

**TALKING TRASH: THE POLITICS OF SUSTAINABILITY
AND WASTE MANAGEMENT IN WHISTLER, BRITISH
COLUMBIA**

by

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ABSTRACT

In 2005, the Resort Municipality of Whistler, British Columbia began shipping its solid waste to a landfill in Redmond, Washington as part of its solid waste management program. According to the municipality this practice is in line with *Whistler 2020*, its fifteen-year comprehensive sustainability plan, adopted in 2004. Whistler's waste management policy and practices raise questions of municipal, citizen, business, and visitor responsibility regarding waste management and sustainability in resort communities. The research focuses specifically on the issue of waste management in Whistler, British Columbia, which has articulated a strong sustainability discourse based on The Natural Step framework. Through a process of discourse analysis, and in depth interviews, conclusions regarding responsibility for waste management and sustainability policy in Whistler, B.C. can be formed while considering implications for the adoption of sustainability policies in other resort communities.

Keywords: Sustainability, Responsibility, Lukács, Solid Waste Management, Resort Community

Subject Terms: Governance, Sustainability Fix, Human Geography, Entrepreneurialism

DEDICATION

For Grama Enes

And for all my friends and family, without whom, I would not have been able to write this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Objectives

The number of municipalities that have adopted a “sustainability framework” for guiding planning policy has risen dramatically over the last decade. Indeed, in recent years, environmental, economic, and social sustainability have become popular catch-phrases in policy making circles, particularly at local scales. Sustainability can be defined as a worldview that emphasizes individuals’ and societies’ responsibility to preserve and enhance quality of life and ecosystem quality at the local scale and at other scales. Frameworks like The Natural Step employ ‘strong’ sustainability positions (Robert 2002); while enacting ‘weak’ sustainability practices. Strong sustainability does not allow for privileging one of the three elements of sustainability – environmental, economic, and social – over the others. Weak sustainability, on the other hand, does allow for tradeoffs between the three.

Discourses of sustainability, as they are used by stakeholders and institutions, are emerging from the environmental movement’s influence into mainstream politics. Sustainability is often used as a “fix” for local governments that are responsible for meeting the demand of interest groups to account for environmental conditions (While et al. 2004; Kruger & Gibbs 2007). Despite its growing popularity, “sustainability” as both a discourse and a practice has been used with normative valuations attached to it, yet the concept lacks critical evaluation (Gibbs et al. 2002). “This body of research... remains conceptually impoverished and we believe it could benefit from engagement with

theoretical approaches to local and regional governance” (Gibbs et al. 2002; 124). While such a critical discussion has begun (Gibbs et al. 2002; While et al. 2004), this research seeks to add to this discussion within the context of a resort community.

In its broadest sense, this research is concerned with the relationship between ideology and policy-making with a particular focus on the production of place. The practice of place-making is especially pronounced in resort communities because of their economic dependence on a particular place-image. This economic imperative, coupled with a focus on sustainability, forms the basis for an ideology that shapes place discursively and materially. Sustainability in this context is a discourse employed by interest groups and institutions as an operational fix that responds to critiques of neo-liberal capitalism by civil society groups in North America and Europe. By adopting a sustainability framework or policy, interest groups and institutions hold up this discourse against critiques of their actions. This argument echoes While et al. (2004) who argue that local governments use discourses of sustainability to alleviate political pressure from interest groups. In this regard, this research has the following objectives:

- To explore the practices involved in implementing municipal sustainability initiatives.
- To examine the ways in which notions of environmental, economic, and social responsibility are implicated in local policy-making
- To clarify the ways interest groups and institutions create local ideologies¹ surrounding sustainability and the mutually constitutive relationship between these ideologies and local policy discourse and practice.

¹ Following Cox and Mair (1988) I define local ideologies as particular sets of generally accepted beliefs that shape societies and are formulated through discursive tools constructed at multiple scales but are particularly influenced by place – based or *situated* discourses. For a further discussion of ideology in the context of this research, see chapter 2.

To achieve these objectives, I have focused specifically on the issue of waste management in one resort community – Whistler, British Columbia – which has articulated a strong sustainability discourse based on The Natural Step framework. Solid waste management is central here because of the significant consumption, and therefore increased waste production, in resort communities (Leiper 1997). Waste is a material output of consumption and when it is visible, people tend to have extreme reactions to its presence, making it, in turn, a major object of policy-making. The following questions guide the research:

- How and to what extent is waste management policy formulated and implemented in the context of sustainability discourses in resort communities?
- Why and how is the Natural Step framework for sustainability mobilized by interest groups and institutions in Whistler, BC?
- How does waste management discourse shape and how is it shaped by its economic, social, environmental contexts?

My research examines the politics of implementing waste management policies under a sustainability framework and within the context of a resort community through an in-depth discourse analysis of the proceedings leading up to, during, and after the implementation of a sustainability framework and the creation and execution of Whistler's waste management policy. The documents examined are: newspapers, town council meeting minutes, and policies of the resort municipality. This research is also contextualized through interviews with key informants including: municipal leaders, residents of Whistler, members of the Association of Whistler Area Residents for the Environment (AWARE), key business operators, and waste management firms operating in Whistler.

Contribution

Following the argument of scholars such as Gibbs, Jonas, and While (2002; 2004), discourses of sustainability are used by municipalities as a defense against critiques of their planning processes. Examining how The Natural Step is mobilized by interest groups and institutions in Whistler, BC assists in illuminating the practices involved in implementing municipal sustainability initiatives and the ways that notions of environmental, economic, and social responsibility are implicated in local policy-making. By asking how waste management discourse shapes and how is it shaped by its economic, social, environmental contexts, this research helps to clarify the ways interest groups and institutions create local ideologies surrounding sustainability and the mutually constitutive relationship between ideology and local policy. Asking these questions also help answer the question of how and to what extent is waste management policy formulated and implemented in the context of sustainability discourses in resort communities? This research expands on the work begun by Gibbs, Jonas, and While (2002; 2004) by putting questions surrounding the politics of implementing municipal policies under a sustainability framework and within the context of a resort community.

Methodology

Archival Research

For this research project I have chosen a single case study approach using discourse analysis as the method of data analysis. This has allowed me to utilize several different types of data collection and analysis (Van Dijk, 1993; Yin 2003; Maxwell 2005). By conducting archival research, semi-structured interviews with key informants, and short questionnaires this type of case study approach offers a chance to incorporate different

forms of evidence to gain a detailed view of what is happening in Whistler (Yin 2003). The use of discourse analysis as the primary method of analyzing data entails searching various forms of data, such as texts and visual representations to look for key themes that emerge within a particular discourse. While the archival research consisted mainly of texts, it also included some visual representations such as Carney's – the local waste management company – Recycleman, a cartoon figure visible throughout the community. By taking a multi-modal approach to discourse analysis, semiotic representations can also be used as text in the sense that they convey a message and contribute to the construction of ideology (Forbes 2000; Constantinou 2005). By including representations in the analysis I acknowledge the possibility of their political importance (Forbes 2000). I also do not limit myself to semantic representations of discourse, and therefore I have the ability to make more informed observations on the construction of ideology within a local context. The replies gained from the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were transcribed verbatim in order to turn them into texts. The use of these modes of data collection, archival research, and interviews, in conjunction with the method of discourse analysis allowed the project to be structured so that each mode of data collection is able to encompass all of the research objectives and attempt to answer each of the three research questions.

My research focused on the construction of local ideologies surrounding responsibility and waste management and its effects on sustainability policy by examining various discourses, including: documents, visual representations, and literature produced by various interest groups and institutions in the Resort Municipality of Whistler including: the Municipality; members of the Association of Whistler Area Residents for the

Environment (AWARE), a key citizen-based environmental association based in Whistler, B.C; waste management firms operating in Whistler; and individual citizens. The research was conducted through the Whistler Public Library and the Whistler Museum and Archives. Conducting archival research set forth an empirical context for this research project.

The documents that I examined were: newspapers, town meeting minutes, and policies such as Whistler 2020 in order to explore the processes that took place in the formation of the Whistler's sustainability policy and the general feeling within the community at the time of the policy's approval. Looking at official documents produced has helped to illustrate the most important aspects of sustainability as defined by the policy makers. Looking at local media such as *Pique Newsmagazine* and town meeting minutes helped to fill out this picture by highlighting points of agreement and points of contention within the decision making process. Where questions arose in the documents, interviews with key officials usually served to answer them.

Interviews

Interviewing key informants including elected officials and hired public servants helped to provide an in-depth snapshot of how Whistler's sustainability policy was formed and how it is currently being played out. It became important to contact people who were involved in the creation process as well as people who are now working within the sustainability framework. They included: former and current elected officials; employees of Intrawest (the corporation that runs Whistler/Blackcomb), Carney's (Whistler's waste management company), and members of AWARE.

In total I conducted twenty-nine semi-structured interviews with twenty-four individual people that included key questions on responsibility, reasoning, and background. Twelve of these were conducted with members of the municipality, the business community, and activist groups, while I conducted seventeen interviews with residents of Whistler. This number of interviews was chosen based on the groups identified above and time constraints, as well as availability of the people with whom I spoke. I conducted three interviews with employees of the municipality, one interview with an elected official, two interviews with environmental consultants who live and work in Whistler, and six interviews with various business operators in Whistler. The interviews ran between forty and sixty minutes. Whenever possible the interviews were conducted in person and several interviews were also followed up by telephone and email communication. Two initial interviews with residents were done over the telephone according to the wishes of the informants.

The people whom I interviewed were some of the heart and soul of Whistler. I spoke to individuals who held top political positions in the town and people who worked as wait staff. The age range of people with whom I spoke ranged from 'retired' to seventeen years old. While there were many differences in the characters of the people that I interviewed, they all shared a love of Whistler and the lifestyle that it provided. Every person with whom I spoke was an avid skier or snowboarder and most enjoyed other outdoor activities. Most of the people I interviewed were not born in Whistler, but, like the majority of the people living in Whistler, had moved there by choice when they were relatively young, specifically because they enjoyed the area (i.e. the outdoor, activity oriented luxury lifestyle), and the community of people who lived in Whistler.

The municipal workers and politicians with whom I spoke were mostly in their early thirties and showed a committed interest in the future of Whistler. Seeing their roles as public servants was one key characteristic that was evident to me during the interviews. Members of the business community ranged in age from near retirement to quite young and new in their jobs. All the people with whom I spoke were enthusiastic about their jobs and during interviews were often reflective of their positions and showed keen interest in developing solutions to the challenges of reaching sustainability and managing waste. The residents with whom I spoke also were a diverse group of people. Many were not property owners, however they mostly showed a vested interest and commitment to Whistler.

Researching Residents & Visitors: Methodological Strategies and Challenges

A key interest group that I targeted were the residents of Whistler. It is important to gauge the attitudes of individual residents of Whistler regarding their responsibility for waste management and their conceptions of waste and waste management. In order to do so, I had originally planned to develop a short questionnaire to be used for both residents of and visitors to Whistler. This portion of the research proved to be the most difficult. There are several reasons for this. The first is that by developing a short questionnaire and distributing it, I would be subject to examine the surveys for statistical relevance and responsible for ensuring a large enough random sample size. I was unable to do so due to temporal and financial constraints. As I conducted interviews in the community and began looking at ways to contact residents and visitors, it became clear that I would not have enough time to explore both interest groups. Because individual residents have

played a huge role in the formation of Whistler and its local policies, the decision to focus on residents was clear to me.

Instead of using the originally planned questionnaires, I chose instead to conduct semi-structured interviews with residents of Whistler. In total I interviewed seventeen residents (See Appendix 1). Empirical data, through interviews with residents was relatively difficult to obtain. This was done, as above, through the snowball sampling technique. However, few of these interviews were one –on –one. There was often a reluctance to talk about policy issues in Whistler because of the residents’ self-perceived lack of expertise, an issue I address in Chapter 5. Often when asked to comment on policy issues, residents, while saying that they did attend council meetings and read local newspapers, they did not consider themselves experts in politics. The main solutions to this challenge I found to be

1. Group interviews done informally.
2. Without the use of a recording device.

In this way people were much more likely to speak candidly about their opinions of Whistler’s sustainability policy and waste management practices. While these methods did provide a solution to the problem of getting residents to talk with me, it did present another challenge. It became very difficult for me to obtain accurate quotes because many interviews were done with multiple people and there is no digital recording, forcing me to rely on my interview notes and memories. I also conducted two telephone interviews with residents as I mentioned above.

Five respondents whom I had interviewed previously from their positions as municipal workers, consultants, and private sector workers also agreed to answer follow-up

questions, by telephone, from their perspectives as long time residents of the community as well. Of the twenty-nine total interviews, I count the five follow-up interviews as separate from the original interview. The people interviewed ranged from ages 17 to “retired,” which I would place at above the age of 65. Residents had lived in Whistler anywhere from one year to thirty-five years. Only three people interviewed had lived in Whistler for under five years. The respondents worked in all areas of Whistler’s economy, from food service workers (wait staff and bartenders), to managerial positions, to high profile municipal positions (again, see Appendix I). The range of ages and job sources allowed me to cross check answers to questions I received from previous interviewees in order to have a fuller understanding of debates in the community.

I took detailed notes during interviews with residents and transcribed the two interviews that were recorded. While I attempted to write down as many direct quotes as possible, much of the information obtained through resident interviews was used to gauge a general feeling in the community and corroborate documentary evidence found of citizen involvement. Data from the archival research and the interviews was coded according to emergent themes that appear from the data itself. The transcriptions of interviews were treated as text and analyzed in the same way as data obtained from the archival research. Using these two approaches allowed me to ‘triangulate’ information in order to come to confident conclusions about the formation of ideology, discourse, and sustainability policy in Whistler, British Columbia. Sample interview questions can be seen in Appendix 3.

Thesis Organization

The thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature and theory that is used to guide this research, using as a framework arguments by While et al (2004) in relation to literature on ideology, discourse, planning, sustainability, governance, citizenship and waste. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 break down my case study into interest groups involved in constructing, implementing, and experiencing the sustainability 'fix' that While et al. (2004) identify. Chapter 3 details the case of Whistler, British Columbia and focuses on the role of the municipality in sustainability and solid waste management planning. Chapter 4 looks at the role of the private sector in the formation of Whistler and its sustainability and waste management discourses and practices. Chapter 5 first details in more depth the theory guiding my examination of the role of the individual resident in the context of this research project and then goes on to look at the role of the resident in the making of Whistler. Chapter 6 concludes the thesis with a discussion of the findings and further implications of this research.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The objective of this thesis is to identify the ways in which sustainability frameworks affect solid waste management in a resort community and how this simultaneously leads to the construction of local ideologies and discourses that shape place. The research questions that guide this research deal specifically with questions of governance and place making. Before focusing on the empirical case study it is important to set up the conceptual framework that guides my research objectives and questions. This framework focuses on three aspects of geographic literature and theory: Governance and responsibility, Marxist notions of ideology and discourse, and geographies of waste. Recent work in the field of urban political ecology has brought to attention the lack of critical discussion surrounding the use of the term ‘sustainability’ in local planning and policy discussions. While et al. (2004) contend that it is not an altruistic desire to engage in ecological management but the need to find ways of reconciling the conflict that exists between the need for economic growth in the new ‘entrepreneurial city’ (Harvey 1982) and the increase of public participation in political processes, which often call attention to and raises concern for acts of environmental and social degradation.

[a]n environmental ‘cut’ can provide a range of theoretical and empirical insights into urban entrepreneurialism, the changing context for urban politics and, to some extent, the social contradictions of urban environmental regulation under a regime of ecological modernization (While et al. 2004; 551).

While et al. (2004) center their argument on post-industrial urban centers, however municipal sustainability frameworks and other forms of politically solidified

sustainability initiatives have been instituted in cities and towns of varying sizes throughout North America. While et al. (2004) further argue that economy-environment relations are currently characterized by the need to find a 'sustainability fix,' which is evocative of Harvey's (1982) notion of spatial fix. When capital reaches certain limits in a particular region, or space, it is compelled to open up new territories elsewhere in order to overcome the limits and crises inherent to capitalism. These spatial moves are used to 'fix' the problems inherent in capitalism. One solution is to turn to politics in order to alleviate the devaluation of fixed capital. While et al. (2004) contend that:

The historically contingent notion of a '*sustainability* fix' is intended to capture some of the governance dilemmas, compromises and opportunities created by the current era of state restructuring and ecological modernization... sustainable develop is itself interpreted as part of the search for a spatio-institutional fix to safeguard growth trajectories in the wake of industrial capitalism's long downturn, the global 'ecological crisis' and the rise of popular environmentalism (While et al. 2004; 551. My emphasis).

Notions of 'sustainability' are many and divergent. Precisely because there is a lack of definition of the term sustainability, While et al. (2004) argue that sustainability initiatives implemented by local governments serve as a sustainability fix – or a solution to conflicts arising between public interest groups and business interests within a particular locality.

In order for a sustainability fix to function successfully there are several factors that need to work in congress, from the perspective of this research they include: public participation models of government; an active responsible, and environmentally-conscious citizenry – including members of the business community, a population that is

aware of the particulars of solid waste in the resort community and an individual consciousness or empowerment to participate in effecting meaningful social change.

Governance for Sustainability: Municipal, Citizen, and Consumer Responsibility

Focusing on the question of responsibility in municipal governance – specifically the understanding and operationalization of notions of responsibility by institutions and interest groups involved in waste management – is important to this research because it is often embedded in local ideologies and is often an important medium through which policy is created. While there is a significant body of literature on corporate and consumer responsibility (Hoffman 1997; Buhalis 2000; Hassan 2000; Clifford 2002; Gill, 2000, the term ‘responsibility’ has not been a prominent concern of literatures on municipal governance. This thesis seeks to go some way to addressing this gap in the literature.

Responsibility is a social construct establishing an obligation to an action or thing. It is a much stronger word than ‘stewardship’, the term more often employed in these discussions (Wackernagle & Rees 1996; Roseland 2001; Tregoning et al. 2002; McCarthy 2002). Responsibility employed in the context of sustainability discourse is often discussed as responsibility to future generations and responsibility to each other (Brundtland 1987; Wackernagle & Rees 1996; Achterberg 1996; Robèrt 2002; Mowforth & Munt 2003; James & Lahti 2004). It is important to highlight the distinction between the use of ‘stewardship’ and ‘responsibility’ because, while there is a responsibility to protect the environment, it is rarely discussed in terms of conservation in aid of the environment’s *inherent* value, but rather in terms of conservation *for the benefit of*

humans. Discussing individual involvement in governance processes in terms of responsibility, however, is important because of shifting forms of neoliberal governance processes where responsibilities for management of things such as social welfare and environmental protection that were once attributed to the state are now being downloaded not only from federal to provincial and municipal levels of government, but also to NGOs and individual citizens (While et al. 2004). The examination of how responsibility is tied to municipal government and its citizens illustrates the ways that governments and citizens create local ideologies surrounding sustainability and how in turn those ideologies become embodied in policy discourses. For example, service to a community by municipalities has been established as a responsibility within the context of governance for sustainability and, therefore, from an analytic perspective, it is crucial to specifically define what kind of responsibility is required and which governing structures will take on specific tasks, such as keeping the city clean (Moore 2004), if we are to understand the process and politics of sustainability policy-making. Doling out responsibility makes it more likely that action will be taken to ensure that governance tasks will be completed. A firm definition and relegation of responsibility allows for accountability within governance structures (Innes 1996; Innes & Booher 2004).

Questions of human responsibility to the environment and, particularly, of governance for sustainability at the local scale have gained increasing prominence since the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit. This conference acknowledged the need for local sustainability initiatives in order to achieve sustainability as defined by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) Brundtland Report (Selman 1998). The preferred term in post-1992 discussions has been governance rather than government,

indicating a widespread acknowledgement that politics and policy-making are enacted by various interest groups (governance) rather than solely through political institutions (government) (Martin et al. 2003; Bulkeley & Betsill 2005; Palmujoki 2006).

This thesis concentrates on the workings and consequences of governance for sustainability and, therefore, it is worth providing a more detailed definition of this term and of the term government with which it is often compared. Government refers solely to political institutions and the people who work exclusively within those systems (Achterberg 1996; Webster 1996; Purcell 2006). 'Governance,' in contrast, involves multiple institutions and interest groups taking part in decision-making processes (Roseland 1992; Martin et al. 2003; Purcell 2006). Governance frameworks seek to incorporate the state, civil society, including NGOs and numerous other community groups, and the business sector in decision-making. Individual people are also centrally involved in public participation processes around questions of sustainability, as I will discuss below. Governance also refers to the rules and actions that these institutions set forth (Roseland 1992) as they call on the wider public to take responsibility for its communities. This perspective on governance for sustainability implies an individual responsibility to participate in decision making about one's environment as well as to take an active role in deciding one's economic and social conditions (Achterberg 1996; Elwood & Leitner 2003).

Citizenship

In the context of calls for individual responsibility in sustainability discourse, it is also analytically useful to develop a conception of whom the active, sustainable citizen is and what she does, or is expected to do, in the specific context of municipal sustainability

agendas. Citizenship has traditionally been conceptualized as being tied to political boundaries that have a physical location (Marston 1990; Painter & Philo 1995; Purcell 2003). These types of territories – the nation state being the most common – have long shaped Western ideas about citizenship. This has left much contemporary theorizing about citizenship to address the limits of the notion of citizenship as a status tied to a sovereign nation (Kofman 1995; MacKian 1995; Painter & Philo 1995).

Marston (1990), MacKian (1995), and Painter & Philo (1995), all call for a re-conceptualization of citizenship that goes beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. As Purcell (2003) has shown, this call has been enthusiastically answered as scholars have developed multiple conceptualizations of citizenship. MacKian (1995) and Painter & Philo (1995) argue that instead of only being physically bound to space, there are other, imaginary geographies in and through which citizenship is formed. As MacKain argues:

One of the main problems [with a great deal of the literature], is that along with the confusion surrounding the use of citizenship there is also a grand divide between *discussing* citizenship, what it may or may not be or who should and should not be a citizen, and the *actuality* of being a citizen and acting out citizenship (MacKain 1995; 209, her emphasis).

As this quote illustrates, debates around citizenship focus on what constitutes a citizen, for example: who actually gets to vote, claim residency and hold a passport, they do not focus as heavily on citizen responsibility, or how citizenship is enacted. Both Roseland (2001) and Kofman (1995) both discuss ideals of municipal citizenship. Kofman (1995) notes that one of the main responsibilities of citizenship is the individuals' attempt at complete inclusion for all people as well as individuals' attempts to fully participate in their community. Roseland (2001; 90) reiterates this sentiment by discussing citizen responsibility in relation to a: "...“municipalist” concept of citizenship cutting across

class and economic barriers to address dangers such as global ecological breakdown or the threat of nuclear war.” While discussions of municipal citizenship as a way to break down the barriers of class is a noble idea, they also become idealistic. Purcell (2003) notes that the current downloading of responsibilities from national or provincial scales to the local, is not an altruistic attempt to grant more autonomy to local scale governance systems nor is it, necessarily, an attempt by higher levels of the state to build stronger social capital by encouraging participation in governance. Rather, it is a neoliberal strategy aimed at escaping the costs of providing services by enrolling civil society and the business sector in areas of service formerly addressed by state institutions.

As I mentioned above, While et al. (2004) engage in a discussion of the entrepreneurial city as explicated by Harvey (1982). Under roll-back forms of neoliberalism², state mandates to care for the people and places over which it governs are reduced and the responsibility to care for people and places is downloaded from national or federal scales to provincial, municipal, and individual scales. Under roll-back neoliberalism, personal responsibility is greatly increased since individual citizens are increasingly pushed to be personally responsible consumers of services and participants in new governance processes which seek to replace the role of the welfare state (Kearns 1995; While et al. 2004). Therefore, research focusing on the responsibilities of the individual – explicitly using the term responsibility – contributes towards understanding contemporary North American and European governance structures and the discourses through which they are constituted.

² Roll-back neoliberalism includes the reduction of state welfare services that contributes to the contraction of the state (Peck & Tickell 2002).

Discussion of responsibility is often termed 'social responsibility' (Roseland 2001). The literature tends to separate social responsibility from citizen responsibility. One reason could be the focus on citizenship as a way of gaining rights (Marston 1990; Painter & Philo 1995). Purcell (2003) examines citizenship in the context of Lefebvre's notion of the right to the city. He maintains that individual citizens must earn the right to appropriation of the city through living their life in the public spaces created. While this is a noble attempt to call citizens accountable, Purcell (2003) does not take a further step in calling for the responsibility of citizens for participating in the decision making process. As Hibbard & Laurie (2000) illustrate in their study of public participation in local planning processes, there are problems already associated with public participation despite the multitude of calls to increase it. They observe that: "The sense that there is no potential for an individual to influence decision making has an extremely corrosive effect on government's ability to engage citizens in community problem solving" (Hibbard & Laurie 2000, 193). If citizenship is about what rights are accorded to the individual by a governing structure it follows that focusing on the actions of citizens and their responsibility towards the governing structure would not be a priority, therefore self selective engagement in planning processes occur. However, by highlighting the personal responsibility citizens have in the governing process, the problem of public participation could be alleviated. If a citizen gains the right to appropriation of the city by living their life in it, so too should they be responsible for participating in the governing of the city when they have earned the right to live in it.

The Visitor-Citizen?

If we are to conceive of citizenship as a set of rights and responsibilities that are enacted by those who *use* a place, not just those with official status within it, then residence and ownership must be accompanied by the category of visitor when we are discussing a resort municipality. If we accept the notion of the visitor-citizen, then there needs to be an understanding of how visitors can be held accountable for their actions in a place, particularly their actions pertaining to consumption and waste production. In the same way that there is a lack of analysis regarding conceptions of citizen responsibility, there is also a gap in the literature on visitor responsibility in the tourist industry. Much of the work that has been written focuses on tourist choice regarding the places they visit (Hall & Page 2000) and responsibility for destination management in the tourist industry is widely accorded to municipalities and tourist operators (Hashimoto 2000; Pearce & Badmin 2003; Gill 2000; Hudson & Miller, 2005).

Anderson & Brodin (2005), however, note that the notion of consumer responsibility in general has been changing over the years. They suggest that there is now more responsibility being placed on the consumer in terms of their decision-making about what and how to consume. Yet, these authors do not provide an explicit analysis of responsibility, *per se*. There is little written on tourist responsibility and resort sustainability practices, specifically. Mowforth & Munt (2003) note that there has been an adoption within eco-tourism of codes of conduct, where ethical practices that are region specific become encoded in text. This does not however, *explicitly* spill over into the luxury tourism sector, although these codes of conduct are beginning to do so. By

and large, Whistler is a luxury ski resort and it is becoming increasingly popular for the municipality as well as business operators to provide 'green' services to visitors.

The notion of responsibility is a discursive tool that is influential in the construction of local ideologies surrounding citizenship. While it is not explicitly discussed in tourism literature, the discourse of responsibility appears in Whistler. Therefore, in order to understand how the discourse of responsibility plays out in the case of Whistler, it first becomes necessary to understand other powerful discourses that are operating simultaneously and in conjunction with the discourse of responsibility. One important discourse is that of sustainability. While et al. (2004) contend that notions of sustainability are discursive tools used in governmental processes as an institutional fix to conflicts arising from opposing interest groups.

Increasingly, sustainability frameworks are being adopted by municipalities. This adoption is partially due to the ways in which discourses are changing local ideologies of governance and responsibility. Gunder (2006) argues that one reason the term sustainability has become so popular is because it functions as an empty signifier, or what Markusen (2003) calls a 'fuzzy concept'. Sustainability is a label through which the conscious individual can define itself in contrast or in congress to or with other individuals. Sustainability can mean everything and nothing at once. Therefore, it is important to understand how ideologies and discourses are mutually constitutive and how the processes that create both ideology and discourse are enacted through the interaction between discourses. This interaction is enabled by the actions of individuals and groups in relation to institutions. In order to examine the implementation of sustainability frameworks in the context of Whistler, BC it is essential to understand The Natural Step

framework (TNS), the contradictions within it, and the work of Robèrt (2000) and James & Lahti (2004). To broaden the context and concretely situate this research, looking at conceptions of garbage, waste management, and environmental planning in resort communities becomes essential. Furthermore, acknowledging the role of responsibility as understood by individuals, interest groups, and institutions within a governance process is important because responsibility is embedded in local ideologies and is the medium through which policy is created. Expanding the exploration of changing ideals of citizenship (Purcell 2003) to include responsibility in the context of consumers and visitors enables a fuller understanding of the empirical context of Whistler.

Ideology and Discourse: A brief discussion of the individual and other scales

Increasingly in North America, sustainability is seriously considered in the municipal policy making process. Municipalities such as Boston, Calgary, and Whistler have taken meaningful steps towards achieving sustainability through the planning process. As stated previously, one objective of this research is to study how ideology shapes municipal policy and how policy shapes local ideology. Therefore I define ideology as a set of generally accepted beliefs that shape societies. It is formulated by employing various discourses. Discourses are understood here as various forms of socially constructed representations formed by and embodied by particular ideologies. Ideologies shape discourses, but changing discourses also shape ideology; ideology and discourse are mutually constitutive. The following brief discussion of Althusser (1971) and Lukács (1971) expands on this tautological argument and helps to introduce the later discussion of Lukács and class consciousness in relation to this research.

Althusser (1971) argues that ideology function through structural apparatuses, i.e., capitalist ideology manifests itself through the state structure, that, in turn is manifested in all aspects of life. He asserts that ideology is manifested at all scales: from the individual to the family, the state, within culture, etc. Ideology in this sense is represented through various discourses and their interactions. The relationships between language, text, visual representations, and both individual and group actions constitute a politics that are informed by particular ideologies. The outcomes of these relationships then proceed to inform the construction and alteration of ideologies. The formation of discourses and the relationships between them are mediated through people (Lukács 1971; Harvey 1996). Without individuals working in relation to each other, discourses would not be formed and ideologies would not be created.

Lukács (1971) argues that by acknowledging the historical context in which ideology is formed we are better able to understand social phenomena in a way that allows us to consciously act. This consciousness then allows us to actively shape decisions we make. Lukács' work on class consciousness outlines the necessity of empowerment or agency by the individual in order to affect meaningful political change. By examining the interrelationships of stakeholders in the context of waste management, this thesis will extrapolate some of the ways ideologies surrounding sustainability are created, represented, and changed, and how this shapes and is shaped by individual stakeholders. The argument that local politics shapes and is shaped by ideology rejects Althusser's claim that ideologies are a-historical. As mentioned above, Althusser provides valuable insights into how ideology is materially represented, yet his distinction between ideology as being trans-historical and ideologies as local and therefore more a-historical simply

denies material reality. Lukács (1971), in contrast, argues that no action can occur without individual conviction that the action is necessary. The gradual reshaping of interactions and ideologies is the force behind which change occurs, and the real nature of social construction lies in: “the relationships between men” (Lukács 1971, 48). While it is possible that a major event can cause a paradigm shift within society, meaningful change more often occurs through individuals coming to similar conclusions on the point of a subject (Marx 1992; Lukács 1971).

Changing attitudes are often reflected in policy-making and, as can be seen in the case of Whistler, in the implementation of sustainability frameworks. I touch here on Lukacs’ work on the role of individuals in ‘the production of’ ideology. Lukács’ work has much to contribute towards understanding the political psyche at the scale of the individual. This becomes pronounced in research occurring in the resort community, which has a demographic population that is on average, a higher educated middle class than the one that Lukacs wrote for and about. It is important to note that Lukács, nor I, am arguing that it is only a higher class of people are attuned to the realities of their relationship to the means of production, but he argues that by engaging in formal education, the individual is empowered to act in relation to particular social constructs. His reasoning behind this is argued in *History and Class Consciousness* (1971). Lukács’ understanding of capitalism is that it is a system that treats the individual as a commodity, or thing. According to Lukács people become reified under a capitalist mode of production.

The fate of the worker becomes the fate of society as a whole; indeed, this fate must become universal as otherwise industrialization could not develop in this direction. For it depends on the emergence of the ‘free’ worker who is freely able to take his labour-power to market and offer it for sale as a commodity ‘belonging’ to him, a thing that he ‘possesses’... Reification requires that a society should learn to satisfy all its needs in

terms of commodity exchange. The separation of the producer from his means of production, the dissolution and destruction of all ‘natural’ production units, etc., and all the social and economic conditions necessary for the emergence of modern capitalism tend to replace ‘natural’ relations which exhibit human relations more plainly by rationally reified relations (Lukács, 91).

Lukács’ argues that if a society functions at all levels in terms of commodity exchange, then the individual becomes a “thing” and relationships between individuals become reified or translated to relationships between things. Reification, for Lukács, is the process by which the capitalist system turns social relations into relationships between ‘things’ or commodities - the individual as a fetishized commodity - and therefore precludes the possibility for social change.

The reified world appears henceforth quite definitively – and in philosophy, under the spotlight of ‘criticism’ it is potentiated still further – as the only possible world, the only conceptually accessible, comprehensible world vouchsafed to us as humans. Whether this gives rise to ecstasy, resignation or despair, whether we search for a path leading to ‘life’ via irrational mystical experience, this will do absolutely nothing to modify the situation as it is in fact (Lukács 1971; 110).

Lukács’ objection to the capitalist system is not a traditional Marxian view of one class oppressing another, but one system, capitalism, oppressing all classes (Lukács, 1971) The empowerment, or agency, on the part of the individual that Lukács argues is found through a process of self realization, or class consciousness, can be seen in Whistler thorough resident success in gaining a direct voice in local politics, and the low level of conflict that arises between resident activist groups, the municipality, and the private sector.

Lukács (1971) defines class consciousness as the ability to identify the problems of specific class interests into the capitalist system. This definition is not limited to the

proletariat, and the ability to achieve class consciousness, according to Lukács, is not limited by class. Lukács argues that by relating consciousness to all aspects of society, it is possible for the individual to identify how it experiences specific instances in relation to society and in relation to the individual itself. He also argues that consciousness is achieved through a dialectical method of individual realization, or a *subjective* process and through a process of formalized education, or *objective* inputs into consciousness.

Concrete analysis means then: the relation to society *as a whole*. For only when this relation is established does the consciousness of their existence that men have at any given time emerge in all its essential characteristics. It appears, on the one hand, as something which is *subjectively* justified in the social and historical situation, as something which can and should be understood i.e. as 'right'. As the same time, *objectively*, it by-passes the essence of the evolution of society and fails to pinpoint it and express it adequately (Lukács, 1971; 50 his emphasis).

Lukács posits that by relating consciousness to all aspects of society, it is possible for the individual to identify how it experiences specific instances in relation to society and in relation to the individual itself. Lukács (1971) reflects on the individual in its role as laborer. He argues that the individual as laborer has a vital role to play in the construction of ideology and its practice. The laborer's actions, he argues, are not only dictated by the relations of production, but is also influenced by its degree of class consciousness. For Lukács, the act of becoming class conscious is a point of praxis – the combination of ideologies, theory and practice – that uses the dialectic method. The radical nature of achieving class consciousness becomes an act of empowerment and opens the possibility for social change.

In addition to the mere contradiction – the automatic product of capitalism – a *new* element is required: the consciousness of the proletariat must become deed. But as the mere contradiction is raised to a consciously dialectical contradiction, as the act of becoming conscious turns into a

point of transition in practice, we see once more in greater concreteness the character of proletarian dialectics as we have often described it: namely, since consciousness here is not the knowledge of an opposed object but is the self-consciousness of the object *the act of consciousness overthrows the objective form of its object* (Lukács, 1971; 178. His Emphasis).

Class consciousness, according to Lukács (1971), is achieved at the individual level, through methods such as advanced and formalized education or life experience. The dialectical process of subjective and objective experiences that bring the individual to consciousness is not, for Lukács (1971), a process that is limited to the proletariat because the process of reification is not limited to a particular class, but is employed throughout the capitalist system on all individuals and, by extension, all classes.

Lukács has been critiqued for his use of the dialectical relationship of subjective and objective methods used to achieve consciousness (Zizek 2006). The critique of determinism that is leveled at Lukács' theorization of consciousness ignores the depth that he uses to argue the case for a dialectical process of gaining consciousness. If Lukács' argument is deterministic, then members of all classes still remain entirely *unconscious* of their lived realities and position in capitalist societies.

There is, however, another possibility open to us: to read the gap between factual and 'imputed' class consciousness not as the standard opposition between the ideal type and its factual blurred actualization, but as the inner self-fissure (or 'out-of-jointness') of the historical subject. To be more precise, when one speaks of the proletariat as the 'universal class', one should bear in mind the strictly dialectical notion of universality which becomes actual, 'for itself', only in the guise of the opposite... The claim that the proletariat is the 'universal class' is thus ultimately equivalent to the claim that, within the existing global order, the proletariat is the class that is radically dislocated... with regard to the social body (Zizek 2006, 110).

I quote Zizek at length here because he too speaks to the notion that class consciousness is not limited to the proletariat, often referred to as the ‘universal class’, but he goes on to highlight Lukács’ relevance to the critical study of contemporary capitalism (Zizek 2006). Lukács’ mandate that class consciousness is not only a necessity for the proletariat highlights the role of the individual in a contemporary service economy. In contemporary North American service economies the class distinctions solidified in 1923 are not applicable, however Lukács’ discussion of consciousness is applied on different scales and to different classes. Considering Lukács can help broaden an understanding of the individual’s role in the construction of ideology and of place.

Utilizing a Lukácsian notion of the individual and class consciousness provides a useful framework for exploring individual motivations in Whistler because of the community’s particular make up of individuals. Looking at individual residents’ accounts and insights into the construction of policy and ideology allow us to have a fuller understanding of the ways in which sustainability policy and ideology are constructed at local scales. This also speaks to the finding that, although there is still a long way to go in terms of sustainability practice in Whistler, the community is far further ahead of most other communities in its overall sustainability and waste management practices, i.e., the high degree of individual resident participation in the planning process and execution of municipal sustainability policy.

Geographies of Waste and Environmental Planning in Resort Communities

Garbage is civilization’s double – or shadow – from which we flee in order to find the space to live -- Scanlan (2005, p.179).

Waste: noun: garbage, debris, dreck, dregs, dross, excess, hogwash, junk, leavings, leftovers, litter, offal, offscourings, refuse, rubbish, rubble, ruins, rummage, scrap, slop, sweepings, swill, trash -- Roget's 21st Century Thesaurus (2005; 902).

In Western societies, waste is seen as something that has outlived its use-value (Hetherington 2004; Leiper 1997; Lynch 1990; Scanlan 2005). Thompson (1979) goes one step further, saying that waste has imposed on it a negative value. Waste is the stuff that no one wants. It is the stuff that no one wants to see. If waste is placed as garbage elsewhere, people do not have to deal with the repercussions of their consumption, nor are their actions dictated by their function of “things” (Hetherington 2004; 159; Scanlan 2005). Hetherington means that waste, a thing of no value, still exists as matter. When one is confronted with one’s waste, i.e., when it cannot be easily discarded, it serves as a check on one’s actions by confronting the creator of the waste with the implications of their own consumption. Lynch (1990) argues that waste is part of life and in order to reduce it, people need to confront it rather than try to forget about it by placing it elsewhere. People have to confront the reality of removing waste so that they no longer have to acknowledge its existence (Hetherington 2004; Lynch 1990). In this sense, the concept of waste is about *placing* (Hetherington 2004; see also Douglass 1984). Placing waste elsewhere allows people to forget about the effects of their consumption. It also allows people to continue their current patterns of consumption.

Hetherington (2004) and others argue the need for a paradigm shift in ways of thinking about waste (Hetherington 2004; Leiper 1997; Lynch 1990; Porter 2002; Thompson 1979; Scanlan 2005). If Western societies conceive of waste as value-negative, then the waste becomes something which we *need* to get rid of. Hetherington argues that we

should be thinking about disposal rather than waste. The process of disposal of waste becomes for Hetherington the conduit through which people interact with garbage. Not only do they use the act of disposal as a way to absolve themselves from a socially constructed guilt surrounding their consumption patterns, but it is also the means by which people are exposed to the reality of garbage. Scanlan (2005) also argues that garbage is not only about the value which we ascribe to objects but also our relations to garbage. 'Garbaged' material tells us about the history of modernity. How we dispose of waste is as important as what we consider to be waste. When waste is considered in terms of its disposal process, the concept of waste does not come at the end a cycle of production and consumption but rather can be produced and disposed of at any point during an object's life-cycle. In other words: "disposal becomes a material expression on translation in the practices of ordering" (Hetherington 2004;160). Focusing on the disposal of waste reminds us that the life-cycle of the object is not over in the moment we release it into the trash bin. Waste's valueless or value negative status is a justification for its disposal and it also reaffirms the value that we place on our new items (Hetherington 2004).

Thompson (1979) and Porter (2002) both argue that in municipal planning waste is currently looked at pragmatically. Porter (2002) takes a strictly economic approach to garbage, arguing for the need to reduce waste as well as arguing that a zero-waste strategy is not feasible because we live under a capitalist system that seeks to create new markets and exploit resources. Instead he seeks to identify how we can profit from the waste we create. He argues for a strengthening of second hand markets and concludes that border regulations, whether state or national, should not impose additional costs or

regulations when it comes to importing and exporting waste. The market in importing and exporting waste should be determined by the market itself. For example: "... the rich countries' trash becomes, through exporting, poor countries' trash. Is this bad? Many poor countries produce little of their own trash and contain much excellent landfill area...poor countries are under-landfilled" (Porter 2002; 114.)

While Porter (2002) essentially argues that the market should spread out its risk using a spatially equal distribution, he neglects the political histories that exist between nation-states which make it impossible for his argument to be considered just. By focusing on the *disposal* of waste rather than solely on waste, Hetherington (2004), Porter (2002), and Scanlan (2005) argue that many negative facets of waste can be reduced or eliminated. Waste and its disposal are inherently spatial topics because the placing of waste affects people who come into contact with garbage, and this in turn affects the places where garbage is put. Waste's placing produces sets of social relations between people and their environment which have consequences beyond human interaction with waste.

Waste in the tourism industry has largely been looked at with respect to the environmental damage it causes (Leiper 1997). While there is a broad body of literature looking at this issue, the conceptualization of waste within the tourism industry has not been fully explored. Leiper (1997) argues that although tourism creates waste, it is also created *from* waste. Innovation has turned surplus goods into commodities for tourist consumption which would have otherwise been waste (Stear 1989 in Leiper 1997). Like Porter (2002), Leiper (1997) also argues that secondary capital circuits – or the reuse and resale of goods – are needed and should be further developed in industry; in the case of Leiper (1997) his argument refers to the tourism industry.

Due to the heavy corporate influence in most tourism communities most of the work on environmental planning in these places deals with citizen/corporation interactions and corporate responsibility regarding environmental planning (Buhalis 2000; Gill & Williams 2006 a, b; Saremba & Gill 1991). The growth machine thesis views particular places such as cities and municipalities as a growth machines. The power of local rentiers is dominant and local politics are viewed in terms of their potential to further economic growth (Logan 1971; Logan and Molotch 1987). Logan and Molotch (1987) argue that residents' positions are often in conflict with those of rentiers.

[T]he growth machine perspective does tend to understand urban politics primarily as the way that business and political elites promote economic development and inter-urban competition for investment without spending a great deal of time investigating the rhetorical strategies and struggles over meaning that serve in the construction of what Cox and Mair (1988, p. 319), call a "local ideology" (McCann 2002; 390).

Over the past twenty-five years public participation has become accepted as part of the planning process in tourism communities (Gill 2000; Saremba & Gill 1991). Saremba & Gill (1991) look at differing value systems for residents and tourists in mountain resorts. Their finding is that residents of the tourist community (in this case Whistler, B.C. a place which draws heavily on its 'wilderness' location to attract tourists) see the "wilderness" as a place which should be utilitarian; similar to the Wise Use movement popular in North America in the early to mid 1990s (McCarthy 2002; Walker & Fortmann 2003). Visitors however, tend to feel that wilderness areas should be kept pristine. They see resort areas as a point of access to wilderness areas and are therefore more conservative in their opinions regarding development activities occurring in these places (Saremba & Gill 1991). Competition over scarce resources and "goal

interference” (Saremba & Gill 1991; 457) are cited as reasons for the difference in valuation of the wilderness and resort areas.

Resort communities that successfully articulate their pristine wilderness image into high number of tourist visits are caught on the horns of a classic development dilemma: while increased visits exerts pressures for development and spatial expansion, this success threatens the very wilderness upon which it is predicated. Therefore, as While et al. (2004) note, sustainability becomes an institutional fix that must be considered as part of resort planning. Development of many resort areas is seen as driven by the “growth machine” (Logan and Molotch 1987; Gill 2000; McCann 2002). Looked at as a driving force in development, the growth machine mechanism for development is driven by a purely economic focus. The “growth management” perspective, as Gill (2000) demonstrates, evolves from opposition to a growth machine method of development. The growth management mode of operation considers social needs within a community. The addition of social considerations in the growth-management perspective of tourism community planning ensures that plans and management schemes developed are more holistic, and focus on the health of the community rather than solely on their economy. The consideration of social needs under the growth – management perspective also helps to mitigate some of the conflict present between rentiers and residents under the growth machine model. The shift from growth machine to growth management becomes inevitable when considering the need for many tourism communities to preserve their sense of place in order to continue attracting visitors (Gill 2000).

While et al. (2004), as stated above, contend that sustainability initiatives are increasingly becoming the medium through which conflicts between strong definitions of

sustainability and economic growth are managed. Growth and development initiatives, even under a growth management perspective, remain economically focused.

Sustainability initiatives, however, are varied and within the multiple definitions of sustainability there are rigid definitions that emerge. In addition, waste is defined as a thing with no value attached to it. This very particular way of defining waste is a socially constructed discourse that legitimates the process of disposal. It does not, however, solve the conflict that arises between the process of disposal and calls for sustainable solid waste management. Thus the potential for conflict arises between economic growth initiatives and planning for sustainability. Applying While et al.'s (2004) argument about the sustainability fix to tourism communities, where levels of consumption are higher than in other places of similar size and population, not only further legitimates their argument, but further clarifies the ways in which these conflicts are managed at a local scale.

CHAPTER 3: THE CASE OF WHISTLER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

Daily, an average of 30,000 tourists walk through the Village Square in the Resort Municipality of Whistler, British Columbia. Not only are these visitors traversing a central point in one of the world's premier ski resorts, which has an average daily population of 40,000, but they are also walking over the site of the municipality's first garbage dump. Whistler's decision to build a town site over a pile of trash in the 1960s has had a profound effect on the governance and development of the town ever since. Whistler's 2004 implementation of *Whistler 2020*, its municipal sustainability framework, is an example of While et al.'s (2004) sustainability fix. In Whistler, there are three main interest groups that need to work in concert in order to achieve success, whether it is economic, social, or environmental. While this chapter focuses on the first of these groups, the municipality, the other two interest groups – residents and the business community – are also addressed in this chapter. Any institution that needs to manage several interest groups in order to achieve its goals also needs to work within and maintain particular discourses, such as sustainability or responsibility. Therefore, I want to make explicit that there is a politics surrounding the implementation of *Whistler 2020* in the community. To this end, this chapter introduces Whistler, the case study area for this research. It first offers a contemporary look at Whistler, its location, geography, demographics, economy, and governance structure. I then go on to sketch a history of Whistler's development from when it was first settled by Europeans to the present. The chapter then focuses on the implementation of environmental policy and sustainability

frameworks in the community with a particular focus on the role of the municipality in this process. By looking at The Natural Step (TNS) framework for sustainability and then at *Whistler 2020* I attempt to illustrate the linkages between these two sustainability frameworks and the municipality. I then begin to highlight the linkages between these frameworks, the municipality, and their relationship to the private sector and individual residents in Whistler.

The Resort Municipality of Whistler, British Columbia is a town located 120 kilometers north of Vancouver in the Coast Mountain Range off the Pacific Ocean. The next closest town to Whistler is Squamish, BC, one hour drive south on route 99, the Sea to Sky Highway. (See Figure 1) While Whistler is often called a “village” or “town,” it has a full time resident population of 9,595, a part-time population of 2,266, and a daily average population that runs between 30,000 and 40,000 people that includes residents, employees, and tourists (Statistics Canada 2007). Whistler was designed to have the feel of a European Alpine Village. The commercial centre of the town is pedestrian friendly, with cars largely banned from the centre, giving it the feeling of a cozy, safe, though sometimes crowded, village. However, the larger daily population in Whistler is significant because it means that despite the home-like feel the municipality tries to create, the municipal government of Whistler is not responsible for planning for a tiny hamlet, but rather for a small city of people, the majority of whom do not have voting privileges because they are tourists, or visitors to the community.

Whistler’s economy is driven by the tourism industry. It is known as a world-class ski resort where people can ski-in and ski-out. This means that the main village of Whistler

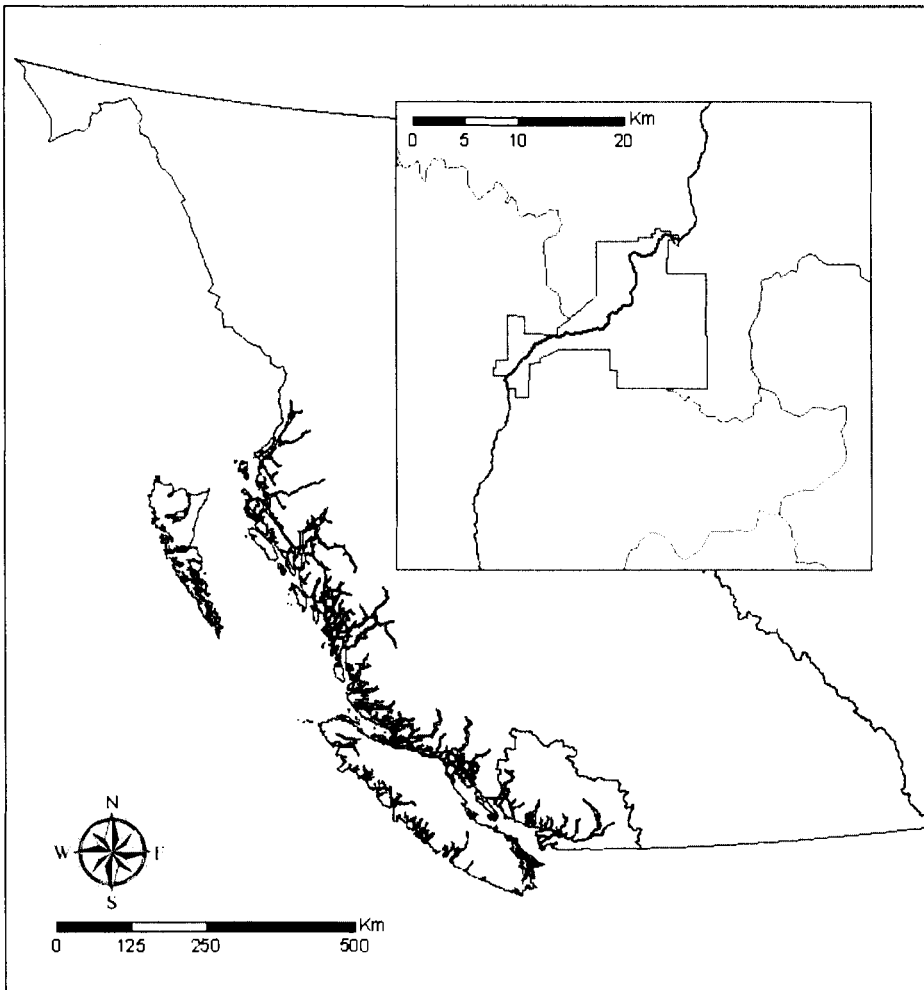


Figure 1: Study Area; Source: Author

is located at the base of the two skiing mountains, Whistler and Blackcomb, which are both run by Intrawest, a North American corporation responsible for several ski resorts on the continent. Popular with mountain bikers and golf enthusiasts in the summer,

Whistler's main attraction is the two mountains. Inlawest and the Fairmont-Chateau Whistler Hotel are the two largest employers in the town, and most other businesses in Whistler are service oriented towards tourists, rather than residents.

Whistler is the world's first Resort Municipality. This designation is significant because it acknowledges the importance of tourism for Whistler's economy. Despite this designation, it falls under the same federal and provincial mandates as other municipalities in British Columbia. Whistler's government structure consists of a mayor and six-member council members who are elected by residents every three years. Local laws are passed through a process that includes public consultation and a majority council vote. The municipality has a Department of Public Works that is responsible for planning, sewage and solid waste management among other things. It retains on its payroll a staff of engineers, maintenance crews, a chamber of commerce, and a sustainability coordinator.

Whistler's economy is dependent on its natural environment to uphold its reputation as a world-class ski resort. Because of its dependence on preserving the natural environment as well as the small-town feel of Whistler, planning frameworks have been put into place in order to manage growth in the municipality. Currently, the main planning framework in the municipality is *Whistler 2020*. It is a long-term sustainability framework adopted in 2004 that is supposed to guide planning decisions until the year 2020. The process through which *Whistler 2020* came to be implemented can best be understood by first looking at a history of Whistler and its municipal planning decisions from its incorporation as a municipality in 1972.

Whistler: The Early Years

Since the area was settled in 1910 to the present day, Whistler's main economic function has been tourism. Primarily a summer fishing destination, because of the many lakes and rivers in the area, by the 1950s Whistler began attracting avid skiers and there began to be calls for a chair lift to be built on Whistler Mountain, a task that was completed in 1965. The ensuing real estate and development boom caused the 527 residents of the valley to call for regulation of development in the area. The answer to this call included the incorporation of Whistler as a Resort Municipality in 1975 as well as a proposal for a completely planned pedestrian village. While this early history held out hope for the small community of residents to remain deeply involved in the development process, Gill and Williams (2005) note that during the first period of development, from 1975 through the mid 1980s, community involvement was minimal. The municipal and provincial governments directed most of the development initiatives in the area in close concert with the two major resort developers, Whistler Mountain Skiing Company and Aspen Skiing Company. Whistler Mountain Skiing Company and Aspen Skiing Company were eventually bought out by Intrawest, a North American corporation that owns resorts in places such as Colorado, Vermont, and California. Whistler-Blackcomb, the branch of Intrawest that runs both Whistler and Blackcomb mountains was formed in 1992. It is the largest employer in Whistler and it is also a powerful interest group in the town.

Thus, the decision to locate the planned pedestrian village at the base of Whistler mountain, and subsequently over the local garbage dump, had little to do with modern environmental ideas surrounding reuse and rehabilitation of landfill space, and more to do with the economic attractiveness of creating a 'ski-in ski-out' resort, where tourists

could take a chairlift from the center of the village and ski right back down the mountain and into their hotel rooms.

So while I wouldn't say that the people in charge of planning, you know, were really thinking about reusing the landfill space. I mean, they were trying to create a desirable resort. I mean, something resembling European ski resort towns. This was the main goal... but sure, locating the village on top of the old landfill was a good idea. It made people feel good that they could reuse the space and put it to good use. And I mean, nobody wants to see an old dump when they're skiing to the bottom of the mountain (Municipal Official 1).

Clearly, local planners quickly realized the importance of place making. Without the look of a "European ski resort" the new Canadian resort could easily have failed in fulfilling the expectations of its visitors. And for the newly minted municipality, the success of the resort was vital to the success of the community.

During this early period of growth from 1965 to the mid 1980s, one of the key forces in the area was the Whistler Village Land Company Ltd. (WVLC), a land development management body owned by the municipality, with members of council as de facto directors and the mayor taking the position of chairman. Although the WVLC soon experienced difficulties and was bought out by the Province, the significance of the municipality's initial ownership of the corporation is that the local government was given a direct economic interest in local development (Gill & Williams, 2006). The provincial government also had a strong role in the initial development in Whistler. The provincial act that granted Whistler its status as a resort municipality also gave the provincial minister the power to exempt Whistler from provincial mandates, vary the composition of council, and to establish an official community plan. The Act also allowed the Province to appoint a member of council. This was changed in 1982 (Economic Planning Group

of Canada, 1984; Yamamoto 1998). During the early stages of development in Whistler, the Province had a significant amount of control over planning and development decisions in Whistler. This is significant because by the mid 1980s, this trend began to turn around, with local residents calling for more influence into how their community was being shaped, and it is with local resident input that *Whistler 2020* was finally established and enacted in 2004.

In 1989 the bed unit cap was set at 52,500. A bed unit is a measurement set by the resort of the number of beds allowed to be built into the resort. It is used in resort management as a tool to monitor and control growth (Gill 2007). Capping the bed units – including resident as well as visitor beds – became for Whistler a key event in the development of the community. Capping the bed units effectively capped the growth and development of the town. With the option of outward growth closed to developers, a need to find new avenues of development emerged in Whistler. As Gill (2000) notes, the switch from a growth machine model of development to one of growth management emerged around 1989, in a large part as a response to the bed unit cap. Switching to a growth management model of development provided new challenges of development planning for Whistler, and the adoption of TNS and eventual implementation of *Whistler 2020* provided the solution, or sustainability fix, for Whistler's need to continue development under a municipally imposed bed unit cap.

Community Visioning: Creating a Sustainable Resort Community

By the end of the 1980s the resident population of Whistler had grown to around 4,000, and by 1991 the population of Whistler included 4,459 full-time residents (Statistics Canada 2007; Gill & Williams 2005). The population boom coincided with an increased

resident voice in the development and politics of Whistler. A main reason for this increase as previously noted by Gill (2000) and Gill and Williams (2005), and confirmed through various interviews conducted for this research, was the changing demographics of the year-round, or permanent resident, population. Gill (2000) notes that the majority of permanent residents moved to the area not only for economic gain, or the business opportunities that are in Whistler, but are also drawn by the lifestyle and aesthetic attributes of the community. This is illustrated in the case of Whistler through the formation of the community's first advocacy group, the Association of Whistler Area Residents for the Environment (AWARE.)

The 1987 formation of AWARE was due to concern for waste management, and the issue that first brought the group together was recycling. This local community action group was successful in starting a recycling program, and eventually was successful in getting the municipality to take on the responsibility of recycling as part of its waste management practices. The initial success of AWARE led to the further involvement of residents in decision-making processes. By 1992 the municipality had instituted a decision making process that took into account resident attitudes and desires as well as corporate attitudes during its decision making process. While municipal elections are held every three years, as noted above, previously, residents had very little say in the planning process, which was heavily influenced by outside private businesses interests and from the provincial levels of government. This change forced the municipality to consider social and environmental needs of the community as well as economic and development needs. The initial process that kick started this new way of thinking was called community visioning and attempted to be as inclusive and comprehensive a process as possible. Three major

future goals emerged from the community visioning process: sustainability, education, and economic stability. These themes have remained in the forefront of planning and development in Whistler and have evolved from ideas raised in community stakeholder discussions into solidified discourses that have had and continue to have a profound influence on the political, environmental, and social landscapes of the community.

Sustainability: The Natural Step and Whistler 2020

In 1993 the Resort Municipality of Whistler stated its wish to become the “Premier Mountain Resort Community” in North America (RMOW, 2004; 5). By 2002, the municipality had broadened its vision to include sustainability as a goal towards which to strive (ibid). In defining sustainability, Whistler makes the following statements:

nature is not subject to systematically increasing: 1) concentrations of substances extracted from the earth’s crust; 2) concentrations of substances produced by society; 3) degradation by physical means; and in that society, 4) people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs (RMOW, 2004; 18).

The Natural Step

The Natural Step Framework for Sustainability (TNS) was adopted by the municipality in 2000, becoming North America’s first municipality to do so. TNS is a popular regulatory framework used by municipalities in twelve countries (The Natural Step Canada 2006). TNS is one of a number of municipal sustainability frameworks that are being slowly adopted by municipal governments in North America and Europe. Strong sustainability, which can be defined as not allowing for tradeoffs between the economic, social, and environmental pillars of sustainability – discussed in chapter two – is congruent with TNS. Strong sustainability and TNS as a form of strong sustainability do not allow the

idea of sustainability to be bounded by local scales (Wackernagle & Rees 1996; Pope et al 2004; Robèrt 2004).

The Natural Step framework for sustainability (TNS) was created by Dr. Karl – Henrik Robèrt in 1989 (Robèrt 2002; James & Lahti 2004). It is a systems based, or what Robèrt would call a ‘scientific’ definition and approach to conceptualizing and achieving sustainability as defined by Robèrt. Robèrt’s definition of sustainability posits that the rate of flow (of resources) should not exceed the rate to regeneration and if it does not, an “interest rate” (Robèrt 2002, 61) from nature is created (and in some cases used) instead of depleting natural capital (Robèrt 2002). Increasing population and consumption, paired with a decline in resources and quality of ecosystems, on the other hand, creates a “closing margin for action” which threatens the environment (James & Lahti 2004, 6). Societies today are positioned within this closing margin for action. A sustainable future, according to TNS, is reached when population growth slows and consumption is curbed (TNS Canada 2006). See Also Table 1.

In order to reach a state of sustainability, Robèrt (2002) proposes four systems conditions that must be met. These conditions are in line with TNS’s definition of sustainability. The first systems condition posits that a sustainable society does not subject nature to, “systematically increasing concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth’s crust” (Robèrt 2002; 65). This statement indicates the need for modern society to decrease its dependence on fossil fuels and other minerals. Not only will liberation from fossil fuels preserve the resources, but it will also stop the detrimental environmental impacts mining resources. Explorations of new forms of energy also create new markets thereby creating employment opportunities (Robèrt 2002; James & Lahti 2004). Note that the arguments

presented here for reducing society's dependence on fossil fuels are not original to TNS; they are commonly discussed in popular media and academic circles (Ball 2005; Burtraw 2005; Fletcher 2006).

The second systems condition states that, "[i]n a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing concentrations of substances produced by society" (Robèrt 2002, 65). Here Robèrt (2002) argues that societies need to reduce their consumption of things which are made from harmful or "unnatural" (Robèrt 2002, 65) compounds; materials which produce toxic or non-biodegradable waste and which are heavily reliant on non-renewable resources. His third condition posits that in a sustainable society nature is not physically degraded by pollution from manufacturing or mining, nor is it degraded by misuse of the land. The fourth systems condition is that "human needs are met worldwide" (Robèrt 2002, 65). While Robèrt (2002) does not further expand this point, James & Lahti (2004) make a distinction between basic needs; clean air and water, food and shelter, and basic needs within developed nations:

Within our communities, our needs include a means of livelihood, mobility, equal treatment, equal access, safety, participation in decisions that affect our lives, the right to peaceful enjoyment of life, and a connection with nature. They also include a need for psychological and spiritual connection and meaning (James & Lahti 2004; 8).

James & Lahti's (2004) distinction between basic needs in developed and developing nations is noteworthy because it speaks to the development trajectory that TNS has taken since 1989. While Robèrt (2002) envisioned TNS to be a universal framework, all of the municipalities that have adopted TNS are in the developed world. In fact, with the exception of Brazil, all of the twelve countries that have programs that utilize TNS frameworks are in the developed world (TNS Canada 2006).

The Natural Step Framework: Three Major Components

The Funnel

TNS uses the metaphor of a Resource Funnel to explain how it operates.

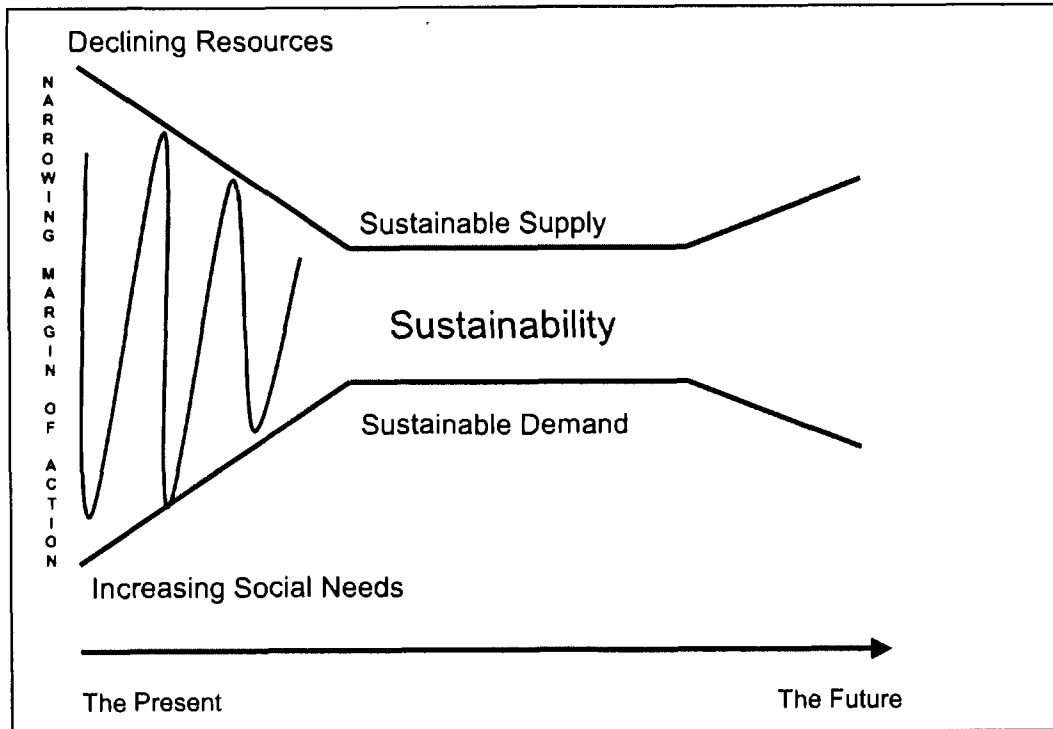


Figure Adapted From TNS Canada

The Four Systems Conditions

TNS utilizes four systems conditions to define a sustainable society:

In a Sustainable Society Nature is not subject to:

- Concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust.
- Concentrations of substances produced by society.
- Degradation by physical means and, in that society...
- People are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs

Implementation Methodology

The 4 step analytical approach to implementing TNS:

- Awareness that the margin for action is narrowing

- Baseline Mapping: Asking where are we currently in terms of sustainability?
- Creating a Vision: What defines us as a sustainable society? How do we get there?
- Down to Action: Supporting effective implementation of sustainability initiatives.

Table 1 TNS Major Components

Note that at this time, there is no independent critique of The Natural Step. As mentioned above, there exists a disjuncture between the definition of sustainability used by Robèrt and TNS and the ways in which the framework is enacted. The adoption of the TNS in mainly developed nations illustrates this point through the value judgment inherent in the distinction made by James & Lahti (2004) above. The authors argue that the needs in ‘our communities’ become just as important to providing basic nutrition, health care, and shelter to communities located within the poorest of the developing nations. How then, does one find Robèrt’s definition of sustainability in line with James & Lahti’s (2004) argument that humankind has the responsibility to provide spiritual stability to those in developed countries? Without discounting the importance of meeting societies needs in all countries, it still becomes important to consider what the meaning of meeting basic human needs ‘worldwide’ entails. TNS defines society’s needs as needs a society has identified for itself (Robèrt 2002). TNS is uncritical of, and places no value judgment on what those needs might be. Because neo-liberalism is based on a system of uneven development, by privileging societies’ needs in developed countries, basic human needs in developing countries become, by default, secondary. This is in contradiction to the strong sustainability definition used by TNS.

Much of Robèrt’s own work with TNS has been focused on business development (1997a, 1997b, 2000a, 2000b, 2002b), as opposed to development of TNS for municipal

governments, which has been a task he has left to The Natural Step organization. This illustrates TNS's initial conceptualization primarily focusing on business practices. Its adaptation for municipal governments comes much later in its existence at a time when many municipal governments are operating as corporate structures (James & Lahti 2004). This is one reason why TNS is relatively easily adaptable for communities.

It is important to discuss the way TNS works in depth because in the year 2000 Whistler adopted it as a guiding sustainability framework. It is upon TNS that Whistler 2020 is based. The official story of how TNS was adopted in Whistler discusses how Dr. Robert was on a snowboarding vacation in Whistler in 1999 and he decided to speak to some people about sustainability, and the idea just caught on among the public so eventually, since everyone thought it was a great idea, the municipality decided to adopt TNS (Whistler 2020 website, 2007). While it sounds like an ideal story, the adoption of TNS by the municipality also came at a time when residents were vocal about the need for a concise community vision and a change of direction in how development in the resort municipality was being managed.

Whistler 2020: TNS Redux

Whistler 2020 is a three-volume policy document adopted in August 2004 by the municipality as a sustainability framework that outlines steps to be taken in order to become a sustainable municipality. The document's purpose is to temporarily define the municipality's goals regarding sustainability up to 2020 and recommend actions for the municipality to take over the next fifteen years in order to achieve their goal of moving towards sustainability. Whistler 2020 is "an overarching, community wide vision and strategic plan ... [a step] on our longer journey to a sustainable future" (RMOW 2004; 9).

Despite the wide-spread community support with which *Whistler 2020* was implemented, it is not without flaws. For example, *Whistler 2020* recognizes the impossibility of reaching sustainability by the year 2020; but it projects that by 2060, sustainability is an achievable goal. Combining the year 2020 and Whistler's sustainability vision is a useful political tool for the municipality. While there is recognition that success of this goal is not possible, the idea is admirable and its articulation garners approval from the public. At the same time, it is politically as well as functionally impractical to create a sustainability plan that extends beyond twenty years because there is a limit to how far-seeing any particular government can be.

Whistler has committed to taking steps towards diminishing and eventually eliminating its use of fossil fuels, mined ores and synthetics and "the degradation of nature" while at the same time resolving to provide equal access to resources required to meet human needs (RMOW 2004; 19). These principles, according to *Whistler 2020*, encompass all aspects of a sustainable society (RMOW 2004). The broad nature of the principles allow the municipality to adjust and define the actions taken and the speed at which the stated goals are implemented on a yearly basis (RMOW 2004). Most commodities are imported into Whistler and the municipality's promise that it will transition to renewable energy sources provides a prime example of this wider, globalized vision (RMOW 2004). If the municipality succeeds in accomplishing this transition, it will not only be using less fossil fuels, but also less fossil fuels in the transportation of commodities to the municipality. Not only does this fall in line with one of *Whistler 2020's* sustainability principles, but also helps to create better air and water quality both around the municipality as well as at the sites of extraction.

Whistler 2020 nowhere mentions the financial cost of implementing its plan. The process of how council approves actions set out in Volume II, and how they are factored into the annual budget for the municipality comes to question. *Whistler 2020* does not address the processes involved in approval or implementation, it only offers outlines and strategies. In both the *Official Community Plan* and the *2005-2009 Five Year Financial Plan*, there is no specific mention of *Whistler 2020*. Its lack of visibility in other policy documents raises questions regarding the effectiveness and application that *Whistler 2020* has in Whistler's various areas of planning. *Whistler 2020* needs to be more conspicuous within other policies adopted by Whistler in order to ensure that the adopted sustainability principles are considered when drafting the policies. This is a concrete way to ensure the success of *Whistler 2020* as a policy. *Whistler 2020* was adopted very recently (2004), and because it is so new it needs time to become embedded in policy making.

Volume I of *Whistler 2020* suggests that it is the community – including residents, employees, visitors, and business owners – who are responsible for implementing the strategic plan (RMOW 2004). As the policy's creation was heavily dependent on public participation, it follows that the call for responsibility of its implementation is also focused on the community. *Whistler 2020* acknowledges that without the cooperation of the public, the plan will not be successful (ibid). Broken into three volumes, Volume I outlines the structure of the plan as well as Whistler's vision and goals. Volume II deals with the sixteen strategies, or areas of sustainability interest that were developed through public input. These sixteen strategies – See Appendix 2 – all fall under one of five objectives outlined in Volume I. Volume III offers an initial monitoring program

intended to keep the municipality on the right track and suggestions as to how to adjust their course if the need arises.

Whistler 2020, as previously mentioned, draws heavily from TNS. Backcasting is a key principle of both *Whistler 2020* and TNS. It utilizes the metaphor of a funnel in order to illustrate how it views Whistler at present and as it moves towards the goal of reaching the defined sustainability principles in 2060. The five priorities *Whistler 2020* sets out for itself are: enriching community life, enhancing the resort experience, protecting the environment, ensuring economic viability and partnering for success. Each of the sixteen strategies that the community has defined and *Whistler 2020* has produced reports on either directly or indirectly relate to these five priorities (RMOW 2004). From the number of strategies that are directly related to these five priorities, it is clear that Whistler privileges economic sustainability over social and environmental sustainability. Indeed, two of the five categories are inextricably linked: ensuring economic viability and enhancing the resort experience are codependent due to tourism being Whistler's main economic sector. The privileged place of the economic in *Whistler 2020* is also clear in how the sixteen strategies directly or indirectly support each of the priorities. For example, the materials and solid waste strategy is categorized, and structured so as to directly affect the goals of enhancing the resort experience and ensuring economic viability. However the strategy as outlined in *Whistler 2020* states that the strategy is only indirectly affecting the protection of the environment.

Whistler 2020 and The Resort Municipality of Whistler: Going Beyond TNS?

This section of the chapter establishes the linkages between The Natural Step framework for sustainability, *Whistler 2020*, and the municipality of Whistler. It then goes on to show how these connections are linked to the private sector and residents in Whistler. As mentioned above, Whistler has an elected mayor and council who are responsible for decision-making in the municipality as well as appointing citizens to various committees that exist in order to monitor and advise the mayor and council. There are also administrators and deputy administrators who are in charge of running the various services that the municipality provides (RMOW, 2005). The committees comprised of both members of the council as well as appointed citizens, are responsible for much of the policymaking done in Whistler. It was the city council that, in summer 2004, voted to adopt *Whistler 2020* (RMOW 2004). In addition, the council approves annual budgets, from which comes some of the money required to implement the approved actions enumerated in Volume II. One of the key objectives of *Whistler 2020* is partnering for success, and the need for corporate cooperation is realized as vital to the success of the plan. Due to these factors, there is a financial obligation on the part of local business involved in this partnering. This is another link between the municipal government and the private sector in Whistler.

Whistler 2020 enables the municipality to follow a path towards reaching its sustainability principles in a two-fold manner. It exists primarily as a policy document that Whistler can use to shape planning policy in Whistler, yet it also serves as a catalyst

for public education³ and awareness about issues surrounding sustainability. As Whistler has branded itself as “moving towards sustainability” (www.whistler.ca) the adoption of *Whistler 2020* is a logical step in that process. As a policy document, *Whistler 2020* has steered the municipality towards taking action in sixteen different areas that the community has deemed important to achieving sustainability at the municipal level.

So it's a dynamic process... and the plan is implemented on the actions and changes that get implemented every year... We've have 5-10-15 year plans for waste and all... but more and more the task forces are coming up with our plans. So the main change is that more and more is that community groups are coming up with and dictating our plans (Municipal Official 2).

As a catalyst for education *Whistler 2020* has succeeded in engaging the public in this process as well as promoting the concept of sustainability as a priority at the local level. Since it is often the case that people are more involved in their local communities rather than at higher scales of governance, outlining sustainability and its application at the local level enables Whistler to enact positive change toward sustainability.

TNS was officially adopted by the municipality as a framework for the community in the year 2000. This action established the municipality's dedication to adopting a sustainability planning technique. While earlier steps were taken towards achieving a clear direction in planning for sustainability, the adoption of TNS by the municipality laid a strong foundation for the way that planning would proceed in Whistler. By using TNS, which relies on a self-defining method of viewing success, the municipality was able to

³ In this thesis I discuss educational initiatives at several points. I define education as a process of communication whereby one person or interest group obtains information. There are many forms of education such as formalized education – or education that is implemented through institutions either public or private – and informal education – or education that is imparted through social interactions or self-awareness

effectively adopt a sustainability framework while ensuring an unproblematic policy framework for the municipality to work under.

Precisely because TNS is self-definitional, Whistler began a process of community consultation that included businesses and residents, and began to develop its own long-term framework based on TNS. The product of this four-year process is *Whistler 2020*. *Whistler 2020* is a policy that is visionary in purpose; its aim is not to prescribe particular actions in order to reach sustainability, but to suggest ways of coming up with particular actions to reach sustainability. The framework is a tool that the municipality is able to use to guide its policy making while incorporating community input.

Essentially it's a vision, it's a plan, and it's a process, made up of stakeholders in Whistler... there are task forces, building actions for the past two years, saying 'here's an action that we believe will move us towards *Whistler 2020*' (Municipal Employee 1).

Whistler 2020 allows the municipality to identify challenges and solutions in the community with the help of residents and the business community and therefore citizens in the community directly shape local sustainability practices. On the other hand, local businesses also play a large role in the shaping of local sustainability practices since they also have representatives that sit on *Whistler 2020's* task forces. This practice is a continuation of the strong influence that the private sector has had on the municipal development in Whistler since 1972.

The municipality in Whistler has used TNS and its extension, *Whistler 2020*, as teaching and planning tools since 2000. Unsurprisingly, the municipality's attitude is positive and hopeful for *Whistler 2020's* success. At the same time, the way the framework is structured allows for a continued influence from the private sector that is very strong.

This raises the question of whether *Whistler 2020* as a sustainability framework has or will have any affect on the processes in the resort municipality. In a stereotypically political attitude, the municipality is hopeful that it will, but claims that it is too early in the implementation of *Whistler 2020* to pass any judgments on its success in changing sustainability practices in which the municipality or the community engages. Businesses and residents in Whistler are more skeptical of the success of *Whistler 2020*, however they too are willing to wait and see if it will have any affect on the community. These attitudes will be discussed in the following chapters, however it is important to note that many businesses and residents that I interviewed saw *Whistler 2020* as the municipality's attempt to play catch-up, to implement a sustainability framework that covered issues that businesses had already identified as important to Whistler's sustained success.

CHAPTER 4: THE ECONOMICS OF WASTE AND THE BUSINESS OF SUSTAINABILITY

The interviews I conducted with members of the business community focused on the use of sustainability policies and frameworks and whether they affected solid waste management practices. I began each interview by asking broad questions concerning the use of sustainability practices. Are they used? If so, are they self-implemented? I then asked specifically about municipally adopted policies, focusing on The Natural Step (TNS) framework and *Whistler 2020*, and their use and effectiveness in the business community. One of the main findings of this research is how the business community sees itself: as leaders implementing sustainability practices, including education initiatives regarding sustainability. Business leaders noted that they see the business community as pioneering sustainability initiatives, far ahead of municipal policies that have been enacted surrounding sustainability. However local businesses were heavily involved in the construction of *Whistler 2020*. The significance of the business community's attitude towards the municipality resonates with the argument of While et al. (2004), that municipal sustainability policies are often more about political discourse than they are pragmatically helpful. The implementation of *Whistler 2020* with the help of many local businesses in Whistler highlights the political project backing *Whistler 2020* with the continuance of a sustainability discourse at the municipal scale. It is not surprising that businesses act in order to increase economic growth, however it may be that businesses will *only* act if there is the potential for economic growth. Therefore, the implementation of *Whistler 2020* – a policy document that is less rigorous than many

private environmental sustainability initiatives – further substantiates the document as a sustainability fix.

In this chapter I focus on the practices of the private sector in implementing sustainability strategies and its role in the implementation of solid waste management practices.

Looking at the ways sustainability practices have been implemented by private businesses provides insight into the ways that sustainability has become a ubiquitous term and a tool in Whistler. Not only does this chapter address how the term sustainability came to replace notions of environmentalism in Whistler – through the adoption of The Natural Step (TNS) – but also how local ideology surrounding sustainability was created, not solely by the municipal government of Whistler, but by private sector initiatives. I then go on to discuss TNS and its use in the community. Why was TNS so easily applied to this resort municipality? One main finding, though not a surprising one, is the economic motivation that underpins private sustainability planning and practice. It is important to note that I do not attempt to lay ‘blame’ on the private sector for the economic motivations behind implementing sustainability policies, however it is important to make this point explicit because it is an important motivation in the construction of local ideologies of sustainability and waste management. In the final section of this chapter, I ask how waste management practices align with sustainability policy in Whistler, BC? I seek to address the question through interviews with members of the business community.

The “new” company town

Tourism has been Whistler’s main industry since its European settlement in 1911. While sport fishing first attracted people to the area, Whistler eventually became known for its

skiing. The first ski lift was installed on Whistler Mountain in 1965 by the Garibaldi Lifts Limited Corporation – started by a group of Vancouver businessmen, whose main objective was to host the 1968 Winter Olympics (WhistlerBlackcomb, 2007). While Whistler was unsuccessful in winning its Olympic bid, Whistler did succeed in co-hosting the 2010 Winter Olympics with Vancouver.

Currently, management of the 2010 Winter Olympics is an issue of concern in local public circles (for a thorough exploration of sustainability and management issues concerning the 2010 Olympics see McKenzie [2006]). While the lead up to and impacts of the Olympics is an important issue, this thesis is concerned with the day-to-day operations, or “mundane practices through which neoliberal spaces, state and subjects are being constituted in particular forms” in Whistler (Larner 2003; 511; see also McCann 2007). TNS and *Whistler 2020* are neoliberal frameworks that have dual functions. Not only do they operate as guides through which policies and ‘mundane practices’ are formulated, but they also serve as sustainability fixes, or tools through which entrepreneurial cities address their responsibility for economic and environmental management.

While et al. (2004) argue that by implementing the sustainability fix, entrepreneurial cities, having to mediate demand for growth and emerging environmental politics, have constructed: “new spaces of engagement’ that are a better fit with the spatiality of environmental problems, and to some extent connecting an environmental politics of the living place to the politics of urban growth” (While et al. 2004; 564). So, as in the case of Whistler, the city becomes a commodity that has to be marketed through public/private

partnerships. Discourses of sustainability, as articulated through *Whistler 2020*, are both a marketing tool as well as a method through which local conflicts can be resolved.

Rather than engaging in a general history of Whistler, which was discussed in the previous chapter, and will emerge again in the next chapter, this section examines the particular role private businesses play in the formation of Whistler's sustainability policy and solid waste management practices. Because there are only two main employers in Whistler, Intrawest and the Fairmont-Chateau Whistler, both corporations have a large influence on local planning and policy construction. Intrawest, which is an even larger corporation, Fortress Investment Group, bought out in 2007, is a North American corporation that owns ski resorts in places such as Colorado, California, and British Columbia. The Fairmont is a North American hotel chain that specializes in four-star resort accommodations. Not only do prominent operators of businesses in Whistler sit on many municipal advisory boards, but private businesses also play a major role in sustainability education initiatives in the community.

The composition of many municipal advisory boards for *Whistler 2020* is composed of local residents and members of the business community. Participation on these boards is voluntary and renewed on an annual basis. Many of my interviewees also sat on these boards in their capacity as residents, rather than business operators. While this occurrence suggests a high level of interest among residents for the planning process, it also highlights the critiques of self-selection that are often cited in the literature on voluntary planning processes (Sapousaki & Wasserhoven 2005). Given the dominance of two corporations in Whistler, it is possible to think of it as a new form of the 'company town'. A single industry town that is based not on the production of a single tangible

thing, such as lumber, railroad cars or chocolate, but a town that is based in the production of a personalized experience (Kotler, 1984), the tourism product (Yamamoto, 1998), calls for a diverse range of services to exist in the town that are not geared towards its residents, but towards its visitors. This suggests that while Intrawest can be seen as The Company, or driving interest in the town, it also allows for other business interests to hold a significant stake in Whistler.

Most respondents I talked with, unsurprisingly, did not see a conflict in their dual role as resident and business operator, however it is important to note because their motives behind sitting on advisory committees were the same regardless of whether they sat on the committee in their role as resident or as business operator. One of the main motives behind participating on the advisory committees is concern for the community. As one business official put it:

Well, in the bigger picture, I've been involved in the sustainability committee... What I see as more important is what the community as a whole purchases. Extra product and packaging and that sort of stuff... working with businesses to come up with a purchasing plan and them working with their suppliers... and having a composting facility that can accommodate paper and wax paper and all that... There's like 2.9 kg of waste per restaurant customer, certainly more than the amount of food they were being served. So there's a lot of things that people can be doing to reduce energy consumption... I think the whole village in general can definitely be going more in that direction...(Business Official 4).

Another business official said: "Right now, [the business community] like working in conjunction with the municipality. On the advisory boards. [Whistler's] got a tall order, but sure they can improve on it" (Business Official 6). This same business operator later discussed in a follow-up telephone interview, how sitting on the *Whistler 2020* advisory boards allowed him to contribute his own knowledge from working and his concern as a

resident for the place where he lives as well as works. This respondent's political participation is an example of Lukács' arguments that realized agency, or empowerment, leads to meaningful action by the individual.

Aside from active participation in the planning process, business operators are also heavily involved in education initiatives. Education came up in every interview conducted for this research. The business community most heavily emphasized it during interviews. As discussed in Chapter 2 education in this context does not only include formal education through learning institutions, but also alternate forms of education such as public awareness campaigns – sponsored through other institutions, both government and private – and learning through social interactions and norms. The local government also takes a strong position on the importance of educating the public, both residents and visitors. “Education on all fronts, whether it's the residents, visitors, local businesses, even ourselves” (Municipal Employee 2). For the municipality the need for a partnership with businesses in an endeavour to educate was clearly expressed by this same Municipal Employee:

This is what we need to be doing in terms of getting sustainability right. We need to oversee the information people are receiving. We need to partner with local businesses. It's them and their workers who are on the frontlines, dealing with the residents and visitors you know, and if they're not on board, then why bother? (Municipal Employee 2).

One demographic that is important in resort communities is the seasonal worker. During the winter ski season there is an average of 3000 seasonal workers residing in Whistler (Statistics Canada 2007), with the numbers falling only a little during the summer mountain-biking season. The majority of these workers are born and reside overseas, mostly from Commonwealth countries such as Australia and the UK. They mostly come

to Canada on yearlong work holiday visas, working for a season and then taking the remaining six months to travel (Statistics Canada 2007). This means that there is an almost complete turnover of workers in the resort every six months.

Since both the local government and businesses view waste management as a responsibility that is primarily theirs, and secondarily the resident's, it has become the responsibility of the resort to educate seasonal residents first and visitors to the resort second. The education of staff in waste management practices is important for many business operators since they believe that guests and residents are unlikely to voluntarily seek out information about sustainability initiatives or waste management practices that the municipality or private businesses have implemented.

I think the major challenge we have in the resort municipality is the turnover of staff and education. It's imperative for us to make sure that new staff are educated because they're the ones who make it successful. Education is the key. That will always be an ongoing practice for the turnover that we have here at the hotel and of course for Whistler itself. I mean we reinvent ourselves every three or four months here. We'll do it again in the spring. That is probably our main challenge is the turn over of our staff and for our staff (Business Official 4).

As noted, this sort of education is no easy task, and, as one business official suggests, the attempt to educate guests in order to save time for employees, and therefore money for the businesses:

We see folks, residents and visitors in the resort, we don't rely on them to take it upon themselves to recycle, but we make sure that we capture it. But to move the guests into the avenue of going to recycle... we'll make it as easy as possible for them. It's up to us to provide that service for them... again, it's also about education, we educate our guests in hopes that it saves time and energy for our employees (Business Official 4).

When employees do not need to clean up after visitors, they can then spend their time performing other tasks.

Like I just did a training session for folks at my office, and we do a training session for all the new workers who come here... even management... It's just easier if you train them, and have management do it too. It's nearly impossible to educate the guests. You know, I was just saying last night, is what I really want to have is one of those massive flat-screen or plasma TVs above the cafeteria and stuff, that's just rolling through all the environmental concerns... without educating we can't get the guests to recycle... I don't think that it's possible really. We just have to work through it, and around the guests (Business Official 1).

Working around visitors to the community seems to have become the consensus both from businesses and the municipality. One question guiding this thesis addresses which groups are responsible for implementing sustainability initiatives and waste management practices. The above quotes also highlight Whistlerites' view that it is the government, the business community, and residents who are responsible for ensuring success towards striving for sustainability. They also expect guests to be absolved from the responsibility to care for Whistler and its environment. In this sense, guests are seen as resources, or capital, not only in the Lukácsian sense of reification, but in a literal sense where the guests' role is to provide economic sustenance to Whistler.

In discussions I had with people while conducting this research, it was not uncommon for residents to refer to Whistler's "tourist-proof" trashcans. The joke here is that the hard to open public trashcans located around the municipality are designed so bears that wander in from the surrounding wilderness cannot open the trashcans and spill garbage out onto the street. Instead, tourists will often look at a bin, be unable to open it, and drop their trash on the street next to it. So the municipality is busy employing street cleaners to keep trash off the streets while at the same time paying for the waste removal from the trashcans. The issue of communication also came up in several interviews: "It's pretty tough for visitors, we really struggle with that one. You can put up signs and all... but

when they're on holiday, the last thing they want to do is sort and recycle. There are communications issues there too" (Business Official 4). Part of the difficulty in educating guests is that many visitors speak different languages and also that sustainable solid waste management is often not a priority in many other countries or even other Canadian jurisdictions.

Another main challenge is the guests as well... But as soon as you allow guest[s to get] involved its crazy! [Voice rises] So we try to design systems around not having guests involved... like if you're Asian, you can't read the garbage and bottle signs... so another challenge is educating guests who don't have the same recycling systems that we do. That's big (Municipal Official 1).

Local residents are usually the people making jokes about trashcans, and their education about sustainability and waste management issues begins at a young age. Again, it is often businesses that spearhead these education initiatives. The following quote addresses the education of children, where private companies enter public schools in order to teach them about waste management.

So when we got into recycling around 1990 – we started looking at diverting cardboard... And what we found was that it's extremely hard to get adults to change their ways. So we started to look at getting them while they're young, nine or ten, eleven years old... going into the schools and all... So we started Recycleman and his fight against the bad guys. And he's been our marketing vehicle. So he goes into the schools, and we have tours, a few a week, that shows the kids what happens to their product... So we do the education program, we have a number of videos that we've shown... so our marketing has really been targeted at the kids. If you get the kids to do it, they can really be aggressive in getting mom and dad to do it too (Business Official 6).

Recycleman is a marketing figure that is very visible in Whistler. His superhero image is on all of the garbage trucks, and stickers with his square jaw and huge grin appear pasted on lampposts and benches in Whistler. It is possible to download a Recycleman coloring

book from an official website (www.carneyswaste.com) so that children can color in Recycleman catching people who litter and converting them into recyclers. It is important to note though, that Recycleman is used, as a marketing figure first and an educational icon second. People in Whistler recognize Recycleman and he serves as a reminder to recycle and compost and dispose of solid waste in an approved manner. From a young age people are educated through private initiatives and private/public partnerships. This also illustrates one of the ways that sustainability discourses are formed in Whistler. Sustainability initiatives are pioneered by the business community and sustainability is a business as well as a powerful discourse.

The Natural Step: Municipal Support and Business Ambivalence

The Natural Step *framework* for sustainability is also a *business* that promotes sustainability. I will now explore how TNS is used in Whistler and the how it plays into powerful local political and policy discourses. TNS focuses on community visioning and implementation of individual goals in order to reach a self-determined state of sustainability. Its adoption in Whistler in 2000 occurred quickly and is largely considered successful by the municipality. Why was TNS adopted so quickly in Whistler and why is it considered successful? From the interviews I conducted, I argue that the answer lies in the municipality's need to find a solution to environmental and social problems caused by development. I further discuss the private sector's reaction to TNS in terms of its usefulness for private environmental and waste planning, as well as its use as a municipal framework. What emerges is a dichotomous relationship between the municipality and the private sector, where the former trumpets the success of TNS, and the latter is largely ambivalent towards the framework. The divergence of levels of

enthusiasm for the TNS between these two, usually intertwined, interest groups (Logan and Molotch 1987, Gill 2000) provides insight into the more general relationship between the business community and the local state in Whistler.

TNS is considered by the Municipality of Whistler to be the backbone of its current sustainability policy. Municipal officials see TNS as a tool that was helpful in the implementation of a planning framework. They also see it as helpful to the municipality because of its efficiency in getting everyone to the same level of education and knowledge surrounding environmental planning and sustainability initiatives. “The Natural Step was the first bit of sustainability to reach Whistler, and it caught on... so it’s really still prevalent among the public, and that’s why you see it around a lot” (Municipal Employee 1).

While the municipality is confident in the success of TNS, not every interest group in Whistler is so positive about its use. Businesses and corporations in Whistler show ambivalence towards TNS that is initially surprising, given the municipal confidence in the framework. Yet, this ambivalence can be understood in terms of the private sector’s recognition of the relative strengths and weaknesses of TNS as a framework for planning, and as a framework for implementing environmental or sustainability standards. A business official spoke to the power that TNS has in communication and education initiatives surrounding sustainability:

...currently it’s a framework, we’re not there yet. We’re not The Natural Step experts, but I think we’re, we use the planning, and we go through all the stages... So you know baseline mapping... we’re kind of working with all of our staff. So like, waste management for instance, we’re only at the awareness stage. And for procurement, we’re only at the baseline stage... so it’s kind of um, moving through the different stages and all of that (Business Official 1).

The above quote illustrates that TNS is useful in certain areas, such as communication and prioritization, however when attempting to implement the framework on a large scale, and adapt it to particular businesses, it becomes more difficult to apply TNS across different purposes.

Some things are harder to implement with The Natural Step plan. And because we have our own facets of our program, you can't just do ABC, here's what we're going to do... its not a process, with The Natural Step, its easy to look at for industry because it's a production process, but we have like fifty different processes. So we've taken the approach that you're looking at different processes... you have to prioritize. It'll take years to use The Natural Step and move through it because of our business... anyway I think it's a long term project (Business Official 1).

Many business officials in Whistler share this attitude. Again, prioritization is a major role that TNS traditionally takes on. This is one of its major strengths as a framework (James & Lathi, 2004), and in its use in Whistler in particular. Its ability to give people a similar language with which to communicate and therefore to help businesses prioritize their sustainability goals is highlighted by several businesses in Whistler. It became clear during most of my interviews, that TNS functioned as an accepted sustainability discourse that, while people were skeptical of its overall success, retained its power in the local acceptance of the language and planning process that it taught people.

The other environmental coordinator started teaching some people about The Natural Step, quite a few years ago really... and we actually got 50 online learning tools and we trained 50 people what they could do with it, once they learned the framework and all of that... Like now we have a procurement group and everyone in the group has taken the training, and they all have an understanding of [TNS] (Business Official 1).

Another business official also spoke of TNS as a productive teaching tool and convenient way of establishing communication between groups:

Well, we need to educate people. And The Natural Step really does a good job of, well, people can get on the same page. If you learn the process, the system's conditions and then you get together with someone from a different department, or even a different business and you start talking sustainability, well then you know what you're talking about... So this way we know everyone's right on the same page. I don't know if it happens other places, you know, other towns. People are always talking at cross purposes it seems, but here, with The Natural Step, that doesn't have to happen (Business Official 2).

The question of why TNS was so quickly adopted as a discourse is partially answered by its strength as a teaching tool.

TNS' accessibility and its success in industry also greatly contributed to its adoption in Whistler, a place that was looking for a solution to its environmental challenges that the entire community would be willing to accept. The language of TNS makes the framework accessible, and for people to adopt it in their daily practices. The adoption of TNS as a common discourse was not organic, but a chosen path that both the municipality and businesses deliberately undertook:

I mean this is what we're working on with the last 50 people I just trained were all managers and supervisors and core people. I mean, it needs to become ingrained in your consciousness. And only then will people come and know that this is Whistler, and it's an amazing ski resort. And it's sustainable... whether you're a retail operator or a chef, it's just in your head... And we're not there yet, but in a couple years, we can maybe have it ingrained in our local culture and then...you know the resort can do that too. But it's way harder to get part of your operation. And yeah, it needs to become second nature. Whether you're a retail operator or a chef, it's just in your head... (Business Official 1).

While many businesses saw TNS as a helpful framework for teaching, they also saw it as a particular program that was brought in by the municipality. Businesses saw themselves as being further ahead in environmental planning and sustainability policy than the municipality, with its rather heavy dependence on TNS as a framework.

Many business owners and operators also appeared skeptical about the value of TNS.

For people looking at a way to incorporate all three pillars of sustainability -- environmental, economic, and social -- into their daily practices, TNS remains a relatively one-sided perspective for practical use in the community

I'm [yet] to be sold yet whether it's a particularly valuable framework... the way I've seen it applied, it's a pretty general framework, it can be, in and of itself, like the four conditions aren't particularly helpful. It can be tailored a thousand different ways. I thought it was, its probably better on the environmental side, but I thought weak in terms of identifying and highlighting from a socio-economic perspective community needs and values. So I have yet to see in terms of [a] ...framework where The Natural Step has provided a lot of value (Business Official 3).

Other business operators expressed a lack of confidence in TNS' ability to be of use to them.

Most of our environmental practices are well ahead of anything the municipality is asking us to do... probably the strengths we have is that we do have a green initiative in place here. I've worked with other towns, cities, villages and I don't see that as much as you do in a place like this. They understand that if you keep Whistler green and beautiful then people will continue to come. It's basically an oasis that people want to enjoy. If they want the pollution and everything else then they can probably stay home (Business Official 4).

While the municipality adopted TNS with the support of the business community, there is little conflict between sustainability standards in the private sector and those that the municipality has set through the use of TNS and by extension, *Whistler2020*. "Sure, it [Whistler2020] could be helpful, you know, for smaller businesses in guiding them, but for us, we've already gone beyond that" (Business Official 4). Another business operator in Whistler had this to say about TNS and *Whistler 2020*:

Whistler really missed the boat when it came to implementing a sustainability framework. The Natural Step and Whistler2020 has [sic] no real accountability, monitoring process. Frameworks such as ISO 14001

[an alternative planning framework (Rondenelli & Vastag 2000)] are much more accountable than Whistler 2020, and would have been a better choice for a town like Whistler (Business Official 5).

While many informants did not directly speak to the idea of the business community being further along than the city towards reaching sustainability standards, the three quotes above illustrate and substantiate the allusions that several informants made to this idea.

The implementation of TNS in Whistler suggests that its adoption is more than just a method for sustainability planning in a resort community; it is a powerful discourse that is used in a world-class ski resort that has won several awards for its sustainability and livability standards. TNS as a resort discourse reaches beyond local sustainability and planning frameworks and is coming to be known throughout the world as a successful sustainability framework. The ambivalent attitude of the business community towards TNS illustrates the nature of the relationship between it and the municipality concerning sustainability planning in the town. In Whistler, the business community looks on itself as a leader in sustainability planning, while it views the municipality, not as a leader in sustainability planning, but as a body that functions solely as a regulatory one.

Whistler 2020: Going beyond The Natural Step?

The Resort Municipality of Whistler adopted the Natural Step Framework for sustainability in the year 2000. By 2004 it had transitioned from TNS to adopting *Whistler 2020*, the municipality's framework for sustainability that is based on central precepts of TNS. An outcome of TNS approach, *Whistler 2020* was meant to go beyond TNS and introduce an approach to sustainability that is tailored to the community.

However, by looking at the reactions of the business community to *Whistler 2020*, questions arise as to whether the sustainability framework is as effective as it was originally meant to be. Is it a vehicle for productive and tangible change towards reaching a state of sustainability, or is it just another political tool implemented by the municipality so that the government is not seen as slow moving, or behind the times? The answer lies somewhere in between.

Many of the business operators that I interviewed were skeptical of the success of *Whistler 2020*, as they were of TNS. While it is still early in the policy's implementation to make a conclusive statement regarding its success, the initial skepticism from the business community raises concerns regarding its effectiveness. Discussing the effectiveness of *Whistler 2020*, one business official reflected: "So maybe *Whistler 2020* came about and helped get people's attention, but it hasn't done much else. We always had a program in place that was way more vigorous" (Business Official 1). Another business operator questioned the effectiveness of *Whistler 2020*, musing on whether the policy will do anything more than make busy work for the municipality:

Implementation of *Whistler 2020*... If anything, it'll make the municipality busier. When you need to require [recycling], it makes more work... it you're going to have to split it up, you need to have sites. You need to have people to collect from those sites. So it's more labor intensive (Business Official 4).

Both of these quotes illustrate a scepticism regarding the effectiveness of *Whistler 2020*, however the business community is willing to give *Whistler 2020* a chance before condemning it completely.

The ambivalence about *Whistler 2020* arises because it is still in its early stages of implementation business officials are waiting before passing final judgment on the policy. When asked if *Whistler 2020* is effective, one business operator said very bluntly:

No. Well, I shouldn't say that. Maybe composting. That's an initiative [that came about after Whistler] 2020. But that's about it. I thought we could try to improve on it... Composting, we started two years ago and that wouldn't have been possible, maybe, if 2020 hadn't enlightened people (Business Official 1).

Many informants saw the value of *Whistler 2020* in the role it plays as an educational and communication tool in a similar way that they view TNS.

Being flexible, the community's gone through quite an excessive consultation program. And they've identified the issues and values and objectives of the community. So what's been developed in the framework [Whister2020] is something to look towards (Business Official 3).

Another business operator stated:

Well, it [*Whistler 2020*] is still within its first five years of implementation... So I guess it is too early to tell whether it will be successful... [*Whistler 2020* is] a good directional tool for a community (Business Official 5).

They were also very willing to acknowledge the usefulness of the policy in creating a local discourse of sustainability in Whistler. From its evolution out of TNS into the form of *Whistler 2020*, this local sustainability framework can be seen as a way that local ideologies are materialized in local discourses. Despite ambivalence towards municipal frameworks, the private sector is willing to give them a chance, however the main reason that the private sector has been so active in sustainability planning is due to economic imperatives.

The disconnect between the private sector and the municipality do not necessarily have negative impacts on the implementation of sustainability initiatives in Whistler precisely because *Whistler 2020* does not require local businesses to change their own sustainability or waste management strategies. The public/private partnerships that currently factor in as a planning success in Whistler ensure that *Whistler 2020* does not implement policies that force them to go beyond what local business are willing to do. So while the disconnect between municipal and private sustainability initiatives may not immediately impede the implementation of meaningful sustainability initiatives, the question remains as to what kind of stronger sustainability policies might be enacted if the municipality had more power to do so. This however, is not the case. So the public private partnerships essential to Whistler, a ‘company town’ and an entrepreneurial city, can be seen as a main cause of *Whistler 2020*’s success as a sustainability fix, but not necessarily a successful sustainability framework.

The Economics of Sustainability and Waste Management in the “Sustainable” Resort Community

Arguments for practicing sustainability often appeal to ‘common sense.’ The idea of preserving the environment, and a healthy society and economy for future generations is generally viewed as positive. The environment, society, and the economy, the three pillars of sustainability, are usually viewed in sustainability planning as having equal weight, however when examining individual motives for implementing sustainability planning initiatives in Whistler, several motivations are revealed. In the case of Whistler, the main motive that emerged was economic. While many businesses implemented recycling and other environmental initiatives before the municipality did, the reasons

behind them was preserving Whistler and its local environment for economic gain. This section of the chapter focuses on the economic motives that drive waste management practices in Whistler. It explores the practices of the main businesses operators and the motives behind their actions. All business owners and operators that I interviewed cited solid waste management as a main challenge to doing business. Not only because of the general logistics of collecting and disposing of waste, but also because of the increased amount of solid waste production in resort communities (see Chapter 2). Most businesses in Whistler had established waste management practices that considered environmental concerns before the municipality implemented its own environmental policies. Like the municipality and residents, recycling programs were the first wave of environmental policy to be implemented by individual businesses and corporations. For many businesses, this began around 1992. Carney's, the main solid waste management company that serves Whistler, was the vehicle that allowed for businesses to implement sustained recycling programs. As the main waste removal service for Whistler and its surrounding towns, without Carney's cooperation, businesses would have to look harder and further and pay more for the removal of recyclables.

Well, our company has spearheaded most of the recycling initiatives in the [Sea to Sky] corridor in the last 15 years. So up until recently, there hasn't been a lot of initiative by the municipality... but we are always looking for ways of diverting waste. The province set a goal for diversion. 90% reduction by 2000 was a huge goal, but we achieved it by 2000. And that was before the composting. And when we started the composting we captured another 20%... We're doing a little more composting collection in Whistler, but that's of course because of the number of restaurants and hotels up there. One of the other things that we started up in Whistler a couple years ago... we were diverting upwards of 100 tonnes a month of construction waste. And that program was shut down a few months ago. But these directions are really coming from the head engineer at the municipality, not so much from the sustainability committee (Business Official 6).

Every business official I interviewed discussed the importance of Carney's in developing sound environmental waste management programs for individual businesses. Most credit Carney's with the success of their waste management programs rather than the municipality. As the above quote illustrates, finding practical solutions to goals set by the provincial level, as well as dealing with the realities of waste management in Whistler, such as an increased amounts of construction waste, has become a priority for the waste management firm.

Waste management challenges in a resort community, and a ski resort as well are often of a different nature than regular challenges of disposal. In the resort community, there is hyper-production of solid waste by a population that is usually uneducated in local waste management practices. In a ski resort, there is the challenge of removing waste in a mountainous region where it is more difficult to find landfill space because of the physical geography of the area as well as the political pressures to move waste out of the community altogether.

One of the main challenges is trying to recycle and compost at 6000 ft. Like it's a huge struggle, more than really anyone can imagine that doesn't work on the mountain, because everything that goes up and down the mountain, once that snow hits, has to get moved on the gondola. We can't just throw trash out and someone will pick it up. It has to get moved, and people have to get moved in that gondola. So we can only move our waste after hours. We can't have waste moving up and down the gondola while guests are uploading. So we have these big black containers that we designed with Carney's to move the trash up and down on the gondola. They just hook on... And again, we designed them. 'Cause that's one of the challenges, how do we get garbage down the garbage line? So we designed these massive containers with a hook, to take garbage down the gondola line...(Business Official 1).

Another challenge that presents itself is the removal of waste from the ski mountains themselves. It is imperative for the ski runs to stay clean, not only for aesthetic reasons,

but also for safety. Skiing and snowboarding cannot happen on runs that are scattered with trash, for safety reasons.

Basically we make our waste management program. And I mean, we work with Carney's. But not the municipality. Like Carney's helped us design our massive gondola carriers. Because we knew what had to be done, but they knew the semantics of it. So basically we work with them [Carney's]... and like for composting, well we worked with them to design it... I can't see where the municipality fits in. We don't work with them very much... I think the thing is, we're WhistlerBlackcomb [the resort]. So I guess you could say we have partnerships with different businesses all over the city...partnerships may be a stretch... we work with suppliers and yeah, I work with Carney's... (Business Official 1).

The challenges faced in mountain resort communities regarding waste management are unique, and Carney's is usually involved in finding solutions to the problems. Also, having to remove trash from the mountain by gondola becomes difficult, especially after considering the increased amount of trash that is produced by visitors to the area, the majority of people using the mountain.

Whistler has moved beyond simply implementing recycling programs in local businesses. It has spurred forward with initiatives such as composting organic materials in order to divert them from the landfill, as well as implementing electronic or e-waste recycling programs. Whistler businesses are looking for any way in which to divert solid waste out of the landfill and recycle or reuse it in other places. However, the reason for this is economic. Businesses are not motivated to implement sustainability programs without financial incentive. Most business operators were candid in their belief that economic incentives are needed in order for sustainable solid waste management initiatives to be implemented.

One of the other major turning points for us was what to do with the wet waste -- organics. The kitchen. You know a hotel this size, like any other

big operation makes enormous amounts of waste. We need to divert the products that were captured in the kitchen and other outlets from each other, i.e., wet waste, and dry waste. Wet waste is mainly food products, i.e., lettuce, meats etc. We adopted a plan in the kitchen based on what we know as wet waste and dry waste. Wet waste is now diverted to an organics [program] at Carney's disposal out of Squamish, where they turn around and use a Right Environmental System [a composting machine], which is, I understand, very cutting edge. And after seven days the product is very good organic material that is used on any golf course [for] fertilizer. That was a major turning point for us because all that wet waste is diverted from the landfill . . . It is, dollar wise it is substantially cheaper for us to divert from the landfill than it is to dump it (Business Official 4).

Without financial reward, many businesses operating in Whistler were unable to justify the initial capital investment needed to implement many waste management initiatives. For example, internal waste audits, employee training, and new equipment, were cited as major cost investments for many businesses in Whistler during the implementation of the composting program, which is now largely considered successful by many local business, and by Carney's, the company that runs the operation. The following quote suggests that it is due to a decrease in labor input in the composting process that this particular business saw an increase of its composting operation.

Well we have a composting system in place at the firm... Initially we did it on our own. As a business we were allowed to have a composting system, where we can't as individuals around here, because of the bears. So there was a lot of employee initiative to have a composting system, and it made sense to be environmentally friendly in the work place, you know, because of what we do. We can say to clients, hey look, we're doing this ourselves, not just telling you to be more sustainable, you know? So now though, we do it through Carney's. I mean a lot of us still bring in our own compost from home and add it in, but that's really been increased... I don't know [why], maybe because we don't have to do as much work for it anymore. We just bring it in now, and Carney's just takes it away and deals with it (Business Official 2).

It also addresses the above point regarding capital incentive in order to initially implement the program. Because of the specific nature of the business operation, it makes sense to employees to engage in practices that they advocate to their clients.

In terms of physical amounts and concrete numbers, business operators were very clear on what this meant for them in terms of cost.

For example, for chargeable plastics and glass, we get 45-50 grand [a year] return. From 40-60 yards of cardboard. Waste and organics is 24,000 - 34,000 kilos a day. This leads to a 25% reduction in our landfill cost. This is all based on weight. Organics weighs a lot of money. So for us to divert that is a lot. Plastics, twelve bins every day. Paper conversion, we have an average of, well we could fill our ballroom in a year. Top to bottom, it's a lot of money, so if recycling will save us money, then its good business sense (Business Official 4).

These numbers, \$45,000 to \$50,000 savings in landfill costs for plastic and glass returnable bottles is a significant amount of money. The same business official later discussed in a follow up phone interview that in these terms, wastefulness and poor solid waste management can cost a business upwards of \$100,000 a year. It became clear from many interviews I conducted that the primary motivation behind implementing a comprehensive sustainability framework in the form of *Whistler 2020*, and implementing sustainable solid waste management initiatives in Whistler was economic. "It's got to make economic business sense. For us and them. I mean, folks are keen to recycle, but they don't want to pay for it" (Business Official 6). Another business official expressed similar sentiments: "If we want a sustainability based waste management program in Whistler, it needs to make business sense, not just for the local businesses, but also the municipality, and residents. They've got to pay their bills too" (Business Official 4). Aside from the occasional passing comment about wanting the environment to stay

healthy, most business operators that I spoke with made it very clear that under a triple bottom line approach prescribed by many sustainability planners – environmental, social, and economic – the foundation of sustainability planning in Whistler is economic.

Returning to the question I posed in the introduction to this chapter: how do waste management practices align with sustainability policy in Whistler? We can see an answer in the ways of implementing ideas surrounding sustainability, which are primarily focused in education. The formation of discourses in Whistler was done primarily through education sponsored by private businesses. Responsibility for education initiatives fell on the institutions involved in Whistler's partnerships. For example the school district allowing private businesses to teach children about recycling and waste management, it is an initiative that is spearheaded by private businesses but run through public schools. This finding addresses my earlier claim that Whistler can be seen as a new form of company town. Whistler is a place where private/public partnerships are often run by and initiated primarily by the private sector rather than the other way around, this is partially caused by the need for Whistler to brand itself as an entrepreneurial city. Therefore, the adoption of The Natural Step framework for sustainability by the municipality is another example of private interests advocating for sustainability planning in Whistler. *Whistler 2020* – the outcome of sustainability planning – is then the fix to several issues facing the community. The discourses that TNS provides allows people to be educated in a particular way and communicate functionally, however its prescriptions are not strong enough to interfere with private business practices. In this sense we can argue that economics is indeed the main influence behind sustainability and waste management initiatives in Whistler, British Columbia.

CHAPTER 5: RESIDENTS AND THE MAKING OF A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Economics does not treat of things [sic], but of the relations between persons and, in the last analysis, between classes; however, these relations are always bound to things and appear as things. –Karl Marx Capital Volume I; 19 (emphasis in the original)

The issue turns on the question of theory and practice. –Georg Lukács History and Class Consciousness 1971; 57

Thus far I have examined the municipal and private actions that have shaped and continue to shape sustainability policy in the resort community of Whistler, British Columbia. I have done so following While et al.'s (2004) argument that municipal sustainability planning policies are increasingly being used as a fix at multiple scales. In the case of Whistler, there are three major interest groups that need to be managed in order to ensure planning success. The third interest group that must be examined in order to have a more complete understanding of how policy and ideology are constructed in Whistler are the residents. Residents of the community of Whistler have played a vital role in the shaping of sustainability policy as well as the community's composition. Residents' significance were elicited through a study of the municipality's demographics, coupled with one-on-one and group interviews conducted with seventeen residents of Whistler. The respondents' comments and feelings give valuable insight into the attitudes of this last, but still vitally important interest group. In addition, the richness of content provided in the stories of these residents adds to previous research done on the values of residents who choose to live in a resort community (Saremba & Gill 1991) as

well as adding scope to the story that demographic and documentary evidence tells on the attitudes of residents in Whistler. The chapter first looks at a demographic profile of Whistler's residents, then goes on to look at the specific case of Whistler and its residents through a demographic profile. Subsequently, I highlight resident attitudes towards sustainability and policy considering past historical accounts, resident letters to local newspapers, and interviews conducted. I then return to Lukács and use the lens of Actor Network Theory to discuss the implications of this research on residents and its contribution to my wider project.

A Demographic Profile of Whistler's Residents

The Resort Municipality of Whistler, British Columbia is home to 9,595 permanent residents, an estimated 2,266 seasonal residents, 11,522 second-home owners, and a daily population between 30,000 – 40,000 people including residents, visitors, and employees (Statistics Canada, 2001; RMOW, 2007) The majority of residents are between the ages of 25 and 44. The median family income for Whistler residents was \$77, 435 in 2001. This is 3.7% above the national average and does not include the incomes of second home owners in Whistler (Statistics Canada, 2007). This last fact is important due to the assumption that second homeowners have, on average, a higher yearly income than the national average. 79% of residents in Whistler responded to being White Canadian or European in this same census, with only a 5% visible minority group. 67% of residents have a trade school, college, or university degree (Statistics Canada 2007).

This brief demographic profile of Whistler, BC shows that the majority of people living in the municipality are white, wealthy, and educated. Whistler residents have the highest earning potential of any demographic group in Canada, and they enjoy a high level of

mobility. The majority of Whistler residents were not born in Whistler, but moved to the municipality during their adult lifetime (Gill 2000). These facts show that the people who live in Whistler are economically mobile and reside there by choice.

Whistler residents, claims the Resort Municipality, are, on average, more politically active than the wider population Canadian (Whistler.ca). This claim, although not backed up, is substantiated through evidence found in high attendance at town council meetings and a vociferous public that voices its opinions through the many letters to the editor of *Pique Newsmagazine*, Whistler's weekly newspaper. There are also several NGOs in the municipality that boast high membership numbers. The main association is AWARE, Association of Whistler Area Residents for the Environment. *Pique Newsmagazine's* catchphrase is "Piquing your interest." It is interesting to note the double entendre that serves as the title to the main local news source, a word that is evocative of the peaks of the surrounding mountains, and at the same time calls for residents to be aware of the issues important in Whistler. AWARE's name is another play on words that also has the connotation that one *should* be conscious of issues surrounding the environment. Both of these titles help to create a discourse that calls for an active and (environmentally) conscious citizenry. This discourse follows Lukács' (1971) discussion of class consciousness, which calls for activism and education initiatives sponsored by various institutions. The connotations that 'Pique' and 'AWARE' have point to the notion that the public *should* be conscious of the events around them and play an active role in the community.

Saremba & Gill (1991) look at the differing value systems of residents and tourists in mountain resorts. Their finding is that residents of Whistler see undeveloped or

wilderness land as a place that should be utilitarian, or be used as a resource, while at the same time maintaining a balanced ecosystem. Visitors however, tend to feel that wilderness areas should be kept pristine. They see resort areas as a point of access to wilderness areas and are therefore more conservative in their opinions regarding development activities occurring in the areas (Saremba & Gill 1991). Competition over scarce resources and “goal interference” (Saremba & Gill 1991; 457) are cited as reasons for the difference in valuation of the wilderness and resort areas between the two groups. The pragmatic view of how undeveloped land should be treated is reflective of the differing value systems that many who move to resort communities share (Saremba & Gill 1991). Due to Whistler residents’ high level of formalized education and high mobility status, many residents made a conscious decision to reside in Whistler. Living in a newly minted resort community allowed people the opportunity to shape their town and the environment around it. As one long time resident reflects:

I read an ad and basically it was you know, “help us get recycling going in Whistler.” Because you know, there wasn’t any in there. There wasn’t any environmental... I think the fact that the community itself was so new that it didn’t have any identity itself yet... I think we had to grow up a little bit to realize that (Resident 1).

This quote highlights the ‘can do’ attitude that is still prevalent in Whistler discourses today. Because of the proactive history of AWARE, there is a feeling in the community that solutions can be found through community input, as many letters to the editor have expressed.

We can not lose sight of where we have come from, and what the foundation of our success has been. We need to be mindful of the soul and magic that created this resort, but also look to the future, accept where we are today, and find new ways to re-create that magic AND create some new magic! Some of our visionaries have gone, but there is a whole new

generation that cares just as deeply about their home, livelihoods and passions...(Brownlie, 2006; 12).

While the newspaper is also a space for citizens to air grievances, *Pique Newsmagazine* in particular, boasts of optimistic attitudes coming from residents.

A building requires a strong foundation in order to support the structure, just as an event or festival also requires a strong foundation from which to grow... there are also times when we need to risk and trust and believe that if you put a shovel in the ground, plant a seed, add water and sun you may just find something grows. Based on the community support and the feedback heard throughout the community, we believe we may have in fact planted the bean stock this year (Iles & Samer 2006; 12).

If there is a problem, Whistler residents are quick to identify it and are proactive about finding a solution, the magazine's discourse suggests. I argue that high resident involvement in the formation of *Whistler 2020*, the sustainability framework is testament to this finding.

Before examining the resident story, I want to make note of the way this data was collected. The archival data came through various sources, including the Whistler Museum and Archives, *Pique Newsmagazine*, and various policy documents. Empirical data, through interviews with residents, was a challenge to obtain through one – on – one interviews. At the conclusion of this research, seventeen people were interviewed. This was done through the snowball sampling technique. However, few of these interviews were one – on – one. There was often a reluctance to talk about policy issues in Whistler because of the residents' self-perceived lack of expertise. While residents are indeed engaged and active in the community, many residents I spoke with did not see themselves as having the authority to speak on such issues as policy and sustainability. When I first asked people to discuss their opinions, they often pointed me towards the municipality.

“Maybe you should talk to someone at town hall. They would know about this way better than I would” (Municipal Resident 12). This brief quote is indicative of initial responses that I received. The role of the ‘expert’ in policy making is very powerful (McCann 2007). While residents are active within Whistler, the ones with whom I spoke did not see themselves as being in this role. I found two main solutions to this problem. 1: Group interviews done informally and 2: interviewing without the use of a recording device. While this solved the problem of talking to people in a way that they were comfortable, it also meant that I was unable to get many accurate quotes. I was forced to rely mostly on notes hastily scribbled down during the interviews and my reflective commentary that I made after each interview was ended. I also conducted two telephone interviews. Five respondents whom I had interviewed previously from their positions as municipal workers, consultants, and private sector workers agreed to answer follow-up questions from their perspectives as long time residents of the community as well.

The people interviewed ranged from ages 17 to “retired,” which I would place at above 65. They had lived in Whistler anywhere from one year to thirty-five years. Only three people interviewed had lived in Whistler for under five years. The respondents worked in all areas of Whistler’s economy, from food service workers (wait staff and bartenders), to managerial positions, to high profile municipal positions. The range of ages and job sources allowed me to cross check answers to questions I received from previous interviewees in order to have a fuller understanding of debates in the community. For an overview, see Appendix 1.

What Residents Did

A history of resident involvement in political and social issues in Whistler is well documented in the town's archives. If we parallel residential history in Whistler with the political and economic developments in the municipality, then we can see that Whistler residents are central to the political and economic stories that are told about the municipality. People lived in Whistler well before the municipality was incorporated. Europeans first settled Whistler in 1877, slowly pushing out Squamish and Lil'wat First Nations who had lived in the area for thousands of years previous (whistler.ca). A popular history of the place recounts Alex and Myrtle Philip, an American couple, settling on Alta Lake in 1911 and opening a fishing lodge. This event is commonly considered the beginning of the community of Whistler, then known as Alta Lake. One often told story recounts Myrtle Phillip's successful fight to open a school in the community before it was designated a municipality so that area children had the opportunity to be educated close to home.

The Pacific Great Eastern Railway (PGE) reached Alta Lake in 1914, thereby making it more accessible to visitors. The success of the Philip's lodge led to expansion and by the 1940s the area was dubbed "the most popular resort west of Banff and Jasper." (Museum of Whistler 2007). The Philips owned the lodge until 1948. They then sold it to Alec and Audrey Greenwood. The lodge burnt down in 1977, but by then tourism was growing rapidly in Alta Lake. By the 1960s logging was also a profitable industry in the area. Yet a decade later, in the 1970s, the logging industry had started to falter. Tourism however, remained a strong and growing industry with the installation of the first chair lift on what is now Whistler Mountain in 1965. In 1962, when the project began, access

to the valley was still mainly by train. There was little to no infrastructure in the community, including a lack of sewer system, running water, or electricity (Museum of Whistler 2007). The residents of the community however, remained strong and proactive in attempts to attract investors to their town. The early years, before Whistler became a municipality, offer very personal histories of the people who settled the area. Since the community was so small, the residents individually played a key role in local politics and the economy before the community was incorporated as a resort municipality in 1978.

The passing of a provincial Act in 1978 created the Resort Municipality of Whistler, BC. This led to an influx of developers and residents. During the early years of the municipality, it is generally noted that there was not a lot of community input or consultation in the development of the town (Yamamoto, 1998; Gill & Williams, 2005). As noted earlier, the passing of the Provincial Act also allowed for a high degree of control by the province in municipal politics and development.

Indeed, the 1975 Act gave the [provincial] minister a significant power to: exempt Whistler from any Act for other municipalities, vary the composition of council, impose and collect charges for local services, and enact and amend an official community plan... Until 1982 the fourth alderman in the municipal council was actually appointed by the provincial government to ensure their voice in the municipality's decision making process. (Yamamoto, 1998; 67)

Whereas many resort communities arose organically and in a relatively unorganized manner, Whistler's development – first through local investors installing a ski lift in 1965, and then through provincial mandate – was rigidly planned in both physical and economic terms.

As Gill and Williams (2005) note, during the early years of the municipality, little attention was paid to the community or residents as a valid interest group. This led to a

lack of political consideration for residents in the community, which is seen through a startling silence, or lack of discussion around social issues in the town council at this time. However, by the early 1980s local residents began organizing around issues that were important to them. The emergence of AWARE in 1989 saw the institution of the community's recycling program as a result of citizen pressure. The success of this program inspired confidence in residents to establish more advocacy groups and demand that resident as well as development needs be met.

Gill (2000) classifies the time between 1975 and 1990 as a key growth phase in Whistler, this classification echoes the history of resident involvement, ending around 1965, with the installation of the first ski lift and subsequent rapid development, to the re-emergence of residents as an effective interest group in 1989, with the establishment of AWARE.

Gill and Williams (2005), contend that another factor in the re-emergence of residents as a prominent interest group lies in the increasing number of permanent, or year-round residents moving to the community. The emergence of an active citizenry lead to a very vocal expressions of attitudes and priorities concerning development in the municipality. AWARE was founded because a group of residents saw the need for a recycling program in Whistler and placed an ad in the paper calling on other concerned residents.

That was our first, the thing that you know brought us together and our main objective was to get recycling going. We did a few volunteer drop off days. We couldn't afford to do anything permanent. We started on Earth Day, and then we picked a couple of days throughout the year where people could come and drop off recyclables at a central location and we arranged bussing, or trucks, to take it down [to that location]. And then eventually the municipality realized that they should be doing it. We kept of course bugging them to do it... (Municipal Resident 1)

Waste management was the issue that instigated resident action. From the narrow focus on recycling newspapers and bottles, AWARE began to expand its mandate to include wetland protection and a variety of other environmental issues. AWARE began to work closely with Whistler Blackcomb beginning in 1991. As mentioned in the last chapter, the relationship between NGO advocacy groups and commercial enterprises in Whistler has not suffered from the often contentious politics that many communities experience when dealing with the conflicts (McCann 1997, 2001, 2002, 2003) of these two advocacy groups. This working relationship between resident groups and business in Whistler led to the 1992 unveiling of Whistler Blackcomb's first Environmental Management System, which outlined several key initiatives, highlighting waste management and wetland/watershed concerns (Forseth 2007).

It was also during the early 1990s that the municipality began to significantly include residents in decision making processes. In 1994, Whistler entered into a community visioning process, where it is estimated that over one hundred residents attended meetings to identify key growth issues in the community. During this process, one of the key attributes focused on by residents was the state of the environment. Concerns were voiced about the apparently unfettered growth of the town at this time. In 1991 the population of Whistler included 4,459 full-time residents. By 1996 this number had grown to 7,172 (Statistics Canada, 2007). This is a sixty percent increase in the number of full-time residents in the town. The exponentially increasing population also meant an increasing drain on resources and infrastructure, which in turn led to increased community concern about the social and economic sustainability of Whistler. From 1994

on, the municipality has generally been active and attentive to resident concerns and this is seen in the high degree of community involvement in the planning process.

We go to meetings whenever we can. As long as the weather's fine, we go. I like to know what's going on in the community, I mean, we've been living here since 1995. The goings on, you know, affects us, and our friends... I don't speak at these things usually, but a lot of people do. They have a lot to say and they make sure that, well I guess that the people on the council hear what's the important issues (Municipal Resident 2).

The sentiments expressed in the above quote are indicative of many of the responses that I received when asking about people's involvement in the community. Their concern is for each other and the place that they call home. There are always people who feel they can make a difference by speaking out and being heard.

Discourses Formed – The Reification of Whistler

After the initial 1994 visioning process was complete, a new planning framework was instituted in Whistler that ensured the collection of community views and opinions on development issues. Town forums are regularly held in the form of an Annual Town Meeting, as well as various other calls for resident input into the planning process. In 1996 a newly elected mayor and council acknowledged the success of the initial visioning process and the process became more formalized and intensive (RMOW 1999). The visioning process was expanded beyond residents to include the business community. In 1997 Whistler Mountain Ski Corporation and Intrawest merged, thereby creating one dominant employer in the town. This, as Gill and Williams (2005) note, changed the relationships that existed between the private sector and the resident community. It also changed the relationships between the municipality and the community and the municipality and the private sector.

Intrawest's ascension to largest employer status affected residents directly. Residents who had before been involved in community planning and visioning were now, more than ever directly tied to Whistler's main and singular source of income. All of the amenities and services that existed in Whistler were there because of the ski resorts. If Whistler residents wanted to be active in the community, they not only had to negotiate a working relationship with the municipality but also with their employer. This relationship was further complicated by the construction of Creekside, a new 'village' in Whistler, in 2000. This development was designed by Intrawest, yet the corporation, not the town was the sponsor of a community visioning program that took into account resident attitudes about housing and environment. This process was considered a success by the corporation and the municipality.

Well, Intrawest worked really hard to try and include everyone. I mean, of course there were people who weren't happy that there was any new development, but it was going to happen. Lets face it, its prime real estate... But you know, Intrawest is good about thinking about the community. They realize that if they don't, well people will make some noise, and that's never good. So they work really hard to include people when they're doing something that affects the town. They actually do listen. I think its also because you know, a lot of the people working at Intrawest are also residents. So their goals are sort of in line (Municipal Resident 3).

By 2001, when Creekside opened, the permanent resident population of Whistler had risen to 8,896 residents (Statistics Canada 2007; Intrawest 2007). With almost 9000 people's opinions to consider, the consensus was that Intrawest did so successfully.

During this time, the beginnings of *Whistler 2020* were forming. Ideas of sustainability, which had been popularized in 1987, were beginning to be used in governance practices.

Municipal governments in particular seized on the usefulness of this notion in order to

form planning frameworks. It was through community forums, sponsored both by the municipality and by the private sector that, in 1998, TNS, was first introduced to Whistlerites. The popular story is that the founder of TNS, Dr. Karl Heinrik Robért, was on vacation in Whistler, and through a few casual discussions with local residents, convinced the town that TNS was right for them. The more formalized story, as recounted by one resident who was involved in Whistler's adoption of TNS talks of a more calculated adoption and implementation strategy.

Well a friend gave me a call and said hey... you've got to meet this guy. He really has something interesting things to say. So I set up a meeting with him [Robért], and I listened. I mean, I was active, in town, I've been here most of my life, I was doing a lot with AWARE back then too. And there were problems, so I guess, when I listened to this guy talking about the natural step, it all sort of made sense. He was talking and suddenly I saw some solutions... So we brought it to AWARE, to Whistler-Blackcomb... more people started to think this was a good idea and finally we got the municipality to do something about it (Municipal Resident 3).

Resident activism to find solutions to problems caused by growth and development led to the municipal adoption of TNS in 2000.

TNS was quickly and enthusiastically adopted by the municipality, and garnered strong support from residents. The adoption of TNS, mainly a visioning tool, was in line with practices that Whistler had already been implementing. The first major endeavor under the new sustainability framework was to identify Whistler's visions, goals – immediate and long term – and the steps that the community should be taking to reach their agreed-upon objectives. In 2001, *Whistler, Its Our Future* was unveiled. This program recognized the successes of past visioning processes and formalized the visioning process as part of Whistler's planning process. Through the visioning processes held under *Whistler, Its Our Future*, it was decided that a formal framework for development should

be constructed. In 2002, *Whistler, Its Our Nature*, was released. According to the Whistler 2020 website, this new program also enjoyed a high number of residential participants. *Whistler, Its Our Nature* was the precursor to *Whistler 2020*.

Whistler, Its Our Nature embodied the two-year, short term planning process that led to the twenty year planning framework. Residential input is now a formalized process, divided up into fifteen working groups that correspond to the fifteen categories that Whistler residents, the municipality and private sector have identified as being essential to consider in planning for sustainability. Participation in the working groups is not restricted. Anyone who considers himself or herself a resident or participant in the community is allowed to join. While there is an annual call for volunteers for these working groups, the people working in these groups tend to be the same year after year. Participants are not only Whistler residents, but also members of the community who live elsewhere – often neighboring Squamish or Pemberton – but work in Whistler, and who have done so for many years. It is important to emphasize that resident participation in the planning process is not limited to participation in the Whistler2020 working groups. In addition to local elections, there are also town council meetings and other community forums where residents are able to participate in decision making.

Discourses Reified

I want to return now to the questions posed earlier in Chapter 2: How does a geographical perspective on Lukács' ideas about class consciousness and reification help us to explore resident and individual stories in Whistler? And, how does considering resident involvement in Whistler's planning process help us to understand the formation of local ideologies surrounding sustainability and waste management? The individual has always

been important in Whistler. Charismatic historical figures are often key discursive representations (Harvey 1996). One of the first pioneers, Myrtle Philip, is also seen as a major social and environmental advocate for the town. For so long, Whistler was a small and close-knit community, so individuals were not only able to play large and defining roles in Whistler's development, but they were obliged to do so. Myrtle Philip's pioneering and active spirit often appears in discussions surrounding advocacy and problem solving in the community. Her name was invoked vigorously in the early 1990s, when residents began to call for a larger role in the planning process. During discussions of individual agency, it is Myrtle whose specter appears in order to inspire residents to action.

The role of the individual in sustainability planning in Whistler can further be understood through Lukácsian notions of class consciousness and reification.

[Lukács] develops profound insights into the possibilities for democratic social change. With working people's relational understandings of the processes comprising capitalist society, along with their unique position as producers within such societies, Lukács suggests the possibility for a developing class consciousness and the potential for revolutionary transformation (Loftus 2006; 1029).

As stated above, Whistler residents enjoy high levels of education, economic stability and general mobility. As exhibited by their repeatedly stated priorities, environmental and social sustainability is as important to members of the Whistler community as economic sustainability. For residents living in Whistler, their priorities stem from their every day experiences. Lukács also highlights the importance of the material in shaping the individuals' realities.

The objective reality of social existence is *in its immediacy* 'the same' for both proletariat and bourgeoisie... by means of which the merely

immediate reality becomes for both the authentically objective reality, from being fundamentally different, thanks to the different position occupied by the two classes within the 'same' economic process (Lukács 1971; 150. his emphasis).

Data has shown that there is a high degree of understanding among Whistler residents that these three aspects – environmental, social and economic – of life are interconnected. Looking at these two results, I conclude that there is a high degree of consciousness surrounding not only residents' awareness of their own position in life, but also an awareness that there is a need for change. The high degree of consciousness is also a factor in the high levels of resident participation in the planning process. With individuals aware of their own actions, they also are aware of their own agency. This creates a tautological cycle where individuals are aware of and become empowered by their own agency and therefore continue to act on it, furthering their involvement in planning and decision-making processes in Whistler.

Actor Network Theory, and its geographic applications then provide one way of understanding the role individuals play in relation to other interest groups and institutions in Whistler. Reiterating Harvey's (1996) argument, social relations and by extension, materializations are discursively formed. And there are many ways of examining *how* these multiple discourses work. Marxist approaches to ANT provide one position from which to examine the formation of ideologies (though discourses) in Whistler. As Kirsch and Mitchell (2004) argue:

ANT's reconfiguration of agency as a collective social and technical process—a process wherein the “non-human” can have very real social effects—can be deepened and given some political efficacy if it is read “back” through Marx's concept of dead labor. The questions that actor network (and “after network”) theorists have articulated, in this sense, might find an explicitly social (and openly asymmetrical) basis that is

predicated on what might be called structural questions of networked agency: how, in a world of ceaseless change, can we account for the durability and resilience of certain institutions, knowledge, and things? And conversely, in a world of powerful resiliencies, how can we best account for the production of newly “active and enterprising” agents (Kirsch and Mitchell 2004; 690)?

The exploration of individual residents cannot be seen as outside of a web of interconnections that exist in the municipality. Marxist, and especially Lukácsian approaches to ANT are particularly helpful in the case of Whistler because coupling Lukacs’ (1971) argument that a conscious population is empowered, with ANT formulations of the discursive ordering of society (Latour 1994; Kirsch and Mitchell 2004) helps to make clear that it is *precisely* the empowerment of the individual that makes their role in this research significant. Consciousness, and therefore, empowerment allows the individual actant to play a significant role in Whistler’s network – in both formal and informal politics and the construction of ideology in Whistler. Through their realized agency local residents become a point through which local ideologies surrounding sustainability and waste management flow, as well as a point through which these ideologies are generated. Following Lukács (1971), Harvey (1996) and others (Kirsch and Mitchell 2004; Loftus 2006), residents help to form ideologies through the discourse they produce and reify. Environmentalism and activism are two themes that have been continuously present in Whistler, since its European settlement in 1911. Discourses surrounding these two ideologies have been altered through the years, however they remain key aspects of Whistler, and it is through resident and individual ideas and actions that these ideologies are produced and reified.

In Whistler’s planning process, which from 1975 to 1990 was largely growth oriented, resident attitudes were largely ignored. However the re-emergence of residential

advocacy in the early 1990s included a call to remember historical figures in the town. The general perception that historical figures had agency is a discourse that helps to fuel current resident activism. Because of individual pressure from residents, the municipality was forced to consider resident attitudes in the planning process. This led to further individual inclusion that produced tangible outcomes. Residents are considered because they currently form an active and powerful interest group in Whistler. Their inclusion in the planning process has ensured that their priorities are considered, and environmental sustainability remains, in the form of *Whistler 2020*, a major factor in the planning process. Resident success in the planning process is often held up as a model for other communities in Canada, as is exhibited by the numerous awards granted to Whistler on the basis of environment, planning and community relations, in the past seven years.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Whistler 2020 is our long-term, overarching, community-wide plan that is guided by our values and sustainability principles, and sets out a shared vision of what the resort community will look like in a successful and sustainable future. – RMOW, (2004, 9)

It is not sufficient to attribute attention to environmental regulation to growing pressures on the urban growth coalition arising from the impact of negative externalities in the living place; nor is it simply a matter that enlightened urban elites have responded positively to growing environmental regulation 'from above'. Attempts to move forward on a green agenda reflect a set of powerful economic incentives in terms of drawing down public funding, finding appropriate languages and policies for reconciling potential conflicts between growth and quality of life and seeing in positive urban environmentalism opportunities for revalorizing urban space or mitigating further devaluations –While et al. (2004, 565)

At the broadest level, this thesis has looked at the Resort Municipality of Whistler, BC from the perspective of recent arguments calling for further investigations into notions of sustainability and their use in local political struggles (Gibbs et al. 2002; While et al. 2004) in order to better understand the construction of place by connecting the discursive formation of local ideology and the material realities that are experienced on the ground, every day. More specifically, I wanted to explore the practices involved in implementing municipal sustainability initiatives, to examine the ways in which notions of environmental, economic, and social responsibility are implicated in local policy-making, and to clarify the ways interest groups and institutions create local ideologies surrounding

sustainability and the mutually constitutive relationship between these ideologies and local policy discourse and practice.

In order to gain a more holistic understanding of this research, I developed a theoretical framework based on the work of several scholars. While et al.'s (2004) argument that municipal sustainability initiatives are solutions to conflicts between environmental politics and the growth machine model that is applied in the new entrepreneurial city. Through this lens I was able to explore municipal and private sector sustainability initiatives. In order to explore if this was the case in Whistler, I first looked at previous work that had been done on the place itself (Yamamoto 1998; Gill 2000; Saremba and Gill 1991; Gill and Williams 2006). This helped in identifying the particular histories that constituted Whistler's development politically and socially. It also provided the identification of the necessary interest groups important for this research. From there, I then looked at conceptions of waste in contemporary North American and European societies. By taking a Lukácsian approach to Actor Network Theories, I was able to identify important roles of the individual in the course of this research. Whistler sees the individual as responsible, and the individual often feels the same. Their position as residents of Whistler constitutes a space of empowerment for the individual in decision-making processes.

From my research findings, I identified three major interest groups – the municipality, the business community and residents – that came together in order to create and implement local sustainability and solid waste strategies. Chapter 3 looked at the municipality's role in the construction and implementation of *Whistler 2020*. It highlighted the responsibilities that the municipality has to care for its physical environment as well as its

economic stability. At the same time this chapter also highlighted the pressures that Whistler faces as a ‘new company town.’ Its economy is dominated by Intrust and its status as a resort community in a neoliberal economy necessitates the need for Whistler to brand itself. Chapter 4 continues this discussion by focusing on the private sector and their own motivations (economic) for implementing sustainability initiatives, and it also looks at the important role that businesses play in terms of partnership and education strategies. The private sector is clearly a powerful interest group that is heavily involved in the discursive construction of local ideologies surrounding waste management and sustainability. Chapter 5 went on to highlight the role of the individual in Whistler’s policy making. It focused on Marxist notions of ANT in order to help explain why the individual becomes an integral part of discourse formation in the community. Through their role as informed citizens, the individual is empowered and, in the case of Whistler, is relatively active in local politics. In Whistler, the individual –through their empowerment - is another conduit through which local ideologies are constructed. In order to explore the complex relationships that these three interest groups had with each other, I structured this thesis in a way that separated the interest groups out from one another. In this conclusion, I bring these three groups back together to reflect on the research as a whole and in direct relation to my research objectives and the questions I asked in order to guide the research.

Analysis: Sustainability Frameworks and Fixes

The implementation of *Whistler 2020* was a pivotal moment in relations between the municipality, its residents and the business community. The participatory way in which *Whistler 2020* was constructed, with input from local businesses and residents, meant that

the implementation of the policy document became the implementation of a particular discourse on sustainability to which the business community and residents both agreed. The politics of managing participatory governance structures then requires ongoing efforts to maintaining the effectiveness discourses in order to keep potentially divergent interests 'on the same page.' In a world where 'sustainability' is a nebulous term, Whistler has constructed its own particular definition which facilitates a particular set of policy initiatives. These initiatives highlight a weak version of sustainability, which is not surprising, because a strong version of sustainability - that does not allow for trade offs between its three pillars, economic, social and environmental - would not be a practical option at this point in time.

Until August 2004, Whistler focused on sustainability through The Natural Step, a framework constructed by an outsider specifically for corporations. *Whistler 2020*, while based heavily on TNS, is a policy document constructed by the municipality, local businesses and residents. It is a document born in Whistler and one over which the municipality can claim ownership. The awarding of the 2005 LivCom Award for Long Term Planning for Sustainability to Whistler as a recognition of the *Whistler 2020* plan gained the community international recognition. The accolades went to Whistler, not TNS. This can be seen to be a prime example of While et al.'s (2004) sustainability fix. Whistler as a very particular kind of entrepreneurial city – a resort community – is forced to brand itself in a way that will attract visitors in order to keep the economy stable and growing. Planning for sustainability for Whistler, especially in a market where green tourism is on the rise, becomes, among other things, the municipality's branding opportunity.

While *Whistler 2020* is a politically useful tool for generating consensus around how best to conduct policy and for gaining international attention, the question remains as to whether it is a practically useful tool from the perspective of on the ground, day-to-day, management of the town's impact on the environment. It is too early to provide a definitive answer to this question. Certainly, from the perspective of solid waste management, the municipality has been successful in diverting more waste from the landfill (RMOW 2006). Trends in solid waste management in North America show that there are more markets for waste products than ever before, and therefore reduction of landfilled materials in favour of recycling and diversion methods is increasingly becoming economically viable. In order for *Whistler 2020* to function successfully as a sustainability fix, it therefore was required to implement a weak definition of sustainability, as is often the case with municipal sustainability frameworks.

Where's the social?

Another strategy that *Whistler 2020* addresses is affordable housing initiatives by identifying categories such as Resident Affordability and Resident Housing. The scarcity and quality of affordable housing for workers is a major issue in Whistler and, despite stated intentions, the implementation of *Whistler 2020* has not seen any progress in this area. One reason for Whistler's sustainability strategy being focused mostly on economic and environmental, rather than social concerns is the large influence of businesses in the construction of *Whistler 2020*. As I noted in Chapter 4, local businesses feel that they have long been doing much more than the municipality or *Whistler 2020* in terms of sustainability and waste management initiatives. Undoubtedly, their motivation is primarily economic – the diversion of waste from the landfill, to recycling centers or for

composting, is cheaper than simply throwing waste out. Yet, there is very little that is economically beneficial to businesses – especially in the short term – about increasing affordable housing in Whistler.

One of the limits of *Whistler 2020* is that, while local businesses are primarily motivated by economic gain, it may be that they will *only* implement strategies that are economically beneficial for them. Despite this limit, this narrowness of focus is required in order for *Whistler 2020* to function successfully as a sustainability fix. The participatory way in which the policy was constructed coupled with Whistler's status as a new type of company town means that *Whistler 2020* cannot be a perfect document that deals thoroughly with all aspects of sustainability. The differing agendas of each interest group – municipal, private, and resident – must be accommodated in *Whistler 2020*. Therefore powerful local businesses find that their interest are more quickly accommodated than residents', who, after several decades of exclusion in the decision making process, are a relatively new interest group in planning discussions.

Where's the (contentious) politics?

The power of the business community is evident throughout this thesis. While Whistler can be seen as a new form of company town it would be wrong to say that business in the town is all-powerful. Rather, the role of residents is worth noting since residents actions have heavily influenced local policy over the past twenty-five years. Having said this, local environmental activists are largely absent from this thesis. The lack of conflict between environmental activist groups and the municipality and businesses in Whistler was initially surprising. Yet, because Whistler is economically dependant on maintaining the beauty of its physical environment and because residents tend to value the physical

environment it is understandable why there is a lack of contentious politics in Whistler and why, in interviews, both activists and business representatives spoke of productive partnerships. When there is an environmentally conscious resident population that has successfully fought in the past to be included in local decision making processes regarding growth and development issues, it follows that there are reduced spaces for conflict between the interest groups operating in Whistler. In addition, the implementation of *Whistler 2020* has provided each with a common discourse on sustainability that allows the articulation of ideas to more smoothly flow through multiple 'actants' in the community in order to materialize in a less confrontational way than might otherwise be the case.

Who's responsible?

The notion of responsibility is another theme that this research has explored. The responsibility to care for Whistler was seen by all of the interest groups I identified to be a shared responsibility. The differing duties required under this responsibility, such as waste management, were seen on the part of the municipality to be primarily its own with the help of the business community. Residents largely agreed that they had the individual responsibility to care for their community and be responsible for their own trash, but also to be responsible for paying attention to what happens in the community. In contemporary North American society, when there are often arguments about an 'apathetic public', the latter responsibility, identified by several residents, was in some ways surprising. The scope of this project, coupled with the difficulties I had interviewing the resident population made further exploration of this idea impractical.

However, future projects might look more in depth at local ideas of citizenship in the resort community.

One way of looking at future projects might involve further investigations of individual responsibility in terms of class consciousness and how (or if) it affects other communities that have begun to increase their share in the tourism market. Are individual notions of responsibility to participate and care for a community discourses through which the neoliberalized state is able to download more of its own (former) responsibilities onto the individual? Also furthering the connection between notions of responsibility to care *for* a place and conflicts facing the entrepreneurial city by looking at these projects through ideas surrounding spatial and political ‘fixes’. While et al. (2004) make the argument that sustainability fixes open new spaces of engagement for conflict over environmental politics and the impetus of the growth machine within the entrepreneurial city. Further exploration of these spaces considering notions of individual, municipal, and corporate responsibility, consciousness and local ideologies would contribute much depth to each of these strains of thought under a neoliberal paradigm.

Challenges and Future Research Opportunities

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the most difficult aspect of this research was contacting a broad range of residents with whom to speak. Considering the active political participation of Whistler’s residents, I still have questions about how to reconcile the local political action of residents and their lack of enthusiasm when I attempted to talk with them about their opinions. A future project might reconcile this issue by initially implementing a broad survey on public opinions to be backed up with more in-depth qualitative interviews and organized focus groups. A project focusing

solely on individual residents and their political activism might be able to accomplish this.

Visitors were another group that I had difficulty researching. I had initially intended to conduct short interviews with visitors in order to gauge their opinions of sustainability and waste management in Whistler. However visitors, like residents, also proved reluctant to talk with me. Considering the time constraints on this project, I was forced to choose between tackling the challenge of interviewing residents and interviewing visitors. Because residents' role in this project was much more integral, I chose them. Other attempts to access data on visitors through organizations such as Tourism Whistler were similarly unsuccessful. When I asked several tourism operators about data on visitor opinions regarding Whistler, I was told repeatedly that they did not keep such data. I was unable to find any publicly available data on tourist opinions surrounding the municipality. Further projects regarding sustainability, responsibility, and conceptions of solid waste management in the context of a resort community would include detailed information on visitor attitudes surrounding these issues and whether these attitudes affected their decision to choose Whistler as a destination, and whether their attitudes affected or were altered during their stay in Whistler. Possible methods might include broad range surveys and focus groups.

This research has shown that if there continues to be a market for waste products, these products will increasingly be diverted from the landfill. While there has been a reduction in solid waste landfilled in Whistler, this trend began long before the implementation of *Whistler 2020* (RMOW 2006). While there may have been initial environmental concerns that motivated innovations in solid waste management practices, what has

emerged are market based solutions. It is doubtful that *Whistler 2020* has had any affect on solid waste management practices in Whistler, however further analysis of the policy in conjunction with solid waste strategies in subsequent years may help to answer this question.

This research has shown that in many ways *Whistler 2020* is a political tool as well as a policy document: it is a very good example of a sustainability fix. From this perspective, policy implications of this research for other resort communities and other municipalities more broadly are that sustainability frameworks like *Whistler 2020* are likely to increase in their implementation in North America and Europe. An interesting question both from a research perspective as well as an implementation perspective would be to look at the effects of *Whistler 2020* in five, ten, and fifteen years from now in order to see what material differences it has helped to bring about as well as to look at its intended goals from 2004 and how they fit with notions of sustainability in the year 2020.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Resident Interviewees

Respondent	Age	Years as Whistler Resident	Occupation	Method of Interview	Follow-up Interview?
1	65+	10	“Retired”/ Volunteer	One on One	Yes (Telephone)
2	65+	30	“Retired” Volunteer	One on One	Yes (Telephone)
3	35	15	Consultant	Email	No
4	31	22	Activist – Employed	One on One	No
5	36	14	Municipal Employee	One on One	Yes (Telephone)
6	Unknown	17	Consultant	Telephone	Yes (Telephone)
7	“Mid – 50s”	35	Municipal Employee	Telephone	Yes (Telephone)
8	22	7	Wait staff	Group of 2	No
9	31	10	Bartender	Group of 2	No
10	28	3	Manager – Food Service	Group of 5	No
11	26	5	Manager – Food Service	Group of 5	No
12	28	8	Manager – Apparel Shop	Group of 5	No
13	25	3	Wait staff	Group of 5	No
14	25	1	Lift Operator	Group of 5	No
15	22	5	Lift Operator	Group of 3	No
16	17	2	Construction Worker	Group of 3	No
17	21	1	Wait staff	Group of 3	No

Appendix 2: Whistler 2020 Strategies and Goals

Strategies	Goals
Arts, Culture, Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally Diverse Arts • Heritage is Preserved • Arts Contribute to the Local Economy
Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limits to growth are obeyed • The built environment is attractive, safe and accessible (mixed-use) • Policy contributes to the financial health of the community • Building design, construction and operation is efficient, durable, and flexible • Streamlined policies and regulations help to effectively achieve green development
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The economy achieves competitive return on invested capital • Products and services with a high net value to users drive Whistler's economic activities • Locally owned businesses are encouraged • Whistler is an integral part of the region's economy
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistler's energy system maximizes economic opportunities, and finds a balance between energy efficiency and generating new supply • The energy system moves towards a state where emissions and waste into air, land and water are eliminated • Energy is generated, distributed, and used efficiently, through market transformation, design, and appropriate end uses • Residents, businesses and visitors understand energy issues
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistler lives within its financial means • The cost of maintaining the resort community is shared • Resort community partners work together to identify shared spending priorities, share resources, and leverage funds and financing opportunities • Whistler has a healthy economy that generates revenue to contribute to the resort's funding base

Strategy	Goals
Health & Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members and visitors accept responsibility to maintain their own health • Chemical-free, organically-grown food produced in the Sea-to-Sky Corridor is available year-round at a price affordable to community members • The resort community is safe for visitors and residents, • Whistler is accessible and inclusive for community members and visitors with disabilities
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A learning culture is nurtured and promoted locally and and leverages Whistler's international stature • Residents and visitors have opportunities to actively learn about the resort community, the natural environment and First Nations culture • Learning opportunities contribute to the local economy and attract visitors to the resort community for learning vacations
Materials & Solid Waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistler is clean and well maintained • Whistler is on its way to achieving its 'zero waste' goal • Increased economic opportunities are being realized as a result of smart materials management • Local businesses, residents and visitors are knowledgeable about material flows, and have a strong ethic of responsibility toward resources and materials
Natural Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of critical natural areas is avoided to ensure ecosystem integrity • Indigenous biodiversity is maintained • A policy of no net habitat loss is followed • Community members and visitors act as stewards of the natural environment
Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions consider the community's values and short and long-term consequences • Partners participate in policy making and other decisions at various levels of government where relevant • Trust is established and maintained among Whistler Partners
Recreation & Leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation and leisure are part of the Whistler lifestyle • Whistler is globally recognized as a leader in innovative recreation products and services • Recreation and leisure infrastructure and practices minimize the degradation of natural areas • Recreation and leisure is a core contributor to the Whistler economy

Strategy	Goals
Resident Affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income and innovative benefits help make it affordable to live and play in Whistler • Residents have access to affordable goods and services that meet their needs • Diverse and affordable opportunities for recreation, leisure, arts and culture exist • Products and services offered to meet residents' needs move continuously toward meeting our sustainability objectives
Resident Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident housing is affordable • Residents enjoy housing in mixed-use neighborhoods that are intensive, vibrant and include a range of housing forms • Developed areas are designed and managed to be sensitive to the surrounding environment
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistler encourages affordable and safe non-motorized and public transit • Transportation alternatives are developed, promoted and supported • Whistler's transportation system is transitioning toward renewable energy sources, improving air quality, and maintaining ecosystem integrity
Visitor Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors feel welcome • Whistler proactively anticipates market trends • The resort community's authentic sense of place and engaging, innovative and renewed offerings attract visitors time and time again
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water supply is distributed reliably, equitably and affordably • All potable water is used sparingly • Regarding water resources, capital and long-term costs are managed in a financially responsible way

All Information For Appendix 2 obtained from RMOW 2004 and whistler2020.ca
2007.

Appendix 3: Sample Interview Questions

Background (If relevant)

- Can you tell me a little about your background and experience with this organization?

Sustainability

- Are you familiar with The Natural Step framework for sustainability and Whistler2020?
- How do you feel about working with Whistler 2020? (Has it had any effect on how you operate/make decisions?)
- What do you think are some of the strengths and weaknesses of using a sustainability framework in the context of Whistler?
- Do you have any suggestions, from your perspective, on how to alter sustainability framework's use in planning?

Waste Management

- Do you recall the solid waste management policy, implemented in '05, being constructed?
 - Knowing that Whistler is shipping its waste to Redmond, in the US, how do you feel about Whistler's waste management policy?
 - Do you think there are any connections between the solid waste management plan as compared to the recent debate surrounding the sewage treatment plant in Whistler?
 - In your opinion, has this organization's practices surrounding waste management changed in the past year?
 - What do you feel should be the responsibilities of various groups (the municipality, businesses, residents, visitors) in Whistler regarding the garbage produced?
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