipated that city-regions will drive the growth of national economies. Indeed, they are centre stage in ubiquitous discourses on global competitiveness, where urban centres are compared, contrasted and ranked on criteria ranging from economic performance to lifestyle and liveability. City-regions are also imagined as key nodes in global networks of innovation and knowledge exchange. And municipal planners are increasingly confronted by a myriad of shared and pressing environmental challenges. City-regions are becoming the hub around which both opportunities and risks for the future are being considered and acted upon.

Some planning scholars suggest that the evolving regional context amounts to a "rescaling" or "re-territorialization" of governance. Along with traditional administrative roles and service provision, city-regions are taking on new responsibilities that were formerly the preserve of larger state and national governments. For instance, traditional roles of local environmental stewardship are being extended to include wider ecosystem management and risk mitigation. Today's planning academics find themselves working on carbon reduction or flood management, or dealing with historically unparalleled amounts of human waste.

Edmonton, Canada | Mary St. Germain-Brown

Fort McMurray, Canada | Gord McKenna

ROOTING GLOBAL STRATEGIES IN LOCAL CONTEXTS

Shaping Our Region, a symposium on economic development hosted by the City-Region Studies Centre in Edmonton in June 2010, generated an important dialogue about the ways in which local development decisions can meet the needs of regional citizens and respond to global contexts and challenges. The event, sponsored jointly by the University of Alberta and the Edmonton Capital Regions Board, brought together an international collection of planning experts with an audience of community leaders.

A recurring challenge put to the audience was to create a foundation of local understanding from which to develop more global strategies. Keynote speaker Dr. John Harrison, a lecturer at Loughborough University in the United Kingdom, cautioned against the tendency to impose city-region models taken from other urban areas. While consultants and academics often talk about city-regions in universal terms, or advocate certain models of governance and development, Harrison warned that the experiences of one city rarely map successfully onto the needs of others; looking with "envious eyes" at other city-regions is not a basis for successful economic development planning. He urged that the planning discipline make the understanding of local contexts central to its mandates and actions.

Effective economic development planning must translate external experience and expertise in ways that account for local context and socio-economic conditions. Panellist Dr. Michael Glass, a lecturer at the University of Pittsburgh, noted that each city-region has unique experiences and needs, and each must cope with distinct issues in developing infrastructure, political institutions and local cultures, as well as differences in size and population. The lesson for planners and wider communities, Glass posed, is to emphasize the importance of focusing on process as opposed to fixating on desirable end products. Engaging with communities, developing transparent working practices and interrogating different community standards for interpreting success are all aspects of process. Road maps for development can be formed, but we must recognize that they are partial and situated within a particular interpretation of development at a specific point in time. As Dr. Glass stated: "We form a road map, but there is really no destination to the journey. We can only hope to be on the best highway at the time."

KEY PLAYERS OFTEN OVERLOOKED

Shifting the focus toward local context and processes has the important consequence of grounding economic development and planning in "community." This may seem obvious within the language and practices of the city-region, but needs and desires for the future of local communities are often overlooked or imposed onto communities by assumptions about the nature of development. Discussions of economic development generally focus on the language of hard economic truths and talk about market placement, global competitiveness and innovation. Similarly, government processes have tended to fixate on political boundaries, infrastructure, commuting distances and so on. But community can be found if we pay attention to each of these processes and not simply the discourse. This can lead to recognizing a new range of "publics," which can include local organizations, entrepreneurs, business associations and financial institutions as well as a wide range of citizens. They are important resources for developing successful city-regions.

Including these actors in economic development planning embodies democratic values of good governance. Research suggests that engaged, open and transparent policy-making by governments can lead to greater legitimacy, public confidence and community cohesion. This was the argument put forward at the symposium by Dr. Raheemah Jabbar-Bey, assistant professor at the University of Delaware. She urged the audience to recognize that including various publics in the planning process can offer benefits that directly inform the creation of better policy. For instance, while traditional approaches to economic planning have focused exclusively on market reforms and viewed citizens only as market actors, engaged processes can encompass discussions of equity and how benefits are understood, achieved and shared by citizens. Engaging communities permits questions about who benefits from development and how to make development work for communities as a whole. Inclusive

Shifting the focus toward local context and processes has the important consequence of grounding economic development and planning in "community."

planning also fosters productive intersectoral relationships, allowing for the sharing of knowledge and skills and encouraging co-operation and cohesion. Given the expanding range of complex policy issues facing city-regions, the ability to draw on multiple sources of expertise and experience from within the community is becoming an essential aspect of contemporary governance.

Clearly, local context matters. What Geddes understood at the turn of the previous century was that as the urban landscape changes, planners and municipal governments have an essential responsibility to adapt. In order to successfully navigate the many challenges a community faces in today's world, it must recognize its own unique makeup and context. In this way, a community can take meaningful action at the local level: action aimed at providing long-term, shared social and economic benefits in ways that account for issues of equity, liveability and sustainability. This challenge is embodied in the common phrase, "Think globally, act locally" — an idea, not surprisingly, that is attributed originally to Geddes, the town planner.

Kevin Jones is a research associate at the City-Region Studies Centre, University of Alberta. Prior to joining the Centre, Dr. Jones was an assistant professor at the University of Liverpool Management School. His recent research addresses the development of expertise and engagement in environmental policy-making and hazard regulation. He is cross-appointed to the University of Alberta's Department of Rural Economy and is an adjunct professor of sociology.

Edmonton, Canada | Howie Phung

SHAPING OUR REGION SYMPOSIUM

Lister Hall, University of Alberta

On June 25, 2010, the CRSC presented a stellar lineup of national and international speakers on regional economic development. The Shaping our Region Symposium was an opportunity for local policy-makers and community leaders to explore best practices in regional economics, and to discuss how these practices can be translated in the local context. The event generated an important dialogue which contributed to the Capital Region Board's implementation of the Capital Region Economic Roadmap. A summary of the day's discussions can be found at http://www.shaping-our-region.ca.

SPEAKERS

City-Regions as Key Sites for Economic Development
John Harrison, Loughborough University, United Kingdom

Capital Region Economic Roadmap
Kathleen LeClair, Capital Region Board

Science, Technology and Commercialization in Economic Roadmaps: Case Studies from France and Sweden,
Tracy Grose, Collaborative Economics

Seeking Global Competitiveness through Regional Governance: Comparing Auckland and Pittsburgh
Michael Glass, University of Pittsburgh

Struggling to Get Out of the Shadow of the Federal Government: Regional Economic Development by the City of Ottawa
Caroline Andrew, University of Ottawa

Regional Economic Planning in the Greater Golden Horseshoe
Hazel McCallion, Mayor, Mississauga

The Role of Non-governmental Actors in Regional Economic Development
Raheemah M. Jabbar-Bey, University of Delaware

Summary of the Day
Jason Brisbois, Western Centre for Economic Research
Carl Amrhein, University of Alberta

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Community, Citizenship, Liveability
Michael Phair, University of Alberta
Martin Garber-Conrad, Edmonton Community Foundation
Rob Shields, University of Alberta

Environment, Energy, Resources
Kevin Jones, City-Region Studies Centre
Tracy Grose, Collaborative Economics
Beverly Yee, Government of Alberta
Debra Davidson, University of Alberta

Infrastructure, Housing, Land Use
Alex Lord, University of Liverpool, United Kingdom
Greg Christenson, Christenson Development
Gordon Molnar, AECOM
Richard Parker, RKP Consulting
Simon O'Byrne, Stantec

Innovation, Knowledge, Adaptation
Gary Albach, Alberta Innovates
Chris Lumb, TEC Edmonton
Martin Salloum, Edmonton Chamber of Commerce
Alan Smart, University of Calgary

Population, Equity, Inclusiveness
Kyle Whitfield, University of Alberta
David Etherington, Middlesex University
Scott Ferguson, Service Canada
John Kolkman, Edmonton Social Planning Council

HOSTS AND MC

Rob Shields, Academic Director, City-Region Studies Centre

Corey Wentzell, Professional Programs, Faculty of Extension

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Peterborough, Canada

Sustainability Planning in a Regional Context: COLLABORATION AND THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE

Stephen Hill and Natalie Napier

Sustainable community planning seeks to guide decisions and activities so that environmental, social, cultural and economic goals are considered in an integrated way. Sustainability planning must work at multiple scales, acknowledge ecological boundaries such as watersheds and airsheds, and connect urban and rural systems. Unfortunately, this sort of holistic planning doesn't normally align conveniently with political boundaries and institutional structures.

Recognizing these challenges, the Greater Peterborough Area is embarking on an 18-month sustainability planning exercise involving eight townships, two municipal governments, two First Nations and a range of private, public and non-profit organizations. The work is being funded jointly by local governments, the Green Municipal Fund, the Rural Secretariat and the Trillium Foundation. The administration is being led by the Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corporation (GPA EDC), and a consulting group is facilitating the work.

While the formal planning process is only now beginning, getting to this point involved years of effort to create alliances of support for the notion of sustainability planning so that key actors and stakeholders could "buy into" the process. This article describes the genesis of this regional sustainability planning process. As participants in the process we have spent some time reflecting on the successes, challenges and dynamics at work in getting to this point.

This is not the first time Peterborough has made an attempt at sustainability planning. Although Peterborough has a reputation for having a progressive environmental attitude and close ties to the natural environment, it lacked a coordinated and strategic approach to sustainability. In response, a group of local academics and community-based environmental professionals formed the Peterborough Sustainability Network (PSN) in 2000 with the ambition of coordinating their activities and bringing policy ideas from the university and community to the municipality. They met monthly, attended public meetings at city hall and directed letters to the appropriate councillors, trying to move sustainability issues higher on the municipal agenda. Yet the PSN was never able to make an imprint on the official political agenda. The group disbanded in 2006.

Four years later, as we write, city and county staff are working alongside environmentalists, economic developers, academics, retirees, students and members of the business community to create a regional sustainability plan. Together they have prepared and defended grant applications, hosted workshops, presented to councils, hired consultants and built the political support needed for this project to move forward. The city and county councils have backed the process by allocating funding and staff time as well as by making joint applications to various funding agencies. The townships are also participating, and a governance model and reporting structure for regional sustainability planning has been established.

What made the difference? In our view, a critical factor was a strategic focus on collaborating with key decision-makers and supporters in order to build new relationships and social capital. The collaboration was not focused on one particular issue, such as transportation, energy or climate change. Moreover, the work didn't attempt to generate specific policy ideas or carry out detailed analysis, as the Peterborough Sustainability Network attempted. Rather, the pieces of the PSN's efforts were picked up over early-morning breakfast meetings with a

small group of environmentalists, where a plan was conceived to capture the attention of key leaders in the region. The plan involved bridging the gap between conceptual ideas and on-the-ground challenges for municipal policy-makers.

The first stage in the collaboration effort was to stage a sustainability workshop in the fall of 2007 with the hope of involving politicians and officials from the city and county. The group asked the mayor to host the workshop in his name. He agreed and issued invitations to councillors and staff. On the day of the workshop, the mayor made an appearance, as did other invited politicians and officials. In the end, the content of the workshops, though of interest to many, was strategically far less important than the perception that the mayor was hosting the event and promoting collaboration between the municipality and the workshop's organizers.

The workshop led to a request for seed funding from the city and county to create a task force on regional sustainability. This request came just as public concern for the environment was at its peak, capitalizing on a window of opportunity. The Sustainable Peterborough Steering Committee included representatives from the community, non-profits, academia, and municipal and county staff. It focused much of its work on gaining political traction for the notion of sustainability planning, work that has been aided greatly by the leadership of the GPA EDC. The GPA EDC holds significant political legitimacy in the region and, because of its focus on economic and social betterment of the region, lends credibility to the steering committee's claim that sustainability needs to meaningfully integrate environmental, economic and social issues.

In Peterborough's case, change has come from working with, rather than against, key politicians and leaders. To do this, steering committee members worked hard to engage more effectively in the political system and to understand the pressures and issues facing political leaders as well as constructing a salient and compelling narrative for other groups and stakeholders. They also found, because they came from a range of organizations, that it was important — though sometimes challenging — to build trust, legitimacy and co-operative work habits that crossed the boundaries of their institutional cultures. It appears sustainability planning might be better advanced when advocates come together and learn to speak the language of those they're trying to reach. This stands in contrast to a truism on which environmental advocacy is often based — that criticizing those in power through analysis or activism is the path to change.

It appears sustainability planning might be better advanced when advocates come together and learn to speak the language of those they're trying to reach.

Frances Westley, an academic who studies social innovation, defines social systems as "any organized assembly of resources, beliefs and procedures united and regulated by interaction or interdependence to accomplish a set of specific functions." Change in the "basic routines, resource and authority flows or beliefs" of a social system constitutes social innovation, Westley writes in "The Social Innovation Dynamic."

While it's too early to call the work of the Sustainable Peterborough Steering Committee a social innovation in the sense that Westley defines it, we feel that the culture of collaboration and efforts to bridge previously alienated social systems — in this case, academia, community-based not-for-profits, municipal governments and the private sector — are laying the groundwork for future innovation. We instead would like to call what has taken place "social learning;" that is, "learning processes among a group of people who seek to improve a common situation and take action collectively," as described by Will Allen in "Social Learning, Governance and Practice Change." The steering committee members are still in the midst of this social learning, which Allen says depends on "network building, dialogue, knowledge management and evaluation."

In Peterborough, the collaborative approach to regional sustainability planning has proven more successful than a confrontational one in placing sustainability on the regional political agenda. We view the collaborative relationships cultivated as a considerable achievement in and of themselves, regardless of the substantive outcomes of the planning process. We expect the collaborative working relationships that have emerged across political and institutional boundaries will ultimately bring a range of innovative action plans into the realm of possibility and will provide a solid basis for dealing with the inevitable conflict and misunderstanding that arise in making the challenging decisions that sustainability planning demands.

More background about the Sustainable Peterborough Steering Committee can be found at http://sustainablepeterborough.wordpress.com/.

Frances Westley's "The Social Innovation Dynamic" can be found at http://sig.uwaterloo.ca/sites/default/files/documents/TheSocialInnovationDynamic_001_0.pdf.

Will Allen's "Social Learning, Governance and Practice Change" can be found at http://www.learningforsustainability.net/social_learning/.

Stephen Hill is an assistant professor of Environmental and Resource Studies at Trent University and has been involved with both the Peterborough Sustainability Network and the Sustainable Peterborough Steering Committee.

Natalie Napier was the community researcher for the Sustainable Peterborough Steering Committee during 2008–09 and now works for Cambium Environmental.

How to Make Regional Collaboration Work: LESSONS FROM FLAGSTAFF COUNTY

The CRSC Flagstaff Research Team

Introduction

The County of Flagstaff, Alberta, envisions itself as a "community of communities." This is more than just a nice idea. It's a real commitment to co-operation and a meaningful appreciation of diversity — with all its rewards and challenges — that makes this nice idea a driving force and the ethos for an entire county.

"Our vision is actually that we are a safe and caring and vibrant rural community of communities committed to working with our neighbours to ensure a quality of life for all citizens. As an innovative and progressive community that balances economic prosperity and environmental stewardship, we deliver a responsible level of service that is both efficient and effective."

The City-Region Studies Centre (CRSC) conducted a research study to explore the nature of interdependencies between the urban and rural areas of Flagstaff County in terms of economic, social and environmental sustainability. The study sought to understand the conditions under which partnerships are most beneficial and ways to facilitate co-operation that would lead to prosperity and well-being in the region. The final report is available online at http://www.crsc.ualberta.ca. The following is a summary of the lessons learned about encouraging successful partnerships.

LESSON 1: See diversity and difference as a strength

The communities of Flagstaff come together around shared values and goals. But they are also brought together by their differences. The communities acknowledge that diversity among them creates opportunities for partnership. Diversity gives both the reasons and the tools to collaborate with and complement one another. Partnerships enable community members to pool resources, reduce duplication, share knowledge and do much more.

LESSON 2: Recognize the mutual benefits of partnering

"Everybody's got their strengths, and if you put them all together, you can accomplish quite a bit."

If collaboration through partnering enables diverse communities to complement one another, what conditions favour partnerships? In Flagstaff, there are many. But urban-rural alliances and agreements are most beneficial when the participating parties share common goals, resources and timelines, and when they pursue their shared objectives through open communication. In these successful partnerships, the involved parties share knowledge, resources and best practices, and include a balance between outside expertise and local know-how. They value and encourage top-quality administrative and political leadership, have clearly delineated roles and responsibilities, and develop trust and social relationships between partners and among others.

Strome, Canada | Ondine Park

"We have ... the mindset that we are working towards the same set of goals."

LESSON 3: Acknowledge conflict and differences

While people in rural and urban areas enjoy and acknowledge the benefits of partnering, there are also, of course, conflicts. For example, there are contrary views about who benefits most from rural-urban interdependency. Some believe the towns and villages are dependent on the county for continued viability. Others believe the towns and villages pay a disproportionately large share of costs for recreational facilities that are used by county residents.

LESSON 4: Turn challenges and obstacles into opportunities

The challenges

The past

Current practice is influenced by past experiences. Past failures can be particularly tenacious obstacles. Involved parties may be reluctant to try again if they feel they lost out in previous partnering.

Resources

At times, partnering is hindered by a lack of resources brought to the table by some of the partners or by a lack of local knowledge, guidance and structure about how to partner.

Personalities

Some partners bring unresolved interpersonal conflicts to the table, while others have a mentality of protectionism and limitations in dispute resolution mechanisms.

Inequalities

Inequalities in power and population base can lead to complications in cost sharing and funding.

The opportunities

The people of Flagstaff recognize opportunities in the diversity in opinions, resources, knowledge and ways of doing things within the region. They see co-operation as a way, for example, to reduce development-related conflicts and promote environmental sustainability through water conservation, sustainable agriculture and waste management. They look forward to developing more social infrastructure, including seniors' housing and recreational facilities, and to engaging with other partners through regional organizations.

LESSON 5: Facilitating urban-rural partnerships

In seeking to create productive relationships, the communities of Flagstaff emphasize the need to actively guide and structure partnerships while still allowing communities to choose what to partner over and with whom. A spirit of co-operation and community should be fostered, and communities that invest in partnerships should be rewarded. Community members feel that fostering local innovation is one way to achieve diversification, and they see partnering as a way to foster innovation by sharing knowledge and best practices. Potential benefits include attracting investors to the region and helping maintain services and populations, which would help keep the communities viable.

"What you've got ... is a bunch of people that have ... divergent personalities and different ways of approaching a problem, so that you have a lot better chance of maybe solving that problem in the best way possible."

Conclusion

This community of communities has demonstrated both the need for partnering and the way forward to achieving it. Diversity is an important ingredient in creating productive partnerships, presenting challenges, but also providing the impetus to come together.

Daysland, Canada | Ondine Park

The Importance of Interdependency

Intermunicipal interdependence is a fact of life in Alberta and elsewhere. Growth pressures and population increases drive urban expansion farther into rural areas, blurring the traditional political boundaries and separating rural communities and urban centres. Communities and governments must respond to the challenges of interdependency with innovation rooted in collaborative cultures and practices.

To this end, the CRSC's work on the nature of urban-rural relations has revealed some potentially useful insights. We invite you to visit our website at **http://www.crsc.ualberta.ca/partnership.cfm** to share your experiences of intermunicipal partnerships. By engaging a variety of voices in discussions of our observations and outcomes, we hope to enrich the pool of knowledge about intermunicipal partnership.

UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNICATIVE CITY

Marco Adria and Gordon Gow

INTRODUCTION

Marshall McLuhan is now regarded as a kind of old prophet of technology. But his comments about new media and urban spaces continue to yield provocative perspectives even today. McLuhan expressed his observations as probes, what he thought of as a new grammar for a new age. Through these, he raised fundamental questions about our relationship to technology and urban space but, controversially, left it to others to pursue the answers to these questions.

MEDIA CHANGE HOW WE SEE THE WORLD

McLuhan argued that each new technological innovation introduces immediate and fundamental changes in how we make sense of and respond to the world and to other people. Space and time are altered whenever a new medium comes into wide use. Significantly, we tend to misunderstand, ignore or fail to see these changes as they happen. Even as we use technology like extensions of our human senses to experience the world more intensely, we become simultaneously more separated from it, paradoxically resulting in a feeling of "numbness." Thus, while technology is deeply embedded in our culture, we are often only vaguely aware of the implications of our relationship to it.

A NEW MEDIUM CHANGES WHAT'S FRONT AND CENTRE

Although we can never fully understand the meanings of the messages being created in and by the city, McLuhan suggests we can try to do so by immersing ourselves in the city's images. With the advent of electronic communications technology, McLuhan claimed, we are witnessing a fundamental shift away from visual ways of understanding into a world of acoustic or auditory space. He described the new acoustic space as a sphere without fixed boundaries, and the instantaneous global connections of electronic media change our experience of space to one with no point of favoured focus. The metaphor of acoustic space can help us grasp ways in which electronic spaces are influencing everyday life in cities. Cities, he argued, could now be imagined as "technological composites," or what we might today call mashups, hybrid spaces that, for example, combine with social media and mobile communications devices, such as the iPhone and iPad. Space becomes dynamic and always in flux, creating its own dimensions moment by moment. McLuhan notes that in this contemporary context of auditory space and electronic media, power shifts away from a fixed centre and toward multiple points of influence: "Today the entire human community is being translated into 'auditory space,' or into that 'field of simultaneous relations,' by electric broadcasting. It behooves the architect and town planner, above all, to know what this means."

The media-rich city landscapes of North America have raised new questions about public and private space. How can we create and sustain cultural and economic spaces? What new images can we use to understand the city, and what it might become? McLuhan's keen insights can help us understand the changing relationship between new media and urban spaces. The value of the acoustic metaphor may yet lie in its capacity to reconfigure our understanding of culture and technology.

Marco Adria is an associate professor of communications and director of the Graduate Program in Communications and Technology in the Faculty of Extension. Gordon Gow conducts research on the social impact of new communication technologies and is also an associate professor in the Faculty of Extension.

Herbert Marshall McLuhan Edmonton Centenary

In 2011 the University of Alberta will host the Herbert Marshall McLuhan Edmonton Centenary, marking 100 years since the birth of the influential scholar and public figure in Edmonton on July 21, 1911. The centenary will continue the scholarly and popular development of the Edmonton-McLuhan connection by providing opportunities for citizens, students and scholars to consider just some of McLuhan's themes about media and space in cities. It will also use new media to identify spaces and places connected to McLuhan's birth in, visits to and reflections on Edmonton. For more information visit **http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/mact/CentenarySchedule2011.cfm**

A crowd gathers in front of Liggett's Drug Store (now Starbucks) to listen to the radio. McLuhan argued that technological innovations immediately and fundamentally change the way we make sense of and respond to the world.

The first house in which Marshall McLuhan lived still stands in the Highlands neighbourhood of Edmonton. The future of the house and whether it will be protected as a historical landmark remain uncertain.

For McLuhan, communication systems in Canada began with rivers, which gave way to the railroad, then the telegraph, radio and television, and finally satellites and computers. Each system was accompanied by a different emphasis on space and time.

The University of Alberta honoured Marshall McLuhan with an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree in 1971. In his address, McLuhan stressed the need for schools and universities to adjust 19th-century values to 20th-century electronic means. (*Edmonton Journal*, November 22, 1971)

MAPPING INVISIBLE FENCES

An Interview with Dr. Allan Parnell

Howie Phung

According to Dr. Allan Parnell of the Cedar Grove Institute for Sustainable Communities, there are "invisible fences" that separate minority groups from the rest of the community. Dr. Parnell's work using geographic information systems (GIS) has been described as making those "invisible fences" visible. Using publicly available government data, Parnell finds patterns of discrimination in the way municipalities plan and provide services, whether intentional or not. For example, he used GIS to show that degraded fire hydrants were located primarily in poor neighbourhoods in a particular American town. In other instances, he has used GIS to show that in some African-American or Latino neighbourhoods, infrastructure such as sewerage, street lights, and sidewalks haven't been provided at all, in stark contrast to the surrounding communities.

CURB: Can you give us an example of your work?

AP: We went in front of a jury with GIS in Zanesville, Ohio, a small industrial town between Columbus and Pittsburgh. In the mid-'50s, they ran the waterline just outside of town. The waterline stopped at the last house owned by whites in this neighbourhood. Since then, they've never extended that line, even though they've since extended the lines 13 miles beyond this neighbourhood. And in this place you cannot use groundwater — well water — because of contamination from coal mining. The small African-American community of 30 households had to catch rain off their roofs into cisterns or drive to the water plant, fill up barrels and dump them into their cisterns. This went on from the mid-'50s until they finally filed a federal lawsuit in 2004. Their neighbours had hot tubs, and they were catching water off their roof.

What we did was obtain the public data: the location of the waterline, all of the houses in the neighbourhood whose owners had billed water service. Then I went door to door to find the race of the homeowners. We built this map a layer at a time in front of the jury and showed clearly that the reason these people didn't have water was because they were black. And it was powerful. Afterwards, the jury said it was a powerful piece of evidence that made [discrimination] visible again.

CURB: How can GIS be used by governments?

AP: I think GIS is an essential planning tool for governments to understand the distribution of government resources, from infrastructure, to paving, to the location of fire hydrants. If it can be incorporated into ongoing assessment of the provision of services and assessments of potential inequities that get built into the system, then it can be used as a powerful way to evaluate how a government is serving its people.

CURB: Where do you think GIS will go from here?

AP: I think it will expand greatly as long as we can help maintain public data and transparent data. There's increasing use of GIS: it's used in geosciences, environmental sciences, planning. But we can start looking at issues of social justice and access to public resources.

It's getting the data and knowing the questions that are the issues. You can combine information from different sources into a single map. We're not addressing hypotheses in the scientific sense; we're using the empirical research tools and research designs to build evidence that will help bring social change.

US/Mexico Border, USA | Brian Auer

A NOVEL APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIP

Edward C. LeSage Jr.

Researchers often work with public officials on real-world public policy and administration issues. These arrangements benefit both sides: elected and administrative officials contribute to researchers' knowledge, while the research provides them with useful insights and information. An added bonus is that students, as principal researchers or research support, gain contextual knowledge and experience.

These "fair trades" are regular occurrences. But an initiative at the University of Oregon bears a closer look for its novelty – and its possible use in Canada. The Sustainable Cities Year (SCY) component of the university's Sustainable Cities Initiative strikes a partnership with a different Oregon city each year, providing university courses from various disciplines that focus on defined sustainability goals and projects in that city. The focus is intense, and the investment of energy and resources is significant.

Municipalities compete to be selected. This year, the state's capital city of Salem was chosen from among five contenders. SCY will focus on seven principal projects, ranging from research into development scenarios that make better use of Salem's riverfront in the downtown area, to a civic engagement strategy to expand communication and public participation through new technology and other means. Other projects include the redesign of a civic centre and a start on planning for a new police facility, a strategy to restore natural areas in a semi-developed urban park and a development plan for a housing authority site.

The partnership with Salem will involve more than 25 university courses, an equal number of faculty members and approximately 600 students. This is a jump from last year's inaugural partnership with Gresham, a municipality in the Portland Metro area, which started with six courses but expanded to 21. The university estimates that nearly 100,000 hours of student work were applied to the Gresham projects.

While the projects reflect SCY's roots in the School of Architecture and Applied Arts, with a focus on architecture, planning, interior architecture and landscape architecture, the program now extends to other university schools and colleges, including public policy and management, law, business management and journalism. A couple of Portland State University courses will also be included in the mix.

Salem's city manager praises the program for helping the city pursue its goals and for leveraging limited resources to move projects forward more quickly. University administrators see it as a vehicle to serve the public interest, while the principals of the SCY see it as a way to promote the sustainability ideal. Perhaps the crowning achievement is that students who will soon graduate into professional practice have the opportunity to wrestle with integrating theoretical and practical problems.

Could this idea work in Canada? It would require, at the very least, strong academic leadership, an institutional commitment to "engaged scholarship" and public service, the wide range of disciplines found at a large university and public partners willing to commit staff time, funding and other resources. Prior success in university-public sector partnerships would also be an advantage. Undoubtedly, there are Canadian institutions and municipalities that could make it work.

For more information, see http://sci.uoregon.edu/.

Edward LeSage Jr. is a professor emeritus at the Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta.

APPLIED LAND USE PLANNING
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

Photos by Darren Kirby.

Photo by Ivydawned

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For more information, visit: **http://www.extension.ualberta.ca/govstudies**

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ISSN 1923-7413 (Print)
ISSN 1923-7421 (Online)