Arts Engagement with Sustainable Communities: Informing New Governance Styles for Sustainable Futures

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Abstract: In established processes of governance and related literature, arts and culture have been largely neglected, but work is currently being produced suggesting the importance of arts and culture to processes of good governance and the sustainability transition. A style of governance that fully integrates cultural considerations and understands cultural implications of policy is desirable to address the integrated aims of sustainability and to guide the transition to a sustainable future. The impact of arts and culture on communities and social perceptions is difficult to assess and to anticipate; similarly, the influence of culture on governance and policy is equally difficult to measure, though culture permeates every aspect of social and political life. This article suggests that taking cues from the processes of arts and culture to inform new styles of governance supports an open, adaptive, participatory, and creative governance model that responds to a diversity of voices and alternative modes of communication. It argues that a governance style that integrates cultural knowledge is better able to build equity across present and future generations, and is better suited to support a sustainable future. Empirical examples of arts engagement with two communities practicing sustainable behaviours demonstrate the power of arts and culture to build social capital and to potentially contribute to an inclusive and innovative style of governance.

Keywords: Creative governance, inclusive governance, sustainability, artistic engagement, social capital

Résumé : Les principes établis de gouvernance et la littérature sur ce sujet ont jusqu'à présent largement négligé les arts et la culture. Cependant, des travaux sont en cours suggérant l'importance des arts et de la culture pour l'établissement de bons principes de gouvernance et pour la transition vers le développement durable. Un style de gouvernance qui intègre les considérations culturelles et qui conçoit les implications culturelles de la politique est désirable et ce, afin d'adresser les objectifs intégrés du développement durable et de guider la transition vers un futur durable. L'impact des arts et de la culture sur les communautés et les perceptions sociales est difficile à évaluer et à anticiper; de la même manière, l'influence de la culture sur la gouvernance et la politique est également difficile à mesurer, bien que la culture imprègne tous les aspects de la vie sociale et politique. Cet article suggère que de s'inspirer des procédés propres aux arts et à la culture pour guider de nouveaux styles de gouvernance supporte un modèle de gouvernance ouvert, adaptatif, participatif et qui répond a des voix diverses et des modes de communications alternatifs. Il soutient qu'un style de gouvernance qui intègre les connaissances culturelles est mieux apte à promouvoir l'équité entre les générations présentes et

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futures, et est mieux équipé pour soutenir un futur durable. Des exemples empiriques d'engagement des arts avec deux communautés pratiquant des comportements durables démontrent le pouvoir des arts et de la culture pour bâtir le capital social et pour contribuer potentiellement à un style de gouvernance inclusif et innovant.

Mots clé : la gouvernance créative, la gouvernance inclusive, la durabilité, l'engagement artistique, le capital social

Introduction

Sustainability has been described as a multi-legged stool that stands strong only when the economic, ecological, social, and cultural dimensions are equally weighted and meaningfully integrated. And yet the cultural leg of sustainability has, to date, been very difficult to integrate, which is perhaps why cultural dimensions of sustainability have remained under-researched. That culture is an important and valuable, even essential, component of an evolving and thriving society is not challenged, but the ways in which culture influences policymaking, and the ways in which policy impacts culture are hotly debated. Further complicating the issue, it is unclear how, first, the importance of culture to matters of governance process and policy can be evaluated and, second, how arts and culture can be meaningfully and productively incorporated into those processes.

Current styles of governance that favour bureaucracy and limited methods of assessing the needs and desires of the population are often at odds with the adaptive and creative nature of the arts and the multi-vocal, multi-dimensional nature of cultures. Potentially, a change in the method of assessment and information gathering can influence the style of governance that emerges, and which produces policy. Undertaking arts-based approaches to citizen engagement produces new forms of knowledge that are equitable and participatory, and that have the power to significantly shape styles of governance that emulate the strengths of cultural and arts-based approaches. Embracing new modes of engagement with citizenry may also shift the locus of governance away from the bureaucratic centre outwards to communities where changes are made on the ground. This article will examine what it is about arts and culture that cause them to remain elusive yet essential dimensions of human experience. Then, the importance of culture and the arts to a sustainable future will be described, and potential impacts on governance of integrating cultural approaches will be explored.

Two examples of arts-based eco-minded community projects that present engagement through the arts as both a critical practice and a meaningful form of inquiry help demonstrate the power of arts and culture to build social capital and shift the locus of governance. In the first example, a theatre group that travels by bicycle and performs a play about sustainable choices embodies sustainability both on stage and off. Group members battle with understanding, contributing to, and accepting collective action and decision-making, while becoming individually empowered to take on new and bigger projects for a sustainable future. The interplay between their experiences acting on stage and everyday activities off stage reveals the moments on stage to be learning opportunities not only for the audience but for the actors as well. In the second example, participants of a community recycling programme undertake a photographic method of data creation with the aim of improving the recycling programme. Their project uses the arts as a rich form of inquiry that

produces multi-media results that can also be used subsequently as promotional and lobbying materials. This article will demonstrate the power of arts and culture to build social capital and to contribute to a style of governance that is inclusive, participatory, equitable, and sustainable.

Culture in sustainability and governance

In the introduction to a short but powerful treatise on the role of culture in public planning, Jon Hawkes (2001) laments "the concept of culture is an invaluable tool that has been largely ignored in these attempts to reconfigure the ways that governments plan the future and evaluate the past" (p. 1). The omission of culture in planning discussions may be due in part to the lack of a stable and comprehensive definition of *culture*. Colloquially, culture is sometimes defined as the traditional rituals practiced by ethnically defined groups, or sometimes as the trivial indulgences produced liberally by the entertainment sector. These definitions are neither comprehensive nor productive. In the academic literature, definitions range in level of specificity and in the value that is placed on artistic endeavour to the definition. For example, where sociologist Giddens (1982) equates culture with the fine 'high' arts of painting, literature, and music, a more anthropological interpretation defines culture as a set of values and beliefs that inform practices in societies or organizations (Darlow 1996; Throsby 1995).

Cultural capital was first coined by Bourdieu (1986) to mean assets that provide an individual with social leverage. The phrase is sometimes used almost interchangeably for *culture*. Cultural capital can take the form of educational achievement or skills acquired over time; it can be objectified in the form of art works, texts, buildings, and other exchangeable assets that hold wealth in the economic sense or the social sense; and cultural capital can be institutionalized in the form of academic qualifications or certifications, meaning it is recognized in an official form by members of society (Bourdieu 1986). Thus, Bourdieu's *cultural capital* can be thought of as the operational potential of *culture*, and *culture* in the definitions above as the embodied *or* objectified state of *cultural capital*. Similarly, Conquergood (2006) argues that culture is made in the moments of relation between people and so should be treated as a verb rather than as a static noun because of its active quality. Bourdieu's *social capital* is the realm of interactions between people or social institutions where cultural capital is exchanged or leveraged. Without a social world of interactions in which to exist, cultural capital has no meaning and is in fact *not* capital, or culture. It follows then that the social context of culture is constitutive of cultural capital and in practice cannot realistically, or usefully, be separated from culture.

For the purposes of this article, culture is seen as the result of an accumulation of myriad exchanges of beliefs, values, and norms within a localized social realm, which culminates in art works, institutions, innovations, and even leverage-able skills. The embodied and objectified forms of culture are distinct products of the unique collectives present in a specific social realm. Both the processes and products of creativity are valued as cultural items in and of themselves, and the economic and social values of cultural items are entwined. By this measure, the entertainment sector is a product of cultural processes and in turn produces cultural products, a fact that some critical cultural theorists may deride. Yet the values, beliefs, and norms of society are explored in media produced by the entertainment sector, and media (television programming, music, videos, etc.) carries weight in today's information and technology-driven world. The broad reach of

communication technologies allows for a wide distribution of media and provides multiple forums for participation by experts and lay people alike. Participation (i.e., interactions where cultural capital is exchanged) builds social capital and can engender a sense of community with others. In turn, social capital strengthens "civic participation and localized empowerment via social interaction and sense of community" (Dempsey, Bramley, Power & Brown 2009, p. 1). These are essential elements of sustainable communities where culture plays a vital and influential role.

Strategies for sustainability that integrate cultural considerations and needs can be defined by five principles: the advancement of both material and non-material well-being; intergenerational equity, including sustained cultural capital; equity among the current generation; recognition of the interdependence of all systems (Throsby 1995); and enhanced citizen participation (Darlow 1996). Explicitly including culture as the fourth pillar of sustainability promotes an ethical and moral approach that elevates cultural acts from being perceived as trivial entertainment or archaic rituals, to dynamic and critical expressions of society's values, fears, and hopes. Culture in western societies is the result of integrating multiple voices across classes and ethnicities, covering a broad range of concerns. Similarly, the integration of economics, ecology, culture, and society is fundamental to the systems approach that is implicit in sustainability studies (Berkes 1999; Berkes & Folke 1992; Hawkes 2001; Throsby 1995). In particular, sustainability studies that call for interdisciplinary research, integrative policy, citizen participation, and analysis of the socio-cultural dimensions of sustainable futures value multiple stakeholder voices and inputs (Robinson 2004). Cultural ecology scholar Berkes (1999) argues that the transition from chaos to sustainability depends on the existence of diversity; human cultural diversity and biodiversity are both essential for long-term survival of human life on earth (Gadgill 1987).

Integrating diverse cultural perspectives into governance and policy is thus essential for good governance for a sustainable future. This requires that the processes of data collection and measurement used to inform governments and to assess the cultural impacts of policy be inclusive, equitable, and receptive (Healey 2004; Markusen & Gadwa 2010; Rathgeb Smith 2010; Sandercock 1998). This is a daunting task for governments that are deeply immersed in governance cultures of restraint and top-down control (Healey 2004). Culture is difficult to assess and measure because it is constantly evolving. Concurrently, the norms and goals of cultural planning and policy are rarely explicitly stated (Darlow 1996; Markusen & Gadwa 2010). This points two ways: that a functional means of accurately measuring and assessing cultural impacts has yet to be defined (and culture is inherently at odds with accuracy in the sense that it eludes capture), and that a style of governance should be developed that better embraces arts and culture as critical and influential components of our evolving society.

For all the slipperiness of culture, art remains "the paramount symbolic language through which shifting meanings are presented" (Hawkes 2001, p. 23). Engagement with the arts builds creativity, lateral thinking, risk-taking, cooperative willingness, and innovation (Hawkes 2001). Taking a cue from the arts when thinking about governance, Healey (2004) questions what influence creativity can have on governance models and practices. She argues that three manifestations of creativity can act as objectives for a new style of governance, including: being adaptive and flexible, enriching human experience, and creating new objects like market niches, governance practices, or infrastructure. While a new governance model could potentially be

adaptable and flexible under changing conditions, having the strategic capacity to perceive innovation and foresee its potential application is equally if not more important. Increased citizen participation multiplies the diversity of inputs to decision-makers, improving the rate of innovation while also building social capital through strengthened civic participation and empowered citizenry (Dempsey et al. 2009; Robinson & Tansey 2006; Salter, Robinson & Wiek 2010). This results in enhanced social cohesion and inclusion, helping communities work toward greater equity among present and future generations (Lister 2000).

But Sandercock (2000) claims that increased participation in a system of communication that is foreign to many citizens will rarely result in consensus and, even in cases where consensus is achieved, it is even more rarely transformative. This may be due to barriers in language, cultural tradition, or simple ignorance of the processes of governance and participation. Sandercock (2000) suggests that city planners and other officials train to become versed in "a range of ways of knowing and communicating: from storytelling to listening to interpreting visual and body language" (pp. 25-26). Similarly, cultural planners should receive interdisciplinary training to reflect the evolving goals of urban development (Bianchini & Parkinson 1994). City and cultural planners should be sensitive to the tensions that exist between the goals of achieving sustainability and embracing a governance style influenced by culture and the arts. For example, cultural planners often want to centralize arts and culture in an arts district as a nexus of creativity. Sustainable planning directives prefer to distribute cultural assets around the city, decentralizing in part to take better advantage of cultural diversity in neighbourhoods and to reduce carbon measures like travel time to venues (Darlow 1996).

Transitioning to governance models that promote citizen engagement, an equitable distribution of goods and services, and equitable participation, and which are adaptive to changing circumstances is not simple. It will take "slow, hard, conflict-ridden, time-consuming and time-taking micro-level work" (Healey 2002, p.176) to build the social capital required of those who govern and those who are governed. The line between the two camps will blur as the locus of governance shifts, reflecting a more fluid system of regulation and information flow. Culture and the arts are fundamental to citizen experience and should influence the nature of governance and decision-making.

Arts inquiry and practice informs new styles of governance

Bourriaud (2002) describes art as "an interface between human society and the invisible forces governing its movements" (p. 27). Bourdieu & Nice (1984) encourage interpreting everyday culture with an anthropological lens so that the meaning and implication of cultural practices are exposed and examined. At the level of daily life, the abstract structures and systems crafting the social sphere of action break down into "particular people, practices and performances" (Conquergood 2006). To this end, the local and everyday scale of governance and policy impacts can be meaningfully investigated by thinking of society's arts and culture as performative actions that reveal our norms, beliefs, and values. Human actions are dialogical processes of subjectification, that incorporate human physicality, sociality, and material encounters with objects and spaces simultaneously in the moment of making meaning. Thrift & Dewsbury (2000) argue that the fluidity of meaning in human action "leads us inevitably to the performing arts, for it is amongst their

practices that we find fluid spaces worked up, worked on, and worked out" (p. 419). Dieleman (2008), too, argues that engaging people through the arts empowers them to be reflexive and emotional in a way that traditional forms of engagement cannot access. He believes that "we should look at sustainability as a 'more than rational' change process" (p. 117), requiring "the language of forms and metaphors, images, music, theatre, and the like" (p. 136).

People cope with daily life by acting creatively, constantly generating relational and dialogic approaches that respond to unique situations uniquely. Human actions have moral, ethical, and practical dimensions. Our actions depend on having fluency with multiple modes of communication (language, bodily practices, facial expressions, economics, and others) (Crouch 2003). The performances of daily life are deeply embodied, soliciting our bodily histories and experiences to help guide our actions in present space and time, while creating and responding to human affect and emotion. The fluid and integrated nature of everyday life should be investigated using a method that is synchronous with the experience, that is, the strategy of investigation should be explorative, fluid, participatory, and creative. Applying such a strategy with communities undertaking sustainable behaviours promises a rich dataset for understanding the complexities of sustainable futures, and what is required to facilitate the transition to a sustainable future. Further, the variety of forms of data produced by arts-based methods, with novel appeal and varied forms of communication, can reach new audiences that traditional environmental and social awareness strategies have not reached (Darlow 1996).

Lessons from arts engagement with sustainable communities

Two modes of engaging communities on sustainability issues exist: practice and inquiry. The first empirical case presented here is an example of a group using theatre as a mode of practicing sustainable behaviours and modelling them for audiences. Research findings reveal that the process of acting is also a form of inquiry that enables both actors and audience to learn about the processes of sustainability during their time together. The second empirical case is an example of arts engagement used as a mode of inquiry to identify the strengths and weaknesses of an eco-equity community recycling project.[1]

Theatre for sustainability – The Otesha Project

The Otesha Project sends groups of 10 to 15 volunteers between the ages of 18 and 30 on two-month cycle tours in regions of Canada. Through a theatrical play and interactive games, the groups teach audiences about environmental awareness and sustainable behaviours ("The Otesha Project," n.d.). For this study, tour members of the Sunshine Coast Otesha Tour 2008 were filmed as they performed the play in two different locations, and semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted by phone with six of the 11 tour members and one tour organizer in Ottawa one month after the tour ended.

The founders of The Otesha Project intended for the tour experience to be transformative for tour members, teaching them about alternative transportation, collective action, sustainable food

[1] In-depth articles describing findings of the Otesha and UBU-Cart interactions are currently being prepared for publication.

systems, and community dynamics (The Otesha Project 2008). Tour members interviewed all reported feeling empowered by their experiences on stage during the tour. One tour member described her fear of calling herself an environmentalist before the tour because the act of claiming that identity left her vulnerable to attack. After playing a variety of roles on stage, she felt more comfortable claiming an identity for herself, secure in the knowledge that she could adopt a new identity in the future. Another tour member reported that he learned from a more seasoned performer in the group to make eye contact with audience members as a stage technique to engage the audience. He now recognizes the power of eye contact in everyday interactions. Three of the six tour members describe being more willing to engage in other collective activities and new projects after their experiences with Otesha since they realized they were more knowledgeable than they thought and more confident to try something new. Their confidence grew from experimenting on stage with various roles and lines.

When asked about creativity and the role of improvisation in the play, the reaction was mixed. Some tour members felt that improvisation occurred regularly on stage and kept the performances alive, yet other tour members described improvising as "dangerous" since it risked leaving fellow actors unprepared and potentially alienating audiences. During group discussions, they collectively decided to limit on-stage improvisation to minimize that risk, but some interviewees still reported more improvisation happening than they were comfortable with. It is possible that their discomfort points to a deeper issue about the locus of control of their message, including who has the right and the power to decide what goes out to the audience. Discomfort with strict power hierarchies resonates in the creative governance literature where Healey (2004) explains the need to balance the enabling and constraining dimensions of governance. Good governance for a sustainable future must find a dynamic balance between innovation and stability, much like Otesha tour members collectively needed to find a balance between improvisation and consistent messaging. Those tour members resisting improvisation on stage were afraid that audiences would receive the 'wrong' message about sustainable options. But the sustainable future remains to be defined, especially in the face of the fundamental uncertainty of predictive climate science (Robinson 2003). Inclusive governance that shifts the locus of control from few to many must acknowledge the potential of emergent solutions that can bloom from innovation, creativity, and improvisation, and the risks of mixed messages and conflicting responsibilities.

Tour members also experienced the tensions inherent in social change and that are clearly present in the sustainability transition. One tour member purchased bananas with group funds, which caused uproar when other members described the catastrophe of crop monocultures and high food miles embodied in the banana. This episode sparked weeks of conversation and conflict as they tried to come to some resolution where all tour members could fuel adequately for the long hours of cycling without expanding the eco-footprint of the group. Two interviewees described feeling hypocritical on stage after the banana conflict as they had to act out making sustainable food choices for audiences while making some unsustainable food choices off stage because they felt bananas were necessary to sustain their energy on long rides. Tour members also experienced intergenerational tension by being a part of the play. Playing the role of parent on stage allowed one tour member to better understand the hurt her parents were feeling when she rejected their consumerist lifestyle. They worked hard to provide all possible comforts for her, and now she could

see how her choice to use only alternative transportation, follow a vegan diet, and live simply appeared to reject their efforts.

In the Otesha example of art as the practice of sustainability, tour members gained social cohesion, self-empowerment, and the opportunity to creatively experiment with identity. They collectively explored the advantages and risks of improvisation, encountering at a micro-scale many of the conflicts that serve as barriers to collective decision-making for sustainability at larger scales. It can be seen from the interviews that the performative act on stage opened up the potential for tour members to learn about themselves, their choices, and their social groups. Otesha tour members employed a practice mode of engaging audiences on sustainable choices through an artistic play, and experienced an inquiry mode of arts engagement as they explored their own lives through the lens of the play. Tour members are both educators and pupils of how to build cultural capital in a sustainability context. Their efforts and (personal and collective) growth are models for cultural data generation and communication that a new style of governance could embrace. In the next example, participants in a community recycling programme were asked to participate in an arts-based method of data collection, an explicit use of the arts as a mode of inquiry, in the hope of identifying successes and barriers to success of the programme.

Photography as inquiry – UBU-Cart programme

The United We Can bottle depot (UWC) opened in 1995, purely by the efforts of community organizer Ken Lyotier. UWC operates as a self-sustaining urban enterprise, providing recycling services to individuals and businesses in the downtown eastside (the DTES) area of Vancouver, British Columbia. The DTES is a notorious urban region, known as the 'poorest postal code in Canada' where the drug trade is rampant and prostitution supports many residents. In this environment, the bottle depot helps create community-driven collective action for environmental stewardship, job creation, community inclusivity, and advocacy for marginalised people in the area ("United We Can," n.d.).

UWC operates numerous eco-equity programmes that employ local residents. One of these is the Urban Binning Units (UBU) cart project that sends UWC employees – self-named 'binners' since they sort through bins of refuse for valuable recyclables – to local businesses and condo associations to collect recyclables to return for a deposit. The programme earns income for the binners, a charitable donation for the bottle depot, and a small income for the business. In conversation with UWC representatives and some of the UBU binners, it was apparent that some issues remain unresolved in the programme which are barriers to its expansion. In particular, a lack of social connection between the UBU binners and employees at the pick-up businesses and condo associations was noted as a significant barrier to improving the working conditions for the binners and to the overall functioning of the programme. The arts method of engagement called photovoice was chosen as a method of identifying such barriers, and hopefully strengthening relationships between binners and business and association employees.

In a photovoice project, participants are given cameras and encouraged to take photographs of their experience in order to share the images with other participants to promote critical discourse on issues affecting the group (Wang 2003; Wang & Burris 1997). Empowering participants to capture the experience from their own perspective provides a forum for people who are often silenced or

marginalized in some way, be it through socio-economic hierarchies of power, disability, or language barriers (Harper 2009; Wang, Cash & Powers 2000). In this study, three UBU binners and three employees at one of the pick-up businesses were able to contribute creatively through their photography. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with each photographer based around the images they created during the project.

Photovoice allowed participants to document aspects of the recycling programme that were going well, and that could be improved. The binners took photographs of pick-ups that are kept very clean and organized, and of pick-ups where the bins are filthy and inches deep in broken glass. Two binners took 'before' and 'after' photographs of a garbage room in a condo tower where they spend considerable time cleaning up messes left by other people. The photographic project allowed them to document an action they are proud of that is beyond the dictates of their job as UBU-Cart binners. One binner took images of his living space to show the programme coordinators why he cannot take a UBU-Cart home as there is not enough space for it in his small rented room. This identified an issue that must be resolved with the bottle depot of what can be done with the carts if binners miss the depot's open hours, particularly with a full cart of recyclables that would be stolen if left outside overnight.

Two of the three binners in the photovoice project reported enjoying the opportunity to engage members of the public in the photography when they had to ask someone to take their picture, which sparked conversation about the recycling programme. Binners say they regularly feel spurned by members of the mainstream public, and even some participants in the UBU cart programme, for appearing dirty and underprivileged. The cameras along with a handout on the project and its association with the university were a form of legitimizing currency that helped build trust with others. See Figure 1 for two images taken by a binner, the first showing how he imagines people see him – as threatening – and the second image of him using his 'threatening' tools to access bags of waste in large dumpsters.

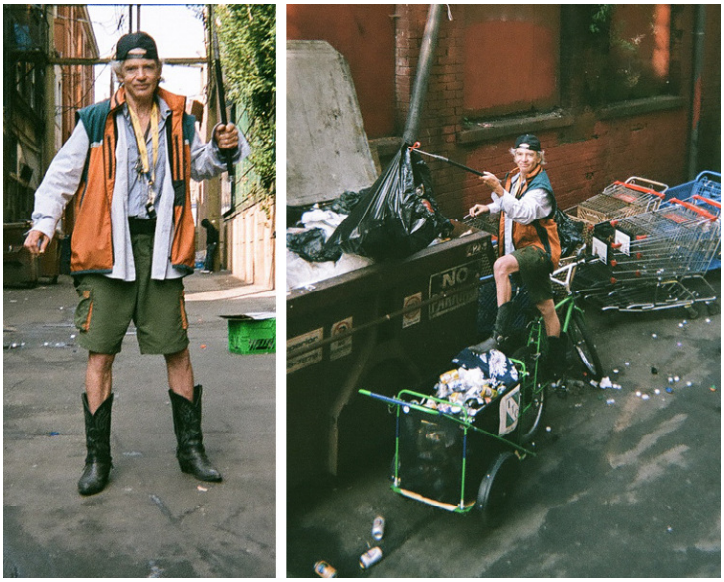

Figure 1. Photovoice participating binner showing how he believes people find him threatening, then demonstrating how he uses the threatening tool for use in dumpsters

The employees at the pick-up business also described social gains they felt stemmed from the photographic project. One employee says she learned far more about the recycling programme and about the binner who regularly works her route through participation in the photographic project. She brought her recyclables from home to be collected by the binner for over a year before the photographic project, but had not made a connection with him. Another employee said that taking the photographs made her think more deeply about the lifecycle of recyclables and the social network they have created through the UBU-Cart programme and the bottle depot. See Figure 2 for some images from her "day in the life of" series depicting her recyclables moving from her home to her workplace along public transit to eventually be picked up by a UBU-Cart binner.

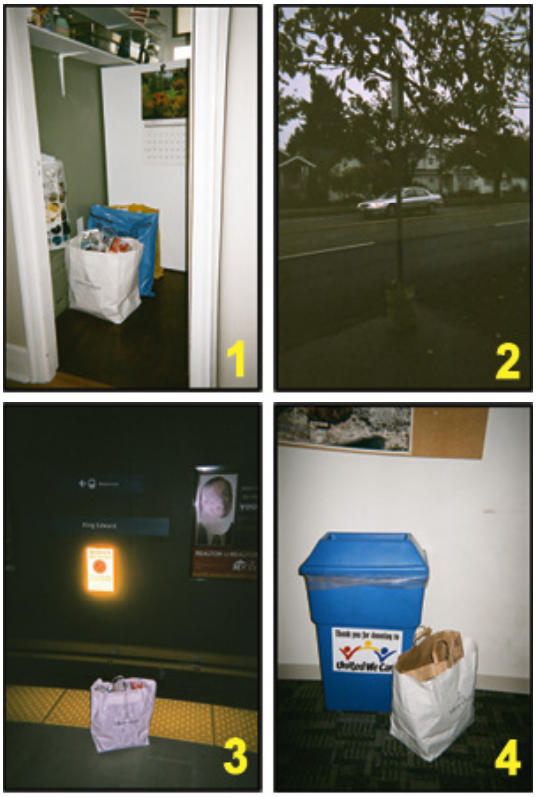

Figure 2. Photovoice participating employee's images of bringing her recyclables from home, through public transit, to the workplace for the UBU-Cart programme.

An intended outcome of the photovoice project is to use some of the images in promotional material that can be distributed to new businesses and condo associations to expand the programme. Further, with the images in hand the founder of the bottle depot hopes to lobby city council, demonstrating the social good of the grassroots enterprise to garner support for a second depot in an adjacent region. He believes the images pack an emotional punch that will help convince council members that the depot's alternative governance and finance models satisfy a green niche market that municipal contracts have been unable to identify (Seyfang & Smith 2007). An unanticipated but very positive outcome that emerged from interviews with participants was that some of them now feel empowered to identify as creative individuals. As one employee stated, "I felt like I was doing performance art" while shooting photographs in a public area. This outcome clearly indicates

increased cultural capital for photovoice participants, and satisfies Hawkes' (2001) call to improve the artistic capacity of regular citizens so that they may participate more readily and meaningfully in arts-based engagement for policymaking and governance. In the previous case study, Otesha tour members and audiences also gained an increase in cultural capital through their theatrical experiences.

In the UBU-Cart project example of using an arts-based method as inquiry into the complexities of sustainable behaviours, participants recognized the value of building social connectedness through shared experience. Participation in the project increased their social capacity and improved the longevity of the recycling programme in the process. The sustainability of the programme was assessed: facilitative infrastructures specific to the programme were both identified and imagined, barriers to the programme's evolution were identified, and possible uses of the material products of the photovoice project were envisioned that have the potential to support an evolving, sustained community-driven recycling project.

Final thoughts

A sustainable future will be achieved only through significant transformative change in our individual behaviours and in collective actions forged by our modes of governance. Artists can be transformative agents who create, renew, and rethink the world around them. The transformative potential of art and artists can be productively harnessed in the quest for sustainability by the application of arts-based methods and the integration of culture to governance styles for sustainability (Dieleman 2008). A participatory relational approach to governance offers an explorative, multi-vocal, and ripe ground for innovation; this is in distinct opposition to path-dependent top-down approaches in which "entrenched cognitive, social, economic, institutional processes lock us into trajectories and lock out sustainable alternatives" (Seyfang & Smith 2007, p. 588). As vehicles for learning the desires and perceptions of citizens, artistic methods of data generation and collection provide the voices of diverse social actors in sometimes unusual modes and forms. Embracing a variety of data forms is a move towards inclusive research practices. Increased inclusivity establishes a more equitable platform for discussion where dialogue can occur across many modes of communication, be they visual, musical, embodied, etc.

The implications of employing arts methods for inclusive and equitable citizen participation on governance models are far reaching: the input (open, fluid, diverse, affective) can better support and influence the output (policy, norms, strategies that respond to citizen input). Not only can policies and strategies better represent citizen desires, but governments employing this style of governance build social capital that bridges diverse groups. According to Putnam (2000, 2002), social bridging and increased social capital are more likely to mobilize citizens, create safer neighbourhoods, increase economic development, and empower community action. Arts-based methods like photovoice (which is only one of many options) help to make visible the particular people, practices, and performances that are shaped by the local style of governance. Results provide insight into the lives and practices, beliefs and values of community members, which can then be brought forward into consultation and negotiating processes, enabling participation from citizens who may not otherwise participate of their own accord in governance forums.

At the same time, incorporating cultural dimensions and broadening the scope of available data forms may also introduce new difficulties for which governing groups should be prepared, including the lack of a united or deciding voice and increased risk of public disagreements. Arts-based data generation may appear to be merely window-dressing and will be criticized by some as a distraction from important issues. These concerns are valid and must be addressed throughout the transition process to a new style of governance for successful inclusion of cultural dimensions to occur, and to positively impact governance processes and outcomes.

It will not be an easy transition to a style of governance that emulates the strengths of an arts-based approach to engagement, and it will take time, but the result could potentially move towards a sustainable model of governance that shares the values and beliefs of its governed people, that values innovation and creativity, and that promotes equity and citizen participation in all forms.

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