

“Working Well, Together”: An Introduction to the Cultural Future of Small Cities

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The Small Cities Book is a collaborative exploration involving both university and community research partners. As we write this introduction, we are beginning our fourth year of a five-year research program initiated by the Kamloops Art Gallery and The University College of the Cariboo in Kamloops, British Columbia. The program is supported by a Community-University Research Alliances (CURA) grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), and the collaboration focuses on the cultural future of small cities — on the city as a cultural formation and how cultural and arts organizations work together (or fail to work together) in a small city setting.

There’s much talk of late about a “new deal” for cities. But when national governments speak about cities, they are thinking primarily of the Torontos and the Vancouvers. *The Small Cities Book* has been written with the conviction that now is the time for small cities to make the case for smaller-scale cultural development. If not by definition, then certainly by default, “culture” is associated with big city life: big cities are commonly equated with “big culture”; small cities with something less. The Cultural Future of Small Cities CURA seeks to pro-

vide a more nuanced view of what constitutes culture in a small Canadian city. In particular, the university researchers and community partners are exploring notions of social capital and community asset building; in this context, “community,” “creativity,” “cultural indicators and scale,” “home and homelessness,” “visual and verbal representation,” and the need to define a local “sense of place” have emerged as important themes.

If smaller urban centres are to prosper and maintain their identities in the face of mass cultural influences and big-box retailing, they need to think critically about notions of scale, space, and place. To tell their own stories, small cities need to listen to the vernacular, to local examples and voices. Accordingly, *The Small Cities Book* localizes questions of globalization and cultural identity at the municipal level, seeking to explore the challenges and possibilities facing small cities like Kamloops. It is our aim to share knowledge about cultural expression and community development that is transferable to other cities of comparable size in British Columbia, Canada, and elsewhere.

Influential studies by Manuel Castells (*The City; The Information Age*) and Saskia Sassen and Kwame Appiah on global cities, as

well as those specifically about urbanization in Canada (John Caulfield and Linda Peake; Trudi Bunting and Pierre Fillion), offer a starting point for research in this area, but these studies require a levelling when applied to small cities. Much has also been written on rural community life in a Canadian and international context, as demonstrated variously by *The New Rural Economy Project 2* and by many edited proceedings and collections, such as those by Kenneth Beesley and R. D. Ramsey, and Bill Reimer and Grace Young. Yet, their emphasis tends to be on small towns or sparsely populated regions. In either case, experiences may be similar, but the conditions and configurations of small cities can be decidedly different, owing to, among other things, what Clifford Geertz terms “local knowledge,” and to factors of scale and geography.

At the Small Cities Forum (an international symposium hosted by the CURA in May, 2004), Thomas Paradis provided a wonderfully concise “top-ten” list of reasons to approach cultural development in small cities differently. As Paradis argues, “[i]n certain ways, smaller places share some commonalities with larger places.... Still, there are probably more differences than similarities between the small city and the metropolis.” Accommodating to new migration patterns, establishing growth-oriented social and economic networks, linking local planning to community functions and identity, recognizing the challenges of integrating “newcomers,” preserving a viable downtown, animating local history, resisting the forces of purely commercial gentrification, promoting the multiple faces and facets of the city, generating a strong sense of place, and taking advantage of scale to promote community involvement — these are the key areas where small cities and their larger metropolitan counterparts differ in terms of the need for special emphasis, planning, and cultural participa-

tion (Paradis). Indeed, small cities occupy what many observers have identified as a cultural “third space” (Bhabba), positioned as they are in the shadow of large cosmopolitan cities but still bound by rural history and traditions. The under-representation of small cities in the scholarly literature on cities generally, particularly with respect to cultural issues, is thus a key rationale for research — and for this present book.

Kamloops as a Site for Community-Based Research

We focus on Kamloops and the region as a living laboratory. Kamloops is located in the southern interior of British Columbia in the Thompson-Nicola region, about four hours northeast of Vancouver on the Trans-Canada Highway to Calgary and two hours north of Kelowna in the Okanagan Valley, with which it is often compared or confused, to the chagrin of both cities. The relative isolation of Kamloops is one of its virtues, at least, in the case of the arts, for large cities are just too distant to satisfy a cultural diet. Yet, isolation is not the sole condition for the sustainability of arts and culture: there is a degree of local involvement that is attributable to more than the city’s geographical location. For over twenty years the city has had numerous thriving arts organizations such as the Kamloops Art Gallery, the Kamloops Museum and Archives, the Kamloops Symphony Orchestra, and Western Canada Theatre — cultural organizations which many cities of comparable size either do not have or cannot adequately sustain.

At the initial meeting of potential research partners in 2000, Jann Bailey, the Director of the Kamloops Art Gallery, pointed out that, as a cultural community, “we are all doing it well but not together.” Given this observation, the participants immediately recognized that they were beginning with a knowledge and appreciation of Kamloops’ diverse cul-

tural resources, as opposed to its deficiencies and drawbacks, thus possessing the fundamentals for what John Kretzmann and John McKnight have termed “asset-building community development.” However, the participants were also being asked to consider the possible advantages of working more deliberately together and of sharing resources. This led to a consideration of the very purpose of collaboration for the partners and the community of Kamloops.

The group recognized that while partnership arrangements can have a dramatic impact on the life of a small city like Kamloops, the possibilities and challenges are even greater when a topic as complex as culture is the focal point. Accordingly, we built in a self-appraisal component that takes into account the diverse literature on cooperation and community development, as well as related work on strategy and organizational theory by scholars such as Henry Mintzberg and several of his colleagues who discuss collaboration as an organizational strategy and simultaneously reflect upon their own collaboration as co-authors (Mintzberg et al). A series of pamphlets documenting group meetings and fieldwork activities, poster displays, research process journals, a website, and *The Small Cities Book* have become for us such self-reflexive opportunities, ones where we seek to enact the principles of community collaboration, documentation, and dialogue that mark the spirit and potential of community-university research alliances.

Over an eight-month period in 2000, consultations and discussions led to the emergence of a research and community-based initiative designed (1) to examine cultural life in Kamloops and (2) to consider the implications of our research for cities of comparable size in British Columbia, Canada, and abroad. The program began with nine partners: the Kamloops Gallery (KAG) as lead organization, The University College of

the Cariboo (UCC), City of Kamloops, Forest Research Extension Partnership, Kamloops Museum and Archives, John Howard Society, Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, Stuart Wood School, and Western Canada Theatre. More recently, we have extended our partnerships to include the Kamloops Make Children First Learning Initiative, the Comox Valley Art Gallery, and, more informally, two other CURAs studying small and mid-sized cities — those at the University of Waterloo and the University of New Brunswick, Saint John. Our studies and related community initiatives consider (1) city, regional, and environmental planning; (2) the challenge of linking cultural resources to social development; (3) the role for local history and heritage in cultural development; and (4) modes and strategies for representing the small city. In *The Small Cities Book*, we have organized these studies into three thematic clusters: Cultural Formations and Possible Futures, Cultural Narratives and Representations, and Cultural Symbols and Identities.

To further ensure continuity and knowledge sharing, all researchers and community partners meet formally on a regular basis. The study also includes a strong student component with UCC students engaged as research assistants, in work-study projects or as interns in community organizations. Information sharing includes a newsletter, the website (www.cariboo.bc.ca/smallcities), and three major public events to showcase the research results: an exhibition at the Kamloops Art Gallery and other venues that will document the work of the research projects, and two Small Cities forums (one held in May 2004 and the second scheduled for May 2005). These week-long forums include panels, workshops, town meetings, design charrettes and cultural events addressing the cultural, social and economic challenges facing small cities.

As we near the end of our research program, we are beginning to appreciate the implications of Jann Bailey's observation that local individual arts and cultural organizations were "doing it well but not together." Community–university research alliances like ours bring communities together in ways that make all partners productively self-conscious about community development in general — and about the shape (and purpose) of "research" in particular. Community-based research is good for the local economy, providing employment, business opportunities for local suppliers, and enhanced learning opportunities for students. It improves our local research capacity and know-how by mobilizing a ready network of university consultants and community researchers.

Working together, however, means more than establishing shared projects and goals: it also means understanding and negotiating otherwise hidden or unspoken assumptions, procedures, and agendas. Partnerships, however well intended, involve some measure of gain and some measure of loss — that is, all the participants are beginning to recognize that we need to work differently if we are to work well and together.

A community–university research alliance, as outlined in the SSHRC guidelines, is conceived as an "entity based on an equal partnership between organizations from the community and the university." We are working towards equality, but initial differences of perspective, tradition, and purpose preclude any immediate creation of a utopian alliance. Community organizations and universities do not necessarily speak the same language or hold the same objectives and values. Moving ahead with the university's research agenda while remaining sensitive to community sensibilities and expertise remains a dimension crucial to this form of research.

Attention to collaboration as a mechanism and process has also led us to reconsider the

very idea of community. As attested by the CURA program itself,¹ few would dispute the value, if not the increasing necessity, of fostering a sense of community for the purpose of fusing research and education with the public good, in small cities or large metropolitan areas. An expanding literature about the meaning of and possibilities for community now traverses many disciplines and fields in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. "Community" has also become a watchword for diverse collective endeavours and arrangements not necessarily tied to local or civic associations or structures, or to a specific group held together by a common aim or purpose, as was traditionally the case. Community is now wrought large, as in "the global community"; but as Peter Katz and others have suggested, it also has become synonymous, yet often erroneously, with "network" and other technological configurations.

For our part, we have viewed and continue to view Kamloops and the surrounding Thompson region as constituting a defined community, a cultural and geographical place with implicit and explicit similarities and differences to other places, and having a diversity of cultural identities and interests. In this respect, our research continues to take its cue from Lucy Lippard, who has perhaps best articulated the possibilities for art and cultural expression in local situations. As she puts it, "Community doesn't mean understanding everything about everybody and resolving all the differences; it means knowing how to work within differences as they change and evolve" (127).

In addition to collaboration and community, the CURA research features, of course, culture. As Raymond Williams observes, "culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (*Keywords* 87). Williams' early work (*Long Revolution*) and a specific study of the coun-

try and city (*The Country*), as well as work by others, such as Geertz and Carey, laid the foundation for what has become known as the "cultural turn" in the arts, humanities, and social sciences.² What has emerged is the encompassing field and approach called cultural studies. An academic sea change has occurred which now provides a framework and an appreciation for the legitimate and interdisciplinary study of a range of texts, artefacts, practices, and events, some of which are included in this book.

However, because culture now refers to a multitude of enactments and interpretative possibilities, issues about the very conditions and contours of cultural participation become equally pertinent. Bennett Berger, for example, asks what needs to be known about the relationship between cultural (and symbolic) choices that people make and the social locations in which they take place. Or to raise matters relevant to Kamloops and other comparable cities, we are prompted to ask: (1) What comprises a viable and sustainable cultural life that has meaning and value for its citizens in an economic and political climate characterized by mega-structures and forces such as globalization? (2) To what extent do the local and the vernacular give way to these more cosmopolitan trends and standards? (3) What is the value to the community in either celebrating or institutionalizing a local history?

Working from these questions, we recognize, both theoretically and thematically, the importance of social capital in creating and sustaining cultural activity. Robert Putnam, like others, such as Francis Fukuyama and Xavier Briggs, define social capital as "features of social organizations, such as networks, norms and trust relations that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" ("The Prosperous" 35). Social capital is thus the glue that binds communities; for individuals and groups with cultural

interests and objectives it is an essential resource, given the collaborative aspects of creation. It also has significant ramifications for policy making, cultural and otherwise, for, as Putnam explains, "social capital is not a substitute for effective public policy but rather a prerequisite for it and in part a consequence of it" ("The Prosperous" 42). Yet Putnam contends that, in the United States at least, while there is enormous and unprecedented capital accumulation in the form of money and goods, social capital is being eroded, with the result being less citizen participation in civic life. For confirmation, he points to the decline of voluntary associations and other social ties and alliances that bring people together. In his much-quoted dictum, people are increasingly "bowling alone."

Social capital is therefore a key resource and phenomenon reflected in the Small Cities CURA's very partnerships and studies. The attention to collaboration also provides a platform for seeing social capital in action within the context of a Canadian small city, including its forms and extent. As Alejandro Portes and Patricia Landolt point out, individuals, groups, and places always face barriers to participation, cultural and otherwise, because they lack the resources. While social capital may be of concern to the public and private sectors, it is especially an issue for non-profit organizations, now commonly regarded as the "third sector," given their mandates, associations and diverse activities (Drucker). Putnam may well be correct about the decline of voluntary and communal activity, yet the pressures and expectations of the third sector for services are dramatically increasing (Banting; Rifkin). Thus, in the longer term, the Small Cities CURA hopes to provide some insight about the capacities of non-profit cultural organizations in small cities and about some of the challenges faced by the larger sector in which they are situated.

Artists-as-Researchers

The research projects represented here do not employ a single methodology; rather they reveal a commitment to methodological diversity, where the fundamental criterion is to use the most appropriate form of inquiry for the topic under study. Some projects incorporate traditional archival and historical methods; others employ ethnographic approaches and action research; while some use a combination of methods. One unique feature of this endeavour has been the involvement of artists-as-researchers.

From the beginning — and with an art gallery as lead partner — the directors saw the potential for “displaying” research as an important means of public dissemination. Once the research program was underway, at the first major meeting of researchers and community partners, the group reviewed its goals for (1) collaboration and assessment, (2) new partners and alliances, (3) additional funding possibilities, and (4) communication and dissemination strategies. In addition, Dubinsky and Garrett-Petts presented a brief on the potential involvement of artists. Initially, including the artists was presented as an example of how new researchers could be drawn into the project, in this case through culminating exhibitions that documented the projects and presented artistic work reflecting major project concerns. While the exhibition is still planned, the program has moved to attach artists to projects as they arise. In the meeting, we noted that this enhanced use of artist-participants reflected the progress of several current projects, and was “generally supported by an increasing interest by the contemporary art world in what we might call ‘community-based art.’” We envisaged “several possibilities ... each ... contingent upon agreement by the researcher(s), community partner and artist(s) for each project. For example, some artists might participate

fully as researchers with their work incorporated into, if not in some cases synonymous with, a specific project. In other cases, artists might work as more detached observers” (Dubinsky and Garrett-Petts 4–5).

We are now in the midst of refining the forms and models of collaboration involving artists, academic researchers, and community organizations. To date, as this book illustrates, we have engaged numerous artists to work with our community-based research teams, encouraging them to follow one of three inquiry models (see Bratton and Garrett-Petts). We are encouraged by the potential we see for linking creative inquiry to more traditional methods of research. As Neil Bradford said recently in a background report on the structure of creative cities, “The lifeblood of the arts is creativity, imagination, experimentation, and appreciation of difference. These are precisely the habits of mind and modes of expression urgently required across all sectors [including community-based research].” Bradford notes that in business management, it is reported that “competition is no longer about creating dominance in large, scale-intensive industries but about producing elegant, refined products in imagination-intensive industries.” He quotes the *Harvard Business Review* in proclaiming the “breakthrough business idea for 2004” to be that the Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) degree has become the new MBA, the essential currency for a business career [qtd. in Schachter]. Urban planners and policy makers recognize “that artistic works can enable dialogue between diverse people and groups; that cultural heritage can become a focal point for regenerating derelict neighbourhoods or, indeed, for reinventing a whole city’s ‘sense of place’; and that by valuing self-expression, the arts and culture contribute to active citizenship” (1-2).

Artistic practice — and the presence of

working artists as co-researchers — thus offers the possibility of well-crafted critique, playful destabilization and an identifiable “third view,” one not tied directly to either the university or the community partners (see bissett; Garrett-Petts and Lawrence; Gottfriedson; Hargrave; Kroetsch; MacLennan et al; Turner; and van Herk for examples in this volume). As an aspiring learning community, we continue to pursue our initial purpose, but we have also turned to art and artists to help refine our terms of reference, to help redefine our working relations. The chapters that follow reflect this artistic inflection, and, we trust, encourage readers to consider the poems, exhibitions, photographic essays, and creative nonfiction that have emerged as complementary forms of research — as practice-based embodiments of a small city culture in action.

The Small Cities Book

In more traditional forms of social research, Robert Mackinnon and Ross Nelson offer an historical and geographical overview of Kamloops and the region, showing how “the driving sectors of the local economy may have [changed over time], but not the underlying economic and power relationships” (43). Echoing the observations of Paradis on why we need to study small cities, they conclude that responses to the opportunities and challenges posed by globalization are “scale dependent.”

Next, Lon Dubinsky, working with a multidisciplinary team, reviews how city planners can promote community involvement and “visioning.” Several kinds of perceiving, casting and reflecting characteristic of the charrette process — a community visioning exercise — are identified as helping citizens speculate about and design the physical and aesthetic shape of their immediate environment. As Co-director of the Small Cities CURA,

but also as an arts-researcher based primarily in eastern Canada, Lon Dubinsky is both community insider and outsider, participant and observer. What he identifies in “The Culture of Participation” many locals might too easily take for granted; namely, that Kamloops reveals a substantial number “of long-standing commitments and connectedness and an involvement in the arts and heritage that is rooted in what has been termed a culture of participation stretching across sectors, age groups and city areas” (81). He concludes that volunteerism, and the many various forms that cultural participation takes, constitutes evidence that “social capital seems to be thriving rather than dwindling” (82). These observations lead him to introduce the proposition — one developed more fully in Ross Nelson’s “A Cultural Hinterland?” — that the usual measures (indices) used for assessing cultural capital in large centres, especially those developed by Richard Florida, are inappropriate for judging small cities.

Cultural participation, for example, is not always correlated with positive economic development. As John Bratton and Will Garrett-Petts point out in “Art at Work”:

[a]ccording to the existing literature on large urban centres, the opportunity to establish strong community ties may actually deter some people from moving to small communities and thus inhibit growth: deep community involvement is said to be commonly rejected or avoided by itinerant knowledge-sector workers and members of the so-called “creative class,” who characteristically prize personal flexibility and opportunity over community responsibility and commitment. (112)

In contrast, Bratton and Garrett-Petts find that the small city setting narrows the false divide between creativity and work — that

smaller cities show an openness to “explore the complementary relationship between the arts and sustainable innovation (the potential for arts to invigorate innovators) in the workplace” (112).

In the second thematic cluster of chapters, Aritha van Herk reminds us that the small city may be a “comforting oxymoron,” but one rarely visible as the subject of creative representation. “We hide, here in Canada, in cities small enough to disappear,” she says. “The secret of cities is their ability to disappear their citizens....” She warns of geographers whose “cartographical programs ... ‘unclutter’ maps by erasing the small cities and exaggerating the large.” “The small city,” she says, “speaks to its own intimate murmur, its habits precise as a local vernacular” (137).

David MacLennan, Donald Lawrence, Will Garrett-Petts, and Bonnie Yourk engage in a very different cartographical practice — story mapping — as a means of exploring and documenting the community’s “lived experience grounded in the routines and spatial patterns of everyday life” (146). Their focus is on the vernacular, on an “intermediate space where image, embodied knowledge and discursive knowledge overlap” (148). The story mapping sessions are held, generally, in community halls or neighbourhood centres, with each participant invited to draw and speak about his or her own personal map of Kamloops. This study of the community from “the ground up” maps individual stories of belonging and detachment, while, at the same time, identifying and validating the vernacular theories that inform these stories. Garrett-Petts and Donald Lawrence extend this study, asking what happens when a community art exhibition is used as a vehicle for academic inquiry into the nature of the small city. Echoing van Herk, they note that “smaller cities seldom find themselves the subject of ... artistic representation” In

“Relocating the Homeless Mind,” they explore “the place of the small city in the Canadian imaginary” (168).

Similarly, Ginny Ratsoy considers the small city as setting and trope in Canadian literature. She finds small cities associated with what she calls a “peripheral vision,” a way of seeing exhibited by those situated on the margin but self-consciously aware of their relationship to the centre. “Precisely because of Kamloops’ edge position,” she concludes, “it becomes a place of possibility — of escape, refuge, and self discovery” (209).

The city’s children too have stories to tell. In their linked chapters on the development of children’s museums, Elisabeth Duckworth and Helen MacDonald-Carlson argue that “small city museums should remain true to their roots: they should strive to draw upon vernacular experiences, to invest exhibits and programs with local significance” (248). Here the voices and images of the community’s children help to define a larger sense of place.

Virtually all the researchers and community partners, in one way or another, are interested in the means and strategies used to represent Kamloops and the Thompson region to itself and to areas beyond. They also observe informal interactions, such as people using parks or other public spaces, patterns of walking, frequenting restaurants and taverns, or attending performances and events that bring locals and visitors together. As artist-researcher Laura Hargrave reflects in her *River Walk Project*, “the act of physically traversing the land [is] in some way tied to the lasting quality of the memory” (170). Such interaction remains important for a vibrant and desirable city culture; it is part of the social capital that flows from formally constituted associations.

The final cluster of chapters opens with a detailed consideration of how cultural symbols are socially constructed and consumed.

Sherry Bennett looks at local outlaw figures as objects of tourism promotion, asking the intriguing question, "What makes historical figures either eminently marketable or mere archival curiosities" (256)? Her study suggests that figures still rooted in vernacular culture, those not easily "separated from private and personal association" (274), are thus less attractive to the tourism industry than more stereotypical figures (the generic outlaws of popular culture). But, she argues, if we fail to promote local history on the basis of "proximity and familiarity" (275), we silence the very stories that define who we are and what we have to offer others.

The work of Marianne and George Ignace on relations between street culture, the "Rez," and the city details a moving story involving both artistic celebration and personal loss. Like Bennett, these authors seek to resist the temptation of the stereotype; in "Tagging, Rapping, and the Voices of the Ancestors," they argue that for Aboriginal culture to carry on, "it must reinvent itself in continuously new ways and forms" (318). Kamloops as the small city has a central role to play, for not only does it connect the reserve to the city, but the city "provides one of the real arenas for the seeking and finding of self-expression among [Aboriginal] youth" (318).

This middle position, situated somewhere between the local and the cosmopolitan, creates both opportunities and challenges for theatrical expression and production as well. James Hoffman and David Ross tell the story of how an iconic historical document from 1910 ("The Laurier Memorial") became the subject of intense artistic collaboration and struggle. *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout* — a play by Tomson Highway, which, as Hoffman notes, "powerfully replays a performance that was originally staged in 1910" (288), suggests a model for the development

of vital, political theatre specific to small city symbols, scripts, and circumstances.

In "Change and Resistance: Kamloops' Civic Symbols and Identity in the 1990s" Rachel Nash argues that symbolic representation is "not limited to official insignia, coats of arms and similar materials put out by chambers of commerce, city governments and various booster organizations. Civic self-representation occurs through a complex of different practices and mechanisms, including celebrations, mascots, and the language cities use to describe and promote themselves" (319). Nash focuses on Kamloops' centenary year, 1993, as a "symbolic moment" marking a positive shift in both the city's economic situation and cultural confidence. It is a moment when "the community attempted the delicate task of fashioning a contemporary image, without completely abandoning its long-term identity in the process" (320). Nash sees small cities as having "a relatively limited range of representational resources on which to draw. That is, the big or 'world-class' city is a rich and suggestive notion, as is the small town. In contrast, there are fewer established ways to discuss and describe the small city; the patterns are not as clear" (330). As all the chapters in this cluster argue, the challenge for small cities is "to develop and sustain existing local identities without resorting to generic abstractions" (330).

The local also includes the disenfranchised. Just as a city's varied history is important to understanding itself and its future, many of its community organizations now recognize the vital importance of enabling particular clienteles to give voice to their life experiences through various forms of cultural expression. Linda Deutschmann looks at the meagre social capital of marginalized groups. She also speaks to the "not in my backyard (NIMBY) syndrome," which, because of

closer proximities, small cities must inevitably address with respect to housing and the provisions of various community services.

Some Tentative Conclusions

The Small Cities Book identifies four keys to a culturally healthy small community: (1) a vital, culturally rich and diversified downtown core; (2) an authentic, publicly celebrated history; (3) a high level of cultural participation, including a tradition of volunteerism, growth coalitions, and leadership; and (4) a cultural policy that links the city's centre and heritage to its outlying areas and communities. Actions that diminish the downtown, obscure or ignore local history and heritage, discourage cultural participation, or fail to consider outlying areas in relation to the city's centre and heritage will, in the long term, erode the city's identity and the prospects for future development.

Economic development and cultural development, therefore, cannot be effectively separated, especially in a small city setting. Tourism promotion, for example, can have only limited success if it is not planned in coordination with the cultural sector. As Thomas Paradis outlines in his "top-ten" reasons why Kamloops is no Vancouver, "[a]ny constructed theme that is perceived as imposed on a community from an elite group of citizens or city leaders is not likely to attract positive attention." If not cast as legitimate expressions of a city's local character and history, festivals, events, and promotional publications become merely generic — a sign of the city's decline, not its development. The city without its own story to tell has nothing distinctive to promote.

Our preliminary findings thus confirm the importance of specific community-based activities in the arts and heritage. The presence of Dubinsky's "culture of participation"

in many sectors of the city is a key to economic and social sustainability. A recent Cultural Strategic Plan found that one third of the Kamloops population is actively engaged in artistic events, education, or practices. Studies show that cities that define themselves as creative, as so-called "learning communities," share a strategic advantage: creative cities become magnets for economic and cultural development. Our findings thus suggest we need to celebrate creative participation in all its forms (see especially chapters by Bratton and Garrett-Petts; Ignace and Ignace; Nelson).

Through this study we can begin to understand how small cities overlook or undervalue creativity. Many cities fall victim to fragmented cultural planning and decision making, allowing one municipal sector to win out at the expense of another: local arts councils vs. major cultural organizations, sports vs. the arts, economic development vs. cultural development. We've come to see these divisions as false dichotomies, the kind of either/or thinking and practice that remains far removed from the lived experience of the average citizen. Most of us take little time to distinguish among sports, recreation, the arts, and our work activities. One flows into the others, part of the array of choices available. Also, different people define these activities differently. The arts, for example, can be recreational for some and a business for others. Important is the range of opportunities for ourselves, our families, and our neighbours.

Traditional cultural categories — high and low culture, arts and recreation — are not a good fit with the small city landscape. Our investigations suggest that we need to recognize and nurture more permeable boundaries between and among sports and recreation, high arts, amateur artistic expression and culture, folk arts and ethnic celebrations, and

education at all levels. Ironically, sports and recreation are key drivers behind Kamloops’ high levels of arts funding: the city’s investment in sports, in particular, has created a rhetorical situation allowing, historically, a strong case for compensatory funding in the arts.

The 1993 Canada Summer Games established a watershed moment in terms of city pride, participation, and vision. According to Recreation and Culture Manager Ron McColl, the city’s successful bid for, and hosting of, the national games came at a time when Kamloops was searching for a shared sense of identity. As McColl points out, “National events go to the spirit of a community” (personal interview); they help articulate and generate lasting cultural capital. During the 1980s (as MacKinnon and Ross detail in their chapter on local adjustments in a staples economy), Kamloops was hard hit by recession and experienced a general cultural malaise. The city’s mascot was a cute but uninspiring “Kami the Trout,” and the annual festival was called “Spoolmak Days” (Kamloops spelled backwards). While the city and region had a long history of organizing and hosting important events — including the first provincial winter games in 1979; the first BC Festival of the Arts in 1985; the Yale-Cariboo Music Festival; and, important to the region, the provincial bull sale centred in Kamloops — the Canada Summer Games was “the first *national event* requiring the full participation of the city’s citizens” (McColl).

The Summer Games were a huge economic success, leaving behind money and such new facilities as a rowing club, a sailing club, a competition pool, a track-and-field stadium, and so on. More important, though, was the legacy of community pride and organizational leadership, fostering a “what do we do next?” attitude. It’s hardly coincidental that, by 1995, the Mayor’s Task

Force on the Arts felt confident enough to recommend that the city commit 1% of its tax base to arts and culture — a goal exceeded by 1998.³

What the city discovered was that its scale did not prohibit a national vision for culture broadly defined. In 1985, the city proclaimed itself “The Tournament Capital of B.C.”; following the Summer Games, Kamloops branded itself “The Tournament Capital of Canada.” But in addition to playing host to numerous national and international tournaments (such as the Ford World Curling Championships, the Strauss Cup, the Memorial Cup, the World Fly Fishing Championships, and much more), the city’s cultural sector has premiered or otherwise initiated numerous artistic, theatrical, educational, and musical events of national import. In other words, the city manages to balance local development in sports *and* culture with national (and even international) achievements and aspirations.⁴ A national vision is common across a range of cultural activities in the city, and the city’s double vision, its largely successful fusion of the local with the national (the centre and the periphery), may turn out to be its defining characteristic. As Kamloops Mayor Mel Rothenburger suggests in the concluding chapter of this book, “In Kamloops, all of these issues and initiatives consciously or subconsciously emanate from our very name: ‘Meeting of the Waters,’ as translated from the Secwepemc language” (350).

Of course, such an heroic narrative of achievement is only part of the story: it is important not to over-romanticize the small city, for scale not only provides opportunities — it also magnifies misunderstandings, difficulties and disagreements. Stories circulate quickly in a small city: the tall tale is endemic to small places. In large measure, understanding how stories work *in* and *on* the small

city is a prerequisite for successful municipal development.

In a variety of modes, and from multiple disciplinary perspectives then, the following chapters explore municipal development as a narrative art. Our sense of a city's history, its presence, and its potential futures is expressed in stories — in our newspapers, annual reports, promotional materials, and planning documents; in formal debate and casual conversation with one another; in the many ways we represent the city verbally and visually to others. Place, people, and participation — the “3Ps” of the creative city — have become key narrative elements essential for community self-definition, development, growth, preservation, and promotion. As this book attests, such narratives involve multiple authors: civic leaders, community coalitions, bureaucrats, educators and social critics, children, entrepreneurs, outlaws, poets, artists and other risk-takers. To build successful cities, we need resources, enabling policy (championed and implemented at all levels of government), political will, collaboration, participation via multiple points of entry, and leadership. Above all, cities — especially small cities — need opportunities to articulate, acknowledge, compare, and harmonize their competing narratives of place: they need opportunities for moving shared visions into action.⁵

Notes

1. The CURA program, established by SSHRC, offers grants to institutions and organizations requiring infrastructure support to coordinate “programs of activities and partnerships within a broadly-defined theme area.” The CURA program’s express purpose is to “support a diverse range of innovative research, training and related activities that will (1) enhance mutual learning and horizontal collaboration between community organizations and universities, (2) contribute to the social, cultural, and/or economic development of communities, (3) enrich research, teaching methods, and curricula in universities, and reinforce decision-making and problem-solving capacity in the community, and (4)

enhance students’ education and employability through diverse opportunities to build their expertise and workforce skills in an appropriate research setting.” SSHRC scheduled two competitions (one in 1999/2000 and one in 2000/01) to fund 37 CURAs; this pilot period covered 4 years, with a total budget of \$22.6 million. The Cultural Future of Small Cities program was awarded funding for three years in April 2001; we received an additional two-year completion grant in 2004. CURA has now become a mainstream program accepting annual applications. See www.sshrc.ca/english/programinfo/grantsguide/cura.html.

2. For a recent and comprehensive overview of these developments, see Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt.

3. Today, the City of Kamloops contributes 1.96 % to Arts and Culture.

4. For example, in June 2004, the Canada Council for the Arts announced that Vancouver Aboriginal artist Rebecca Belmore will be Canada’s official representative at the 2005 Venice Biennale of Visual Art, the world’s oldest and most prestigious venue for the international display of contemporary art. The Kamloops Art Gallery and the University of British Columbia’s Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery, which proposed Rebecca Belmore as the Biennale candidate, were the institutions selected in a nationwide competition to represent Canadian visual arts at the event. The 51st edition of the Venice Biennale will take place in June 2005.

5. The notion of municipal development as a narrative art was first presented by Garrett-Petts at the *Creative Cities Structured Policy Dialogue* hosted by Canadian Policy Research Networks, Ottawa, June 14, 2004.

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