

Factors nurturing resilience in resort destination governance

by

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Abstract

Resilience is a concept of growing interest amongst scholars who seek to understand how communities may better adapt to change. From a tourism perspective, the dynamic nature of the industry appears to provide it with an ability to cope with a range of system changes; however, tourism communities are at risk and vulnerable to a variety of shocks (e.g. disease outbreaks, terrorist attacks, tsunamis,) and stressors (e.g. prolonged economic recessions, climate change, changing demographics, et cetera). This research draws upon and applies the socio-ecological resilience (SER) framework developed by Ruiz-Ballesteros (2011) to understand the factors that nurture resilience in sustainability-focused governance systems. It presents the findings from a case study undertaken in the mountain resort community of Whistler, British Columbia, Canada. The findings are drawn from 48 key informant interviews, participant observation, and document analysis.

This study corroborates past research, which described four sets of socio-ecological systems-based factors that enable or enhance resilience at the community level. However, it extends these findings and offers: 1) new insights related to a set of individually based factors that also appear to shape a resort community's resilience. This study proposes an extended SER framework reflective of this finding; 2) insights related to how a variety of shocks and stressors affected a resort destination's sustainability-focused governance system; and, 3) insights into the role of governance actors in enhancing governance and resort community resilience. Overall, the research contributes to the theoretical and applied dimensions of resilience, resort destination governance, shocks and stressors, and sustainable tourism knowledge.

Keywords: resilience; resort destination governance; shocks and stressors; sustainability

Dedication

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List of Acronyms & Glossary

AWARE	Association of Whistler Area Residents for the Environment. AWARE “strives to improve the quality of life in Whistler and surrounding areas, protect and restore the natural heritage and maintain our resources and ecosystems, and achieve environmental sustainability through community education and advocacy (AWARE, n.d.).
CoC	The Chamber of Commerce represents over 800 businesses in Whistler. The organization calls itself the “Voice of Business.” (Whistlerchamber.com., n.d.)
Critical events	Defined as significant economic, socio-cultural, political and/or environmental occurrences (positive or negative) that have influenced Whistler’s overall approaches to planning, development and sustainability.
EPI	Economic Partnerships Initiative report was released in October 2013. The report “summarizes key research findings, provides concrete recommendations for collaboration for Whistler’s continued economic success, and defines guidelines for evaluating investment of Resort Municipality Initiative (RMI) funds to maintain and grow Whistler’s tourism economy.” (RMOW, 2013b)
MAC	Mature Action Committee is a registered, non-profit organization concerned with seniors’ issues, such as their social needs and housing. The organization seeks to enable residents to age in place.
OCP	Official Community Plan. Whistler’s OCP is mandated by the Province of BC. It is comprised of a set of high-level plans and policies, and includes land use designations to “guide land use planning, social, economic and environmental policies and civic infrastructure investments.” (RMOW, 2013e)
Phase One Covenant	Required homeowners of property to rent their property when they were not using it, if they not living in it full time.
Phase Two Covenant	Required homeowners to put their units in an organized rental program, approved by the RMOW. A Phase Two Covenant is considered more restrictive than a Phase One Covenant. The Phase Two Covenant resulted in the development of what are known as condo hotels.
Province of BC	Province of British Columbia
RMI	Resort Municipality Initiative. Implemented in 2006, the RMI funding comes from the Province of BC and is shared amongst BC’s eligible resort municipalities. The funds permit Whistler to “invest in many important programs and services to support tourism” (RMOW, 2013e).
RMOW	Resort Municipality of Whistler
SFU	Simon Fraser University

SLRD	Squamish Lillooet Regional District. The SLRD consists of four municipalities: District of Lillooet, Village of Pemberton, RMOW, District of Squamish, and four rural unincorporated electoral areas. The SLRD is within the traditional territories of the Squamish and St’at’imc Nations (see slrd.bc.ca).
Sustainable development	“Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987).
TW	Tourism Whistler is a non-profit, member-based marketing and sales organization that represents Whistler. TW also runs the Whistler Conference Centre, Whistler Golf Club, the Whistler Visitor Centre, and Coast Mountain Reservations. TW is legally known as the Whistler Resort Association.
VANOC	Vancouver Organizing Committee. VANOC is the non-profit organization that was incorporated under the Canada Corporations Act to oversee the planning, organizing, financing and staging of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. The committee was guided by a 20 member board of directors (Government of Canada, 2009)
WAC	Whistler Arts Council. WAC is a registered charity that seeks to “build and integrate the arts into the fabric of the community” of Whistler and the surrounding areas. WAC was established in 1982 (WAC, 2014).
WAG	Whistler Animals Galore. Founded in 1982, WAG is a non-profit, registered charity that cares for and re-homes hundreds of animals each year (WAG, 2014).
WORCA	Whistler Off Road Cycle Association. Founded in 1989, WORCA works with government, landowners, and developers to “ensure mountain bike trail access while providing a wide range of other services to the mountain bike community (WORCA, 2014).
WB	Whistler Blackcomb is the name commonly used to describe Whistler Blackcomb Holdings Inc., the company that owns a 75% interest in both Whistler Mountain Resort Limited Partnership and Blackcomb Skiing Enterprises Limited Partnership (Whistlerblackcomb.com, 2014b)

Prologue

In the spring of 2012 I began to hear rumours that the Resort Municipality of Whistler's (RMOW) sustainability movement was dead. Having been involved with the Whistler Centre for Sustainability (WCS) in 2008-09 in my provincial government position, and later as an independent consultant, I was surprised to hear that Whistler would choose to move away from its sustainability focus. After all, the community had spent, according to one informant, at least one million dollars developing and implementing aspects of its sustainability strategy. Further, the community's blossoming sustainability movement had, according to some informants, helped Canada secure the successful bid in 2003 to host the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games' (2010 Olympic Games) venues. The WCS, a non-profit organization, originally birthed within the halls of the RMOW, was now out in the world, working on a fee-for-service basis to assist other communities develop and implement sustainability strategies. Whistler's reputation for sustainability leadership had spread and they were setting the bar for other resort destinations and beyond. Proof of its growing sustainability reputation was evidenced in its growing list of regional, provincial and even global awards. The rumours piqued my researcher curiosity and instigated this study.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Since the late 1980s, a growing portion of the developed world nations has placed increasing priority on implementing the concept of sustainable development. More sustainable forms of development may enable the current generation to address its own needs in such a manner that it does not compromise the ability of future generations to do likewise (World Commission Environment and Development (WCED, 1987). However, Handmer and Dovers (1996) note the enormity of this task and suggest that much uncertainty exists on how best to achieve this goal. They feel that part of the solution to this is learning lessons of past human experiences, “where change and the interaction of human and natural systems have been addressed before” (p. 485). They propose that the ecology discipline, along with research that studies risk, hazards, and disasters, provides the answers. As they explain, these fields are concerned with understanding “responses to both the threat and the occurrence of rapid-onset change in human and natural environments,” as well as how best to cope with changes (p. 485). The ability to manage and cope with change is known as resilience. Lebel et al (2006) suggest that human societies must shift their focus toward first improving the ability of communities to enhance their resilience in order to effectively pursue more sustainable forms of development.

With its focus on a systems approach to problems, many scholars believe resilience rather than a sustainability approach may help humanity better manage its responses to changes in socio-ecological systems (SES). The most common resilience definitions arise from two separate fields of study. The first field concerns SES where resilience describes the “the ability to absorb disturbances, to be changed and then to re-organise and still have the same identity (i.e. retain the same basic structure and ways of functioning).” In this context, “A resilient system is forgiving of external shocks” (Resilience Alliance, 2012, n.p.). The second field emerges from child and youth psychology development theory. It perceives resilience as being the internally focused capacities, characteristics, or behaviour, as well as the structural conditions (social,

cultural and political) that enable children or youth to adapt in the face of adversity (Ungar, 2003). A variety of frameworks have been developed and tested to assess resilience, both at the community and the individual level. One of the more recent community oriented models, from a tourism perspective, is a socio-ecological resilience (SER) framework developed to examine resilience in the small rural tourism community of Agua Blanca, Ecuador (Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011). The SER framework identifies four groups of overriding community-based resilience-enhancing characteristics. These include: 1) learning to live with change and uncertainty; 2) nurturing diversity for reorganization and renewal; 3) combining different kinds of knowledge; and, 4) creating opportunity for self-organization. The general notion is that the more prevalent these characteristics exist within in a community, the greater the place's overall resilience. From an individualistic perspective, one of the more relevant resilience frameworks is that of Kumpfer (1999). She draws upon a large body of child and youth developmental and psychopathology literature to develop a set of five internal resilience characteristics or factors (cognitive, spiritual, behavioural, emotional, physical) that contribute to personal resilience, particularly in times of stress.

Despite the presence of these parallel fields of study, it appears that no studies have examined the cross-scale dynamic interactions between individuals and community resilience. This situation extends to studies examining the role of governance systems in enabling and enhancing individual and community resilience. In the context of this dissertation, governance refers to the values, rules, and laws, as well as the institutions and processes (i.e. policy-making, discursive debates, negotiations, mediation, elections, referendums, public consultations, protests, etc.) through which public and private stakeholders seek to achieve common objectives and make decisions (Lebel et al., 2006; Pierre, 1999; Rhodes, 1997). Research concerning tourism governance has grown rapidly in recent years, particularly with respect to its role as a tool for shaping economic, social, political and environmental policy policies (Hall, 2011), and helping destinations adapt to change (Baggio, Scott, & Cooper, 2010). While a commonly accepted framework for exploring and understanding the dynamics of governance systems has yet to be established, a growing body of research exists concerning how governance systems identify, prioritize, and respond to environmental, technological, and sociological change (Strandberg, 2005). More recently, researchers have turned

their attention to better understanding the role of governance actors in destination development and management (see Beritelli, 2011; Beritelli & Bieger, 2014; Franch, Martini, & Buffa, 2010). However, the research points to the need for social structures that support the resilience of tourism governance systems (see Luthe, Wyss, & Schuckert, 2012), particularly in times of shock and stress. It also points to the need for greater understanding of the governance models and management strategies that will be most effective in shaping sustainability progress (Gill & Williams, 2011; Rijke et al., 2012).

The ability of individuals and social groups and their governance institutions to adapt to change and/or to cope with shocks and stressors is a critical component of social resilience, especially where exogenous disturbances put pressure on social capital and institutions (Adger, 2000). In the context of this dissertation, “stressors” refer to slow moving events, while “shocks” concern more sudden events that typically precede crises. Tourism industry stakeholders are regularly confronted with a range of system shocks (e.g. SARS, terrorist attacks, tsunamis) and stressors (e.g. climate change, changing weather patterns) that require them to cope and adapt to evolving situations on a seemingly ongoing basis (Scott, Frietas, & Matzarakis, 2008). As Turner, Vu, and Wit (2006) observe, such critical events may lead to both short and/or long term declines in destination economic performance (e.g. visitation, revenue, competitiveness, etc.), which has an impact upon host communities. Increasingly, ill-prepared resort communities are at risk and vulnerable to a variety of shocks and stressors, particularly in this globalized world. Consequently, it is critical that tourism governance managers gain a stronger understanding of not only how shocks and stressors impact the vitality and resilience of their communities, but also that they acquire a greater appreciation of the types of governance approaches for nurturing resilient responses to such events.

1.1. Statement of the problem

Despite the research and efforts to implement more sustainable forms of development, implementation progress has been slow, piecemeal, and overall disappointing. An increasing number of researchers suggest that a resilience approach, particularly at the community level, may be the key to more timely and substantive

progress on sustainability. Recently, researchers have turned their attention to understanding the factors that may enable and enhance community resilience, both in the general and in the tourism literature; however, there is a lack of research to understand the factors that enable and enhance resilience in resort destination governance systems, particularly those focused on sustainability. Further, there is a research void as it relates to understanding how shocks and stressors affect the resilience of such governance systems and resort destination communities, generally.

1.2. Research objectives and questions

This study presents insights into the resilience-enhancing factors in resort governance systems, particularly those focused on sustainability, as well as insights into how shocks and stressors affect the resilience of such systems. The following research objectives and related research questions were explored in the context of the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW), British Columbia, Canada. Whistler, one of Canada's premier mountain resort destinations, was chosen for this study because of its unique, sustainability focused governance system and the challenges it was experiencing.

Research objective #1 seeks to address a gap in the literature as it relates to *understanding those factors that nurture resilience in resort governance systems, particularly those focused on sustainability*. The following research questions address this objective:

Research question 1: What do governance actors perceive to be the factors shaping the capacity of its sustainability-focused governance system to proactively respond to and manage shocks and stressors?

Research question 2: What do governance actors perceive to be the strategies that enable proactive responses to shocks and stressors?

Research objective #2 seeks to address a gap in the literature as it relates to *understanding how the various types of shocks and stressors affect the resilience of a resort's sustainability-focused governance system and the community's overall resilience*. The following research question addresses this objective:

Research question 3: What types of shocks and stressors do governance actors perceive to be strengthening and weakening the resilience of a sustainability-focused governance system?

Research objective #3 seeks to address a literature gap as it relates to *understanding the role of governance actors in enabling and enhancing the ability of a sustainability-focused governance system to proactively respond to shocks and stressors*. The following research question achieves this objective:

Research question 4: What is the role of governance actors in shaping the sustainability-focused governance system's ability to proactively respond to shocks and stressors?

While these research objectives are focused on achieving greater levels of understanding as it relates to tourism destinations, their results may be applicable to other communities.

1.3. Case study

The RMOW, a purpose-build resort community, approximately 120 kilometres north of Vancouver, BC, has been on a self-described *journey toward success and sustainability* since the late 1990s. To guide it on this journey, the community worked collaboratively to develop a unique governance system that imbedded a sustainability plan into public policy. This plan, known as the Whistler2020 strategy, has been in place as the RMOW's highest-ranking governance document since approximately 2005. However, during its existence, Whistler has been besieged by a variety of system shocks (i.e. 2008 global financial crisis; 2011 municipal election) and stressors (i.e. climate change, changing demographics and key markets, a volatile Canadian dollar, and the hosting of the 2010 Olympic Games). These shocks and stressors collectively challenged the sustainability focus of the resort's governance system. Perhaps the most significant shock was the change in the community's political leadership in 2011. This leadership shift occurred in no small part due to unfavourable community reaction to previous local political commitments to sustainability priorities. Past priorities were perceived to not address challenges emanating from ongoing global and regional economic slowdowns emerging in 2007-08. For many pundits, the combined impact of

the above noted shocks and stressors left Whistler's *journey toward success* lacking sustainability. As such, Whistler was a fascinating case study.

1.4. Organization of the dissertation

The remainder of the dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 2 examines three separate, but interconnected bodies of literature: resilience theory, governance theory, and shocks and stressors. The chapter focuses on tracing the theoretical underpinnings of these three main concepts, both generally and from a tourism perspective. In the course of this undertaking, Chapter 2 also examines related literature, such as *governance for sustainable development*, good governance, path dependence and plasticity, and regional lock-in. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the interconnectivity of these three concepts.

Chapter 3 presents the methods used to conduct the research and addresses aspects of undertaking qualitative research, such as naturalistic inquiry, emergent design flexibility, and exploratory case study methods. It also explains why Whistler was chosen and provides relevant background information on the case study location, the design and testing of the survey instrument used in this study, as well as data collection, handling, coding, analysis, and reporting procedures. Chapter 3 concludes by discussing the ethical considerations related to this study.

Chapters 4 and 5 apply these methods to the case study location. Specifically, Chapter 4 discusses the findings as it relates to the impact of shocks and stressors (critical events) on Whistler's governance system and community, as a whole. While many critical events were identified by informants, chapter four focuses on three overriding critical events: the lead up to and hosting of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, Whistler's sustainability movement, and the 2011 municipal election and resulting leadership changes. Chapter 5 focuses on the findings related to the factors perceived to strengthen and weaken the resilience of both the governance system and the community. It also presents the findings related to perceived resilience enhancing strategies and the roles of key people and organizations in enabling governance and community resilience.

Chapter 6 discusses the major findings of the study; however, it puts the findings into perspective by providing the background on Whistler's sustainability movement from the late 1990s through to the completion of the interviews (November 2014). This section discusses the findings in terms of path dependence and plasticity, regional lock-in, and resilience to examine the pressures faced by Whistler's unique sustainability-focused governance system. The second half of Chapter 6 discusses the most relevant findings related to the research objectives, including the factors (and strategies) perceived to strengthen resilience in sustainability-focused governance systems and communities at large, critical events, as well as the roles of key people and organizations. Chapter 6 concludes by providing an overview of the study's limitations and contributions and draws upon the findings to make some future research recommendations.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Chapter 2 examines three main bodies of theoretical and applied research that guide the overall development of the dissertation: governance (Section 2.2); resilience (Section 2.3); and shocks and stressors (Section 2.4). Section 2.2 examines relevant governance literature, both generally and from a tourism context. It describes the shared history of governance and sustainability concepts, describes an emerging governance model, often referred to as *governance for sustainable development*. This governance model is explored because it is of particular relevance to this study. Section 2.3 describes the evolution of the concepts of adaptability, adaptive capacity, path dependence, and resilience as it relates to these purposes. As part of this discussion, the section outlines frameworks for assessing and nurturing community and tourism resilience, and identifies challenges associated with measuring resilience. Section 2.4 summarizes the literature related to the concepts of shocks and stressors in SESs and tourism settings. Included in this section is a discussion of tourism's vulnerability to shocks and stressors. Chapter 2 concludes by drawing together these three bodies of theoretical and applied research.

2.2. Governance

2.2.1. Introduction

While the term governance has been described as “an unplanned, unheralded governing structure” (Rhodes, 1997, p. 45) of the modern world, the term itself dates back to at least medieval times (Jessop, 1995). Indeed, systems of governance have existed since humans first began to organize themselves (Aras & Crowther, 2009). As a concept, it connotes the way in which an organization or a region conducts itself (Aras &

Crowther, 2009). In more recent times, the concept of governance has received much scrutiny, as problems within governance systems on all levels – from regional to international, from for-profit to not-for-profit organisations – continue to manifest around the world (Aras & Crowther, 2009). Today, the term 'governance' is considered an important concept for understanding the functioning of the modern world (Jessop, 1995).

2.2.2. What is governance?

Despite its ancient history, governance, as a concept, is complex (Organisation for Economic & Cooperation Development [OECD], 2004) and plagued with confusion. A review of the literature reveals a growing number of studies on the topic of governance, but little agreement on a definition, scope, or what it actually encompasses. Ruhanen et al. (2010) contend that the confusion is due to the fact that most of the empirical research on the topic is case study based and lacks a common conceptual framework. Stoker (1998, p. 18) concurs and points out that part of the challenge lays in the fact that governance theory has its roots in institutional economics, development and organizational studies, international relations, political science, public administration and the work of “Foucauldian-inspired theorists.”¹

Rhodes' (1996) oft cited definition of governance offers a starting point for much of the more salient academic governance research. He defines governance as “self-organizing, inter-organizational networks” that act as governing structures for control, coordination and allocation of resources (Rhodes, 1996, p. 652). Governance creates the “conditions for ordered rule and collective action” (Stoker, 1998, p. 17). Pierre (1999) defines governance as a process by which local and private actors endeavour to achieve collective goals. Governance infers social coordination wherein separate, but interdependent social entities, work together to achieve socio-economic objectives (Jessop, 1995). Wilde, Narang, Laberge and Moretto (2009, p. 5) describe governance as the processes through which “public policy decisions are made and implemented.” It involves negotiations, decisions, and a variety of stakeholder relationships that influence “how things get done,” “how services are provided” and determines “who gets what,

¹ Michel Foucault (1926-1984) was a French philosopher, social theorist and historian. He is best known for his critical analysis of social institutions and the history of human sexuality.

when and how” (Wilde et al, 2009, p. 5). Drawing from these various definitions and for these purposes, governance is generally defined as the values, rules, and laws, as well as the institutions and processes (i.e. policy-making, discursive debates, negotiations, mediation, elections, referendums, public consultations, protests, etc.) through which public and private stakeholders seek to achieve common objectives and make decisions (Lebel et al., 2006; Pierre, 1999; Rhodes, 1997). For concept and theoretical clarity, it is important to differentiate between public and corporate governance definitions. The Cadbury Report (1992) defines corporate governance as a system through which companies are controlled and directed. In this system, a board of directors is responsible for the governance of their companies, while the shareholders are responsible for appointing the directors and auditors (Davies, 2006).

Stoker (1998) contends that public governance insinuates less government and, indeed, it is often associated with spending cuts. However, the blurring of responsibilities within governance systems can then lead to an environment of blame, where responsibility and accountability prove challenging. Consequently, even though governments may steer the collective action within governance systems, he contends that failures can and do occur. Stoker (1998) proposes five basic propositions that characterize systems of public governance, as follows:

1. The involvement of institutions and actors from both within and outside government;
2. The blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for addressing social and economic issues;
3. Relationships built on shared power between institutions involved in collective action;
4. Autonomous self-governing networks of actors, and;
5. A recognition that the capacity to get things done does not rest on the power, command and authority of government to command. Rather, it allows governments to use new techniques to steer and guide.

2.2.3. The evolution of governance

Establishing a chronological evolution of the Western world’s governance approaches since the mid-1950s is challenging, as systems of governance have

developed in isolation and reflect the context in which they develop and operate. However, there is consensus within the literature that organizational and governmental systems began evolving in the early 1970s, emphasizing economic growth and competitiveness (Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Fuller & Geddes, 2008; Rhodes, 1996; 1997). State-dominated models of social and economic development, prevalent in socialist bloc countries and throughout much of the Third World from the 1950s to the early 1970s, began falling out of favour (Weiss, 2000). According to Stoker (2004), this evolution occurred because of the rescaling and modernization of states, which began to affect management and governance styles. Neoliberal ideology was soon spreading throughout most of the more established countries. Neoliberalism supported open, competitive, and unregulated markets (Peck & Tickell, 2002). However, the literature reveals that a growing level of discontent with government as a means of governing society emerged during the late 1980s to the early 1990s. Specifically, the perception of growth as a social good and a sign of progress began to be questioned (Zovanyi, 1998). Consequently, other forms of governance emerged over the last few decades. These more recent models of governance are increasingly influenced by the realities of climate change, information technology, and globalization (Strandberg, 2005).

In step with these more recent models, there are growing pressures from economic and environmental stakeholders to embed greater accountability into governance systems. On the environmental side, advocates of sustainable development “are pushing for more accountable, transparent, and connected governance” (Willard, 2009, p. 23). They are using social networking sites to influence who gets the “power, how decisions are taken and communicated, and how accountability is rendered” (p. 23). On the economic side, Strandberg (2005) observes that shareholders are demanding greater accountability and responsibility in the management of their investments. He adds that governance approaches require a multi-stakeholder approach that includes shareholders, employees, and consumers to manage business demands in a responsible fashion. Overall, these shifts in governance signify a trend towards greater financial and social accountability (Strandberg, 2005).

These newer approaches to governance are characterized by a number of key traits, including the embedding of participation and power sharing in policymaking. Other characteristics include multi-level integration between levels of government and the

private sector, as well as greater levels of diversity and decentralization in legislative or regulatory approaches. Multi-stakeholder approaches to deliberation are flexible, while guidelines and laws are revisable (Hall, 2011). New governance knowledge and best practices are being created and shared (Hall, 2011), including more comprehensive methods for assessing governance efficacy (Wilde et al, 2009 outlines 22 different governance assessment frameworks). Predominant methodological frameworks for studying governance are derived from past work in the studies of social constructivism and constructionism. The following sections explore this approach in more detail within the broader academic literature (Section 2.2.4), and then within tourism specific contexts (Section 2.2.5).

2.2.4. Governance in tourism settings

Introduction

The topic of tourism governance has increased in importance over time. It is considered a vehicle to understand tourism's economic, social, political and environmental policy challenges (Hall, 2011), as well as a tool to assist tourism destinations² adapt to change (Baggio et al., 2010); however, tourism governance is complex and involves an assortment of stakeholders, in a variety of relationships, on a number of levels (Zahra, 2011). According to Hall (2011), there are two overarching meanings of governance from a tourism perspective. The first definition refers to how a state or a destination operates within its economic and political environments. Here, tourism governance involves the institutions and individuals involved in the development of rules, policy, and business strategies (Beritelli, Bieger & Laesser, 2007). The second definition is more conceptual in nature and describes how the state coordinates socio-economic systems. More specifically, Bramwell (2011) defines tourism governance as the application of power, rules, and resources that require the coordination, cooperation and collective action of various parties.

² In this context, a tourism destination is a geographical entity that is characterized by its network of suppliers who seek to meet the demands of visitors. It is a social system focused on business and non-business related goals (Laesser & Beritelli, 2013).

Sustainable tourism destination governance

Tourism destinations are a collection of resources and services providers that require effective management to ensure their sustainability (Beritelli & Bieger, 2014; Richards & Hall; 2002; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Drawing from the proceedings of the Biannual Forum on Advances in Destination Management held in Switzerland in 2012, Laesser and Beritelli (2013) summarize the participant submissions and discussions to describe the characteristics of successful sustainable destination management. These include a common destination vision, drawn from a set of sustainability values and long-term priorities and a management approach focused on balancing the three pillars of sustainability (i.e. economic, social, environmental) within the destination. Research related to the governance of tourism destinations is an emerging area of focus; however, it is fraught with research challenges. Laesser and Beritelli's (2013) summary highlights the diversity and lack of terminology agreement within the destination governance literature. For example, a variety of governance typologies have ensued, but they have neglected to differentiate the concepts of community and corporate governance. Laesser and Beritelli further observe that past governance case studies have focused on the differences between destinations, whereas a focus on the commonalities would help to advance governance theory.

Substantive progress on implementing sustainable tourism destination governance systems is likewise challenged. The lack of progress is a result of the unique and complex aspects of tourism systems. For example, such systems involve many different private and public stakeholders and diverse policy issues, including aspects of transportation, employment, regional development, planning, and climate change (Bramwell, 2011). Tourism systems commonly rely upon access to natural resources for the development of its experiences and infrastructure, while at the same time requiring the conservation of those same high quality and often fragile natural resources to ensure the tourism experiences provided remain competitive. Williams and Ponsford (2009) refer to this as the 'resource paradox.' As such, ensuring that tourism governance systems enable sustainability advancement becomes even more problematic, particularly from a community perspective. Further, many tourism governance systems, not unlike most governance systems, are focused on short term objectives as opposed to longer term objectives. This is because priority planning and

policy-making actions tend to align with three or four-year election cycles and this proves challenging for making progress on longer term and more slowly unfolding sustainability issues. Consequently, governance systems are more apt to focus on short-term political priorities, as opposed to longer-term sustainability actions. In this regard, Laesser and Beritelli (2013, p. 48) contend that destination governance “requires an increase in professionalism to achieve successful and sustainable development.” Finally, there is an even deeper philosophical challenge related to many established governance systems in which never-ending growth is valued and encouraged as a source of social stability and well-being (Homer-Dixon, 2007), as opposed to those that encourage a steady-state economy.

Bramwell and Lane, 2011 (p. 411) contend that sustainable tourism requires “tailored and effective governance” models in order to improve democratic processes, provide direction, and enable “practical progress.” However, the efficacy of these models tends to be context specific. Several recent studies identify creative models of governance that may lead to more sustainable resource use, stewardship, and institutional innovation (Stratford, Davidson, Lockwood, Griffith & Curtis, 2007). As governance models that effectively support destination sustainability objectives and initiatives are important to this research, the following sections explore notions of *governance for sustainable development* and good governance.

2.2.5. Governance for sustainable development

The topics of *governance* and *sustainable development* not only share a history of conceptual advancement, but so too are they linked in a variety of disciplines and discourse. In the last decade, the focus has turned, in more earnest to the role governance systems must play in sustainability, both from a general and a tourism perspective. Much of the work linking governance to sustainable development is focused on exploring the policy regimes and governance models that may be most effective in making progress on sustainability. A smaller body of research links the two concepts into a phrase, *governance for sustainable development*. It focuses on identifying and prescribing the type of governance system that should be employed to make sustainable development progress a reality; however, few attempts have been made to develop a “dedicated theory of sustainable development governance” (Jordan,

2008, p. 24). Kenny and Meadowcroft (1999, p. 2) contend that the lack of focus on governance for sustainable development both within the literature, and in practice, may be a reflection of the fact that sustainable development is often “defined around the core value of opposition to economic growth” and therefore it is “implausible for some ... that the state could ever be more than an agency for the brutalisation of non-human nature.” As Jordan (2008) further notes, one of the main lessons emerging from the Brundtland report in 1987 is that sustainable development does not just happen. Nor does it occur in an institutional or political vacuum (p. 19). Rather, it requires careful discussions, open debates and centralized planning (Carter, 2007) – key components of governance for sustainable development.

Meadowcroft (2004; 2007) is one of the first scholars to adopt the term governance for sustainable development. He defines it as:

[The] processes of socio-political governance oriented towards the attainment of sustainable development. It encompasses public debate, political decision-making, policy formation and implementation, and complex interactions among public authorities, private business and civil society – in so far as these relate to steering societal development along more sustainable lines (p. 299).

Meadowcroft (2004) adds that governance for sustainable development requires the integration of ideas and practices of three participatory groups: citizenship, the community, and stakeholders. This governance model should promote innovation, integration, measurement, social engagement, and learning (Meadowcroft & Bregha, 2009). Further, it requires goal-oriented interactions and intervention by and between representatives of these organised groups and those already involved in environmental challenges to reform the governance of socio-ecological interactions. Governance for sustainable development affects both political and corporate systems of governance and seeks a “governance model which ensures the appropriate management of social, environmental and economic factors, taking into consideration and giving due weight to the expectations of society” (SUSTENTARE & SAM, 2010, p. 6).

Bleischwitz (2003) contends that governance for sustainable development goes well beyond traditional, state-centred policy making because it seeks proactive behavioural changes in both individual and organizational actors, on a variety of policy, planning and practice levels. He adds that corporate governance systems can be key

catalysts for sustainable development activities, while state governance systems can be responsible for setting and reforming the governance for sustainable development framework. Meadowcroft (2004; 2007) clarifies that the various parties should act together to define clear goals and aligned programs, while governments should orient societies towards actions that match with these goals and programs. Farrell, Kemp, Hinterberger, Rammel, and Ziegler (2005, p. 132) contend that governance for sustainable development implies a “deliberate adjustment of practices of governance in order to ensure that social development proceeds along a sustainable trajectory.” These practices include: changes to policies in specific sectors (i.e. forestry, energy, transport); measures to address specific environmental, social, and economic interactions with governance mechanisms at a variety of scales (i.e. local, regional, national, international, global); shifts in the use of policy instruments (emissions trading, ecological fiscal reform); the participation of civil society in decision making, and must take a long-term view of problems and solution strategies (Janicke, Jorgens, Jorgensen, & Nordbeck, 2001; Meadowcroft & Bregha, 2009).

Governance for sustainable tourism development

Although the concepts of governance and sustainability are frequently linked in the tourism literature, most of these narratives focus on the role that governance systems and stakeholders must play in enabling and encouraging sustainable development. Definitions of governance for sustainable tourism development are currently unreported. Only a handful of researchers have addressed this topic in general and few empirical studies exist and a scant few have attempted to define what exactly it is and how such tourism systems may be different from other types of governance approaches. For example, Dinica (2009) explains that a definition of governance for sustainable tourism must specify what is being influenced and how it is being influenced, in order to prevent negative resource impacts; however, she does not provide a definition. She elaborates on a number of questions that public authorities should address, such as: the coordination of tourism policymaking; the levels of government where tourism policies should be adopted; and, how the negative interactions related to tourism development can be most efficiently and effectively managed. Further challenges relate to the fact that while some tourism researchers mention governance for sustainable development, they do not appear to see it as a tourism governance

model in and of itself. Rather, they propose a variety of governance models, such as network governance (Erkus-Ozturk & Eraydin, 2010) and effective governance (Bramwell & Lane, 2011), to create more sustainable forms of tourism development.

van Zeijl-Rozema et al. (2008) believe that progress on sustainable development will not occur until the most appropriate modes of governance for achieving sustainability are made more explicit. As such, governance for sustainable development requires a comprehensive definition, theoretical development, as well as details on the system and how its governance actors are likely to interact. More research is also required to understand how such systems can be sustained over the long term, given the fact that environmental issues occasionally fall from the attention of the public and consequently governance leaders. This research begins to address this gap, particularly as it relates to understanding the pressures and how these may affect a governance system focused on sustainability. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, Whistler's sustainability goals have been embedded within its governance system since approximately 2005. Although, the sustainability focus has lessened since that time, at the time of the interviews the governance system still bore some characteristics of a *governance for sustainable development* system.

The challenge of sustainability-focused governance

Indeed, the challenges experienced by Whistler's sustainability-focused governance system are explained in the literature. For example, In 't Veld (2013, p. 283-4) observes that humans are concerned with pursuing "a good life according to their own values," which is often at odds with enabling a satisfactory relationship with the surrounding nature. In other words, human nature may be at odds with sustainability practice. As such, governance systems are challenged to promote a more satisfactory relationship between humans and the surrounding environment. They are further challenged because they must focus on increasing the long-term orientation of citizenry values and decision-making to include future generations, if sustainability initiatives are to be sustained. A long-term focus is risky for governance leaders who may be voted out by those who do not see the value of such an orientation (Meuleman & In 't Veld, 2009). Other scholars observe that the governance of sustainability is a 'wicked problem' that requires novel policy and institutional responses (Lockwood, Davidson,

Curtis, Griffith, & Stratford, 2010). While a wicked problem opens up opportunity for new approaches (Wexler, 2009a), governance systems often resist such change.

Despite these noted challenges, some researchers contend that sustainability-focused governance has the potential to move forward in both tourism and broader global contexts. Academic and non-academic researchers, non-profit organizations (i.e. UNWTO), and several governance (i.e. Institute on Governance) and non-governance organizations (i.e. Resilience Alliance) all acknowledge that progress on sustainability requires a more focused involvement approach to governance. Farrell et al. (2005) suggest that sustainability-focused governance calls for:

- policy integration;
- the development of common objectives;
- criteria choices and trade-off decision rules;
- progress indicators;
- information and incentives for practical implementation of sustainability practices and programs.

To support such governance systems, In 't Veld (2013, p. 289) contends that a new type of governance leader is required. Such leaders will: 1) possess sustainability knowledge that includes the ability to design and deliver sustainability solutions; 2) focus on a “long-term orientation” particularly as it relates to decision making; 3) implement policy to support and ensure decisions are kept on track, beyond one or two political cycles. Such decisions will be made in participatory environments, and will be transparent and realistic to ensure that ethical decisions are made.

2.2.6. Good governance

Governance for sustainable development builds upon notions of good governance. Indeed, good governance principles are increasingly seen as a vehicle for incorporating sustainability into governance policy development and practice (Commonwealth of Australia 2000; Israr & Islam, 2006). This is particularly the case as it relates to the management of natural resources (Stratford et al., 2007). Good governance is often associated with corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Strandberg, 2005). The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD, 2002, p. 7) defines CSR as “the commitment of a business to contribute to sustainable economic

development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life.” CSR strategies have created solutions to social and ecological challenges in a variety of contexts (Kleine & von Hauff, 2009). In democratic governments, key elements of good governance are the essential link to achieving sustainable, economic, and social development (Commonwealth of Australia 2000). However, the ability of good governance to influence sustainability depends upon the individuals and the groups involved in the governance system. Their desires, their values, and the decisions they make about issues affect the transparency, the accountability, the level of knowledge sharing, the efficiency and the equity of the governance system (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000).

Good governance is increasingly the focus of dialogue, research, and donor agency practice, as well as on the agendas of many private and public banks (Weiss, 2000). According to the UNDP (1997), good governance is participatory, responsive, consensus oriented, accountable, equitable, transparent, and effective in making the best use of resources. It is about “achieving the desired results and achieving them in the right way” (Institute on Governance, 2011, para. 5) and denotes “quality, effectiveness, and efficiency” in the administration and delivery of public services (Wilde et al., 2009, p. 5). Others note that good governance signifies inclusiveness, transparency, participation, performance and accountability in public policy and decision-making (Newman & Clark, 2009; Wilde et al., 2009) and is a prerequisite for effective management (Lockwood, 2010). It is considered to be a vehicle for addressing some of the less desired characteristics of older forms of government (e.g. limited human rights, corruption, unelected and unaccountable governments and the inefficiencies of non-market systems); however, good governance does not mean less governance, rather, it strives for more effective and efficient forms of government (Weiss, 2000).

Principles of good governance

Good governance models are increasingly linked to a set of overriding principles (see Ashton, 2007; Ivanov & Dobrova, 2011; Lebel et al., 2006; Steiner, Kozlayova & Bauer, 2009). Many of these principles are reflected in sustainability guidelines and practices. Meadowcroft (2007) contends good governance is the foundation for making progress on more sustainable forms of development. Indeed, many agencies, such as

the United Nations Development Programme and the Institute on Governance promote a set of good governance principles as a vehicle for strengthening democratic institutions, improving service delivery, strengthening the rule of law and combating corruption, and ensuring the voices of vulnerable people are heard in decision-making (see United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2007). Indeed, the incorporation of good governance principles within a sustainability-focused governance framework may provide an ethical foundation upon which to build sustainability practice. Table 2.1 suggests a suite of good governance principles drawn from a variety of governance sources. These principles may serve as a framework for implementing a governance for sustainable development model. For each governance principle, an example is provided that illustrates how the governance system might respond to its presence. Further, it suggests a checklist-list of questions for identifying the presence or absence of the principle within a governance system.

Table 2.1: Good governance principles & sustainability practice

Good governance principles	Governance System Examples	Checklist for improving sustainability practice
Ethical behaviour	Codes of conduct/ethics exist & align with community values; ethics training for elected and appointed governance actors on an annual basis	Is there a clear commitment to ethics-based leadership for sustainability?
Innovation	New ideas and/or methods are encouraged and enabled, both internally and externally to the governance system;	What programs are needed to encourage sustainability innovation?
Integration	Vertical & horizontal policy integration (particularly related to the environment); Integrated decision-making across all levels of government;	Are conditions in place to steer sustainable development integration?
Measurement/ Effectiveness	Socio-cultural, environmental & economic sustainability indicators are tracked, monitored, and reported on an annual basis;	Is science-based expertise involved either directly or indirectly?
Societal Engagement	Community & stakeholder participation (societal self-steering) is encouraged and enabled; co-governance networks to address specific issues are encouraged and enabled; all sectors of society are included and engaged (i.e. youth, First Nations, elderly);	Is stakeholder involvement in decision-making encouraged?
Learning/reflexivity	Changes to existing systems of production and consumption (esp. agriculture, transportation, construction & energy); learning opportunities are provided in the community; responses to past events and issues are reflected upon for learning purposes.	Is the diversity of knowledge and scientific input to problems adequately managed?
Social justice & equity	Access to living-wage employment; access to affordable housing;	Are the trade-off rules clearly stipulated & justified?
Precaution	Precautionary principle applied to decision making; long-term planning; long-term objectives to operationalize sustainable development initiatives;	How are decisions made when there are unknowns?
Accountability	Integration of environmental & social dimensions into the town's economic accounts; financial reporting to community on quarterly basis;	Is there a common understanding of sustainable development?
Transparency balanced with privacy & confidentiality	In-camera council meetings; bi-annual (every six months) open houses; financial reporting available online; acknowledging that in certain cases transparency must be balanced with other values such as privacy and confidentiality; community decides which elected positions have access to sensitive material (i.e. security issues) & s/he represents constituents in dealing with sensitive information.	How is transparency balanced with other values such as privacy, confidentiality?
Adaptability	Risk management plans are put in place; threats and opportunities are identified and planned for; environmental scanning is an ongoing process;	What actors and policy instruments need to be involved at national and sub-national levels and what should be the involvement of stakeholders?
Efficiency	Costs & benefits of action are distributed;	How are the costs/benefits of sustainability initiatives evaluated?

Drawn from Adger et al. (2005); Bomberg (2004); Dinica (2009); Janicke et al. (2001); Kemp et al. (2005); Lafferty (2004a; 2004b); Meadowcroft (2007); Meadowcroft & Bregha (2009); Sheppard, Dodds & Williams (2015); Torgerson (1999);

2.2.7. Conclusion: Governance

Over the past sixty years governance systems have developed and evolved in response to the realities of an increasingly complex and global world. Governance systems have evolved from those that emphasized social and economic development, to others that emphasized economic efficiency, growth and competitiveness. Today, scholars are evaluating governance models that may take us into what Jeremy Rifkin (2012) calls *the third industrial revolution*, where humanity will live within its means and more carefully control and manage development. One such governance model, *governance for sustainable development*, may enable more substantive and timely progress on sustainability at the community level; however, it remains stalled at the theoretical level. Incorporating a suite of good governance principles, as suggested in Table 2.1, may be the first step in moving this governance model beyond theory.

2.3. Resilience thinking

2.3.1. Introduction

Resilience has gained significant prominence as a concept for understanding “the capacity of a system to deal with change and continue to develop” (Simonsen et al., n.d., p. 3). A resilience approach focuses on ways to build capacity in order to successfully deal with unexpected change. It studies how socio-ecological systems (SESs) “can best be managed to ensure a sustainable and resilient supply of the essential ecosystem services on which humanity depends” (Simonsen et al., n.d., p. 3). Before delving into the resilience literature, it is important to take a step back to understand two important concepts that form the foundation of resilience thinking: adaptability and adaptive capacity. The following paragraphs explore the evolution of these concepts from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, as well as with respect to their links to emerging governance and sustainability literature. This section also identifies factors that nurture adaptability within a regional economy and community perspective. To do this, it draws on literature related to governance path dependence, plasticity, creation and lock-in.

2.3.2. Adaptability & adaptive capacity: Theoretical underpinnings

Adaptation to variability in the environment has its origins in the natural sciences and particularly evolutionary biology (Smit & Wandel, 2006). It has been a topic of anthropological studies since Julian Steward's⁵ work in the early 1900s (Janssen, Schoon, Ke & Borner, 2006; Janssen & Ostrom, 2006). In this context, adaptability refers to the development of genetic and/or behavioural characteristics that enable organisms or systems to cope with environmental changes in order to survive and reproduce (Kitano, 2002; Smit & Wandel, 2006; Winterhalder, 1980). In the late 1970s, early 1980s, adaptation to environmental change became a focus for much of the socio-ecologically-focused research (Vogel, Moser, Kaspersen & Dabelko, 2007). Within this SES research, adaptation concerns how systems adjust in response to actual, perceived, or expected changes in the environment, as well as the impacts of those changes (Janssen & Ostrom, 2006).

An SES is defined as an “integrated concept of humans in nature” and stresses “that the delineation between social and ecological systems is artificial and arbitrary” (Folke et al., 2005, p. 443). Research indicates that SESs have strong reciprocal feedbacks and function as complex adaptive systems (see Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2003; Gunderson & Holling, 2002). More recently, adaptation is the focus of many studies related to environmental and human-induced climatic change, particularly as it relates to explaining the processes that enable adaptation (see Adger et al., 2005; 2009; Janssen et al., 2006; Janssen & Ostrom, 2006; Osbahr, Twyman, Adger, & Thomas, 2008; Schwarz et al., 2011) as well as disaster-risk reduction (Vogel et al., 2007). Here, adaptation is often defined in terms of the capacity of humans to influence and manage potential damages or to take advantage of opportunities associated with changes in the environment (Janssen et al., 2006; Walker, Holling, Carpenter, & Kinzig, 2004).

The concept of adaptability is linked with many other models of human and environmental interaction. For example, it is linked to notions of planned action, where individuals, organizations, or governance actors are either anticipating a threat or

⁵ Julian Steward (1902-1972) was an American anthropologist best known for developing “the concept and method” of cultural ecology, including the scientific theory of culture change. Cultural ecology is the study of human adaptation to the social and physical environment (Sutton & Anderson, 2010).

averting the impacts of a threat. In such cases, adaptation strategies may be an anticipatory (i.e. new building codes) or reactive governance response (i.e. enforcement of building codes) (Smit & Pilifsova, 2001). Adaptability is often linked with the human behavioural literature. Osbahr et al. (2008) observe that adaptation often results in human behavioural changes, particularly in response to long-term or on going disturbances. Adaptability is also linked to notions of adaptive capacity (Smit & Wandel, 2006). Brooks and Adger (2005) note that effective adaptation cannot occur without the presence of adaptive capacity in a system. Often, these two terms are used interchangeably (Gallopini, 2006); however, Smit and Wandel (2006, p. 287) state, “adaptations are manifestations of adaptive capacity.” In other words, the adaptive capacity of a system permits adaptations in response to shocks, hazards, and sensitivities, et cetera. Adaptive capacity, as a concept, is also closely related to a number of other concepts, such as coping ability, management capacity, stability, flexibility, robustness, and resilience (Smit & Wandel, 2006; Smithers & Smit, 1997).

Social science researchers often refer to adaptive capacity being responses to risks associated with environmental hazards and human vulnerability (Adger & Vincent, 2005; Janssen & Ostrom, 2006). It is considered a key management dimension in SESs. Luers (2005, p. 218) defines adaptive capacity as “the potential to adapt and reduce a system’s vulnerability.” Her use of the word *potential* helps to distinguish the difference between adaptive capacity and adaptation. Similarly, Brooks (2003) defines adaptive capacity as representing the potential of a human system to reduce its social vulnerability and, as a result, minimize the risk associated with a hazard. Adger (2006) defines adaptive capacity as the ability of a system to evolve in a way that deals with a policy change or an environmental hazard effectively. As a result, the system expands its range of variability to cope. Adaptive capacity is context-specific, varying from country to country, region-to-region, community-to-community and individual-to-individual (Smit & Wandel, 2006). While it cannot be measured directly, social, educational, institutional, and other factors can be assessed to determine adaptive capacity (Simpson, Gossling, Scott, Hall, & Gladin, 2008) at a variety of scales, from the individual to the national level (Adger & Vincent, 2005). The forces or factors that influence the ability of a system to adapt are the same forces that determine its adaptive capacity of a system (see Adger, 2003; Walker et al., 2004; Smit & Wandel, 2006).

Within SESs, adaptive capacity includes two different components. The first component relates to the capacity of the SES to improve its condition in relation to its environment, even if the environment does not change. The second component relates to the capacity of the SES to cope with or improve its condition, in the face of changes within the environment (Gallopín, 2006). As such, adaptive capacity is closely associated with the coping ability of a system. Both are related to the internal elements of a system's vulnerability; although, they may differ in scope and scale (Vogel & O'Brien, 2004). As Vogel and O'Brien (2004) explain, coping is considered a short-term response to a shock or stressor, while the adaptive capacity of a system is considered to be a longer-term process. It involves implementing a variety of measures to reduce sensitivity and vulnerability to the shock or stressor (see section 2.4). Adaptive capacity is dependent upon the variables of governance, such as political rights, health, literacy, and general economic wellbeing. Improving adaptive capacity often involves structural changes (Vogel & O'Brien, 2004).

Despite the depth and breadth of literature related to factors enhancing and enabling system adaptability, Adger, Arnell, and Tompkins (2005) highlight the difficulty in determining what exactly successful adaptation looks like. They warn that simply meeting objectives is not an indication of successful adaptation, as the achievement of one objective may impose externalities at other temporal or spatial scales. For instance, what may appear to be successful adaptation in the short-term may not be so over the long-term. Further, the successful achievement of adaptability as it relates to an individual, group, community, or region may cause "negative externalities and spatial spill-over," affecting others or, more disconcerting, the ability of others to adapt" (p. 80). Rather, Adger et al. (2005) contend that successful adaptation, particularly as it relates to governance, must be assessed in terms of effectiveness, equity, legitimacy, and the economic efficiency of the adaptation; however, Adger and Vincent (2005) warn that the notion of governance indicators is problematic due to the difficulty in projecting scenarios into the future, including how the system may change. They add that, "Newtonian laws guiding understanding of adaptation processes or elements" do not exist (p. 409).

Adaptive capacity and the tourism industry

The concept of adaptability as it relates to tourism is in its embryonic stage. A review of the literature reveals that tourism-related adaptability was initially discussed in one of two ways. First, it was frequently discussed in terms of destination competitiveness and the need for flexibility and adaptability in designing and developing tourism products (see Barnes, MacGregor, & Weaver, 2002; Craigwell & Worrell, 2008). Second, it was studied with respect to the decision-making processes of tourists and the adaptability of their vacation planning process (see Decrop & Snelders, 2004). More recently, adaptability was explored in the context of tourism sustainability and governance (see Pforr, 2004), organizational change management (see By & Dale, 2008), the tourism industry's response to climate and environmental change (see Wall, 2005; Scott et al., 2008) and shocks and disturbances (see United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], United Nations Environment Program [UNEP], World Meteorological Organization [WMO], 2008). Scott et al.'s (2008) research as it relates to the tourism industry's adaptability is among the most detailed to date. Specifically, they explore tourism-related adaptation strategies in response to climate change and, in particular, the adaptive behavioural, technical, and management changes that will be required.

The dynamic nature of the tourism industry appears to provide it with a conditioned ability to cope with a range of system shocks and stressors (i.e. SARS, terrorist attacks, tsunamis, climate change, changing weather patterns, et cetera) (Scott et al., 2008). A number of researchers observe that the industry's ability to rebound from shocks and stressors is evidence of the industry's high level of adaptive capacity (Scott et al., 2008; UNWTO-UNEP-WMO, 2008). However, Scott et al. (2008) warn that there is variability in the adaptive capacity of the various tourism stakeholders. For example, tourists are considered to have the greatest adaptive capacity, because of their ability to avoid destinations or change the time they travel. Tour operators, transport providers and travel agents are considered to have a medium level of adaptive capacity, as they may have the ability to re-route transportation services to address consumer demand. Hotels, resorts, attractions, operators and tourism destinations are, for the most part, immobile and at the whim of the tourists. Destinations often must adapt new policies, invest in new products, or develop a new mix of accommodations to influence

consumers' travel choices; however, these changes often require years to implement and consequently the adaptive capacity of these tourism service providers is considered low (UNWTO-UNEP-WMO, 2008).

2.3.3. Adaptability & adaptive capacity: the governance link

Governance and adaptability are often referred to in terms of the adaptive capacity of the system to respond to change. As a consequence an extensive body of literature exists around notions of adaptive governance. An adaptive governance system connects individuals, organizations, agencies, and institutions at a multitude of levels, while key people provide leadership, vision, and meaning and develop trust in order to assist in the transformation toward a learning environment (Folke et al., 2005). This learning is geared towards nurturing behavioural adaptation amongst stakeholders (Clark & Clarke, 2011). Hatfield-Dodds et al. (2007) define adaptive governance as “the ways in which institutional arrangements evolve to satisfy the needs and desires of the community in a changing environment.” Walker and Salt (2012, p. 131) observe that governance systems are considered adaptive when they change either in response to or in anticipation of “new circumstances, problems or opportunities.” Adaptive governance systems often self-organize as social networks comprised of teams and groups that contribute knowledge and experience to create common understanding and policies (Folke et al., 2005).

According to Ashlin (2012), adaptive governance is based on three key components: collaboration with a network of actors, social memory and learning, and experimental and flexible approaches. Duit and Galaz (2008) also speak about the importance of collaboration. They contend that collective action and the adaptive capacity of governance systems are influenced by the ability to balance *exploration* (risk-taking, experimentation, discovery, innovation) with *exploitation* (efficiency, choice, production, implementation, execution) imperatives. They conclude that governance structures require: 1) flexible decision-making; 2) the ability to handle long-term transformation processes, as well as sudden changes; and, 3) the ability to reorganize when necessary. These features do not normally exist in governance systems, which they note are usually characterized as path dependent and products of circumstances and power struggles. Folke, Hahn, Ollsen, and Norberg (2005, p. 463-4) suggest four

interconnected and important aspects of adaptive governance within complex SESs: 1) building knowledge and understanding of resource and ecosystem dynamics, in order to detect and respond to environmental feedback in order to enhance resilience; 2) incorporating ecological knowledge into adaptive management practices, emphasizing leadership, learning, and changes to social norms within organizations; 3) enabling flexible institutions and multilevel governance systems to enable adaptive management; and, 4) dealing with perturbations, uncertainty and surprise (e.g. climate change, disease, natural disasters, global market demands, subsidies, governmental policies).

Adaptive governance helps to clarify how human and social capital can be integrated to promote sustainability (Clark & Clarke, 2011). It is most useful in informing the management of SESs and developing the necessary governance structures to cope with and adapt to unexpected change (Ashlin, 2012). According to Elbakidze et al. (2010) an adaptive governance platform enables sustainable development by facilitating the coordination of planning and management of activities at the private, public, and civil levels. Such a platform also enhances social learning and knowledge transfer at a variety of levels, and helps to make sure the needs and interests of a variety of stakeholders are heard. Walker and Salt (2006) contend that adaptive governance is a critical component of resilience practice, because it operates on a variety of levels, and includes the citizens, public and private institutions, as well as the governance system itself. They also observe that adaptive governance is gaining support at the subnational level and add that increasingly, “top-down, one-size-fits all governance” does not work. Nor does a governance system that focuses on bottom-up only (Walker & Salt, 2012, p. 191). Rather, an adaptive system, where governance is distributed may be best suited to managing socio-biological feedbacks in a timely and effective way.

Tourism and adaptive governance

Within the tourism literature, the role of governance systems and actors in enhancing and enabling adaptability is a relatively new topic and mostly exists in the natural resource management arena (see Plummer & Fennell, 2009). When adaptability is discussed, governance is not normally the primary focus. For example, Scott et al. (2008) were early researchers who explored a variety of tourism-recreational related adaptations to climate change. In their research, they highlight a number of cases where

governments have implemented adaptation strategies for tourism events (e.g. Japan's cherry blossom festival, Ottawa's tulip festival). They also briefly discuss the role of governance actors in developing business strategies, including adaptation strategies for dealing with unanticipated events (e.g. risk warning systems & evacuation plans) and tourism stakeholder education programming. However, the general sentiment is that overall there are few examples of governments developing adaptation policies for regions that depend upon tourism (UNWTO-UNEP-WMO, 2008).

2.3.4. Factors nurturing regional adaptive capacity & adaptability

The factors enabling regionals to adjust and adapt are varied. Factors include the region's economic structure, the level of organizational entrepreneurship, the number of new organizations, and the ability and willingness of existing firms to innovate and move into new product areas and new sectors (Christopherson, Mitchie, & Tyler, 2010). Other researchers note enabling factors, such as: 1) the ability to create learning environments (see Archibugi & Lundavall, 2001); 2) the presence of a modern productive infrastructure; 3) the presence of a skilled entrepreneurial, innovative and skilled workforce; 4) information access and use; 5) management capacity; 6) the presence of supportive financial systems that provide capital; and 7) the presence of a diversified economic base (see Christopherson et al., 2010; Smit & Wandel, 2006). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2001) identifies a number of factors that nurture regional adaptive capacity. These factors include; 1) the availability of technology options and resources; 2) the structure of critical institutional and decision-making authority; 3) the stock of human capital and social capital; 4) access to risk-spreading processes; 5) information management and credibility of information supplied; and, 6) the public's perception of risk and exposure. Similarly, Smit et al. (2001) identify a number of community and regional features that influence adaptive capacity. These include economic wealth, technology, information and skills, infrastructure, institutions, and equity.

The ability to successfully adapt is often linked with higher levels of economic development, as the ability to adapt is dependent upon access to technology and resources in order to invest in relevant strategies; however, the importance of experience and knowledge cannot be overlooked. Further, the ability of regions to adapt

is influenced by the level of economic diversity and variability, where technology, innovation, learning and ethical behaviour are enabled and embraced (Adger et al., 2009; Walker & Salt, 2006). Clark, Huang, and Walsh (2010, p. 122) concur and stress the importance of regional capabilities (skilled labour, strong institutions) as well as the ability to “leverage innovation in response to changing technology, markets and resource environments.” Other scholars focus on social capital and its importance in nurturing regional adaptability. Social capital is defined as a measure of community intangibles, such as shared values, networks, linkages, and cultural pursuits, as well as behavioural attributes that include trust, commitment, and respect (Beeton & Lynch, 2012; Nkhata, Breen, & Abacar, 2009). Social capital influences the ability of a community to absorb shocks, take advantage of opportunities, realign, and thrive into the future. Its absence affects community cohesion and often leads to negative migration (Beeton & Lynch, 2012). Social capital and the ability to overcome social dilemmas may help to foster resilience in governance systems, particularly as it relates to managing communal resources (Nkhata et al., 2009). Adaptive learning increases local knowledge and increases the likelihood that locals will remain involved into the future. Keeping local people involved creates capacity for responding to current as well as future problems and is what adaptability is all about. Further, the knowledge gained through experience today becomes expertise over the long term. Appendix A presents a comprehensive list of governance enhancing adaptive features and actor responses drawn from the literature. However, it is important to note that no universally agreed upon list of adaptive capacity and adaptability factors exist.

Path dependence

While economic structures, diversity, and individual factors influence the ability of a region to adapt, perhaps most important is the “pre-existing economy,” and as such, the ability to adapt appears to be a “path dependent process” (Martin, 2012, p. 11). The original notion of path dependence is credited to Paul A. David (1985, p. 334) and his discussion at The Ninety-Seven Annual Meeting of the American Economic Association in May of 1985. In that discussion he described how the inefficiently organized (from a user’s perspective) QWERTY typewriter keyboard from the late 1800s became the “universal” keyboard” still in use today. David’s (1985) lesson at that time was that strong technical inter-connectivity, economies of scale, and the irreversibility of learning

and habituation to the QWERTY keyboard trumped the standardization of a more logical and efficient user-friendly keyboard. In other words, history matters. As Page (2006, p. 87) explains, it is the acknowledgement “that a small initial advantage or a few minor random shocks along the way could alter the course of history.” As with many ideas, the concept of path dependence has grown in scope and is, today, applied in a variety of social science contexts, including as Strambach and Halkier (2013) observe, the study of politics (as it relates to political tactics and the interactions between governance actors, public policy, and society).

Puffert (2008, n.p.) defines path dependence as the “dependence of economic outcomes on the path of previous outcomes, rather than on simple conditions.” Choices that are made under certain conditions may persist long after the condition has changed. Consequently, one must consider history, as opposed to simply looking at current conditions, in order to explain the outcomes of path dependent processes. Kay (2005) defines a path dependent process as a process where a move in one direction, results in future moves in the same direction. Within economies, path dependence features can include everything from “small scale technical standards to large scale institutions and patterns of economic development” (Puffert, 20008, n.p.). “A ‘path dependent’ process or system is one whose outcome evolves as a consequence of the process’s or system’s own history” (Martin & Sunley, 2006, p. 399).

Pierson (2000) notes that there are two ways of defining path dependence; one broad and one narrow. In broad terms, path dependence refers to the “causal relevance of preceding stages in a temporal sequence” (Pierson, 2000, p. 252). For example, Sewell (1996, p. 262-263) defines path dependence broadly as “that what happened at an earlier point in time will affect the possible outcomes of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time.” Pierson (2000, p. 252) contends that this broad conceptualization equates to a “not very helpful assertion that *history matters*.” According to Pierson (2000), Sewell’s definition does not speak to the difficulty in leaving a particular path. Rather, the definition suggests that in order to understand the significance of a particular social variable, one must understand the path taken. However, while previous events do indeed influence outcomes and paths, they do not necessarily induce a path in the same direction. On the contrary, events may provoke a

reaction in a different direction (Pierson, 2000). Levi (1997, p. 28) proposes an alternative, narrower definition of path dependence, as follows:

Path dependence has to mean, if it is to mean anything, that once a country or region has started down a track, the costs of reversal are very high. There will be other choice points, but entrenchments of certain institutional arrangements obstruct an easy reversal of the initial choice. Perhaps the better metaphor is a tree, rather than a path. From the smaller trunk, there are many different branches and smaller branches. Although it is possible to turn around or to clamber from one to the other – and essential if the chosen branch dies – the branch on which a climber begins is the one she tends to follow.

Levi's (1997) definition is consistent with notions of *increasing returns*, which is a narrower conceptualization of path dependency. Increasing returns, also described as “self-reinforcing or positive feedback processes,” is thought to be the root cause of path dependence (Pierson, 2000, p. 250). Increasing returns is explained in terms of the likelihood that more steps along the same path increases with each step along that path. This happens because the relative benefits of the current activity or path increase over time, making an alternative activity or path increasingly unlikely (Pierson, 2000). In other words, the cost of switching makes it unlikely that an alternative activity or path will be chosen.

Regional lock-ins

Closely related to path dependence is the concept of lock-in. Despite the negative connotation, notions of lock-in can be positive. For example, regional economies may become ‘locked-in’ to a specific development path and, as such, are sheltered from an exogenous shock or disturbance, which may be positive. In other words, the resilience of the regional economy shelters it from the impact of the exogenous disturbance, and the region continues along the same development path. On the other hand, the notion of a locked-in development path may be seen a negative characteristic, as the regional economy is prevented from restructuring and adapting to the external shock (Simmie & Martin, 2010), hindering the restructuring processes in regional development (Grabher, 1993; Hassink, 2005; 2010; Martin & Sunley, 2006) and ultimately undermining the resilience of the economy.

Grabher (1993) describes three kinds of regional lock-ins. The first is a functional lock-in, which refers to the hierarchical enterprise relationship that can develop between large enterprises and smaller-sized suppliers. In this scenario, small to medium-sized suppliers become so dependent upon the large enterprise that they neglect critical scanning functions, such as research, development and marketing. The second type of regional lock-in is referred to as cognitive lock-in, where the region becomes locked into a specific worldview that confuses trends with cyclical downturns. Grabher draws upon the work of Morgan (1986) as it relates to *groupthink*. He explains that groupthink develops in such inter-firm relationships and leads to a specific worldview that is reinforced within the group. This leads to two problematic situations where: 1) the worldview of the group determines which events or signals are brought to attention of the group and which ones are ignored; and 2) when an event or a signal is brought to the attention of the group, the worldview determines how the event or signal is interpreted. In such situations, other informational sources are left out or ignored and innovation or technological opportunities may be missed.

The third and final regional lock-in is political lock-in, where the region seeks to preserve existing and more traditionally based industries. This focus on preserving traditional industries hinders the process of industrial restructuring. As Grabher explains, political lock-in occurs when there is a cooperative relationship between industry, government, local planning authorities, unions, and professional associations. He refers to this as a *politico-administrative system*, and states that such a system can keep a region, or a town on a specific path, even when the path has become a dead-end (p. 263). Grabher adds further, “perfect adaptation to a specific economic environment may undermine a region’s adaptability” (p. 265). He warns that adaptation and adaptability are not necessarily positively correlated, and that success today (defined as adaptation to an economic situation) could be an indication of challenges to be faced in the future. Specifically, “adaptation leads to an increasing level of specialization of resources and a pronounced preference for innovations that reproduce existing structures” (p. 265). In other words, as the system optimizes its adaptation or fit into the economic situation, it actually loses its ability to reorganize its internal structure in order to respond to or cope with unpredictable changes in its environment in the future. The ability to adapt depends upon the availability of unspecified and uncommitted capacities to be put to a variety of

unknown uses. Grabher refers to this as redundancy and explains that it enables social systems to not only adapt to a change in the environment, but also to question whether or not the adaptation to the change is appropriate. When the firm questions the appropriateness of certain behaviour, it may be more adaptable and more likely to self-organize when necessary (Bateson, 1972).

Path dependence & lock-ins: Conceptual challenges

As with many concepts, path dependence and lock-in are not without detractors. Some point out that path dependence suffers from a lack of definitional clarity (Djelic & Quack, 2007; Pierson, 2000). Some of this confusion is evidenced in the literature dating back to the mid 1990s. For example, Liebowitz and Margolis (1995) state that path dependence is often associated with a dependence on initial conditions. On the other hand, Goldstone (1998, p. 834) observes that path dependence is “not determined by any particular set of initial conditions.” Vergne and Durand (2010) appear to stand in the middle, pointing out that path dependence occurs when an initial condition is followed by a series of chance or contingent events. As they explain, these later events are of more influence on the path than the initial condition was. Once the path has been contingently chosen, a variety of mechanisms may increasingly constrain the course, such that it becomes self-reinforcing. Others are sceptical that there is empirical support for path dependence (Liebowitz & Margolis, 1990). Some observe that there is a lack of evidence that path dependence actually exists in practice (Hirsch & Gillespie, 2001). Although Stack and Gartland (2003) maintain that path dependency is useful for explaining why suboptimal technologies survive and thrive, they feel it is less useful in explaining the underlying processes of these developments.

The idea that history matters *in the long run* and the subjectivity related to determining what *the long run* is has faced tough questions. Vergne and Durand (2010) observe that path dependence predicts a lock-in situation down the road; however, its timing is unknown. As a result, path dependence cannot be falsified because one cannot know when the time has passed in which the predicated lock-in was to have occurred. Vergne and Durand (2010) note that most attempts to empirically apply path dependence have failed to adequately address three important issues: 1) how to verify or falsify contingency, 2) how to define the long-run, and 3) how to adequately speak

about sub-optimality, which is most simply described as *we do not live in an optimal world*. As such, these scholars suggest that path dependence be used “parsimoniously” and recommend that scholars employing the concept in empirical research: 1) specify the relevant properties of institutions, technologies or capabilities that should be considered when comparing alternative paths; 2) clarify which contingencies or changes occurred and when they occurred; and, 3) specify for each path what components of self-reinforcement are at issue and for how long (Vergne & Durand, 2010, p. 752).

Further, the notion of increasing returns has also faced some tough questions in the literature. Liebowitz and Margolis (1995, p. 206), in particular, challenge the concept. As they note, companies can overcome the effects of past events, particularly if they can foresee that one outcome may eventually be more efficient down the road than another. Consequently, such firms are motivated to avoid a suboptimal outcome. Liebowitz and Margolis (1995; 2000) refer to “three possible efficiency outcomes” (first, second and third degree) that help to explain the dependence on initial events or conditions often exhibited by dynamic processes. *First-degree* path dependence is described as instances where sensitivity to the starting point exists, but where an implied inefficiency cannot be found. For example, the owners of a factory chose to power the plant with a particular machine, knowing that the decision will influence the factory for quite a few years. The factory owners are fully aware of the effects of their decision and have taken it into account. *Second-degree* path dependence occurs in situations where imperfect information exists. Modifying the previous scenario, the factory owners are unaware that the machine they are choosing is going to quickly become obsolete because of a new technology. As such, they should have chosen a different machine that would have led to greater wealth over the long term. Here the notion is that the owners regret their initial machinery choice, it would be costly to change, but the machinery works fine and the outcome of using the current machine is, from a functional perspective, not inefficient. In contrast, outcomes in *third-degree* path dependence are inefficient. Inter-temporal effects spread the error; however, the error is seen to have been avoidable and, further, the outcomes cannot be predicted even with knowledge of both the starting point and the desired alternative outcome. In contrast to first and second-degree path dependence, improvements can be made to the path, either now or in the future. Indeed, switching gains are high, but the transition to switch may be

impractical. Consequently, the firm is locked-in to their current path. However, Liebowitz and Margolis (1995) contend that this type of a situation is rare and that no real-world examples of private locked-in efficiencies exist. Lock-in is, essentially, a state of equilibrium, where it is unlikely for an endogenous change to occur and consequently difficult to escape from (Vergne & Durand, 2010).

Other challenges are observed with the concept. For example, Pierson (2000) contends that the two approaches to defining path dependency, one broad and one narrow, provides evidence that the concept has fallen prey to what Sartori (1970) terms *concept stretching*. Concept stretching occurs when attempts are made to “augment the extension without diminishing the intension” of a concept (Sartori, p. 1041). As Sartori (1970) explains further, the gains achieved by concept stretching are offset by losses in connotation accuracy. He argues that concept stretching occurs either as a “deliberate attempt to make our conceptualizations value free” or because of what he calls the “boomerang effect” (p. 1034). Sartori (1970) describes the boomerang effect in terms of a desire to create universal concepts. For example, a concept that applies in the Western world may not apply in South-East Asia. Rather than accept this fact, scholars subsequently refuse to use the concept in Western applications because of this lack of a global fit. Pierson (2000, p. 252) concludes that the concept of path dependence is plagued by “fuzziness” and that broad notions of the concept have led to problems with analytical clarity. Vergne and Durand (2010) agree and point out that the concept is defined both in terms of persistence and in terms of novelty (the opposite of persistence). They conclude that the construct of path dependence is not theoretically distinctive from persistence and that it is actually a “quasi-synonym” for persistence (p. 739). They question what path dependence adds as a concept for explaining strategy, institutional and technological persistence. Others researchers, such as Puffert (2008, n.p.), claim that the issues related to path dependence have been “misconstrued” and that notions of third-degree path dependence are “incoherent.” According to Kay, (2005) the concept of path dependence is only applicable for understanding phenomena from a historical perspective; however, as he points out, this is not uncommon to many concepts within the social sciences. Further, in order to demonstrate that change was constrained and therefore path dependent, it is necessary to demonstrate that what

happened, happened because of an earlier sequence of decisions. Kay (2005, p. 554) calls this a “formidable challenge.”

Strambach and Halkier (2013, p. 8) contend that path dependence and lock-in do not take into account the multi-dimensional nature of institutions, nor the multi-scalar settings in which they exist. As they explain, notions of path dependence and negative lock-ins present a “polarized conceptualization of institutional change.” Rather, paths are often not logical and there is always a certain degree of *plasticity* in them. Path plasticity investigators focus on the actors who creatively use is a limited range of choices within an established institutional framework to creatively innovate, without breaking out of the current path. These researchers contend that the notion of plasticity does not deny that in some cases there is a deliberate move to create a new path or to break out of an old one. The notion of path plasticity helps to explain why some paths become stuck in a negative lock-in and why others remain dynamic over the long run (Strambach & Halkier, 2013).

Undeniably, the path dependence literature is complicated and not without its detractors; however, despite Vergne and Durand’s (2010, p. 741) noted criticism, they observe that the notion of *contingency* as well as components of *self-reinforcement* are rampant in organizations and so they conclude “path dependence must be at play out there.” They define contingency as “unpredictable, non-purposive, and somewhat random events” (p. 741). Consequently, these researchers warn that “not every historical process is path dependent,” but that by narrowing the definition down “to its logical core,” path dependence can help to explain the phenomena that other theories cannot (p. 741). Similarly, Pierson (2000) suggests that researchers must be clear and consistent as to what they mean when they employ concepts. As it relates to path dependency, he warns that researchers must understand the importance of differentiating the distinct processes of path dependency and must be clear as to whether they are speaking of path dependency in the narrow or broad sense. As he points out, the sequencing of events is critical to path dependent processes. For example, events that take place early in the process are more influential than events taking place later in the process. Therefore, a different sequencing of events is likely to create different outcomes. Pierson (2000) notes that this is where the notion of *history*

matters comes into play and consequently, path dependence must be explored in context of the causes and effects that are frequently separated in time.

Similarly, the notion of lock-in has been used to help explain why certain institutions, technologies, or even regional economies are able to adapt more easily than others (see Cowan, 1990; Cowan & Gundy, 1996; Hassink, 2010; Vergne & Durand, 2010). Technologies may become locked-in, including sub-optimal technologies, while institutions and regional economies often become 'locked-in' to a specific development path. Vergne and Durand (2010) contend that lock-in efficiencies do exist and are caused by path-dependent processes in the absence of an exogenous shock. These researchers claim that a way to clarify the debates regarding path dependence is to distinguish between the process of path dependence (consisting of contingency and self-reinforcement) and its outcomes (a state of persistence known as lock-in).

Path creation

The notion of path creation is put forward as an alternative to path dependence or lock-in. In such a process, the chosen path is modified on a continual and progressive basis (Garud & Karnoe, 2001; Garud, Kumaraswamy, & Karnoe, 2010). Path creation "implies an ability to disembed from existing structures defining relevance and also an ability to mobilize a collective despite resistance and inertia that path creation efforts are likely to encounter" (Garud & Karnoe, 2001, p. 3.). As Garud et al. (2010, p. 762) explain further, "embedded actors attempt to shape and navigate their ways through (or out of) such processes, knowing that other actors are attempting to do the same thing." Entrepreneurs set processes in motion, in real time, to help shape social and technical elements (Garud & Karnoe, 2001). In other words, firms and entrepreneurs play a role in "shaping and interacting with their environments" (Stack & Gartland, 2003, p. 489).

In contrast to path dependence, which is focused on historical events, path creation is focused on "real-time effects" that entrepreneurs and firms can have on their environment (Stack & Gartland, 2003, p. 489). While Garud and Karnoe (2001, p. 28) observe that the role of history is also important in path creation, they contend that the "place and role of history changes." Entrepreneurs seek to "shape history-in-the-

making,” and as such they “offer strategic interpretations of history” (p. 28). Entrepreneurs also seek to “actively shape emerging structures of relevance and objects,” and as such, they affect “development efforts” (p. 28). In path creation, production processes and new technologies that become successful in the marketplace are a consequence of the dynamic interplay between producers, consumers, and regulators, rather than the work of efficiency-minded actors. In such environments, it is the actors who influence the evolution of markets and the rules under which the markets operate (Stack & Gartland, 2003). Stack and Gartland (2003, p. 490) compare path dependency as a process where the entrepreneur is “passively on the outside looking in” to path creation where the entrepreneur is “actively on the inside looking out.”

Path creation processes provide a means to understand how entrepreneurs seek to shape a course in real time and that they do this by “setting in motion processes that actively shape emerging social practices and artefacts” thereby escaping a lock-in situation (Garud & Karnoe, 2001, p. 3). As such, there must be flexibility in the path so that entrepreneurs can respond to events as they arise (Gill & Williams, 2014). Mindful deviation and real-time influence are two concepts that help to differentiate path creation from path dependence. Mindful deviation is the process whereby actors undertake “deliberate and conscious actions” in order to “reframe their thinking and approach along new pathways” (Gill & Williams, 2014, p. 54). In their tourism governance-related research, Gill and Williams (2014, p. 547) put forward the notions of *mindful deviation* and *real-time influences* to explain Whistler’s move “from a growth-dependent model towards one grounded in principles of sustainability.” Whistler was then, ostensibly, able to break away from established institutional structures and practices (growth-oriented trajectory) towards a more sustainability-focused path.

2.3.5. Conclusion: Adaptability, adaptive capacity, path dependence & creation

This preceding section explored the evolution of the concepts of adaptability and adaptive capacity from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including the tourism literature. It also explored their linkage to emerging governance and sustainability literature, and identified the factors that nurture adaptability from a community perspective, as well as within a regional economy. It also explored the literature related

to governance path dependence, plasticity, creation and lock-in. These concepts are relevant to this research for understanding how shocks and stressors shaped the ability of a governance system to adapt. The ability of a system to adapt is considered a prerequisite of resilience and reflects the ability of the system to learn from disturbances and move forward (Pike, Dawley, & Tomaney, 2010). This has set the foundation to now explore the relevant resilience research.

2.3.6. Resilience: Theoretical underpinnings

Concepts of *resilience* can be traced back to its beginnings in the fields of mathematics and ecology (Davidson, 2010; Janssen & Ostrom, 2006; Janssen et al., 2006). Over time, the notion of resilience has been explored in a variety of contexts and defined in a variety of ways within disciplines such as environmental, biological, psychological, and social sciences, as well as business, engineering and materials, policy studies (Almedom, 2008; Gunderson, 2000; Holling, 1973; Hudson, 2010; Hyslop, 2007; Pimm, 1984)⁴, and most recently as topic in discussions concerning national, international, and human security (Brown, 2012). As a result, a diversity of definitions has developed (Janssen & Ostrom, 2006; Turner et al., 2003). While many researchers draw attention to the challenges related to this fact, such concerns are not unique to the concept of resilience, nor has this challenge prevented researchers from undertaking valuable and credible research on system resilience in a variety of contexts. As Janssen and Ostrom (2006) observe, with time and collaboration amongst scholars in the various fields, the linguistic confusion will slowly wane.

Resilience is a core concept first utilized by ecologists to understand the relationships between people, nature, and the co-evolution of SESs (Berkes & Folke, 1998; Blaikie & Brookfield, 1987; Folke, 2006; Hudson, 2010; Janssen & Ostrom, 2006; Janssen et al., 2006). C. S. Holling, an ecological theorist, first applied the concept of resilience within the ecology literature in the 1970s. In his work, Holling (1973) defined resilience as a measure of the ability of a system to persist in the presence of change and disturbance. Pimm (1984) built upon the work of Holling, interpreting resilience to

⁴ See Folke (2006) for a comprehensive history of the development of resilience theory.

mean the speed with which an ecosystem returned to a state of equilibrium, following an unusual disturbance. However, there were challenges with this approach to resilience, particularly because it did not fully account for the complexity of systems. As Davidson (2010, p. 1137) explains, this original thinking on resilience took the perspective that a system will tend toward a stable mode of behaviour, in the absence of a disturbance. In the case of a disturbance, the level of resilience in the system effects how likely the system is to return to its original domain of attraction. If the disturbance overwhelms the resilience threshold of the system, it is unlikely that the system will return to its previous domain of attraction. However, this approach fails to recognize that systems are complex, that several domains of attraction all influence system behaviour, and unpredictable shifts may occur from disturbances.

To address this shortcoming, the resilience concept was expanded to include the adaptive cycle as a means of describing the dynamics of ecosystems (Davidson, 2010). The adaptive cycle consists of four ecosystem functions: exploitation (r), conservation (K), release (Ω), and reorganization (α) (Holling & Gunderson, 2002). According to Holling and Gunderson (2002), the cycle starts with an exploitation phase. From there, the system moves slowly to the conservation phase. The shift from the conservation to the release phase occurs rapidly, as does the shift to the reorganization phase. There is also a rapid shift back to the exploitation phase. The cycle functions within two dimensions: 1) *potential*, which is inherent in accumulated resources of biomass and nutrients; and, 2) the degree of *connectedness*, between the controlling variables. Each of these dimensions has a property. The *potential* dimension is associated with limits to change, while the *connectedness* dimension is associated with the degree of internal control over variability principle.

Again, shortcomings were noticed with this adaptive cycle model, as inconsistencies arose when it was applied in varying situations (Holling & Gunderson, 2002). Consequently, *resilience* was added to the dimensions of *potential* and *connectedness*. The *resilience* dimension is associated with the principle of vulnerability to change. Holling and Gunderson (2002, p. 41) explain that resilience expands and contracts through the cycle. Specifically, resilience contracts as the cycle moves toward conservation (K), “where the system becomes more brittle.” Resilience expands as it

shifts quickly through the back loop of release (Ω), and reorganization (α), to begin the cycle again. The three dimensional, adaptive cycle model suggests that in the absence of a disturbance, the system will tend toward increasing complexity (Holling & Gunderson, 2002) (see Figure 2-1).

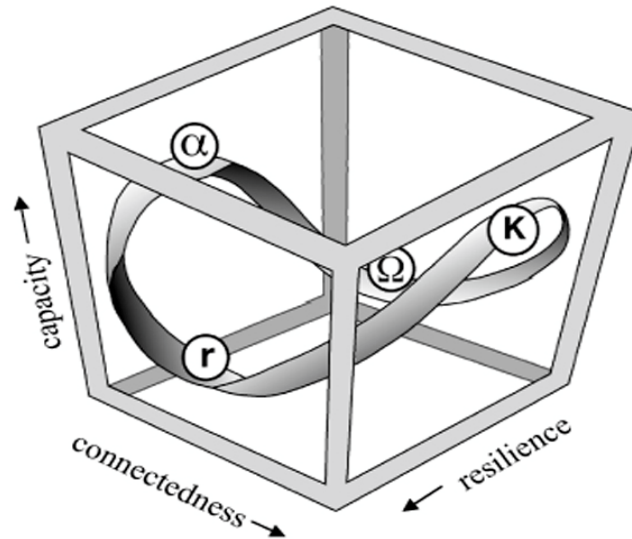


Figure 2-1: The adaptive cycle (from *Panarchy* by Lance Gunderson & C.S. Holling. Copyright © 2002 Island Press. Reproduced with the permission of Island Press, Washington, DC.)

Resilience is now defined as the ability to bounce back, renew, and reorganize (Folke, 2006), not only from an ecological perspective, but also a social perspective (Berkes et al., 2003). The ability of a system to adapt is a prerequisite of resilience and reflects the capacity of the system to learn from the disturbance and move forward. Carpenter, Walker, Anderies, and Abel (2001, p. 766) define resilience in terms of: 1) the amount of change a system can undergo and still retain the same structure and function; 2) the degree to which the system is capable of self-organizing; and, 3) the degree to which the system can build the capacity to learn and adapt. According to Walker et al. (2004), there are four critical aspects of resilience. The first of these aspects is *latitude*. Latitude refers to the maximum amount of change a system can undergo before crossing

a threshold and thereby losing its ability to recover. The second aspect, *resistance*, refers to the ease or difficulty of changing the system. The third aspect is *precariousness* and it relates to how close the system is to a threshold. The fourth and final aspect is *panarchy*, which describes “the cross-scale and dynamic character of interactions between human and natural systems” (Walker & Salt, 2006, p. 89). It builds upon systems theory, which purposes that “diversity promotes resilience, while uniformity breeds fragility” (In ‘t Veld, 2013, p. 285). Holling and Gunderson (2002) draw the word from the Greek god, *Pan*, which is a symbol of universal nature to capture the notion of change. The second half of the word draws from the word *hierarchies*, to the cross-scale nature of human and natural systems (Walker & Salt, 2006).

Resilience is approached from a variety of perspectives. *Ecological resilience* focuses on whether or not a disturbance leads a system to move into another set of behaviours (Simmie & Martin, 2010). Here, resiliency refers to the magnitude of the disturbance that can be absorbed by the system without changing its structure and function (Holling, 1973). In other words, resilience is defined in terms of flexibility, or the capacity of the system to undergo some change (or adapt) without crossing a threshold that would put it into a different regime or state – or a system with a “different identity” (Walker & Salt, 2006, p. 32). Flexibility refers to the degree of manoeuvrability within the system or in activities (Smithers & Smit, 1997). Defining resilience in terms of flexibility and the ability of the system to undergo some degree of change, permits the concepts of resilience and adaptability to be connected and is considered the preferred definition (McGlade, Murray, Baldwin, Ridgway, & Winder, 2006). *Engineered resilience* focuses on the stability of a system within some equilibrium or steady state existence. The stability of a system refers to its ability to remain in a fixed and unchanged state in times of disturbance (Smithers & Smit, 1997). Engineered resilience is often used in contexts of regional economies, where it is defined as the ability of a region to achieve an “equilibrium-based rebound” after an environmental or economic event (Christopherson et al., 2010, p. 5). Resilience theory is also promoted as the preferred approach to understand and implement disaster risk reduction strategies (see Larsen, Calgaro, & Thomalla, 2011), as well as to understand how and why systems are frequently pushed beyond their ability to recover (Walker & Salt, 2006). Walker and Salt (2006) contend

that at its core, the concept is about risk and complexity, while Holling and Meffe (1996) observe that the loss of variability in a system inevitably leads to a loss of resilience.

Resilience & development

In a development context, system resilience enables an economy to adapt its structure (i.e. institutions, firms, industries, technologies) so as to maintain growth in employment, production output, and material wealth (Martin, 2012). This approach is often referred to as *social resilience* (Folk et al., 2003). It is employed to analyze system vulnerability and the sensitivity of regional economies to exogenous shocks (Simmie & Martin, 2010). Here, resilience is discussed in terms of the uneven ability of places to “react, respond and cope with uncertain, volatile and rapid change” (Pike et al., 2010, p. 59). Hudson (2010) contends that the ability of a region to adapt is a critical element of resilience, as adaptive regions are more able to adjust and respond in ways that do not damage or jeopardize the system. Luthe et al, (2012) point to the importance of both stability and flexibility, observing that while regional resilience requires stability within the economy it also needs flexibility to permit innovation and development.

Resilience is also linked to the study of psychology, including clinical psychology (post-traumatic stress disorder), development psychology (child & youth resilience), psychology and social work (substance misuse, abused children), positive psychology (adult subjective wellbeing, happiness, hope, thriving studies), and existential psychology (hardiness) (Almedom, 2008). Of most relevance to this research is the developmental psychology field, which focuses on positive life adaptation in children and young adults. Here, resilience is defined as the internal capacities or behaviour, as well as the structural conditions (social, cultural and political) that enable a child or youth to adapt in the face of adversity (Ungar, 2003; 2005). The edited text *Resilience and Development: Positive life adaptations* (Glantz & Johnson, 1999) may be one of the earliest collections of resilience-related research examining individual resilience. Within this body of development psychology is the work of Kumpfer (1999) who developed a resilience framework for research on children and young adults. She identifies a set of five internal resilience characteristics or factors that contribute to individual resilience, particularly in times of stress (see Table 2.2). Kumpfer (1999) contends that in times of stress or challenge, a set of risk and protective factors (family, culture, community,

school, peers) combine with these five internal resiliency factors (noted above), to enable positive outcomes (positive adaptation and resilience) after a negative life experience. She suggests that it is important to understand the processes through which individuals develop resilience characteristics or “ego strength” (p. 201). Chapter 6 will more fully discuss the implications of this research as it relates to this study.

Table 2.2: Five internal resilience characteristics (Kumpfer, 1999)

Characteristic	Description
<i>Spiritual or motivation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encompasses mostly cognitive capabilities or belief systems; motivates individuals to proceed in a specific direction; success depends upon the direction taken;
<i>Cognitive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> helps an individual achieve his or her dreams and goals; includes intellectual, academic, and job skills; includes moral reasoning, and ability to 1) judge right from wrong; 2) internalize standards of the way things should be done or what is normative, 3) value compassion, fairness, decency; and, 4) the desire to serve others; connected to insight and reflective skills, high levels of self-esteem, creativity and the ability to plan;
<i>Behavioural/social</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> similar to cognitive competencies, except that they require a behavioural action, as opposed to just thought; includes problem solving skills, communication skills, street and peer resistance smarts, and ability to be empathetic to the needs of others
<i>Emotional stability/emotional management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes happiness, the recognition of feelings, ability to control anger and depression; includes ability to restore one's self-esteem, humour and hopefulness.
<i>Physical wellbeing/physical</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes good health, health maintenance skills, physical talent development, and physical attractiveness; good physical state is predicative of resilience.

Resilience & governance

Most of the resilience literature related to governance is concerned with adaptive strategies (see earlier section). A smaller body of research discusses factors that enhance regional resilience from a governance perspective. For example, Lebel et al. (2006) contend that a series of feedback loops between systems of governance and the regional ecology enable regional resilience (Lebel et al., 2006). In these feedback loops, regional resilience can be affected by variability in governance systems, such as the

variety of actors and their level of engagement, interests, and knowledge, differences in technology use and investment, varying levels and approaches to power, as well as diversity in regional ecosystems. At the same time, the ability to manage resilience can influence the type of governance system employed, and in another feedback loop, ecosystems can constrain governance and its capacity to be resilient. However, Lebel et al. (2006) warn that the assessment of governance systems can be challenging, because of the difficulty in assessing the capacity of and the relationships between the variety of actors and institutions. Further, analysis of governance structures and processes can reveal what these researchers refer to as “the darker side of conservation,” where the rights of minorities can be ignored in the interests of ensuring ecological resilience (Lebel et al., 2006, n.p.).

Management practices are considered to be an important factor in shaping governance systems to better enable regional resilience. The OECD (2011) reports several management practices that serve to increase resilience. These include planning, security, and operational practices for businesses and governments. It also identifies a series of potential risks to consider. These include cyber security, natural weather events, natural disasters, public health, accidents, aging equipment, malicious acts, terrorism, and supply chain disruptions. Lebel et al. (2006) examined the attributes of governance actors that enhance the capacity to manage resilience within regional SESs. They assert that a variety of capacities must be managed by a variety of stakeholders, social networks, and institutions within the regional SES. Specifically, the ability of SESs to self-organize, adapt, and learn (factors that enhance systems resilience) is enabled by a set of governance capacities. These six capacities include: 1) the ability to effectively engage with and handle multiple and cross-scale dynamics; 2) the ability to detect and navigate away from thresholds that, if crossed, will set the system into a new operating regime; 3) the ability to anticipate and cope with uncertainties and surprises; 4) the ability to combine and integrate different forms of knowledge; 5) the ability to design institutions to fit diverse social and ecological contexts; and, 6) the ability to maintain ecological, economic, and social diversity.

Resilience & communities

Drawing from the work of resilience scholars, the Resilience Alliance, the Stockholm Resilience Centre (2015), and the Centre for Community Enterprise (CCE) (n.d., p. 11) define a resilient community as being one “that takes intentional action to enhance the personal collective capacity of its citizens and institutions to respond to, and influence the course of social and economic change.” A resilient community encompasses four aspects: people, organizations, resources, and, processes. Patton and Johnson (2001, p. 273) define community resilience as the ability of the community to “bounce back and recover using its own resources” (2001, p. 273). They define community resilience in terms of the physical infrastructure, the economic resources, and “ensuring that community members have the resources, capacities and capabilities necessary” to respond to adversity (p. 272). These researchers contend that it is the ability of a community to conceptualize its “response to adversity” that enables the community to draw upon its “internal resources and competencies to manage the demands, challenges and changes...” (p. 273). Tobin (1999, p. 23) warns that responses often perpetuate “the disaster-damage cycle, rather than addressing the root causes of the problem.” He observes that community resilience may be in the hands of “absentee” employers, rather than local business people. Large employers “make decisions based upon shareholder profits rather than local concerns” (p. 16). He suggests sustainable and resilient communities must:

- Seek to lower the level of risk to all community members through reduced exposure to geophysical events. This can be achieved through structural and non-structural measures;
- Seek to reduce the level of vulnerability of all members of the community, especially those who are politically or economically marginalized;
- Plan for sustainability and resilience; Ensure commitments are long-term and that sustainability goals stay at the forefront of all community planning efforts;
- Ensure high-level support and political will from agencies and political leaders; embrace partnerships and cooperation across the various levels of government and across organizations. This will insure the involvement of leadership, skill and resource utilization, and local knowledge to help develop mitigation projects and to ensure buy in for sustainability initiatives;

- Strengthen networks of independent and interdependent segments of society, and plan at the appropriate scale.

Measures of community resilience

A particularly useful framework for assessing community resilience was developed by the Canadian Centre for Community Renewal (CCCR, 2000). It was developed to assist with the recovery and renewal of economically stressed, rural communities in BC. Its guiding handbook, *The Community Resilience Manual* (2000) assists communities assess their circumstances “efficiently and effectively,” so that they could make better decisions on how to best invest their limited resources (p 1-1). The manual describes 23 characteristics of a resilient community (see Appendix B); however, the CCCR observes that the characteristics are “not black and white, but rather shades of grey.” They observe that because each community is unique it will experience the resilience characteristics differently and, further, the resilience characteristics may change over time. The CCCR adds that depending upon the community’s history, values, and the nature of local stresses, certain resilience characteristics may be more significant than others. The work of past resilience researchers, such as Walker and Salt (2006), and the *community survival* work of the Heartland Center For Leadership (1998) form the foundation of the manual (see Appendix C for more detail on the 20 Clues to Rural Community Survival). The CCCR resource is valuable to this research, because it builds upon the individual resilience characteristics developed by Kumpfer (1999) and helps to explain the factors that enhance resilience at the community level.

Resilience & sustainability

Local and regional development discussions are increasingly moving away from discussions of growth to discourses about regional resilience and adaptation (Christopherson et al., 2010; Dawley, Pike, & Tomaney, 2010). Perceptions of increasing uncertainty and insecurity, as well as intersecting economic and environmental crises have led to a heightened sense of vulnerability, and, a desire to find more resilient paths to regional and local development (Hudson, 2010; Pike et al., 2010). Managing for resilience is now considered to be an imperative for successful planning and management of organizations. This extends to resilience within systems of governance, particularly those centred on following more sustainable development paths

(see Berkes et al., 2003; Carpenter et al., 2001; Derissen, Quaas & Baumgartner, 2011; Folke, 2006; Gunderson & Holling, 2002; Maler, 2008; Walker, 1998; Walker et al., 2002; 2004; Walker & Salt, 2006). Lebel et al. (2006, n.p.) believe that “strengthening the capacity of societies to manage resilience is critical to effectively pursuing sustainable development.”

SES studies draw a connection between resilience and sustainability (Adger, 2000; Derissen et al., 2011; Maler, 2008; Walker & Salt, 2006); however, there are divergent perspectives on the relationship between resilience and sustainability. Indeed, there is a lack of consensus that resilience thinking will lead to more sustainable forms of development. For example, Christopherson et al. (2010) question how judgments about resilience can be made when the future is unclear and it is unknown how a particular system will respond in the face of future stressors and shocks. Simmie and Martin (2010) warn that the concept of regional economic resilience is ambiguous and that the variability within the development approach of regional economies may affect a community’s resilience to external shocks or disturbances and its ability to return to its sustainability policies, initiatives and practices.

Additionally, there are divergent perspectives on the relationship between resilience and sustainability. For example, while some researchers contend that resilience is a precondition for sustainability (Arrow et al., 1995; Lebel et al., 2006; Perrings, 2006), others suggest that resilience and sustainability are, in essence, one and the same. For example, Perrings (2006, p. 418) contends, “[a] development strategy is not sustainable if it is not resilient.” Holling and Walker (2003, p. 1) state that “a resilient socio-ecological system is synonymous with a region that is ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable.” Likewise, Maler (2008, p. 17) observes that sustainability and ecosystem resilience can “merge within a single conceptual framework.” In his research on community-based tourism (CBT), Ruiz-Ballesteros (2011) claims that the extent to which CBT increases the community’s resilience, is evidence of the extent to which it nurtures sustainable development. However, Carpenter et al. (2001) appear to contest these perspectives, noting that while sustainability is always desirable, resilience can be either desirable or undesirable. Holling and Walker (2003, p. 1) agree, warning that resilience “is not necessarily a good thing.” As Derissen et al. (2011) explain, resilience can be seen to be the objective,

rather than a way to enhance sustainability. In other words, a resilience framework appears to stress the return to existing structures and may encourage the repetition of past mistakes, rather than promoting adaptation and regeneration (Hassink, 2010).

In contrast, many resilience scholars believe that a resilience approach actually promotes adaptation and regeneration. For example, Moberg and Simonsen (n.d., p. 7) contend that “resilience thinking is an important part of the solution,” for linking society, the economy and the biosphere. They state that a resilience approach encourages “flexibility and adaptive capacity,” as opposed to approaches that seek “to achieve optimal production and short-term economic gains” (p. 7). Kemp, Parto, and Gibson (2005) contend that adaptability is one of the most important principles as it relates to governance and sustainability. Indeed, over the past decade, many studies have explored how notions of resilience, adaptability and learning might support and enable progress on sustainability (see Dietz, Ostrom & Stern, 2003; Folke et al., 2005; Rijke et al., 2012). Other studies have also linked these concepts to sustainability and systems of governance (see de la Torre-Castro, 2012; Elbakidze et al., 2010; Lockwood, Davidson, Curtis, Stratford, & Griffith, 2010; Rijke et al., 2012).

Resilience & tourism

While the concept of resilience has been a topic of focus in the tourism research since approximately the mid 1990s⁵, it is interesting to note that it has developed almost in isolation to the community resilience literature. Originally, the concept of resilience was explored in terms of tourism market fluctuations (see O’Hare & Barrett, 1994) and tourism-environmental impacts (see Nystrom, Folke, & Moberg, 2000). Most recently, resilience is linked to the climate-environmental change and tourism sustainability literature (see Klint et al., 2012), as well as the disaster and risk literature (see Biggs, Hall, & Stoeckl, 2012; Hall, 2010), particularly from a destination (or regional) perspective (see Cochrane, 2010; Larsen et al., 2011). Cochrane (2010) draws a link

⁵ There is a body of research dating back to the 1970s that discusses resilience in terms of the management and conservation of parks and protected areas, particularly as it relates to area degradation (see Western & Henry, 1979).

between the underlying forces of Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle⁶ to explain resilience as it relates to tourism systems; however, she notes that resilience "goes further in explaining the cyclical and complex nature of systems," particularly as it relates to recovery from disturbances and the accumulation of various forms of capital. This then enables faster renewal and stronger structures (p. 173). In her research, undertaken in Luang Prabang, Laos, Cochrane (2010) illustrates how the tourism industry passed through the various stages of the Holling's (2001) resilience model (reorganization, exploitation, conservation, release).

The literature exploring the factors shaping resilience in tourism governance systems is, with the exception of a few studies, sparse. Most of the research that exists relates to governing the building of resilience in tourism destinations (see Luthe et al., 2012) or the role of governance systems in creating resilience post disaster (see Larsen et al., 2011). A few studies explore the factors shaping resilience in tourism governance systems. For example, Luthe et al. (2012) explored network governance systems⁷ in relation to resilience within mountain tourism communities in Gotthard Region of Switzerland. Their research highlighted the need for economic diversification, as well as a network governance structure that supported stability, flexibility, and innovation that strengthened resilience in the face of climate change. They also noted the benefits of cohesive communities, collaboration, distribution of power, and integration within supply chains. Similarly, Powell, Cuschnir and Peiris (2009) undertook a case study of tourism management in Sri Lanka to understand the resilience factors that build adaptive governance capacity. Their research demonstrated the importance of trust, social capital, internal leadership capacity, attitudinal commitment, vertical and horizontal system integration, local-national partnerships, and a long-term commitment.

⁶ Butler's (1980) hypothetical "A tourism area cycle of evolution" depicts the various stages of tourism development from the exploration stage, through development, consolidation, stagnation and either rejuvenation or decline.

⁷ Network governance is defined as the structures and processes through which collective action among a variety of actors is coordinated in such a manner that it upholds publicly held values and resources (Stoker, 1998).

Resilience measures in tourism settings

Ruiz-Ballesteros (2011) contends that the inclusion of socio-ecological resilience (SER) as a dimension of tourism studies and assessments may contribute to tourism-related sustainability analyses. The SER framework focuses on the social dimension of socio-ecological resilience” and is applied to communities where “tourism activity constitutes a major economic resource for the families” that inhabit the location (p. 657). Although, a resilience approach to studying social systems has been challenged, Ruiz-Ballesteros contends that it is not a strategy to avoid change and transformation. Rather, it “provides a lens to study how change and transformation are tackled” (p. 657). As this study utilizes the SER framework, the following paragraphs describe his research methods and findings in more detail.

Ruiz-Ballesteros’ research involves an exploratory ethnographic case study, which explored SER⁸ and sustainable development of community-based tourism in Agua Blanca, Ecuador, a community of approximately 260 residents. The purpose of this research was to explore the practicality of examining SER in tourism-related research. It sought to create new avenues for analytical and methodological development. Specifically, Ruiz-Ballesteros’ (2011) research explored four groups of interrelated factors that nurture the development of SER at the local level. The foundation of these factors rests in past SES resilience research undertaken by Berkes and Seixas (2005) and Folke (2003). However, many of the individual factors that comprise these four groups of factors can be traced back through the growing body of resilience research from approximately 2000 and onward (see Adger, 2000). The four groups of resilience enhancing factors are as follows: 1) learning to live with change and uncertainty; 2) nurturing diversity for reorganization and renewal; 3) combining different kinds of knowledge; and, 4) creating opportunity for self-organization (see Table 2.3). Berkes and Seixas (2005) stress that identifying the factors that build resilience at the local level is critical to understanding what resilience looks like “on the ground” (p. 973). While they note the difficulty in assessing some factors (i.e. nurturing memory) and the difficulty in obtaining data (i.e. performance indicators) they argue that most factors can be assessed qualitatively and/or quantitatively.

⁸ Rather than using SESR, Ruiz-Ballesteros has employed the term socio-ecological resilience (SER).

Table 2.3: Factors nurturing SER at the local level (Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011)

Factors nurturing SER at the local level	Defining particulars
Learning to live with change and uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating learning environment, particularly as it relates to shocks & stressors; • Building rapid feedback capacity to respond to environmental change; • Managing disturbance; • Building a portfolio of livelihood activities; • Developing coping strategies;
Nurturing diversity for reorganization and renewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurturing ecological memory; • Nurturing diversity in institutions to respond to change; • Creating political space for experimentation; • Building trust among users; • Using social memory as a source for innovation and novelty;
Combining different kinds of knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporating systems of local knowledge into management and external decision-making authorities; • Building capacity to monitor the environment; • Building capacity for participatory management; • Building institutions that frame learning, memory and creativity; • Building institutions that create cross-scale mechanisms to share knowledge;
Creating opportunity for self-organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting participatory strategies that permit self-organization of groups & communities; • Promoting participatory strategies that consider the diversity and alteration inherent in resilience; • Building capacity for user self-organization; • Building capacity for self-determined and self-organized fairness in resource access and allocation; • Building capacity for self-organization in response to external drivers; • Building conflict management mechanisms; • Matching scales of ecosystem governance; • Creating multi-level governance

From a methodological perspective, Ruiz-Ballesteros' (2011) research analyzes the degree to which the tourism experience fosters the development of the four groups of resilience factors. More specifically, he examined how different tourist activities contribute to SER. He presents his findings through a series of four separate narratives, one for each of the groups of resilience-related factors. Ruiz-Ballesteros concludes that an analysis of SER may be "relevant in the development of sustainable tourism,"

because it may be a tool to assist with planning and decision-making as it relates to tourism-related initiatives (p. 665). While he warns against generalizing beyond the case study, his findings suggest that community-based tourism, especially that which is focused on sustainability, may increase SER and, as a result, reduce vulnerability. He adds that an analysis of SER may be of value to communities, particularly governance agencies interested in developing community-based tourism, as it enables the analysis of activities, behaviour and attitudes essential to understanding how to achieve socio-ecological sustainability.

Resilience thinking: challenges

Beyond the debate as to whether or not a resilience approach is compatible with a sustainability approach lies an even bigger discussion concerning the ecological foundation of the resilience framework (see Adger, 2000; Davidson, 2010; Leach, 2008; Miller et al., 2010). Indeed, extending the concept of resilience beyond its ecological foundation is questioned by a number of researchers. For example, Adger (2000, p. 350) observes, “taking the concept of resilience from the ecological sciences and applying it to social systems assumes that there are no essential differences in behaviour and structure between socialized institutions and ecological systems.” Others, such as Hassink (2010) question the value of a resilience framework. They conclude it stresses the return to existing industrial structures, rather than promoting adaptation and renewal. Hayward (2013, n.p.) contends, “human prosperity requires more than resilience. It requires creative political imagination and agency, the ability to take action to shape our life circumstances.” She elaborates that if society wishes to achieve significant political transformation in the future, it will need less resilience and “more vision for compassion and social justice, achieved through collective political action.”

Swanstrom (2008) contends that the resilience framework fails to acknowledge the significant role of state, policy, and private markets. Rather, it supports what he refers to as “consensual, network forms of regional governance” (Swanstrom, 2008, p.19). The tendency to wait for consensus within governance networks may lead to inaction. Davidson (2010, p. 1142) observes the focus on diversification with the resilience framework and states that such a focus may actual reduce complexity. She contends that complexity rather than diversity may be the desired state. She also

observes that quick responses are often considered to enhance resilience, improve adaptive capacity, and reduce vulnerability, yet she observes that decision-making and monitoring may not be able to keep up with the requirement for quick responses.

Neocleous (2013) expresses concern with the latest use of the term resilience by international organizations. He observes that organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund suggest a resilience approach can be used as a vehicle for elevating the world's poor toward wealth. While this is certainly a desired state, Neocleous expresses concern that the focus has turned to helping the poor become wealthy through resilience. He observes that the world's poor obviously already possess resilience, but the messaging they are now receiving is that they just need a little training in how to recognize their own resilience. He adds further that, political officials have been quick to pick up resilience as a means to undermine anti-austerity measures. He and Hayward (2013) both express concern that within neoliberal agendas the focus is on resilience as a personal quality. In other words, such a focus may imply that suffering and grief are matters of personal responsibility, which then serves to distance governance systems and leaders from their responsibility (Hayward, 2013).

The literature also points to a debate regarding appropriate measures of resilience. For instance, economic measures such as employment rates, economic growth rates, standards of living, quality of life, and the ability of a region to achieve an "equilibrium-based rebound" after an environmental or economic event are often used as measures of regional resilience (Christopherson et al., 2010, p. 5). However, Christopherson et al. (2010) question the validity and usefulness of measuring resilience in terms of an economy's ability to maintain a path of equilibrium growth. Rather, they contend that the concepts of adjustment and adaptability are more useful measures of regional resilience, as the ability to change and adjust are more likely to enhance regional economic success over the long term. Adger (2000, p. 354) observes the challenge in judging whether resilience can and will be maintained into the future and as new threats emerge. Others observe the challenge of appropriately applying a resilience approach to the chaotic character of tourism systems. For example, McKercher (1999, p. 427) states that one "cannot predict or explain" how tourism systems can be shaken to the core by events, yet "re-emerge in an even more competitive manner." He adds that a focus on "orderly linear change," cannot account for "rogue" players who often

influence the development of tourism destinations. Calgaro, Lloyd, and Dominey-Howes (2014) suggest that the notion of tipping points (or resilience thresholds) to help anticipate change is not easily applied to social situations, because as Zahra and Ryan (2005) observe human actions and outcomes are unpredictable.

Challenges related to assessing individual resilience are also noted in the literature. For example, Werner and Johnson (1999, p. 259) contend that there is “more promise in the concept of resilience than there are possibilities for application.” They observe the lack of longitudinal research related to individual resilience, as studies rarely extend beyond the first 40 years of life. They also draw attention to the lack of studies to understand the interplay between risk and protective factors. Despite these challenges, Benard (1999) suggest that resilience research within the social and behavioural sciences is powerful because it moves the focus beyond individual deficits and pathology, toward a focus on individual and community strengths. She adds, “at the community level, a resilience paradigm provides optimism, hope, and motivation” (p. 270); however, she too suggests more research is needed to move the research findings into the field.

2.3.7. Conclusion: Resilience thinking

The noted challenges and debates only serve to strengthen the sustainability and resilience literature. A resilience approach provides a valuable foundation for future research, particularly as it relates to sustainability. It challenges researchers to go beyond a search for the ideal sustainability challenges, to examine evolutionary cycles and the changes that occur after a disturbance (Davidson, 2010, p. 1145). The application of a resilience approach is valuable for this research because it enables a deeper understanding of the factors that shape the capacity of a sustainability-focused governance system to proactive respond to and manage shocks and/or stressors. It enables an understanding of the types of shocks and stressors affecting a governance system and the role of governance actors in shaping proactive responses and overall community viability and success.

Indeed, many scholars believe that a resilience approach holds promise for creating greater understanding of the factors that enable proactive responses to change.

Understanding the factors that nurture adaptability and shape community resilience is the first step in creating the governance systems that are necessary to begin addressing humanity's sustainability challenges. Indeed, a variety of governance models, such as adaptive governance and governance for sustainable development, as well as good governance principles have been proposed to help communities better manage change, such as shocks and stressors, and better live within their means.

2.4. Shocks and stressors

2.4.1. Introduction

Shocks and stressors affect the economic, environmental, socio-cultural and political fabric of communities, including tourism destinations. Responses to them (successes and failures) often overlap and “compound over time” (Calgaro et al., 2014, p. 348). When they affect tourism destinations, it often results in a decline in tourism visitation (Turner et al., 2006). However, Moberg and Simonsen (n.d., p. 3) contend that shocks and stressors can spur “renewal and innovative thinking.” Indeed, as noted by the Resilience Alliance (2010), shocks can spur proactive decision-making. The following sections explore the theoretical underpinnings of the main concepts of *shocks* and *stressors*. As part of this process, practical distinctions are made between shocks and stressors, as they relate to system vulnerability, renewal, and resilience. A variety of features are presented that may shape the ability of a tourism destination and its governance system to adapt to and capitalize upon shocks and stressors.

2.4.2. Shocks: theoretical underpinnings

Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, the effects of shocks are of growing importance, particularly because of their potential to affect the economic, socio-cultural, environmental, and political fabric of society. While the literature reveals a debate as to whether shocks, such as natural disasters, are actually increasing in frequency, what is not debatable is the magnitude of the losses connected with such events (measured in terms of human lives lost, infrastructure destroyed, ecological damage, and disruptions

to social networks) (Costanza & Farley, 2007). In addition to the climate change literature where shocks are mostly discussed in terms of natural disasters, notions of shocks and stressors are frequently described and applied to a variety of industries and professions. A review of the English-language literature reveals that the term *shock* was first discussed in the mid-1800s in relation to medical science and the human body. As time progressed, the evolution of the concept reflected human progress and significant historical, political, and economic events (i.e. World War I and *shell shock*, advances post World War I in medical knowledge of the human brain and *shock therapy*, the spread of electrical power and *electrical shocks* in the 1920s, *economic shock* related to the 1929 stock market crash, and in the 1940s with the increase in travel, *culture shock*).

SES shocks

Much of the literature examining the impacts of shocks on SESs systems does so at the global level. A global shock is defined as a “rapid onset event with severely disruptive consequences covering at least two continents” (OECD, 2011, p. 12). Although, the effects of a shock can be a matter of perspective (i.e. what is bad for one country, may be good for another), large-scale shocks usually threaten global stability and are consequently thought of in mostly negative terms. Global shocks can result from catastrophic events that affect the entire planet (e.g. a nuclear accident) or from subtle events that may begin as small, localized events (e.g. political uprisings) and which grow to encompass the rest of the world, spreading through a global network of interconnections and interdependencies (OECD, 2011). From an SES perspective, shocks fall into event categories: biological (e.g. disease), economic (e.g. market shocks), physical (e.g. weather), political (e.g. revolutions, riots), social (e.g. population issues), and policy (e.g. carbon tax). SES shocks can disrupt ecosystems, populations, and/or communities, and affect resource availability.

SES shocks are often spoken of in terms of being exogenous (external) or endogenous (internal) to a system, and creating instability in the landscape (Walker, Holling, Carpenter, & Kinzig, 2004). Exogenous shocks are categorized as being either: 1) environmental or natural shocks (e.g. natural disasters, including earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, droughts, floods, etc.) or 2) human-made (e.g. riots, wars, fires, financial crises) (Guillaumont, 2009; Wilks & Moore, 2004). Endogenous shocks

can include political instability and/or domestic instability. Undeniably, natural shocks, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes and typhoons, are decidedly negative in their impact. The damage is often extensive in terms of lives lost and capital destruction (Guillaumont, 2009). However, shocks do create opportunities for new systems (or new leaders) to become established (Resilience Alliance, 2010). Further, shocks present opportunities for renewal and innovation (Folke, 2006; Moberg & Simonsen, n.d.). Indeed, an exogenous shock can help free a system from its path dependent history (Vergne & Durand, 2010).

Indeed, there is a growing body of literature related to shocks and the opportunity for change or renewal. Most of this literature concerns the effects of disasters and hazards. While smaller disasters are less likely to influence change, large disasters, particularly those associated with natural hazards, can lead to “socially progressive” changes (Birkmann et al., 2010). Kingdon (1995, p. 166) contends that problems (e.g. natural disasters or political events) can open a “policy window” within governance systems, which can then lead to “windows of opportunity” for favourable outcomes. These favourable outcomes may enable small, and often indistinguishable change. In such cases, linking a natural disaster to a particular change can be challenging. On the other hand, larger changes, such as changes to previously “dominant ways of thinking and acting” that create “new conditions and relationships within environmental, socio-economic and political structures are more easily detectable (Birkmann et al., 2010, p. 638). The changes can involve current institutional structures and also lead to the development of new institutions, as well as shifts in the involvement of current and new actors (Birkmann et al., 2010). On the other hand Hayward (2013) observed that system shocks may also lead to socially regressive changes, as they did in Christchurch, New Zealand after the 2010 and 2011 earthquakes.

Economic shocks

In addition to the SES literature, notions of shock are dominant within the economics literature. From an economic perspective, a shock is defined as “an unexpected change in the economy or a component of the economy” and can lead to changes in individual behaviour and decision-making (Darity, 2008, p. 500). According to Hoffman and Ocasio (2001), a shock is a highly publicized event and a critical trigger

for institutional transformation (see Hoffman, 1999; Sewell, 1995). The Financial Stability Oversight Council (FSOC)⁹ (U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2012) states that a shock is often defined as an episode of financial disruption that arises when unforeseen and adverse developments interact with vulnerabilities within a financial system. The FSOC, in its 2012 report, explains that a financial shock can threaten system stability if it induces significant losses on a set of assets over a short period of time. Shocks can also occur from or be exacerbated by the behaviour of a specific business, infrastructural events, as well as breakdowns in the functioning of the market(s), which then creates or aggravates losses related to a set of assets. Destabilizing shocks are most likely to occur when the markets have undergone structural changes, such as those related to technological developments and/or financial innovation. These types of structural changes are often slow moving and may occur over a number of years. Slow moving structural changes are particularly problematic as they often lead to complacency in risk managers and can lead to even riskier behaviour in those seeking higher returns (FSOC, 2012). Further, the changes are rarely recognized at the time they are occurring and risk management models are consequently left unadjusted. In such cases, the probability of a shock is underestimated and market participants are left unprepared when such an event occurs.

According to Darity (2008, p. 500), economists are most concerned with three types of shocks: inflationary (unanticipated changes in inflation), production (unanticipated changes in the growth rate of real gross domestic product), and leading shocks (unanticipated changes in leading economic indicators). A positive inflationary shock is an unanticipated growth in prices, which leads to a reduction in real wages and

⁹ The FSOC fulfills the U.S. Congressional mandate to describe significant financial market and regulatory developments, analyze potential emerging threats, and to make recommendations. The FSOC produces annual reports which are available from the U.S. Department of the Treasury's website.

lower levels of consumption. A positive production shock is an unanticipated increase in real economic activity and may lead to an unanticipated decline in inflation and real wage growth. An unanticipated change in a leading economic indicator may be an indication of a turning point in a business cycle. The business literature also evidences that shocks are variously referred to as jolts (Meyer, 1982) critical events (Pride, 1999), or focusing events (Kingdon, 1995). Pride (1999, p. 5) states that critical events are contextually dramatic happenings, such as economic depressions, environmental disasters, intense physical confrontations, strategic initiatives by a social movement organization, or new public policies. Critical events also have duration and history and are best understood as “a sequence of overlapping activities and processes that occur over time (Nigam & Ocasio, 2010, p. 824) (see Abbott, 1992; Isabella, 1990). As Isabella (1990, p. 7) observes, they require “continual adjustment and present unending challenge for all concerned.”

Shocks: collective & individual adaptive responses

A review of the literature reveals that one of the more critical characteristics as it relates to the ability to adapt to shocks and stressors is the presence of strong partnerships between governance actors, organizations, and professional networks. The OECD (2011) believes that, increasingly, collective action will be required to address shocks and stressors; however, such action will require strong, collaborative partnerships (e.g. public-private partnerships [PPPs]). Interestingly, Schwarz et al.'s research provides evidence that the ability to adapt to shocks and stressors is contingent upon the community's sense of self-support. In other words, the community must feel confident and be willing to look internally for solutions when faced with shocks and stressors, rather than turning to external organizations or institutions (e.g. the provincial or federal government) for assistance. This sense of confidence leads to another important factor, which is the perception held by the community (individual and collective) regarding its ability to cope with change, respond positively, and build resilience to future shocks and stressors. A number of studies have explored factors that influence coping, adaptation, and resilience related to shocks. For example, Schwarz et al. (2011) demonstrate that perceptions of strong community cohesion and good leadership influenced people's perception that their community was resilient and able to effectively cope with a shock. Adger et al. (2009) agree, and state that

regardless of whether or not the ability to cope is actual or perceived, individual and collective perceptions matter in shaping responses to shocks.

Related research indicates that individual and collective values and perspectives influence which adaptation options are chosen (see Grothman & Patt, 2005; Adger et al., 2009; Weber, 2010). For example, Spaargaren and van Vliet (2000) demonstrate that individuals and communities may be more likely to engage and invest in the individual and collective actions and behavioural changes required to adapt to shocks, if there is a supportive social environment. Research by Schipper and Dekens (2009) suggests that the adaptations considered successful by the affected community often depend upon what the community members perceive to be worth saving and protecting. They contend that it is important to understand people's belief systems, including their perceptions and possible responses to hazards or shocks. Schipper and Dekens (2009) describe a belief system as the beliefs (i.e. socio-cultural & religious), worldviews (i.e. how individuals view the world), values and moral principles (i.e. respect, reciprocity, sharing, humility) and ethics of individuals. These findings suggest the need for governance actors to a) have knowledge of individual and collective beliefs, values, perceptions and motives, b) understand what the community sees as being important and what they want to protect, and c) educate people so that they fully understand what their choices mean as far as what will be saved, what will be lost, and the impacts of their choices.

Shocks and resilience

The concepts of shocks and resilience are intertwined. They are increasingly spoken of in context of the resilience of individuals, communities, and nations when confronted with shocks (Brown, 2012). For example, the OECD (2011) takes a systems perspective and defines a shock as a sudden change that affects system resilience. Similarly, Schwarz et al. (2011) take a systems approach (at the household level) and define the perception of the capacity to cope with shocks in terms of resilience. The National Infrastructure Advisory Council (2010, p.16) also takes a systems approach and identifies three key elements of resilience in critical infrastructure, particularly during times of shock, as follows: 1) robustness, which must be present in advance of the shock in order to assist an entity absorb the shock and continue on; 2) resourcefulness, which will assist the entity to skilfully manage a disaster as it unfolds; and, 3) the ability

to recover rapidly in order to get services back as quickly as possible, and incorporate lessons learned from past events to improve resilience.

Social and institutional factors are considered critical in strengthening the ability of communities to cope with shocks and increase the resilience of the SESs that serve as the foundation for the community (Schwarz et al., 2011). The Resilience Alliance (2010) contends that the longer an SES remains in a disturbed state, the more difficult it becomes to recover. However, Walker and Westley (2011) warn that not everyone in a community will be working towards recovery. As they note, some individuals within the community will benefit from the disturbed state and, as such, these individuals may seek to perpetuate the situation as long as possible. Further, a response to a shock may result in a short-term fix; however, such band-aide solutions eventually lead to what Walker and Westley (2011) refer to as “peripheral blindness.” Peripheral blindness occurs when community stakeholders prefer to focus on the disturbances that are conducive to quick fixes, but ignore long-term vulnerabilities.

2.4.3. Shocks: the tourism literature

The tourism-related literature, both academic and non-academic, is focused in a few key areas as it relates to shocks. The first area of tourism research is focused on the growth in frequency and variety of shocks now affecting the tourism industry (see Turner et al., 2006; Wilks & Moore, 2004). A larger body of research looks at specific destinations and takes a case study approach to studying the shock response, recovery, and reduction processes (see Ritchie, 2008; Schwarz et al., 2011; Saleh, Verma & Ihalanayake, 2011; Turner et al., 2006; Wilks & Moore, 2004). Within this body of research a variety of frameworks and approaches for identifying, assessing and nurturing adaptive responses are proposed. A third area of focus looks at the vulnerability of the industry to shocks (see Aramberri, 2012; Jenkins, 2012, Ryan, 2012), while Turner et al. (2006, p. 35) examine the effects of shocks as it relates to “substitute tourist flows,” and how one or more destinations may benefit from shocks affecting other destinations.

The types of shocks that affect the tourism industry frequently arise as the result of political uprisings (e.g. Tiananmen Square, 1989), wars (e.g. Iraq, 2003), financial

crises (e.g. stock market crash of 2008), adverse weather incidents (e.g. Indian Ocean tsunami, 2004), terrorist attacks (e.g. USA, 2001; Bali, 2002, 2005), natural events (e.g. earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis), health-related incidents (e.g. SARS, 2003), and the death or injury to tourists (e.g. murder, drowning, fires). In addition to these types of shocks, tourism shocks are also categorized based upon geographical dispersion or their breadth of impact. For example, SARS first affected tourism arrivals in Hong Kong, before spreading out to neighbouring countries. By way of contrast, the 2003 Iraq war resulted in an almost immediate worldwide downturn in tourism arrivals (Turner et al., 2006). Tourism shocks are also categorized as either natural or human-made (Wilks & Moore, 2004); although, Turner et al. (2006) believe that such a categorization does not capture the variety of shocks, particularly human-made shocks. Rather, Turner et al. (2006) provide a fairly comprehensive list of shocks that affected the tourism industry (from 1997 to 2004), categorizing them from either a country (or cross-country) perspective and/or an event perspective. Specifically, they are categorized by event type (e.g. air disasters, financial crises, health related, natural disasters, politically related, including wars, and terrorist attacks) and country of origin.

Understanding the variety of shocks and their potential impact on tourist arrivals is of increasing importance, particularly because of the shortened tourist planning and investment cycles characteristic of many western countries (Turner et al., 2006). Shocks can occur at any time, they are difficult to predict, particularly as it relates to the magnitude of a shock, and consequently shocks make tourism forecasting challenging (Tourism Queensland, 2003). Although shocks are transitory in nature (Saleh et al., 2011; Sharpley, 2012), they can impact the destinations economically, socio-culturally, politically, and environmentally. Further, they compound volatility in tourism demand; however, as Sharpley (2005; 2012) notes, as long as tourists perceive that they will not be personally at risk, they soon return. Consequently, he believes that tourism is actually a driver of recovery from crises (or shocks) because of its ability to contribute to a destination's resilience to or recovery from shocks and stressors. Despite the variety of shocks that can impact the tourism industry, Jenkins (2012) observes that, from a global perspective, the tourism industry has demonstrated considerable resilience and vigour in adapting to changing circumstances. Rather, vulnerability to shocks manifests itself at the destination level. Tourism destinations are often characterized by the

prevalence of small and medium sized enterprises (frequently family owned and managed), which rely upon mostly local labour. They must price their products to reflect local conditions (i.e. providing liveable wages to employees) and they are most likely to be impacted by local shocks, such as political, weather, or health-related issues.

Measures of tourism shocks

Tourism-related shocks are often studied and measured as it relates to the impact on tourist arrivals. For example, Turner et al. (2006) studied the impact of a variety of shocks on 34 destinations around the world to determine the percentage increase or decrease in tourist arrivals against the expected average. The extent of a negative shock was measured by the time (in months) taken for the rate of growth to equal or exceed the average growth rate for each month after the start of the shock. The extent of a positive shock was measured by the time (in months) taken for the rate of growth to drop back to its average rate of growth. Turner et al. (2006) warn that such calculations are most likely to underestimate the severity of a shock because they measure against an expected average, which balances out growth over a number of years, including the year of the shock. Further, because tourists have a variety of destinations to choose from, in the case of a substitution, the impact is spread across a variety of destinations and, therefore, measurement should occur at the destination level, rather than on a total arrival basis. However, these researchers note that the expected average provides a stable benchmark for comparison and permits the measurement of the extent and duration of the shock and provides a basis for comparison. Tourism shocks from a destination or regional perspective can be measured through economic measures such as employment rates, economic growth rates, standards of living, quality of life, and the ability of a region to achieve an “equilibrium-based rebound” after an environmental or economic event (Christopherson et al., 2010, p. 5). Identifying, assessing, measuring, and nurturing adaptive responses to shocks is of increasing importance to tourism destinations; however, of equal importance is the effects of system stressors, which will be discussed in the following section.

Tourism shocks and stressors

Within the literature, particularly the tourism literature, the concepts of *stress* and *stressor* are often used interchangeably; however Turner et al. (2003) observe that

stressors lead to stress within a system. These researchers define system stress as a continuous or slowly increasing pressure that often originates within the system and is within a normal range of system variability (e.g. soil degradation). Further, stressors are, on occasion, discussed as *indirect shocks* or *slow-onset shocks*. For example, Wilks and Moore (2004) provide examples of indirect tourism shocks, such as currency fluctuations, disease outbreaks and economic downturns. The OECD (2011) describes slow onset shocks in terms of climate change and risk to public finances due to human longevity. They contend that slow-onset shocks provide time for individuals and systems to adjust, react and mitigate the impacts. However, it could be argued that while these may indeed cause indirect shock to a system, these events are more aptly defined in terms of the current stress they create on a system, such as a governance system. Different systems maintain a variety of sensitivities to stressors, which are strongly linked to the coping capacities of individuals and communities to respond to and avert any harm that may be associated with a stressor or a threat (Turner et al., 2006). Despite its negative connotation, a system stressor may be positive if it prepares and strengthens the resilience of a system in the event of a shock, because it may assist the system in avoiding a crisis situation. Alternatively, a stressor may lead to adaptive responses that ultimately enhance the resilience of a system to weather future stressors and shocks.

Undeniably a destination's preparedness for and response to a shock is of increasing importance, particularly as it relates the ability of the destination to rebound and recover; however, in certain situations, system stressors may have as much, if not more of an impact on a system long-term, both in breadth and depth. Further a system stressor may manifest itself long before a shock occurs and the stressor may remain after the shock has subsided. By way of example, it is valuable to turn to the research of Gill and Williams (2011) as it relates to the experience of Whistler, BC in hosting the 2010 Games. As Gill and Williams observe, in the seven years before the staging of 2010 Games a variety of fiscal, socio-cultural and political stressors affected the RMOW. Some of these stressors related to the rising cost of real estate, which was influenced by speculation on the impacts of a successful bid and staging of the Olympics (Landcor Data Corporation, 2010). Indeed, the 2010 Games helped to mask some of the external challenges related to the 2008 global financial crisis; however, almost immediately proceeding the completion of the 2010 Games, the combination of past stressors and

the ongoing effects of the 2008 financial crisis, proved a significant shock to the financial vitality of Whistler. The effects of that shock was a downward pressure on real estate values in Whistler (Barrett, 2013; personal communication, February 26, 2014) and ultimately impacted municipal tax revenues for the RMOW's operation (Barrett, 2013). The revenue losses related to decreasing property assessments (upon which municipal taxes are based) had the RMOW's governance actors looking for system efficiencies (RMOW Communications, 2013).

Wilks and Moore (2004) outline a variety of tourism-related governance features that shape the ability to adapt to shocks and stressors. Some features are specifically related to the governance system itself, such as the presence of management and communication plans (risk, crisis, disaster) that are integrated across the various departments. Other features relate to what the governance system can and should be doing to help the community prepare for and adapt to shocks and stressors, such as encouraging preparedness in individuals and businesses, including encouraging a diversified portfolio of markets. The OECD (2011) stresses a number of activities that help communities prepare for shocks, such as disasters, including implementing early warning indicators, undertaking an inventory of strategic reserves, stockpiling critical resources, identifying socially vulnerable populations in advance, sharing information, consulting and providing opportunities for participation in training exercises, simulations, and citizen level resilience. Other features relate to what individual businesses or the destination marketing organization can do to respond to and adapt to shocks and stressors, such as marketing strategies (Keller, 2006).

Tourism's vulnerability to shocks & stressors

When vulnerability is spoken of within the tourism literature, it is usually done so at the destination level, as opposed to the tourist level. Undeniably, tourists are vulnerable to shocks and threats that may reduce their propensity to travel; however, Sharpley (2012) notes that it is at the destination level where the "true vulnerability lies." As he explains, threats affect the demand for tourism, which in turn affects the economy and the wellbeing of communities that depend upon tourism. The most vulnerable destinations are those that are least resilient to tourism changes, including declines and increases in tourist arrivals. Indeed, Calgaro et al. (2014) contend that there are 11

factors that increase a destination's vulnerability: travel motivation and consumer choices; institutional flexibility; destination remoteness and inaccessibility; place specific issues; tendency to be located in ecologically sensitive and hazard prone areas; dependence on tourism for livelihood; seasonality; access to resources; image is sensitive to risk; limited disaster preparedness; and reliance on external marketing. However, there also appears to be evidence that linking tourism activities within a sustainability-focused system enhances destination resilience, while decreasing vulnerability (Sharpley, 2012). Determining which destination may be more vulnerable than another is challenging and, indeed, research appears to indicate that destination vulnerability must be assessed on a case-by-case basis (Sharpley, 2012).

Vulnerability is linked to three psychological factors that determine proactive responses: sense of community, coping style, and self-efficacy (Bachrach & Zautra, 1985). Sense of community is defined as "the feelings of belonging and attachment for people and places, encourages involvement in community response following disaster and increases access to social networks" (Miller, Patton & Johnston, 1999, p. 255). Bachrach & Zautra (1985, p. 129) contend, "a psychological sense of community is believed to be an important ingredient in determining involvement in community activities." In contrast, those who perceive themselves as having little involvement are more likely to view community issues as being of little relevance to themselves, which further solidifies their non-involvement. They also contend that a person high in a sense of self-efficacy may be more likely to deal with the consequences of a hazard (Bachrach & Zautra, 1985; Bandura, 1982). Self-efficacy describes an individual's self-appraisal of what he or she is capable of doing and determines how much effort and perseverance an individual will expend to reduce a risk (Patton & Johnson, 2001). A greater sense of self-efficacy leads to greater community involvement (Bachrach & Zautra's, 1985) and is considered a precursor to sense of community (Patton & Johnson, 2001).

The importance of sense of community has been identified as an important psychological component of community resilience. According to Crawford et al. (2013, p. 10), "A consideration of place is critical for building resilience." Indeed, as Patton and Johnson (2001, p. 274) observe, the more people are involved in community activities the greater their sense of community and self-efficacy, and the greater their ability to solve problems, which strengthens resilience to adversity. These researchers contend

that a sense of community enables both psychological resilience and preparedness. As Miller et al. (1999, p. 256) observe individuals who perceive themselves as having little investment in their community may develop a sense of detachment, which in the event of a shock, such as a natural disaster, may manifest itself in feelings of “isolation and encourage learned helplessness.” They elaborate that there is a connection between how a community conceptualizes its response to hazards in terms of utilizing its own “internal resources and competencies to manage the demands, challenges, and changes encountered” (p. 272).

2.4.4. Conclusion: Shocks and Stressors

Shocks and stressors may hinder or enhance the resilience of tourism destinations. Understanding how they affect the resilience of resort communities has never been more important. Indeed, the requirement to build capacity for greater resilience will require communities to develop coping strategies for dealing with a variety of shocks and stresses (ResilientCity.org, n.d). The ability to prepare for and adapt to such shocks and stressors may enhance a resort community’s success in advancing its sustainability initiatives and goals, which may ultimately ensure the community’s long-term resilience.

2.5. Conclusion: Drawing together three threads of literature (governance, resilience, shocks & stressors)

The literature review provides evidence that shocks and stressors have the ability to affect change within governance systems. Sometimes the effects are positive and provide windows of opportunity for innovative policy and structural changes, as well as changes to leadership. At other times they are negative, and may lead to socially regressive changes that threaten the very fabric of a community. Indeed, the ability of a community to live with and proactively shape change to its advantage is dependent upon a variety of factors that are perceived to enhance resilience. Understanding how shocks and stressors affect the resilience of governance systems, particularly those focused on sustainability, has received little research attention. This is particularly so as it relates to tourism-focused resort communities. Consequently, the general literature, as well as

that focused on tourism, would benefit from research that focuses on understanding those factors that strengthen governance responses to shocks and stressors and overall resilience. In Chapter 6, these three concepts of governance, resilience and shocks and stressors are linked together and discussed in terms of the findings of this research.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

As identified in Chapter 2, several research gaps exist in the resilience literature. One of the most glaring gaps relates to the identification of factors that enhance resilience in tourism destination governance systems, and the impact of critical events on such systems. Consequently, this study combines both theoretical and applied elements to present a real world example and insights into the resilience-enhancing factors that strengthen the ability of a resort community to live with and proactively shape change to its advantage. The ability of the governance system to proactively respond to critical events may enhance a resort community's competitiveness, viability and overall resilience in the future. Further, it may enhance resilience within the governance system itself, such that it is able to manage and more quickly adapt to future critical events. In achieving this purpose, the research will contribute to and extend the growing body of literature that discusses the factors that enhance community resilience.

3.2. Research questions

The following questions inform and respond to the dissertation's overriding purpose:

1. What do Whistler's publics perceive to be the factors shaping the capacity of the governance system to proactively respond to and manage shocks and stressors?
 - a. What factors in the past weakened the capacity of the governance system?
 - b. What factors currently appear to be strengthening and weakening the capacity of the governance system?
 - c. What factors in the future may strengthen and weaken the capacity of the governance system?
2. What types of shocks and stressors do Whistlers' publics perceive to be strengthening and weakening the resilience of the governance system?

- a. What types of shocks and stressors in the past have strengthened and weakened the resilience of the governance system?
 - b. What types of shocks and stressors currently appear to be strengthening and weakening the resilience of the governance system?
 - c. What types of shocks and stressors in the future may strengthen and weaken the resilience of the governance system?
3. What is the role of governance actors in shaping the governance system's ability to proactively respond to shocks and stressors?

3.3. Naturalistic inquiry & emergent design flexibility

To achieve the purpose of this study and to answer the research questions, a naturalistic inquiry approach was undertaken. A naturalistic approach takes place in real-world settings, where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest. Rather, the subject unfolds naturally. In this mode of enquiry, informants are interviewed with open-ended questions in places and under conditions, which encourage flexibility and openness to new paths of discovery (Patton, 2002). A naturalist approach permits considerable design flexibility and openness. A naturalistic approach was suited to this research because it enabled the researcher to better understand the perceptions of the informants and what they deemed to be of relevance. Patton further suggests there a number of aspects a researcher should consider, including validity and reliability. The following section will discuss these three considerations and how they were addressed in this research.

3.3.1. Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity are two areas of concern for researchers undertaking naturalist design research. According to Yin (2009) reliability is enhanced when the researcher establishes trustworthiness, credibility, confirmability, and dependability of the data. Reliability demonstrates that the methods of the study, such as data collection, can be replicated with the same results. Yin (2009, p. 45) cautions that reliability does not mean “replicating the results of one case study by doing another case study.” In the past, case study procedures have been poorly documented and, as such, he recommends using either a case study protocol or a case study database as tactics to deal with documentation problems. A case study protocol contains the research

instrument, as well as the procedures and general rules to be followed in using the protocol (Yin, 2009). Its purpose is to guide the researcher in carrying out the data collection related to a single case study. The researcher ensured reliability by using a case study protocol and by thoroughly and accurately documenting her methods.

Babbie (2001) also suggests a number of strategies to address reliability challenges. For instance, he emphasizes the importance of the researcher understanding his or her biases and worldviews. He further suggests that when making judgments or evaluations the researcher can improve reliability by employing comparative judgments or evaluations. By way of example, Babbie (2001) states that it is important not to make a judgment that one group is conservative in its approaches. Rather, it is more important to state which group is more conservative than another, by way of comparison. I addressed potential reliability concerns by employing these techniques in Chapters 4 and 5. Babbie (p. 298) also contends that undertaking field research enhances validity of the findings. Consequently, this research involved field research that occurred over the course of a year. According to Babbie (2001, p. 298) field research is a powerful technique for gaining insights into the nature of human concerns in all its “rich complexity,” and a method for ensuring superior validity. Yin describes four tests of validity as follows: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. The following paragraphs discuss construct validity, external validity and reliability and how these aspects were addressed in this study. Internal validity is not applicable to this study.

Construct validity

Construct validity is concerned with identifying the correct operational measures for the concepts. Yin (2009) describes two tests for meeting construct validity. The first test is to define the unit of analysis in terms of specific concepts and relate them to the original objectives of the study. The second test is to identify operational measures that match the concepts (preferably citing studies that make similar matches). To address construct validity in this study, I defined all terms in the literature review and or through the Acronyms and Glossary table (at the beginning of the dissertation). I also provided definitions of key terms, both verbally and in written format, to the informants in advance of the interview and as the interview began. Yin (2009) also proposes a number of

tactics to increase construct validity, including the use of multiple sources of evidence, establishing the chain of evidence and having key informants review the draft case study report. I ensured construct validity by utilising multiple sources of evidence (i.e. RMOW governance documents, provincial government documents, ENGO documents, Whistler Question, the Pique, online documents available from a variety of organizations, etc.). All informants were provided with an opportunity to review and comment on their interview transcripts. Informants will were also provided a copy of the findings and an opportunity to comment before the dissertation was finalized.

External validity & reliability

External validity refers to defining the domain to which the study's findings can be generalized. Critics frequently point to the challenges of ensuring external validity in single case studies and, in particular, the generalizability of the findings. However, Yin (2009) observes that case studies only seek analytical as opposed to statistical generalizability. Case study researchers are concerned with generalizing the results to broader theory. The findings of this study are generalizable to the existing resilience literature, particularly with respect to the factors strengthening and weakening community resilience.

3.4. Exploratory case study method

The design strategy for this study was an exploratory case study inquiry. According to Babbie (2001), there are three reasons for instituting an exploratory approach to research. First, exploratory research satisfies “a researcher’s curiosity and desire for a better understanding” (Babbie, 2001, p. 92). Second, such research tests the “feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study” and, finally, it helps the researcher to “develop the methods to be employed in any subsequent study” (Babbie, 2001, p. 92). Exploratory case studies are appropriate when the research questions are mainly focused on “what” questions (Yin, 2009). In this case study’s context, it was an effective approach to explore the perceptions of Whistler’s publics.

According to Yin (2009), case studies contribute knowledge related to an individual, a group, an organization, as well as social and political phenomena. They

help researchers “retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events – such as individual life cycles, small group behaviour, organizational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries” (Yin, 2009, p. 4). Yin (2009, p. 18) notes further that a case study approach “benefits from prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.” However, according to Rowley (2002), propositions are not required in exploratory case studies. Rather, research questions can take the place of propositions (Yin, 2009). In this study, research questions took the place of propositions.

A qualitative case study approach is an effective method for studying governance systems and is the method chosen for this study. Adger et al. (2003) suggest either qualitative or quantitative methods, case studies, or historical inquiries. These researchers further argue that the aim to produce universally relevant observations and understanding is counterproductive. As they note, “environmental decisions occur within and are influenced by particular economic, political, social, cultural, and ecological contexts” as well as “different geographical settings and scale” (p. 1099). They contend that it is “instrumentally and intrinsically” more important to understand the role and the context in which environmental decisions are made. As such, a qualitative case study approach was appropriate for these purposes

3.4.1. Unique case orientation

A unique case study approach is best employed when the individual case is the major focus of the investigation (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The strength of undertaking such case studies is the ability to deal with a variety of evidence, such as documents and interviews. Yin (2009) agrees that a single case study is appropriate when it represents a “critical case” for “testing a well-formulated theory.” It is also justifiable when the case represents an “extreme or unique case” or a “typical case.” Second, he feels it is an acceptable design when the phenomenon under study has previously been inaccessible to social science inquiry” (Yin, 2009, p. 47). Patton (2002) refers to this as a revelatory case. Third, Yin (2009) feels a single case study design is appropriate when the study is concerned with two or more different points in time (longitudinal case).

A single case study approach was justified in this study because of the uniqueness of Whistler's governance system and also based upon past empirical governance research, particularly from a tourism perspective. As Ruhanen et al. (2010) note, the governance literature, both generally and that found within the tourism literature, largely flows from single case study research. Specifically, past governance research has focused mainly on single case studies, often at the destination or country level (e.g. Dawkins & Colebatch, 2006; Dinica, 2006; 2009; Gill & Williams, 2011; Gurrán, Blakely, & Squires, 2007; Mordue, 2007; Nordin & Svensson, 2007), municipalities within a tourist destination (e.g. Beritelli & Laesser, 2011), analysis of previous single case studies (e.g. d'Angella et al., 2010), or occasionally multi-case studies (e.g. Rist, Chidambaranathan, Escobar, Wiesmann, & Zimmermann, 2007). Further, a case study approach is the focus of a large body of research related to sustainable tourism, governance and resilience at the community level, particularly in investigations focused on attitudinal and perception-related research (e.g. Horn & Simmons, 2002; Lepp, 2008; Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011).

3.4.2. Social constructivism paradigm

The research employed a social constructivism approach. This approach is a dominant methodological paradigm in the governance literature, and is increasingly applied to the study of governance in tourism settings. Constructivists believe that in order to understand the world, one must interpret it (Schwandt, 1994) and that each person's way of making sense of the world is valid and worthy of respect (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). There are two types of constructivism approaches: individual and social. Watkins (2000) credits the philosophical foundation of individual constructivism to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831). Hegel, an influential German idealist and philosopher, focused many of his writings and lectures on the subject and nature of knowledge. He observed that individuals learn about a phenomenon by comparing it to other phenomenon. This is an ongoing process because an individual can learn new knowledge that will provide new conceptual perspectives from which to view and interpret the phenomenon (Markova, 1991). As such, a social constructivism approach focuses on "the making of knowledge by communities of individuals, rather than by the individual" (Watkins, 2000, p. 99). Knowledge is viewed as a collaborative construction

in which individuals take from the social groups in which he or she participates (Cobb, 1994). Constructivism rejects the objectivist view that knowledge exists apart from consciousness; there is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered. Rather, individuals construct meaning in their own individual ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon (Crotty, 1998). While it is beyond the scope of these purposes, it is important to note that there is a debate as it relates to the terms social constructivism and social constructionism (see Guzdial, 1997).

A constructivist worldview rests in phenomenological studies in which individuals describe their lived experiences (Creswell, 2007). Rather than start with a theory, researchers inductively generate a theory or pattern of meaning. Guba and Lincoln (1994) analyze a constructivist paradigm in terms of ontology (relativist: local and specifically constructed realities), epistemology (transactional/subjective: investigator and object of investigation are interactively linked, findings are created) and methodology (hermeneutical: individual constructions can only be obtained through interaction between and among the investigator and the respondent). In terms of methods, a social constructivist paradigm relies heavily upon case studies, inductive analysis, participant observation, and in depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews. The informant's meaning is drawn out through discussions and interactions between the informant and the researcher (Creswell, 2007). Questions are open-ended and the researcher listens carefully to what the informant says and does in his or her life setting. Constructivist researchers often focus on the context in which people live and work, so as to understand the cultural and historical elements of the person being interviewed. Creswell (2007) observes the importance of the researcher acknowledging and recognizing how his or her own background shapes the interaction with the informant. Consequently, the researcher makes an interpretation of what she finds, which she acknowledges is influenced by her own experiences and background.

The constructivist/constructionist paradigm is not without its detractors. In addition to the terminology debate previously noted, this approach has been criticised for its relativist point of view in which anything goes and nothing is pinned down. However, Crotty (1998) counters this criticism, stating that when we say something is the way it is, it is really just the sense we make of that something. Indeed, he notes further, we must "recognize that different people may well inhabit quite different worlds" (p. 64). Schmidt

(2001, p. 148) agrees, stating that there is “no such thing as sociological relativism.” He observes that the normative indifference with which constructivists look at their subject is merely a function of looking at the subject from a sociological point of view, which is nothing more than an acknowledgment of the limitations associated with that point of view. Another concern related to the social constructivism paradigm relates to the relativist criticism, particularly from an environmental perspective. For example, Newton, Deetz and Reed (2011) observe that a social constructionism paradigm may condone the disregarding of the real consequences of human activity, particularly as it relates to the environment and in dealing with human differences and making decisions. In other words, if a particular culture holds a low regard for the natural environment, then a relativist perspective would state that this is what is right and true to that culture and therefore the perspective would be acceptable. As Sayer (1997, p. 466) observes, the idea that the world is our social construction, particularly as it relates to the environment, may be “more conducive to triumphalism.”

At the core of a social constructivism paradigm is the “optimistic belief that people and societies can become better in the future, than in the present or in the past” (Wilson, 2005, p. 35). This belief in the ability to improve goes to the heart of this study. Indeed, greater understanding is required concerning how humans and societies can continue to make progress towards a more sustainable, more resilient, and a more equitable (for all species) future. Additionally, the foundational research questions of the constructivism paradigm, as proposed by Patton (2002), match the objectives and research questions in this study. These foundational questions include “How have the people in this setting constructed reality? What are their reported perceptions, truths, explanations, beliefs, and worldview? What are the consequences of their constructions for their behaviours and for those with whom they interact” (Patton, 2002, p. 96)? The social constructivist paradigm has become an important methodological approach for understanding governance, because it allows the researcher to more fully understand how individuals within a society make meaning of a governance system, in their own way. As such it was an appropriate methodological approach for these purposes.

Units of Analysis

According to Patton (2002), the key to choosing the appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what it is the researcher wants to be able to say when the study comes to a close. Choosing the appropriate unit of analysis flows from the primary research questions (Yin, 2009). The main unit of analysis for this study was Whistler's governance system. As the community is a major component of and key stakeholder in Whistler's governance system, the analysis also focuses on community perspectives as it relates to the governance system. Within this umbrella governance/community unit of analysis, the researcher looked at three sub-units of analyses: 1) critical events; 2) the factors strengthening/weakening proactive responses; and, 3) the roles of key individuals and organization. These sub-units of analyses were examined through the perceptions of key informants.

3.4.3. Purposive sampling

The study took a purposive sampling approach to primary data collection. Patton (2002, p. 40) observes that this method is appropriate when the researcher seeks to understand the perceptions of key informants who are deemed "information rich" and who may have insight into the phenomenon being studied and will be most able to address the questions under study. A purposive sampling approach is typically utilized when a researcher has a specific purpose or a research question from which he or she wants to generate as much detail as possible. It helps the researcher to then answer the research questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). A naturalist inquiry that maintains design flexibility and takes a purposeful sampling approach is the best design strategy for achieving this goal (Patton, 2002) and was the method employed in this study.

3.5. Case study site: Whistler, BC

Whistler, BC, Canada was chosen as the location for the research for a number of reasons. First, this study forms a part of a larger, ongoing portfolio of studies undertaken by Dr. Peter Williams and Dr. Alison Gill in Whistler over the last two decades. Their research project in Whistler sought to understand evolving governance

structures and the role such structures play in increasing competitiveness and long-term sustainability in resort destinations. Within their study were five projects smaller research projects, all of which were funded by the Canadian federal research-funding agency, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). This research was one of the five research projects, funded through its own separate SSHRC grant.

Second, Whistler presents a unique case study, because of its unique planning and policy initiatives that have become models of resort community development and management over the years. Further, since approximately 2005, Whistler's governance system has been intertwined with its sustainability goals, a fact that led to Whistler being considered and recognized as a global leader in community sustainability planning and progress. During this same time period, a number of stressors, both local (i.e. hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics) and global (i.e. changing demographics, changing markets) in origin, have added pressure to and changed the operating environment in Whistler. Compounding these stressors, the community experienced a number of more significant shocks (2008 global financial crisis and the 2011 municipal election). The 2011 municipal election was a watershed moment in Whistler's history and the electoral results of that election are considered a response to many of the above-noted shocks and stressors. Specifically, in the 2011 election the community voted in an entirely new slate of leaders, on a platform of fiscal constraint. Only the mayor had past political experience (Taylor, 2014). For the first time in approximately 13 years, the elected council was not considered environmentally focused, nor were they as committed to Whistler's sustainability movement. As such, Whistler was a fascinating location to study the pressures that were affecting Whistler's sustainability-focused governance system. A resilience lens offered a unique perspective of how the critical events shaped ensuring governance changes (see Chapter 5 for more detail on Whistler).

Finally, almost all of the previous resilience-related research has been undertaken in communities that have experienced a significant critical event, which has resulted in considerable community devastation, including the loss of life (e.g. The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, New Zealand earthquakes), or in communities that are struggling to transition to new economies, often with the hopes of developing a tourism industry (e.g. Ecuador, Northern BC). Whistler represented neither of these situations. Rather, it

is a considerably privileged community that had experienced both positive and negative stressors and critical events.

3.5.1. Whistler, British Columbia

Whistler, BC is situated in the Coast Mountain Range on Canada’s west coast, 120 kilometres north of Vancouver. Whistler’s coastal location and elevation result in an annual average snowfall of 11.92 metres. Originally established as a ski resort in the 1960s, Whistler is now a four-season resort destination offering a variety of recreational, cultural, health and wellness experiences on 12,630 hectares. See Figure 3-1.

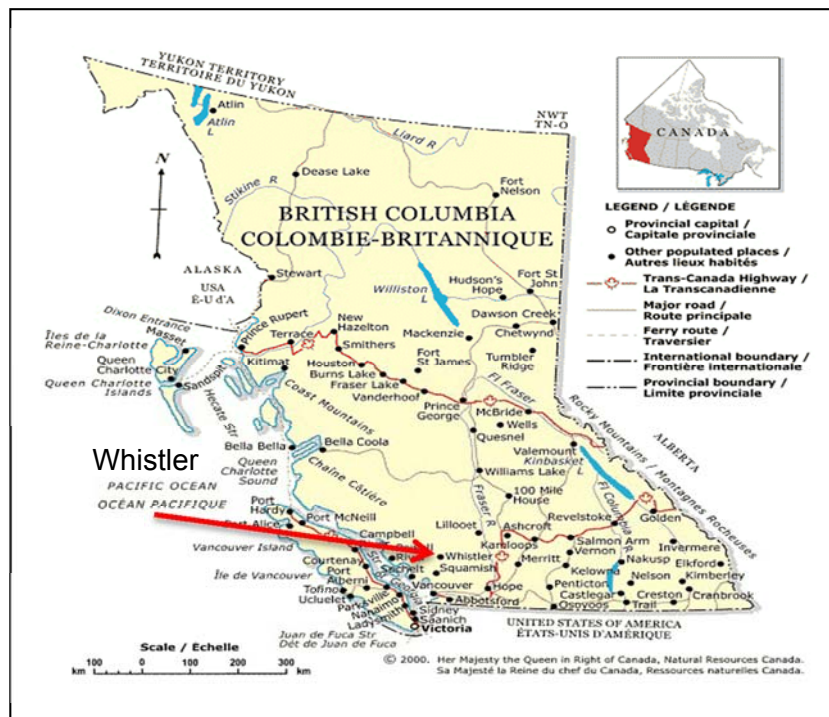


Figure 3-1: Map of British Columbia & location of Whistler

First Nations’ relationship: Historical and present day

Long before the arrival of the first European settlers in the late 1700s, the Coast Salish Aboriginals inhabited the lands in and around Whistler. Despite experiencing dramatic socio-cultural and economic setbacks precipitated by devastating encounters and relationships with early settlers, and the Canadian government, descendants of the

Coast Salish continue to live in and share the region's territory. However, First Nations' engagement in tourism has historically been limited in the Whistler region. With the advent of the 2010 Games and an emergence of global market interest in Aboriginal culture, several First Nation communities utilized the momentum of the Games to develop tourism-related opportunities as a vehicle for economic and social development. It also provided them with an opportunity to enter into working relationships with Whistler tourism stakeholders involved in leveraging tourism benefits for the community and its businesses.

However, most recently that relationship once again became strained. In June of 2014, the Squamish and Lil'wat First Nations won a B.C. Supreme Court ruling against the RMOW and B.C.'s Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development. The Supreme Court agreed with the First Nations that neither the Provincial Government nor the RMOW had fulfilled its duty to consult in developing and approving Whistler's 2013 OCP. The First Nations fought against the OCP because they believed the growth cap infringed on their Aboriginal rights and prevented them from pursuing economic development activities on Crown land located within the municipality's boundaries (Barrett, 2014). Whistler's 2013 OCP was subsequently nullified as a result of the court ruling. Consequently, many informants perceived that Whistler was at the most critical juncture in its history. This situation will be discussed further in this chapter.

3.5.2. Whistler's development: past and present

As with the Coast Salish people, early settlers to the Vancouver region visited Whistler because of its rich bounty of natural resources. However, initially it was not the spectacular mountains that drew people. Rather, it was the great fishing experiences that the region's lakes and streams provided. In the 1960s, a Vancouver business group recognized the opportunity to develop an alpine ski area on London Mountain, as it was then known. Their company, Garibaldi Lifts Limited, renamed the mountain Whistler Garibaldi Mountain and soon after began developing a series of ski lifts. Their ultimate dream was to host the 1968 Olympic Games. While unsuccessful, several decades later their dream was realized when Vancouver, in association with Whistler, hosted the 2010 Winter Games (Whistler Blackcomb, 2014a).

Undeniably, the development of Whistler Garibaldi and Blackcomb Mountains and the valley lands associated with them altered the area's landscape and character. However, the ensuing tourism-driven economic development did not happen without consideration of many environmental and social ramifications. Indeed, developers, as well as Whistler residents have demonstrated and maintain an appreciation and respect for the area's natural and social environment in many ways. From the design and development of purpose-built Whistler Village (an auto free and pedestrian friendly village that relegates cars to the village's perimeter), to the implementation of a growth management strategy that puts a precise bed-unit cap on development, to the creation and management of a community wide comprehensive sustainability policy and strategy, Whistler and its tourism stakeholders have made significant attempts to govern according to principles of environmental, social and economic balance (Whistler2020.ca, 2013; Whistler Blackcomb, 2014a). More detail about Whistler's sustainability movement is provided in Chapter 6.

Today, Whistler is a recognized world class, four-season mountain resort offering an array of recreational and cultural experiences, events, and festivals to both residents and visitors from around the world. It is also recognized for its innovative approaches to destination planning and development. Whistler is home to about 9,824 permanent residents (RMOW, 2013a), an estimated 2,754 seasonal residents, and an estimated 11,522 second-home owners (Tourism Whistler, 2014). As evidenced in Table 3.1, the resort community's socio-demographic make-up is more homogenous than most towns. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that more Whistler residents reported being a 2nd or 3rd generation Canadian, they were also less likely to report being an immigrant from another country, and they were more likely to report that English or French was their mother tongue, when compared to BC residents. Whistler residents were also more educated when compared to the rest of BC, based upon their reported educational or trade-related certificate, diplomas or degrees. They also had a lower median income for people over the age of 15, working full time, for an entire year, when compared to the rest of BC. This finding is probably indicative of the fact that many Whistlerites are employed in the tourism industry, which, generally speaking, pays lower wages

compared to other employment sectors. It could also be an indication that, as stated by many informants, residents enjoy participating in a range of outdoor activities, as opposed to working long hours. In other words, residents sacrifice wages for the opportunity to recreate.

Table 3.1: Whistler’s socio-demographic statistics (Statistics Canada, 2006; 2011)

Whistler residents	BC residents
76% 2 nd generation Canadian*	67% 2 nd generation Canadian
56% 3 rd generation Canadian*	45% 3 rd generation Canadian
15.7% immigrants*	27.5% immigrants
1.2% Aboriginal *	4.8% Aboriginal
80.6% English as mother tongue**	70.3% English as mother tongue
12.1% mother tongue not French or English**	26.5% mother tongue not French or English
6.4% do not have a certificate, diploma, degree*	19.9% do not have a certificate, diploma, degree
\$37,341 median earnings (residents over 15, full year, full time employment)*	\$42,230 median earnings (residents over 15, full year, full time employment)
40.4% married couples with children*	46.9% married couples with children
32.4 median age*	41.9 median age

* Statistics Canada (2006); ** Statistics Canada (2014);

From a tourism perspective, the resort community receives approximately 2.3 million overnight and non-overnight visitors annually, and has the capacity to accommodate 30,000 overnight visitors, daily. Interestingly, more visitors now visit Whistler in the summer season (56%), compared to the winter season (44%) (Tourism Whistler, 2014); however, the winter ski market is more lucrative to Whistler, because winter visitors generally come from further afield, and spend more money and time in the community. Currently, the resort community provides approximately commercial 10,000 rooms supplied via a combination of approximately 150 hotels, condos, chalets, pensions and bed and breakfast facilities. Additionally, there are 230 hostel beds and 118 campsites available for overnight visitors (Tourism Whistler, 2014). Whistler has an abundance of service businesses, including 150 restaurants, cafes, lounges and bars and over 200 retail shops. The community has 15 public parks and 551.3 hectares of parkland, as well as five major lakes within its boundaries (Tourism Whistler, 2014). In 2010 the

community hosted the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, culminating a 50-year dream held by Whistler's early founders. It is estimated that Whistler has a gross domestic product value of \$1.3 billion per year and that it contributes approximately \$428 million in tax revenue per year to the Province of BC (RMOW, 2013). The significance of this and the preceding facts provides an indication of the importance of Whistler's success and its long-term resilience – not just to its approximate 10,000 residents and business owners, but it is also of the utmost concern to Whistler's key stakeholders, including the Province of BC. The following sections will provide an overview of Whistler's four main organizations responsible for the management and success of Whistler, as well as an overview of the WCS.

Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW)

The Whistler resort community was incorporated in 1975. It is governed by the RMOW, which in turn receives its governance mandate from the Province of BC (RMOW, 2013c). The RMOW is led by an elected (as of 2014 every four years) mayor and six councillors and administered by an executive team and staff. It manages municipal planning and development, fiscal planning and financial services, legislative services, human resources, by-laws and enforcement, public utilities and environmental services, fire rescue, park and village operations, sports facilities and recreation, and communications and administration of the Whistler2020 Comprehensive Sustainability Plan. There are four divisions within the RMOW: CAO's office, Infrastructure Services, Corporate and Community Services, and Resort Experience. Committees of council assist council with the business of running the resort and also provide opportunities for residents to be involved in municipal affairs. Currently, there are 18 select committees, ranging from the Whistler Business Enhancement Committee through to the Coat of Arms Committee and two standing committees: the Audit and Finance Standing Committee and the Human Resources Standing Committee. Additionally, there are two Council-Appointed Boards: the Board of Variance and the Whistler Public Library Board of Trustees (RMOW, 2013e). The RMOW Council Governance Manual (RMOW, 2005) is the foundational document that clarifies governance and the management aspects of Whistler (RMOW, 2005).

Whistler Blackcomb (WB)

The RMOW works closely with a variety of resort partners, the most important of which is WB. WB manages Whistler and Blackcomb mountain operations and the surrounding Crown lands. The facilities are spread out across 8,171 acres of tenured Crown land (Whistler Blackcomb, 2013b). Whistler Blackcomb Holdings Inc. owns a 75% share in Whistler Mountain Resort Limited Partnership and Blackcomb Skiing Enterprises Limited Partnership (Whistler Blackcomb, 2014b). The incorporated company is run by a management team and a board of directors and is listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange. Every year WB works with many of its partners in the resort community to coordinate a range of the festivals and events, as well as development activities. In addition to its many engineering innovations (e.g. Peak 2 Peak Gondola), the company is recognized for the development and implementation of an environmental management and social stewardship strategy for its ski and mountain resort operations (Whistler Blackcomb, 2014b). Its environmental activities are part of a larger CSR initiative run through Whistler Blackcomb Foundation. The Foundation provides financial support to registered non-profit organizations in the Sea to Sky corridor. Since 1992, the Foundation has raised and donated over \$7 million dollars to local non-profits. The organization believes that environmental goals cannot be achieved without first meeting social needs (Whistler Blackcomb, 2014c).

Tourism Whistler (TW)

Another close partner is the Whistler Resort Association, known as Tourism Whistler (TW). It is a non-profit, member-based marketing and sales organization tasked with marketing the resort to approximately two million annual domestic and international visitors (see www.whistler.com). Formed in 1979, TW is run by an executive team and administrative staff and is overseen by a board of directors. The organization represents more than 7,000 member businesses who pay a compulsory fee to support its activities and the running of the organization. TW also runs the Whistler Conference Centre, the Whistler Golf Club, the Whistler Visitor Centre, as well as Coast Mountain Reservations, Whistler's official source for accommodation and activities information and bookings.

Whistler Chamber of Commerce (CoC)

The Whistler CoC was established in 1966. It calls itself “the leading business association in Whistler” and “the voice of business” (Whistler Chamber of Commerce, n.d.). The organization represents over 800 fee-paying members and “works to create a vibrant and successful economy” (Whistler Chamber of Commerce, n.d.). A volunteer board of directors oversees the operations, complementing a staff of seven. In 2013 a new CEO was appointed to lead the CoC and establish a stronger collaborative link with the RMOW, WB, and TW. As noted by a number of informants, historically, the CoC was not considered a major partner in Whistler. A stronger link was sought in order to provide a stronger voice for Whistler’s businesses and a place at the *One Whistler* table.

Whistler Centre for Sustainability (WCS)

The WCS is a “mission driven, enterprising non-profit organization that provides community sustainability planning and implementation services to local governments in BC, across Canada, and North America.” It was established in 2008 “to work with and empower communities and the tourism sector toward an inspiring and sustainable future” (Whistlercentre.ca, n.d.). The organization hosts public sustainability discussions via guest speakers, and leads on-the-ground sustainability work within Whistler and beyond. The organization is led by an executive director and is comprised of staff and industry and academic associates¹⁰. A board of 10 members oversees the organization. The organization is comprised of two, provincially incorporated societies: the WCS Society and the WCS Institute Society. The WCS Institute Society is a federally registered charity that undertakes charitable work through foundation grants and private donations” (WCS, n.d.).

The RMOW (and later the WSC) have been awarded numerous sustainability-related awards, (e.g. the United Nations Liveable Communities Award for best community planning in 2006 for their work on the Whistler2020 strategy, the

¹⁰ The researcher worked on a project with the WCS and the Town of Tofino from October to December, 2013. The work consisted of drafting a framework for a tourism master plan for Tofino and attending a planning meeting in Tofino.

LiveSmartBC Green Cities Award in 2006, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Sustainable Communities Award for its work with the City of Williams) (WCS, n.d.). The organization, originally fully funded by the RMOW, now receives \$40,000 annually from the RMOW to run the community's annual 2020 monitoring and reporting program. The rest of the organization's funding comes from its consulting services, or from donations made through its charitable society, the WCS Institute Society.

3.5.3. Whistler's current economic situation

According to the Economic Partnerships Initiative (EPI), "Whistler's resilience is due in part to its ability to track and adapt to external trends such as globalization, demographic change, upward pressure on energy and transportation prices, and growing competition" (RMOW, 2013b, p. 2). The EPI summarizes key research and findings from the EPI task force and provides recommendations that are anticipated will ensure the continued economic success of the resort. The task force formed in 2012 and was comprised of 10 individuals representing the RMOW (elected and appointed), WB, CoC, TW, and the Hotel Association of Whistler. There was one member at large. The task force evaluated the state of Whistler's economy and in their report provide recommendations with the goal of ensuring Whistler's continued economic success. The EPI strategy reflects a strong economic mandate and specifically seeks to: 1) grow the resort community economy; 2) build confidence in the resort community economy; and, 3) encourage reinvestment in Whistler (Whister2020.ca, 2013).

Although the EPI does not specify Whistler's economic challenges, the report does outline a number of concerning economic trends, such as an ongoing weak recovery from the 2008 financial crisis, the value of the Canadian dollar, pressure on disposable income, and rising travel costs (particularly air travel), all of which had "the potential to act as structural barrier(s) to continued growth in long-haul markets" (as of 2012) (p. 9). The statistics cited in the report make it clear that Whistler is dependent upon the long-haul travel market (particularly winter tourists) for its economic success. The report also highlighted the need to encourage re-investment in Whistler's aging

infrastructure, particularly the condo hotels. The informants in this research identified all of these challenges and some linked these economic challenges to Whistler's loss of sustainability momentum.

3.5.4. Whistler: Summary

RMOW, WB, TW, and the CoC are the four key organizations involved in the management and/or success of Whistler. These four organizations work collaboratively under the moniker of *One Whistler*, to enable the financial success of the community. Although, the WCS was never considered one of Whistler's key influential organizations, in the minds of the informants, the WCS began losing importance in the community in approximately 2010. This loss occurred at both the political and citizenry levels and still continued up to the time of the last interviews (November 2014). The effects of this situation are described by the informants in Chapters 4 and 5, and discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

3.6. Data collection & field methods

3.6.1. Collection of qualitative data

The data for this study was collected primarily through a qualitative inquiry approach. A qualitative inquiry is particularly oriented towards exploration, discovery, and inductive analysis and typically focuses on a relatively small sample, including single case studies (Patton, 2002). It consists of "quotations, observations, and excerpts from documents" (Patton, 2002, p. 47). Qualitative data captures, describes, and communicates the experience of each individual informant, while open-ended questions collect detailed, thick descriptions that provide personal perspectives and direct quotations. Interviews are a common approach to data collection within a social constructionist paradigm (Othman & Rahman, 2011) and have been applied in a variety of research projects on governance and tourism governance (see Beritelli & Laesser, 2011).

Qualitative data for this study were collected via open-ended questions, administered mostly in face-to-face situations by the researcher; however, a few phone and Skype interviews were also undertaken, when required. See Appendix N for a breakdown of the dates, location, and mode of interview. Additional qualitative and quantitative data were collected through participant observation, which took place at council meetings, open houses, and community speaker events. Quantitative data were gathered through the review of secondary data sources, including reports and historical documents related to the destination's governance system and events that have or were currently impacting the economic, socio-cultural or environmental aspects of the community. Online newspapers (i.e. Whistlerquestion.com) and email communications from the RMOW's communication department were examined on an ongoing basis until submission of the first draft of the dissertation. A list of many of the reviewed documents can be found in Appendix E, the Case Study Protocol.

3.6.2. Survey instrument design

This research utilized an interview guide to answer the research questions. Patton (2002) states that an interview guide enables the researcher to develop key research areas, within which she is then free to explore, probe, and ask questions. He elaborates that this permits the researcher to build a conversation in a particular subject area, but maintain the freedom to word the questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversation style that suits the particular situation. As discussed in the preceding chapter, there are a variety of established and developing methods to assess resilience in community or destination settings. This study drew upon the community-tourism resilience framework employed by Ruiz-Ballesteros (2011), which emerged from the growing body of resilience literature (see Adger, 2000; Berkes & Seixas, 2006; Folke, 2003). Although, Chapter 2 contains more detail, it bears repeating here that the SER framework identifies four interconnected, over-riding behavioural characteristics (or factors) that enhance system resilience: 1) learning to live with change and uncertainty, 2) nurturing diversity for reorganization and renewal, 3) combining different kinds of knowledge, and 4) creating opportunity for self-organization. Each of these four groups of interconnected characteristics is accompanied by a set of defining criteria (See Table

2-3). Presumably, the more resilience-enhancing factors that are present, the more resilient the community is likely to be.

The interview guide for this research did not specifically ask the informants a set of interview questions related to the four interconnected characteristics or factors noted above. There are a few reasons for this approach. First, Ruiz-Ballesteros did not utilize a specific set of questions related to the four characteristics. Rather, his questions were free-flowing and guided by the informants at the time of the interview (personal communication of April 20, 2013). In following the lead of Ruiz-Ballesteros and asking the questions in similar free-flowing fashion it permitted the researcher to test for the presence of these factors without leading the informants in their answers (See Appendix D, interview guide). Chapter 4 provides more specific detail on the research questions.

The research questions in this study sought to draw out the perceptions of the informants. A perception is defined as the process by which people translate sensory impressions into a coherent and unified view of the world around them. As such an informant's view may be incomplete, unverified, and perhaps unreliable; however, perceptions guide human behaviour (Businessdictionary.com, 2014a). As such, the collection of perception data can assist with achieving the objectives of this study; however, Patton (2002, p. 264) cautions researchers to bear in mind during interviews that participants are offering their "selective perceptions" of the way they see the world. He adds that the researcher also comes to the interview with his or her set of perceptions. Patton suggests that direct observations of informants can moderate these effects to provide a more comprehensive view of the setting being studied" (p. 264). As discussed earlier, the researcher spent four periods of immersion in the community, over the course of a year, attending community open houses, council meetings, and speaker sessions in order to have a more comprehensive view of the setting.

3.6.3. Preliminary exploratory work: Whistler

In June and July of 2013, a series of informal chats (face-to face and telephone) were undertaken with past and present informants with knowledge of Whistler's sustainability journey. The purpose of these chats was to ground truth the research before drafting the research proposal. To begin this process a number of informants'

names were provided by Dr. Peter Williams. Dr. Williams has an extensive history researching in the community and has earned the respect of community members. Other informants' names were supplied during some of the informant chats. Overall, 15 informants were approached, either by email, telephone or through Facebook, and asked to participate in an exploratory chat at an agreed upon time in the immediate future. The researcher failed to make contact with two of the 15 informants. All 13 of the 13 informants who were contacted agreed to participate. Nine chats were held face-to-face in Whistler during the week of July 8 to July 11, 2013, while four were held on the telephone in June and July 2013. Four questions were drafted for the study and sent to the informants in advance of the chat (see Appendix F).

Some interesting findings emerged from this exploratory research. First, it confirmed the rumours I had heard that Whistler was either at a significant crossroads on its *journey toward success and sustainability*, or it had reached a roadblock on its journey. Informants discussed some of the ongoing global and regional economic challenges, combined with the effects of past critical events and current stressors. It was apparent that these challenges were constraining the community's sustainability-focused governance system. While past recent governance approaches in Whistler had focused on an integrated approach to balancing economic, socio-cultural and environmental imperatives, at the time of the informal chats many informants perceived a singular focus on the economy. This perception was reiterated by many of the informants during the formal interview process from November of 2013 through to November of 2014. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Based upon these exploratory chats, a number of changes were made to the interview guide. For example, while almost all informants agreed that the use of *sustainability journey* should be understandable to informants, two informants suggested using the language that was contained within the Whistler2020 strategy to define and describe that journey. As one informant noted, this phrase was specifically used in documentation and on the Whistler2020.ca website in order to ensure that the community understood that sustainability meant more than just environmental sustainability. The list of Acronyms and Glossary (page xv) provides the definition of sustainability employed in this research. Consequently, the phrase *journey toward success and sustainability* replaced *sustainability journey*. Another change based upon

the exploratory chats related to the time period under study. Specifically, the historical timeline for the study, as it relates to a variety of shocks and stressors, was changed to date back to 1998. This date reflected the start of the community's sustainability journey (late 1990s). A final change emerging from the June-July chats was the addition of the research question related to the role of governance actors in shaping responses to critical events (see Appendix D, interview guide). The role of governance actors was mentioned by a number of the informants and is an area that a number of resilience and tourism destination scholars suggest deserves more attention.

3.6.4. Piloting the questionnaire: Victoria West Community Association (VWCA)

The interview guide was slightly modified to ensure the language was applicable and piloted with the VWCA. The language modification did not change the content of the questions (See Appendix G). The researcher chose the VWCA because she resides in the community and as such has knowledge of, membership in, and access to the organization. The VWCA is a "non-profit community group that promotes the interests of the residents of the Victoria West neighbourhood" (Victoria West Community Association, n.d.). It seeks to foster community participation in land use changes in the Victoria West community, improve the well-being of the community, "facilitate participation of residents in all public projects within the community and to encourage consultation with residents concerning policies, planning and program delivery, including consultation and participation in the preparation and implementation of the Victoria Official Community Plan, and neighbourhood community plans for Victoria West" (VWCA, n.d.). The researcher initiated contact with the VWCA by emailing the association president. Subsequently, the researcher was given permission to attend the June 2013 VWCA monthly meeting to seek members to participate in piloting the survey instrument. At that meeting nine members agreed to participate in the piloting of the research project. The pilot interviews took place from November 4 – 19, 2013. Informants were provided with a modified background document and the research questions in advance of the interview. Consent forms were not signed, as the data from the pilot study does not form part of this or any study's findings. No challenges or issues were observed or noted in the administration of the pilot interview guide.

3.6.5. Final comments on the interview guide

After the successful piloting of the interview guide with the VWCA members, the final Whistler interview guide was emailed to four informants in Whistler for their final review. These four informants had all participated in the June-July exploratory chats. Based upon the comments of three informants, and in discussions with the researcher's supervisory team, a few small changes were made to the interview guide. The suggested changes involved using clarifying language and probes. Based upon these findings, the interview guide (Appendix D) was finalized, along with a number of other documents. These documents include: the interview guide for U.S.A. informants (Appendix H); Backgrounder for Whistler informants (Appendix I); Backgrounder for U.S.A. informants (Appendix J); Consent form for Whistler informants (Appendix K); and the Consent form for U.S.A. informants (Appendix L). These documents, along with other required documents, were previously provided to Simon Fraser University's Research Ethics Branch (SFU, 2013), as the research involved surveying human subjects. Ethics approval was obtained on October 31, 2014, #2013s0624.

3.6.6. Choosing key informants

Following the lead of Beritelli and Laesser (2011), governance actors were identified as important to the research based upon: 1) holding a hierarchical position either currently or during the relevant time period; 2) having valuable knowledge of how critical events have shaped governance approaches; 3) having influence upon past and/or present governance mechanisms/processes, and/or; 4) having past and/or present material assets (i.e. money, land) invested in the community. Key informants were drawn from a cross-section of Whistler's governance actors. Specifically, they comprised individuals representing private, public and not-for-profit organizations and came from the following general areas: municipal government, BC Provincial Government, not-for profit organizations, business-related organizations, First Nations (Squamish, Lil'wat First Nations), media, and other organizations with past or current involvement with the governance system.

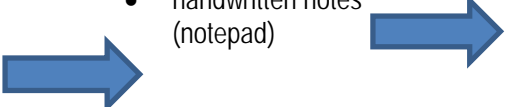
Informants representing business were chosen to reflect variations in company size, type of business and length of time embedded within the community. Actors

representing community members were chosen to provide variation in terms of length of time living in the community and knowledge of the matters at hand. Similarly, informants from the public and NGO sectors were selected based upon their knowledge of governance issues. It is important to note that not all actors were embedded within the community. For example, an interview was undertaken with a provincial government actor who had extensive knowledge of Whistler's governance system, but was not situated with the community. To provide context to Whistler's critical events, three informants from relatively similar types of resort communities in the United States (Aspen, Colorado = 2 & Ketchum, Idaho - 1) were asked to describe the critical events that had and were affecting their communities over the last 10-15 years.

3.7. Data collection: Whistler methods

Data were collected through waves of face-to-face interviews wherever possible, and by telephone and Skype call, in other instances (see Table 3.2). All interviews were recorded with the informants' permission, with a handheld device. The researcher made handwritten notes during the interviews. Field notes were also made throughout the process. The first wave of interviews was directed at an initial list of 30 informants. The original list of 30 informants was developed through contracts of Williams and Gill, as well as from the researcher's personal list gathered through her previous work at the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts with the Provincial Government of BC. Initial contact with the informants took place through email or phone. Potential informants were contacted by email and phone and sent the background document and a copy of the research questions by email. Once an informant confirmed willingness to participate, an interview date was set and an interview consent form was sent via email. Completed consent forms were either returned via email or collected at the time of the interview.

Table 3.2: Data collection, management and presentation

<u>Data Collection</u>	<u>Data Management</u>	<u>Data Presentation</u>
<p>Participant Selection</p> <p>Wave one (26 in-depth interviews)</p> <p>Wave two (17 in-depth interviews)</p> <p>Wave three (2 in-depth interviews)</p> <p>= 45 total interviews</p> <p>6 groups in Whistler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance elected (3)* • Governance appointed (15)** • Non-profits (10) • Businesses (14) • Media (3) • 2 genders • Residents; former residents; non-residents <p>Competing Destinations (3 total)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism non-profit (female) • Business (male) • Governance appointed (female) 	<p>Express Scribe (transcription)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transcribed into N-Vivo & copied into a Word document • >660 pages transcribed <p>Other Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 pages field notes (Word) • handwritten notes (notepad) 	<p>Concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • key themes (1st 34 interviews; Word) • key themes (all interviews; NVivo) • sub-themes (NVivo) • sub-sub-themes(NVivo)
		
	<p>Coding</p> <p>NVivo (coding by question)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critical events • miscellaneous • resilience strategies • weakness • sustainability-related roles 	<p>Form of Findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conceptual framework • theme frequencies • quotations
<p>Wave Three (interviews & follow-ups)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 email clarifications / further questions • 2, one-hour informant chats re 2014 municipal election • 1 email re 2014 municipal election 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • handwritten notes (notepad) • Recorded & transcribed in N-Vivo & copied into word • handwritten notes (notepad) 	
<p>Participant Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public meetings, council meetings, online council meetings, open houses 		
<p>Document Analysis (see Appendix E)</p>		

* This figure does reflect the fact that some informants had served in an elected governance capacity at some point in the past.

** Governance included municipal, provincial, and First Nations. This figure includes past and present governance actors.

The first wave of interviews ran from November 25, 2013 to January 29, 2014. Overall 26 interviews took place during this time period. During these interviews and or through time spent in the community, other informants were identified and a second wave of interviews took place from February 4 to April 17, 2014. The same procedure of supplying the background document, research questions, and consent form was followed. During this period another 17 interviews took place. Two final in-depth interviews were conducted: one in early October 2014 and the other in mid-November, 2014 (see Appendix N). The purpose of these two final interviews was to gain an understanding of the slate of election candidates for the November 2014 municipal election. This final wave of interviews did not follow the interview guide. Both informants were asked to speak about their experience with Whistler2020, why the sustainability movement had lost momentum, whether or not any candidates were running on an “environmental platform,” and what were their perceptions were as to the future of sustainability in Whistler.

During the in-field immersion period (November 2013 through to November 2014), the researcher returned to many of the informants for a second and, in some cases, a third time. Permission to re-approach was secured through the consent form. This was usually done by email. The purpose of returning to the informants was to seek further understanding and clarity related to the topics and issues discussed in the interview, or to explore new areas that emerged, such as the role of ethical behaviour and community values in governance systems. Overall, the questions from the interview guide provided direction for the interview; however, for the most part, informants took the lead in the interview. A few informants came prepared to the interview with typed answers to all of the questions. In these cases, despite the preparation of advance notes, the interviews were still free-flowing and led by the informant. At appropriate junctures, the researcher interjected to ask a new question or to seek clarity. Such an approach permitted the researcher to dig deeper on emerging issues.

3.8. Socio-demographic data

Section A of the interview guide asked informants about their history in Whistler, including whether or not they were currently, or in the past, a resident of Whistler and, if

so, for how long. Informants were also asked to state their past and current employment (paid or volunteer) as it relates to Whistler. Informants were not asked their age; however, all informants were over the age of 18 as indicated on their consent form. As this research was seeking the perception of how critical events had impacted the governance system and the community over the last 10 to 15 years, what was more important was finding a range of perspectives based upon time in the community, with the emphasis on finding those who had been living in the community for the greatest length of time. Overall, the majority of informants had lived for 16 or more years in the community. Of this group of informants, two informants had been in Whistler for 40 years and were involved in the original development of the resort. Another nine had been residents between 30 and 39 years. Another nine informants had lived in the community from 11 to 15 years. Within this group of informants, one informant had also been involved in the original development of Whistler, for a total of three informants with experience going back to Whistler's early development days. Only six informants had been living in Whistler for less than 10 years, while two had never lived in Whistler (one represented the provincial government and the other represented First Nations). One informant was new to the community, having only arrived six months before the time of the interview. Many of the informants indicated that they were part-time residents before becoming full-time citizens. As such, attempts to determine an average length of time of residency across the informants could not be determined (see Table 3.3).

The majority of respondents were male and the majority were current residents of Whistler. A few informants resided in the vicinity¹¹ of Whistler (i.e. Squamish, Pemberton, or surrounding towns). Analysing the employment of the Whistler informants was also a little challenging, as many were involved in a variety of employment situations over the time period in question. For example, some informants spoke in their capacity as elected governance officials, as well as business owners. Other informants spoke in their capacity as business owners, as well as in their capacity working for non-profit organizations (either for a salary or as a volunteer). Consequently, at the conclusion of each interview, the researcher assigned informants to a primary employment category based upon the discussion during the interview, as well as the following criteria: 1)

¹¹ For these purposes, vicinity is defined as less than 60 km from Whistler.

employment before retirement or employment that spanned the greater amount of time while employed in Whistler, 2) employment during time as a resident in Whistler or vicinity, or 3) current employment. Overall, the business sector, the governance sectors (elected and appointed) and the non-profit sector were fairly equally represented. The media sector was the least represented sector (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3: Whistler informant statistics

Length of residency	Never	0 – 5 years	6 to 10 years	11 – 15 years	16 or more years
	N=2	N=2	N=4	N=9	N=28 *
Gender	Female	Male			
	N=28	N=17			
Residency	Current	Former	Vicinity	Never	
	N=33 **	N=5	N=5	N=2	
Sector represented	Business	Governance appointed	Governance elected	Non-Profit	Media
	N=14	N= 14***	N=3	N=11	N=3

* 2 informants > 40 years in Whistler; 9 had lived in Whistler from between 30 and 39 years

** 2 current residents were part-time residents;

*** 1 = Provincial government; 1= First Nations; 12=RMOW

3.9. Data handling

As soon as possible after each interview, the audio files were uploaded to the researcher's computer and stored in a transcription software program called Express Scribe. From there the researcher personally transcribed each interview. The original transcribed interview was kept in the Express Scribe program. Three copies of each

transcribed interview were made: one copy was stored in a password protected Word folder (for safe keeping) and the other copy was uploaded to NVivo for later coding and analysis. Another copy was kept on a memory stick and stored in a locked room. The completed transcriptions were sent to each informant for verification of spellings and interpretation, et cetera. One respondent, having reviewed the transcript, asked for the removal of sensitive material and the researcher complied with the request.

3.10. Data coding & analysis

As described in Chapter 3, the analysis of the data took a decidedly inductive approach. Inductive analysis begins with observations and moves toward general patterns, while deductive analysis begins with the specification of main variables and hypotheses before the data collection begins (Patton, 2002). The inductive design of this study encouraged dimensions to emerge from the patterns found in the case study, without presupposing in advance what those dimensions will be; however, it should be noted that this study also contained elements of a deductive analysis. This is because previous related studies indicate a number of factors that appear to enhance community resilience. Patton (2002) notes that in practice, inductive and deductive analyses are often present in a research design, as some aspects of the evaluation and research questions are determined deductively, while other aspects are determined inductively.

The first step in the data coding and analysis process was to create a three to four page key themes document in Word, for each interview. This process occurred during the transcribing process; however, after the 34th interview the themes had attained saturation and the researcher did not produce key theme documents for the remaining 11 transcripts. All 45 interviews were uploaded into NVivo software for Mac users. NVivo allows the researcher to “manage, shape and make sense of the unstructured information” (QSR International, 2012). NVivo provides a workspace and tools to work through the collected data. According to the QSR website, NVivo is a practical software tool for analyzing perceptions. The QSR website outlines a five-step process for analysing interview data focusing on informant perceptions. The researcher followed the recommended five-step process for each of the 45 interviews, as follows: 1) import documents, 2) auto code by question & set up case nodes, 3) code themes, 4),

query and visualize, and 5) memo. N-Vivo permitted the researcher to more thoroughly code and analyse the data. It also permitted her to easily see the connections between and amongst themes. The connections reveal patterns that can then be sorted into categories and a manageable coding scheme (see Appendix M for a example of this process).

Once all 45 Whistler interviews and the three U.S.A. interviews were uploaded to NVivo, the researcher created codes to match each of the interview guide's areas of questions for the Whistler interviews. These seven major code categories were as follows: 1) critical events; 2) factors strengthening proactive responses; 3) factors weakening proactive responses; 4) resilience strategies; 5) roles of key individuals; organizations; 6) sustainability-related topics; and 7) miscellaneous. After creating each of these major categories (nodes) as noted, the researcher went through each Whistler interview to code the data. During this process, the researcher created relevant sub-nodes and sub-sub nodes in NVivo to capture the themes. By the end of the process hundreds of nodes had been created from the analysis of the 45 Whistler interviews. NVivo also permits the researcher to create memos during the analysis process, which proved valuable for capturing the researcher's thoughts. The three U.S.A. interviews were assigned their own folder with one node: critical events. Each of the three U.S.A. interviews was coded for its critical events only. Chapter 4 and 5 sets forth the analysis of the nodes for both sets of informants. See Appendix M for a sample of the NVivo node created for "critical events_impacts."

3.11. Data reporting

The findings related to the data analysis process are contained in Chapter 4 and 5. Before this dissertation was finalized, all informants were provided with an opportunity to read and comment on the findings in Chapter 4 and 5. Further, anyone who requested a copy of the entire dissertation will be provided with a PDF copy as soon as it is finalized and is in compliance with SFU library standards. As anonymity has been assured to the informants, all informants were assigned a number by which they are identified in the dissertation. The same process will be maintained for any publications flowing from this research. All informant quotes are matched to the informant number in

the dissertation. Informants will be informed of their number and provided a copy of the findings before the dissertation is stored with SFU's library. This will provide informants an opportunity to have a final say over their data. In addition to the dissertation, the researcher will produce an executive summary type report to be distributed to the research participants, as well as to the key organizations that participated in the study. If any quotes are used in smaller reports the same process will ensue as it relates to anonymity. The executive summary report will be distributed on or before August 31, 2015. In addition, the researcher will present her findings at a Whistler Chamber of Commerce membership meeting in the fall of 2015 and intends to publish at least three papers related to the findings with her supervisory committee. Informant anonymity will be maintained in the reporting of any and all findings.

3.12. Assumptions

It was assumed that the informants in this study answered the questions truthfully and accurately, based upon their own personal experiences and perceptions and to the best of their ability. Further, it was assumed that the informants had experience shaping and/or influencing Whistler's approaches to governance and were therefore well qualified to answer the research questions. Finally, it was assumed that the informants did not feel pressured to participate in the study, nor to answer the questions in a manner that did not represent their own personal perceptions. The researcher attempted to verify these assumptions, to the best of her ability, when initial contact was first made with the informant and then throughout the interview process.

3.13. Ethical considerations

There were no identified risks to informants in this study. The researcher took care to safeguard the confidentiality of the study informants by identifying them only by a number in the dissertation and in any written reports. The researcher was also careful to ensure that she did not use any direct quotes or material that would be easily associated with an informant. Further, all interview material was secured as set forth in Simon Fraser Research Ethics Board's documentation. A few informants asked to speak off the

record and their requests were honoured and that material does not form part of any written record.

3.14. Conclusion

This chapter has presented an explanation of and the justification for the research methods chosen. It details how the research was undertaken, the exploratory case study design and methods employed, the theoretical framework, the design of the research questions, how they were administered and to whom, the data handling, coding, and analysis, the intended reporting strategy, and the ethical considerations. It also provides a justification for the choice of Whistler for the case study. The following chapters, 4 and 5, will present the findings of the study.

Chapter 4. Critical events

4.1. Introduction

Chapter 4 focuses on the findings related to critical events, and their impact on governance, Whistler's sustainability movement, and the community's overall resilience. It also briefly examines the critical events affecting competing destinations. Where appropriate relevant secondary data are drawn into the findings.

4.2. Critical events: Whistler

Informants were asked to identify up to three past (within the past 10-15 years), present, and future events that, in their perspective, had, was or would impact Whistler. A critical event was defined as a "significant economic, socio-cultural, political, and/or environmental occurrence, positive or negative, that influenced Whistler's overall approaches to planning, development, and sustainability." Overall, informants identified approximately 38 separate events as being critical to Whistler's evolution (Table 4.1 lists these events with no particular weighting). These 38 events were subsequently collapsed into 28 critical events. They covered a broad array of topics and many were beyond the time scope, but often mentioned. For example, some informants described the importance of the foresight of the original founding fathers in the design of Whistler, as well as the policy and planning documents that attempted to control Whistler's growth. A variety of financial challenges (e.g. near bankruptcy in the early 1980s) and the ownership changes that Whistler faced over the years were also identified as critical events. Other broad areas included Whistler's unique funding tools (Resort Municipality Initiative, Tourism Industry Development Subsidiary Agreement), Whistler's struggle with employee and affordable housing, evolving demographics and markets, weather-related incidents, and the challenges Whistler is now facing as it relates to aging infrastructure (particularly condo hotels). Many informants identified Whistler's current built-out status

and the need to diversify its tourism product, infrastructure, and business mix as critical challenges for Whistler’s future prosperity.

Table 4.1. Whistler informants’ perception of critical events (late 1990s - ~2014)

2010 Olympic Games, including pre & post planning & implementation	Unified community vision
Terrorism (i.e. 9-11) and health related issues (SARS)	Federal issues
Affordable housing, including employee housing, local workforce, and poverty	First Nations issues
Aging Infrastructure, including condo hotels	Currency fluctuations
Near bankruptcy of Whistler in the early 1980s	Function Junction
Emerging markets, including China	Governance changes, including the 1990s “green councils,” to the 2011 municipal election, as well as changes to elected and non-elected RMOW positions
Climate change, including the ability to travel and weather related issues	Growth pressures, including the development cap, environmental impacts, (Nicklaus North, wetlands, Green Lake, university), growth management, market growth, regional growth, a steady state economy, and zoning in the SLRD
Competition, including Whistler’s growing reputation	Internet and changes to consumer purchasing habits, as well as the impact of social media
Customer service	Lack of career jobs
Demise of construction industry/phase	Mountain ownership changes
Demographic shifts, including aging resident population, immigration & multiculturalism, labour issues, loss of markets, and tourism & ski trends	Policy & planning documents, such as Whistler2020, E.P.I., O.C.P., as well as funding, such as the RMI and TIDSA
Design of Whistler, including critical decisions made during Whistler’s early creation and development days (i.e. covenants, special legislation)	Resource development
Diversification, including becoming a four-seasons destination, complementary industries, festivals & events, less weather dependent activities, small business versus chain stores	Second home owners
Economics, including the global economy, affordability of the community, economic downturns and recovery in 1980s and 2008, gas prices.	“Sustainability fatigue”

Despite the breadth of critical events discussed, a number of critical events gained prominence, based upon the number of informants who discussed the event and the time spent discussing it. The most prominent were: 1) the 2010 Olympic Games, including pre and post-planning phases; 2) the 2008 global financial crisis; 3) the sustainability movement; 4) the 2011 municipal election; and, 5) weather-climate related challenges. While weather was frequently mentioned as a critical event, this became a prominent issue in the November and January interviews, as the lack of snow became a significant concern for the year's ski season. For the purposes of addressing the research objectives and to answer the interview questions in a manageable fashion, the following sections will discuss the following three critical events and governance effects that gained prominence through the interviews: 1) 2010 Olympic Games, including pre and post-planning, 2) the sustainability movement, and 3) the 2011 municipal election and resulting leadership changes. While the global 2008 financial crisis was frequently mentioned as a critical event, it was often spoken of in relationship to the Olympics, its effect on the sustainability movement, and the 2011 municipal elections. Chapters 4 and 5 provide evidence of this effect. Overall, these three events represent a time period from the late 1990s, through to the completion of the interviews (November 2014).

4.3. Critical events: Competing destinations

Three individuals representing competing resorts in the USA agreed to participate in the study (Sun Valley, Idaho =1; Aspen, Colorado = 2). The Sun Valley informant lived and worked in Ketchum, the city where Sun Valley Resort lies. One of the Aspen, Colorado representatives worked for the City of Aspen for nine years, but had left three years previously and was now working for the City of Ketchum. She mostly spoke about the events impacting Colorado; although, she did discuss a few events she perceived were affecting Sun Valley Resort. The other Aspen informant lived and worked in the ski industry in Aspen, Colorado. These informants were asked to speak about their perceptions as it related to the critical events affecting their destination in the past and present, and also possible future critical events. The purpose behind this undertaking was to provide a general understanding of the critical events affecting some of Whistler's key competitors and it also served as a comparison of critical events affecting more developed resorts (Sun Valley and Aspen). As indicated in Table 4.2

many of the findings mirror Whistler, such as aging infrastructure, the lingering effects of the 2008 financial crisis, affordable housing, and growth management. However, there was a significant difference. Within these three U.S.A. destinations there was a concern for the lack of green space in the periphery of the resorts. These resorts were more mature than Whistler and they had experienced significant growth in their perimeter and a resulting loss of green space. The U.S.A. resorts were now seeking to buy surrounding property to create a green buffer zone outside the resort and ultimately a “sense of arrival” for visitors. This is an important lesson for Whistler and the Provincial Government of BC, particularly in light of development pressures in the sea-to-sky corridor.

Table 4.2: USA informants’ perceptions of critical events

Sun Valley, Idaho	Aspen, Colorado
Natural disasters (fires & smoke)	War/terrorism spikes
Fragmented approaches in efforts to achieve economic vitality – many small organizations and governments splintering efforts & budgets; lack of stability in budgets for existing organizations	Affordable housing strategy
Aging population, both in terms of residents & visitors to areas	“The Canary Initiative” -- Focus on environmental quality (greenhouse emission reduction goals)
Aging infrastructure	Renewable Energy Mitigation Program (green building code)
Lingering impacts of economic downturn	Ongoing recession
Public transportation	Water rights (future)
Air access (community must provide minimum revenue guarantees to airlines or they will not fly in)	Climate change and impact of erratic weather on business, at Aspen and at other resorts that; Weather/climate events (storms, droughts, floods)
Ketchum County Open Space: buying land for trails, etc. (land trust)	Open space program”: Buying up space around the resort to create a buffer zone funded through property transfer tax
Sun Valley Marketing Alliance	Cost of transportation (oil)
	Aspen growth management plan

4.4. The impact of critical events

4.4.1. Introduction

Informants were asked to describe how the events, they defined as critical, influenced Whistler’s past and current approaches to governance. Informants were also asked how they perceived critical events might affect Whistler in the future. The

following sections focus on the three previously identified critical events (2010 Olympic Games, sustainability movement, 2011 municipal election). It describes how informants perceived these events shaped elements of governance, such as planning, infrastructure development, collaboration, communication, community engagement, decision-making, as well as leadership relationships and pressures. While the 2008 global financial crisis and lingering effects were also significant events, most informants' spoke about these economic issues in relationship to their impact on the three previously noted critical events. This will be evident in the following sections. Chapter 6 will elaborate on the findings and discuss the impact of these critical events on Whistler's sustainability-focused governance system, particularly as it relates to its sustainability initiatives and overall community resilience.

4.4.2. Critical event #1: 2010 Olympic Games

Introduction

Planning for and hosting the 2010 Olympic Games was identified as a positive critical event that had a significant impact on Whistler's planning, development, and sustainability. This is not surprising. The original vision and impetus for the creation and development of Whistler as a destination in the late 1960s and early 1970s was to host a winter Olympic Games. As informant #11 noted, "Whistler Mountain was premised around getting the Olympics initially." The following sections discuss the impact of hosting the 2010 Olympic Games from a governance perspective, including the impact on governance leaders, collaboration and communication, community empowerment, and self-reliance. This will be followed by the informants' views on the economic benefits and burdens, including legacies such as new infrastructure, and the enhanced ability to host festivals and events. The final section presents the findings related to the impact on the community's sustainability movement.

Impact on governance

Many informants noted an evolution in Whistler's governance system, including its leaders, during the years leading up to the 2010 Olympic Games. For example, Informant #21 felt that the Games "fundamentally changed a lot of people," on a personal level and that it "fundamentally changed our relationships with senior levels of

government.” While he noted that some of these relationship changes were for the better, he believed the relationship between the mayor and his key supporters suffered through the planning of the Games. He described the evolution of the mayor from “pretty much a radical socialist,” before his election, to his necessity of having to “embrace things” that he had formerly spoken out against. He added, “It was kind of like a kid finally realizing that if you just play the game, there’s lots of rewards to be had.”

Indeed, some informants perceived that the lack of 2010 Olympic Games’ economic benefits, coupled with the global economic realities did not create a healthy governance environment for many of the post-Olympic municipal staff and elected leaders. Informant #7, in speaking about the economic environment at the RMOW post-Games stated, “There needed to be a reduction in the size of the administration. So that cut two managers.” He went on to explain that it was “a natural step” that “had to be taken” so that the RMOW could “regroup and reform” itself. Informant #4 commented that the “massive spending on the Winter Olympics meant that people in our community were ready for a break from big spending.” In a similar line of conversation, Informant #8 described, in general terms, how the depth and breadth of decision-making during Olympic planning affected the political life expectancy of leaders.

Others described the fear the community felt when it woke up from the Olympic party and discovered the global recession, and how this impacted the elected governance leadership. For example, Informant #39 stated:

[E]verybody woke up and freaked out and so suddenly what emerged was fear and what happens when you have fear that you can’t act upon, is it turns into anger and all of that anger got directed at the council and Ken [Whistler mayor 2005-2011] and it was somehow like Ken Melamed was personally responsible for a recession hitting Whistler ...and they [meaning mayor and council] were thrown under the bus ...

Similarly, Informant #19 described the impact of the post-Olympic environment as it related to the future longevity of political leaders:

[T]he shift in political climate [meaning post Olympics] was as a result of realizing that we need to get back to business and ... [and it became a

question of] do our current¹² political leaders, are they the right people to really get us forward?

According to Informant #19, this sense of economic urgency in the post-Olympic environment required a “new governance” body, one that would lead the community forward. He stated:

It was no longer that we need to be gatekeepers and protect our environmental and non-economic variables. We were no longer that. We had to be, wow, careful now ... so it was okay, Games are over. Now we gotta get back to business and what business should we be getting at?

Similarly, Informant #4 noted that after the election there was a requirement to reduce spending. He believed this requirement to be “an important correction and I think one that pretty much any politician elected to be part of the council in 2011 felt committed to.” He added, “So events create needs for tacking in a new direction a lot of the time.” He mused that we often think “an engaged electorate will lead in the right direction,” but that often “the right direction is a different direction than you’ve been going for a while.” He explained this in terms of the 2010 Olympic Games and the requirement to be “spending, spending, spending,” and stated “you come to a juncture where you need to stop, because the electorate won’t be able to pay the bills any more.”

Collaboration & communication

Some informants perceived an increased level of collaboration that evolved from the bid process through to the hosting of the 2010 Olympic Games. Informant #31 stated, “It brought together a lot of disparate groups who learned to work together for something collaboratively.” Informant #8 noted that the Olympics created a sense of urgency that required and enabled a significant level of collaboration in order to meet deadlines in a timely fashion. Others noted that through this Olympic period, the community, including organizations, businesses, and residents, learned how to

¹² Unless otherwise stated, all references to the ‘current’ mayor (Nancy Wilhelm-Morden) and council, the ‘current’ political leaders, or the ‘current’ time is understood as representing the time period during which the interviews were undertaken [November 2013 through to April 2014] and represents the municipal election cycle of November 2011 through to November 2014. References to the ‘previous’ mayor (Ken Melamed) and/or council are understood as the time period from November of 2008 through to November of 2011.

collaborate and communicate more effectively and transparently. Some informants credited the collaboration requirement for breaking down silos in the community, particularly amongst the four major organizations (RMOW, Whistler Blackcomb, Tourism Whistler, Whistler Chamber of Commerce). For instance, Informant #30 stated that the Games were “a good step in breaking up the silos there.” She added, “So tourism [people] had to work together [and] the businesses had to work together.”

On the other hand, Informant #10 perceived a “tighten[ing] up” of the governance communication strategy during the lead up to the Games, particularly as it related to dealing with pre-Olympic questions from a global audience. She described how “everything was like top secret” and added that when “they [the RMOW] did that it reflects bad on what the community sees, because it tightens it up to them as well.” She perceived this new communication strategy to still be in effect in the community, stating, “[I]t’s still difficult to get a freedom of information request from the council and information that we should be getting fairly easily ...” Informant #21 agreed and spoke about what he perceived as the lack of community engagement during the Games planning phase. He equated the lack of community engagement to the fact that Whistler was “riding the tail of the comet” and not “steering much of anything.” Although he noted that the governance leaders were busy making “these big decisions,” he added, “everybody felt pretty pushed around by the Olympics.” At the same time he perceived an increased sense of power amongst the decision-makers, and stated:

And I think to an unfortunate extent, it sort of ... it got decision makers, it got municipal staff ...and by that I mean mostly the senior staff, the ones who really wheeled some civil service sort of power into this frame of mind that they can make these big decisions, they can make these bold moves and they don’t really necessarily need to do a lot of community engagement behind that.

Empowerment & self-reliance

A sense of empowerment and self-reliance was an intangible benefit mentioned by a number of informants. Informant #21 spoke of this in terms of decision-making. He observed that, “[T]he Olympics were an interesting experience, because it expanded and it emboldened our decision-making, our view of ourselves.” Similarly, Informant #17 felt that “...the Games had an enormous effect in helping Whistler see what it was capable

of ... [it] made us feel that we could depend more upon ourselves and that we didn't always need to feel insecure and ask for outside help ...”

In addition to a sense of empowerment and self-reliance, the Olympic process also brought about a sense of confidence that is reflected in the comments of Informant #17 who stated, “...it really raised Whistler's confidence as an amazing place to be and having this ability to put on awesome events.” Although the community had past experience hosting events, she noted that this was “a game changer in the level of awesomeness and confidence and belief in ourselves...” Some informants described both personal and collective changes within the community in terms of an increased sense of community and country pride. For instance, Informant #22 described how she is now personally more exuberant at community events after having been an Olympic spectator. She described her personal evolution in terms of the stereotypical Canadian persona as “so humble and afraid to toot our horn too much” and added that she now felt that it is “okay to be happy and to be proud of who you are and to brag about your results in the Games.” Similarly, Informant #30 perceived that the Games drew many Whistler residents out of their “bubble,” which she described as a “little world [that] revolved around sports.” She perceived that Whistlerites became more aware of what was going on ‘beyond Function Junction.’ On an individual level, many of these perceived benefits manifested themselves in an increased level of volunteerism within the community. Informant #7 described the increased level of volunteerism as “the legacy of becoming involved in the community, a helping community.”

On the other hand, Informant #21 noted what he described as Whistler's enhanced view of itself, post-Olympics, and that this enhanced view had actually “hobbled” the community because Whistler was now “in this box, this Olympic box.” He elaborated that:

[T]here was always an expectation and a use of the phrase ‘world class,’ but now it's ‘Olympian’ and to the extent that there was this fatuous Whistler standard to begin with, it's just been ratcheted up by that experience and you know, that has a lot of interesting implications for governance, because if you think you deserve or if you have grown accustomed to driving the Mercedes, it's a real bitch to have to finally go out and buy a Chevy or realize that you now have a Chevy budget.

Impact on economics: Burdens & benefits

Many informants discussed the economic benefits of hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics, particularly as it related to cushioning the community from the blow of the 2008 global financial crisis. For instance, Informant #12 stated that the Olympics “saved our bacon.” He added that across North America there was “[an] 18 to 20 percent [increase in] bankruptcies in hotels,” and that as such Whistler “dodged a bullet because of the Games...” Likewise, Informant #2 observed, “the bubble of the Olympics blanketed the major recession here.” On the other hand, Informant #12 observed that while there may not have been an immediate economic benefit, the Games kept people employed. Indeed, many informants, believed the hosting of the Games cushioned the community from the 2008 global financial crisis; however, this effect was short-lived. For example, Informant #33 stated:

But we very much felt the impact, because, of course, when there’s a global economic downturn, one of the very first things that disappears from people’s economic opportunity is the opportunity to travel. So we very much felt that, particularly by the summer of 2010.

Other informants spoke about what they perceived as the economic burden of hosting the Games. For example, Informant #19 stated that while Whistler achieved the level of exposure it desired through the hosting, the economic windfall did not materialize. He added, “I would say the opportunity of the Games led to some successes and, somewhat, might have been perceived as a lack of success.” He added the “expected economic windfall,” did not occur. Similarly, Informant #15 noted that post-Olympic visitation did not occur at the expected level. Informant #8 believed Whistler “...didn’t feel the economic crunch ... until the Olympic year and then in 2011;” however, he went on to explain that “we knew [the economic crunch] was going to happen anyways and it always happens.” Informant #39 agreed, stating that the post-Olympic economic slowdown was normal and to be expected; however, she went on to describe how unprepared the community was to face the post-Games’ economic realities:

[S]omewhere between April and May the community sort of raised its head, coming out of like a drunken stupor that was the Games and went, as they say, pardon my French, ‘Holy shit, there’s a recession on.’ And we did not see it until then ...

Other informants, such as Informant #29, observed that Whistler had not prepared well for the post-Olympic “hangover.” Informant #31 explained, “[T]he community was so focused on the Olympics that they weren’t really thinking beyond the Olympics.” Informant #12 agreed, observing what could be described as a heads-in-the-sand mentality within the community. He stated, “I don’t think people fully appreciated how bad it was elsewhere ...” Informant #13 believed the hosting of the event left the community with an economic burden and as a result the community went into an evaluative stage.

Infrastructure and capacity building

Many informants noted that the pre-Olympic development phase was critical to development in Whistler, particularly as it related to Olympic-related infrastructure. A number of informants noted that these infrastructure benefits occurred because Whistler was in charge of much of the Games-related decision-making. For example, Informant #30 described how the building of the Athletes’ Village “wasn’t about building the Athletes’ Village; it was about us dealing with resident housing.” In other words, the community, through its governance leaders, influenced decisions in such a manner that ensured the Athletes’ Village was not a series of portables to be dismantled after the Games. Rather, the Athletes’ Village was built with the agreement that it would assist the community in addressing its affordable housing challenges post-Olympics. Consequently, the Games became a tool for the governing leaders and the community to address a significant social issue related to affordable housing. A number of informants pointed out that many of the Games’-related development decisions continued to benefit the community.

On the other hand, some informants perceived that Whistler’s post-Olympic economic reality was worsened by an infrastructure legacy they perceived as unsustainable. For example, Informant #13 described how the new bus depot’s capacity was four times that required by the community post-Games. Similarly, Informant #31 described the bus depot as the equivalence of the “Taj Mahal.” Other informants described how some of the infrastructure, including the sliding centre, had become a significant drain on the Olympic legacy funds. The legacy funds exist to sustain some of the larger Olympic-related facilities long term; however, a number of informants

expressed concern about the longevity of these funds given the lack of financial return related to some of the infrastructure.

Many informants noted a positive community impact as it related to the lessons learned from hosting the 2010 Games. In the eyes of these informants, the RMOW, and the community as a whole, now had the experience and ability to deliver high calibre concerts, festivals and events. Other informants noted that hosting the Games enabled the community to more fully commit to its desire to develop as a cultural tourism destination. Some noted the cultural legacy of the Games, generally. Others spoke of the building of the Lil'Wat Cultural Centre, or the 2013 release of *Whistler's Community Cultural Plan* that will guide the community's cultural tourism development (RMOW, 2013h). Informants credited the hosting of the Games with creating cultural opportunities, and noted Whistler's increasing draw as a cultural tourism hub. In fact, many believe that the community's new focus on cultural tourism drew Michael Audain to Whistler and influenced his decision to locate a new museum to host his personal art collection¹³ in Whistler.

Impact on sustainability movement

Informants provided a variety of views related to the interconnectivity of hosting the Games and the community's sustainability movement. Many felt it enabled the community to advance its sustainability goals. For example, Informant #15 observed, "...a lot of sustainability stuff got incorporated into the Games' strategy." Similarly, Informant #22 stated, "...because the theme of the Olympics was sustainability, there were a lot of things that got jumped forward." She described how she originally feared the environmental impacts related to hosting an Olympics, but that the trade-offs in the form of technology development and projects alleviated her concern. Others believed that the community's sustainability goals acted as a road map for the community to more fully benefit from hosting the Games. Informant #36 believed that the sustainability movement "served us well during the Olympics," particularly as it related to providing environmental guidelines. Similarly, Informant #7 stated, "our push was to have our plan

¹³ The Audain Art Museum began construction in September 2013 and was set to open to the public in the fall of 2015 (RMOW, 2014a)

in place in order that we best take advantage of everything that we could from the Games and that they'd be aligned to our priorities in moving to our vision." Informant #27 added, "[B]y the time 2010 came along, that was embedded. It's sport, culture, and sustainability..."

Some informants credited Whistler's "sustainability agenda" as helping the community secure the Games in the first place, as noted by Informant #2. Informant #23 described Whistler2020 as "...the pivotal piece, the hinge on which it swings is the Games. It needed the Games and it foretold the Games and gambled that we'd get them when it was first drafted." Others, such as Informant #28, described how Whistler2020 enabled the community to leverage the Olympics to address some of the community's social challenges, such as affordable housing. Informant #44 recalled that at the bid phase Mayor Hugh O'Reilly¹⁴ pushed the perspective with VANOC that "if sustainability isn't one of the cornerstones that you build the foundation of these Games on, we don't want them." Informant #44 retold the story of being at a debriefing following the Games and hearing John Furlong, President and CEO of VANOC say that VANOC "wouldn't have been so committed to sustainability if it wasn't for Whistler." He recalled that Furlong stated that a "huge influencing factor on why these Games were as effective as they were from a sustainability perspective," was because of Whistler's lead on sustainability.

In contrast, Informant #26 perceived that the Games did little to advance sustainability in Whistler. He emphasized that "...if people really cared about climate change they would boycott the Olympics," generally speaking. He noted how people used the term 'sustainability,' in name only, in order to justify the planning and delivery of the event. He elaborated, describing how "...the organisers of the 2010 Olympic Games prided themselves in having the most sustainable winter Olympics ever." He added that the David Suzuki Foundation had endorsed the Games. Whereas he believed that "...these were probably the most pernicious winter Olympics ever, in terms of environmental impact." In a similar line of conversation, Informant #39 described her observations of the VANOC team trying to get people out of their cars during the Games.

¹⁴ Hugh O'Reilly was mayor from 1996 to 2005.

She described the dichotomy that “Whistler liked to think it was quite green and progressive,” but that “they were green until [they were asked] to get out of their SUVs.” Informant #27 believed the sustainability movement was just a moment in time, put in place for the purpose of the Games. He stated, “the government said, ‘Okay, we’re going to do all these sustainability things. Okay, the Olympics are over. Now we can get rid of that stuff.’”

4.4.3. Summary: Impact of 2010 Olympic Games

Overall, the hosting of the 2010 Olympic Games was considered a critical event that strengthened the resilience of Whistler’s governance system, particularly from a community perspective. Many informants described personal benefits such as a sense of empowerment and community pride, enhanced confidence, which manifested as benefits for the community. Informants described the improved level of collaboration between the governance leaders and the community and how that set the bar for future collaboration. They also spoke about infrastructural and capacity-building benefits related to this critical event. Although many informants perceived a financial burden associated with hosting the Games, overall informants believed that it cushioned the community from the 2008 financial global financial crisis. Interestingly, many informants felt that the hosting of the Games negatively affected the resilience of Whistler’s elected governance leaders, as it related to their ability to maintain their elected positions after the 2011 municipal election. Further, while the hosting of the Games resulted in considerable benefits to the community, such as infrastructure and citizen development (e.g. hard and soft skills), the post-Olympic environment had a negative effect on the resilience of the community’s sustainability movement. This was also discussed in terms of the governance system’s loss of focus on sustainability. The following sections will more fully describe Whistler’s sustainability movement as a critical event that both strengthened and weakened its overall governance system.

4.4.4. Critical event #2: The sustainability movement

Introduction

In the minds of many informants, the sustainability movement (~late 1990s – 2010) was one of the most important critical events that both strengthened and weakened the resilience of its sustainability-focused governance system. As Informant #44 stated, “...from basically 1998, 1999, 2000, Whistler really was on an organized and very, very committed path to understand what sustainability meant in the context of a resort community and resort development, maintenance of resort infrastructure, continued success within a limited growth frame.” He added that in 2005, after 35 years of exponential resort development, the last five of which entailed “exhaustive community engagement and deliberate conversations in the resort community, Whistler2020 passes through council as North America’s first community with an integrated sustainability plan.” He drew attention to the fact that not only was Whistler2020 a plan, but it was the “highest level policy” document. The following paragraphs describe, in words of the informants, the impact Whistler’s sustainability movement had on the governance system, how Whistler2020 became a framework for sustainability and educating the community, where and why the sustainability movement lost momentum in the post-2010 Games’ environment, and the effects that had on governance.

Impact on governance

According to the majority of informants, Whistler’s sustainability movement was a guiding force for the community’s values and vision, and that it enabled and encouraged long-term thinking. For example, Informant #8 noted a positive change in community values, which he attributed to the adoption of the Whistler2020 strategy. He attributed this change to discussions within the community about sustainability, as well as to the role speakers played by coming into the community to speak on this theme. Similarly, Informant #41 believed the strategy created awareness and changed “the environmental and the sustainability ethic in Whistler.” He also spoke about how these values were then reflected not only in the residents of Whistler, but also in business approaches within the community. A common thread throughout many of the interviews was the idea that Whistler2020, as well as its predecessor document, *Whistler, it’s our Nature*, enabled or helped establish the community’s vision. For example, Informant #38 felt that

it helped guide the community's "sense of [a] common vision [including] where the community is going and it helped us create a language..." Informant #19 stated the strategy was "... like a vision statement, or a mission statement within a company. It helps remind you what you're really trying to achieve." While most informants believed it had provided the community with a common vision, Informant #41 described how it was the community's desire for a common vision that drove the development of the strategy.

In a similar line of conversation, a number of informants described the strategy as enabling the community to think long term about the future. For instance, Informant #8 stated the Whistler2020 process allowed the community to envision "what kind of future do you want?" Informant #17 described it as the time "where people began thinking about the future." Similarly, Informant #7 felt it "impacted how we looked at Whistler, from a future perspective ... looking to where we want to be." Informant #41 agreed that having a sense of where the community was going enabled the community to better respond to "perturbations." He elaborated, stating that "...you get hit [by a perturbation] and you can still see into the future better." In addition to crediting Whistler2020 with enabling a long-term vision, a few informants recognized the role of leaders. For example, Informant #15, credited governance leaders with recognizing that people come to Whistler because of "the spectacular natural environment." She gave credit to these leaders for realizing that "a long-range strategy" was required to "protect the environment." Informant #17 compared Whistler's long-term focus to that of other communities. She observed that most communities think short-term and that this is reflective of the fact that councils "work in a three-year term," and that therefore "that's all they think about." She went on to explain that the strategy forced the community to think about where they were going, what they were doing, and what the world was going to look like in the future. Similarly, Informant #13 stated that Whistler2020 helped the community to realize what was important. She described how the community's strong sustainability-focused vision, as defined within the strategy, drew her to Whistler to live.

Planning & decision-making

A number of informants spoke of how the Whistler 2020 strategy influenced planning. For example, Informant #17 noted that it "...set the tone for cross-sectoral, cross-community discussions and planning..." As an example of how it set the tone for

planning, Informant #5 described how the community leveraged its vision, as outlined in the strategy, to convince Terasen Gas (now known as FortisBC) that the company's propane tanks must be replaced by a natural gas pipeline. Terasen Gas was proposing to build a new propane tank farm to increase capacity. Informant #5 explained that a natural gas pipeline would assist the community in its eventual move away from fossil fuels,¹⁵ because the pipeline would have the capability to carry new flex fuels as they become available. Other informants, such as Informant #4, spoke about the effects the strategy had on planning, such as Cheakamus Crossing. The athletes' housing for the 2010 Games was built in Cheakamus Crossing. Rather than a temporary development, as had been the approach in past Olympics, it became a permanent resident community.

Others spoke about Whistler2020 in terms of how it affected decision-making within the community. According to Informant #8, it "slowed the thinking down around decisions, to some degree, and provided a more methodical approach to making decisions." He described how the governance leaders applied a 2020 lens to methodically determine the fate of the community's inadequate propane system. In a similar line of discussion, Informant #7 noted that the strategy "really broadened the base of decision-making," and it "brought in a lot more voices than council ever had before into decision-making." He added that he believed a high level of participation in decision-making still existed within the community. Informant #5 also spoke about decision-making as it related to Whistler2020. He stated it was "a serious attempt by government to share decision-making and spread the responsibility for the success of the resort to all sectors and members." In contrast, Informant #10 observed that the effectiveness of the strategy really depended upon the knowledge of RMOW staff, and she believed it had little impact on decision-making.

Leadership

Many informants spoke about the importance of leadership as it related to Whistler's sustainability movement. Most informants perceived that the local

¹⁵ Natural gas is a fossil fuel formed by a combination of layers of dead plants and animals and intense heat and pressure, over the course thousands of years (EPA, 2013a; 2014). According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration (n.d.), the burning of propane emits 139.0 pounds of CO₂ per million Btu of energy, whereas natural gas emits 117.0 pounds.

government of the day was leading the sustainability movement. For example, Informant #2 noted that it was “the local government who was actually the leader on it.” He also spoke about the importance of leadership and the requirement to have “champions in government.” He explained “that since the laws are made in local government, if you don’t have the visionaries and the champions in local government, your chances for success are that much harder.” Informant #9 provided an example of a champion within local government in describing the leadership of the community’s previous mayor, Ken Melamed. She described him as “a very strong environmentalist,” and stated, “[H]e was very instrumental in our community sustainability plan.” Informant #38 agreed noting that the former mayor “gets a lot of credit for having a major hand” in “pushing for a lot of the environmental reform and platforms that exist today...”

Others leaders in the sustainability movement were also identified. For example, Informant #5 credited Jim Godfrey, a former CEO with the RMOW, as the “bright strategist” who “made it all happen behind the scenes.” Informant #41 agreed, stating, “[H]e showed a great deal of leadership in terms of visionary documents and visionary planning.” Other informants spoke about the leadership from previous governance leaders such as the previous mayor, Hugh O’Reilly, previous RMOW CEO, Bill Barrett, and Tim Wake of the Whistler Housing Authority. Informant #41 described O’Reilly as “a student of Jim’s” who was “smart enough to realize that Jim had a lot of wisdom and so was very supportive of Jim.” Informant #15 was not sure who exactly was leading the charge within the RMOW, but she believed that since the 1990s key people “were already starting to think sustainability–wise, without necessarily calling it that.” A few informants, such as Informant #22, attributed the fact that the municipality is small and well financed for enabling the governance leaders to be “forward thinking” and “doing cutting edge things.”

A few informants spoke about the importance of key influencers who were not directly involved in Whistler’s governance system and their role in advancing the community’s sustainability movement. For example, Informant #22 described the initial challenges in getting the community, including those in high positions, onboard with sustainability. He believed that changed with the arrival of Dr. Henry Robert, a leader in the global sustainability movement. Informant #41 spoke about leadership within the business community. He described one hotel general manager in particular, whose

respect within the business community helped to advance the sustainability movement. He spoke about the manager's ability to "speak very positively and get the credibility of the business community."

Other informants spoke about the characteristics of leaders, generally, whether they were key community influencers or champions within government. These informants noted characteristics that included a high level of determination, commitment, or to being guided by a set of principles. Informant #41 gave credit to what he saw as a "network of arts and business leaders of various sorts," also playing an important role in getting the conversations started. Although many informants spoke of the importance of leadership in the sustainability movement, Informant #38 noted that not all community leaders were initially onboard. He described how "some of us leaders in the community came to the party a little later." He noted this particularly amongst the more senior leaders within the community, stating some, "...like myself, who are older, [we] didn't have the benefit of growing up with, you know, sustainability and the environment being taught in school."

Collaboration, stakeholder engagement & partnerships

Many informants discussed the Whistler2020 strategy in terms of how it enabled and encouraged collaboration. For instance, Informant #23 stated that it was "the strategy of collaboration." He credited the strategy with enabling partnerships within the community and good example of how stakeholder engagement should be undertaken. He added that it taught the community to collaborate and to be strategic, which he described as "working as Whistler Inc." He added, the "Games bid and planning was actually the way we expressed the collaboration that was envisioned in Whistler2020." According to informant #41, it was not just a document; rather, it was an "engagement process." Informant #7 agreed, observing the level of engagement in terms of organizations. He observed, "another phenomenon, I guess, from the 2020 has been the engagement of organizations with each other, that didn't really have a line of communication before." Other informants spoke about the benefits of the task forces in enabling community engagement and participation. Informant #7 observed that the 2020 process "brought a lot of people out of their shells." Informant #5 believed the task forces "were one of the most brilliant engagement, community participation models that

I've ever come across." He noted, "[I]t became a model that was copied in a lot of other communities." Informant #13 stated that the community task forces provided people with an opportunity "to engage in lots of topics," and to get "into the nitty gritty of the issue..." Informant #17 agreed. She attributed the strategy and then later the 2010 Games with enabling a culture of community engagement and participation.

A few informants spoke about the sustainability movement in terms of the relationship between local government and the community. For example, Informant #5 observed a change in the relationship between "local government and its relation to the community," particularly as it related to community engagement and shared responsibility. He believed the task forces established a balance of responsibility for achieving the Whistler2020 actions and the community's ultimate success. He described how approximately 50 percent of actions were "targeted to the municipal government," while the remaining 50 percent were targeted at the community, including "the Builder's Association, or the Chamber of Commerce, or [the] Regional District." Informant #41 observed that the governing leadership of the day "gained political currency ... built social capital [and] changed people's notion of government, governance." He felt there was now an expectation regarding the right to participate in the governance system.

In a related line of conversation, a number of informants described an evolution, over time, in the governance leaders, particularly as it related to how they interacted with the community. Informant #41 noted that these leaders faltered on their first attempt to reach out the community on the new sustainability focus. However, he noted a second evolution in the relationship between the community and the governance leaders. As time progressed the governance leaders "forgot about the success which was the genuine engagement and co-creation and they pushed [a] sort of ideology and a sort of a 'we know what the best is.'" Informant #9 also spoke about an evolution in the governance leaders as time went on, particularly in terms of their level of responsiveness. She believed the mayor "was leading [on sustainability] and by the end of his term, unfortunately, probably losing support in the community." She felt the governance leaders were too focused on sustainability and had ignored the concerns of the community's economic wellbeing.

Whistler2020: A framework for sustainability

The Whistler2020 strategy is credited with providing the framework for the community's sustainability movement. A number of informants described how in the early days the community struggled to frame its sustainability vision and goals. For example Informant #38 described how in late '90s and early 2000s "...there was a community need to get focused on Whistler2020 and sustainability and what it meant." He went on to state, "There was a hunger for it." Indeed, the community's willingness to move forward with a sustainability framework was defined by Informant #7 as a "complete paradigm shift." Many noted that the community drove the strategy. For example, Informant #24 observed, "It [Whistler2020] really was the community's plan. It wasn't the municipality's plan that they ran by the community to see if it was okay." Similarly, Informant #9 stated that the strategy was "community led and fed." Informant #41 concurred, noting, "It was owned by the community, not just by the bureaucrats." She commented further that "the local government at the time was receptive," to not only the strategy, but also to ensuring it was "community driven." Informant #13 described how the community needed a strategy to guide Whistler's development long term. She explained that "as a community that has seen, in a relatively short period of time, a huge amount of growth and development," the strategy was a way for the community to build, make money, and protect the environment all at the same time.

Others credited Dr. Henry Robert's timely visit to Whistler with providing a framework and the language for the community's sustainability vision, through The Natural Step (TNS) (see <http://www.naturalstep.ca/>). For example, Informant #7 noted that it was actually TNS that provided "a common language about sustainability, about moving forward, that everybody could understand. It was very straightforward and simple." Despite its connection to TNS, many noted that the Whistler2020 strategy was flexible. For example, Informant #22 described the strategy as "workable" and noted, "You had options: You had choices. It wasn't being crammed down your throat." Informant #45 stated that TNS "gave our sustainability planning its philosophical underpinning."

Many informants spoke about other community benefits related to the strategy, particularly as it related to educating and providing skills for community members.

Indeed, a number of informants mentioned that the strategy doubled as a community-wide training manual, or in the words of Informant #23 “our collective undergraduate degree.” He went on to explain that “it incorporated so much learning from the previous 30, 40, 50 years.” Informant #17 stated that Whistler2020 “was an educational process for those individuals that participated” in it. She described how the process served as a training ground for the 2010 Games, particularly as it related to WAC. Similarly, Informant #7 described a legacy of meeting skills that community members gained through their participation in the task forces. Informant #4 spoke in broader terms when he stated that the strategy helped the community begin “to understand ourselves from an economic, environmental and social perspective.” Despite the efforts that went into involving the community and educating them on sustainability through the Whistler2020 process, a number of informants believed some members of the community, particularly businesses, did not fully understand the concept of sustainability. Informant #1 expressed his frustration in trying to educate people on how “the way the world works.” During the interview he drew a picture of the standard, three-legged stool (environment, socio-cultural, economy), as representing how sustainability is often visually depicted. After finishing his drawing he stated, “We’ve got to balance all these things [pointing to the three-legged stool] and I’m like bullshit about your balance, you know?”

The sustainability movement loses momentum

Many informants observed that as time progressed Whistler’s sustainability movement began to lose momentum. Indeed, the majority of informants who spoke about the sustainability movement concurred that it no longer held the visibility it once did within the community. For instance, Informant #36 stated, “It’s [sustainability] certainly not in its heyday.” She went on to describe how 10 years ago “the word was in the newspaper every single week.” Informants attributed this shift away from sustainability to a number of factors. Many claimed this situation was due to governance changes in both elected and appointed positions immediately preceding and following the 2011 municipal election. Others attributed the 2008 global financial crisis and ongoing economic challenges to the loss of momentum. Others, such as Informant #39 blamed *sustainability fatigue* or attributed it to the fact that the objectives and goals of Whistler2020 were *inaccessible*. Informant #5 believed that the governance leaders “underestimated the amount of additional work that’s necessary to bring people into that

way [sustainability-focused] of running a community...” Some informants described it as a matter of balance and as such, believed the focus needed to be flexible. In other words, the focus would shift from the environment to the economy, as need be. A few informants felt that sustainability was alive and well in Whistler, although it was not as visible in the community, as it has been in the past. Some informants attributed this fact to what they perceived as *sustainability having been taken care of*.

Political realities & perceptions of hypocrisy

According to Informant #23, “there’s a political reality” attached to the Whistler2020 strategy, and indeed many informants spoke about this notion. Informant #5 suggested that the involvement of some participants in the sustainability movement was more politically motivated as opposed to altruistically motivated. He stated, “Looking back, I think that many of the participants were there only to oblige the council.” Informant #28 attributed the loss of momentum to those seeking to align themselves in a politically expedient fashion. He stated, “Sometimes they position themselves in favour of a plan and sometimes they position themselves against a plan, and not really, you know, knowing what they’re doing. It’s not ... it’s politically expedient, as opposed to long-term community expedience.”

A few informants talked about Whistler’s sustainability movement as being hypocritical. For example, Informant #23 described how the municipality was driving the task forces and enabling and empowering the residents to articulate a sustainability vision and develop strategies, yet there was no budget to deliver on the strategies. He questioned, “Why engage everybody to do these things, come up with these ideas, when ...there’s no budget to act?” He stated that the RMOW “never put a nickel against any of those strategies,” and added “If we wanted to put our money where our mouth was, we had a lot of money in reserve, [the RMOW] should have said, ‘Okay, here, you tell us what you think these tactics are going to cost and [what] your priority tactics are...’” Similarly, Informant #39 stated, “It was like we were green and sustainable until you ask too much of us. And then it was ‘this is too hard.’” Similarly, Informant #10 observed, “There’s an anti-idling policy in Whistler, but half the time the vehicles you see idling are the municipality vehicles.” Some informants perceived that the level of hypocrisy in the community had grown over time. For example, Informant #14 described Whistler’s

previous focus on sustainability and stated, "...you feel almost a little hypocritical about our community commitments, because it is not so much really there any more." Informant #13 described how the WCS is "going out and advocating for this approach, when it's come to a standstill in our community." She felt it was hypocritical that people came to Whistler to learn more about its sustainability strategy, when in fact she believed the community had moved away from sustainability.

A few informants spoke about hypocrisy in terms of Whistler projecting itself to the outside world as a leader in sustainability. For example, Informant #13 stated, "Whistler always talks about wanting to be a leader, a leader in the tourism industry, a leader in sustainability, a leader in business. But in order to do that, you have to keep up the momentum and keep going." Informant #14 added, "It becomes particularly sad when the government created the Whistler Centre for Sustainability [WCS] as a response to inquiries from places around the world who wanted to emulate us and were inspired by what we had done." Others similarly denounced the loss of Whistler's sustainability leadership position. Informant #14 stated, "It's sad, and there are other communities who are trying to follow us." He questioned, "Why are we losing that leadership position that we took and it just seems like it's frittering it away?" On the other hand, Informant #38 believed that despite the current council's focus on economics, Whistler's governance leaders would be considered green in comparison to other communities. In contrast, Informant #26 noted the hypocrisy of presuming that Whistler could ever be sustainable. He noted that Whistler's economy "is almost entirely dependent on the two million plus visitors who visit Whistler every year." He went on to describe the CO₂ emissions from plane travel, and automobiles used by the tourists to get to Whistler. He added, "Those emissions are never reported in any sustainability report about Whistler. It is as if Whistler wants to deny that it is not, in fact, the most sustainable tourism destination in the world, but rather, the most unsustainable." Informant #27 agreed, stating:

There's nothing sustainable about Whistler, because we require destination visitors. So we need people to fly in a jet and then we take them up to the mountains ... and we've got to power them up to the top of the mountain and they ski all day and then they sit in an outside hot tub and then they go to the restaurant and we feed them Chilean sea bass ... Whistler will never be sustainable.

Sustainability fatigue

Many informants discussed their perceptions of why Whistler's sustainability momentum had stalled. Some informants attributed this situation to the fact that the community became fatigued, fed up, or had lost interest in sustainability. Informant #39 spoke about what she called "sustainability fatigue" stating, "Whistler2020 was just the first leg and we already have what we're calling ... sustainability fatigue." Informant #13 observed, "I think that when you're just talking about the environment all the time, people do switch off to it, because there is so much out there ... there's so many other things that people are interested in ...". Informant #30 thought that Whistler was "trying to move so fast without a lot of substance behind it, that people got fed up..." Similarly, Informant #4 observed that while the community engagement model attached to Whistler2020 enabled a lot of people to be involved, it eventually "waned and it became difficult to keep people involved." Informant #44 attributed the loss of momentum to three things. The first was what he referred to as "tautological fatigue" and the fact that people had been "Whistler2020ed over the head so many times they started to fight back." He believed the term became so overused that it "undermined its validity" and that the governance staff "obfuscated its meaning" and eventually the sustainability program became "a political pariah." The second factor he believed played a role was that "an entirely new political body is elected by the community" in 2011 on the premise that the community could not afford sustainability. The third factor he identified was the hiring of a new CAO whom he claimed did not understand or care to understand the sustainability strategy.

Some informants spoke about how time consuming the sustainability movement became and the effect it had on the community. Informant #44 recalled that as early as 2008 he could see "process fatigue" and added "you're seeing the usual suspects at the table bringing their organizational, individual or corporate agendas, trying to get those reformed into a community developed action." Informant #11 believed that people working on the sustainability movement became "worn out," and this enabled others to put forward their economic-focused agenda. Similarly, Informant #33 observed that the task forces "got tired and worn out" and eventually collapsed. Informant #32 also noted the burnout and stated, "People didn't want to go to any more planning meetings, because they were very time consuming." Informant #36 noted that the process "went

on for about eight years,” and added, “these processes run their life cycle and it was tired and needed something else, but nothing else was moved in to fill that void.”

Others, such as Informant #30, observed “[T]he whole focus on sustainability ... ended up running its course.” She added, “Environmental sustainability, so don’t mention that word any more ...” Similarly, Informant #36 spoke about sustainability running its course, pondering whether the loss in momentum was attributable to the fact that it had “just run its course,” or it was a “natural evolution” of the plan. Informant #36 also spoke about the loss of momentum in terms of a natural evolution. She stated that the community is now “exploring new ideas of diversifying and strengthening the economy, rather than looking at it through this certain [sustainability] lens.” Informant #23 spoke about the perception of some community members regarding the loss of momentum. He stated that if you asked some residents, “they’d say, ‘Oh yeah, thank God we don’t talk about sustainability or the ‘s’ word anymore.’” Similarly, Informant #17 stated, “It suddenly seems to have become a dirty word.” In contrast, Informant #36 believed the sustainability movement began to lose momentum almost from the beginning. She described early issues around choosing a planning group to help the community move forward with sustainability and believed this led people to lose “a little faith from the get-go.”

A number of informants spoke about how the sense of accomplishment related to the sustainability movement made the community feel as though sustainability had been taken care of. Informant #22, in speaking about Whistler2020, observed a sense of accomplishment within the community. She suggested that this then led to an attitude of “we tackled that...” Informant #14, observed the same sense of accomplishment as it related to sustainability. He observed this in terms of a move toward addressing smaller community issues. He stated, “I think now it’s like, ‘Yes, all that has been done. That’s great. Let’s patch the potholes and make sure the water’s clean.’ You know, just we’re done [with sustainability].” Informant #9 observed that the community has “taken it [Whistler2020] for granted. Like it’s there, we’ve done that, it’s in the background.” She added, “I feel there’s not as big a role or need for the work they’re [WCS] doing internally, because again, going back to again, ‘We’ve already done that’ [type of an attitude].” Informant #32 spoke about the time required to advance community awareness related to complex issues, such as the environment, and added “But the

heavy lifting has been done on sustainability and that took about 10 years ...” Informant #33 made the point that, “I like to think that so many of its [Whistler2020] principles have just been completely incorporated into the organization [RMOW] that we don’t need to be talking about it all the time. It’s just there.” Informant #22 noted that Whistler had addressed the “low hanging fruit,” and that “taking it to the next level is difficult.” She added, “We still have a long way to go and I think everyone's still working on that, but there's not so many things that are in trouble that we have to be talking about it all the time.”

Sustainability misconceptions and a lack of buy-in

Others contend that there were misperceptions regarding the focus of the sustainability movement, generally, and misperceptions related to the Whistler2020 strategy, in particular. Although many informants spoke about the strategy as being too focused on the natural environment, a number of informants believed this to be a common misconception in the community. They pointed out that the strategy did, indeed, have a clearly defined economic focus. In the words of Informant #4, “Whistler2020 had very, very, very important inbuilt economic pieces to it.” Some informants believed the misconception developed within the community because the previous mayor and council were considered environmentally focused. For example, Informant #5 stated that the previous mayor and council were seen “as being anti-business and anti-progress ... anti-diversification.” He added that part of the past council’s undoing was that the community did not hear the message “that sustainability is an interdependence of the economy, society and the environment.” He attributed this situation to council not spending “enough on communicating what it was, how it could work, and the positive impacts.” Others spoke about the misconceptions related to the sustainability movement in terms of a lack of understanding. For example, Informant #28 thought people had not “spent the time to really understand it.” Informant #5 agreed, stating that he felt those involved in creating and shepherding the sustainability movement “may have overlooked the fact that many of the task force participants and community at large did not understand it [Whistler2020]” in the same way the leaders did. He equated their excitement at having created Whistler2020 to “a giddy parent, fawning over their child's latest water color.” Informant #44 believed the sustainability movement “became a target for people” because “[T]hey didn't understand it. They

thought you're just trying to be too environmental. You're all green. You don't care ... you don't care about business."

Some observed that those who were involved with the sustainability process understood it, but agreed that the majority of the community did not understand it. For example, Informant #10 observed, "So the only people who know about Whistler2020, are passionate about it, ... were actively involved in it..." She added "...the majority of people didn't even know and weren't involved and ... have no connection to it, so then they can easily write it off as not being important." Informant #13 stated, "An interesting thing I found was that while community members were engaged, there were some who don't even know what Whistler2020 is." She recalled being at meeting with business owners and second homeowners in the lead up to the 2011 election and being involved in a discussion related to the costs attached to the Whistler2020 strategy. She stated, "They hadn't even read it ... just a lack of understanding for what that document actually entailed..." In a similar line of conversation, some informants observed a lack of buy-in by the business community as it related to sustainability. For example, Informant #41 noted the lack of buy-in from the business community. He stated that there was a misperception by the business community that it was associated only with the natural environment. He attributed this to the fact that the mayor of the day had "a very, very strong environmental ethic." He noted that consequently, "those in the real estate industry and business ... [who] had a different set of priorities," didn't accept the "narrative that was being put forward by the political leaders."

Beyond the misperceptions and the lack of buy-in by some members of the community, some informants suggested other reasons why Whistler's sustainability movement stalled. For example, Informant #22 suggested that the topic of sustainability is complicated and people have what he referred to as "option paralysis." He observed that people often don't know what is being asked of them, how much time will be involved, or how much money it will cost and therefore they become overwhelmed. Informant #27 explained why he believed sustainability had lost momentum in the community. He stated, "You've got a very highly educated population that like to go out and ski and mountain bike and are not really paying as much attention to reality as they should." This lack of attention perhaps explains Informant #15's surprise that Whistler's sustainability focus had been allowed to stall without "community uproar." Informant #16

believed that Whistler2020 was not embedded into the core of organizations. As such, with staff “turnover and attrition,” and the current lack of governance focus on sustainability means “it’s probably been falling off” [in importance]. Similarly, Informant #13 believes that the sustainability movement:

...became very ingrained in individuals and so people ... associate with certain individuals at the political level ... and so then when that individual either steps aside or is voted out, then you lose ... you suddenly ...the environment becomes a very political item. So it's... it became a political hot potato.

Informant #15 believed it was a “lack of ongoing engagement and thinking around sustainability as a big picture...” that was detrimental to the sustainability movement. Informant #7 felt that the next step of sustainability “action planning” did not occur because the various community sectors were not engaged. He elaborated that all of the sectors should have been “represented in the monitoring program” and “participating on an annual basis of setting priorities and actions.” The results of monitoring would then determine “where you focus your next year’s actions on.” Informant #44 believed mistakes were made much earlier in the process when the community’s sustainability strategy was moved from the oversight of the RMOW to the WCS. He recalled that the community was confused as to who the WCS was, what they were doing, and why they were getting a large government contract to do work that could be undertaken by a private local consulting firm. He added, “So instantly the poor people at the Centre inherited this credibility gap. So there was a problem there. The staff was external to the community. They brought in some ... they hired somebody to run their plan.”

Economic & government priorities

Many informants attributed the loss of sustainability momentum to the 2008 global financial crisis and the ongoing financial slowdown that Whistler was still experiencing at the time of the interviews. As informant #6 noted, “...I think its [sustainability] significance or its momentum dropped as the economic crisis hit...” Informant #41 mused, “I mean economics, let’s face it, that’s one of the greatest challenges around sustainability these days, and significantly in the corporate world...” According to Informant #38, the community had no choice but to focus on economic and

social aspects given the global economic situation, otherwise the environment would have suffered along with the economy. He added, “had we stayed on the course where we were prior to the last election and not given attention to economic sustainability of this community and to the social sustainability of our residents here, the environmental part would have fallen off the table anyway.” Informant #36 perceived the current focus on the economy to be in response to the fact that Whistler had reached build-out. She recalled that in the past, issues were run through a sustainability lens and stated “We’re exploring new ideas of diversifying and strengthening the economy, rather than looking at it through this certain lens.”

Some informants believed Whistler’s loss of sustainability momentum was reflective of Canadian federal environmental policy, and society, in general, and reflected a move toward self-interest and individualism. For example, Informant #13 noted that there was a “backlash” to the environmental agenda and that “people wanted to re-focus and focus on the economy and the whole...‘Whistler’s open for business’ model.” Informant #44 spoke about the loss of “traditional values” at the political level. He stated, “...50 years of liberal and conservative misguided rule of Canadians has undermined our traditional values, whatever those are ... and put us in a position that we're in.” Informant #14 stated, “...we’re seeing that [a shift in priorities] with everything, right? We have the Kyoto agreements and everybody was committed and ready and now you have Japan tearing it up, Canada tearing it up and all that matters is the next quarter, right?” Informant #41 spoke about things starting to break down, noting that society has moved “towards more of an individualistic, sort of American-style culture.”

Others attributed the loss of sustainability momentum in Whistler to those at the top of the economic pyramid. For instance, Informant #5 stated, “some special interest groups prefer the old system, where money and influence are more effective to meet their interests.” Informant #10 agreed, contending, “Our society is still based on a pyramid of sort of who should be making the decisions.” She believed that there were two schools of thought or “camps” in Whistler “battling it out a bit.” In the one camp were those who believed the community should be making the decisions; in the other camp were those who believed individuals at the top should be making the decisions. Informant #22 stated, “I think there was sort of a small group of people that had been in

Whistler forever and they were putting out all these plans [meaning sustainability] that really weren't reflecting the reality for a lot of other people."

Many informants attributed the loss of sustainability focus in the community to a normal process and that the new economic focus merely adjusted a previous lack of balance. Informant #13 believed that the loss of sustainability focus was not a signal that the community did not want to be focused on the environment; rather, "they just wanted it to be balanced." Informant #16 agreed, observing, "[I]t was a period of correction." Other informants noted the challenge of balancing environmental, economic and social-cultural aspects within the community. Informant #38 likened the challenge of balancing economic, environmental and social community aspects to being on "...one of those teeter boards ...and you're always juggling to not fall off." He added that sometimes precedence must be given to one aspect of sustainability over the other, "depending on what's going on around you in the world..." Informant #29 observed the challenge of balancing the current focus on the economy and sustainability. She stated, "It just sort of feels like there's a lot of wrestling around [with] some different projects and just a huge focus on the economy and just kind of trying to maintain the sustainability [focus]..." Informant #9 also discussed the challenge of finding balance; however, she spoke about balance in terms of balancing a grassroots movement with the need to have experts involved. She observed that there was a desire to get "a lot of people involved [meaning in sustainability], to have a say and feel connected ... but then it got to a point where I think the community felt that it needed to have more expert oversights."

Other informants attributed the lack of balance to what they saw as the pre-2011 mayor and council's environmental focus, which was reflected in the Whistler2020 strategy. For example, Informant #2 stated, "Green went too far one way." Informant #31 recalled the previous councils' focus, stating, "The previous administrations for the last probably 10 to 12 years had been focused on the environment, the idea of sustainability and ... certainly the emphasis was on the environment..." Informant #41 stated that the lack of balance was an "error by the previous council," and that they had "created that either or thought-process [meaning environment or the economy]." He described the previous council's emphasis on the environment as being out of line with the citizens' who, "month after month, year after year went to the economic." Although

Informant #36 questioned whether or not it was true, she noted that others in the community believed the Whistler2020 strategy lacked an economic component.

Informant #41 spoke about balance from a different perspective. He called the notion that the environment and the economy can be approached separately as a “delusional separation.” He went on to state, “it always has to be all at once.” He described the interconnectivity between the natural environment and human health, particularly as it relates to the economy and hoped for a future where environmental initiatives are seen to be good “for the resort, good for business, and good for the community.” The interconnectivity between economic, environmental and social systems were also associated with a healthy environment by Informant #10 who noted, “Everything depends on a healthy environment.” Similarly, Informant #11 believed that “sustained prosperity” of the resort could only be achieved by maintaining a balance, where the environment is “working in lock-step with the economy.” Informant #24 spoke generally regarding misperceptions of an either/or focus as it relates to the environment and the economy. He stated that there is a “misconception out there [that if] we’re looking after the environment, we don’t care about the economy.” He added that the price associated with maintaining the environment needs to be offset against “the cost to the economy if we don’t [maintain it].” While many informants perceived a lack of balance with 2008-2011 mayor and council, as it related to sustainability, other informants stated that the 2011-2014 council’s focus on the economy was similarly unbalanced. For example, Informant #16 stated that the “micro focus on fiscal management obviously can’t be the only thing.” Similarly, Informant #15 noted, “they’re just solely focused on the economic and open-for-business side, without seeing the bigger picture and the long term.” She went on to explain that even though the E.P.I. document was framed as evolving from the Whistler2020 document it was “just an economic development plan. It has nothing to do with anything else.”

Other informants spoke about sustainability in terms of a swinging pendulum. They described how, as required, the pendulum would swing to favour the natural environment, while at other times the pendulum would swing to favour the economy, or the socio-cultural environment. Some noted that Whistler’s sustainability movement originated in response to the perception of negative impacts associated with a high level of development in the ‘90s and in the years leading up to the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Informant #13 described this situation clearly. She stated, "...the pendulum's always moving ... 20 years ago, when we were building, building, building, the pendulum was the other way and the environment is not as high a concern as it should have been ... so getting to that position where it [the environment] was a major priority was the result of stuff that had happened before and the fact that it had been placed as a low priority." On the other hand, Informant #27 questioned, "How many times do you have to keep swinging back and forth?" He added, "That's not a good way to do things."

Whistler2020: Inaccessibility, inflexibility & other challenges

Many informants attributed the loss of sustainability momentum in the community to what they perceived to be the inaccessibility and inflexibility of the Whistler2020 strategy. Informant #11 felt the strategy had "turned into a bit of a disappointment, because it had, "all these terrific goals and everything [that] were in play, but the 2020 itself [sic] is largely inaccessible." He elaborated, stating, "It probably, in hindsight, was too lofty of an exercise, because it ... created expectations that haven't come true." He further described many of the goals as "pie-in-the-sky," "unachievable," and "disappointing." Informant #39 also spoke about the inflexibility of Whistler2020. She stated, "[T]he framework became so overbearing and controlling to decision making." She suggested that the strategy was missing flexibility, demanded too much of the community, and that it needed "some soft edges." Informant #39 believed that it evolved over time, becoming "a bit didactic and a lot less collaborative ...". Similarly, Informant #26 described it as being "disjointed," and not really a plan at all. He added, "[I]t's confusing and I don't know if anybody can really understand it. I think they took a whole bunch of ideas and put them in a ... basically mixed them up and this came out [meaning the Whistler2020 strategy]." Informant #39 spoke in almost the same terms. She described how "[I]t became a framework for decision making, not planning." She noted, "People thought it was going to create a visionary plan ... a visionary approach to our future [that] turned into a check-list of dos and don'ts..." She drew upon an analogy of being in an eye exam and having to quickly choose which lens was the best. She stated, "[I]t turned into nothing but a filter, a machine by which you put a question in and [and through a] 20/20 perspective or lens ... [the] answer came out. It didn't matter if it was good, bad, right, strategic, et cetera. It was just the 2020 answer." She added that this inflexibility, particularly during the 2010 Games, led to the undoing of the

sustainability movement. A number of informants spoke about the limitations of plans, such as the Whistler2020 strategy. As Informant #19 explained “a lot of plans get developed, you reference the plans, but you don’t actually use the plans ... so a plan is just a plan ...” He stated, “Plans don’t work; people do.” Similarly, Informant #21 stated that Whistler2020 “kind of established planning as its own little demi-god,” “the lens through which all decisions were viewed and shaped.” He added that the strategy was “something you don’t mess with,” and “... the end in and to itself.” He added that “planning in the real world is an iterative process of feedback and experience and the plan always changed ... the plan has to change to reflect reality.”

Many informants discussed the costs related to Whistler’s sustainability movement, particularly in relation to Whistler2020 and the WCS. For example, Informant #40 believed that the focus on the environment had “created cost annuities, rather than revenue annuities within the community.” Informant #26 believed that the strategy was “a horrific waste of money” and believed “good planning documents” would have achieved better results in a much more cost-effective manner. Informant #39 also spoke about the costs and recalled, “...the decisions and costs related to those [sustainability] decisions were rising.” She questioned whether the community could “afford to be this showpiece...” and added that the desire to be a “sustainable community by 2060...” was increasing the “costs of virtually everything we did, at a more dramatic rate than I think people anticipated.” Informant #22 spoke about costs in terms of the RMOW’s staffing levels. He stated “the Muni’s over-resourced from the sustainability standpoint, because you know, they have so many staff...”

On the other hand, Informant #14 questioned whether or not Whistler2020 would become “horrifically expensive,” as some feared. He felt Whistler was not “...doing anything crazy and so much of ... what was done has such long-term cost savings.” Informant #13 compared the costs of running the task forces against the value of a high level of community collaboration. She stated, “...the value of getting those people into those rooms and talking about those issues was huge...” Informant #27 believed that people were supportive until it came time to actually pay for the sustainability initiatives. She compared the sustainability movement to “a group hug,” where everyone is on board initially, until it comes time to pay for it. Informant #38 agreed, observing that even those who were supportive of sustainability became disillusioned as their taxes began to

rise. He described how, "...people in the community who had been very supportive of sustainability thought that that was an organization [meaning the WCS] that the Muni was paying for and so therefore it was a cost extra [sic] going back to individuals here through their taxes for that." Informant #44 credited a few powerful community individuals who "repeated over and over in public" that the community could not afford sustainability with creating that perception. Some informants expressed concern for Whistler's future, given the current lack of sustainability momentum. Informant #27 stated, "Whistler's future, with that model [economic focus], looks very bleak from my eyes..." Others feared a loss of sustainability values. For example, Informant #38 stated, "the sustainability values that we've developed and kind of have a common language around will need some attention here before long." He added "the leadership understand the importance of it, but I don't see leadership advancing or elevating the visions and the values to the next level." Similarly, Informant #30 stated, "[I]t's going to be time now for us to go back again [to sustainability because the community has] probably lost sight of some of those values..."

Although Informant #27 equated Whistler's loss of sustainability momentum to "building something and then walking away from it," other informants believed the strength of Whistler2020 would enable momentum within the community for a little longer. For example, Informant #21 believed the strategy still held relevance in the community, but he felt it had "been neutered." Informant #29 stated she did not think "all of that is undone or can be undone" because sustainability has been integrated into the community's planning framework. Informant #4 credited the principles attached to the strategy for the ongoing sustainability focus. He stated that while the task forces no longer existed, "I think a lot of the principles [sustainability] are baked into the way the organization works." While Informant #23, questioned the "shelf life" of the strategy, given current economic and political perspectives in the community, he believed it to be "...such a powerful document that it actually has, I think,the ability to exist for a while, for quite a bit longer in our minds." Other informants noted the sustainability torch must now be carried forward by key RMOW staff. For example, Informant #36 noted, "it's actually is the staff that keep it alive." Some informants believed that the natural environment is so integral to Whistler, that the community will always be focused on sustainability in order to ensure its success.

Others noted that the Whistler2020 strategy had evolved and now served as the foundation for some of the more current planning documents. For example, Informant #9 observed the similarities between Whistler 2020 and the new E.P.I. document. She stated, “You know, it’s actually not that dissimilar from what Whistler2020 was. It was a shared vision.” She went on to describe how the strategy was focused on community sustainability, whereas the E.P.I. document was focused on how the community will continue to be competitive and successful, but “from more [of] an economic position.” She observed that the E.P.I. was “definitely not as focused on sustainability,” as Whistler2020 had been. Informant #28 agreed, noting a lack of integration and interconnectivity between the current E.P.I.’s economic focus and the 17 Whistler2020 strategies and priorities.” Others noted that the strategy had served as the foundation for the community’s 2012 O.C.P.

4.4.5. Summary: Impact of the sustainability movement

The majority of informants considered Whistler’s sustainability movement to be a critical event that enabled the existence and resilience of its sustainability-focused governance system. Informants described how the movement helped guide the community’s values, vision, encouraged collaboration and engagement, as well as long-term thinking and planning from the late 1990s through to approximately 2010. While some informants perceived the sustainability focus to be alive and well, the majority felt otherwise. These individuals described how and why the resilience of the sustainability-focused governance system had been severely tested in the period from 2010 to 2014.

4.4.6. Critical Event #3: 2011 municipal election & leadership changes

Introduction

The 2011 municipal election and resulting leadership changes were perceived as a significant critical event that both strengthened and weakened Whistler’s sustainability-focused governance system. The resulting leadership changes were credited as creating significant changes in the community, particularly with respect to governance-related issues. Indeed, many informants perceived that the community was purposely

trying to affect change by electing a new mayor and council in 2011. Many informants spoke of the changes in favourable terms, particularly as it related to the capabilities of the 2011-2014 mayor and council in getting the RMOW and the community focused on the economy. Informants perceived an improved level of collaboration and partnerships between the RMOW, its partner organizations, and the community that they credited to the changing of the guard in 2011. On the other hand, some informants connected the loss of sustainability momentum to the leadership changes that occurred after the 2011 election. The following paragraphs identify informant perceptions on the effects of this critical event, particularly in the context of the impact on Whistler's governance system and the community's sustainability movement.

Impact on governance: The changing of the guard

In 2011, the community spoke. The standing mayor and council [2008-2011] were entirely defeated and a new council, elected on a platform of fiscal restraint, were installed. Informant #38 called it a "wholesale re-election ... seven for seven. Seven out, seven new in." He added that the changes extended beyond elected officials, coinciding with the appointment of a new city manager at around the same time. Informant #13 described the impacts of the 2011 leadership change as "mind-blowing" and "immediate." Informant #26 called it a "watershed moment," "a tipping point," and "a profound change in the governance." As mentioned, many informants connected the 2011 election results with what they perceived to be shortcomings in the previous governance team. Informant #24 stated the mayor and council were "ousted because of a perception in the community that they were no longer responding to the actual needs and concerns of their community." He added, "They were going through the motions of public engagement" and added that regardless of whether or not the 2008 financial crisis had occurred, there would have been a new mayor and council elected in 2011. He stated, "...even if we hadn't had the global economic crisis, Whistler still has its economic ups and downs, I think we would still have seen this council that was more concerned with fiscal restraint..."

A few informants spoke about the relationship between the previous mayor, council, and the residents as responsible for the 2011 election results. For example, Informant #21 recalled, "[I]t was just okay, you've pissed us off so many times and

you've picked so many unnecessary fights that we're getting rid of all of you." He explained that the election changes "helped stabilize the balance or put us back into homeostasis..." and added "the people in town felt like they had some power too, because for a long time they just ... they didn't." Other informants spoke about a lack of cohesion with the previous elected governance leaders, or a mindset, that contributed to their defeat at the polls. For example, Informant #24 observed, "[T]he biggest part of their downfall, [is that they] fought about everything and didn't really make any decisions and if they did make a decision, then a month later three councillors were kind of going back on it..." Informant #2 also perceived that the 2008-2011 mayor and council "really wasn't working together and didn't get ahead of the economic train and it [mayor and council] got run over." Informant #10 spoke about an attitude of indifference with the 2008-2011 governance team. She recalled, "there were some people on the other council that if they made up their mind on something, it was, humph, we're doing it ..."

Many felt that the changing of the guard in 2011 brought about a high level of political cohesion that had not existed with the previous governance team [2008-2011]. Informant #45 described the 2011-2014 council as focused on "... consensus, being unanimous." This perspective was also discussed in an article by a reporter with the Pique Newsmagazine who described the relationship between the 2011-2014 mayor and council as "untroubled harmony at a council table long troubled with discord" (Taylor, 2014). She added that to that point in time, only twice (out of hundreds of issues) had the mayor and council not voted in solidarity on a community issue. Taylor admitted that while "the identical voting record ruffled feathers in some corners, it certainly allowed the council to plough through work and get the job done." Indeed, some informants worried that there was too much cohesion. For example, Informant #39 observed that the 2011-2014 council "always vote unanimously on every issue." She stated, "[T]here's a lot of people suspect of the fact that this council does vote unified on everything." She questioned, "Like where's the healthy political debate there? Where's the healthy production of new ideas? And if that's all happening at back of house, that is not good civic engagement." She added, "I think it's important that we hear the arguments at the table sometimes." Informant #6 agreed and stated, "We're far stronger because of those dissenting voices and, for the most part, informed, dissenting voices." Some informants spoke about the power of the media as it related to influencing the governance changes

in 2011. For example, Informant #17 believed the previous mayor and council did not get elected in 2011 because of gossip and the influence of the local media. She stated, "...they got turfed because of the newspapers and the word and the gossip."

Some informants attributed the governance changes to the fact that Whistler was transitioning into a new phase where growth would be substantially constrained, if not curtailed. For example, Informant #24 stated that even though it is not, perhaps, articulated as such, the election results reflected the community's more urgent need to figure out "...how do we make this transition from growth to no more growth" [meaning in the post-Olympic world]. Similarly, Informant #36 linked the 2011 election changes to a new era of no growth, observing that the 2008-2011 council was attached to a growth period. She observed that the 2011 election results did not occur because the previous mayor and council were "bad." Rather, it was the fact that they had "unique challenges in the period of growth that we were in ... leading up to the Olympics."

A number of informants spoke about the influence of the governance leaders' personalities and agendas on Whistler's development path. Informant #11 observed that it is the "personalities and the agendas of people that get elected," which are driven by events that are affecting the community, which then influence Whistler's direction. He described how elected governance leaders define "their rules and regulations, policy, zoning and all the rest of it," based upon their perspectives. He added that unlike in other communities, Whistler's elected governance leaders play "a role in what's happening" in the town, as well as "defining the future of what Whistler's all about." He recalled back many years to the near election of a mayoral candidate who ran on a platform of "let's build our way out of our problems," and added that "had she ruled the day," Whistler would be very different from what it is today. Informant #21 also spoke about the influence elected officials have on the community's direction. He stated, "If we woke up after the next election and found we had ... three realtors and two developers on the council, phew, hello bedcap, it's been good to know you." Informant #43 spoke about the influence of Whistler's persona on its development path. She described mountain bikers "all decked out in massive armour kind of stuff," and felt this created a disconnection from the land. She felt Whistler attracts thrill seekers who lack a "sense of contemplation [for the natural environment]." The Whistler persona then influences the

marketing, the branding, and even the type of businesses that establish themselves in Whistler. This in turn influences who is elected and who runs for council.

A number of informants described a move toward more traditional *government* approaches after 2011. For example, Informant #41 stated that planning had gone back to “a fairly conventional community planning [and] economic development” focus. He saw this new focus as being “kind of unimaginative,” but noted this focus “mirrors North American society, in general.” Informant #43 noted a decrease in the level of engagement with First Nations after the 2011 election. While she observed that the 2008-2011 mayor saw the Olympic benefit from both a Whistler and First Nations’ perspective, the engagement had changed after 2011. To address such an issue in the future, she suggested that it would be beneficial to have a good level of engagement at the staff level within the governance system, because “you may lose that relationship” [meaning with the elected governance]. Informant #7 observed that governance was “back to less flat, more vertical,” in its setup. He added that it is “more aligned in a traditional sense of a hierarchy, where you have a manager basically responsible for planning and a top-down [management].” Informant #31 noted the return to committees of council as the method of getting council work done. She described how “committees of council were virtually non-existence” [over the last few administrations]. In a Pique news article, Taylor (2014) contrasted the resurgence of “the committee model” to past Whistler2020 taskforces. She observed that now the work of council is done in “smaller, specialized sessions before coming to council table.”

Indeed, many informants perceived a back-to-basics government and a return to short-term thinking and planning after the 2011 election. Informant #41 observed what he felt was a “back to basics, efficient, effective government,” that was smaller, more “dogmatic,” and more “cost effective.” He described the new council as “much more basic nuts and bolts stuff” and “right-wing conservative.” He also saw a return to a more traditional short-term governance focus that he believed would be more reactive, as opposed to proactive, to future “critical events.” He added that this new governance orientation could result in “less risk [taking], less innovation.” Informant #1 also spoke about the move to short-term thinking and decision-making. He observed that when businesses were no longer making the profits they were [because of the recession], “...the community conversation got short term.” He added that consequently, “Your

council and your decision-making follows suit.” Likewise, Informant #10 stated, “I don’t see any focus on the long-term strategy.” Nor did she see a focus on “what we’re doing and why we’re doing it and how we’re going to get there.” Informant #15 believed that in contrast to the previous mayor and council, the current council “didn’t have a big picture strategy in mind.” Many informants noted a greater strategic focus and higher level of partnership engagement with the 2011-2014 mayor and council. For example, Informant #4 observed that they “have really pushed hard for and delivered upon ... cooperation between Whistler’s big four corporations: Whistler Blackcomb, Tourism Whistler, the ROW, and the Chamber of Commerce.” He added, the partners are “united in gathering the evidence and making decisions based on that evidence.” Informant #7 also spoke about the importance of partnerships. He observed that Whistler’s partnerships are unique, stating, “You now see unusually strong partnerships that you just don’t see in other resort communities, between the mountain, between the chamber, between the marketing arm, and the local government.” Similarly, Informant #36 noted a “new spirit of collaboration,” and “a feeling that everyone’s working on the same page now.”

Indeed, many informants expressed their support for and satisfaction with the 2011-2014 council. Informant #28 stated, “They’re a great council. It’s probably one of the best council’s Whistler’s ever had.” Informant #30 felt that the current council was very capable, skilled, and worked very well together as a team. Some informants spoke about positive changes to decision making as a result of the 2011 municipal election. Informant #35 stated, “We’ve really flown by the seat of our pants [in the past] and so that [economic research] may empower us to make some of these really bold decisions [speaking about the need to address aging infrastructure].” Informant #4 observed a move toward “more evidence-based” decision-making, and gave the example of how research was used to refute a perception that transit use was down in parts of Whistler. Informant #12 believed that the community did not recognize the strengths of the 2011-2014 council. He stated, they are “more recognized by the province and other communities in this province, than they are within their own [community].” Informant #35 expressed the sentiments of many informants when he expressed concern that the current council would not run in 2014. He stated:

Well we've just got to try and keep them there for a while, because they're very good at figuring it out. We've never been there before. We never really analyzed

our business model and where our money comes from and how we can improve on that.

Communication & engagement

Many informants perceived changes to how the governance leaders communicate with the community. Some perceived the changes to be positive, such as the belief that there was a clearer line of communication between the four big partners (RMOW, TW, WB, and CoC) and the community. Informant #20 spoke about a “higher level of engagement with our key stakeholders” [i.e. WB, TW, CoC], as well as the WAC, the Squamish Lil’wat Cultural Centre, and the museum. In a similar line of conversation, Informant #28 stated, “[I] can’t emphasize this one enough and the current administration is doing it really well ... communicating and engaging.” Informant #33 observed that community open houses enabled residents’ input into decision-making. Informant #4, in speaking about the move away from community task forces to committees, stated, “The community is engaged in a different way now...” He added, “[T]hat model of community engagement [Whistler2020 task forces] kept a lot of people involved, but it waned and it became difficult to keep people involved.” Informant #16 also spoke about the evolution of engagement since the days of planning the Whistler2020 strategy. Although she wanted to be clear that “I’m not saying that right now council isn’t engaging the community ... they are. But it’s kind of whatever’s current or topical.” She added that past approaches to community development “gave more people more opportunity” to decide which issues needed to be addressed, whereas now those types of decisions are “left to one group to decide what’s current or topical.” Informant #13 agreed, and warned about the danger of not engaging “the wider community,” and compared a committee approach to decision making with the use of community-based task forces and working groups for decision-making. She stated, “Sometimes when you do things by committee, one loud voice can be the one that’s heard...”

Others, such as Informant #12, spoke about the level of engagement in terms of reporting back to the community. He stated, “...they [2011-2014 council] don’t do as much reporting.” Informant #13 recalled, “there have been issues with things being shut down at municipal hall, because of the transparency and the actual information you can get as a community member.” She added, “[I]t’s broken down in terms of things like information and trying to get information.” Informant #39 agreed, and stated, “[T]hey’re

not very transparent when it comes to the media and they have very tight media policies.” Informant #17 described the 2011-2014 council and staff’s reaction to “inviting too much input” as an “allergy” and questioned whether the council and staff were afraid that the community would have to make “too many decisions,” or would have “too much input...” She felt that the current governance team was “secretive and just paranoid” and recalled that Whistler was “voted like the most secretive municipality in Canada by the Canadian Association of Journalists.” She added, “the only person that’s allowed to talk to the press is the mayor and that never was the case before.” Despite these observations and comments, Informant #17, added that the 2011 governance team appeared to have, overall, “a better success rate than the last council, in the press...” In other words, the press was more favourable to the 2011-2014 elected governance team.

Many informants described how the 2011 election results had moved the community and governance focus toward greater emphasis on the economy. For example, Informant #36 spoke about the 2011-2014 council’s emphasis on an “open for business” approach. Informant #19 observed a “greater appetite for economic statistical review” with this council. He pointed to the EPI as evidence of this shift in governance focus. Informant #19 elaborated, stating, “that the “deep dive into statistics” was done in order to “allow decision makers to have a basis of understanding, common ground of understanding, but also a back-up to their decision.” He added, “So decisions, from the outside looking in, will seem a lot more justified and lot more grounded in fact, rather than intuition and experience...”

Others, such as Informant #1, directly linked the financial crisis of 2008 as leading to “a council change [and] to the current focus on shorter term economics. Informant #10 agreed, observing, “[T]he recent economic downturn had a lot to do with pressures to elect a new council that was focused on our economy.” She added that although there were still issues to be dealt with in the community, had there not been the economic downturn, “I don’t think it would have been a complete change over and the kicking of the Whistler2020 to the side ...[the] complete mind shift” that occurred. Informant #29 noted, “times were just sort of tough” and people were looking for change. Informant #2 agreed and stated, “It needed to happen. We needed to get back ... we needed a tighter town hall. We needed much tighter fiscal commitments to the way we operate the resort. We were vulnerable.”

Many other informants connected the 2011 election results to Whistler's economic situation as the 2010 Games came to a close. For example, Informant #21 believed the previous mayor "got caught in the vortex of the Olympics." Similarly, Informant #36 spoke about the lack of a "positive vibe" and the lull after the Olympics. Informant #19 noted "a disappointment of the economic impact of the Games," and that this situation "developed a desire in the community to get economic results and that was certainly reflected in the most-recent political change ... municipal." Informant #38 believed it was a combination of events. He spoke about the combined effects of hosting the Olympics, a poor economy, reduced visitation, particularly from the U.S. market, high property taxes, and a governance system that was "spending money that wasn't necessarily coming in..." He recalled how these issues resulted in "a lot of unhappiness within the residency of Whistler." On the other hand, Informant #29 believed that the community just wanted change and to "swap it up at least for a term."

Impact on sustainability movement

Many informants discussed how the 2011 municipal election impacted Whistler's sustainability movement. Informant #44 in speaking about the governance system, stated, "The culture changed." He went on to describe the loss of governance leadership and juxtaposed this against the commitment many in the community had made to sustainability. He described how the governance leadership had a "moral commitment to the community" and that many in the community had "invested heavily in sustainability." He spoke metaphorically about the "energy" and the "currency" that the citizens of Whistler had put into the bank and stated, "their bank account was just closed and they didn't get anything back. Nothing." He went on to describe how sustainability planning requires the political will, support, capacity, leadership, and buy-in, at both the elected and the staff level "in order to effectively engage the community and efficiently implement sustainability planning..." He added, "All of that disappeared" after the 2011 election.

Many perceived that the 2011 election changes had occurred because the 2008-2011 governance team was perceived not to be listening to the community, nor paying enough attention to the economy. Many other informants spoke of the 2011 election changes in terms of a decisive move away from the community's previous sustainability

focus. Some informants explained why this happened. For example, Informant #41 described how a series of small issues, like air quality in the vicinity of the asphalt plant and new pay parking regulations “were sort of chipping away at people’s affordability and lifestyle.” He felt the 2008-2011 council had “downplayed” the “legitimate concerns of the people ... in the name of a sustainability mission.” Others spoke about what they perceived to be a more calculated strategy by a few powerful Whistlerites who successfully convinced the community that they could no longer afford sustainability. This resulted in what Informant #16 observed as an “increased focus on fiscal management ... and a reduced focus on what we’re calling ... that broader sustainability goal.” Informant #33 added that while sustainability “hasn’t been discarded,” “the focus has been, instead, looking at economic indicators and business.” Similarly, Informant #10 described how after the Olympics:

“There was a big heavy focus to get the community back focussed on economics versus environment and this council [2011 – 2014] has done that and partly they’ve done that by downplaying the Whistler2020 which is seen as an environmental document, even though it’s not...”

The majority of informants attributed the loss of sustainability momentum directly to the changes in leadership positions at the RMOW, and the resulting cuts to the WCS’s budget¹⁶. Informant #44 observed that when the RMOW’s new CAO was hired in 2011 he “had no understanding, no capacity, and no commitment to sustainability.” He went on to describe the loss of “Mike Vance, who was on the senior management team and who had shepherded Whistler2020 from its development ... through to the whole implementation, adoption and implementation.” He stated that these internal staffing changes led to a loss in “internal alignment,” which, coupled with the changes at the elected level in 2011, resulted in a loss of sustainability memory and created “this vacuum.” Informant #24 added, “[T]he current council is the first council to kind of drift away from that [Whistler2020], in their struggle to address costs.” Informant #13 agreed that the new council was questioning “... whether this [sustainability movement] is a priority, whether this is a good use of funds...” She believed it was the “the changing of

¹⁶ Shortly after the 2011 municipal election, the WCS budget was slashed from approximately \$230,000 annually for staffing, sustainability programming, implementation, and monitoring to \$30,000 annually to run only the monitoring program. As a result, the monitoring program received cut backs.

the guard” in 2011 and their lack of financial support for the program that was responsible for the “failure” of the sustainability movement in Whistler.

A few informants attributed the loss of sustainability momentum to loss of leadership in key organizations and within the community. For example, Informant #28 spoke about the loss leadership in key organizations, as well as in the community, and that this led to a loss of understanding and a loss of ownership with Whistler2020. Other informants spoke about the impacts of the 2011 municipal election and resulting governance changes in terms of how it affected the RMOW’s structure and priorities. For example, Informant #7 observed, “the [RMOW] departments are aligned around their work program as opposed to the community priorities, that were expressed annually through 2020.” He was describing how the RMOW’s departments were reconfigured to align with the 2020 strategy, whereas as that was no longer the case after the 2011 election. Some informants spoke about the RMOW’s change in priorities and how that affected the WCS and Whistler2020. For example, Informant #10 perceived that both the WCS and the 2020 strategy had fallen off the community’s “radar.” Informant #9, in speaking about WCS, stated “Our current local government doesn’t tend to look to them as key leaders or drivers.”

Some believed that the 2011-2014 council’s move away from the 2020 strategy was because it was not their initiative and they did not have ownership over it. Informant #23 stated the 2011-2014 council had moved away from the strategy because it “had very little involvement in the development of Whistler2020 and, I suspect, [they] have very little understanding of or appreciation for what it is.” He went on to note that from the perspective of the 2011-2014 mayor and council, the strategy was “not invented here” and therefore “the [2011-2014] mayor kind of wanted to distance herself from the former mayor, who[m] she ran against and defeated soundly, and I think wanted to carve out a whole new terrain [for herself and her council].” Informant #29 mused that “sometimes politicians, if someone else came up with it, then it’s not mine...” and therefore “...maybe [do] not own it.” Although Informant #24 worried that the 2011-2014 mayor and council was “not paying attention to the sustainability issue,” he added, [I]t’s not as though they’re doing things and making decisions that are derailing our move towards sustainability. They’re just not putting any fuel to it. So I think coasting is a good word to use. We’re coasting right now ...”

On the other hand, a number of informants believed the community's sustainability movement had already started to lose momentum before the 2011-2014 mayor and council came to power. For example, Informant #4 believed that "by the end of the Whistler2020 process, we had lost some of the momentum." Informant #5 connected Whistler's loss of sustainability momentum to the global situation. He discussed how sustainability thinking was most prevalent in the 1990s, but that since that time there has been a "global downswing in sustainability and sensitivity to sustainability agendas." He stated, "Increasingly people lost faith in these attempts to find global agreement and it has started to manifest on the national level and down into the municipal levels." On the other hand, Informant #21 reflected that as long as the community had been engaged in driving the sustainability movement, things were moving forward. He believed things started to fall apart when it "fell into the bureaucratic machinery." In other words, as long as the community, rather than the RMOW, was driving the sustainability movement, it was moving forward. Similarly, Informant #28 observed that a variety of leadership changes over the years had impacted the strength of Whistler2020. Consequently, he believed the document was "not as clearly understood, or the time and effort hasn't been put in to understand it, so it's not as powerful as it could be at this point."

In contrast, not all informants stated that Whistler had moved away from its sustainability focus. For example, Informant #4 used a play on Mark Twain's quote to state, "The death of Whistler2020 is greatly exaggerated." Similarly, Informant #45 described how the strategy was built into the planning and budgeting process so it was still there; however, she added, "but it's kind of behind the scenes in a way. Overtly, you wouldn't see it in the community." Informant #36 appeared to agree, stating sustainability was "still pretty much alive at the hall [meaning the RMOW]. She described how the 2011-2014 "mayor and council has pretty well defined the same direction," as that set out in the Whistler2020. She stated, "We're not going to grow. We care about the natural resources, but they've also made a focus on the economy." She used the example of the RMOW's decision to turn down a recent proposal to develop a university as evidence that sustainability was still in focus in the community. The university proposal included developing the last remaining wetlands in the areas. She stated, "We're not going to create business or create growth at all costs. We're going to

be measured and really think about how we want to diversify and grow.” Informant #36 noted that the new OCP also limited growth, and that the 2011-2014 mayor and council were also “strong on the environment,” but that they were taking a “We’re open-for-business,” focus. Informant #22 agreed, but noted, “Our path looks a little different now, but that we still are on the path.” She stated, “We certainly haven’t lost momentum...” and added, “there’s probably a lot going on behind the scenes.” While many felt that Whistler was still focused on sustainability, some expressed a concern for the future. For example, Informant #27 believed that the strategy was still there, but she expressed concern for a potential loss of momentum and cohesion in the future. She believed that “there has to be leadership from the municipality, from the local government, to decide where we’re going next, to make sure we’re still going toward the vision.”

Some informants specifically credited the 2011-2014 mayor and council and the RMOW staff for the ongoing sustainability momentum. For instance, Informant #33 stated that Whistler2020 was still there as a guiding document for the RMOW and that it was not on a shelf, collecting dust. She believed that “so many of its principles have just been completely incorporated into the organization [meaning the RMOW] that we don’t need to be talking about it all the time. It’s just there.” Informant #28 added, “The staff reports and things are still evaluated against Whistler2020. It’s still evaluated against the priorities.” Informant #32 stated that while Whistler2020 is “not waved around as much as it used to be [but] it is embedded in the municipal hall and in a lot of community organizations.” Informant #42 observed, “...echoes of that document [Whistler2020] are in almost every room you go into, any committee I sit on, any board I converse with. It’s like a mantra, ‘Well let’s remember Whistler2020. Let’s remember that vision.’”

4.4.7. Summary: Impact of the 2011 municipal election & leadership changes

The 2011 municipal election and resulting leadership changes were considered a critical event with profound effects on the governance system, particularly as it related to its sustainability focus. On the one hand, it was seen to strengthen the resilience of some aspects of the governance system. For example, some informants perceived that it had improved the communication and the community’s overall economic outlook, enabled a higher level of partnership engagement, and brought harmony and cohesion

to the local political system. On the other hand, it was seen to weaken the resilience of certain aspects of the governance system. For example some informants felt there was too much cohesion and a lack of healthy debate. Others felt the governance system was too narrow in its focus on economics and that its approach to getting business done mirrored more traditional, hierarchical approaches (e.g. controlled messaging, secretiveness). While many informants linked the loss of sustainability momentum to the 2011 changing of the guard, others felt that sustainability was so engrained within the governance system and the community that it remained a community focus.

4.5. Critical events & community resilience

A second theme explored with the informants focused on how they perceived critical events had affected the community's resilience. The majority of informants believed that resilience was shaped through the community's experience with critical events. For example, Informant #19 stated that, "[I]f everything's fine, you don't build resilience." Similarly, Informant #8 stated that what is most important is "how we respond to those [events]" in terms of the actions taken. Informant #17 stated:

I think, you know, whatever the critical event is in any event, if you can overcome it, it gives you confidence and a belief in yourself, where you may not have had that before, because unless you overcome something, you're not sure if you can.

However, Informant #16 warned, "As long as they're small enough [meaning critical events], they can have a positive impact, because hopefully we adjust and tweak the system for the next time ... and employ whatever strategy." She added, "If they're too big, obviously, you know, it can have a negative impact." On the other hand Informant #1 felt that if the critical event was large enough, people "steel themselves" against it.

Some spoke about the importance of learning from critical events, as a means to create resilience in the future. For example, Informant #20, in speaking about the lack of snow in the early 2013-2014 winter season, stated, "...I think there's a lot we're learning right now and we have learned through the work we've done [to diversify]." He added, "You know, it sets us up as well for the future." Informant #17 linked experience with critical events to confidence. She stated, "[W]hatever the critical event is ... if you can

overcome it, it gives you confidence and a belief in yourself ... because unless you overcome something you're not sure you can." Informant #8 believed that past critical events helped the community realize it was vulnerable and that such a realization allowed the community to address its vulnerability. On the other hand, Informant #41 warned that "with an economic focus and a conventional government focus," the community will "respond in a more reactive way to critical events and, in other words, [if or when] you get hit, the oscillation or the variability of the response will be greater."

A few informants noted that Whistler's critical events drew the community closer together, which then enabled collaborative responses. For example, Informant #12 recalled that the "Olympic downturn" forced the council to "refocus" and work with other stakeholders "to provide support of our local businesses, more coordinated approach to marketing." He added, "[P]eople started to realize that we're not competing against ourselves, we're competing against other resorts and if we can get our act together, it's an advantage." In a related conversation, Informant #9 noted that the community had to deal on a daily basis with an influx of people that increased the population from 10,000 to 50,000 on any given day. She stated, "So we're used to pressures, pressures on the community," and it was these everyday pressures she believed that made Whistler able to respond to critical events. Some informants spoke about the danger of slow moving critical events. For example, Informant #7 drew the analogy to slow moving critical events as "...putting a frog in warm water and raising the temperature. You don't realize that you're dying until ...until there are critical symptoms." Informant #24 stated, "If you don't have the urgency of the problem right in your face, then it's very tempting to sort of let that go..."

4.6. Conclusion

Chapter 4 focused on the findings related to critical events, and their impact on governance, Whistler's sustainability movement, and the community's overall resilience. It also briefly described how critical events had affected some of Whistler's main competitors. Where appropriate relevant secondary data were presented to explain or extend the findings. Chapter 5 will focus on the findings related to those factors that informants perceived strengthen and weaken proactive responses to critical events.

Chapter 5. Responses to critical events & resilience-enhancing strategies

5.1. Introduction

Chapter 5 focuses on the findings related to those factors that informants perceived strengthened and weakened proactive responses to critical events. The factors were discussed both in terms of the governance system and the community, at large. This chapter also presents the findings related to the strategies for reinvigorating the community's sustainability movement and overall resilience. As part of these findings, Chapter 5 also describes the roles of key people and organizations.

5.2. Factors affecting proactive response to critical events

5.2.1. Factors that strengthen proactive responses

The following sections present informant perceptions concerning those factors that strengthen proactive responses to critical events. Informants spoke specifically about how these factors affected the sustainability-focused governance system, but most often they spoke about the effect of these factors in enhancing the community's overall resilience.

Strong, effective governance

Strong and effective governance was considered key in the ability to proactively respond to critical events. A few informants spoke of this in terms of nimbleness in the governance system. For example, Informant #33 credited nimbleness to the governance leaders whom she described as being close to "the ground." Informant #7 also spoke about nimbleness, observing that the "municipality is better situated for our economic climate and better positioned ... maybe a little more nimble now." Others spoke about

the importance of leadership, particularly as it related to Whistler's four key players (RMOW, WB, TW, & CoC). Informant #11 stated, "It's the leadership within these key players, these key organizations, the mayor and council ...". Some informants spoke about the importance of governance leaders listening to the community. For example, Informant #9 stated, "We've been fortunate to have a government, a local government, that's been receptive to the community." Others spoke about the importance of governance leaders supporting local business. For example, Informant #12 stated, "The impact this local government has had on the success of this place, it's off the charts in my view." He went on to describe Whistler's government as being different from other communities, stating, "it was more business-like than anywhere" and added that they're "very sensitive to the business side, business success." Others felt that aspects of governance, such as values-based decision-making strengthened proactive responses and functioned as a tool to strengthen community resilience. Informant #4 recalled how, at times, governance decisions were politically or emotionally motivated, as opposed to being based upon evidence. He spoke about the value of having evidence when discussing opportunities, risks and threats and added that policy documents, such as Whistler2020 and the EPI "pushed our community towards valuing evidence-based decisions."

Shared values & single-mindedness

Many informants discussed the importance of having a shared community vision, as a factor that strengthens proactive responses to critical events. Informant #9 spoke about the importance of "a strong shared vision that is community created..." Informant #28 compared Whistler's community-driven vision to other communities where "they want economic development so bad, anybody with a hammer is welcome." Informant #5 recalled how the community's shared vision came about in response to growth pressures. He recalled the general manager of a major hotel saying, "We created a monster and we need to feed it." He noted that the community's response became, "We'll do better by working together, [rather] than fighting each other." He felt the community knew it would be more successful if it had a shared vision and a shared identity with everyone pulling "in the same direction..." Some informants believed that planning documents solidified Whistler's shared vision. For example, Informant #4 drew attention to both Whistler2020 and the EPI, stating, "Both of them focus and drive our

community towards a shared vision of the future, which is resilience.” In a similar line of conversation, a couple of informants noted the importance of shared community values. For example, Informant #28 added, “I think a strength has been a strategic approach and sticking to our values.” Other informants spoke about the importance of a shared vision between WB and the community. For example, Informant #32 described the past when there was a competition for the community’s tax dollars and a debate as to whether the money should be invested into developing a cultural tourism product or into building infrastructure, such as new lifts. She spoke about “push-back from the Mountains,” when the community first began talking about cultural tourism, but noted that WB was eventually supportive of that initiative.

In the minds of informants, Whistler’s single-mindedness strengthened its ability to proactively respond to critical events, and contributed to the community’s resilience. Informant #13 voiced this perspective, stating, “one of [Whistler’s] strengths comes from the fact that while there’s a willingness to diversify, we do know what our core business is.” Similarly, Informant #19 observed what he referred to as “very like-minded people” in Whistler. He believed like-mindedness enabled the community to be “on the same wavelength,” which in turn enabled them to recognize the opportunities. He was speaking in terms of the community’s decision to more fully develop cultural tourism experiences as part of a diversification strategy. Others referred to the fact that Whistler was a one-industry town, which was mostly viewed as a strength. For example, Informant #6 stated, “...it’s primarily a one-industry town. We know what drives everybody’s business and where the jobs are and whether they’re employed or not.” On the other hand, a number of informants, such as Informant #19, warned that like-mindedness can be both “a strength and a weakness.” Similarly, Informant #17 felt that “Whistler is weak in that it’s a tourist resort, but ...we pack that out in a way that’s also a strength, because ... this is our core business.” She believed, “We’re not going to start a logging camp or a mining operation.” Informant #13 also spoke about the single-mindedness in Whistler, acknowledging that such a singular focus “could be perceived as a weakness;” however, she believed it was “a huge strength and a kind of shared goal.”

Strong partnerships, collaboration & community involvement

The importance of strong partnerships was a key theme that ran throughout the interviews. Not only were partnerships seen to be a key resilience strategy, but so too were partnerships considered critical in strengthening proactive responses to critical events. Informant #28 observed, “A real strength of Whistler is the partnerships and its relationships. He credited this strength to what he perceived as a “mutual trust and mutual respect.” He recalled that when other resort officials visited they often expressed surprise to learn “that the Municipality got along with the Mountains [meaning WB].” He compared Whistler to other jurisdictions where there was “a love-hate relationship.” Informant #29 also spoke about the partnership between the WB and the community, noting “they’ve historically been really good community players.” She credited this fact to the leadership at WB, particularly Doug Forseth, Vice President of Planning. Informant #38 believed that partnerships were a “mentality” in Whistler, and that partnerships had “nourished here for well a good 25 years and I think it happened prior to that as well.” Informant #12 appeared to agree with this statement, attributing the depth of the partnership to “the realization that Whistler, both private and public sectors, are not competing against each other, but are competing against other major ski destinations in Europe and the USA.” Informant #12 summed up the importance of partnerships by stating, “Hey, if we fail, we all fail. If we succeed, we all succeed.”

Many informants spoke about partnerships in terms of collaboration. For example, Informant #20 believed a “collaborative approach” enabled the community to have “some foresight to see what’s coming down the pipe and work together to deal with those issues or opportunities.” Informant #8 observed a strong level of collaboration and networks in comparison to other resort communities and added, “[T]he collaboration around tourism is really very strong.” Informant #26 agreed, stating, “...Tourism Whistler and the RMOW and Whistler Blackcomb, they do a really good job of collaborating.” Informant #29 stated it is the community’s ability to collaborate that enables Whistler to be resilient. He referred to what he perceived as a “very intentional sort of thinking of Whistler Inc.” and as an indication of the level of collaboration between TW, the RMOW, and WB. A few informants spoke of collaboration beyond Whistler’s borders as strengthening proactive responses to critical events. For example, Informant #33 spoke about “working collaboratively with partners,” as enabling proactive responses to critical

events. She discussed the value of the partnerships within Whistler, such as the EPI group, the Learning and Education Strategy Task Force, as well as those with “our partners in the corridor...” A few informants spoke about the spirit of collaboration that enabled Whistler and the neighbouring town, Squamish, to share resources. Informant #31 shared the fact that Whistler’s taxes helped to fund the hospital. He added that Squamish residents had, in turn, helped to fund Whistler’s CAT scanner. He recalled that both towns amended their by-laws in order to enable this sharing of resources.

Some informants spoke about the characteristics of Whistler’s key partnerships (RMOW, WB, TW, and CoC) as it related to strengthening proactive responses to critical events. For example, Informant #42 felt that role clarity within the partnerships was critical. Informant #38 spoke about the importance of “a strong level of trust” and “the elimination of game playing,” as it related to the leadership within the RMOW, WB, and TW. Informant #38 credited “the values that have been instilled about this level of trust and cooperation and partnership[s],” as being “core to our success in the future.” Similarly, Informant #39, in speaking about the partnerships between the four key partners noted a general level of “mutual respect.” Transparency in communication was also a characteristic of strong partnerships. As Informant #39 stated, being resilient means, “being transparent about the problems.” Informant #11 added, “...to be resilient, I would argue that transparency is an important piece here to all of that, to make sure everybody remains engaged ...”

Many informants considered community engagement as a factor that strengthened proactive responses to critical events and as a characteristic of a resilient community. Some credited the community’s experience with the Whistler2020 strategy as raising the bar in terms of the community’s expectation to be involved in decision-making. Informant #7 stated, “It [Whistler2020] brought in a lot more voices than council ever had before into decision-making.” Others, such as Informant #13 linked Whistler’s “great minds” and their drive to a high level of community engagement. She stated, “I think there is a lot of great minds there and I think that that has really allowed them to ask questions through council of the municipality...” Many informants, such as Informant #11, connected the high level of community engagement to the fact that “people are here by choice and not necessarily for their careers and all the rest of it.” Similarly, Informant #6 linked the fact that people choose to live Whistler with wanting to be informed. He

stated, "...when you make that choice to come here, you do it for various reasons, but you care about the place and there's a better chance that you make yourself informed." Others connected community engagement to being able to make a difference in the community. For example, Informant #4 stated, "our community has been engaged and so they've been able to make the community move in the directions that they want to go." Similarly, Informant #7 stated, "I think the people believe they make a difference, they have made a difference, they will make a difference and they participate." He elaborated, observing, "The community gives them opportunities for meaningful participation," and added, "We tend to structure our opportunities for engagement around what the community has defined as issues."

Communication between the governance leaders, business, and the community was considered a critical part of encouraging and enabling community involvement, which in turn strengthened proactive responses to critical events. Informant #25 credited the fact that management, governance leaders, and community members all live in Whistler as enabling a good level of "respectful" communication. He recalled attending an open house in Whistler and described being "impressed" by the number of people who attended "just out of interest." Informant #4 spoke about the importance of an engaged electorate. He stated that it is the politicians who bear responsibility for "...keeping the electorate engaged and involved and listening to them [electorate], and taking their direction from those people." Many informants, such as Informant #1, credited the EPI and the community's task forces as setting "the bar in what is expected in this town in terms of a collective contribution to those decisions..." Similarly, Informant #7 credited the OCP and Whistler2020 with reinforcing "how engaged the Whistler community had become." Informant #13 credited the current and past councils with being consultative "in terms of setting up task forces and working groups around the issues..."

Whistler's reputation

A number of informants spoke about the importance of Whistler's reputation as strengthening proactive responses to critical events. Informant #13 stated, "I think things that go in Whistler's favour is its reputation, especially around the green agenda, the background with Whistler2020 and the fact that we were seen very much as a leader in

the industry.” However, she added, “We’re still living on that reputation; we’re not living it in reality.” Informant #29 spoke about Whistler’s strong brand and noted that “sometimes success can sort of breed success.” She added, “Like even that image of ... they don’t have to fight to establish a new [one].” Informant #40 in speaking about the advantages of Whistler’s reputation stated, “[W]e really are on the world stage now ... I think it allows us to be able to bob and weave and move around and do things.”

Community and corporate memory

Generally speaking, informants spoke about the importance of the community’s historical responses to past incidents, particularly as it related to enhancing the community’s resilience. As Informant #33 observed, “So you know there is that sense of history that allows ... that gives some resilience in the community.” She added, “We’ve got to keep telling our story, that’s for sure.” Indeed, many informants spoke about the importance of Whistler’s history as showing the community the way forward. For example Informant #6 stated, “[M]ost of the main players understand that history and where Whistler came from and they’re looking ahead to where it needs to go.” Informant #21 also tied the “historical wisdom” to “finding that long-range thinking as opposed to the short-term, self-interested, what’s in it for me thinking.” In a related line of conversation, many informants spoke about the importance of corporate memory as it related to enabling proactive responses to critical events. For example, Informant #12 stated, “History and corporate memory of past challenges, and successes in meeting those challenges, places Whistler in a position of strength versus other resorts.” He observed:

...all of those experiences, that corporate memory of ... where we've been and all these issues have set us up well for the future, as long as they keep that corporate memory, remembering what has happened in the past and how you deal with that

Informant #12 spoke about the importance of corporate memory as it related to understanding that the original design of Whistler was done in such a way as to make the most of sunshine and mountain views. He stated that maintaining corporate memory ensured people understand why “...even the planters are elevated...” Informant #21 stated, “If you don’t know the history, what’s your stake in protecting it?” He added, “You know, what do you have to draw on to help it limp into whatever the future is or keep it

from just becoming another urban place with a couple of nice mountains.” Informant #31 agreed, stating, “So it’s that history that soon gets forgotten and needs to be reinforced.”

Taking care of social issues

Informants spoke about the importance of addressing social issues, as both laying the foundation for proactive responses to critical events and as a characteristic of resilient communities. Some informants spoke about the fact that Whistler is a caring community with a strong safety net. For example, Informant #35 spoke about the “high percentage of single parents in this community...” and added there’s “a very strong safety net.” He went on to explain that the community is small “so there’s a lot more caring going on.” Similarly, Informant #9 in speaking about the high percentage of young adults (25-35) making a living in Whistler, stated, “I think they feel ... safe and secure.” Many informants spoke about Whistler’s affordable housing strategy as addressing the community’s most critical social issue. Informant #11 observed, “You go to all these other places around the world and that’s one of the biggest challenges is having, you know, the beds for employee and residents in that place.” Informant #5 agreed, and recalled the struggles other resort communities had with resident and staff housing and their warning to Whistler that the community would not be successful without addressing affordable housing. He went on to describe how having those beds in place, in turn, enabled the development of infrastructure and amenities that benefited not only the tourists, but also the residents. Other informants spoke about affordable housing and compared Whistler’s success to that of Aspen or Vale, where the lack of affordable housing resulted in a lack of full-time residents. Informants spoke about this as the *Aspen-effect*, or the *down-valley syndrome*, describing these resorts as *lifeless*. Informant #1 painted a clear picture of the physiological impacts of an unaffordable community, stating:

If you don’t have a place to call your own, to sleep, to store your bike or whatever, to raise your family, to have memories, to have a dinner [with] ... that hurts not in your head, it hurts in your heart, in your gut.

Informant #6 spoke about the impact affordable housing had on the public education system. While many informants acknowledged the importance of taking care of socio-cultural issues, other informants noted the importance of taking care of the economy in

order to address social issues in the community. For example Informant #38 observed, “It helps with the social part of this community by having people solely employed and pleased with their lot in life.” He spoke about the importance of creating “more business,” and that “business hopefully will be profitable and those profits can then be reinvested in the community...”

Well-resourced community

Many informants directly linked the availability of resources to the community’s ability to proactively respond to critical events. Indeed, many informants spoke about Whistler’s variety of assets, including: financial; human; infrastructural; organizational; and, natural capital. Informant #10 stated, “You know, if a major world event, or sea-to-sky area event, or something was to happen, we would have some resilience for sure, we’d have some stuff to fall back on.” She compared Whistler’s ability to be resilient to that of a “desert-like area,” that would be lacking in natural resources in comparison to Whistler, which is rich in natural resources. Informant #8 stated, “So I think what makes Whistler resilient to some degree is the relative affluence ... not necessarily of citizens, but of organizations in the area.” Informant #35 observed, “[P]eople want to live in Whistler so ... we get better teachers ... or we get a better school system...”

A number of informants spoke about Whistler’s well-funded governance systems as enabling proactive responses to critical events. Some informants attributed this fact to a variety of funding mechanisms available to Whistler, such as those created by the RMOW, as well as by the Province of BC. For instance, Informant #23 spoke about using the RMI funds to “make a dent in initiatives such as poor weather mitigation,” or to hire “consultants to tell us how we should consider developing a water park or how we should diversify some other aspect of the community.” Informant #20 spoke about the importance of the RMI funds for Whistler’s success and stated, “[W]e work closely with the Province to demonstrate how we’re investing it sensibly and how it contributes to the Provincial coffers, through our own success.” Others spoke about the importance of the hotel tax as enabling the community “to diversify the economy.”

Other informants spoke more specifically about the plethora of amenities, such as infrastructural amenities that strengthen proactive responses to critical events and

enhance the community's overall resilience. For example, Informant #8 noted that Whistler has two electricity substations and added, "So if the northern lines go down, the southern line can offset." He added, "So there aren't many communities that have that network." Informant #18 spoke about the benefits of Whistler's heliport and air ambulance service, which can transport patients to Lion's Gate Hospital in 10 minutes. She spoke about the community's CAT scanner and stated, "I mean, Vancouver, if you need a CAT scan, you're waiting six months. Here, we can walk down the hall and get it done. That's pretty nice." Others spoke about amenities that enhanced the appeal of the community and thereby its overall resilience. For example, Informant #21 spoke about the benefits of being within a three to five minute walk from "the most amazing network of interconnected trails that can take you the rest of your life to explore." Others spoke about the community's recreation centre, health care centre, library, and theatres that "typically surpass what you would get in a community of 10,000," as noted by Informant #9. Informant #8 summed up by stating:

I think Whistler's got a lot going for it from an amenity perspective. It's a very attractive community...natural assets and all those things...proximity to Vancouver. Those things make Whistler a very attractive place...I think all those factors play a role, you know, lead ... support the notion that Whistler is, over the long term, is relatively resilient.

Many informants believed that Whistler was well resourced in social capital and that people were its greatest strength for proactive responses to critical events. Informant #33 spoke about the "extraordinary brain trust" and the "very well qualified volunteers in the community," who helped the municipality identify and make recommendations related to post-secondary opportunities in Whistler. Informant #5 observed, "...because of the beauty of the place and the quality of the recreation, it's a lifestyle community that attracts some of the best and brightest ... the professionals who are working here." Informant #13 added, "So you have some amazing skill sets. You'll jump in a taxi and your driver is an engineer." A few informants spoke about Whistler's population diversity as a strength. For example, Informant #2 observed, "The level of education is very high and people come from all parts of the world with different views, different frames of reference." Informant #9 stated, "I mean having so many people from different places in the world. Different perspectives [is a strength]." Similarly, Informant #22 observed, "[T]he diversity of the community just makes for a broader experience for

the people in the community...” Despite the diversity, a number of informants noted that the community is usually “on the same wavelength.” Many informants saw this as a strength. For example, Informant #30 stated, “We always say this is a community of ‘A’ type personalities and so extremely opinionated, but I think when push comes to shove, people are sort of on the same wavelength. I guess that energy is what drives us forward.” Similarly, Informant #22 stated, “People are pretty vocal.” And added, “You know, [there is] no shortage of letters to the editor.” Some informants linked what they perceived as Whistler’s resilience to the affluence of its residents. Informant #34 called Whistler “privileged” and added, “The lifestyle is privilege.” Informant #40 spoke about the tax base in Whistler, stating, “So you’ve got a very, very strong group, with lots of disposable income.” Informant #8 questioned whether there was more wealth in Whistler than in other communities, but he acknowledged, “liquid assets [equals] higher resilience, I think, to be able to bounce back and take advantage of things...” Informant #40 spoke about Whistler’s “fairly rich tax base,” and observed that this permitted the community “to be able to react to issues.”

A number of informants, such as Informant #2, spoke about “an exuberant youth culture ... that most other ski resorts do not have.” He added, “We are the epicentre of youth culture in North America, in mountain resorts. That is our strength. That is our resilience.” Informant #17 countered the criticism that is often directed at the younger generation for not getting involved. She stated, “They’re out there ... they’re at protest marches ... they are there and they are mobilized and they are talking ...” Informant #18 stated, “I look at the young people around Whistler and what they’re doing ... they’re fabulous.” She added, “I have huge faith in the future generations. I think they’re amazing.” Informant #35 believed it was the youthful, vibrancy that drew people to retire in Whistler. He stated, “I mean lots of people have had places here over the years and then they’ve chosen to retire here, because it’s a young, vibrant community.” Similarly, many informants spoke about Whistler’s strength in having youthful seniors, as noted by Informant #22 who stated, “...even the old are young.” Informant #18 mused, “The community draws a certain type of person who wants to be active” and added that they don’t “want to ever be called a senior.” She spoke about these “youthful” seniors who need “big storage rooms for all their bikes and skis and it’s not where am I parking my scooter? It’s where am I parking my mountain bikes.” Informant #38 observed, “We’ve

got ski school instructors in their 70s and 80s that are still working, teaching skiing, and they have a great time at it and [are] quite capable.” He recalled a study done by the University of British Columbia a few years previously, and recalled that the researchers said, “[Y]ou guys are way more fit than most seniors.”

Sense of place; sense of connectedness

Many informants described how a sense of place enhanced community resilience. For example, Informant #5 spoke about “a tremendous sense of place and that helped define who we were and the context.” Informant #27 recalled how the village was originally built to create a “sense of place” that would draw the residents into the village. He recalled past efforts to create a sense of place by controlling the type of business that was permitted in the village and a debate within the community over a discount chain store that wanted to establish a store in the village. Many believed that the chain store would erode that sense of place and as such, the store was turned down. On the other hand, Informant #27 connected that incident to destroying the sense of place for residents. He believed the lack of discount stores discouraged the locals from coming into the village and “Whistler Village ceased to become a village for the locals...”

Informant #35 spoke about Whistler’s sense of connectedness as a resilience-enhancing factor. He compared Whistler to other resorts that become “ghost towns” in the summer and added, “I mean you go out on the street [in Whistler], you know, half the people you see are living right here, right?” Some informants believe the sense of connectedness is enabled through a connection to the natural environment and the lifestyle that enables. Informant #9 stated, “I think people feel connected to the place and I mean whether that’s a commonality for the love of the environment, the nature, the lifestyle that it has to offer, I don’t know, but we do have a strong community here.” Informant #18 in talking about what she sees as a Whistler “mindset,” added, “I think it’s connected to the environment, to what keeps people here.” Some informants spoke of connectedness, not in terms of the community of Whistler, but rather in terms of Whistler’s connectedness to other centres, such as Vancouver, Vancouver International Airport, and the USA. Informant #8 stated, “I think Whistler’s proximity to Vancouver is something that makes it easier for us to respond to critical events.” Informant #29 spoke about the advantage of being close to Vancouver, in terms of Vancouverites coming to

Whistler. She stated, "I guess an advantage Whistler has is it does have a feeder city like Vancouver to sort of continue to have people going there."

Many informants described their passion for Whistler. As informants spoke about their passion for Whistler it became clear that a sense of community passion enabled proactive responses to critical events. For example, Informant #1 in speaking about Whistler's challenges around affordability and housing, stated, "I think the negative pressure of the crisis is what probably drove the passion and that passion is what drove innovative solutions..." Informant #22, in speaking about the strengths that enabled proactive responses stated, "The strengths are the people, the fact that they're educated, passionate." Informant #22, who worked in Whistler, but lived outside the community, spoke about her own personal passion for Whistler. She described her passion for Whistler and stated that just because she lived outside Whistler, "doesn't mean that [she's] not vested in the community." Others, such as Informant #22, linked the community's passion to a lifestyle choice. Some described the passion and sense of love they have for the community. For example, Informant #38 in speaking about the fact that while people may come from all over, their choice to be in Whistler creates a "common love of the place and the mountains..."

Many informants believed it is passion that motivated the community to make Whistler even better and stronger by getting involved. For example, Informant #22 felt that people's passion for Whistler draws them into politics. She stated, "We have a lot of people to choose from in terms of people running, because people want to be involved." She added, "People love to get involved." Informant #16, in speaking about the mayor and council, stated, "They're still community members who love the community and are passionate about this place and want to make it better." Similarly, Informant #38 stated, "[P]eople are engaged and have chosen to be here, they have a stake and an ownership in Whistler's future, that they participate actively ..." He went on to describe how the community comes together "in times of tragedy, when we lose one of our community members..." He added, "I don't think you can put a price tag or a sense of how strongly this community pulled together in times of need and support."

Other informants spoke about a sense of pride that strengthened proactive responses. Informant #17 stated "if something happens, it's amazing how this town

mobilizes and focuses on problem solving.” She recalled during the Olympics that “people had so much pride around making Whistler look good, that you could get anybody to volunteer any amount of time and work really, really hard to make it a good experience.” In a related line of conversation, informants linked the fact that people chose to live in Whistler for lifestyle reasons to their commitment to the community. For instance, Informant #4 stated, “Whistler has been a place where people have decided, ‘I am moving there and I am going to live there. That’s where I want to be,’ and so they become more highly invested.” Informant #17 noted that Whistlerites “...give up better salaries ... they give up something to come live here and it makes them really committed to this place...” Others, such as Informant #8, believed that people truly cared about Whistler, because they had a vested interest in the community. He stated, “I think there’s more people with a vested interest in Whistler now, than there was before.”

Informants spoke about the community’s ability to address issues and get things done, as a resilience-enhancing feature. As Informant #2 observed, “So we are built on vision; we are built on believing we can do anything.” Similarly, other informants spoke confidently about Whistler’s ability to *do anything*. For example, Informant #28 believed Whistler’s strength lay in “a belief in ourselves, that we can do anything.” He added, “It’s a community that can come together and make things happen and do things. So you know, having that confidence is really, really important.” Similarly, Informant #23 spoke about “leveraging” Whistler’s pride “to be able to accomplish anything in the future.” She added, “We’re resourceful and resilient.” Informant #35’s comments also demonstrated this high level of confidence. In speaking about Whistler’s ability to address larger issues such as climate change he stated, “We know global warming is going to affect us over time, because we’re a low altitude resort.” He added, “Well the Peak2Peak [Gondola] solves that problem.” As Informant #35 noted, “When Whistler wants something, they just go and get it. I mean it’s as simple as that and that’s been the way since day one, right?”

Informant #35 believed Whistler’s can-do attitude stemmed from the fact that it was an expensive community in which to live. He added, “So there is a certain sort of spirit of ‘I’m going to make this work’” and added, “It’s partly survivalist...” Some informants, such as Informant #39, spoke about “a grassroots spirit in the community that is can-do ...” She observed that Whistler’s can-do attitude, “floats from the

grassroots up. It doesn't float so much from the administration down." Informant #1 stated, "[T]here's a real expectation that your involvement is going to have an outcome and going to change something." He added that people in Whistler are "very outcome oriented." Some informants spoke of the ability to get things done because of the high level of creativity that exists in the community. For example, Informant #19 stated, "...the type of people that Whistler attracts tends to be free-spirited and creative [people]."

Other informants spoke about the can-do attitude of the community's major organizations. For example, Informant #39 stated, "They're pretty can-do..." in speaking about Whistler's organizations. Informant #35 recalled the backlog of residents waiting for affordable housing and described how Whistler took on the financial risk in building affordable housing in the lead-up to the 2010 Games. He elaborated, explaining that the Province of BC provided the land and that VANOC provided the servicing of the land. He described this three-way partnership as a "creative solution to a really nasty problem." Similarly, Informant #38, in speaking about *One Whistler* said, "...it's amazing, I'm always impressed how, you know, when you get the right group of people together, such as that group, and you put your mind to a task, we can often times make a difference."

Volunteerism

The high level of volunteerism, as noted by many informants, is another resilience enhancing characteristic of Whistler. Informant #13 stated, "[T]he amount of time that people volunteer in this town is astounding." Informant #22 observed, "People love to get involved," and added that because many residents are "financially set up ... they have the time to get involved..." Informant #18 stated, "[I]t's the seniors that do all the volunteer work. They're the mountain hosts; they're the village hosts. I mean they keep the community going. Without the seniors, half of this community wouldn't exist." Similarly, Informant #30 stated "[P]eople are pretty passionate about volunteering and being mountain hosts and guides and whatever. So that's a real strength." Informant #31 spoke about the importance of volunteers for Whistler's non-profit organizations, such as the Whistler Health Care Foundation. He recalled how millions of dollars were raised in the community to build a heliport for medical emergency transportation and to

purchase medical equipment, such as a CT scanner. He also spoke about the Community Foundation of Whistler, which raised six million dollars and AWARE, as having “done marvellous work.” Informant #9 believed it is was a combination of Whistler’s small size and the strength of its non-profit organizations, such as Whistler Community Services Society, that contributes to Whistler’s ability to respond to critical events. Informant #22 added, “We don’t have homeless people. There’s strong support systems for anyone who’s having trouble here.” In a similar line of conversation, Informant #21 noted the strength of the communities advocacy groups, such as WORCA, AWARE, and WAG and added, “They swing a lot of weight in this town. You ignore the 1,500 members of WORCA at your peril.” WORCA is Whistler’s off road cycling association. It had its first lobbying success in the late 1980s when it halted the planned closure of bike trails in Garibaldi Provincial Parks (WORCA, 2014). Informant #8 observed, “Whistler’s got lots of non-profits, compared to other communities ... they all contribute to various services that support Whistler’s success and moving toward a more sustainable community which, I guess, to some degree creates a bit of resilience ...” A few informants spoke about an organization known as American Friends of Whistler, a non-profit organization of American citizens who own second homes in Whistler, and the substantive funds they have raised and donated back to the community over the years. Informant #40 spoke about the Whistler Blackcomb Foundation, which raises “between four and five hundred thousand dollars every year.” Informant #13 summed things up by saying that a good cross-section of non-profits creates “resilience at every level, from projects on the ground to the politics.”

5.2.2. Summary: Factors strengthening proactive responses

Informants described a variety of factors they believed strengthened Whistler’s responses to critical events, which then in turn strengthened the resilience of the community. Informants spoke specifically about governance-aspects, such as the importance of a strong, effective governance system that helped the community understand what it valued, nurtured strong partnerships amongst key Whistler organizations, addressed the community’s social issues, and enabled a high level of community involvement and collaboration. They also spoke about the importance of maintaining Whistler’s historical memory. Informants also spoke about personal factors,

such as the high level of volunteerism, and the fact that the community was well resourced with social, financial, political, and environmental capital. One of the more intriguing findings was the importance of a sense of place and/or connectedness and how this then led to a sense of pride, passion, and a can-do attitude. Many informants felt that a sense of place was a key factor that strengthened Whistler's ability to proactively respond to critical events, which then enhanced the community's overall resilience.

5.2.3. Factors that weaken proactive responses

Introduction

The following sections describe the informants' perceptions of the factors that weaken Whistler's ability to proactively respond to critical events. Because the absence of many of the factors mentioned in the preceding section translates into resiliency weaknesses, this section only provides examples of novel weaknesses.

Lack of resilience enhancing strategy and focus

A number of informants perceived that Whistler lacked a resilience-enhancing strategy. Indeed, as noted earlier, a number of informants pointed out this shortcoming in terms of the EPI. As Informant #32 observed, "It talks more about what we've been doing all along." Informant #29 stated, "I don't think there's a lot of strategic work going on." He believed that "...ten years ago there were some players that were deeply and strategically invested in sort of laying the foundation and that groundwork and it was a bit of a culmination of the right people, the right time, the right thinking." She added, "Now it just feels more piecemeal." Informant #17 noted the EPI's emphasis on greater economic diversification, but she questioned whether or not there was a strategy. She stated, "There isn't a strategy as far as I can see." She spoke about a cultural tourism development strategy and its focus on creating unique experiences, but stated, "...it doesn't really address that [a resilience strategy]."

A few informants believed the community's move away from sustainability was an indication of a lack of a resilience-enhancing strategy. For example, Informant #13 felt that the community's move away from "the green agenda," was a weakness for the

community. Similarly, Informant #39 believed Whistler had not “thought through global warming” and later spoke about the need for “transparency about our future ... and the challenges that face us.” She added, “...we sure have to figure out how we’re going to respond to realities and the Mountain [WB] doesn’t really want to accept that they’re really there [meaning the realities of climate change].” Informant #24 in speaking about climate change questioned, “Are we going to have a ski resort here if we have global warming to the point where we don’t have snow? What’s that going to do to our economy?” He added, “[W]e’ve really barely dipped our toe in the water on that issues and the whole issue of what can we do locally to mitigate climate change locally and what, if anything, can we do ... to help mitigate the larger problem.” In a similar line of conversation, Informant #43 noted that while Whistler is focused on “sustainability and maintaining the area and providing a certain experience,” she questioned why that experience didn’t include “the beauty of nature and having a low impact.” She reflected, “everything that’s promoted these days ... is all about high impact and thrills” and added “it doesn’t fit with how First Nation’s cultural and spiritual values [exist].”

A significant number of informants felt that the current economic, short-term focus affected the community’s long-term resilience. Some informants believed the current focus on the economy failed to take a holistic lens to identify a broader range of challenges the community will face in the future. While a number of informants praised the EPI for its focus on economics, others discussed the EPI in terms of its short sightedness and lack of breadth. For example, Informant #19 stated, “The EPI has a limit as to how much attention it’s going to give anyone or any organization that does not have an economic reality that’s immediate.” He worried that the focus on “maximizing destination travel in the winter” could “overshadow other priorities” and cautioned that other things should be considered, other than those with an immediate “demonstrated economic R.O.I.” He questioned, “Well what about the stuff that EPI would grade as a low [priority], because it doesn’t have an economic impact in the next 12 months? Well what if it has great economic impact in 10 years? It needs to start somewhere.” Similarly, Informant #15 stated that the EPI is siloed in its focus and goals and added, “[T]here is no goal about improving quality of life or increasing median income.” Informant #32 observed that the EPI had been criticized ‘because it’s basically more of the same.’ She added, “It really doesn’t talk about the aging demographic. It doesn’t

really talk about small business and diversification and authenticity. It talks about what we've been doing all along..."

Not addressing social issues

Housing and the lack of affordability

While many informants noted the high level of wealth amongst a large percentage of the residents, other informants saw the lack of equality and Whistler's lack of affordability to be a weakness that affected the community's ability to proactively respond to critical events. Indeed, a number of informants questioned how people afforded to live in Whistler, despite the community's affordable housing strategy. As Informant #3 observed, "Well I don't know how they can afford these expensive homes. Even the subsidized housing, you know, for four or five hundred thousand [dollars], it just seems like outrageous to me." Informant #21 spoke about a home in the affordable housing pool selling for \$487,000. He stated, "...that's pushing the definition of affordability." Informant #35 observed the lack of equity in Whistler. He stated, "There's a lot of money in this town and I do think that's a weakness, that there's a bit of a ... there's the rich and the poor, okay? So there's not a lot in of middle." Informant #18 observed:

Many people leave the community because they can't get a job or they can't get housing. They can't get a job that will pay them enough for them to own property here, so they leave the community. So we lose the young people and they marry, they have children, they want to have a home, but they can't do it on hospitality salaries, so they end up leaving.

Similarly, Informant #22 observed that working in the food and beverage industry pays well with the tips, but added "...then you have a family and suddenly you don't want to be ... you want to be home at night and so people would have to leave." Informant #41 observed that a larger percentage of residents are employed in the hospitality industry within Whistler at the time of interviews, compared to the past. He observed that when Whistler was growing and building, many residents were employed in the trades, which he called "good jobs." He added that it was the tradespeople who could afford to buy homes. He worried about Whistler's future resilience with a larger percentage of residents working in "low paying" hospitality jobs. He added that this situation mirrored a North American predicament, which is the "hollowing out of the middle class and this

huge shift of wealth to the very wealthy and having a larger and larger group that are near the poverty line.” As informant #4 observed, “Our median income is unbelievably low and I think that’s problematic.” Some informants spoke about the lack of career jobs, which caused people to leave Whistler. Informant #18 stated, “So if you’re lucky enough to get some sort of job that is on your career path and make a go of it, that’s great, but the vast majority of them can’t do it, so they ... they do leave.” Similarly, Informant #22 stated, “...most people that we knew would come here for a few seasons, work, and then they’d have to go get a real job and go somewhere else in order to that that.” She added, “So that’s definitely a problem.” Informant #42 questioned, “So many people move to Whistler to be part of the guests’ value chain, but what about the thousands that come up here that aren’t working in the tourism industry?” He added, “Do we have career opportunities up here for them, so that they want to stay up here as well?”

Condo hotels

Many informants spoke about the challenges related to condo hotels¹⁷ (also known as strata hotels). Many informants perceived that as the condo hotels aged, they were increasingly affecting the ability of the community to proactively respond to critical events. Informant #21 described the situation with the condo hotels:

[Y]ou have too much capacity, you don't have enough occupancy, not generating enough income, the investment isn't as good as you hoped it would be So as that ages and deteriorates ... what's the motivation for you to reach into your pocket and pull out another \$60,000 to upgrade that to Whistler's standard or what we'd like to think the Whistler standard is? So there's every opportunity there for a downward spiral that just adds to the gravity of that problem.

Informant #7 added that at the time condo hotels were being built, no one thought “... that there could be issues with individual owners managing their own properties and then not reinvesting.” He also noted that flagship chains such as Pan Pacific, Delta, Four Seasons, and the Westin, which own condo hotels in Whistler, could choose to walk

¹⁷ Condo hotels are accommodation properties that were bought as vacation properties. When not in use, the units are put into the rental pool for visitors to Whistler. The development of condo hotels permitted Whistler to build up its accommodation inventory, as very few major hotel chains (with the exception of the Chateau Fairmont) were willing to build, own, and manage new hotels in Whistler. It is widely recognized that condo hotels are and will become a bigger challenge for the community as the structures age and require costly repairs. If the majority of condo owners in a building vote against repairs, there are currently no regulations, legislation, or incentives to compel or motivate owners to undergo necessary renovations.

away in the future if the individual unit owners do not maintain them. He worried, "If a flag walks, there's a significant impact to the marketing component and a visual component to our resort." Informant #27 also spoke about the challenges related to the condo hotels and stated, "So my concern for the future of Whistler is how do you make that sustainable? How do you keep upgrading hotel rooms?"

Complacency, apathy & a lack of caring

In contrast to the community's can-do attitude as previously described, many informants spoke about the risk of becoming complacent. Informant #39 believed complacency becomes more of an issue "the bigger Whistler gets, the older Whistler gets as a community." She added, "The more something becomes the status quo, the tougher it is for change. Even though it's been a community that's been quite good with change, I think we've gotten poorer at it in the last few years." Indeed, many informants noted Whistler's success in dealing with past critical events and felt that this led to a sense of complacency. Some observed that such an attitude might delay future responses to critical events. For example, Informant #4, in speaking about Whistler's affordable housing challenge stated, "[I]n some ways, a lot of people felt like we've put a check beside that box..." In other words, Whistler's affordable housing challenge had been addressed. Likewise, Informant #24 spoke about complacency related to the Housing Authority and stated, "So as long as we have the Housing Authority, we're okay. But if we start to see people saying, 'Well we really don't need the Housing Authority any more,' [then we're not okay]." Other informants spoke about complacency as it related to Whistler believing it did not need to be concerned about what was going on beyond its boundaries. Informant #28 in speaking about the danger of complacency recalled "a number of years ago we turned our back on the region..." He added, "But we still have to embrace the region." Informant #12 recalled that in the 1990s Whistler became complacent and as a result, "became known as a really expensive rich resort."

Informant #19 spoke about complacency in a slightly different context. He suggested, "[W]e might be challenged in our ability to be broad thinkers." He described how Whistler had a snow advantage over other ski resorts for the past few seasons. He stated, "[W]e have a history of success in winter tourism and that's a weakness, because perhaps that has ingrained in us a dependency on winter tourism and it's hard to get out

of that.” He added, “...maybe we’re partially set in our ways ... rather than taking a more broad thinking approach.” He mused that perhaps in 10 years time winter tourism will not be Whistler’s main industry and suggested, “We’ve got to start thinking about what’s going to be our new biggest industry or what’s going to compete with that to allow ourselves to imagine continued prosperity and stability and sustainability, in the bigger sense of the word.”

Others spoke about what they saw as apathy in the community. For example, Informant #21 felt one of the biggest weaknesses was that Whistler puts “the pathetic into apathetic.” He added, “It’s the same usual suspects at all the open houses, the planning meetings ... and I don’t know how you engage the younger demographic ... and being interested in running for office, in being on advisory committees.” Despite earlier noted comments about the level of youth engagement in Whistler, Informant #13, who was often in contact with the youth of Whistler, stated, “We have a really hard time engaging with the kind of younger, say 20 to 30 year olds, part of the community.” She observed, “...they don’t feel like they want to expand their knowledge and don’t want to know and that scares me, because ... as we move forward as a community, having that kind of approach, it’s not going to be a strength.” In a related line of conversation, a number of informants spoke about the lack of caring within Whistler as something that weakened proactive responses. For example, Informant #3 spoke about the newer generation of skiers and snowboarders and expressed concern that the newest generation of Whistlerites was “living the dream,” but was not interested in staying beyond one or two seasons. She stated they “...come for one or two seasons and be gone and they don’t really care.” Informant #5 also spoke about the transient nature of the workforce, and expressed concern that they represented approximately 70 percent of Whistler’s workforce, yet they were unprotected by a union. Informant #10 spoke about the fact that there was poverty in Whistler and demand upon the community’s food bank. She stated, “being a small community, we care about each other, but there is a perception that Whistler is a choice and that you need to be of a certain wealth to make it here and if you can’t cut it, you can just leave.” She added that because of “that mindset of ‘Well if you can’t make it in Whistler you can just leave,’ there’s less ... caring... and [a] perception that we don’t need a food bank, we don’t need all these [social] services.” Informant #43 perceived a lack of care from Whistler’s governance leaders. She stated,

the “village is simply based on tourism and how to keep it looking this way” and added, “...their focus isn’t necessarily on their people that live there all the time.” Informant #37 agreed, stating, “The number one, most important person in Whistler is the guests [sic]. Not the locals and not the weekenders.”

One-horse town

Although many informants identified the community’s recent efforts to diversify as one of Whistler’s strengths, a number of informants believed that, at the foundation, Whistler is and remained a *one-horse* town. Many informants believed this fact weakened the community’s resilience. As Informant #8 stated, “Where are we weak? You know, some people say we’re a one-horse town and to some degree we are.” Similarly, Informant #17 stated, “Well certainly what weakens its [Whistler’s] ability is the fact that it has no diverse economy really ... if anything were to happen to the tourism economy, it would be over. There really isn’t much else.” Informant #29 stated Whistler is a “one-industry town with some level of diversification within that,” but added, “How would Whistler reinvent itself? And I think it’s challenged [in that regard].” As Informant #22 observed, Whistler does not “...have a lot of diversification and I think that’s a loss to any community.” While most informants spoke about the community’s partnership and relationship with WB in positive terms, a few informants expressed concern that the community was still “a one-company town,” as Informant #21 called it. Informant #19 observed that because the community wanted WB to succeed, they begrudgingly stood by as WB put “one or two businesses out of business at times.” He believed it was a weakness that the community depended upon the success of WB for their success “because in private industry it often doesn’t lend itself towards subtlety and social causes and public interest.” He added:

If the industry is bigger than the public sector, in terms of its ability to cause things to happen, you end up having an imbalance in how things are governed. Maybe the public sector governance really is ... has been declawed a little bit.

Similarly, Informant #11 spoke about the reality that despite the emphasis on partnerships, WB was “the big brother,” who was “self-serving.” He credited WB as being “...great corporate citizens, because they bring a lot to the table and they don’t just ignore the community and act like the big company town and abuse everybody,” but

added "...they are primarily about themselves and definitely 100 percent oriented towards tourism and attracting people. Informant #3 stated, "Since WhistlerBlackcomb privatized and they got a board of directors, it's all about ... paying out the shareholders."

Self-interest, greed & insularity

A number of informants perceived a weakness in Whistler as it related to an inclination toward self-interest, greed and insularity. For example, Informant #15 stated, "Whistler is quite Whistler-centric..." Informant #35 observed, "It's a very me-type community and you're never going to keep them happy." Informant #22 stated, "We've seen too many examples of people who were initially overjoyed to get their little slice of Whistler and then, you know, greed and self-interest kicked in and they [wanted to know] how do I get around this?" Similarly, Informant #5 stated, "We've lost that sense of community and everything has become very competitive and selfish." Informant #21 mused that many community members got upset because their children could not afford to stay in the community when they grew up. In his opinion, children who grew up in Whistler should leave and see how the rest of the world lived. He added, "While the people who gravitated to Whistler as adults tend to be somewhat adventurous and well-educated, the town itself is not particularly intellectually stimulating." In a related but different manner, Informant #43 spoke about what she saw to be Whistler's insulation from the natural environment. She drew a connection between its adventure-focused persona, self-centred and thrill seeking, but at the same time disconnected from the natural environment.

Many informants felt that Whistler was a *bubble*. Informant #17 spoke about Whistler's "isolation" from "the outside world" and stated, "I mean it's odd that Whistler is such a bubble and just so self-absorbed and concerned with its own things." She wondered if it could be the fact that there was a "sense of entitlement because of its wealth," and compared it to other tourism communities with less wealth whom she perceived as being more connected with the outside world. Informant #30 stated, "This is an interesting community. No one picks up their mail. No one reads the paper." Informant #22 spoke about the community's lack of diversity and stated, "...you're raising your children, raising them in a community that's as homogenous as Whistler ..." and added "so you know, wealthy, white ... I'm just saying the spectrum is quite narrow."

She added that she worried that by raising her children in Whistler “they’re going to go out in the world and have zero acceptance of anybody who’s not wealthy and white and healthy ...” She added, “[T]he whole world is not like this.”

Homogenization was also spoken of in terms of Whistler’s tourism product. For example, Informant #17 spoke about the lack of business mix in Whistler. She observed that over the years many of the businesses owned by locals had gone out of business because of the high rents, only to be replaced by “flagship, corporate, national, international chains ...” She added that these chains were “faceless, not interesting, not unique and don’t bring any culture to Whistler.” She noted that they “hire managers,” but “there’s no owner that lives here and has a family here” and echoed the opinion of other informants that Whistler had lost its soul. Informant #34 added that the large chains, such as the GAP and Starbucks, can be found anywhere and added, “I like the small, uniqueness, individuality of a business...” Informant #32 agreed and questioned, “Does everything have to be big? Does everything have to be driven by the need to fill hotel beds?” She recalled how many of the small business owners who are no longer operating in the community “were deeply committed to their communities.” She expressed concern about “foreign ownership” observing that even “[T]he Mountain’s not owned locally any more. It’s all foreign ownership.” She added, “So where is the control of our future? How do you take back what you’ve lost already?”

Similarly, Informant #3 noted a move toward homogenization; however, she spoke about it in terms of the rental accommodation market. She stated, “[T]hese websites make everybody [accommodation properties] seem the same...” Similarly, Informant #39 observed, “Whistler’s doing, I think, a very good job on how they’re adding events, et cetera,” but added that “even how it’s being sold or positioned just isn’t that different than anybody else that’s in the snow/resort business.” Informant #39 spoke about homogenization in terms of the “Mall of the Mountains.” She suggested that it is the choices Whistlerites made which were responsible for the big box stores. She described how people would make “their Costco run in a Ford150” and added, “People don’t think about the impact.” She wondered if Whistler would “figure that out [before] we start to see, you know, businesses boarded up.” Similarly, Informant #11 agreed, observing, “The Village is viewed as a kind of factory by most, but you know, that’s the tourism factory. You come and you go, but you don’t really live there.”

Growth pressures

Many informants believed the growth pressure Whistler was experiencing was a weakness and something that could threaten the future resilience of the community. As Informant #11 observed, the growth pressures are “a really critical land planning component to what the future is about.” Some informants discussed the growth pressures that Whistler had experienced since its inception. For example, Informant #6 spoke about the building pressures of the 1990s, recalling, “The whole municipal hall was overrun with development applications and design proposals...” Similarly, Informant #8 recollected how the terrorist events on September 11th affected Whistler, observing that the resort had “...always been growing and it’s the first time that things have changed [after 9-11].” He was speaking about the negative impact the event had on Whistler’s visitor numbers. Informant #11 spoke about the ongoing growth pressures in Whistler. He stated that “the place is a great place and you want to be here,” and as more people move to Whistler, they need housing, and employment, and it is just a “cycle” of pressure.

Many informants felt that Whistler was already overbuilt. Informant #29 stated, “There are empty hotel rooms. It’s overbuilt and that’s a weakness.” Similarly, Informant #37 stated, “Whistler is already probably too big today and it is destroying the guest experience.” He recalled that the growth cap had gone from the original “48,000 pillows” to 56,000 or 60,000. He stated, “[T]hey have changed the formula on how they count [the pillows].” He stated that if Whistler were still using the original formula, the pillow count would currently sit at around 70,000 to 75,000. He added, “You can’t have 20,000 to 25,000 people skiing in one day” without lowering the guest experience. He believed that if the bed cap gets raised in the future, more people will come, but it will lower the quality and the value of the experience and so Whistler will end up with twice as many people spending half of what people used to spend. Informant #42 also spoke about Whistler being overbuilt, and added “But I think the reality is we have such a ... we have a fragile economy because we are dependent upon this destination guest... the capricious nature of the global economy...”

A few informants discussed the fact that Whistler was in denial when it comes to the end of growth. For example, Informant #24 stated “...we are at the end of growth

and have been at the end of growth for quite some time.” He added, “We are in denial about the end of anything like that.” He recalled how Whistler began talking about the need to transition to “a sustainable economy that doesn’t rely on this incredible growth,” and added, “...everybody around the table would go, yah, yah, yah, we’ll do that.” He added, “But, you know, we got there in the early 2000s and we have very little in the way of strategies for actually making that transition and I think probably our only strategy has been to watch expenses, you know, a little more closely and ... try and minimize tax increases.” He elaborated, “But we really need a bigger and better strategy, which would improve our resilience, which would create the platform to actually move us towards economic sustainability...” Indeed, a number of informants spoke about the bed cap as not being the proper tool to manage Whistler’s growth. Informant #26 recalled that bed units were originally “designed for sewage treatment, to determine the size of the sewage treatment plant.” He stated, “...now they’ve [bed units] become a growth management tool and they’re not a growth management tool. They’re not designed for growth management, but they’re used for growth management.” He noted that this has gotten Whistler “into this big problem [for which] they’re in court now.” He was speaking about the Lil’wat and Squamish First Nations’ 2013 court challenge to the OCP. The OCP denied them the opportunity to develop their lands within Whistler’s boundaries. The BC Supreme Court later ruled in favour of the First Nations’ request to nullify the OCP.

On the other hand Informant #32 believed “no growth is not sustainable.” She noted that sustainable development actually means “controlled growth, controlled management of controlled growth.” She added, “[B]ut we’re the human race. I mean we reproduce, we increase, we have appetites ...” She stated, “[J]ust give me one example in the world where there’s not growth.” Informant #31 agreed, and stated, “[I]t’s against human nature to have no growth. Until you control population, generally, there’s going to be pressure.” Similarly, Informant #25 stated, “I don’t know if you can actually put a cap on growth, without driving prices up to make it way too expensive for everybody.” He added that you can control growth by putting in zoning, but added, “I think you have other consequences that come with that.” Informant #10 believed the notion that Whistler was overbuilt was merely a perception. She compared the perception of someone who moved to Whistler in 1975 and had witnessed the growth over that time,

to that of a newcomer who did not see the same level of growth. In other words, a newcomer to Whistler would not perceive Whistler as being overbuilt, whereas someone who had a long history in the community would perceive otherwise because he or she would have seen Whistler when it was less developed.

Informant #21 spoke about the dreamers who think they can control growth in Whistler. He recalled a conversation he had with someone who “thinks we can go through this right-sizing exercise, become a smaller, more cohesive community.” He recalled telling him:

...when the shit hits the fan and we're facing economic disaster, I'll take your money and give you odds that the people in power at that time will fall back on the same old way out, which is growth. There is no doubt in my mind that they will salute the bed cap and blow right past it, because there will be developers lined up with bags of money who say, 'Here's the solution to your problem.'”

He went on to describe the future growth pressures Whistler will face from developers:

They won't ever stop coming. They ... they're like vermin. As soon as you think you've gotten rid of them all, you see more mouse droppings. You know, they'll be back with bags of money saying, 'This is yours if you let me do this.' You know, and they'll wear you down, they'll keep making it look like a sweeter and sweeter deal and they won't go away. Sooner or later ... sooner or later ... the bad guys only have to win once and then whatever you were trying to protect is gone. And you have to win every time. Well nobody wins every time.

Informant #24 also felt that Whistler would always face growth pressures. He spoke about the desire to “grow our economy,” but felt that this would create a need for more infrastructure, such as more hotels, more lifts and more terrain. He added that growth is “what we always do, all over the world in order to solve our financial problems.” However, he felt that Whistler was “the perfect little embryo, test-tube solution here to actually learn how to do it [control growth] and just do with what we've got...” Informant #25 spoke about the pressure to “balance growth with lifestyle and what the community wants, but he added, “[U]ltimately, the community will decide.” Informant #22 observed the “constant struggle” in that “people want things to change and get better and get better. Well is better bigger?”

Some informants discussed the growth pressures in the SLRD as it related to Whistler's long-term resilience. For example, Informant #12, spoke about the proposed development called *Garibaldi at Squamish*, and the fear that "All they'll do is poach and [decrease] real estate prices, accommodation." He added that development in the corridor puts pressure on the Sea-to-Sky Highway. Informant #32 also spoke about the pressure on the Sea-to-Sky Highway, stating, "...eventually the Sea-to-Sky Highway from Vancouver to Whistler will have development ... all the way." Informant #11 was concerned about "parasitic" or "competitive development on the edge of Whistler." In speaking about *Garibaldi at Squamish*, he added:

...some would argue that more capacity in the corridor would mean more visitors and more variety ... others would argue quite the opposite, that the development isn't worthy of being there to begin with and it's just a real estate play and it's going to crowd the highway and create all sorts of problems.

He explained that governments like the development taxes, but added, "there's some serious challenges ... and threats to the idea of sustained prosperity, achieving prosperity and then sustaining it." Other informants described how growth pressures led to developments such as Wedge Woods and Green Lake Estates and that Whistler had no control over them. Informant #24 felt these developments had "a huge impact on Whistler." He compared Whistler's "managed" growth to "unmanaged" growth in SLRD corridor and felt there was "nothing that Whistler can do about growth in the corridor."

First Nations Issues

A few informants expressed concern that Whistler, the Province of BC, and the Squamish and Lil'wat First nations were, at the time of the interviews, in court regarding Whistler's OCP. They worried that if the Supreme Court of BC ruled in favour of the First Nations, it would lead to more development in Whistler that would hinder all efforts to move beyond a growth model¹⁸. Informant #43 spoke about a "constant battle" between First Nations and Whistler. She described the First Nations' efforts to make not only their current presence known, but also their historical presence known. She spoke about a lack of effort made by Whistler's governance leaders to learn about First Nations and

¹⁸ In June of 2014, the Supreme Court of BC ruled in favour of the Nations. At the time of writing, it is unsure how this ruling will affect Whistler's development.

the expectation governance leaders had that it was the responsibility of First Nations to educate every new council in Whistler. She believed the responsibility lay with every new council to make an effort to learn about the First Nations in the community. She spoke about Whistler's 50-year history and the fact that there was "no employment, no consideration of employment [and] no consideration of engaging at any level" [with First Nations' people].

Shifting demographics

The shift in global demographics, particularly as it related to Whistler's key tourism markets, was regarded as a challenge to the community's ability to proactively respond to critical events. For example, Informant #11 noted that the baby boomers were "progressively less interested in skiing..." Similarly, Informant #21 observed that skiing was "going to be a harder sell to the changing demographics of the ski industry." While he believed Whistler's diversification strategy was a move in the right direction, he warned, "I don't think there's any way to be smug about feeling the future is ensured ...". Informant #9 observed the aging population and the fact that many Whistlerites were leaving for larger centres, such as Vancouver, that had more amenities. She was speaking specifically about the lack of seniors' housing and the inability to age in place. Informant #3 also spoke about changing demographics within Whistler. She observed that many of the long-time residents were permanently leaving Whistler, now that their children had grown up. She noted that many of these families were heavily involved in running some of the volunteer programs in the community, particularly related to skiing and snowboarding and she wondered who would continue these programs in their absence.

5.2.4. Summary: Factors weakening proactive responses

Informants described a variety of factors they perceived weakened proactive responses to critical events. Many informants felt that the current governance focus on the economy was too narrow. They felt the loss of the community's sustainability momentum and the governance system's move to a short-term focus meant that future responses to critical events might be more reactive in nature, and consequently weaken the overall resilience of the community. Informants expressed concern that while

Whistler was focused on diversifying its economy, it was too dependent upon tourism. Informants also expressed concern for Whistler's future responses to critical events because they perceived a growing wealth disparity in Whistler and a lack of concern for First Nations' issues. They worried that Whistler was a bubble and that residents were self-interested, insular and complacent. Some informants felt that Whistler was over-confident in its abilities and that this could cloud its ability to recognize the seriousness of critical events in the future. This was particularly evident in the words of many informants who perceived that sustainability had been taken care of, or that climate change worries had been solved through the building of the Peak2Peak Gondola. Others felt that ongoing growth pressures posed a significant threat to Whistler's long-term resilience, as they believed continued growth would eventually destroy that which made Whistler so attractive.

5.3. Strategies for a reinvigorating the sustainability movement

5.3.1. Introduction

A number of informants stated they believed a resilient Whistler included an active sustainability agenda. Many suggested strategies for reinvigorating the community's sustainability movement and some suggested strategies for ensuring the movement remained resilient into the future. Many informants identified the need for the community's sustainability strategy to be refreshed and repackaged. Others spoke about the importance of skilled and respected leadership for ensuring that the movement remained resilient into the future. A few discussed the importance of partnerships for getting the sustainability movement back on track. However, as previously discussed, not everyone agreed that the sustainability movement had stalled, nor did everyone agree that even if it had stalled that there should be efforts to bring back the momentum. The following paragraphs describe the strategies suggested by informants who wished to see the level of importance of sustainability heightened or re-established in local government.

5.3.2. Refresh & repackage

Many informants perceived that Whistler's sustainability movement was stale and suggested ways to revitalize the movement. For example, Informant #5 suggested that Whistler2020 required a refresh and a repackaging, which could then be promoted to the community through social marketing. Informant #1 suggested that "little quick reminders" were needed with the community to reinforce the awareness of the linkages between the economy, the environment, and society. Informant #29 spoke about the need to refresh the language so that the current council would be more connected to Whistler2020. Informant #5 suggested, "adapting [to] the language of the day and retrenching a little bit..." He also suggested that the community look to the wealth of information and individuals in the field of sustainability for guidance. In a similar line of conversation, Informant #16 suggested that sustainability strategies must use "more generic, broad, appealing language," so that when political changes occurred the "next group" of politicians would be able to carry the initiative forward. She went so far as to suggest that "in hindsight... I think if we had not named it sustainability, we would have been, you know, better off." She elaborated that "buzz words change. The plainer you can be [the better]." Informant #44 agreed and suggested that the word "sustainability" should not even be used. He added that once the policy framework and decision-making structure was in place there was no need to keep repeating the word, which nobody really understood anyways. He believed the better approach was to enable the residents to buy into the need for change, by allowing them to "future cast themselves to a better place and develop actions in the meantime to get to that place."

Informant #28 believed, "[I]t [sustainability] was the same process for too long..." He stated there was a need to "continually re-invent." Similarly Informant #5 stated, "[Y]ou can't run the same model over and over. There's a very short attention span. There's really a need for something new and different..." He went on to add that "keeping on top of ... trends" was important, as was keeping things fresh. Although he noted that a re-evaluation of the community's sustainability plan had taken place, he believed it had taken place too late in the game. Informant #13 observed that because Whistler was "at a different stage of evolution," things probably needed to "change a little bit in order for it to be effective in terms of where we're at." She added that the 2020 strategy had limited delivery outcomes and stated that the community cannot always be

talking about sustainability. She stated that at some point you need “time to implement these things.”

Informant #5 suggested that the messages related to Whistler2020 should have been “toned down and re-contextualized,” and suggested squeezing “in those positive resiliency messages.” He also had advice, perhaps tongue in cheek, for governance leaders to focus on the messages that some members of the community wanted to hear, such as “jobs, prosperity, and growth.” Informant #2 similarly warned that, “in politics ... you can’t stray far from the centre. You’ve got to be centre left, centre right slightly, but not a lot.” Informant #22 suggested keeping sustainability messages simple. He believed people needed to be told clearly what was being asked of them, how much time it would involve, and how much money it would cost. He suggested that progress would be made when people were given a couple of small projects that they could work on. Informant #10 believed that sustainability must be integrated from the top to the bottom and the messaging reiterated. She stated that “if your main goal [is] to do that [implement a sustainability initiative], make sure it trickles down and it’s reiterated again, and again, and again.” On the other hand, Informant #26 stated that Whistler did not need to renew its sustainability strategy. He suggested Whistler would have been much further ahead had it simply focused its resources on “strong action planning.” He believed the money spent on Whistler2020 would have been put to much better use by creating a plan that ensured the community was “moving towards [its] strategic plan.” He added, “I think you need a strong financial policy framework in order to help guide that and turn that into a reality and do it, in such a way that, you know the overall community can live within its means.” Rather than something new and different, Informant #26 suggested that “a plan,” “just like the O.C.P.,” which “people are used to,” would be all that was needed to keep moving forward.

5.3.3. Resources: Human and financial

A number of informants spoke passionately about the need for skilled and respected leadership to help re-invigorate Whistler’s sustainability movement. Leadership in governance, business, and the community was required. For example, Informant #28 spoke about the importance of a “strong governance model with great political leadership” as being key. He added that the sustainability movement needed

people with “personal and organizational energy to make a difference,” as well as “the ability to energize others” and influence provincial and regional agendas. He added that people “must be able to make the tough decisions and those are tough decisions when things are going well and tough decisions when things aren’t going so well.” He believed it was important for leaders to understand the risks, the challenges, and what makes the community successful and added, “You’ve got to make sure that leadership in the resort is still tuned into it [Whistler2020] and is actually using it and understands how it benefits them.” Informant #5 spoke about the importance of sustainability leadership at the local government level. He stated that while it “doesn’t need to be local government ... you can probably see success factors more assured [than] if it came from ... at the higher level.” Informant #44 agreed that the involvement of local government was a critical success factor and added, “local government needs to own sustainability planning implementation. Government needs to be the lead. That’s where the political will, the administrative support and community buy-in comes from.” Similarly, Informant #15 suggested that the sustainability strategy must lie with someone in government who had both influence over the budget, as well as the respect of others within the governance system. She felt that the leadership’s efforts to fight for sustainability initiatives would not be successful unless the leadership was respected within the governing body.

Informant #44 suggested that not only does sustainability implementation require the commitment of human and financial resources at a governance level, particularly as it related to programming, so too did it require commitment from the community and leadership organizations. He suggested that sustainability implementation “needs to be, in and of itself, an engagement tactic and it needs to be constantly refreshed to remain relevant at the neighbourhood level, at the community and stakeholder level.” He felt sustainability implementation was much more challenging and stated:

So you can commit all kinds of time and energy, local government and community resources to developing a plan, turning that plan into action takes just as much resource commitment, if not more ... it’s easy to just say, ‘Okay, we went through that exercise, put it on the shelf and go back to what you were doing before you did the planning exercise.’

In a similar line of conversation, many informants spoke about the importance of corporate memory to ensure sustainability momentum, particularly at the governance

level. Informant #1 perceived that the community was losing its sustainability literacy; although, he believed that literacy still existed at the staff level within the RMOW, at the time of the interviews. Informant #5 advised community groups concerned about sustainability to be concerned about the “political world.” He suggested that “as a strategic future success-building strategy put allies in government. So if there isn’t a champion on council, get one there. You can cultivate that. You need to create the conditions for it, groom the person, choose somebody” in order “to have that voice at the table.” Informant #5 put forward the suggestion of “using high profile athletes as role models and change agents” to enable sustainability momentum. Interestingly, this is the approach that Snowmass Resort had used in Aspen, Colorado. Informant #29 suggested that Whistler needed a “stock of people to draw on,” for their knowledge and their leadership and suggested the WCS compile a list. Informant #5 added that it was important that business be involved and that business leaders were leading by example.

5.3.4. Strong partnerships for sustainability

Some informants spoke about the importance of strong partnerships in regaining Whistler’s sustainability momentum. Informant #28 believed that strong partnerships were critical and suggested that if “new leadership wants to leave their mark and create something new,” they should build upon what is already there, as opposed to tearing it down. He believed “you have to have continuous engagement and as boards change, leaders change, as the community changes, that you’ve always got that opportunity to re-invent it, re-commit it, re-understand it, as opposed to, ‘It’s done and it sits there.’” Informant #39 offered a suggestion for a way to combine planning documents from the past with future planning documents. She suggested balancing Whistler2020 “with other community decision-making concerns.” She elaborated and stated, “The Whistler2020 vision needs to be a longer-term Whistler vision, of which Whistler2020 has an influence but does not solely define all future planning.” Similarly, Informant #13 acknowledged even though there is an “environmental side,” that when dealing with businesses, it’s importance to focus the relationships “on the social and the economical [sides].”

5.3.5. Ongoing education, sharing successes & learning from the past

A number of informants noted the need for ongoing education as a strategy to reinvigorate and enhance the resilience of the sustainability movement. Informant #5 noted, “One of the lessons learned, that we didn’t do well enough, was re-education.” He suggested that a “re-indoctrination of the community’s purpose and vision with newcomers,” would be valuable, particularly given the fact that there was a high level of turnover in resorts. In this regard, he suggested an online tool, “An introduction to Whistler,” or a “Whistler101,” be created to re-engage the community and particularly “key influencers.” Informant #13 agreed that there was a need to engage “those who haven’t been engaged into understanding what this is all about.” She added “there is a will and a support to get Whistler2020 going again for many members of the community.” Informant #28 suggested sustainability should be part of “every board retreat” and that key organizations, such as Tourism Whistler, could then work with its stakeholders to educate them on the fit between tourism and sustainability. He observed that it takes time, energy and the commitment of senior leadership and added, “If senior leadership is not involved in those discussions, it isn’t going anywhere.”

Beyond re-educating the community, many informants felt that an opportunity existed for Whistler to share its sustainability successes and challenges with the world. For example, Informant #27 suggested that a “huge opportunity” existed to turn Whistler into a sustainability education centre. He stated, “People should come to Whistler ... to learn about sustainability and community engagement and so on. We have the infrastructure. You don’t need to add anything.” He noted that it just needed seed funding to get it off the ground. Informant #29 had a similar suggestion. She believed that the WCS should look beyond its regional focus to attract “... some of those brains and some of those leaders” in sustainability through educational courses. Informant #2 suggested that people “want a soulful experience in nature” and that the community could “become key influences.” He added that Whistler could play a role “in bringing people from all over the world here, to play here, to connect, and to learn something from us, and for us to learn something from them...”

In a related line of conversation, many informants discussed the need to learn from past experiences. For example, Informant #13 stated, “there’s a lot of lessons to be learned from the past and we’ve got to figure out, as we move forward ... so we don’t make the same mistakes again.” Informant #20 also spoke about the importance of evaluating and learning from past experiences stating it was important to not “stand still for any length of time.” He stated, “It’s being proactive and learning and I think it’s understanding what you could have done differently.” Others gave specific examples of learning from past experiences, and interestingly, many of these examples were drawn from the experiences of other resort communities. For example, Informant #31 recalled a past council’s site visit to Aspen in the early 1990s to learn about their “warm bed”¹⁹ challenges. Similarly, Informant #9 spoke about learning from the experience of Vale, Mammoth and Aspen in terms of their affordable housing challenges and how governance leaders then used that knowledge to create affordable housing in Whistler.

5.3.6. Summary: Strategies to reinvigorate sustainability movement

Informants who wished to see Whistler’s sustainability movement reinvigorated suggested a variety of strategies. Many felt that in the past things coasted along for too long and that people became bored with sustainability. They suggested there was a need to refresh and repackage the sustainability messaging. In this regard, informants suggested the use of generic language and toned down messaging. Informants also felt that there was a need to educate and re-educate people on sustainability, particularly because of the high-turn over of employees. Others spoke about the need for strong partnerships between the governance leaders, businesses, and the community at large. Informants also spoke about the importance of strong governance leaders leading the sustainability charge, and understanding sustainability and why it was important to Whistler. Many felt that the governance system must ensure that the corporate memory related to the sustainability movement be maintained, so that lessons learned would not be forgotten.

¹⁹ The concept of “warm beds” is often used to describe the situation in resort destinations where the accommodations are utilized more frequently than just as weekend vacation retreats.

5.4. Strategies for enabling community resilience

5.4.1. Introduction

As this section builds upon the informants' perceptions of Whistler's strengths that enable proactive responses in times of critical events, only those strategies that extend past findings are discussed in this section.

5.4.2. Good governance & good leaders

A number of informants spoke about the importance of good governance, which they often defined as "strong" governance. Informant #17 felt a system of strong governance, reinforced with strong leaders was important for community resilience. She also spoke about this as it related to boards of directors and councils and suggested that all governance leaders must understand the importance of decision-making. Informant #28 stated that governance leaders must "understand the risks...and seek out the "complementary opportunities that further our goals as a tourism economy." Informant #22 believed the governance system must not be "afraid of change." Some informants identified preferred characteristics of governance leaders. For example, Informant #19 believed governance leaders must have "a greater good in mind." Informant #29 suggested that leaders should "have the charisma, the smarts," and be "thoughtful," in order to rally people around a long-term vision. A number of informants spoke about the importance for governance leaders having the courage to make tough and, frequently, unpopular decisions. Informant #24 stated, "you need to have a council that is willing to take the criticism and [have] the resistance when they're faced with a decision about adding whatever amount of density to a certain area..." Informant #42 stated, "You do need some leaders and visionaries." He added, "I think Whistler has probably more than its per capita share of visionaries and leaders that have a vision that is aligned and that resonates with lots of people."

Many informants discussed the importance of electing "good" people to municipal government. For example, Informant #38 spoke about the importance of influencing and "finding the right people for the team..." Informant #31 stated, "It's so important to have that quality in your council and good people..." He added that they should be "strong

and respected community leaders.” Informant #28 suggested that governance leaders “must have the personal and organizational energy to make a difference and the ability to energize others in order to get them to move in a specific direction.” Informant #19 also spoke generally about the importance of decision-making that benefits the community over the long term, as opposed to decisions made for the purpose of getting re-elected. Informant #21 believed the community should strive “to elect good people who aren’t all about lining their own pockets,” but warned that politicians would be wise to acknowledge the importance of community engagement.

A few informants spoke about governance leadership as it related to the Province of BC. For example, Informant #28 suggested that the province must take a leadership role “in terms of making sure it [Whistler] just doesn’t become another community ... like the lower mainland and they have the capability of influencing that.” He warned that the provincial focus was often “very short term,” and often takes the perspective that “any development is good development.” Informant #17 spoke about the importance of involving youth in governance, as a means of enhancing community resilience. She wondered if perhaps it was the “annoying or old” governance structures that kept them away; however, she added, “When they’re interested and you spark their imagination, they do get involved.” She suggested that it was important to figure out what motivated them and how they were motivated. Similarly, Informant #24 spoke about the importance of youth getting involved in the governance system. He spoke about the importance of having a balance of leaders representing “income diversity” and “age diversity,” and added “then you’ll benefit from the wisdom of the older folks and the enthusiasm and vigour of the younger ones.” A few informants suggested governance leaders must not lose sight of the community’s values. Informant #5 warned about ensuring that the community’s values were not ignored in the interests of “short-term popularity.” He added that if the community had a strong set of values “we’re not going to drop our drawers for the highest bidder or the carrot that somebody dangles in front of us.”

5.4.3. Good planning, strategies & policy documents

Many informants felt that good planning documents stand the test of time and as such are a resilience enhancing strategy. Informant #7 noted that Whistler’s history with

good planning documents goes right back to the creation of the RMOW Act,²⁰ in 1975, and legislation that provided Whistler with a different set of tools required to manage a resort community. Informant #29 observed that Whistler had made “some really good planning decisions,” as it related to housing and the growth cap. Informant #33 spoke generally about the importance of policy documents and noted that for the first time Whistler was in the process of developing a policy on how it would handle its cash reserves. Informant #28 also spoke generally about the importance of having a “strong financial model,” for enabling community resilience.

Informant #31 spoke about the importance of “long-term planning” that the community “buys into.” He stressed the need for “constant reviews and consultations, with both the electorate and stakeholders,” to “create continued support for those policies.” Many informants mentioned Whistler’s affordable housing strategy as an example of long-term planning that was contributing to the community’s resilience. Informant #12 believed that Whistler’s “success is tied to a local workforce.” Similarly, Informant #33 observed the benefits of ensuring the workforce could afford to live in the community in order to have “a real town.” She stated, “[I]ts good for the resort, for the operations of the resort, that the firefighters and the policemen and the teachers and so on live in the resort...” She added, “82 percent of our residents live here in Whistler.” Informants mentioned other planning documents they believed were critical in ensuring Whistler’s future resilience. For example, some spoke about the EPI and its focus on moving the community toward a more diversified economy, including weather independent attractions or “poor weather risk mitigation,” as noted by Informant #1. Informant #9 felt that the EPI brought the various groups together to “talk about a shared future and ... where we want to go.” She added that the EPI ensured Whistler continued to be competitive. Some felt the EPI was a good model for partnerships, as well as for clarifying the community’s required direction. The OCP was also mentioned by a number of informants as an important policy for enabling a more resilience future. Some informants spoke about the OCP in terms of it addressing Whistler’s future without

²⁰ The Resort Municipality of Whistler Act was enacted in the spring of 1975 by way of a special statute. The Act enabled Whistler property owners and residents to elect a mayor and three councilors. The Province appointed its own councilor who retained veto power, oversaw financial issues and ensured that the Province’s interests were maintained (Pique Newsmagazine, 2000).

growth. For example, Informant #26 stated that “the OCP was a step in the right direction,” in terms of acknowledging “the end is here [referring to the end of growth].” Some informants spoke about the importance of ensuring that the community’s various plans were integrated. For example, Informant #29 suggested that the community’s OCP should be integrated with a resilience or sustainability strategy. Despite the fact that the community, generally speaking, seemed to be suffering from sustainability fatigue, many informants felt it was important for the community to have a sustainability policy.

The community’s efforts to control growth, through the bed cap policy, were considered to contribute to resilience. Informant #32 believed, “growth is inevitable, so let’s plan it.” Informant #37 noted that he was a “strong free enterpriser,” but added he believed that Whistler needed a bed cap to ensure the quality of Whistler’s experiences. He noted, “[Q]uality is probably easier to manage with fewer guests than more and added, “There’s no God-given right that everybody has to be able to go to Whistler.” Informant #35 noted the importance of the bed cap for ensuring that Whistler was not paved from “side to side.” Informant #1 felt that Whistler’s “growth management plan” and its “urban boundary containment” was the community’s “edge.” Similarly, Informant #34 stated that Whistler’s efforts to control growth actually benefitted business. He believed the limits to growth in Whistler limited business competition, because there was limited space for businesses to set up and that limited the competition.

Others spoke about the need to ensure that plans were strategic. Informant #33 suggested it was important to have a “strategic perspective and then develop policy and proceed in that fashion.” Informant #28 observed:

And it's not just any plan, but it's a plan that's right for the community and right for the time and I think you have to use the plan, whatever it is, to be able to bring the different parts of the community together, so your community, in terms of its residents, has to be able to support it, but also local government has to be able to support it, the partners, and Whistler's success has to be supported.

Others spoke about the importance of flexibility in the community’s plans, and that they should be clearly communicated. For example, Informant #5 spoke about the importance of “developing strong and clear policy in advance of the critical demand or

the crisis.” Informant #31 spoke about the importance of flexibility in planning, stating, “[I]f you have to, you revise them.” Informant #28 stated:

I think you have to look at the environment around you and you have to be prepared to adapt and change and to reposition, but you should always be looking out in terms of where you want to go and anticipating what’s going to happen.

A few informants suggested new policies for Whistler, in order to enhance overall resilience. For example, Informant #19 suggested the need for an incentive program to keep Whistler’s art community alive. He noted the expense of living in Whistler and wanted to see artists “given an opportunity to survive” through some type of an incentive program. Other informants spoke about the need to have strategies in place to ensure residents could age in place, as an integral part of a resilient community. Informant #35 spoke about MAC and its advocacy work to ensure Whistler’s seniors could age in place. He pointed to the need for seniors’ housing projects to enable this. Informant #10 expressed the desire to see “some sort of tool” to replace Whistler2020. She added, “Right now, without Whistler2020, we’re just moving along. We’re dealing with issues day to day as they come up and you can’t do that.”

5.4.4. Scanning & risk management

Many informants spoke about the importance of environmental scanning to more fully understand the trends, as well as the threats, risks, and the opportunities. Some spoke about the importance of scanning on a micro level (i.e. understanding what improvements can be made internally to customer service, or technological advancements such as snowmaking). Others, such as, Informant #20 spoke more generally, such as learning from the past and “looking beyond what we’re doing and seeing what other people have to deal with.” He added that it was important to “anticipate that you could be dealt the same situation or you can identify particular trends and be ahead of that curve, before you get behind it.” A few informants spoke about the importance of risk management as a vehicle to enable greater community resilience in the future. For example, informant #28 stated that he believed Whistler’s major organizations, including the hotels, were undertaking a program of risk management; however, he added, “a community enterprise-wide risk management program is

needed.” He suggested that such a program would enable the “different players” to have a better understanding of what Whistler’s product is, and how it should be enhanced and diversified. This approach would then enable the players to have a better understanding of the risks and solutions for managing the risks. Informant #28 added that mitigation strategies should take a broader community focus on the operational, financial, strategic and human risks, as well as climate change and weather risks. He added that the next step for Whistler should be to develop the plans to address the various risks and suggested the community evaluate “what is working and what is not working and effecting change as required.” He added, “Just because it’s in the plan doesn’t mean you should be doing it if it’s not working.”

5.4.5. Re-visioning

According to Informant #39, “You ask anybody right now what’s Whistler’s great vision, what is Whistler working on for the next decade, to take it to the next place ... nobody can answer that question.” A number of other informants concurred and felt there was a need for Whistler to undergo a re-visioning process, as a strategy to enhance the long-term resilience of the community. Informant #11 observed that the current vision was not “a strong vision in my mind and it needs to be right back at the top, it needs to be redefined, repurposed, so that we know where we want to go in the future.” He also spoke about the community’s current penchant for “navel gazing” and thought it was a sign that a re-visioning process had begun. He noted that the community was questioning “So now why are we here and what are we doing and what’s the future and so that re-visioning is starting to take shape and it’s starting to influence the thinking in terms of the future.” Informant #29 suggested that it was important that any new vision be attached to a process. She observed that the Whistler2020 vision had attached to the Olympic strategy and the OCP decisions. She stated, “it was part of a bigger bundle of institutional requirements and changes, so there was something to hook onto. Otherwise, it would have just floated.” Informant #32 believed Whistler’s vision needed to be “revisited in terms of diversification.” She added, “Maybe it does need to be updated ... consolidated perhaps or re-freshened up.” While many informants felt a re-visioning would be helpful, some felt the community would not be in support of such an exercise. They noted that a lot of time and effort, on the part of the community, had

gone into arriving at a common community vision through the Whistler2020. Some noted the cost of that exercise and expressed the fear that another re-visioning process would be greeted with ambivalence and/or derision.

5.4.6. Controlling growth

Despite the challenges Whistler faced in controlling growth, as previously described, many informants believed that doing so was fundamental to enabling and ensuring Whistler's long-term resilience. Informant #42 believed that the conversation about Whistler's growth/no-growth predicament needed "to be a front and centre dialogue..." Although Informant #31 stated, "Excessive growth," will eventually "destroy the quality of life that you're here for," Informant #42 observed, "Whistler isn't against expansion or growth." He went on to state, "It [growth] has to be intelligent, it has to align with our vision, and it has to align with the community plan and it can't cannibalize something else." However, many informants felt that Whistler had already gone beyond its growth capacity and that the community was, indeed, over-built. These informants spoke about the importance of controlling future growth and also acknowledging that further growth was no longer viable. Informant #1 spoke about the need to control growth, because the alternative is "sprawl and sprawl and sprawl." He added that Whistler "has to feel like an escape" and warned that tourism destinations must keep this notion of escape "in mind when they're making those sorts of development decisions." On the other hand, Informant #1 noted that there is a price to be paid by controlling growth and that is the "upward pressure on the housing."

A number of informants spoke about the need to delink physical growth from economic growth, as a strategy for enhancing and enabling community resilience. Informant #1 stated that Whistler is striving to "delink physical growth of the resort with continued economic growth of the resort." He added that while no one truly understands a "steady state economy," he believed Whistler understood "it a little better than most places." He suggested that Whistler could grow its economy by focusing on improving guest services and experiences, which would not require physical growth. Indeed, a number of informants suggested the need to focus on quality customer service as a resilience strategy. Informant #39 suggested Whistler had an opportunity to become a "model resort community in terms of how we deliver customer service, how we engage

with our guests, how we engage as a community... It's how we approach our business and how we approach our future that maybe becomes the next vision to get us there."

Some informants suggested organizational resilience strategies. For example, Informant #3 spoke about the constant pressure WB is under to have something new for "bragging rights." She observed "they're putting in more lifts this year, so those lifts cost a lot of money and they've got to be maintained..." She suggested, "I think it would be better to make what you've got better, than to keep expanding, expanding, expanding." Informant #10 questioned the bed cap as the basis for deciding the size of Whistler. She suggested that the bed cap should be "...based more on what our resources are in the community ... How many people can live here on the water and the energy and the food that we have access to locally? So if we had to survive completely on our own, what can Whistler sustain?" Informant #24 called for regulations to create nodes of development that would then be surrounded by a rural area with parks and wildlife, as opposed to creating more roads. He used the SLRD corridor as an example, noting the development along the highway. He felt it was much better to develop "...functional nodes and protecting in between and really putting a cap on what can happen in between."

5.4.7. Communication, engagement & knowledge

Many informants spoke about communication and engagement as tools for enabling community resilience. Informant #7 spoke about the importance of going out into the community to identify issues and priorities, as well as to discover what the community sees as opportunities. He added that the community's answers should then be incorporated into governance responses and actions. Informant #30 believed it was important to let go of the silos and to communicate "a common vision." Informant #32 suggested the need for a "community awareness program." She believed such a program should concentrate on moving Whistler in a new direction, including consideration of "the aging demographic," "small business," "diversification and authenticity." Informant #7 warned that if governance leaders do not engage the community, they would lose their trust. He added that it "takes a lot longer to get their trust back" and "it's much easier to stay in touch and stay engaged." Informant #27 also

spoke about the need for engagement with the general public, but he believed the responsibility lay with the public. He stated, “We have to educate ourselves.”

A number of informants spoke about the importance of knowledge as a community resilience factor. Informant #8 believed that “access to knowledge based learning ... and diversity in knowledge and ideas, infrastructure,” creates resilience, particularly as it related to the ability of the community to “bounce back.” He added that sometimes one part of a system may not be working very well, but diversity enables other parts of the system to continue functioning. Many informants discussed metrics as a strategy for enabling community resilience, particularly as it related to providing the community with knowledge. While informants spoke about the importance of the data collected through the community’s Life Survey, Tourism Whistler, as well as the metrics collected by the WCS, most spoke about metrics in terms of economics. Informant #40 suggested that the community needed to use the data collected from the metrics to “set policy that leads towards a successful resort and a successful community.” Informant #20 spoke about the importance of the community having a firm understanding of Whistler’s economy and what drove it. He, along with many informants, credited the EPI work with enabling this understanding. He added that metrics enabled the community to determine what services needed to be improved upon. Informant #33 felt that quarterly financial reporting through the Corporate Action Plan and the Corporate Work Plan ensured accountability and transparency.

Informant #6 felt the community could be doing a better job collecting more in depth metrics. In this regard, he suggested that there was a wealth of data stored in the business transactions of each business, which could help to determine “the number of people that come up and go back, but don’t stay here, what they spend and what their impact is...” He suggested such data would help the community understand if it was going “in the right direction.” Informant #10 also spoke about the need for more metrics; however, she suggested collecting data related to the carrying capacity of Whistler. While she acknowledged that the community had limited resources for collecting such data, she believed such data would make “sure that people from the lowest economic denominator to the highest are living within a comfortable range.” She added that metrics were the way to ensure that the community was moving towards its vision.

5.4.8. Partnerships, collaboration & capacity building

Many informants spoke about the importance of partnerships, collaboration, and capacity building in terms of key success factors for enhanced community resilience. For example, Informant #5 stated partnerships “enabled us to develop our relationships to gain trust in each other (meaning the RMOW, WB, TW, and the Chamber).” Informant #7 added, “the partnerships contribute to Whistler’s resilience, in that we are sharing resources, sharing strategies.” Informant #23 warned, “that as soon as we become protectionist and siloed ... we’ll fail.” Informant #28 stated it’s important to “try and harness the capabilities of each partner.” He added that partnerships were important when things were going well and even more important when things were not going well. In a similar line of conversation, Informant #19 suggested that it was important to find “like-minded organizations ... and like-minded people in the larger, more powerful, more significant [organizations] that have the ability to keep you relevant.” However, he warned, “I think too often organizations try to find like-minded organizations and they just kind of talk and stay ...” Informant #30 in speaking about capacity building observed that Whistler was now “more accepting” of looking for “outside input and knowledge” and acknowledged “we don’t have to do it all ourselves.”

Informant #6 spoke about partnerships from a different perspective. He observed, “[T]he voice [of the tourism industry] isn’t as strong as the auto industry or the lumber industry ... or certainly not the oil [industry]” and suggested the need for tourism organizations across the country to work together. He added that it was important to “make the higher level of government aware of how significant tourism is ... and the general public as well.” Similarly, Informant #5 observed that Whistler was “entirely dependent upon the goodwill of senior levels of government,” and added that it was advisable for governance leaders to talk “their language.” He made this comment in terms of Whistler’s dependence upon provincial funding. Informant #12 spoke about the importance of “getting our message across of what the issues are” to the Province of BC. He added, “And the more that we can engage them and invite them to the collaborate conferences [the better].”

A number of informants spoke about *One Whistler*, as an illustration of the level of collaboration possible within the community and as a resilience enhancing strategy.

Informant #38 noted the formation of *One Whistler* coincided with the partnership formation between RMOW, WB, and TW. He added, “[T]he whole idea was to have *One Whistler*, meaning we all work together as one entity and we thought that was a competitive advantage over other resorts...” Similarly, Informant #42 spoke about the community’s long history with collaboration. He stated, “[T]his resort town has a history of a one-team, one mentality, team effort philosophy and that has been probably the biggest thing from a governance perspective.” He added that the group shares “key metrics and then they talk about the issues they’re experiencing and then we look for ways to collaborate and kind of ease the pain [in order to move forward].” Informant #34 spoke about a mindset in the community. He felt the merger between Whistler Mountain and Blackcomb Mountain “strengthened the community in terms that it had a direction.” He added, “I think it just gave a strength to the mindset of the local community.”

Others spoke about *Team Whistler* as another example of collaboration. Informant #42 recalled the commitment to ensure everyone who should be so was at the table, that all opinions, all voices needed “to be present and heard.” Informant #38 stated that the CEO of WB sat on the Builder’s Association board, as did one councillor from the RMOW. He added, “...generally speaking, everyone feels like they’re on Team Whistler up here.” Informant #23 stated, “...I actually think of us as a corporation of 9,900 employees, because everybody here is actually employed by and directly impacted by this thing called Whistler ...” Informant #33 spoke about the value of working collaboratively with partners, including “our partners in the corridor.” Informant #28 agreed that the collaboration must extend beyond Team Whistler. He spoke about the importance of collaboration within the Sea-to-Sky corridor. Informant #20 spoke about the importance of collaboration and added that it was important to have clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each of the resort’s partners. He added, “the ability to proactively respond to critical events ... comes back to working collaboratively with the different key partners that we have.”

Informant #5 believed that capacity building within the community was a resilience-enabling strategy. He stated it was important to “know where the champions are” within the partners and to cultivate those champions; however, he warned to not “overuse them.” He added that Whistler “probably would not have achieved the same level of success if [the governance leaders of the day] hadn’t engaged the early adopters

in this community.” Similarly, Informant #16 spoke about the importance of capacity building in the community, observing that in terms of the Whistler2020 task forces. She believed that it was through the task forces that individuals became familiar with the sustainability lens, which they could then take back and apply in their own organizations. Informant #22 worried about the lack of capacity building as it related to females. She observed that despite the high level of women working in the tourism industry in Whistler, comparatively speaking, there was a lack of women in senior and leadership positions.

5.4.9. Recognizing vulnerabilities

A number of informants suggested that Whistler must first acknowledge that it is vulnerable before it can begin to address its vulnerabilities. Others, such as Informant #16 perceived that Whistler was well aware of its vulnerability, pointing out that the community has taken great strides to address vulnerabilities. Informant #22 also perceived that Whistler had addressed many of its vulnerabilities. She recalled the snowless winter of 2005 when the community first acknowledged its vulnerability to the weather. She observed that since that time Whistler had taken great strides to develop a range of weather independent activities and felt that Whistler was a leader because of its ability to plan ahead. Many informants believed that a good place for Whistler to begin addressing its vulnerabilities was through self-reliance. For example, Informant #5 suggested that the best place for Whistler to begin was just to ask, “What do we need to do to survive into the future?” Other informants spoke about self-reliance in terms of buying locally. Informant #32 discussed what she called a “strong movement in Whistler to buy-locally,” and spoke about the importance of developing “a small, friendly, unique west coast experience,” along the SLRD corridor. Informant #39 discussed the need to educate people on the importance of buying locally, observed that in making their “run” to Costco in Squamish “people don’t think about the impact.”

5.4.10. Innovation, experimentation & education

According to Informant #1, it is the passion of Whistler’s residents that drives innovative solutions. Informant #22 spoke about innovation in terms of “going out on a

limb,” and added that in doing so you often “make mistakes and [you often] make a complete fool of yourself.” She felt the willingness to go out on a limb was part of the Whistler “mentality.” Informant #26 spoke about the need for innovation and agreed “Whistler tries hard at doing that” and added that Whistler was “an excellent example of trying to find innovation...” A number of informants spoke about innovation as it related to diversification. For example, Informant #4 stated that innovation can buffer the community during tough times, but he felt it was important that “our innovation planning actually takes advantage of those great years.” In other words, innovation planning should be proactive as opposed to being reactive. Informant #27 spoke about the willingness to experiment as a resilience enhancing strategy. He provided an example in the decision to replace the community’s hydrogen buses with a fleet of diesel buses. He stated, “[I]f we didn’t do something like that we would never move ... we’d never push that big boulder up the hill.” He added that it was a great project that enabled learning and stated, “innovation builds on innovation.” Informant #19 observed the importance of research and development as enabling experimentation. He warned, “[W]e have to try to remember that some things that don’t have immediate economic results are important too.” He added that while the desire for economic “immediate wins,” is a legitimate desire, the importance of “research and development” must not be overlooked. He suggested that the community needed “to recognize that R & D is critical,” as well as the need to experiment and develop “new things.”

Many informants spoke about education as a resilience strategy, from a variety of perspectives. For example, some spoke about the importance of the RMOW drawing upon expertise both from within and external to the community as a means for enabling community resilience. Informant #20 spoke about the importance of recognizing and utilizing local expertise to assist Whistler in really understanding the issues facing the community. Informant #33 also noted the importance of “getting as many brains around the table as possible, so that we make the best and the best-informed decisions we can.” Informant #39 suggested creating “a culture that understands resilience ... and from there you start building plans that allow you to be resilient.” She described such plans as “alternative plans for if certain things were to change.” Other informants spoke about education in terms of community education, employer education, and governance education. For example, Informant #30 spoke about the benefits of governance training

at the municipal level and suggested it is important to know “this is what your role is, this is how you should operate.” She added that she believed there was now more focus on ensuring leaders had stronger governance knowledge, particularly as it related to decision-making and “understanding how things work.” She was referring to the municipality’s governance courses, which ran twice a year. Informant #39 believed Whistler’s future depended upon delivering exceptional customer service and suggested a program similar to the community’s Spirit Program, but focused on educating employers.

5.4.11. Diversification

Most informants believed the community’s movement towards diversification was part of the move to create a more resilient community. In the words of Informant #24, “diversity breeds resilience.” Informants observed that the move toward diversification was driven by a number of issues, including changing climate, changing demographics, changing markets, et cetera. Informant #6 spoke about the decision to diversify as a “conscious decision” to be not only “an international ski area,” but also an “international all-season resort.” Informant #8 stated that the drive to diversify Whistler’s economy “really started around 2000-2001.” He noted that it was around this time when things started to really change, recalling the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on September 11th, 2001 and fluctuations in the exchange rate. Informant #2 noted that Whistler was well positioned to diversify, given “You can have winter here and summer here and the lushness of being near the Pacific Ocean ... the flora, fauna, the geology, geography here is second to none.”

A number of informants spoke about diversification as a resilience strategy for addressing weather-related challenges. For example, Informant #20, speaking about the lack of snow in late 2013 and early 2014, equated the community’s drive to diversify as “weatherproofing” the community. Informant #42 stated, “...how we build for the future is to put more and more emphasis on weather-independence.” Informant #42 pointed to the success of the community’s past diversification efforts by noting the shrinking shoulder seasons (spring and fall). While certainly there was a need to keep things fresh with new product offerings, Informant #13 warned that things must be kept fresh for residents too. She observed, “...when you live here year-round, it’s kind of, ‘Oh, it’s that

again.” She added, “[I]t would be really nice to have something else that isn’t just festivals and events that you can engage in.” Informant #13 spoke about the need for the community to determine its priorities, including whether or not the focus should be entirely on tourism. She believed there were educational opportunities that added value to the community’s tourism focus and should be part of a diversification plan.

Informants spoke about a variety of other resilience enhancing strategies that were under way in Whistler at the time of the interviews. For example, many informants noted the community’s desire to more fully develop its cultural tourism offerings. Informant #38 spoke about diversification in the SLRD corridor, and its benefits for Whistler’s diversification. Informant #32 suggested that Whistler could become a medical tourism destination, given the fact that it already had “a lot of the infrastructure in place to support health tourism.” However, a number of informants warned that diversification strategies must align with tourism. A few informants referred to this as *sticking to our knitting*. Informant #11 warned that diversification should “not compete against tourism,” but rather “complement tourism.” He suggested “soft industry,” is a good fit with tourism. Informant #13 suggested that diversification should be focussed on “providing opportunities for people to be outdoors, because that’s why people come here.” She spoke about the opportunities to develop a post-secondary educational institution as a means to diversify the community’s economic base. She stated that diversification helped buffer the community in periods of tourism downturn and created “a little bit more resilience.” Other informants spoke about the Audain Museum, contending that it would further cement Whistler’s draw as a cultural tourism hub, and was a means to diversify the tourism product.

Informant #25 spoke about diversification from a different perspective. He believed there was an evolution underway in terms of accommodation needs in Whistler. Rather than condo type accommodation focused on those staying for two weeks, he believed there was a need for accommodation to house people, including multi-generational families, for three to six months of the year. Informant #2 spoke about the need to diversify Whistler’s markets, which he believed must include a strong regional focus. He observed, “we need more international guests because they spend more money here and we’re always working on that, but in a downturn, it’s the regional market that gets you through it.” Informant #28 spoke about the need to diversify the tourism

product. He observed that “now, the sophisticated visitor is coming to do at least five or six things and you’ve got to make sure that you have the range of things that they’re looking to do...” Informant #34 believed that Whistler Blackcomb would have to diversify “in terms of buying outside businesses elsewhere or having to grow with backcountry development...” He added that there was now more demand by people to go into the backcountry to do touring, such as cross-country skiing. A couple of informants also spoke about the importance of small business diversification as a vehicle for enabling community resilience. Informant #34 expressed concern about the number of “big brand stores,” and suggested owning a portfolio of small businesses as a diversification strategy for small business owners.

While many informants saw the community’s move toward diversification as a strength, some informants worried that diversification can also be a weakness. For example Informant #5 stated, “Yeah, diversification has become a mantra in the same way that jobs, growth, and prosperity have...” He added, “But diversification isn’t a panacea. It’s not a guarantee and diversification by rights should conform to the shared economic vision of the community to avoid the risk of undermining the resort’s economy.” Specifically, he was concerned that diversification would mean “more people, more cars in the wrong places and that unwelcome environmental and social impacts could result from an ad hoc economic diversification strategy.”

5.4.12. Revitalizing and redevelopment

Many informants believed that Whistler faced a future with little to no growth, in terms of infrastructure development and expanding Whistler’s boundaries. As such, they felt its future resilience depended upon revitalization and redevelopment of existing infrastructure. As Informant #5 warned, “It’s not about adding new stuff to the mix, it’s about refining and enhancing, if you will, the viability of the business model that we’ve created.” Informant #40 stated that the next round of development would be redevelopment. He had a few suggestions for Whistler in this regard. His first suggestion related to incentives for property owners, which he believed would encourage redevelopment. Second, he suggested that new zoning regulations would give people “the incentive to tear down” aging infrastructure that no longer met the needs of the community. He was speaking about the future need for greater density. His third

suggestion related to the “the condo associations ... and the property management companies,” which he believed must “begin to accumulate reserve funds that can then be used” for property repairs. Informant #28 also spoke about redevelopment as it related to the aging condo-hotels. He believed a key resilience strategy was the “maintenance and upkeep of our existing product and infrastructure.” He warned, “If we don’t maintain our product and infrastructure, then we’re not going to present the image and we won’t be ... an overused phrase ... but we won’t be world class.”

Other informants, such as Informant #35 observed, “[T]he city’s taxing system hits the rental product pretty heavy” and suggested slowly moving toward a more balanced commercial and residential tax system. He added that this would enable improvements to the “so-called commercial units.” Informant #28 suggested that the RMOW look at purchasing one of the “accommodation properties and converting it” into a university. He noted that such a move would reduce the number of accommodation units, which would in turn increase the occupancy rate, and ultimately benefit the community. Informant #11 suggested repurposing some of the beds into residential housing in order to encourage more people to live in the village and to “put a different type of magic into the village, where ... you’re rubbing shoulders with the locals.” Although a number of informants identified Whistler’s Phase One and Two land covenants²¹ as an effective vehicle for controlling land costs, which ultimately enhanced the community’s overall resilience, a few informants suggested changes to the covenants. For example, Informant #35 suggested removing the Phase Two Covenant from some properties, which would enable condo owners to remove their properties from the rental pool. This would then raise Whistler’s low accommodation occupancy rate because there would be less rental inventory. As part of a strategy to revitalize and redevelop, a number of informants spoke about the importance of adequate funding of resort destinations, in order to ensure community resilience. While most informants spoke about the necessity of provincial and federal support for resorts, Informant #27 spoke about the importance of the community also ensuring it maintained reserve funds

²¹ The intention behind the Phase I covenant was to ensure “heads in beds,” and avoid a “soulless community,” because no one was home; however, the Phase I covenant was weak and was replaced by the Phase II covenant. Phase II stipulates that owners of condo hotels can only use their unit for 26 days in the summer and 26 days in the winter.

and kept them topped up at “the highest level.” Informant #35 spoke about the importance of the hotel tax, observing that the community now received “probably seven or eight million dollars a year...”

5.4.13. Keeping the history alive & understanding the competition

A number of informants spoke about the importance of keeping the community’s history alive as a resilience strategy. History was spoken about from a variety of perspectives. For example, Informant #42 spoke about Whistler’s history as “a really beautiful story.” He felt it was important to keep the conversations around that history alive, “to pay attention to the elders,” and to remind “ourselves what this is all about...” Informant #21 spoke about the importance of “finding that historical wisdom,” which he contrasted with “short-term, self-interested, what’s-in-it-for-me thinking.” Informant #39 spoke about the importance of not losing the history of Whistler. She noted that “over the next ten years” there was going to be “a major turnover in decision-making in this community.” Other informants, such as Informant #13 spoke about the importance of ensuring people who knew the history of the community remained involved.

A few informants spoke about the importance of ensuring that Whistler’s product was competitive, while others spoke about the importance of understanding whom the competition was and what they were doing. Some informants spoke of this in terms of scanning the competitive environment to see what others were doing. For example, Informant #28 spoke about the importance of having a competitive product, of knowing what the competition was doing, and also of being ahead of the competition. He gave the example of the Peak2Peak gondola as providing the community with “bragging rights for a while.” He suggested, “[W]e have to recognize the changing needs of the consumer” and added that if a resort was not diversified it would lose visitors to the competitors.

5.4.14. Summary: Strategies to enable community resilience

Informants suggested a wide range of strategies to enable community resilience. Interestingly, all of the strategies related to the governance system, or things the governance system could do. No one spoke about community resilience in terms of

individual strategies. Overall, these strategies encompassed aspects of good governance, such as strong leaders who are able to make long-term decisions and tough decisions that may not be popular with voters. Other suggested strategies related to the governance system itself. Informants felt the system must encourage and enable revitalization and redevelopment through incentives like lowered taxes for rental units and changes to zoning regulations. Some felt that the governance system must enable innovation and experimentation, but also keep the history of Whistler alive. It must ensure that environmental scanning takes place, and to understand the risks and vulnerabilities. Informants felt that mitigation strategies must focus on the economy, but also the community at large. Other aspects of good governance, such as communication, public engagement, collaboration, capacity building and partnerships were also considered important to community resilience.

5.5. Roles of key people and organizations

5.5.1. Introduction

The roles that individuals and organizations play in shaping Whistler's self-described *journey toward success and sustainability*, as well as overall community resilience were also examined with informants. The following paragraphs describe their insights in this respect.

5.5.2. General comments

Many informants noted the importance of leaders who had the strength to tackle the tough issues and who enabled strong partnerships. For example, Informant #4 stated, "We need ...thought leaders and organizations that will say it like it is ... [who] will bring their piece to the table and not become insular and siloed." Informant #17 believed that "...everybody has an equal role to play, because without any of those [meaning opinion leaders, organizations] you can't make progress in a strong and coordinated and coherent and successful manner." Similarly, Informant #8 spoke about the importance of leadership generally. He stated, "...leading by example, emulating, exuding positivity and confidence..." Informant #16 also spoke about leadership and

added that leaders must be “vocal champions” who must use “the vision and the framework” as the foundation for “debate and decision making...” Informant #19 believed that people within organizations must “recognize that they have an opportunity to not just go with the flow, [but] to actually try to look around a bit.” Informant #41 believed that the role of key people is “...convening and creating conditions for trust to be built and leaders to emerge.” Others, such as Informant #18 spoke about the role of social non-profits in collecting data and identifying issues and then determining whom to partner with, so that a solution could be brought to the table. Informant #42 stated that it was important that Whistler, as a “collective,” continued to talk about its vision, to clarify and revisit it each year.

5.5.3. Government (Local, regional, provincial and federal)

Many informants spoke about RMOW leadership responsibilities. Informant #4 believed the role of “municipal governments [was] to pay attention to both the R [resort] and the M [municipality] and the interaction between the two.” A few informants indicated that the role of the RMOW included assisting the community determine and achieve its vision [meaning the Whistler2020 vision] and its values, as it related to sustainability. Other informants spoke more specifically and listed a variety of issues they believed the RMOW must be concerned with, such as adequate housing for residents, health care, education, risk and scenario planning, setting policy that enabled and restrained development, driving strategic partnerships, economic development and wellbeing, determining where the money was spent, setting targets, and measuring progress. Many informants stated that the RMOW must make tough decisions that benefitted the community, even if those decisions were not politically popular and that short-term decisions must be made within a long-term context. Some spoke about the importance of creating an environment that enabled business success, transparency, and encouraged the sharing of information.

Others spoke about the role of governance leaders within the RMOW. For example, Informant #28 stated that governance leaders “must have the personal and organization energy to make a difference and the ability to energize others.” He added that they also play a role in “influencing the provincial agenda or influencing the regional agenda” and they must have the ability to make “tough decisions when things are going

well and tough decisions when things aren't going well." He also believed it was important that they "think at a higher, sort of institutional level, sort of strategically." Informant #20 believed that RMOW played a role in keeping the Province of BC informed about Whistler's challenges and "the value of our economy is to them..." He also spoke about the role of the RMOW's governance leaders in anticipating potential political changes in the future.

Other informants were more specific about their perceptions related to the role of governance leaders. Informant #8 believed that the mayor and council's role was "finding the fine art between where the community potentially objectively needs to go to become more resilient and more sustainable and successful." Informant #33 believed that the mayor's role was to ensure that the community trusts its governance leaders. She added that when the mayor and council set that tone, "...it then permeates down ...into the hall, into the staff ... and you start to see a change in the corporate culture." Informant #33 also believed it was important for the mayor and council to set a respectful tone, to "fight hard for what [they] believe in, compromise if [they] need to, collaborate with one another, but be respectful and at the end of the day, make a decision, and move on."

Some informants spoke about the role of the Province of BC as it related to Whistler's success. For example, Informant #12 stated he believed the Province of BC was "...an integral player in the success of Whistler." He was speaking about the proposed Garibaldi at Squamish ski resort. Similarly, Informant #25 believed that the Province of BC played a role in listening to the opposition as it related to various planned projects. He was speaking about other proposed ski resort projects, such as Jumbo. Informant #28 also spoke about the role of the Province in ensuring that the resort market was not oversaturated, "to ensure that this goose that's been laying golden eggs for some time, continues to do so." He later added that the Province played a role in understanding "the demand and the market" and must "provide the necessary support and tools" for Whistler's success. In a similar line of discussion, some spoke about the role of the federal government in assisting businesses success – not hindering them with red tape. Informant #34 stated that governments should ensure that the basic infrastructure was there and maintained, particularly as it related to health and education. He stated, "I do not believe the government should be in business." Rather

he believed they should focus on creating the necessary regulations to ensure fair business practices.

5.5.4. The Business community

A number of informants discussed their perceptions around the role of the business community in Whistler. For example, Informant #10 believed that businesses in Whistler should be playing a role in establishing “hiring practices” and ensuring that workers were housed. Similarly, Informant #34 believed that business must play a role in not only looking after their employees, but also in keeping apprised of what was going on in the community, so that businesses could “voice their concerns ... for the betterment of the community. He stated that the business community should make itself aware of “what’s going on in terms of immigration” and have an awareness of “what programs are available from the government...” ... He added that the business community must make “... sure that they put back in what they’ve made...not just taking it out and taking it elsewhere ... not just for their own personal pockets, to line their own personal pockets.” Similarly, Informant #2 believed that business must “listen to our community, the issues and the values.”

Many informants believed that business must lead within the community. For example, Informant #2 stated, “We have a moral obligation to show leadership in that environment [the ski industry].” He elaborated, “Not to be asked, but to drive what we believe might make a difference” and added, “[W]e have to be accountable on leadership. Great leadership comes from sitting still and listening first...” Informant #22 spoke about the importance of leadership from WB, as the largest employer in the community. She believed the organization must set an example both “socially and environmentally,” including looking after staff housing needs and having good supports in place for staff. Informant #38 believed WB must play a leadership role in sustainability, which he believed included making sure “that [sustainability] agenda is front and centre” with council. Some informants spoke about the CoC, as the voice of business in Whistler. These informants believed that the CoC played a leadership role and must be continually communicate. Informant #34 spoke about the requirement for the CoC to work with government to bring the concerns of the business community forward. Informant #42 noted that the role of the CoC was to ensure that “once the

guests are here, they have an incredibly soft landing with all the businesses that support the guest experience, that the customer service training is exceptional ... and that the members are engaged in that training...”

5.5.5. Non-profits and educational institutions

A number of informants spoke about the role of socially and environmentally focused non-profits, as well as the role of non-profit organizations such as the Whistler Arts Council. Informant #8 believed the role of these organizations was to deliver the services that make Whistler successful, and to also ensure that the organizations “move toward being more sustainable organizations.” Informant #15 felt that environmentally focused organizations, such as the WCS “have an important role” to play and she added that the WCS must “be more creative” in how it engaged with Whistler. She noted that the WCS was playing an important role by inviting speakers to the community. Informant #17 believed WAC played a key role in helping the community build a cultural vision. She added that the non-profits must ensure they have “strong governance,” “strong boards of directors ... or councils,” and that they understand the importance of decision making.” Informants #18 believed socially focused, non-profits played a role in “lobbying for services that aren’t currently here, but we see will be needed within the 10 to 15 years.” Informant #8 was the only informant who spoke about the role of educational institutions. He stated that educational institutions should be “helping to develop a bit of the learning and knowledge foundation required for all community members and the organizations to be more successful and sustainable.”

5.5.6. The media

A few informants spoke about the role of the media. Informant #9 believed the role of the media was to bring recognition of the issues to the community. Informant #6 believed the media plays a role in “providing different opinions and examining positions or directions, whether they’re put forward by the municipality or Whistler Blackcomb or whoever.” Informant #27 believed the role of the media was to apply an “unbiased lens” to educate the community on the various issues. Informant #36 also believed the media played a role in keeping people informed and added “and hopefully by being informed

they care.” Informant #36 believed that the role of media included pushing the municipality to make “sure we’re getting information...” that the municipality may not necessarily want released.

5.5.7. Individuals

Many informants believed the role of Whistler residents was to be informed, to participate, and to help create the community vision. Informant #7 stated that it was important for individuals “to question our vision or policy direction...” Informant #10 stated, “The role of the individual is to ... help come up with that vision and then help government [measure] how you’re achieving that, how you’re moving towards that.” Informant #19 observed the role of the individual was to be informed and to recognize the value of research and development and to understand why lies ahead...” Informant #25 felt that individuals within the community played a role in voicing what they want to the various levels of government. He stated, “So I think it’s bottom up, rather than top down.” In other words it was the individual who enabled the community’s success and sustainability by voicing its needs and wants to the various levels of government.

5.6. Conclusion

Chapter 5 presented the findings related to those factors that informants perceived strengthened and weakened proactive responses to critical events. The factors were discussed both in terms of the governance system and the community. Chapter 5 also presented the findings related to the perceived strategies for reinvigorating the community’s sustainability movement and overall resilience. It also described the roles of key people and organizations. Chapter 6 will draw together the findings from Chapters 4 and 5, as well as relevant literature from Chapter 2, in order to examine some of the more intriguing findings that arise from this research.

Chapter 6. Discussion

6.1. Introduction

This chapter draws together the findings from Chapters 4 and 5 and relevant literature from Chapter 2 to discuss some of the more intriguing findings and implications of the study. Chapter 6 is divided into two sections. The first section begins by providing an overview of Whistler's sustainability movement. Here, the discussion links back to some of the relevant literature, such as path dependence, lock-in, and path plasticity, and discusses the findings related to governance for sustainable development. The second section of this chapter presents some of the more intriguing and interesting findings as it relates to the research objectives, including the factors and strategies perceived to enhance governance and community resilience, critical events, as well as the role of governance leaders. Chapter 6 concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations and contributions.

6.2. Whistler's sustainability movement: Past

The Whistler2020 website explains that people are drawn to Whistler because of the beauty of the natural environment and as such Whistlerites recognize it as their "most important and beloved natural asset". Over the years the community's love of the natural environment led to important environmental and socially-focused decisions, such as the creation of the Whistler Housing Authority, the Village Design Guidelines, and AWARE (Whistler2020.ca, 2011). Perhaps the most important decision has been the resort's attempt to control growth through a bed unit cap. The bed unit cap was imposed during Whistler's early development stage as a policy mechanism to ensure that the overall number of visitors and residents staying overnight in the resort at any one time did not exceed the physical capacity to handle them. The bed unit cap formula was

originally tied to the capacity of the sewage system. In the late 1980s environmental and social concerns about the speed and level of development occurring in the resort led the RMOW to shift from its primary focus on bed cap limits to a search for other tools to better manage growth. This eventually led to the development to a sustainability framework for those purposes. In 2002, Whistler adopted TNS as its framework for defining sustainability and developing a strategy (see www.naturalstep.ca).

In keeping with TNS approach, an early adopter program was established with the RMOW, WB, TW, AWARE, One-hour Photo, and the Fairmont Chateau Whistler. This group launched a community outreach program called, “Whistler: It’s our Nature” to help create awareness and inspire sustainability thinking and action in the community and with businesses. The program entailed a “Train the Trainer” program to increase awareness within organizations, a community symposium on sustainability, a speaker series, and the development of sustainability toolkits for businesses, schools and households. Based upon the success of the program, the community decided to move forward and develop a comprehensive, long-term vision, plan, and process to help them move toward a “future that was rooted in sustainability” (Whistler2020.ca, 2011a). This three-year program, “Whistler: It’s our future,” was tasked with identifying the community’s hopes and priorities for the future and culminated in the creation of the Whistler2020 strategy in 2005.

6.2.1. Whistler2020

The Whistler2020 strategy is the community’s “shared vision and plan for continued success to the year 2020” (Whistler2020.ca, 2011a). It is based upon an extensive community based stakeholder engagement process to ensure the governance of the destination remains adaptable, but focused on emerging internal and external pressures. The strategy was initially endorsed by 54 businesses and organizations, including the RMOW, and it helped set the community’s vision, directions, priorities, and actions with respect to future sustainability. The strategy was “the first comprehensive sustainability plan in North America to use the science-based TNS framework at all levels of development and implementation” (Whistler2020.ca, 2001a).

Whistler2020 strategy is both a policy document and a strategy that demonstrates the community's commitment to a more sustainable future. It is built around the community's strategic vision. Based upon almost three years of community consultation, awareness building and priority setting, the strategy became the cornerstone policy around which Whistler's governance evolved in approximately 2005. It outlined a range of sustainability building priorities that provided the filter through which the RMOW's development and management decisions were made (Whistler2020.ca, 2013; Whistler Blackcomb, 2013b). As evidenced earlier, there was disagreement amongst the informants as to whether or not Whistler2020 remained the community's guiding document. There were also a variety of opinions expressed as to what was missing from the strategy that allowed it to lose strength, including the viewpoint that perhaps it never was a strategy. These perspectives are discussed in the following section concerning the current state of Whistler's sustainability movement and what the future may hold.

6.3. Whistler's sustainability movement: Current

A variety of perspectives were expressed in the interviews concerning Whistler's sustainability movement status, as evidenced in Chapter 4 and 5. Some informants perceived Whistler's sustainability movement to be alive and well, albeit operating at a much lower level of visibility. Others perceived that Whistler's sustainability momentum was temporarily on the backburner, while the community dealt with more important issues, such as Whistler's economy. Other informants observed that Whistler residents had become fatigued with the whole issue of sustainability. Indeed, many informants stated that Whistler's sustainability movement was "dead," a "dirty word," or "fatigued." Some of these informants pointed out that Whistler's sustainability fatigue was reflective of what they perceived as a national fatigue, which is reflected in Canada's federal government's policies related to climate change and the natural environment. While many informants discussed the high level of community participation during the sustainability movement, a few pointed out that only 10 percent of the residents were initially involved and that as the years went by, the percentage of involved residents slowly declined. Further, many observed that those who were involved in the

sustainability movement were already *believers* and so essentially the sustainability movement was *preaching to the converted*. Some informants believed that the majority of Whistler residents did not understand the sustainability movement, and/or were opposed to spending time and money on sustainability initiatives, particularly in the recent challenging economic environment. Despite the variety of perspectives, the overwhelming perception was that Whistler's sustainability focus had mostly disappeared from the community's attention. Interestingly, the findings of Whistler's 2013 Community Life Tracking Survey (RMOW, 2013f) seem to confirm this perception. For example, the survey indicated that only 5% of permanent residents and second homeowners indicated *environmental issues* as the most significant concern facing the community. This is down from 2012 when 14% (2009 = 11%; 2008 = 9%)²² of residents indicated as such.

6.3.1. Sustainability: Misconceptions and disappointments

Many informants attributed sustainability misconceptions to the Whistler2020 strategy as leading to the loss of momentum. The most common misconception cited by informants was that it was focused too heavily on the side of the natural environment. This was an interesting perspective and it links back to the previous discussion about silos. It may also be an indication of the definitional challenges related to the three pillars of sustainability. As one informant stated, it is the language of sustainability with its supposed balanced stool approach that sets up this misconception. He contends that sustainability needs to be approached from an integration perspective, where the economy depends upon a healthy natural and social environment. Indeed, as mentioned, many informants spoke about the notion of silos as it related to the sustainability movement, or the fact that too much attention was paid to the environment and that now the economy had rightly come into focus. In fact, Mayor Wilhelm-Morden voiced this perspective at the all-candidates meeting in the lead up to the 2014 municipal election. One informant recalled hearing the mayor claim that prior to 2011, things were too heavily focused toward the natural environment, but because of the 2011-2014 councils' focus on the economy, things were back in balance. However, my subsequent

²² Air quality in the vicinity of the asphalt plant became a significant issue in 2011-2012, which may have influenced these findings.

analysis of the Whistler2020 action items document (as of January 2010)²³ revealed that only 25 of 577 (4.3%) action items were categorized as exclusively focused on “protecting the [natural] environment” (Whistler2020.ca, 2011b). Approximately 96% of the action items fell under the other four Whistler2020 priorities, or a combination of any of the five priorities (i.e. enriching community life, enhancing the resort experience, ensuring economic viability, protecting the environment, partnering for success). This fact appears to back up the perception of many informants that the communications strategy related to the Whistler2020 strategy was inadequate, and there was a need to more fully educate the community on the nature of the action items connected to the strategy.

6.3.2. Complacency

Some informants attributed the loss of sustainability momentum to what they perceived as complacency within the community. This was another interesting finding, particularly because it stands juxtaposed to another finding that the community has a can-do attitude. However, one informant explained this apparent contradiction connecting the community’s past successes (e.g. hosting the 2010 Olympic Games, affordable housing) to a high level of confidence that Whistler can address any challenges that come its way. She believed a high level of confidence led to a sense of complacency. She explained that many in Whistler had an attitude that sustainability was like a box that could be ticked off the to-do list. For example, the affordable housing issue had been checked off the to-do-list and so too had sustainability. Other informants who spoke about complacency in the community described how Whistler became like a bubble. As one informant described it, some residents were so disinterested in the outside world they often did not pick up their mail for weeks at a time. Indeed, the 2013 Community Life Tracking Survey also indicated a general contentment with life in Whistler. Ninety-nine percent of permanent residents and 94% of second homeowners reported they were satisfied with Whistler as a place to live or spend time.

²³ As mentioned elsewhere, the Whistler2020 actions have remained in limbo since January 2010. No work has proceeded on the action items since that time.

6.3.3. Sustainability: Swinging pendulums and silos

As noted earlier, many informants described sustainability in terms of a swinging pendulum, and that as need be, the community was able to focus on different aspects of sustainability (i.e. environment, economy, or society). This was an interesting finding, because sustainability is often defined in academic and applied literature in terms of a three-legged stool or three pillars: economy, environment, and society, as noted elsewhere. While the intention of sustainability is that each leg or pillar of the stool is to receive the same level of attention and thus the stool is balanced, in reality it may be unrealistic to think that a community can and will address all three pillars equally. Undeniably, some aspects of the operating environment may require a more in depth focus at certain periods of time. Communities have limited budgets and they must choose which issues get addressed and when, within those budget constraints. As noted earlier, sometimes these choices are politically motivated. Indeed, it appears as though Whistler's approach to sustainability had become siloed as many informants observed. According to Rifkin (2012, p. 226), siloed initiatives are "autonomous, self-contained, and unconnected to efforts going on in other departments and agencies." He maintains that such approaches are endemic in governments around the world and adds that siloed thinking "inevitably leads to isolated pilot projects" (p. 227). It is the opposite to the more desired systemic thinking. He adds that systemic thinking is "a difficult task in a bureaucratic environment where there is a strong drive to hold on to turf and protect domains" (p. 227). Indeed, Whistler's current siloed approach to sustainability, suggests a weakness with the sustainability approach generally, and as demonstrated elsewhere (see Markey et al., 2010).

This notion of a swinging pendulum as it relates to sustainability priorities is also indicative of the vagueness of the concept. Such vagueness has been observed in sustainability approaches, such as the *triple bottom line*, in what Wexler (2008) refers to as *strategic ambiguity*. The triple bottom line approach arose as a means "to help focus concerns of those seeking to make business more accountable, transparent and sustainable" (Wexler, 2008, p. 67). Wexler contends that strategic ambiguity enables the conditions for concession and consensus to occur as it draws together diverse views and enables the adaptation of new knowledge; however, he also notes that it protects and buys an organization time before it actually has to act. Similarly, McCool and Moisey

(2008) equate sustainability to a *guiding fiction* and, like Wexler, state that “as long as definitions remain vague” they enable discussions to occur. Indeed, Gill and Williams (2008) draw upon the notion of a guiding fiction to explain how TNS provided a flexible framework to enable sustainability discussions in Whistler. Applying notions of guiding fiction and strategic ambiguity to Whistler’s sustainability movement, it becomes apparent that such notions enabled concessions and consensus to occur in Whistler by drawing together diverse views; however, it also enabled the perspective to take hold that sustainability is like a pendulum and enabled the siloed approach to sustainability that began to take hold in the post-Olympic environment.

6.3.4. Politics & the sustainability movement

As noted in Chapter 4 and 5 many informants attributed the loss of sustainability momentum to a perceived level of dysfunction during the term of the 2008-2011 elected governance team. Informants provided examples of contentious issues affecting the level of professionalism on council during that time period. Many felt that the 2008-2011 council had placed too much focus on the environmental pillar of sustainability and not enough focus on the economic pillar, or had failed to anticipate the importance of keeping the sustainability movement fresh. Other informants described the fear that overtook the community post-Olympics, and the concern that the politicians were not listening and/or were out of touch with the real world. Informants described how the perceived level of council dysfunction combined with a fear that sustainability was a luxury the community could no longer afford and how this helped a new slate of municipal candidates move into position on a platform of fiscal constraint.

Certainly, it is possible that the loss of sustainability momentum would have occurred regardless of the results of the 2011 municipal election as a few informants stated; however, many informants specifically named the 2011 “changing of the guard” as one of the reasons for the loss of sustainability momentum in Whistler. Some described how the 2011-2014 council did not understand or support sustainability spending. Some pointed out that only the new mayor had previous involvement with the Whistler2020 process at a governance level; therefore, the other council members were not emotionally or intellectually connected to it. Some informants stated that governance leaders often try to distance themselves from their predecessors’ policies to carve out

their own governance direction or focus and the EPI document was an indication of this. While some observed that the five Whistler2020 priorities still anchored many planning documents, such as the EPI, others expressed concern that unless an environmentally focused candidate was elected in the 2014 municipal election, the community's sustainability movement would be further eroded.

Indeed, there are a number of indications that point to the loss of sustainability momentum and sustainability fatigue in the community as the 2010 Olympic Games drew closer. For example, the Whistler2020 implementation program was put on hold in January of 2010 and the community task forces were not convened that year in order to allow the community to focus on delivering and recovering from the Games. During this time and into 2011, the WCS busied itself with updating the action items implementation program to draw in sector participation (i.e. accommodation, food and beverage, retail, etc.) and developing action items to accompany projects; however, in late 2011, after the municipal election, the RMOW budgetary committee made the decision to withdraw the implementation budget. The 2014 release of Whistler's 2013 Annual Energy and GHG Emissions Performance Summary seemed to provide evidence of the loss of sustainability progress. The report evidenced that Whistler was no longer on track to meet its greenhouse gas reduction goals for 2020 (see Noel, 2014, July 7). The report highlighted that the community's 2013 energy consumption levels were approximately 16 percent higher than recommended in the RMOW's 2003 Integrated Energy Plan (RMOW, 2014b).

In contrast to the perspectives described above, some informants stated that the demise of the sustainability movement in Whistler was greatly exaggerated. These individuals stated that the sustainability movement, while perhaps less visible, was so embedded in the community's psyche that it would never go away. Indeed, one can find examples to show that the community's sustainability focus is alive, albeit perhaps on life support. For example, shortly after the release of the 2013 Annual Energy and GHG Emissions Performance Summary, as noted above, a communication was emailed from the RMOW on August 6, 2014, describing a new *Residential Energy Assessment Rebate Program*, which would make "it easier for homeowners to reduce monthly utility costs." The program offered homeowners \$250 towards a home energy evaluation; however, the rebate was offered only until March 2015. The RMOW also started its first ever

ecosystem-monitoring program and reported out for the first time in 2014. The report highlighted that while “Whistler’s air, land, water, plants, and wildlife are generally good with no major environmental issues of concern,” human activities were observed to be placing pressure on land systems and threatening biodiversity (RMOW, 2014b). The report called for “the RMOW to implement effective monitoring programs” and suggested that these programs be integrated “into plans, policies and regulations” (p.3). The RMOW also started work on a climate adaptation and mitigation plan in 2014.

In the last informant interviews undertaken in October and November of 2014, Informant #44 stated that Whistler was still focused on sustainability, but just not in the same way. He stated that sustainability was “less overt, less strategic, and more ad hoc, [and] focussed on political priorities rather than a long-range strategic plan.” He added that from 2011 through to 2014, Whistler was “governed and administered from press release to press release.” Informant #45 expressed concern that as time progressed and people retired or were reassigned at the RMOW, the sustainability knowledge and memory would be lost; however, she stated that because Whistlerites care about the environment, there would always be a focus on looking after the natural environment. She felt this concern for the natural environment would take a different form than a sustainability strategy in the future, and added that the word “resilience” had become more common in the Whistler lexicon.

6.3.5. The competitors and sustainability

Many of the perceived current critical events in competing USA destinations, namely Aspen-Snowmass Resort, Colorado and Sun Valley Resort, Idaho, mirrored those in Whistler. For example, changing demographics and markets, both in terms of residents and visitors, were identified in both Whistler and Sun Valley, as were the challenges related to aging infrastructure. The lingering impacts of the 2008 financial crisis were affecting Sun Valley, Aspen, and Whistler. While Whistler informants mentioned growth in the SLRD corridor as of growing concern, both Sun Valley and Aspen were addressing this concern with their “open space” programs. The Open Space program focuses on: 1) the reclamation of land in and around the resorts in order to create green buffer zones that enable a “sense of arrival;” and, 2) creating trails. Sun Valley had taken only initial steps toward developing and implementing a sustainability

strategy. Their *Environmental Awareness* webpage outlines fairly basic sustainability-related initiatives related to water consumption/reduction, recycling, composting, lighting retrofits, and raising funds to care for the surrounding national forest lands (see <https://www.sunvalley.com/environmental-awareness>).

Aspen-Snowmass Resort is located in Pitkin County in western Colorado and is operated by the Aspen Ski Company (ASC). Like Whistler, ASC had modified some of its sustainability initiatives in recent years. For example, ASC recently gave up its ISO 14001 Certification, because of the expense, bureaucracy, and what they claim is a lack of rigour in the program. They were still running the core ISO program, their Environmental Management System, but the monitoring was now undertaken in-house. The ASC had also taken an active political role in lobbying the federal government in the U.S.A. to develop and implement climate policy. They also supported a marriage equity lawsuit in the 10th Circuit Court to enable same-sex couples to marry. As they note in their latest report, "... we like that our simple mission and corporate values take us deep into the messy complexity of the world, and also into new lines of work – not just to methane plants and marriage equity lawsuits, but into education, human rights, art, and public policy" (Aspen-Snowmass, 2014, p.2).

While it is challenging to draw a conclusion that the ASC's approaches to sustainability are more substantive than Whistler's, on the surface it appears that ASC has gone beyond Whistler, particularly as it relates to attempting to influence political policy at the national level. Certainly, Whistler and its competitors are concerned about the long-term sustainability and overall resilience of their resorts, particularly as it relates to the wellbeing of the individuals who make their homes and livelihoods there, as well as satisfying other stakeholders. While sustainability initiatives at the resort level may enhance the over resilience of the resort, such approaches may be hampered in their effectiveness if they are not supported at the national or global governance level.

6.3.6. Back to the beginning

As explained at the outset, I began this research project wondering whether the rumours were true that Whistler was, indeed, losing its sustainability focus and jeopardizing its leadership in this regard. I wondered how a community that had

demonstrated leadership in sustainability planning and implementation, and had spent significant resources and time doing so, could allow its governance leaders to so easily and with little protest, move away from its sustainability focus. I questioned what role had Whistler's governance leaders, and the community, at large, played in this move away from sustainability. Indeed, the findings evidence that the loss of sustainability momentum cannot be linked solely to the changing of the governance guard in 2011. As many informants noted, the community got what it voted for.

Perhaps the most important question to ask at this juncture is what changes occurred in the operating environment such that sustainability no longer holds the prominence that it once did in the community? To help answer this question, it is valuable important to return to the literature and particularly the research of Kingdon (1995). Kingdon suggests that issues fade from agenda prominence when people believe they have solved the issue, and they therefore turn their attention elsewhere. On the other hand, Kingdon (1995, p. 104) observed that failing to address an issue also results in its "demise as a prominent agenda item." He explains, "It takes time, effort, mobilization of many actors, and the expenditure of political resources to keep an item prominent on the agenda." In such cases, Kingdon suggests that governance actors become fatigued by the lack of progress and they believe they did their best. Consequently, the issue is left to fade away, until the governance actors decide to make another attempt at addressing the issue. Kingdon (p. 146) also speaks about a national mood, and observes that governance actors will "sense a national mood" and that this mood will help to elevate certain policy items over other policy items.

As such, Kingdon's research is very relevant to the Whistler's case. Certainly, it is obvious that Whistler did make progress on its sustainability agenda. Indeed, Whistler2020 is still the lens through which other governance decision-making is filtered. Some informants stated that sustainability had been addressed, or they spoke about a perception within the community that sustainability had been addressed. Perhaps the 2011-2014 governance team, likewise, believed that environmental sustainability had been taken care of, and that is why they turned their attention to another aspect of sustainability – the economy. Likely the 2011-2014 governance team was influenced by the national and global concern with the ongoing effects of the 2008 financial crisis. The

2011 pre-election message that Whistler could no longer afford sustainability played upon these concerns.

It is equally important to ask what enabled the development of Whistler's sustainability movement in the first place. As previously discussed, according to some informants many stakeholders in the community were concerned by the decades of development in Whistler and the effects it was having on the environment and social landscape. This concern enabled the sustainability movement to come into focus. Undeniably, Whistler's sustainability movement was also enabled by Olympic money. As such it is possible that once the Olympics were over, the will and the way to advance sustainability initiatives no longer existed in the community (i.e. the pro-sustainability governance leaders were not re-elected in 2011). One cannot overlook the fact that, as many informants stated, the community, at large, did not really understand sustainability, nor did they want to see precious resources allotted to the initiative. Presumably, the community knew that in electing a governance team focused on fiscal restraint, sustainability initiatives would suffer and, indeed, according to many informants that was the intent.

6.3.7. Applying a path dependence lens

According to many informants, Whistler was locked into a growth model of development from approximately the 1960s to approximately 2002, only to apparently shake itself free from those shackles to embrace a more sustainable form of development (see Gill & Williams, 2014). According to these informants, a variety of critical events (e.g. lack of affordable housing, overdevelopment, Dr. Robert's visit) helped push Whistler off its growth path and over the threshold onto a new sustainability path at the turn of the new millennium. However, it is also important to consider that the governance system may not have fully deviated from its growth path. Perhaps, at this point in time, the sustainability movement drew support because it was considered a means to balance the extensive pre-Olympic development that was occurring in the community and a means to ensure lasting legacies. A sustainability path enabled those who were concerned about the extent of development to feel that things were not out of control; rather Whistler was actually in control and benefitting from the development. At the same time, those who were pro-development could ignore the sustainability

movement, as it was not really affecting them. However, as a variety of critical events (i.e. 2010 Olympic Games, the Olympic aversion effect, and the 2008 global financial crisis) affected the economic fortunes of the community, these events led the community to elect an economic-focused council. As stated, many informants expressed the belief that Whistler had reached build-out and, indeed, the now defunct 2013 OCP stated as such. However, some informants believe that Whistler had yet to fully comprehend what that meant or how to maintain a built-out state. Some informants believed that as the RMOW budget becomes increasingly strained there will be pressure to either raise taxes or go back to a growth model that includes new development. It is also likely that BC Supreme Court's ruling in favour of the Squamish and Lil'wat First Nations in 2014 may mean that growth may return to Whistler, as the Nations have stated a desire to develop their lands.

Path plasticity and regional lock-in

Gill and Williams (2014) utilized a path creation framework to understand Whistler's shift from a growth model to one based upon the principles of sustainability in the decade leading up to the 2010 Olympic Games. Specifically, they describe how Whistler was able to draw upon the collective agency of the community to generate support for a new sustainability-focused governance model; however, at the end of the paper, Gill and Williams acknowledge that in the post-Games era things were beginning to shift again in Whistler. They observed that stakeholders were questioning the priorities and programs attached to the Whistler2020 strategy in the post-Olympic era. They suggested that a retrospective path dependency lens might reveal that past sustainability-related events were not "a fundamental break from the lock-in of growth dependency" (p 558). In other words, these events more accurately reflect an example of path plasticity.

According to Strambach and Halkier (2013), path plasticity better explains how actors introduce innovations within a path dependent situation. Indeed, it is possible that Whistler's presumed move toward a sustainability-focus was more an example of Whistler actors experimenting with a new governance approach (sustainability-focused) within a path dependent situation. While a definitive conclusion may be a bit premature at this point in time, this research appears to suggest such a perspective. In other

words, Whistler's move toward sustainability may not have been an indication of path creation; rather, it may have been an example of a brief governance experiment. The experiment was enabled mostly by outside resources (Olympic funding) and as mentioned earlier, it enabled those who were concerned with the level of development to feel that development would not get out of hand. At the same time, the pro-development people were not worried that the sustainability movement would stop development. On the contrary, they only had to look around to see the pre-Olympic development to feel convinced that sustainability fit well with a capitalist model. This finding speaks to the resilience of path dependent processes.

It is also valuable to return to the literature related to regional lock-in. As noted in Chapter 2, Grabher (1993) describes three kinds of regional lock-ins: functional, cognitive, and political. In a lock-in situation, a system becomes entrenched in a mode of operation and is unwilling or unable, because of the behaviour of key actors within the system, to make changes when change is required. Whistler presents evidence of a functional governance lock-in situation. First, there is the presence of a core organization (WB). Second, there is the presence of other organizations (RMOW, TW, CoC), all of which have a close working relationship and, in some instances, personal relationships through long-standing friendships. During the interviews many informants acknowledged WB's power over the community, although, most spoke positively about the relationship between WB and the community. Other informants also spoke about the length of service some key actors have had within those key organizations, and how this enabled a strong collaborative relationship between WB and the other three main organizations. While many informants spoke of these relationships as a *one for all and all for one* mentality, Grabher (1993, p. 160) warns that long-standing relationships between organizations can be problematic. He explains that when long-standing personal connections exist between organizations, the non-core organizations often relegate "boundary scanning" functions to the core organization. Consequently, the non-core organizations suffer from a lack of external information. In other words, they look to the core organization to share with them the results of its boundary scanning functions; however, for competitive reasons that may not always occur, or what is shared may be selective. Applying the characteristics of a functional lock-in to Whistler, we can see that if the RMOW, TW, and CoC relegate their own organizational boundary scanning

functions to WB, then they may not be privy to a broad set of environmental scanning perspectives.

Similarly, we can see the potential for cognitive lock-in with Whistler's governance system. As described in Chapter 2, Grabher (1993) observes that in situations where there are professional relations between firms and, often, personal ties, *groupthink* may occur, which then leads to a common worldview. Again, applying the characteristics of a cognitive lock-in to Whistler, there is a potential for a specific worldview to develop amongst the four main organizations. A number of informants spoke about the presence of *One Whistler*, the collaborative group now comprised of the RMOW, TW, WB, and the CoC. Indeed, many informants spoke positively about the fact that all of the main organizations *were on the same page*. Some informants compared the level of *oneness* in Whistler to other destinations, which they believed were disadvantaged because they lacked a similar level of collaboration. However, in a groupthink situation, current perspectives may not be challenged, while other perspectives may be ignored. As such we can see that a growth model, by way of example, could become the common worldview of the group of four in Whistler. Indeed, it did not appear that any of the four major groups were publically outspoken about the loss of sustainability momentum in the community, nor was there evidence that any of them have spoken publicly about the need to bring sustainability back into focus. Undeniably, there are benefits to working collaboratively as the four organizations are aligned around enabling a strong tourism industry; however, a degree of separation between the four organizations may be warranted to minimize the potential for groupthink and common worldviews, and as a means to enhance the long-term sustainability and resilience of the community.

Of the three types of lock-in, political lock-in is, perhaps, the most apparent in Whistler. In a political lock-in situation, a region seeks to preserve existing and more traditionally based industries, which then hinders the process of restructuring. Grabher (1993) explains that this situation is enabled by cooperative relationships between the various levels of government, unions, professional associations, and industry. If we examine Whistler we can see that there are cooperative relationships between these entities and that further, it does appear that Whistler is seeking to preserve the existing tourism industry. As many informants noted, Whistler has adapted to a challenging

economic situation by focusing in on economic diversification; however, Whistler's diversification appears to be focused, almost exclusively, on tourism-compatible diversification. As a few informants noted, Whistler needs to *stick to its knitting*. Grabher (1993) warns, a concentrated focus on adapting to a specific economic challenge often means increasing levels of specialization, where resources are geared only to that situation and any innovations are also geared to addressing that specific situation. As such the governance system may be decreasing its ability to respond to or cope with unpredictable changes that may come along in the operating environment. In other words, the system loses its redundancy. Redundancy enables social systems to not only adapt to a change in the environment, but also to question whether or not the adaptation to the change is appropriate. In Whistler's case, the concentrated focus on tourism-compatible diversification may mean that governance actors are not questioning whether this focus is appropriate, or whether Whistler should be also considering non-tourism compatible diversification opportunities (such as cottage industries, small-scale manufacturing, industry partnerships, etc.). As Davidson (2010, p. 1142) and other scholars observe, Whistler may actually be reducing its complexity by only focusing on tourism-compatible diversification.

6.4. Whistler's sustainability movement: the future

Whistler's most recent governance approach, with a focus almost exclusively on the economy and tourism-compatible diversification, may not lead to greater community resilience over the long term. Further, if the level of partnerships and collaboration amongst Whistler's four main organizations creates a tendency toward a common worldview and a groupthink mentality, then there is a further risk that other critical events or threats on the horizon may be ignored, or misjudged. Indeed, there a number of possible climate change influenced scenarios that could affect Whistler, beyond a lack of snow. For example, it is possible that flying for pleasure purposes could go the way cigarette smoking has gone and become associated with anti-social behaviour. Flying increases greenhouse gases, which contribute to climate change. Climate change threatens the livelihoods and health of humans and the health of ecosystems around the world. While flying for business purposes may be unavoidable, flying for pleasure purposes is not. Indeed, if the climate change calculations are correct, more of the

world's population will soon be negatively affected by climate change (e.g. rising sea levels displace coastal populations, catastrophic storms damage cities). Flying to Whistler for five days of skiing may become equated with anti-climate, selfish, and/or anti-social behaviour.

Another potential scenario that could threaten the long-term resilience of Whistler relates to peak oil and increases in oil prices, which could lead to changes in vacation behaviour. If the cost of flying rises to the point where those of moderate to upper moderate income can no longer afford to fly, then Whistler may be negatively impacted by this situation. It does not appear as though Whistler has or is considering how it will survive if it cannot draw long-haul travellers to the extent required. While these scenarios represent only conjecture at this point in time, they are not beyond the realm of possibility. Groupthink and common worldviews in Whistler may prevent a similar level of critical thinking as demonstrated here, and increase the likelihood of non-adaptive behaviour and a lack of overall community resilience long term.

In a related line of contemplation, a number of informants perceived that Whistler is unprepared for the build-out situation it now finds itself in. If we consider that Whistler was just entering a new phase – build-out – it is reasonable to assume that Whistler was at a critical fork in the road. Undeniably, there will be pressure to return to a growth path in the future, as a capitalist system appears to demand continued growth (McMurtry, 1966 refers to it as “The cancer state of capitalism”). Certainly, the Squamish and Lil'wat First Nations would like and deserve to be included in the Whistler economy. At the same time, no one really knows what the steady-state path will entail or how Whistler will prosper on such a path. Indeed, the path dependence literature points to the improbability that will occur, as the costs of changing paths can be financially, structurally, and psychologically insurmountable. Perhaps the time has come for the community to take a step back and contemplate what type of a community it wants to be in the future. While this process was undertaken during the Whistler2020 process, more than a decade has passed. As many informants suggested, perhaps it is time for Whistler to update its vision. Such an undertaking will require strong leaders drawn from all sectors of the community, in order to regain Whistler's past momentum. These leaders will need many skills, but most importantly they will possess the wisdom to understand the imperative for long-term thinking and decision-making. Undeniably, their

biggest challenge will be garnering the committed support of the community, in times of prosperity and in times of challenge.

Framing Whistler's future from a community resilience perspective, rather than a sustainability perspective, may help it see more clearly how a steady-state economy will and could function. At the minimum, a resilience lens may help the community answer the following questions: 1) What does the community envision for its future? Has that vision changed from the Whistler2020 vision? 2) Is the community supportive of return to growth, and if so, how can growth be better managed? 2) If the community is not supportive of the shift back toward growth, what needs to happen? 3) Is there a way to combine Whistler's economic imperative with a collective resilience imperative, through projects such as redevelopment and economic diversification that looks beyond tourism? 4) Is there a way to involve the First Nations without returning to a growth model of development? 5) Would a governance system focused on good governance and sustainability principles ensure community resilience long-term? In order for this type of resilience thinking to begin, Whistler's governance leaders must first collectively agree that a growth path cannot be maintained long term. Only then will they be able to initiate the required steps to ensure a more sustainable and a more resilient path for Whistler.

6.5. Sustainability-focused governance

The quest for more sustainable forms of living has led to a search for those governance models that may be more likely to instigate and sustain sustainability practice. As discussed in Chapter 2, governance for sustainable development systems and good governance principles are proposed as concepts and models that may enable such improvement. However, there has been little progress in determining an optimal governance model that is flexible enough to be molded to meet the needs of individual communities, yet inflexible enough to withstand the pressure of the various shocks and stressors that will undeniably come its way. Indeed, one only has to look to Whistler's experience with its sustainability-focused governance system to fully understand this challenge.

By the time I concluded my research, I believed Whistler's governance system was in the process of a slow transition away from its sustainability focus. While it is true that the Whistler2020 strategy was still the foundational document guiding governance-related decision making at the time of the research, the strategy was slowly losing its position of influence. This conclusion is based upon three aspects: 1) the perceptions of informants, most of whom stated that sustainability no longer held the level of community and governance influence that it once did; 2) document analysis; and 3) the fact that the governance system appeared no longer focused on changing the behaviour of individuals and organizations (from a sustainability perspective) as it had previously. Farrell et al. (2005) contend that governance for sustainable development implies a "deliberate adjustment of practices of governance in order to ensure that social development proceeds along a sustainable trajectory." These processes include policy changes to address specific environmental, social, and economic interactions with governance mechanisms, shifts in the use of policy instruments to ensure reform, the participation of civil society in decision making, and long-term views of problems and solution strategies (Janicke et al, 2001; Meadowcroft & Bregha, 2009). Based upon the interviews and the document analyses, it is my opinion that these elements were all in decline at the time of the interviews, when compared to the past (~2000-2010). This was particularly so as it related to the perception of many informants that there was less opportunity for civil society to participate in decision-making (at the earliest stages) and a shift toward short-term thinking and decision-making.

What this tells us about sustainability-focused governance systems is that they are as precarious as other forms of governance. They are beholden to the whim of the community and their governance leaders, as are all governance systems. Many informants spoke about the strength of Whistler2020 strategy as a planning document; however, it was struggling to maintain its position of influence only five years after its implementation. The loss of those leaders who had originally steered the strategy combined with a series of critical events that ultimately left the sustainability-focused governance system in a compromised position. Admittedly, it may be too early to determine whether such a position may actually be evidence of adaptability within the sustainability-focused governance system. In other words, the sustainability governance system has adapted to the community's demand for greater focus on the economy, and

when the time is right it will move back to a more focused balance on sustainability (i.e. economy, environment and society).

As a large body of research has demonstrated, stated behavior is often very different from actual behavior. Although Whistler2020 indicated the desired behaviour, based upon the findings of this research, it does not appear that the strategy was strong enough to survive a community-driven change in focus and priorities. This finding is disturbing, because it points to the challenge related to making greater progress on sustainability, locally and globally, and it also raises a lot of questions. For example, if Whistler, a well-resourced community that depends upon the natural environment for its existence cannot weather the storms that come its way, then what is the likelihood that other communities will be able to make progress on sustainability? If sustainability-focused policy documents can come in and out of vogue so easily, what is missing that will enable greater progress today and into the future? Overall, this research demonstrated that: 1) a governance for sustainable development model may not be the most effective governance model for ensuring progress on more sustainable forms of human societies, and 2) as such, a governance for sustainable development model may have limited capacity to enhance overall community resilience. On the other hand, a suite of good governance principles, as proposed in Table 2.1, combined with the governance-enhancing adaptive features and actor responses, as proposed in Appendix A, may enhance the resilience of a sustainability-focused governance system. Such a system may have the fortitude, yet flexibility, required to weather the inevitable storm of critical events and ensure that the desired behaviour (i.e. sustainability) becomes an actuality. This is an area that requires further research.

6.6. Addressing the research objectives: significant findings

The following sections summarize some of the more intriguing and significant findings from the interviews, particularly as it relates to the three research objectives, as follows: 1) the factors that strengthen/weaken proactive governance responses, including resilience strategies; 2) critical events (shocks and stressors), and; 3) roles of governance actors.

6.6.1. Research objective one, question one: Factors strengthening resilience: significant findings

In order to address research objective one, informants were asked to describe a variety of factors they perceived strengthened the ability of Whistler to proactively respond to critical events. In order to address objective one, this research utilized the SER framework from the research of Ruiz-Ballesteros (2011). Overall, the findings evidenced the presence of the four sets of resilience-enhancing factors as outlined in the SER framework. Appendix O depicts the findings of this analysis to report on the extent to which these four sets of factors prevail in Whistler. Specifically, I drew upon the informant interviews, document review, and participant observations for this analysis. It is important to reiterate that informants were not guided in their responses on this issue. No checklist of resilience-enhancing factors was presented as prompts for the assessment of the extent of existence. Rather, Whistler informants were simply asked to describe their perceptions of the ability of Whistler to respond to critical events, as well as their perception of what factors were either enhancing or constraining its ability to be resilience in the face of critical events. This approach allowed me to ground truth the validity of the theorized resilience-enhancing factors as expressed through the words of the informants. Consequently, not all informants mentioned each factor, but the list captures all mentions made. Further, I may have missed or misinterpreted some responses or other documentation that would have shed further light on one or more of these factors. However, I believe I have minimized these limitations by taking the extra step to seek informant feedback on the presence of the various factors. The analysis contained within Appendix O is meant to provide: 1) an understanding of the informants' perceptions of the extent to which Whistler's governance system, through policy and through the actions of its actors, fosters the development of the four resilience-enhancing factors; and, 2) an understanding of the ability of the SER framework to extend beyond Ruiz Ballesteros' purposes, to understand the factors affecting the resilience of Whistler's governance system, and its ability to proactively respond to shocks and stressors. The following paragraphs focus on the highlights from the analysis contained in Appendix O.

Appendix O demonstrates that all four sets of SER factors appear to be present in Whistler – albeit to varying degrees. For example, Whistler has considerable

experience *learning to live with change and uncertainty*, the first factor from the SER framework. Indeed, the community has demonstrated in the past that it has dealt quite well with disturbances. For example, the 2010 Olympic Games were a significant disturbance that Whistler managed well and also used as a learning opportunity for the hosting of future events. Many informants spoke about the fact that the Olympic legacy infrastructure, as well as the community's experience with hosting the Games, had enabled Whistler to develop an extensive portfolio of almost weekly festivals and events. Additionally, in response to the potential threat from climate change, WB responded proactively, building the Peak2Peak Gondola and installing snowmaking equipment. In addition to the uncertainty related to climate change, the community is learning to live with the uncertainty related to changing demographics, changing markets, changing consumer wants, and weather. Indeed, as noted in Chapter 2, many scholars contend that the tourism industry, generally speaking, is rather resilient given its ongoing experience with shocks and stressors (see Aramberri, 2012; Jenkins, 2012; Ryan, 2012).

Some examples that demonstrate Whistler's ability to live with change and uncertainty include Whistler's snowmaking capabilities, an Olympic legacy. The snowmaking equipment helps the resort through periods when the snow cover is less than required or desired. Whistler's focus on cultural tourism is another example of how the community has learned to live with change and uncertainty. By broadening its cultural tourism offerings Whistler has created another weather-independent activity that is likely to draw a new market segment (cultural tourists) to the community. The Audain Museum, when it opens in 2015, will add to Whistler's repertoire of cultural tourism experiences. Whistler is also exploring more family-friendly activities, such as a water park. Further, the RMOW instigated a variety of reports (*2011 A Tapestry of Place* and the *2013 Learning and Education Task Force Report*), both of which lay the groundwork for diversifying the resort's experiences. Whistler continues to search for the right educational institution to establish either a new university, or an offshoot of an existing university (RMOW, 2013g). However, there is an indication that while Whistler is focused on diversification, it plans to *stick to its knitting*, as mentioned. Informants pointed to the EPI as evidence that while Whistler is attempting to diversify, it is looking to mostly diversify the resort's tourism-related or focus on tourism-compatible experiences. Some saw this as positive, while others expressed concern for Whistler's

future if it remains focused only on tourism. Indeed, as discussed earlier, diversification within solely one sector of the economy is not considered the most effective diversification strategy for the long term (Davidson, 2010; Grabher, 1993). Further, while the community has demonstrated that it is developing coping strategies, as evidenced by the EPI, which responds to economic challenges, many informants described the report as short-term in focus. Others noted that the EPI neglected to consider potential future threats or changes to the operating environment, such as those previously indicated.

Nurturing diversity for reorganization and renewal is an area that appears a little weaker in Whistler. The literature suggests that maintaining the community's memory, as it relates to past experiences with ecological, social, and institutional change is critical, particularly as it relates to helping the community reorganize and renew. The annual Community Life Tracking Survey and the Ecosystem Monitoring Program are good tools for maintaining memory, as they both illustrate changes over time. Likewise Whistler's BioBlitz and Fungus Among Us events help to collect and track species information. However, many informants discussed the presence of a video that was, at one time, shown to all new RMOW employees. These informants spoke positively about the video. They described how the video documented why Whistler was built the way it was and many informants feared that without a means to maintain the development-related social memory, future community leaders will not understand why things were done the way they were. None of the informants with knowledge in this area could confirm that the video still existed. They indicated that as far as they were aware the video was no longer shown to new employees. Such videos are important, particularly as it concerns Whistler, for maintaining the memory related to important development decisions.

Collaboration is considered an important factor in *Nurturing diversity for reorganization and renewal*. While many informants spoke positively about the level of collaboration between the four major Whistler organizations, many informants perceived a lower ability to participate in the governance system, at the individual level, since the loss of the Whistler2020 task forces. Others perceived that Whistler's governance system had moved to more of a hierarchical organization that discouraged citizen participation, particularly at the early stages of decision-making. In the past, the task forces had encouraged citizen participation; however, as noted by informants,

community task forces had suffered from participant burnout. It is important to note that in contrast to the findings of this research, the RMOW Community Life Tracking Survey, 2013, indicated that 62% of permanent residents and 51% of second homeowners were satisfied with opportunities for input into community decision making. In 2010, the year before the council change, these figures were 47% and 51%, respectively. In other words, the community's level of satisfaction in their ability to have input into decision making had improved since the 2011 election. This finding can be interpreted in a variety of ways. For example, it could be an indication that many of the informants from this research were part of the 38% of permanent residents or 49% of second homeowners who indicated they were not satisfied with the opportunities for input in the survey. It must also be remembered that some of the informants no longer lived in Whistler and so their perceptions may not have been based upon personal experience. Alternatively, it could be an indication that the RMOW's survey question did not differentiate between the ability to participate early versus later in the decision-making process. Or it could be an indication that some of the informants in this research were generally dissatisfied with the change in political leadership in 2011 and that they did not represent the perspective of the majority of Whistlerites.

The third factor, *combining different kinds of knowledge*, shows some areas of strength and other opportunities for improvement in Whistler. Many informants spoke about the cross-scale sharing of knowledge amongst Whistler's four key partners and many perceived an increased level of sharing at the SLRD level. These are good examples of building institutions that create cross-scale mechanisms to share knowledge. For example the annual RMOW Community Life Tracking Surveys monitor and report on "indicators of community life and RMOW services that contribute to measuring Whistler's success and sustainability" (RMOW, 2013f). The finding of these surveys are shared annually at a community meetings and are also available on through the website. The new Ecosystem Monitoring Program is a good example of building capacity to monitor the environment, as is the Cheakamus Community Forest plan. The Cheakamus Community Forest plan demonstrates that capacity is being built for participatory management at the organizational level (Lil'Wat, Squamish, First Nations, and RMOW). Whistler appears to be working to build institutions that frame learning, memory and creativity (e.g. Audain Museum, Squamish-Lil'wat Cultural Centre, etc.)

However, the court challenge by Squamish and Lil'Wat First Nations is an indication that First Nations knowledge and perspectives have not been fully utilized in other land-related decisions in Whistler.

The fourth characteristic, *creating opportunity for self-organization*, demonstrates some strengths (e.g. matching scales of ecosystem governance) and some areas for future strengthening (e.g. building capacity for self-determined, self-organized fairness in resource access and allocation, building conflict management mechanism; and building multi-scaled governance). While the Ecosystem Monitoring Program could be used to promote multi-scaled governance, particularly with First Nations' communities, it does not appear have been considered at the local ecosystem level (other than as it relates to the Cheakamus Community Forest). As previously mentioned, many informants perceived that the governance system has become less multi-scaled since 2011. Further, there is no indication that capacity is being built for user self-organization. This is an important component for Whistler to consider because it speaks to the ability of the community to manage through a significant crisis (e.g. a land slide that closes the highway, a major earthquake). Conflict management mechanisms are also missing, particularly from a First Nations' perspective.

Admittedly, the preceding paragraphs provide a high level assessment of the degree to which the four SER factors are apparent in Whistler. Certainly, this was a difficult task and is limited in that it is based upon the knowledge and perceptions of the informants, as well as my document search and participant observation (e.g. attendance at community events, open houses, etc.). If the purpose of this research had been to fully assess the presence of these four factors in Whistler, a much deeper level of analysis would need to occur. However, the purpose of this exercise was to test the extent to which the SER framework could be extended beyond the original case study for which it was designed. It appears that this research may be the first time the SER framework has been tested and applied beyond Ruiz-Ballesteros' (2011) research, and therefore this was a valuable and successful undertaking.

Assessing the utility of the SER framework

Indeed, the Ruiz-Ballesteros was a useful framework for analyzing the presence of the four groups of SER factors within Whistler. Its value lies particularly in the fact that it draws in a large body of resilience literature and synthesizes that literature into four sets of factors that are believed to nurture SER at the community level. From a community perspective, this framework is useful because it brings attention to a variety of factors that help to enhance SER; many communities may not be aware of the SER enhancing factors. Further, the framework may also help a community see what it is doing well and which areas need greater attention. For example, Whistler is focused on diversification; however, the resilience literature suggests that diversification within one industry does not create the desired level of diversification for enhanced community resilience. In fact, an argument could be made that Whistler's diversification scope is lacking in complexity and is too narrow in focus.

The SER framework provides a few examples of characteristics to describe each of the four sets of factors. This is helpful; however, the suggested characteristics are high level and some language around the characteristics is unclear. For example, what exactly is meant by "Promoting participatory strategies that consider the diversity and alteration inherent in resilience"? It would enhance the framework to simplify the language and to provide some examples with each of the characteristics. In other words, for each defining characteristic the framework should provide some examples of possible governance or community-related policies and programs (i.e. training programs, examples of participatory management, etc.). Ruiz-Ballesteros does provide more detail in the narrative section of his paper; however, as he states, the characteristics are specific to Agua Blanca, Ecuador. Therefore, it would enhance the framework to have some general examples that are applicable to most communities.

New SER findings

One of the more interesting findings from this research was that informants spoke extensively about what I came to understand as a *Whistler mindset*. The Whistler mindset encompassed a set of personal characteristics that strengthen the community's ability to proactively respond to critical events. While on the surface these findings appear unique, in actuality they mirror factors found in the CCCR's community resilience

framework. In this research, one way or another and without prompting informants identified all of the CCCR's 23 characteristics of community resilience. Further, the finding of internal or personal resilience factors has been evidenced in past resilience research in the psychological development field. Of most relevance to the findings of this research is the work of Kumpfer (1999). In fact, the five internal factors identified by Kumpfer are all identifiable in the Whistler research. For example, informants spoke extensively about *spiritual* factors, such as a *sense of place* or a *sense of community attachment* (i.e. draw of the mountains). Many informants perceived that the sense of place/community attachment was enabled because Whistlerites share a connection to the natural environment, that some described in terms of love and pride. For example, informants described how Whistlerites love to be outdoors, playing in the natural environment, and that this then, in turn, enables a sense of connectedness to the natural environment, and the community more generally. Many informants perceived Whistlerites to be empathic and caring and gave as an example the number of people who will attend memorial services. Informants also spoke about what they perceived as a high level of volunteering within the community. Although this was the perspective of the majority of respondents, it is also important to note there were differences in opinion. For example, one informant spoke about spiritual wellbeing in terms of the search for the next adrenaline rush. She questioned why there was not more focus in Whistler on connecting with nature as opposed to using nature for an adrenaline rush. Despite these differences in perspective, it is evident that spiritual factors play an important role in Whistler and contribute to what I earlier referred to as the *Whistler mindset*.

Many informants spoke about Kumpfer's second characteristic, *cognitive* factors, as both a strength and a weakness in Whistler. For example, informants described the high level of education, skills, and creativity possessed by Whistler residents and second homeowner, which they believed contributed to the community's ability to solve its challenges. Informants also spoke extensively about the desire of Whistlerites to give back to the community, which was evidenced by the high level of volunteerism. They also spoke about the level of compassion and caring in the community. On the other hand, some informants perceived a lack of caring in the community. A few informants perceived an attitude that "well if you can't afford to live in Whistler, then you can just leave." Other informants worried about the youth of Whistler whom they felt needed to

leave Whistler in order to be more fully intellectually stimulated. While there were different opinions as to the presence or absence of cognitive factors, it was clear from the interviews that there was a positive relationship between the presence of individual cognitive factors and the overall resilience of the community.

Whistler informants also spoke about the high level of *physical wellbeing* amongst residents, the third characteristic Kumpfer speaks about. For example, many informants described Whistler as a life-style choice. They described how people move to Whistler because they want to be active in the natural environment. One informant recalled the UBC study that described Whistler's seniors as "youthful" because of their high level of physical activity when compared to other communities. This same informant described how people with health issues would spend the morning skiing and then return to the valley for medical treatment in the afternoon. Another informant, in speaking about diversity between the current and previous councils, noted a common denominator in the fact that they all were skiers, snowboarders, and/or mountain bikers. In other words, physical activity enhanced physical wellbeing in Whistler. Importantly, it also created a sense of camaraderie and enhanced the community's resilience through the physical wellbeing of its residents.

Some informants spoke about *behaviour/social factors* amongst Whistlerites, which is the fourth characteristic Kumpfer describes as enabling resilient responses. For example, many informants spoke about the community's success in addressing past challenges faced by the community. Some informants recalled that when Whistler was originally awarded the Olympics, not everyone was in favour, and in fact some were outwardly opposed. Some informants described how eventually everyone, including those who were opposed to the Olympics, put their different perspectives aside and rallied together to make sure the 2010 Games were a success. Others spoke confidently (although perhaps naively) about how Whistler addressed the potential threat from climate change by building the Peak 2 Peak gondola. As mentioned, many informants felt that the community did not need to speak about sustainability any more, because the Whistler2020 strategy was there, making sure that sustainability was taken care of. Another informant humorously described how the secret to getting good attendance at a meeting in Whistler is to start it at around 4:00 pm and to make sure you provide beer and appetizers, as Whistlerites enjoy socializing after a hard day on the

slopes. Many informants spoke about the fact that the community is collectively focused on one industry, tourism, and that this creates a sense of single-mindedness. While these behavioural/social factors manifest at the individual level, they create a sense of confidence that spills over to enhance the overall resilience of the community. In other words, Whistler is a collection of skilled, confident, and social individuals who can work collaboratively, when required, to address community challenges that may arise today or in the future.

Emotional stability/emotional management is the fifth characteristic discussed by Kumpfer. Whistler informants also spoke about the presence of this characteristic in the community. Most informants spoke about emotional stability/emotional management in terms of the emotional connection and attachment to the natural environment, the draw of the mountains, and the passion Whistlerites feel for the community and the natural environment. One informant described how living in Whistler creates a strength of character. As he explained, Whistler is an expensive place to live and find a good paying career job. This in turn then creates a survivalist mentality. Many informants spoke about a sense of optimism they feel about the future of the community. Other informants spoke about the fact that Whistler is like a bubble, where some residents do not pick up their mail and are not concerned with the outside world. Many studies, including a recent survey by NPR, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Harvard School of Public Health, indicates that watching, reading and listening to news contributes to day-to-day stress (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2014). Many informants also spoke about the ability to better manage their stress by just being in the presence of the mountains. As such, Whistlerites may experience lower levels of stress compared to those in other communities, which we might presume contributes to their emotional stability. Individual emotional stability would likely strengthen the fabric of the community because many of its residents are likely to be happy and content.

The presence of these five internally-based characteristics is a very interesting finding flowing from this research, particularly because it draws two threads of resilience literature/research together: the systems-based factors (resilience literature) and the internally-based characteristics (psychology literature). Indeed, both of these sets of characteristics/factors appear to play a role in enabling proactive responses to critical events, thereby nurturing SER at the local level. As such, the SER framework may

benefit from the addition of the five internal characteristics drawn from Kumpfer’s research. Table 6.1 depicts how these five factors could be incorporated into the SER framework. As evidenced in Table 6.1, a new set of factors (characteristics) that nurture resilience at the individual level would be added to the SER framework. These five characteristics are as follows: 1) physical wellbeing; 2) emotional wellbeing; 3) spiritual wellbeing; 4), cognitive competencies; and 5) behavioural competencies. Based upon the findings of this research, these five characteristics are accompanied by defining characteristics. The “evidence” column is drawn from the informant interviews to provide the evidence or absence of each characteristic.

Table 6.1: Characteristics nurturing resilience at individual level in Whistler (adapted from Kumpfer, 1999)

Characteristics nurturing resilience at the individual level	Defining characteristics based on Whistler research	Evidence: Whistler Informant perceptions
Physical wellbeing	Individual physical health is enabled;	Living in Whistler is an active lifestyle choice; youthful seniors; Whistler has an excellent trauma centre, good doctors;
Emotional wellbeing	Individuals have a sense of optimism about future of community;	Whistler creates a survivalist mentality; Whistler is like a bubble, where people can forget about the worries of the outside world; Whistler can solve its challenges;
Spiritual wellbeing	Individuals feel a connection to the community, a sense of place;	Informants spoke about connection to the mountains and the natural environment; One informant questioned why there was not more emphasis on the spiritual aspects of communing with nature, as opposed to seeking an adrenaline rush.
Cognitive competencies	Individuals have a high level of self-efficacy & moral reasoning; a can-do attitude; opportunities for intellectual stimulation;	Well educated, skilled residents; High level of volunteerism in the community; lack of intellectual stimulation; Whistler is for those who can afford it;
Behavioural competencies	Individuals have a single-mindedness toward improving, strengthening the community; problem solving skills, communication skills and resistance skills	Informants spoke about <i>all for one and one for all</i> mentality in Whistler, high level of volunteerism; Whistler’s success in hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics;

The finding of another layer of individually based resilience nurturing factors/characteristics is one of the more important findings of this research. Indeed, it may help to settle the debate that Brown (2012) and Benson and Craig (2014) draw attention to concerning whether or not a resilience approach considers issues of human agency. Specifically, the findings of this research suggest that individual resilience factors are intertwined with and enhance community resilience factors. However, it bears highlighting that there may, indeed, be a set of risk and protective factors that further influence proactive community responses to shocks and stressors. As described in Chapter 2, the research indicates a set of risk and protective factors, such as family, community, culture, school, peers (Kumpfer, 1999) and government (Unger, 2012) influence proactive responses to shocks and stressors. Indeed, the presence or absence of a set of protective factors is an area for future research.

Further, as discussed earlier, some researchers are concerned with the focus on individual resilience, particularly as it relates to disaster response and recovery. Hayward (2013, p. 5) contends that human prosperity and flourishing will require more than resilience. She draws upon her experience in Christchurch, New Zealand to advocate for “creative political imagination and agency,” as well as “the ability to take action to shape our life circumstances.” In other words, she calls for not only compassion and social justice to be included within notions of resilience, but also resistance, when necessary (see Benson & Craig, 2014; Brown, 2012). Interestingly, the findings of this research appear to address Hayward’s call for political resistance, social justice, and compassion to be incorporated within notions of resilience. While she observes the absence of these factors in previous resilience research, they are present in this research. For example, the cognitive factors encompass moral reasoning, which includes the ability to value compassion, fairness, and decency. The behavioural factors, which encompass problem solving skills, communication skills, street and peer resistance smarts, could also be interpreted to include notions of political resistance. Certainly, behavioural and cognitive capacities could encompass notions of political resistance, compassion, and social justice. As such, I believe the finding of an internal or individual set of resilience-enhancing factors/characteristics addresses the concern by some researchers that a resilience approach does not consider aspects of human agency.

Figure 6-1 depicts the findings of this research. Looking at the model from left to right, we can see that an individual's set of personal characteristics (cognitive, emotional, behavioural, spiritual, & physical) serve as the lens through which s/he perceives the community's ability to proactively respond to a critical event. Interestingly, and perhaps most importantly, it became clear in the research that informants spoke about the presence of these individual characteristics in terms of the community's strength, or their absence in terms of the community's weakness. Further, it appears as though the strength of these internal characteristics is nurtured by the community resilience-enhancing factors (learning to live with change and uncertainty, nurturing diversity for reorganization and renewal, combining different kinds of knowledge, and creating opportunity for self-organization). In turn, this strengthens the perception in individuals of increased community resilience. In other words, it is the gelling of the presence of a strong set of personal resilience characteristics, at the individual level, with a strong set of external community resilience-enhancing factors, that enable proactive community responses to critical events. The arrows at the top and bottom of the model depict this interdependent relationship between the factors that enhance individual and community resilience. Admittedly, the model does not account for the fact that the community may be dealing with more than one shock at a time, or that slow moving stressors may also affect perceptions of community resilience.

Despite these efforts to add value to the SER framework, it is important to acknowledge a potential limitation with this model. Certainly, the SER framework is valuable and may assist a community, such as Whistler, better understand the factors that may enhance the community's long-term resilience into the future; however, it is limited as it relates to the severity of a future critical event and future resilience. For example, if Whistler, despite its best efforts to plan for and mitigate against a catastrophic forest fire, experienced such an event, a set of risk or protective factors may actually play a greater role in the community's ability to recover, rather than a set of resilience-enhancing community or individual factors. In other words, the resilience-enhancing factors may play a more important role in helping the community weather less significant critical events (stressors), while it is the risk and protective factors that enable a community to recover from a significant or catastrophic event (shocks) that destroys infrastructure and livelihoods. In a related finding, this research suggests that system

stressors, when combined with a system shock, are more likely to have a negative impact on the resilience of sustainability-focused governance systems than a shock alone (see Section 6.6.3).

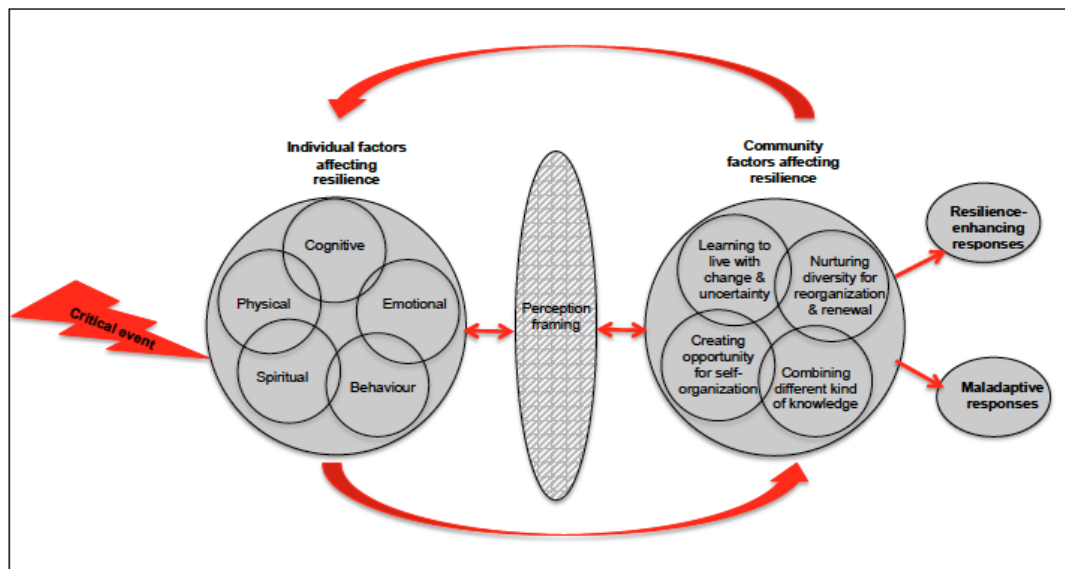


Figure 6-1: Individual and community factors affecting resilience (based upon Kumpfer, 1999; Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011)

6.6.2. Research objective one, question two: Resilience strategies: significant findings

In order to address research objective one, informants were asked for their thoughts on strategies to enhance community resilience. Most of the strategies suggested by informants, link back to their perceptions of the factors that strengthen and weaken the ability of the community to proactively respond to critical events. However, as presented earlier, many informants did perceive Whistler’s sustainability strategy, and the processes that supported it, as important to the community’s long-term resilience. Some informants suggested ways to revitalize the community’s sustainability focus. One of the more interesting findings to arise from this question was the informants’ suggestion that sustainability strategies must be kept fresh, they must be revitalized every couple of years (which requires a significant level of creativity and ongoing communication), and the importance of having governance actors who understand the importance of and are committed to supporting sustainability practices.

Another interesting finding was the fact that many informants believed that controlling Whistler's growth, and indeed, learning to live with no growth, was a strategy for long-term community resilience; however, many informants acknowledged that there was no true understanding of how to do this. Indeed, some informants stated that it was, in actuality, impossible to achieve this goal given the way economies currently function. Indeed, as Barry (2012) observes, economic growth under capitalism is oriented towards the accumulation of capital, not improving the life of human societies or the non-human world. It is a model predicated on "growth for growth's sake" (p. 132). Perhaps, controlling growth is an impossible task under the current model of capitalism; on the other hand, it is most likely inevitable that if humans progress along the same path they currently are on, growth management will become an imperative.

6.6.3. Research objective two: Critical events: significant findings

As noted, informants were asked for their perception related to the critical events that had impacted the community over the last 10 to 15 years. The term "critical events" was utilized to represent shocks and stressors, because it was determined to be more understandable to informants. This decision was based upon the results of the exploratory chats held with a sample of potential informants, before the in-field research began (June-June, 2013). It was also successfully tested in the piloting of the survey with the Victoria West Community Association. As evidenced in Chapter 4, informants identified a wide breadth of critical events that often overlapped. In other words, an economically focused critical event often also affected the social, environmental, and even political aspects of the community (e.g. 2008 global financial crisis, the 2011 change of leadership). Similarly, critical events often overlapped in time. For example, the community was getting ready to host the 2010 Winter Olympics when the 2008 global financial crisis occurred. Some of the critical events identified by informants could be classified as shocks because of their sudden nature (e.g. 2008 financial crisis, SARS, 2011, change of leadership); however, most of the critical events identified fell into the category of a stressor, as they developed more slowly, often over a number of years (e.g. affordable housing, ongoing financial slowdown, hosting of the 2010 Games).

Indeed, a conclusion could be drawn from this research that stressors are more likely to affect governance change when they combined with the effects of a system

shock. In the case of Whistler, the effects of the ongoing global economic slowdown (a stressor), combined with the 2011 leadership change (a shock) and other stressors (e.g. hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics) to push the governance system away from its sustainability focus. In other words, when stressors combine with system shocks, the combination seems to push such governance systems over a threshold where its resilience to withstand the change is negatively affected. Logically, this finding probably relates to the fact that stressors are characterized by the slower speed with which they impact communities when compared to a shock. As such, sustainability-focused governance systems may be effective in enabling a community adapt to stressors. Interestingly, informants spoke in mostly positive terms about the effects of shocks and stressors as it related to improving the resilience of the community. Indeed, they perceived that critical events were often catalysts for nurturing resilience. Informants stated that proactive governance responses gave the community the experience and the confidence to face future critical events. As noted in Chapter 2, such proactive responses were often enabled by the presence of strong partnerships between governance actors, organizations, and professional networks. According to many informants, the presence of strong partnerships in Whistler is perceived to be one of Whistler's greatest strengths. This finding also corroborates other research as it relates to the importance of social cohesion, individual support, and a sense of self-support in enabling adaptive community responses.

Overall, informants expected their governance leaders to respond to critical events in a proactive way, and if they perceived that they were not, then they voiced their displeasure at the election polls by voting accordingly. This appears to have been the situation in 2011 when Whistler elected six new councillors and a new mayor, whom they perceived to be listening to the people, and whom they believed would be best to refuel Whistler's economic engine. This finding suggests that perhaps the sustainability-focused governance system was lacking in flexibility. Interestingly, if we look back through Whistler's history we can see that the governance system appears to have been quite responsive to critical events. However, as this research demonstrates, it was actually the community that forced the governance system to respond. In other words, it was the community that responded to the perceived seriousness of critical events by voting in the type of governance team it believed was needed. This has happened in the

past. For example, many informants spoke about the fact that Whistler had “green councils,” from approximately the mid to late ‘90s through to 2011. The election of green councils over this time period appears to have been in response to the community’s concern for the level of development in Whistler. Similarly, the election of an economically focused governance team in 2011 appears to have been in response to the community’s concern for the economic wellbeing of the community after the 2010 Olympic Games. This finding, particularly as it relates to governance adaptability, can be linked back to the research of Schipper and Dekens (2009). They spoke about the role the community plays in deciding what adaptations are considered successful and therefore worth saving and protecting. Therefore, we might draw the conclusion that Whistler’s sustainability-focused governance system may not have been as adaptable as one might expect. Rather, it appears as though with the passing of time Whistlerites did not perceive the governance system’s focus on sustainability to be serving the community well, particularly at the economic level. This finding is thought provoking because it speaks to the challenges faced by governance leaders who seek to implement sustainability practices, particularly in times of ongoing stress, and more particularly if those practices are perceived to be unbalanced. It also demonstrates the challenge humanity faces in finding and implementing governance models that will be effective in enabling more sustainable forms of development. Interestingly, many informants expressed relief that Whistler’s governance system was now more balanced with its focus on the economy; which in practice was also not balanced.

6.6.4. Research objective three: Roles of key people and organizations

To address research objective three, informants were asked about their perception as to the roles of key individuals and organizations in assisting the community make progress on its journey toward success and sustainability. Respondents were also asked this same question in relation to the role of key people and organizations in influencing community resilience. The findings related to both of these questions indicate that the informants saw the roles of key individuals and organizations to be the same for enabling community resilience and greater sustainability. They felt that the governance system, and more specifically governance actors, is most responsible for creating strategies to enable community resilience and greater sustainability. In this

regard, many described the leaderships characteristics they felt were necessary to enable greater community resilience and sustainability. Specifically, informants provided a variety of leadership characteristics, such as charisma, intelligence, thoughtfulness, visionary, respected, and possessing the energy and courage to make tough, unpopular decisions when need be. This was an interesting finding given that many informants stated that the 2008-2011 council was trying to stay the sustainability course, yet they were perceived as not listening to the electorate. In other words, they were not listening to the electorates' concern for what they perceived as an unbalanced approach to sustainability. This finding certainly demonstrates the challenge for governance leaders who want to lead by a set of personal principles, particularly related to sustainability objectives that may run contrary to popular or political opinion.

6.7. Conclusion

Resort destinations are affected by a variety of critical events that ultimately shape their approaches to planning, development, and, in the case of Whistler, sustainability momentum. Undeniably, specific dimensions of the sustainability movement in Whistler appear to have faltered in the aftermath the 2010 Games and in the ongoing economic global challenges. As described earlier, this happened for a variety of reasons, but perhaps the number one factor influencing this situation was the election of an entirely new council in 2011. The new council members sought not only to distance themselves from the Whistler2020 strategy, but also to move on a different path. Informants described the fears of the community in the lead-up to the 2011 election and their desire to have a governance team that was listening and more focused on the economy. In other words, the 2011-2014 governance team was the vehicle for the community to implement the changes it desired and felt were necessary for the long-term resilience of the community.

It is undeniable that the sustainability movement benefitted Whistler in the lead up to the Olympics. Most importantly, it also served to bring those who were concerned about the level of development and those who were pro-development together into one camp. If one was concerned about the level of pre-Olympic development and the effects on Whistler's natural environment, the Whistler2020 strategy gave comfort. If one was

pro-development and focused on economic sustainability, s/he only had to look outside the window to see the building cranes to feel a sense that all was well. However, things changed after the Olympics. Something had happened to the world while Whistler toiled away preparing for and delivering the Olympics. The economies of most of the developed and developing world had changed. Whistlerites were frightened for the future of the community and the lifestyle they loved. They felt the 2008-2011 council had become dysfunctional and they were ignoring their concerns about what really mattered – the economy. The focus on what Whistler would look like in 2020 no longer mattered. What mattered was what Whistler looked like today and what it was going to look like tomorrow. The voices telling the community it could no longer afford Whistler2020 sounded reasonable and comforting. Most Whistlerites agreed it was time to get back to the business of figuring out how best to draw as many visitors as possible.

For many in Whistler, the foray into sustainability was altruistic, they are proud of the achievements, and they mourn the loss of momentum. Perhaps this was simply a case of using the wrong tool. As noted, many observed the challenges with the sustainability concept and, indeed, this case study seems to verify other research that demonstrates the challenge of sustaining sustainability. For example, Markey, Connelly and Roseland's (2010) research undertaken in the rural community of Craik, Saskatchewan, Canada, similarly demonstrated the challenge of sustaining sustainability objectives. Their research evidenced similar challenges to those of Whistler, including participant burnout, leadership changes, and the challenge of maintaining financial and public support for sustainability initiatives (particularly in periods of economic flux). Some researchers – and increasingly governments – believe that a focus on resilience, rather than sustainability, may help communities better adapt to the changes many environmentally focused scientists feel are now inevitable. Or will it? Indeed, many researchers fear that the focus on improving resilience will follow the same trajectory as the concept of sustainability has. Consequently, it becomes clear that perhaps it is not a problem with the tool or the framework that is chosen to enhance community resilience and sustainability. Rather, it is a systemic problem that may be better addressed through governance models that enable greater resilience and sustainability. More focused governance research is required to make progress in this regard.

Interestingly, this research demonstrated that the informants had almost an intuitive understanding of what was needed to make the community stronger over the long-term. Without being prompted informants spoke about aspects of all SER factors, as well as the resilience enhancing factors noted in previous community-focused research. They also spoke about personal resilience enhancing characteristics that appear to have not previously been discussed in past SES resilience research. Perhaps an argument could be made then that when the community is well resourced, in terms of human, social, financial, and natural capital, the community knows best what it needs for its success. In other words, success will not be determined by choosing a sustainability path, or a growth path ... or even a steady-state path. Success will be determined by the extent to which the community is resourced today and into the future. The question then becomes how best to manage and utilize those resources, so that future generations have an equal opportunity to enjoy the same benefits. In a sense this question brings us back full circle to one of the purposes of this study.

6.8. Limitations of the study

It is important to acknowledge a number of study limitations. First, there is a limited ability to generalize beyond the proposed single case study, particularly as the research reflects: 1) the specific economic, cultural, political, and environmental setting unique to Whistler; 2) the specific developmental process unique to Whistler; 3) the specific stage of current development unique to Whistler; 4) the specific legal environment unique to BC and Canada; and, 5) the specific series of shocks and stressors, any of which may be unique to Whistler. Another limitation relates to undertaking a qualitative, exploratory case study in which the researcher interviewed informants in a face-to-face situation. In this study, the researcher was seeking the perceptions of the informants concerning resilience-enhancing factors. Although understanding the perceptions of individuals is the preferred method for understanding resilience factors, Brown and Westaway (2011) note cultural and ethnic-based differences mediate responses to resilience. While this limitation is noted, it is also important to state that the Whistler informants represented a fairly homogenous group. While this fact may moderate Brown and Westaway's concerns, it also highlights the inability to extend these findings beyond Whistler.

Another limitation relates to how informants were identified and approached to participate in the study. For example, the initial list of 30 participants was developed through the contact list of the researcher's senior supervisor, through the researcher's own personal business contact list, and through online searches. Some participants were identified by the informants during the interview process, added to the list, and approached to participate. Therefore, it is possible that some or many of the informants represented what Wexler (2013) refers to as counterpublics. As Wexler explains, in times of "economic dislocation and uncertainty" people, who might not ordinarily unite, do so "in their opposition to the centre" (p.171). He adds that counterpublics see themselves as agents of change and seek out others to join their cause. During the interview process it became apparent that many of the informants did, indeed, see themselves as agents of change, and as such, many of the informants may have been aligned with what could be called *Whistler's counterpublics*.

Another limitation relates to the use of the Ruiz-Ballesteros framework. While the four resilience-enhancing groups of factors from the framework are well researched, they would benefit from further detail and perhaps even examples of what each of the defining characteristics might look like on the ground. The lack of detail in the defining characteristics for each of the four groups of factors made it a bit challenging to undertake the assessment, as outlined in Appendix O. Appendix P is an attempt to begin fleshing out the SER framework as developed by Ruiz-Ballesteros. It also provides details on how the framework can be extended to include a set of individual resilience factors. This may help future researchers and may also make the work more accessible to communities, who may be interested in understanding the factors that enhance community resilience.

6.9. Contributions of the study & future research recommendations

The design for this study encompassed both inductive and deductive analyses. An inductive approach was valuable because it enabled new patterns to emerge, such as the finding of a set of individual resilience-enhancing factors. A deductive approach enabled the researcher to verify the systems-based resilience enhancing factors

contained within the Ruiz-Ballesteros framework. Following in the methods of a social-constructivism paradigm, the researcher was able to better understand how the informants made sense of their world. As such, this study adds to the growing body of research related to the factors that strengthen proactive governance responses to exogenous shocks and stressors; however, it also addresses some of the existing literature and research gaps by providing insight into the resilience-enhancing factors and strategies that strengthen governance systems, particularly those focused on sustainability objectives. It also provides valuable information as to the factors that enable proactive and resilient governance and community responses to shocks and stressors; however, it extends past research to demonstrate the presence of an internal or personal set of resilience enhancing characteristics. This was probably the most important finding of this research project, as it suggest that a set of individually based resilience characteristics contribute to perceptions that the community is able to proactively respond to shocks and stressors, thereby contributing to perceptions of overall community resilience. This finding begins to address a gap in the literature as it relates to understanding how the cross-scale dynamics between individuals and the community function and, in turn, affect proactive responses. As noted in Chapter 1, Brown and Westaway (2011) contend that more research is needed to understand empowerment, agency, self-efficacy, optimism and self-esteem in determining how people deal with shocks and stressors. This finding begins to lay the foundation for further understanding in this regard. Indeed, it appears that the SES resilience literature has, to date, mostly focused on systems based factors, while a separate body of literature led by those in the child and youth development psychology field along with community research consultants, has focussed on individually-based characteristics. As stated, this may be the first time that a study has indicated that these two domains, community and individually based resilience factors, combine to enable proactive governance responses to shocks and stressors.

The first recommendation to flow from this research relates to testing the SER framework, in resort destination settings, and in other types of communities. As discussed, psychological development research suggests a set of risk/protective factors enable or inhibit proactive individual responses to critical events (see Hayward, 2013; Kumpfer, 1999; Ungar, 2004; 2012). Consequently, a recommendation is made to

undertake a study to understand which risk/protective factors combine with internal and community resilience factors and how they then in turn enable or inhibit proactive responses. Indeed, a set of risk and protective factors may play a more important role in the ability of a community to quickly and more fully recover from a catastrophic event. While the individual and community factors may play a more important role in proactive responses to ongoing system stress or less critical events. Figure 6-2 demonstrates how the risk/protective factors may temper individual resilience factors, which then combine with external community resilience factors to enable proactive or maladaptive community responses to critical events. Specifically, it suggests a set of 10 risk/protective factors as follows: family; culture; gender; government; ethnicity; community; employers; schools; class; and peers (circled in yellow). This may not be an exhaustive list of risk/protective factors; nor would every individual be influenced by all of these factors, or the factors may change over time based upon an individual's personal development. These factors may also be dependent upon the level of development (infrastructural) in the community, and/or the level of diversity within the community. This proposed research may contribute valuable understanding to how: 1) different magnitudes of critical events affect proactive responses; and, 2) individual and community resilience enhancing factors enable proactive responses in response to catastrophic events (shocks) and less impactful events (stressors).

In a related recommendation, future research may also examine the rural geography literature, particularly as it relates to resilience in rural communities. Past research suggests spiritual and cognitive factors, as well as physical and emotional wellbeing factors enhance community resilience in rural settings (see Hegney, et al, 2008). Future research could compare and contrast rural communities to resort destination communities to better understand: 1) how individual resilience factors enhance governance and community resilience; and/or, 2) how shocks and stressors affect the resilience of individuals, communities and governance systems.

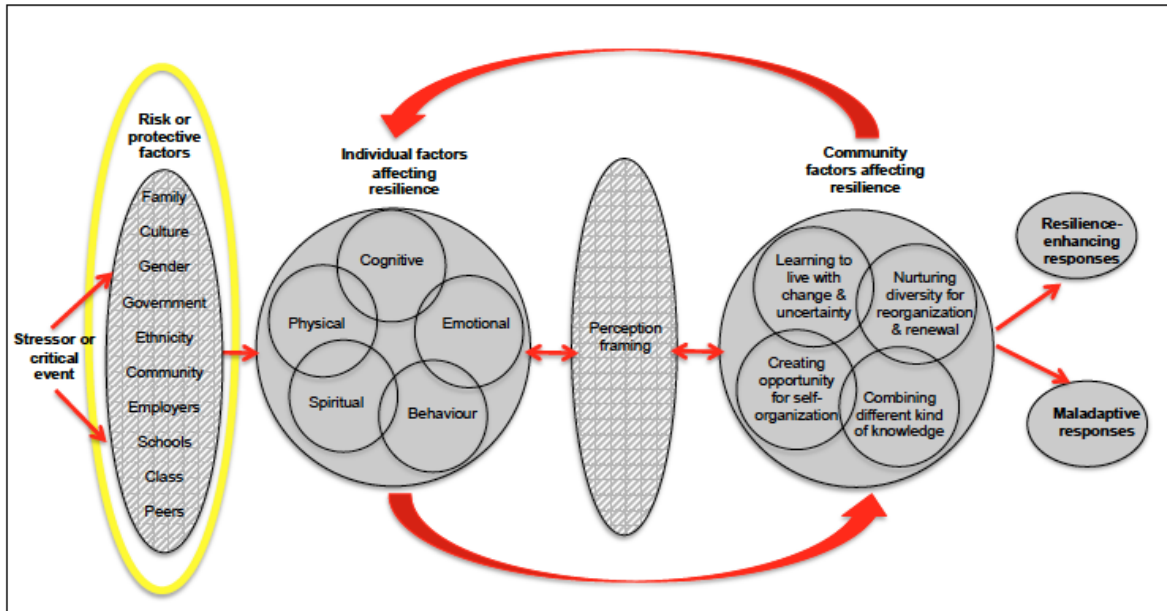


Figure 6-2: A model for future research: risk/protective factors and their influence on individual and community factors affecting resilience

This study adds to the body of literature related to the types of shocks and stressors that affect communities focused on tourism, as well as contributing understanding to how such events affect the resilience of sustainability-focused governance systems, and communities at large. In this regard, it appears that Whistler, at one time, had a governance system that bore many of the characteristics of a governance for sustainable development system. However, it was quite apparent that by the time the researcher arrived in the community to undertake the interviews (November of 2013) the governance system was changing. While it is true that the Whistler2020 strategy was still the governance system’s highest-ranking policy document, many informants perceived that it had been “neutered,” as one informant described it. This finding contributes valuable information about the resilience of sustainability-focused governance systems to withstand the pressures related shocks and stressors, including economic challenges and governance leadership changes. Specifically, this research demonstrated the precarious nature of such governance systems, including how easily they can change focus in the face of

exogenous events. On the other hand, as mentioned, it may also demonstrate that Whistler's sustainability governance system is adaptable and perhaps, with time, its sustainability focus will return when more favourable conditions for such a return exist.

Consequently, this inclusive finding leads to another recommendation to better understand how successful governance for sustainable development systems are for helping communities progress on sustainability. This includes the recommendation for research to better understand what components may help to strengthen the resilience of such governance systems, particularly in response to shocks and stressors. For example, it would be valuable to undertake another study that tracks Whistler's governance system over the next five years to the next municipal election (e.g. 2014-2018), to see how the governance system evolves over this period of time and to determine whether or not it continues to move away from its sustainability focus. As part of this research, it would also be valuable to track Whistler's sustainability strategy over the same time period, to see if Whistler regains its sustainability momentum, or whether this takes another form, such as resilience strategy.

This research also contributes valuable knowledge as it relates to the role of governance actors and organizations in enabling proactive responses to critical events, as well as their role in enabling governance and community resilience and sustainability. One of the more interesting contributions from this area of the study was that many informants spoke about the role of governance actors in making tough decisions, particularly those decisions that might be unpopular with the voting public; however, as evidenced in this research, the 2008-2011 governance team was perceived to have been too inflexible in their approaches to sustainability. So while one could conclude that they were sticking to their convictions and making tough choices based upon those convictions, it was perceived inflexibility that contributed to the fact that they were not re-elected in 2011. The findings of this research also shed light on how and why Whistler's sustainability momentum stalled. It contributes valuable information regarding a variety of reasons as to why momentum was lost and informants made suggestions as to what could be done in the future to ensure that such a situation does not occur. These findings may be of value to other communities that seek to develop and implement sustainability strategies and initiatives for their communities.

A third recommendation is for research to help clarify the dichotomy of perspectives as it relates to successfully implementing sustainability-focused initiatives. Many scholars suggest that many aspects of human societies will have to change in the future in order to avoid some of the more serious predicted changes related to climate change. Informants in this study described how many in the community became fatigued with sustainability messaging, as well as the perception that many in the community did not fully understand what sustainability was or why it was important. Consequently, a recommendation is made to undertake research that seeks to better understand: 1) the role of sustainability messaging in enabling sustainability momentum, and 2) how sustainability messaging could be more effectively transmitted so that the citizenry better understands its importance as it relates to the long-term resilience of their community.

Finally, a methodological recommendation is made as it relates to research question two: *What types of shocks and stressors do governance actors perceive to be strengthening and weakening the resilience of its sustainability-focused governance system.* The approach used in this study was to permit informants latitude to identify any number of critical events and this became slightly problematic. While the researcher had originally asked informants to state three critical events that they perceived as having the greatest impact on the sustainability-focused governance system, and the community at large, most informants went well beyond this number and the researcher eventually gave up trying to keep informants to three events. Consequently, the researcher ended up with a considerable list of critical events. While it was important to understand the informants' perceptions of top critical events, it did prove challenging to keep track of all the discussed critical events and to keep informants focused on those they deemed most critical. To avoid such challenges in the future, a recommendation is made that a researcher ask informants to come to the interview with a written list of the top three critical events. The researcher could then focus her/his questions on those three top critical events. While this may minimize the number of critical events informants speak about, it is probably unrealistic to think that all informants would speak only about a researcher-designated number of events, and frankly, such an approach does not gel well with qualitative methods.

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Appendix A: Governance-enhancing adaptive features & actor responses

Features shaping ability to adapt to shocks & stressors: Governance system (operating environment, i.e. business, public/private institutions & organizations)	Features shaping ability to adapt to shocks & stressors (resilience): Governance actors & other stakeholders
Accountable	Accountable within and to community and stakeholders
Transparency/privacy/confidentiality balance	Transparent behaviour, transparent communication, but an acknowledgement that in some situations (i.e. security) transparency must be balanced with other values such as privacy and confidentiality; community decides which elected positions should have access to sensitive material; elected officials represent constituents in dealing with sensitive information;
Policy to balance adaptability/flexibility	Support for individual, business, system adaptation; balancing rigidity with flexibility (i.e. challenge to policy by special interest groups)
Equitable distribution of risks & benefits	Encouraging political rights
Socially just	Encouraging & enabling social justice
Representative	Trustworthy & ethical behaviour
Multiple levels of authority	Individual support for collective action
Multi-layered institutions, cross-scale interactions	Individual support for multi-layered institutions & cross-scale interactions
New problems on public agendas & solutions for coping	Support for addressing, finding solutions to new problems
Sustainability strategy in place (tracking, monitoring, reporting)	Understanding of what sustainability is, why it is required, and supportive* of strategy to get there
Policy to support risk/crisis & recovery plans (preparedness) (including early-warning surveillance, stockpiling of key resources, scenario building visioning, training, monitoring, integrated communication plans, reporting & reflection mechanisms)	Support* for reviewing & monitoring risk/crisis plans & recovery plans; enabling diffusion of risk across a broad spectrum of stakeholders; individual & institutional preparedness plans in place; key resources stockpiled (i.e. emergency kits, etc.)
Policy to prevent risk	Support for risk prevention policy
Policy to ensure long-term transformation processes continue on despite changes in governance actors	Support for continued transformation processes, despite changes in governance actors
Promote self-support within community	Seek solutions from within
Policy to identify vulnerable segments of population (i.e. social vulnerability index)	Work collaboratively to identify vulnerable segments of population (i.e. social vulnerability index)
Decision-making protocol in place; flexibility in decision-making	Support for decision making protocol & flexibility in decision-making
Understanding of individual & community perceptions regarding ability to cope & adapt to shocks & stressors and build resilience	Willingness to share perceptions regarding ability to copy & adapt to shocks & stressors and build resilience
Understanding of individual & community's belief system (beliefs, values, moral principles, ethical standards, worldviews), motivations, and what they want to protect (ensure publics know the consequences of their choices)	Willingness to share personal belief system, motivations, and choices about what should be protected; educated about consequences of choices
Variety of adaptation strategies developed	Support for adaptation strategies
Policy to provide opportunity for dissent, deliberation, mediation & negotiation	Openness to dissent, deliberation, mediation & negotiation
Policy to support/enable experimentation, adaptation/learning from past shocks/stressors	Openness & support for experimentation/learning from past shocks & stressors & adaptations, etc.
Policy to support& enable innovative & novelty	Openness & support for innovation & novelty
Structural flexibility/balanced with rigidity when necessary	Flexible governance actors & stakeholders; balanced with rigidity when required
Policy to support & enable community/citizen access to health	Support for community/citizen access to health
Policy to support & enable literacy	Support for improving levels of literacy
Policy to support & enable economic/ecosystem diversity to greatest extent possible	Support for economic & ecosystem diversity, to greatest extent possible
Policy to support & enable a skilled workforce	Support for skilled workforce
Policy to support & enable technological advances	Support for technology
Policy to support human & social capital	Support for enabling human & social capital
Policy to support effective, free-flowing internal/external communication	Support for enabling effective, free-flowing internal/external communication
Policy to support & develop leadership	Empowered governance actors & stakeholders
Institutional support for social cohesion, social networks, collaboration	Individual support for social cohesion & social networks, and participation

* Support includes ensuring budgets set aside funding dollars, ensuring policies are put in place, etc.

Appendix B: 23 Characteristics of (Community) Resilience (CCCR, 2000)

Resilience Characteristic	Description
1. Leadership is diversified & representative of age, gender, & cultural composition of community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership represents all citizens of community; • Decisions are fair & balanced & take into account needs, aspirations, and values of people in the community;
2. Elected community leadership is visionary, shares power & builds consensus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates clear vision of future, shares responsibility of power; • Builds consensus to ensure support of initiatives & community buy-in;
3. Community members are involved in significant community decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avenues for citizens to express opinions in productive, positive manner; • Community leaders encourage participation; • Community decisions reflect wide variety of views & opinions;
4. The community feels a sense of pride.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of pride is reflected in how people care for and maintain community; • Sense of pride is reflected in energy & commitment given to events, festivals, celebrations;
5. People feel optimistic about the future of the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People anticipate a bright future; • People sense the potential to develop & change;
6. There is a spirit of mutual assistance & cooperation in the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People make an effort to work together & help each other in difficult times; • Local issues are owned by community & people take it upon themselves to do something about issues;
7. People feel a sense of attachment to their community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People feel they are there for the long term & invest their time, energy & money in improving the community;
8. Community is self-reliant & looks to itself and its own resources to address major issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People perceive future is in their own hands; • People seek out and use local skills, expertise & finance to address issues & problems;
9. There is a strong belief in and support for education at all levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education at all levels is valued and supported; • Children are encouraged to participate & excel; • Adults provided opportunity for life-long; learning, career change, & skills upgrading; • Curiosity or thirst for knowledge exists in community;
10. There is a variety of community economic development organizations in community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a range of capable organizations, through which residences can undertake & influence activities vital to local economic vitality;
11. Organizations in the community have developed partnerships and collaborative working relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizations recognize conflict is costly & therefore work together to resolve issues; • Collaborative working relationships result in efficient use of resources & effort toward achieving common goals;
12. Employment in community is diversified beyond a single large employer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks are associated with reliance on single, large employer; • Economic diversification means supporting employment in smaller companies & active promotion of local ownership;
13. Major employers in community are locally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High degree of local control over economic activities & resources;

owned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources are used to improve all aspects of community life;
14. The community has a strategy for increasing independent local ownership .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of local control over resources is recognized; community works to increase local control; • Emphasis on retaining & expanding existing businesses as well as supporting development of new ones;
15. There is openness to alternative ways of earning a living and economic activity .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative development approaches include micro enterprise, dispersed ownership of community assets, self employment;
16. The community looks outside itself to seek & secure resources (skills, expertise, finance) that will address areas of identified weakness .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimal use of local resources & skills is balanced by use of external resources & information to address gaps & achieve goals; • Connected and access to outside resources;
17. The community is aware of its competitive position in the boarder economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify & build on strengths in relation to other communities and regions; identify opportunities; focus on local initiatives; • Cooperate with other communities as appropriate; combine resources to achieve common goals;
18. The community has a Community Economic Development (CED) Plan that guides its development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CED is critical tool to provide direction & unity; • Means to ensure common vision, maximize resource allocation for greatest community impact; • Build on opportunities;
19. Citizens are involved in creation & implementation of the community vision & goals .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term approach to building active public participation in development & implementation of goals;
20. There is on-going action towards achieving the goals in the CED plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible results breed optimism & sense of self-reliance; • Focus on short & long-term goals & objectives;
21. There is regular evaluation of progress towards the community's strategic goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CED efforts are viewed as on-going learning and capacity building process; • Built-in evaluation criteria & procedures; • Evaluation identifies results and benefits which can be communicated to public;
22. Organizations use the CED plan to guide their actions .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CED is integrated into individual plans of influential community organizations; • CED becomes working document for ongoing decision-making & allocation of resources; • Organizations should be involved in development of plan so they are familiar with goals and objectives;
23. The community adopts a development approach that encompasses all segments of the population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection between unemployment, poverty, & economic stability of community is understood; • CED functions to integrate & strengthen economic self-reliance

Appendix C: 20 Clues to Rural Community Survival (Heartland Center for Leadership Development, 1998).

<p>1. Evidence of Community Pride: Successful communities are often showplaces of care, attention, history and heritage.</p>	<p>11. Acceptance of Women in Leadership Roles: Women are elected officials, plant managers, and entrepreneurial developers.</p>
<p>2. Emphasis on Quality in Business and Community Life: People believe that something worth doing is worth doing right.</p>	<p>12. Strong Belief in and Support for Education: Good schools are the norm and centers of community activity.</p>
<p>3. Willingness to Invest in the Future: In addition to the brick-and-mortar investments, all decisions are made with an outlook on the future.</p>	<p>13. Problem-Solving Approach to Providing Health Care: Health care is considered essential, and smart strategies are in place for diverse methods of delivery.</p>
<p>4. Participatory Approach to Community Decision Making: Even the most powerful of opinion leaders seem to work toward building consensus.</p>	<p>14. Strong Multi-Generational Family Orientation: The definition of family is broad, and activities include younger as well as older generations.</p>
<p>5. Cooperative Community Spirit: The stress is on working together toward a common goal, and the focus is on positive results.</p>	<p>15. Strong Presence of Traditional Institutions that are Integral to Community Life: Churches, schools and service clubs are strong influences on community development and social activities.</p>
<p>6. Realistic Appraisal of Future Opportunities: Successful communities have learned how to build on strengths and minimize weaknesses.</p>	<p>16. Sound and Well-Maintained Infrastructure: Leaders work hard to maintain and improve streets, sidewalks, water systems, and sewage facilities.</p>
<p>7. Awareness of Competitive Positioning: Local loyalty is emphasized, but thriving communities know who their competitors are and position themselves accordingly.</p>	<p>17. Careful Use of Fiscal Resources: Frugality is a way of life and expenditures are considered investments in the future.</p>
<p>8. Knowledge of physical environment: Relative location and available natural resources underscore decision-making.</p>	<p>18. Sophisticated Use of Information Resources: Leaders access information that is beyond the knowledge base available in the community.</p>
<p>9. Active Economic Development Program: There is an organized, public/private approach to economic development.</p>	<p>19. Willingness to Seek Help from the Outside: People seek outside help for community needs, and many compete for government grants and contracts for economic and social programs.</p>
<p>10. Deliberate Transition of Power to a Younger Generation of Leaders: People under 40 regularly hold key positions in civic and business affairs.</p>	<p>20. Conviction that, in the Long Run, You Have to Do It Yourself: Thriving rural communities believe their destiny is in their own hands. Making their communities good places is a pro-active assignment, and they willingly accept it.</p>

Appendix D: Whistler Interview Guide

Introduction

I am a PhD candidate working in affiliation with Simon Fraser University's Centre for Tourism Policy and Research. My research investigates how resort community destinations develop and enhance their resilience when critical events threaten their long-term competitiveness and viability. Whistler is chosen for this study because the community's sustainability vision and goals are uniquely imbedded within the governance system through public policy. Because you have considerable experience shaping and/or influencing Whistler's approaches to development, I invite you to participate in an interview concerning those factors shaping 1) Whistler's ability to respond to critical events and 2) the community's overall success, sustainability and resilience. The interview will take approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

A. About You

- A.1. How long have you been a resident of Whistler?
- A.2. What is your role with the [organization, if applicable]?
- A.3. How long have you been involved with the [organization, if applicable]?

B. CRITICAL EVENTS Shaping Whistler

I am interested in your perspectives concerning critical events that have shaped Whistler's development. In this context, critical events are those *significant economic, socio-cultural, political and/or environmental occurrences (positive or negative) that have influenced Whistler's overall approaches to planning, development and sustainability.*

- B.1. Please identify **up to three** critical events that impacted Whistler over the last 10 years.
- B.2. Please list **up to three** critical events **CURRENTLY** impacting Whistler?
- B.3. What potential significant critical events do you foresee impacting Whistler's success and overall sustainability in the next 10 years?

C. CRITICAL EVENTS Shaping Whistler's Governance

I am interested in your perspectives concerning how the critical events you identified have shaped Whistler's approaches to governance. Governance in this context refers to *values, rules, and laws, as well as the institutions and processes (i.e. used to make community policy, planning and programming decisions) through which stakeholders make decisions and achieve common objectives.*

- C.1 How have the critical events you mentioned influenced Whistler's past and current approaches to governance?
- C.2 How might those and other potential critical events you mentioned influence Whistler's future approaches to governance?

D. About Whistler's Ability to Respond to Critical Events

- D.1 What is it about Whistler that strengthens/weakens its ability to proactively respond to critical events?

E. About the ROLES OF KEY PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS:

I am interested in your perspectives concerning the roles key people (i.e. opinion leaders) and organizations (i.e. RMOW, Province of BC, social non-profits, arts community, business community, educational institutions, etc.) play in Whistler's self-described *journey toward success & sustainability* and their influence on overall community resilience.

E.1. What are the roles of key people (i.e. opinion leaders) and organizations (i.e. RMOW, Province of BC, social non-profits, arts community, business community, educational institutions, etc.) in assisting the community make progress on its journey toward success and sustainability?

Resilience is defined as the ability of a system to bounce back, renew, and reorganize when faced with a disturbance. A resilient community takes deliberate action to enhance individual and collective capacity of its citizens and institutions to respond to and influence the course of social, environmental and economic change. *For these purposes, community resilience is defined as the process by which the community (citizens and institutions) is able to proactively adapt and function competently following exposure to a critical event.*

E.2. In what ways do critical events affect community resilience? (positively and negatively)

E.3. What strategies enable community resilience?

E.4. What are the roles of key people and organizations in influencing community resilience?

Appendix E: Case study protocol

Section A: Introduction to the case study and purpose of protocol	
Case study questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. What do Whistler's publics perceive to be the factors shaping the capacity of the governance system to proactively respond to and manage shocks and stressors? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a) What factors in the past strengthened and weakened the capacity of the governance system? • b) What factors currently appear to be strengthening and weakening the capacity of the governance system? • c) What factors in the future may strengthen and weaken the capacity of the governance system? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2. What types of shocks and stressors do Whistlers' publics perceive to be strengthening and weakening the resilience of the governance? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a) What types of shocks and stressors in the past have strengthened and weakened the resilience of the governance system? • b) What types of shocks and stressors currently appear to be strengthening and weakening the resilience of the governance system? • c) What types of shocks and stressors in the future may strengthen and weaken the resilience of the governance system? • 3. What is the role of governance actors in shaping the governance system's ability to proactively respond to shocks and stressors?
Theoretical framework for the case study	Social constructivism
Section B: Data collection procedures	
Site to be visited	Municipal government, Not-for-profits, Business, Provincial government, First Nations, Community members (residents), media, other:
Expected collection sites: Whistler, Victoria, BC (Prov. Gov.), Vancouver, BC	Competing Destinations U.S.A. (Colorado, Idaho)
Data collection plan: Evidence Expected: Critical events affecting Whistler, surrounding region; How critical events influence proactive responses to critical events; Factors strengthening/weakening proactive responses; Resilience-enhancing strategies; Roles of individuals & organizations in strengthening proactive responses, community resilience.	Secondary data to be reviewed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistler2020 strategy; Whistler2020 evaluation • Whistler Blackcomb Sustainability Policy & Annual report; • Whistler Corporate Plan; RMOW Council Governance Manual; RMOW Official Community Plan; RMOW Proposed Project Listing, 2014-2018; • Whistler Recreation & Leisure Master Plan; • RMOW council minutes; • RMOW 2013; 2114 budget; RMOW 2013 Annual Report; Whistler Energy Consumption and Greenhouse Gas Performance Trends, 2013 Annual Report; • Community Cultural Plan; • Go2Hr Labour Market Study; • Victoria Smith "Heart of Change" 2002 Master's dissertation • Other RMOW documentation of relevance; • BC Resort Strategy & Action Plan (Min. of Forest, Lands & Natural Resource Operations); • Other relevant provincial documents; • AWARE, online resources; • Whistler Centre for sustainability online resources; • Whistler Chamber of Commerce online resources; • Online newspapers; newsletters, communiqués, etc. • Aspen Snowmass, Sustainability Report 2012-2014; 2010-2011 • Other relevant documentation, including published and unpublished reports;

Participant observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RMOW Council meetings (in person, where possible, and available online), public and interest group meetings 								
Expected preparation prior to site visits	Infield preparation (treatment of human subjects): Abide by SFU ethics protocol; preliminary site visit;								
Section C: Outline of the case study report									
Whistler history/context re governance system	Drawn from dissertation literature review								
Describe how critical events shape capacity of governance system to proactively respond	Past factors		Current factors			Future factors			
Describe perceived factors weakening proactive responses	Past factors		Current factors			Future factors			
Describe perceived factors strengthening proactive responses	Past factors		Current factors			Future factors			
Describe perceived resilience enhancing strategies	Past shocks & stressors		Current shocks & stressors			Future shocks & stressors			
Describe perceived roles and responsibilities of key individuals & organizations	Past shocks & stressors		Current shocks & stressors			Future shocks & stressors			
Describe role of governance actors in shaping the GFSD system's ability to proactively respond to shocks and stressors	Provincial Government	Municipal Government	Business	First Nations	NGOs	Media	Community	Other	

Appendix F: June-July Chats: Whistler 2013

The purpose of the proposed research project is to explore the perceived factors that enable a resort community destination to continue making progress on its sustainability goals and initiatives, even when its governance system is faced with critical events (system shocks and stressors) that may be affecting its ability to do so. The ability to manage and quickly adapt to shocks and stressors may enhance a resort community's long-term competitiveness and viability, as well as its economic, socio-cultural and environmental resilience. Or more specifically, the ability to manage and adapt to shocks and stressors may enhance adaptability within the governance system, thereby enabling and enhancing the community's sustainability journey and ultimately long-term resilience.

My purpose in meeting with you is to ground-truth my research, before I write up my research proposal. I'd like to ask you four particular questions:

1. What is the best way to collect data, based on your experience in the community, to achieve my purpose?
2. Can you suggest any questions I should ask that would be helpful in evoking responses from respondents that will help me achieve my purpose?
3. Do you have an opinion about the appropriateness of some of the language I plan to use (i.e. critical events, sustainability journey, resort community resilience)?
4. Can you suggest some documents that I should examine as part of this research project, particularly those that may discuss critical events and their impact on the community's sustainability journey?

Appendix G: Vic West Community Association Interview Guide

Prelude: Have you had a chance to read the interview questions in advance? Do you have any questions for me or can I clarify anything for you before we begin?

A. The first area I'd like to explore with you relates to critical events.

1. Can you name some of the critical events that you believe have affected the Vic West community in the last 10 years or so?
 - a. Past
 - b. Present
 - c. Future
2. Which of these critical events do you believe most affected the VWCA in the past?
3. What impact, if any, did this **past** critical event have on governance aspects related to the VWCA? PROBES:
 - a. decision-making
 - b. objectives of the organization
 - c. policy decisions
 - d. structure of the VWCA
 - e. leadership behaviours
 - f. communication
 - g. negotiations
 - h. elections
 - i. consultation process
4. You mentioned XX as a CURRENT critical event. In what ways do you think this critical event is currently having an impact on the VWCA in term of: (list from above)?
5. And finally you mentioned XX as a future critical event. If this future critical event occurs, in what ways do you think it will impact the VWCA in terms of: [list from above]?

B. Now I'd like to ask you about the factors that strengthen the ability of a community to respond to critical events and which factors weaken the community's ability to respond.

6. In your opinion, what are the factors that strengthen the ability of the Vic West community to respond to critical events?
 - a. PROBE: For instance, there are indications that learning from past critical events, or that having a diversified economy, diversified institutions, sense of trust, innovation, collaboration, ability to self-organize, multi-levels of governance, sharing knowledge can all help a community to respond to current critical events.
7. Which of these factors that strengthen the community's ability to respond are the most significant, in your opinion?
8. In your opinion, what are the factors that weaken the ability of the Vic West community to respond to critical events?

9. Which of these factors that weaken the community's ability to respond are the most significant, in your opinion?

C. The final area I'd like to talk to you about relates to what you believe people and the community of Vic West need to be more resilient, particularly as it relates to critical events. So for example you spoke about XX being a critical event.

10. What do you think would help people in Vic West be more resilient in times of a critical event?
11. What do you think would help the VWCA be more resilient in times of a critical event?

Key Terms:

Governance: The values, rules, and laws, as well as the institutions and processes (i.e. policy-making, discursive debates, negotiations, mediation, elections, referendums, public consultations, protests, etc.) through which public and private stakeholders seek to achieve common objectives and make decisions.

Critical events: critical events are defined as significant economic, socio-cultural, political and/or environmental events that have either strengthened or weakened the community's *quality of life for residents*. They can be global, national, provincial, regional and/or local events. They can be people-related events (i.e. a long-time, active resident moves away) or community events (i.e. an election). Critical events can be slow moving (i.e. the value of Canadian \$, changing demographics) or sudden (i.e. a flood). They can be past events (i.e. 9-1-1) or they can be current events (i.e. the ongoing global economic slowdown), or they may be future events (i.e. climate change). They can have a positive or a negative effect.

Sustainability: Originally defined as meeting the needs of the current generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), sustainability is now defined in terms of values, such as the promotion of human welfare, the preservation of ecosystems, inter-and-intra generational equity, and public participation in decision making.

Community resilience: Resilience is defined as the ability of a system to bounce back, renew, and reorganize when faced with a disturbance. From a community development context, resilience enables an economy to adapt its structure (i.e. institutions, firms, industries, technologies) so as to maintain growth in employment, production output, and material wealth. For these purposes, community resilience is defined as the process by which the community is able to proactively adapt and function competently following exposure to a critical event.

Appendix H: USA Interview Guide

Introduction

I am a PhD candidate working in affiliation with Simon Fraser University's Centre for Tourism Policy and Research. My research investigates how resort community destinations develop and enhance their resilience when critical events threaten their long-term competitiveness and viability. Whistler is chosen for this study because the community's sustainability vision and goals are uniquely imbedded within the governance system through public policy. Because you have knowledge of Aspen's approaches to development, I invite you to participate in an interview for comparison purposes. The interview will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes.

A. About You

- A.1. How long have you been a resident in Aspen, Colorado?
- A.2. What is your role with [organization]?
- A.3. How long have you been involved in this role?

B. CRITICAL EVENTS Shaping Aspen

I am interested in your perspectives concerning critical events that have shaped Aspen's approaches to development. In this context, critical events are those *significant economic, socio-cultural, political and/or environmental occurrences (positive or negative) that have influenced Aspen's overall approaches to planning, development and sustainability.*

- A.1. Please identify **up to three** critical events that impacted these destinations over the last 10 – 15 years.
- A.2. Please list **up to three** critical events CURRENTLY impacting these destinations.
- A.3. What potential significant critical events do you foresee impacting these destinations' success and overall sustainability in the next 10 years?

Appendix I: Backgrounder for Whistler Informants

Valerie Sheppard, Principal investigator: [REDACTED]

Backgrounder for Whistler Participants:

My PhD research investigates how resort community destinations develop and enhance their resilience when critical events threaten their long-term competitiveness and viability. Whistler is chosen for this study because the community's sustainability vision and goals are uniquely imbedded within the governance system through public policy. Because you have considerable experience living, working, and/or shaping development in Whistler, I invite you to participate in an interview concerning those factors shaping Whistler's ability to proactively respond and adapt to critical events, ultimately enhancing the community's overall resilience.

The interview can be scheduled with me at a time that is convenient to you (approximately 60 to 90 minutes in length). The first topic to be discussed concerns your perspectives on those critical events you feel affected Whistler's past and current approaches to governance (both positively and negatively), as well as critical events that may influence its future approach. The second topic seeks your viewpoints on the factors (past and current) that strengthen or weaken Whistler's ability to respond to critical events. The final topic of the interview explores your opinions on the role key people and organizations in Whistler play in shaping its progress on matters related to community success and sustainability. In addition to these three topics, general background questions will briefly explore your residence in Whistler (if applicable) and past and present employment in Whistler (if applicable).

Your participation in this research will be confidential, if you so choose. However, please note that should you choose to participate via Skype, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, as Skype is not considered to be a confidential communication medium. A consent form, as well as details about your rights as a participant in this research project will be provided in advance by email. You will have the opportunity to read and comment on any printed research results before the results are submitted to Simon Fraser University or before any data is presented at a conference or some such event.

There are a number of key terms that will be explored in this project. These terms include:

1. ***Journey toward success & sustainability:*** The Whistler2020 document defines sustainability as "the complete interconnection between the earth's social, economic and environmental systems. It's about ensuring that we work toward success in all three of these systems to create vibrant communities, strong economies and healthy ecosystems. In Whistler, it's been called a *journey toward success and sustainability* - with the term 'success' included to ensure that the economic and social aspects are not forgotten along with the environment."
2. ***Critical events:*** critical events are defined as significant economic, socio-cultural, political and/or environmental events that have either strengthened or weakened the

community's *journey toward success & sustainability*. They can be global, national, provincial, regional and/or local events. They can be people-related events (i.e. a long-time, active resident moves away) or community events (i.e. an election). Critical events can be slow moving (i.e. the value of Canadian \$, changing demographics) or sudden (i.e. a flood). They can be past events (i.e. 9-1-1) or they can be current events (i.e. the ongoing global economic situation), or they may be future events (i.e. climate change). They can have a positive or a negative effect.

3. **Community resilience:** Resilience is defined as the ability of a system to bounce back, renew, and reorganize when faced with a disturbance. From a community development context, resilience enables an economy to adapt its structure (i.e. institutions, firms, industries, technologies) so as to maintain growth in employment, production output, and material wealth. Community resilience will therefore be defined as the process by which the community is able to proactively adapt and function competently following exposure to a critical event.

4. **Governance:** The values, rules, and laws, as well as the institutions and processes (i.e. policy-making, discursive debates, negotiations, mediation, elections, referendums, public consultations, protests, etc.) through which public and private stakeholders seek to achieve common objectives and make decisions.

Valerie Sheppard, PhD Candidate, Simon Fraser University, Faculty of Environment:



Appendix J: Background for U.S.A. informants



School of Resource & Environmental Management
Faculty of Environment

████████████████████
████████████████████
www.rem.sfu.ca

Address
TASC 1, room 8405
Simon Fraser
University
8888 University Drive
Burnaby BC V5A 1S6
Canada

Backgrounder for competing U.S.A.-based resort destinations:

My PhD research investigates how resort community destinations develop and enhance their resilience when critical events threaten their long-term competitiveness and viability. Whistler is chosen for this study because the community's sustainability vision and goals are uniquely imbedded within the governance system through public policy. As an employee of a competing U.S.A.-based resort destination, your knowledge of critical events affecting your resort will add valuable insight and understanding to the overall research project. The interview will take approximately 30-40 minutes of your time, at your convenience.

The topic to be discussed concerns your perspectives on those critical events you feel have, in the past, and currently affect your area's resorts success (both positively and negatively). In addition to this topic, general background questions will briefly explore your residence and employment in the community of Ketchum and past employment in Aspen.

Your participation in this research will be confidential, if you so choose. However, please note that should you choose to participate via Skype, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, as Skype is not considered to be a confidential medium. Information from your interview may assist in explaining some of the findings related to Whistler. You will be provided with a consent form as well as details about your rights as a participant in this research project, by email in advance of the interview. You will have the opportunity to read and comment on any printed research results before the results are submitted to Simon Fraser University or before any data is presented at a conference or some such event.

There are a number of key terms that will be explored in this project. These terms include:

1. **Critical events:** critical events are defined as significant economic, socio-cultural, political and/or environmental events that have either strengthened or weakened the resort's success. They can be global, national, state, regional and/or local events. They can be people-related events (i.e. a long-time, active resident moves away) or community events (i.e. an election). Critical events can be slow moving (i.e. the value of U.S. \$, changing demographics) or sudden (i.e. a

flood). They can be past events (i.e. 9-1-1) or they can be current events (i.e. the ongoing global economic situation), or they may be future events (i.e. climate change). They can be positive or negative in impact.

2. **Community resilience:** Resilience is defined as the ability of a system to bounce back, renew, and reorganize when faced with a disturbance. From a community development context, resilience enables an economy to adapt its structure (i.e. institutions, firms, industries, technologies) so as to maintain growth in employment, production output, and material wealth. Community resilience will therefore be defined as the process by which the community is able to adapt and function competently following exposure to a critical event.

3. **Sustainability:** Originally defined as meeting the needs of the current generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), sustainability is now defined in terms of values, such as the promotion of human welfare, the preservation of ecosystems, inter-and-intra generational equity, and public participation in decision making.

Appendix K: Consent form for Whistler Informants



School of Resource & Environmental Management
Faculty of Environment

Principal Investigator: **Valerie Sheppard, PhD Candidate**

T
E
www.rem.sfu.ca

Address
TASC 1, room 8405
Simon Fraser
University
8888 University Drive
Burnaby BC V5A 1S6
Canada

Consent Form for Whistler Participants: Study #2013s0624

This research is being conducted as part of a PhD dissertation, under the permission of the Simon Fraser Research Ethics Board. The chief concern of the Board is for the health, safety and psychological well being of participants. Should you have any questions about the research study, please contact the

_____ with respect to your participation in this research study as a research participant, please contact Dr. _____ Research Ethics by email at _____

Your signature on this form will signify that you have received this document which describes the procedures, that you have reviewed all three pages of this document, considered whether there are possible risks, and benefits of this research study, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the documents describing the study, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

Valerie Sheppard, Principal Investigator, PhD Candidate
School of Resource & Environmental Management, Faculty of Environment
Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, CA

Dr. Peter Williams, Supervisor,
School of Resource and Environmental Management, Faculty of Environment
Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, CA

TITLE of study: **Resilience in governance for sustainable development systems:
Factors enhancing proactive responses to shocks and stressors**

Purpose and goals of this study: The purpose of this study is to understand how resort community destinations develop and enhance their resilience when critical events threaten their long-term competitiveness and viability. The objectives are to 1) document and analyze the perceptions of governance actors and opinion leaders as it relates to the critical events affecting Whistler's past and current approaches to governance (both positive and negative), as well as those factors that may influence its future approach, 2) document the various factors, past and current, that strengthen and weaken Whistler's ability to respond to critical events, and 3) document and analyze the perceptions of governance actors and opinion leaders as it relates to the role key people and organizations play in shaping progress on matters related to community success and sustainability.

What the participants will be required to do: At the beginning of the interview you will be asked a few questions to confirm your eligibility in the study. Specifically, you will be asked about your residence and employment during the time period in question. Once confirmation of your eligibility is determined, you will be asked to share your perceptions related to Whistler's self-described journey toward success and sustainability, from approximately 2000 through to the present time. Specifically, I will ask you questions related to your perception of 1) the critical events you feel have affected Whistler's past and current approaches to governance (both positively and negatively), as well as those factors that may influence its future approach, 2) the factors, past and current, that strengthened or weakened Whistler's ability to respond to critical events, 3) the role of key people and organizations in Whistler play in shaping its progress on matters related to success and sustainability. It is anticipated that the interviews will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes.

All interviews will be audio recorded. As soon as possible after the completion of the interview, the audio recording of the interview will be transcribed. You will also be presented with a copy of the transcribed interview so that you may verify its content. At some point in the future, you may be asked questions to provide clarification or you may be asked new, but related study questions. You will be asked at the end of this document to consent to future contact. All digital recordings and transcribed documents will be kept on the hard drive of my password-protected computer for the purposes of analysis. You will be assigned a participant number in order to protect your identity, should you wish remain confidential. You will be asked below to confirm whether or not you wish your identity to remain confidential. After analysis is complete, in 2014, the data will be transferred to an external hard drive and stored in a locked cabinet until 2017/12/31. After this time, all digital files will be deleted. Audio recordings will be deleted on or before 2014/12/31.

Risks to the participant, third parties or society: There are no foreseeable risks to participants in this study.

Benefits of the study to the development of new knowledge: The study will contribute to a growing body of research and knowledge related to resilience theory and governance for sustainable development systems. More specifically, it will advance understanding of the resilience-enhancing factors that shape the capacity of tourism resort destinations to proactively respond to and manage change. The empirical results of this study will be of value to other tourism destinations, as well as the countless communities across British Columbia and beyond

that seek a more resilient future.

Statement of confidentiality: If you request that your identity remain confidential, I will maintain confidentiality of your name and the contributions you have made within all documents produced that are related to this study, to the extent allowed by the law. Please note that should you choose to participate via Skype, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed only as it relates to your participation through Skype, as Skype is not considered to be a confidential communication medium; however, your confidentiality will be maintained in all documents produced related to the study regardless of whether you participate face-to-face, by telephone, or by Skype. Please check one of the following:

1. I would like my identity to remain confidential.
2. I consent to my identity being used in this study.

Interview of employees about their company or agency:

You may be asked questions about your employer or the organization for which you work or are involved with. Your organization has not been asked for approval of your participation in this study. Please check this box to indicate your consent.

Interview of participants who are First Nations' members:

You may be asked questions about your employer or organization for which you work or are involved with, which may be your Band. Your Band has not been asked for approval of your participation in this study. Please check this box to indicate your consent.

I consent to audio recording of this interview

Inclusion of names of participants in reports and documents on the study: Knowledge of your identify is not required in reports and documents on the study.

Refusal to participate or withdrawal after agreeing to participate will have no adverse effects on employment, evaluation, or membership in an association.

Contact of participants at a future time or use of the data in other studies:

Based upon information gleaned in this interview and in interviews with other respondents, it may be necessary to contact you to seek clarification or to ask you new, but related questions related to this study. Please check the box if you agree to future contact related to this study.

The information you have contributed in this study may be used in future studies that may be similar (or dissimilar) and may require future contact with you. Please check the box if you agree to future contact related to a future study.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation at any time. I also understand that should I have concerns or complaints with respect to my participation in this research study I may contact [REDACTED] Fraser University; 8888 University Drive; Discovery 2; Burnaby, B.C., V5A 1S6, by email at [REDACTED]

I may obtain copies of the results of this study upon its completion by contacting Valerie S [REDACTED]

Having been asked to participate in the research study named above, I certify that I have read the procedures specified in this document (pages 1-4) describing the study. I understand the procedures to be used in this study and the personal risks to me in taking part in the study as described above.

Participant name (please print): _____

Participant signature: _____

Participant contact information: _____

Date: _____
 Year Month Day

Appendix L: Consent form U.S.A. informants

Consent form: (U.S.A. resort destinations)

Application #2013s0624

This PhD research is being conducted under the permission of the Simon Fraser Research Ethics Board. The chief concern of the Board is for the health, safety and psychological well-being of participants. Should you have any questions about the research study, please contact the [REDACTED] if you should have concerns or complaints with respect to your participation in this research study as a research participant, please contact Dr. Dina Shafey, Associate Director, Office of [REDACTED]

Your signature on this form will signify that you have received this document which describes the procedures, that you have reviewed all three pages of this document, considered whether there are possible risks, and benefits of this research study, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the documents describing the study, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

Valerie Sheppard, Principal Investigator,
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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

TITLE: Resilience in governance for sustainable development systems: Factors enhancing proactive responses to shocks and stressors

Purpose and goals of this study:

The purpose of this study is to understand how resort community destinations develop and enhance their resilience when critical events threaten their long-term competitiveness and viability. The objectives are to 1) document and analyze the perceptions of governance actors and opinion leaders as it relates to the critical events affecting Whistler's past and current approaches to governance (both positive and negative), as well as those factors that may influence its future approach, 2) document the various factors, past and current, that

strengthen and weaken Whistler's ability to respond to critical events, and 3) document and analyze the perceptions of governance actors and opinion leaders as it relates to the role key people and organizations play in shaping progress on matters related to community success and sustainability.

What the participants will be required to do:

At the beginning of the interview you will be asked to confirm your eligibility for involvement in the study. Specifically, you will be asked about your residence and employment during the time period in question. Once confirmation of your eligibility is determined, you will be asked to share your perceptions related to the types of critical events that have influenced your resort from approximately 1998 through to the present time. It is anticipated that the interview will last approximately 30-40 minutes.

All interviews will be audio recorded. As soon as possible after the completion of the interview, the audio recording of the interview will be transcribed. You will be presented with a copy of the transcribed interview in order to verify its content. At some point in the future, you may be asked questions to provide clarification. You will be asked at the end of this document to consent to future contact. All digital recordings and transcribed documents will be kept on the hard drive of my password-protected computer for the purposes of analysis. You will be assigned a participant number in order to protect your identity, should you wish remain confidential. After data analysis is complete, in 2014, the data will be transferred to an external hard drive and stored in a locked cabinet until 2017/12/31. After this time, all digital files will be deleted. Audio recordings will be deleted on or before 2014/12/31.

Risks to the participant, third parties or society:

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study.

Benefits of the study to the development of new knowledge:

The study will contribute to a growing body of research and knowledge related to resilience theory and governance for sustainable development systems. More specifically, it will advance understanding of the resilience-enhancing factors that shape the capacity of tourism resort destinations to proactively respond to and manage change. The empirical results of this study will be of value to other tourism destinations, as well as the countless communities across British Columbia and beyond that seek a more resilient future.

Statement of confidentiality: If you request that your identity remain confidential, I will maintain confidentiality of your name and the contributions you have made within all documents produced that are related to this study, to the extent allowed by the law. Please note that should you choose to participate via Skype, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed only as it relates to your participation through Skype, as Skype is not considered to be a confidential communication medium; however, your confidentiality will be maintained in all documents produced related to the study regardless of whether you participate face-to-face,

by telephone, or by Skype. Please check one of the following:

1. I would like my identity to remain confidential.

2. I consent to my identity being used in this study.

Interview of employees about their company or agency:

You may be asked questions about your employer or the organization for which you work or are involved with. Your organization has not been asked for approval of your participation in this study. Please check this box to indicate your consent.

Interview of participants who are members of an Aboriginal Band:

You may be asked questions about your employer or the organization for which you work or involved with, which may be your Band. Your Band has not been asked for approval of your participation in this study. Please check this box to indicate your consent.

I consent to audio recording of this interview

Inclusion of names of participants in reports and documents on the study:

Knowledge of your identify is not required in reports and documents on the study.

Refusal to participate or withdrawal after agreeing to participate:

Refusal to participate or withdrawal after agreeing to participate will have no adverse effects on employment, evaluation, or membership in an association.

This research abides by the Human Research Protection Guidelines available through the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, available at <http://answers.hhs.gov/ohrp/categories/1567>.

Contact of participants at a future time or use of the data in other studies:

Based upon information gleaned in this interview and in interviews with other respondents, it may be necessary to contact you to seek clarification related to critical events. Please check the box if you agree to future contact related to this study.

The information you have contributed in this study may be used in future studies that may be similar (or dissimilar) and may require future contact with you. Please check the box if agree to future contact related to a future study.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation at any time. I also understand that

should I have concerns or complaints with respect to my participation in this research study I may contact [REDACTED] University; 8888 University Drive; Discovery 2; Burnaby, B.C., V5A 1S6, by email at [REDACTED]

I may obtain copies of the results of this study upon its completion by contacting Valerie [REDACTED]

Having been asked to participate in the research study named above, I certify that I have read the procedures specified in this document (pages 1-4) describing the study. I understand the procedures to be used in this study and the personal risks to me in taking part in the study as described above.

Participant name (please print): _____

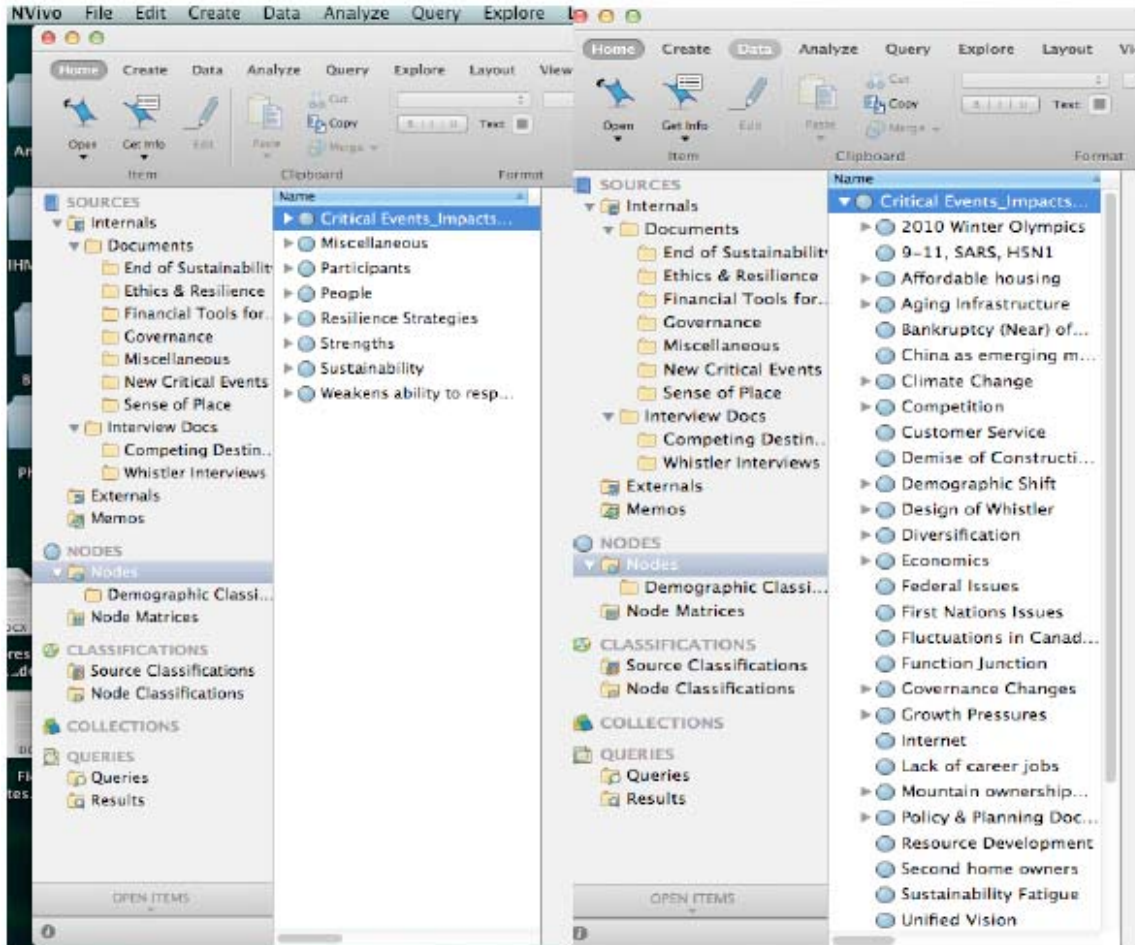
Participant signature: _____

Participant contact information: _____

Date: _____
Year Month Day

Researcher's name: **Valerie Sheppard, under the supervision of Dr. Peter Williams**

Appendix M: Snapshot of NVivo critical events_impacts node



Appendix N: Interview schedule

Date	Location	Details	Sectors Represented
November 25 – 29, 2013	Whistler, BC	12 face-to-face interviews	1, 2, 3, 5
January 13 – 17, 2014	Whistler, BC	11 face-to-face interviews	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
January 28, 2014	Whistler, BC	1 Skype interview	5
January 29, 2014	Victoria, BC	2 face-to-face interviews	2
February 4 – 5, 2014	Vancouver, BC	3 face-to-face interviews	1, 2, 3, 5
February 24- 27, 2014	Whistler, BC	7 face-to-face interviews	1, 3, 4, 5
March 6, 2014	Sun Peaks, BC	1 Skype interview	2, 3
March 6, 2014	U.S.A.	Answers sent via email	3, 7
March 10, 2014	Whistler, BC	1 phone interview	3
March 13, 2014	Whistler, BC	1 Skype interview	3
March 15, 2014	Arizona, USA	1 phone interview	2
March 17, 2014	Vancouver, BC	1 face-to-face interview	3
March 20, 2014	Whistler, BC	1 phone interview	5
March 21, 2014	U.S.A.	1 Skype interview	2, 7
April 17, 2014	Victoria, BC	1 face-to-face interview	6
June 11, 2014	U.S.A.	Answers sent via email	3, 7
October 3, 2014	Whistler, BC	1 Skype interview	2
October 30, 2014	Whistler, BC	1 Skype; 1 phone interview	3, 5
November 17, 2014	Whistler, BC	1 Skype Interview	2

Sectors are defined as 1 = Elected governance; 2 = Appointed governance; 3 = Business; 4= Media; 5 = Non-profit; 6 = First Nations; Competing Destination =7

Appendix O: Ruiz-Ballesteros (2011) SER Framework analysis: Whistler application

Factors nurturing SER at local level	Defining characteristics	Evidence: Whistler informant perceptions + document analysis
Learning to live with change and uncertainty	Learning from crisis;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although Whistler has not experienced a crisis, per se, it has experienced & learned from significant critical events (i.e. Olympics); Informants spoke about Whistler's enhanced ability to host festivals and events.
	Building rapid feedback capacity to respond to environmental change;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WB built Peak2Peak Gondola in response to climate change; Snowmaking equipment installed; More weather independent activities (i.e. museum, cultural centre)
	Managing disturbance;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good response to economic disturbances (i.e. EPI); New ecosystem monitoring program may help Whistler better monitor environmental disturbances;
	Building a portfolio of livelihood activities;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current focus on diversifying economy; Whistler is still "sticking to its knitting." Governance system needs to enable diversification into non-tourism related areas (i.e. education, small manufacturing, cottage industry) for a broader set of livelihood activities.
	Developing coping strategies;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPI document is a coping strategy; Whistler Blackcomb has a climate change initiative: Climate Change and Resource Efficiency Strategy Lack of strategy to deal with future potential threats (i.e. peak oil, loss of international market); Emergency Management program, but lack of a risk management plan;
Nurturing diversity for reorganization and renewal	Maintenance of memory as it relates to coping with change;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Life Survey is a valuable instrument for maintaining community memory; Ecosystem Monitoring Program will also help to create a memory as it relates to natural environment;
	Catalyzing resolution of conflicts, channels of negotiation, participation, & mechanisms of collaboration;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This aspect could be in decline, as some informants perceived it was harder to get information from RMOW; Communication has become centralized and delivered from the mayor's office only; Loss of Whistler2020 task forces means less citizen participation in governance; On the other hand, committees of council, do allow for input of residents, but only chosen residents; Open houses, and open council meetings allow for participation, but not necessarily citizen collaboration;
	Contributing innovative ways of tackling functioning of the system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many informants perceived that governance system is now more vertical system; more traditional approaches; RMOW is developing a customer service strategy to improve ways for public to get information;
	Nurturing ecological memory;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistler published a 2013 State of Environment Report; this report will help to nurture ecological memory Whistler Biodiversity project is supported by RMOW; annual BioBlitz and Fungus Among Us events collect information about local species;
	Nurturing diversity of institutions to respond to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempting to find the right educational institution as a means to diversify. This is a step in the right direction; Consideration should be given to providing incentives to other institutions/industries to locate in Whistler (i.e. small manufacturing, cottage industries, media, elective health care facility);
	Creating political space for experimentation;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The loss of the Whistler2020 task forces means that there is possibly less political space for experimentation; There does not appear to be much experimentation at the governance level;
	Building trust among users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many informants stated there was a greater level of transparency in the governance system related to reporting; however, other informants perceived a higher level of barriers in trying to seek information; Whistler awarded 2013 Canadian Association of Journalists' Code of Silence Award in 2013 (Barnett, 2013);
	Using social memory as a source for innovation & novelty;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was no indication from informants that this was or is occurring; Document analysis did not find evidence of this;

Factors nurturing SER at local level	Defining characteristics	Evidence: Whistler informant perceptions + document analysis
Combining different kinds of knowledge	Incorporating systems of local knowledge into management & external decision-making;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations knowledge is not currently incorporated into management & external decision-making; • At one time a video that documented the history of Whistler was shown to all new RMOW employees.
	Building capacity to monitor environment;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2013 Ecosystem Monitoring Program implemented; • Cheakamus Community Forest, Ecosystem-based management;
	Building capacity for participatory management;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheakamus Community Forest; community managed (Lil'Wat, Squamish First Nations, RMOW, Province) • Committees of Council may help build capacity for participatory management; • Lack of opportunities for capacity building for participatory management amongst citizenry;
	Building institutions that frame learning, memory and creativity;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RMOW is attempting to build learning, memory, & creativity at institutional level (Audain Museum, Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre, etc); while citizens are no longer guiding conversations through task forces, committees of council are used to provide direction to RMOW; opportunity for citizens to comment at open houses, etc;
	Building institutions to create cross-scale mechanisms to share knowledge;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many informants spoke about the cross-scale sharing of knowledge amongst Whistler's partners; • Many informants felt knowledge sharing in the SLRD was improving;
Creating opportunity for self-organization	Promoting participatory strategies that permit self-organization of groups & communities;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 62% of permanent residents & 51% of second homeowners are very or somewhat satisfied with opportunities to provide input into community decision-making; Informants spoke about open houses, Committees of Council; • Participatory opportunities for citizenry have declined since the Olympics; greater use of consultants; • Apparent lack of a strategy to prepare individuals to deal with a significant crisis (i.e. earthquakes, flood)
	Promoting participatory strategies that consider the diversity and alteration inherent in resilience;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee of council struck to examine educational opportunities as a means to diversify economy; • Lack of participatory strategies that consider diversity and change within the community; current efforts appear to focus on undertaking studies, developing plan which lays course of action. This approach is less flexible, and does not provide opportunities for citizen input.
	Building capacity for user self-organization;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No indication of capacity building for individual self-organization; Previously there was a program called iShift Business run by WCS and iShift Citizen, run by RMOW. Neither programs currently running. • However, there are three local funding agencies that could support self-organization projects (Community Foundation of Whistler, RMOW Community Enrichment Program, WB Foundation)
	Building capacity for self-determined, self-organized fairness in resource access & allocation;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local First Nations have gone to court to win the right to resource access & allocation;
	Building conflict management mechanisms;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict management mechanism does not appear to exist, particularly as it relates to local First Nations;
	Matching scales of ecosystem governance;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecosystem Monitoring Program; Biogeoclimate Ecosystem Monitoring/Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping increases understanding of ecosystems; Cheakamus Community Forest provides opportunities for multi-scaled governance with FN
	Creating multi-level governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some indication of multi-level governance, particularly as it relates to non-profits (e.g. Whistler Foundation, Whistler Weasel Workers; Whistler/Blackcomb Habitat Improvement Team, etc.) • Some informants indicated that governance has become more hierarchical in recent years;

Appendix P: A new framework for SER at the community level

Factors nurturing SER at local level	Defining characteristics	Details
Learning to live with change and uncertainty	Learning from crisis;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyzing and documenting past responses to past crisis; learning from others' experience with crisis; sophisticated use of information resources; leaders access information that is beyond the knowledge base available to the community;
	Building rapid feedback capacity to respond to environmental change;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is regular evaluation of progress toward the community's specific goals; CED efforts are viewed as ongoing learning and capacity building process; environmental evaluation criteria, reporting and response procedures; evaluation identifies results and benefits which can be communicated to public;
	Managing disturbance;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies to deal with disturbances (i.e. risk & disaster management planning & recovery)
	Building a portfolio of livelihood activities;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major employers in community are locally owned; high degree of local control over economic activities & resources; resources are used to improve aspects of community life;
	Developing coping strategies;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Careful use of fiscal resources; frugality is a way of life and expenditures are considered investment in the future; There is a variety of community economic development organizations in the community; there is a range of capable organizations through which residents can undertake & influence activities vital to local economic vitality and as a coping strategy; partnerships within the community;
Nurturing diversity for reorganization and renewal	Maintenance of memory as it relates to experience to cope with change;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Willingness to invest in the future, while at the same time maintaining a sense of how community got to where it is today; all decisions are made with an awareness of past experiences to cope with change and potential changes that may occur down the road (i.e. climate change);
	Catalyzing resolution of conflicts, channels of negotiation, participation & collaboration mechanisms;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations in community have developed partnerships & collaborative working relationships; Organizations recognize conflict is costly & therefore work together to resolve issues; Collaborative working relationships result in efficient use of resources & effort toward achieving common goals & minimize potential conflicts;
	Contributing innovative ways of tackling the functioning of the system;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The community has a community economic development (CED) plan that guides its development; CED is critical tool to provide direction & unity; means to ensure common vision, maximize resource allocation for greatest community impact; build opportunities for innovation;
	Nurturing ecological memory;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecological memory involves knowledge of physical environment over time, including available resources to be protected and nurtured; mapping, documenting, and monitoring natural resources in community;
	Nurturing diversity of institutions to respond to change;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership is diversified & representative of age, gender, & cultural composition of community; leadership represents all citizens of community; discussions are fair & balanced & take into account needs, aspirations, and values of people in the community; employment in community is diversified beyond a single large employer; risks are associated with reliance on single, large employer; economic diversification means supporting employment in smaller companies & active promotion of local ownership;
	Creating political space for experimentation;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elected community leadership is visionary, shares power & builds consensus; creates clear vision of future; shares responsibility of power; builds consensus to ensure support of initiatives, experimentation & community buy-in
	Building trust among users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizens are involved in creation & implantation of community vision & goals; long-term approach to building active public participation in development & implementation of goals to build trust;
	Using social memory as a source for innovation & novelty;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating/enabling social memory as it relates to past experiences with events in order to better respond to future crises; it is enabled through community debate and decision-making processes to deal with change (Hassan, 2000; McIntosh, 2000);

Factors nurturing SER at local level	Defining characteristics	Details
Combining different kinds of knowledge	Incorporating systems of local knowledge into management & external decision-making;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members, including First Nations, are involved in significant community decisions; avenues for citizens to express opinions in productive & positive manner; community leaders encourage participation; community decisions reflect wide variety of views & opinions;
	Building capacity to monitor natural environment, competitive environment (economic) & social environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building capacity to utilize First Nations knowledge of natural environment; Community is aware of its competitive position in the broader economy; identify & build on strengths in relation to other communities and regions; identify opportunities; focus on local initiatives; cooperate with other communities as appropriate; combine resources to achieve common goals; take care of social issues;
	Building capacity for participatory management;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The community looks outside itself to seek & secure resources (skills, expertise, finance) that will address areas of identified weakness; optimal use of local resources & skills is balanced by use of external resources & information to address gaps & achieve goals; connected and access to outside resources;
	Building institutions that frame learning, memory and creativity;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a strong belief in and support for education at all levels; education at all levels is valued and supported; children are encouraged to participate & excel; Adults provided opportunity for life-long learning, career change, skills upgrading; curiosity or thirst for knowledge exists in the community;
	Building institutions that create cross-scale mechanisms to share knowledge;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a spirit of mutual assistance & cooperation in the community; people make an effort to work together, share knowledge & assist each other in difficult times; local issues are owned by community & people take it upon themselves to do something about issues;
Creating opportunity for self-organization	Promoting participatory strategies that permit self-organization of groups & communities;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is openness to alternative ways of earning a living and economic activity; alternative development approaches include micro enterprise, dispersed ownership of community assets, self-employment;
	Promoting participatory strategies that consider the diversity and alteration inherent in resilience;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acceptance of minorities in leadership roles; minorities are elected officials, managers, and entrepreneurial developers; deliberate transition of power to younger generation of leaders; people under 40 regularly hold key positions in civic and business affairs;
	Building capacity for self-determined & self-organized fairness in resource access & allocation;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community has a strategy for increasing independent local ownership; importance of local control over resources is recognized; community works to increase local control; emphasis on retaining & expanding existing business, as well as supporting development of new ones;
	Building conflict management mechanisms;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community has decision-making framework; opportunities for input happen at the outset so as to avoid potential conflicts down the road; conflict mechanism (mediation) is in place for situations where conflicts occur;
	Matching scales of ecosystem governance; multi-level governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated local, regional, provincial governance for ecosystem management; includes networked planning for best use and/or protection (Ernstson, Barthel, Andersson, & Borgstrom, 2010)
Individual or internal factors	Physical wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of pride is reflected in how people care for and maintain community; sense of price is reflected in energy & commitment given to events, festivals, celebrations; high level of volunteerism; people are engaged; community has a good reputation that extends beyond community;
	Emotional wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sense of optimism about future of community People anticipate a bright future; people sense the potential to develop & change;
	Spiritual wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People feel a sense of attachment & connection to community, a sense of place; people feel they are there for the long term & invest their time, energy & money into improving community; community enables lifestyle choice; community has shared vision of where it wants to be in the future; single-mindedness toward creating a strong community;
	Behavioural competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People have single-mindedness toward improving, strengthening the community; people feel a sense that the community is working together for a single purpose ... the success of the community; <i>all for one and one for all</i>; people have problem solving skills and resistance skills;
	Cognitive competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People have a high level of self-efficacy, moral reasoning, a can-do attitude, and opportunities for intellectual

Factors nurturing SER at local level	Defining characteristics	Details
		stimulation; Community is self-reliant & looks to itself & its own resources to address major issues; people perceive the future is in their own hands; people seek out & use local skills, expertise & finances to address issues & problems; conviction that in long run, you have to do it yourself; thriving communities believe their destiny is in their own hands;