

Community Attitudes to Waterfront Change in Canadian Port Cities

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Discussion Paper 41

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1997

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This Discussion Paper is an outcome of a research project designed to investigate the role of community groups in the redevelopment of urban waterfront zones in port cities in Canada. The research was facilitated by financial support from the Canadian Government (via the Faculty Research Awards scheme administered by the Canadian High Commission in London) and from the Nuffield Foundation.

The project was explicitly designed to build on earlier work in this field. I developed a strong interest in Canadian port cities, and in Canadian Studies more generally, from the early 1980s. A basis for research activity, as well as for some undergraduate teaching, was established by means of a teaching-orientated Faculty Enrichment Award in 1984 and several conference visits (notably to Quebec) in the later 1980s.

In 1990, with the help of a Faculty Research Award from the Canadian Government, a project entitled '*Canadian dimensions of waterfront revitalization: a comparative analysis*' was successfully completed and led to numerous publications (Hoyle, 1992, 1994, 1995a and b) and, *inter alia*, to the award of the Portus Prize for 1992 by Ports Canada. The 1990 project, which was itself an outcome of earlier work on port-city change and waterfront redevelopment in a global context (Hoyle, Pinder and Husain, 1988), was designed to analyse the comparative roles of three groups of 'actors' in the processes involved: port authorities, urban planners, and real-estate developers. Largely for logistical reasons, community groups were not at that time considered.

There is thus a measure of continuity in research terms between past activities and current research. This research context is also linked to (a) teaching programmes in Geography at the University of Southampton; (b) involvement in Canadian Studies in the UK through the British Association for Canadian Studies (BACS), the London Conference for Canadian Studies (LCCS), the Foundation for Canadian Studies (FCS) and in other ways; and (c) links with Canadian universities for research and teaching purposes. There is also a contextual link with the Association Internationale Villes et Ports which held its 4th International Conference in Montreal in 1993.

I am indebted not only to the Canadian Government and the Nuffield Foundation for their financial support but also to 28 representatives of community groups in Canada who participated in the interview programme and who, by agreement, remain anonymous. In Canada, Ian Langlands, Brian Osborne, Janet Sullivan and Ian Smith were among those who helped me to identify appropriate groups and interviewees; Ruth Goldbloom and Juliet Rowson-Evans provided additional information. At Southampton, Kate Martinson transferred the audiotapes from 25 interviews onto disks.

Discussion Papers are regarded as preliminary, working papers, intended for modification in the light of comments received. Further analysis will lead to the preparation of papers focussed upon comparative approaches and on ways in which Canadian experience can inform the wider community. Published results should be useful in the context of Canadian Studies programmes in the UK and in Canada, and perhaps elsewhere, and the work should contribute to the wider fields of transport geography and urban planning.

Southampton, July 1997

Summary

This paper is a preliminary, working report on research designed to apply an established method of enquiry in an innovative way to a range of community groups in a series of contrasted Canadian port cities. Community groups are a critical element in Canadian society in general, and in the process of urban waterfront change. Building on earlier work on other 'actors' such as port authorities, urban planners and real-estate developers, this report explores the attitudes and influence of such groups, based on structured tape-recorded interviews. Fieldwork centred on five selected, contrasted port cities in Canada. Preliminary conclusions are identified. Further analysis of the material is expected to lead to publications in refereed journals.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Throughout the modern world, inner cities are a focus of change, controversy and research activity. Port cities, where change is derived from urban processes and from maritime technology, constitute a major sub-group where the revitalization of central waterfront zones is of widespread interest and concern to authorities, communities and developers. Canada led the way in research on waterfront redevelopment from the later 1960s (Forward, 1969; Merrens, 1980); and the phenomenon has become increasingly widespread in geographical terms and has attracted the attention of numerous academic disciplines, including politics and planning (Bruttmess, 1993; Fainstain, 1994; Georgison and Day, 1995; Gordon, 1996 and 1997) as well as architecture, ecology and engineering (Hudson, 1996; Malone, 1996; White *et al.*, 1993). Canada retains a central place in relevant research and literature as a source of experience, ideas and policies, although there is a pronounced focus on the complex case of Toronto (Greenberg, 1996; Goldrick and Merrens, 1996; Merrens, 1992; Royal Commission, 1992).

1.1 Context

This paper and the project on which it is based are set within the broad field of modern human geography which focusses on spatial approaches to problems, upon concern for places and societies, and upon development over time. Fundamental to these geographical perspectives is the notion of scale - from local to global - and a concern for the environment in the broadest sense. This project, developed in part with an eye to Canadian preoccupations as well as to global trends, arises essentially from the interface between transport and the environment, and more specifically from two areas of special concern: urban renewal, and port development. These areas come together within the framework provided by the Canadian port city system and focus particularly upon the topic of urban waterfront redevelopment, identified as an element within the broader context of urban planning as well as, to some extent, within the sphere of coastal zone management.

1.2 Research objectives and aims

The essential objective of the research, as of an earlier project with which it is linked, is to investigate the opinions and attitudes of those organizations, groups and individuals who are directly or indirectly involved in the decision making processes that precipitate urban waterfront change. In 1990 a project sampled the views of port authorities, urban planners, real estate developers, and government officials, and this led to a series of publications (Hoyle, 1992, 1994, 1995a and b). It was apparent at that time, and subsequently, that an important element missing from the investigation was the input of community groups.

The present research has therefore been designed, in a sense, to complete the circle by looking specifically at a major component of the decision-making process in port-city change which was not addressed in earlier work. In the 1980s attention had been drawn to the role of communities as an influence on change in port cities (Pinder, 1981; Hilling, 1988). In the 1990s the study of communities within cities has been extensively developed (Davies and Herbert, 1993) and, specifically, it has become increasingly clear that community groups provide a significant influence on the processes of change in waterfront zones (Ashton *et al.*, 1995; Breen and Rigby, 1993 and 1996; Keating, 1991; Hasson and Ley, 1994a and b). Such groups constitute a source of ideas; they influence the pace and pattern of change and development; they encourage, modify, restrain and warn; and as they themselves evolve and grow they become part of the effect as well as the cause. In Canada such groups are numerous and varied, and consequently represent a wide range of opinions. The behavioural factor of community attitude forms an important component in the overall process and analysis of cityport change.

The specific aims of this project are three. First, to sample the range of community group opinion in a variety of types of cityport in Canada, and the character and activities of such groups. Second, to assess the degree to which community views influence the processes and pattern of change, with special reference to tolerance limits. Third, to discover whether there exists a common pattern of reactive and proactive criticism across a range of cityport types and community groups in Canada, or whether opinions and activities are essentially place-specific (Tunbridge, 1988).

It is intended that the research will make a further contribution to the growing literature on port-city regeneration in theoretical and methodological terms. The approach is essentially comparative and structured, although based on empirical evidence from selected locations. The aim is not to produce case studies but to elucidate comparisons and contrasts, to inform policy, and ultimately to emphasise and enhance Canada's position in this research field.

1.3 Research strategy

Implementation of this research project depended initially upon a preliminary data collection exercise and later upon a series of field visits to selected Canadian cityports chosen to

represent the larger, medium-sized and smaller communities of their kind across the country. Five selected locations were used in the investigation. In alphabetical order these are: Halifax (NS), Kingston (Ont), St John's (NF), Vancouver (BC) and Victoria (BC) (Fig. 1).

These port cities are all engaged in waterborne trade in one form or another: Vancouver is overwhelmingly Canada's leading ocean port; Halifax ranked seventh among Canadian ports in 1994; St John's and Victoria are minor ports of provincial and local significance; and Kingston, Canada's first federal capital city and formerly a thriving inland port, now handles only relatively small quantities of water-borne trade (Osborne and Swainston, 1988; Statistics Canada, 1994). Similarly, all have experienced, but in different ways, some of the processes of urban regeneration including waterfront redevelopment derived at least in part from urban economic restructuring and changing port functions.

Perceptions of change, and the role of citizen participation in the formulation of urban waterfront plans and policies, have been the focus of a number of recent studies (Cau, 1996; Hudspeth, 1986; Krause, 1995), while the more general role of community attitudes to port-city change (Pinder, 1981) and the emergence of postmodernism on the urban waterfront (Norcliffe *et al.*, 1996) have also been reviewed. Regulatory frameworks provide a legal context within which perceptions develop and attitudes are formulated (British Columbia, 1995; Hull and Secter, 1996). During field visits to the selected locations interviews were held with representatives of community groups in order to elicit their opinions on the problems and processes involved in waterfront change and the extent of any influence exerted by such groups. Visits had been made to all the selected locations on previous occasions, and preliminary investigations led to the development of contacts with appropriate groups and their representatives. Enquiries directed through established official or academic contacts quickly revealed a substantial number and variety of community organizations of different types.

In St John's (NF), for example, the Port Corporation proposed contact with several community groups including the *Downtown Development Commission* and the *Grand Concourse Authority*. The St John's City Planning Department also suggested the *Johnson Family Foundation* and drew attention to the St John's office of the *Atlantic Coast Action Program* (ACAP). In Halifax (NS) contact was established, through the *Waterfront Development Corporation Ltd*, with the *Community Planning Association* and with the *Downtown Halifax Business Commission*. In Kingston (Ont), the Director of Planning and Urban Renewal provided the names of three influential community groups that have played a part in waterfront change: the *Sydenham Ward Tenants and Ratepayers Association*, the *Little Cataraqui Creek Environment Association*, and *Vision Kingston*.

Contacts in the City of Vancouver Planning Department provided a long list of neighbourhood-based organizations in that city and some advice on how to select appropriate groups and contacts for my purposes. These include the *Downtown Vancouver Association*, the *Redevelopment Impacts Committee*, and the *Carnegie Centre Association*. Other ideas

were derived from recent literature (Droettboom, 1990; Ley *et al.* 1992). For Victoria (BC), the City Manager and the Director of Planning jointly provided a helpful list of fifteen community associations, some of which are specifically concerned with waterfront issues. Useful information was also derived from official community and transport plans (Victoria, 1995 and 1996).

On the basis of these contacts and more detailed investigations by correspondence, interview schedules for the fieldwork period were gradually and carefully prepared in advance, and advice was sought from appropriate quarters about the most representative interviewees whose cooperation might be invited. This proved to be a difficult stage of the investigation. A substantial number of letters (usually faxed) to community groups, explaining the nature of the research and inviting participation, were sent to each of the five selected port cities. Many remained unanswered, sometimes (it was assumed) because the community group concerned had no particular interest in urban waterfront change and had thus been inappropriately identified as a potential participant; sometimes, no doubt, because recipients did not wish to spend time on a project of no immediate benefit to themselves; and, sadly, on one occasion, because a potential interviewee, a very active participant in matters concerning urban waterfront conservation, had recently died. For these reasons it was not possible, except for St John's, the first port of call, to set up a precise interview schedule prior to arrival. For Halifax, Kingston, Vancouver and Victoria, the finalisation of interview schedules involved many long-distance and local telephone calls within Canada, prior to and immediately following arrival in each location.

This process of setting up interview schedules, from initial exploratory contact to a final confirmatory telephone call the day before each meeting, was complex and time-consuming, but eventually yielded (despite last-minute changes) more than the basic target number of interviews in each selected port city. It had been decided at the outset that, in order to obtain a reasonable range of opinion, a minimum of four interviews would be attempted in each location, making 20 in all, and that these would as far as possible reflect a wide range of types of group. In St John's, Vancouver and Victoria this minimum was achieved; in Halifax a total of five interviews were held; and in Kingston, where it proved much easier than elsewhere to locate appropriate interviewees and to obtain their cooperation, no less than eight interviews were achieved. A longer stay in each location might have achieved more, and the limitation of the project to one or two locations rather than five would have produced a different outcome; but, given that an essential purpose of the project was to sample comparative opinion across the country on a structured, selective basis, the balance ultimately achieved seems reasonable. During this process, however, some rethinking of the definition of community groups became necessary and, it is argued, appropriate.

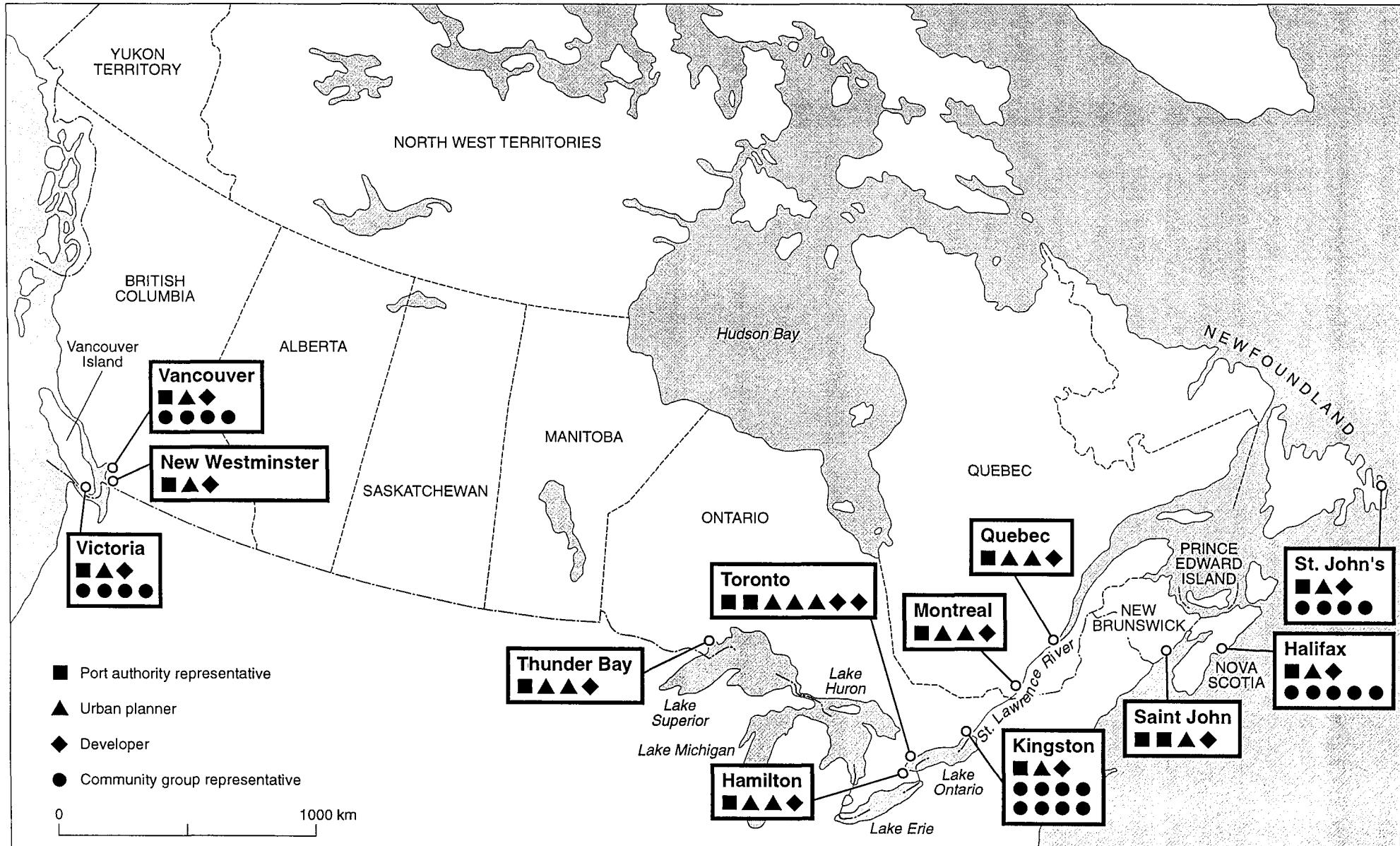


Figure 1: Canada: interview locations

1.4 Interview techniques

The specific interview methods used were based on a highly successful 'proposition-set' technique employed on previous occasions and on a more open-ended range of questions. In broad terms, all 25 interviews were structurally identical so as to facilitate later analysis. The emphasis throughout was on issues and policies rather than on case-study detail. Interviews were tape-recorded, and interviewees were assured of anonymity in published reports or papers. A simple outline (Tables 1, 2) of the general approach and the sequence from community group selection to eventual publication was presented to each interviewee at the start of the interview and briefly explained.

The interviews consisted of two parts. The first part consisted of a series of five open-ended, general questions designed to lead the interviewee gently into the more complex issues to follow. The second part comprised a series of seven proposition sets which raised, progressively, a series of issues to do with community groups in general and with the character and activities of the group represented in particular.

2.0 FIVE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

The five questions (Table 3) began with two about community groups in general - the idea of a community group in today's society, and the importance of community groups in modern Canada. A third question attempted to relate community groups with urban waterfront redevelopment in Canada. The final two questions then focussed upon the local scene, in terms of the types of community group in existence and the aims and achievements of the community group represented by the interviewee.

2.1 The idea of a community group

Responses to the first general question - what do you understand by the *idea* of a community group in today's society? - were very varied. To begin with, a *community* can clearly mean many different things - a community at large, people who live in an area, a group involved in particular areas of activity or with an interest in a range of issues or in a specific problem (Davies and Herbert, 1993). Most respondents quickly identified a community *group* as being composed of like-minded individuals who share a common interest, purpose or cause, promoting or forwarding ideas or aspirations. Some saw the community group as "a shared concern about what's going on in their neighbourhood and who want both to get together to talk about what it means to them as community members, and also to use the group as a vehicle to lobby for change" (Van).¹ Others drew a distinction between individual and group activity, claiming for example that "an association or community group exists to do for the individual what the individual cannot do for himself or herself and therefore there are

Table 1

Research Context: where are we coming from?

1
<p>GEOGRAPHY spatial approaches to problems concern for places and societies development over time</p>
<p>2</p> <p>ENVIRONMENT Canadian concerns Urban change</p> <p>TRANSPORT Local/global problems Port development</p>
<p>3</p> <p>Port cities</p> <p><i>specific focus</i></p> <p>Urban waterfront redevelopment</p> <p><i>(as opposed to broader issues of coastal zone management)</i></p>
<p>4</p> <p>Port authorities Urban planners Developers Government</p> <p>Communities</p>
<p>5</p> <p>Towards the future: where are we going from here?</p> <p><i>Key concept in environmental management:</i></p> <p>Sustainability</p>

Table 2

Research methods: how do we go about this?

1

Community groups

Defined by focus of concern, rather than by specific location

Identification, initial contacts, interview arrangements

2

Selected locations

St John's, NF

Halifax, NS

Kingston, Ont

Vancouver, BC

Victoria BC

3

Interviews

(not less than four in each location)

Part 1: Open-ended questions

Part 2: Propositions

Responses to questions and propositions tape-recorded

4

Documentation

Supplementary data about community groups

5

Follow-up

Later correspondence to clarify any uncertainties

6

Publication

of papers on this subject in appropriate journals, books etc

programmes and ideas and battles that can only be fought as a group and can't successfully be tackled by an individual" (Vic).

Some respondents offered a rather unstructured definition of community groups - "somewhere in there between the market and the state ... just pretty much any group that's not a government organization or a business organization" (Van) - but most emphasised a distinction between groups based on a particular geographical *area* and those based on a specific *issue* or range of problems. "We have very strong communities of interest around particular kinds of concerns - a concern for the waterfront in particular - and we have a geographical community in the sense that this is a city with a strong water-oriented natural resource base, and we come around this in a very geographical sense" (Kgn).

Table 3: Five open-ended questions

1	<i>Community groups in general</i> What do you understand by the <u>idea</u> of a community group in today's society? Can you offer a definition?
2	<i>Community groups in Canada</i> Do community groups play an <u>important</u> part in modern Canadian society? If so, why?
3	<i>The role of community groups in urban waterfront redevelopment in Canada</i> Is urban waterfront change <u>significantly</u> influenced by community groups in Canada as a whole?
4	<i>Community groups here, in this port city</i> Here in this port city, what <u>types</u> of community group exist?
5	<i>This community group: level/range of activities</i> What are the aims and achievements of <u>this</u> community group?

Community groups often comprise quite small groups of people representing a much broader group and working together to achieve certain objectives. Such groups can be very broadly-based or very narrow. An essential characteristic is detachment from, but involvement with, officialdom. Co-operation rather than confrontation is, at least to begin with, the name of the game. A community group is an unofficial gathering of people with a particular perspective or opinion that isn't necessarily represented by their government, either at municipal, provincial or federal levels. Such groups, whether or not closely identified with an area, are basically political pressure groups but range from the virtually apolitical to the highly politicised, depending on the nature of the interest and the membership. All share a member-driven,

bottom-up, community-development focus, (as opposed to a top-down, 'I'm here from the city council to help you' approach).

Although most respondents perceived community groups as proactively seeking to achieve their shared objectives, by working together and wherever possible by participating in decisions, most were quick to distinguish between the community of interest, and the geographical community. These categories are not, of course, mutually exclusive: a group located in a particular geographical area (an urban administrative ward or zone, for example) might well be concerned largely with one specific issue or range of issues; while an issue-based group in a particular city would largely focus upon the relevance of the issue or issues concerned within a recognised geographical framework - an urban administrative area, a waterfront zone, the city as a whole - with larger-scale provincial, national or international resonances. There is thus a flexible spectrum between issue and area, rather than two watertight categories. Groups in either category may be quite large and well-supported, or relatively small but still able to be a voice for the community, trying to achieve or protect its interests. Whether a group is concerned primarily with the protection of a neighbourhood or with the resolution of an issue, the fundamental objective is the enhancement of the quality of life.

For some respondents, the 'issue' groups came to mind more readily than the 'area' groups: such groups "cross all kinds of boundaries in respect of geography and in respect of the nature of the business" (Vic) but share a common bond in terms of an interest, and I think of that first before I think of geography" (Vic). Some interviewees distinguished between single-issue groups and groups with a broader perspective, or between project-specific coalitions that arise to *oppose* something and the rather less common project-specific organizations in *favour* of something, the latter described as much harder to organise.

Another group of respondents saw community groups as being essentially neighbourhood-based. In this category, more specifically, some groups of the 'Citizens for a Better Ward Nine' variety are defined essentially by electoral boundaries. Non-partisan, reform-oriented organisations have sometimes become coalitions to elect local government representatives for a specific neighbourhood programme. In Toronto, for example, there have been some powerful community organizations including waterfront residents' groups which have elected councillors, and have had semi-official status on waterfront planning bodies, so becoming a kind of fifth layer of government.

All such groups originate from a perception of need, from an awareness that their perspective is not being represented or not being given an adequate hearing in a society, of something lacking and, motivated by a desire to improve a situation, they often also share a vision of preferred pathways or desirable outcomes. This is not always easy. "A community group often has to learn right from the start how to function and make decisions and keep notes and lobby and all those things" (Hfx), but may ultimately provide a clear demonstration of consensus and

become more effective than individuals in communicating with politicians and the rest of society. Thus, community groups are seen as "one of the few ways that we have now of getting local issues and concerns onto a government agenda" (Vic).

2.2 The role of community groups in modern Canadian society

Interviewees were asked whether community groups play an *important* part in modern Canadian society and, if so, why? A few respondents were reluctant to express a national view but, almost without exception, respondents took the view that community groups do play an important part in modern Canadian society. It was claimed that Canada has the highest rate of community associations per capita of any country in the world (Kgn); that community groups are an integral part of Canadian society, "more vital now than ever before" (StJ); that there is a growing awareness of problems; that people are becoming more proactive; and that "we're seeing a greater desire to work together" (Vic).

There is a worldwide trend in democratic societies for a greater degree of neighbourhood control over decision-making - "that's really rampant in Vancouver" (Van) - and Canada is in the forefront of this trend (Economic Council of Canada, 1990). "Canada is a very open society, very democratic, individuals have substantial rights, and politicians sense the feelings of well-organised community groups which are effective in creating change much bigger than numbers would suggest" (Hfx). "We are a small enough country that a determined group of people can still make a difference" (Hfx). "We have a very democratic society here that is based on the premise of people living in a community being able to have a say as to how their community should develop ... Oftentimes there are issues that don't immediately come to the forefront unless there is input from the community who are going to be most directly affected ... It can highlight a problem or concern ... (and) it can make for better development ... in a way that enhances the neighbourhood" (Kgn). "The idea of community development permeates many of the kinds of things that we do in Canada ... rather than having government do things for people it's a process of having government help people to do things better for themselves." (Kgn).

A reduction in government spending was often proposed by respondents as an essential explanation for the growth, activities and effectiveness of community groups. "Volunteer groups have risen to address the challenges" (StJ). Such groups are seen in some quarters as "the only way of effectively getting issues onto the national or provincial agenda ... our system is incredibly responsive to that" (Vic). In a related sense, groups are perceived as filling a vacuum created by the shortcomings or inabilities of governments. "Community groups tend to take on projects and sometimes use up energy that may not be available at government levels. They may be able to do things that government is not able to do, for financial or staff reasons. They bring an interest and often an expertise that may not easily be available elsewhere." (StJ). "The effect ... is to make community groups substitutes for political parties" (Kgn).

The relationship between community groups and government agencies clearly involves a multidirectional process of interaction and understanding. Sometimes this appears to work well, and to be generally positive, while at other times there is an air of uncertainty and perhaps mistrust. Occasionally there may be an air of confrontation. "In most cities in Canada the community group plays a role in threatening the political establishment" (Kgn). There is no doubt, however, that the chief impetus involved is from the bottom up. "Canadian society operates ... from the ground up ... there's a lot of input from the average person in the street to put pressure on the powers that be, whether it be just the municipal government or whether it be right up to the federal government ... they bring to light the feelings of the average person at the ground level and they're seeing what effects a certain government policy may have ... and it's their opportunity to let the government know that things are not going the way they would like to see ..." (StJ).

This opportunity to provide input in this way yields "a relationship that folks can understand at a time when they're feeling increasingly alienated from the political structures ... people see their community group as something they own ... You do have trust in it, and people see it as an antidote to the municipal political scene" (Vic). There is inevitably some variation by province and community based on the political realities of the day, but at the local level there is some evidence that cooperation between community groups is increasing: "We're seeing a little bit more co-operation between different groups for the greater good ... (and) the debate has become more logical" (Vic).

In a top-down context, there is a widespread view that if it were not for community groups that have some influence, politicians would simply "tend to do what they think is necessary to get themselves re-elected ... So the role of community groups, then, is to keep their feet to the fire ..." (Vic). Governments in Canada (municipal, provincial, federal) have long recognised the need for development to be community based, and "Governments, at most levels, are required to provide opportunities for public input, and one of the most effective ways of doing that is for community groups to participate. They influence decision-making, and can promote positive change" (Kgn). "We have a pluralistic society with pluralistic governments who, to a degree, have to respond to what they're hearing if they want to get re-elected; and community groups know that" (Van).

Several respondents shared a somewhat sceptical view of the attitudes of politicians and planners towards community groups. On the one hand, "Politicians seem to need to have people to reflect how well they're doing, or how well they're not doing" (Kgn). The attitude of planners towards community group participation was interpreted as being sometimes welcoming and positive, although sometimes tinged with irritation or amused tolerance. "A lot of planners never felt comfortable with the participation process, to the extent that they didn't see citizens and their ideas as a resource that was going to lead to a better plan that would be

easier to sell to Council members because they'd been part of the process; instead it was something they did because it was required (in some cases) by provincial legislation" (Hfx)

Some respondents cited instances to illustrate the power of community groups as a mechanism for the prevention of undesirable developments. "Community groups have been very successful in changing political proposals for waterfront development in Kingston ... A proposal some years ago to build a floating motel was supported by the Mayor and the Parks and Recreation Director ... but our community group opposed it very strongly and we won. We turned that one around" (Kgn). The abandonment of a proposed four-lane expressway along the Halifax waterfront and related high-rise developments in the Toronto mode, together with the conservation of waterfront historic properties, is widely regarded as a triumph for citizen-based common sense. "We had a victory here ... and it was really the citizens groups that made the difference" (Hfx)

Community groups are, however, not always successful or effective in what they try to do. Some respondents took the view that the involvement of community groups may ultimately have little effect on decision-making processes. If ideas are well presented and represented, however, there's "a tendency for those ideas to filter their way into the political mind, usually through the more or less fringe political groups" (Kgn). Yet, quite commonly, "community groups participate all the way down the line, do all the right things and then are effectively outvoted. Whether they've actually influenced the decision a little bit is difficult to judge ... but I don't think that jumping up and down about a working waterfront has made any difference" (Hfx). A particularly dissenting voice claimed that "In the *long* term they play an extremely important part but in the *short* term, not at all ... in many community groups, essentially, one is simply crying out in the wilderness" (Kgn).

2.3 Community groups and urban waterfront redevelopment

A third question asked whether, in Canada as a whole, urban waterfront change is *significantly* influenced by community groups. Most interviewees decided that this question lay outside their experience - "that's a tougher question" (StJ) was a common response - and claimed that "I'm not sure I can answer that for the whole of Canada ... I don't know enough about other waterfronts ... I'm only guessing ... Studies undertaken are often open to submissions from community groups, so they certainly have influence, but whether that's significant I can't really say for Canada as a whole" (StJ).

Although a few respondents attempted a general, Canada-wide answer, most were hesitant about the word 'significant'. Some recognised that community groups are sometimes effective but that their influence inevitably varies: "It does vary as to the significance of the changes they effect ... I know that there have been several cases where neighbourhoods and the city as a whole have mobilised at the grass-roots level to stop and change government initiatives" (Van). Others were uncertain about the extent of any change attributable to community groups: "It is difficult to identify that much of the change has been caused by community

groups as such" (Hfx). "I would say *somewhat* influenced. Not all activity has been successful but there are cases throughout the country that have demonstrated widespread success and other cases where not much change has come about by group activities" (StJ). Others commented that "It has been the changing commercial interests that have changed our waterfront over time" (Kgn); and that "There are processes that allow public input, but I often find that it comes from individuals rather than community groups as such" (Van).

In some of Canada's historic port cities, however, there is clear evidence of general community awareness, involvement and influence with regard to changes on the waterfront. "I rank Halifax with Quebec City and Vancouver as the three cities in Canada where the waterfront is a tremendous asset to the city from a commercial viewpoint and in terms of its attractiveness. Only Halifax and Quebec City have the advantage of great historical significance. Citizens in Halifax who take an interest in community matters are often involved in many associations ... and, in that sense ... have a significant influence" (Hfx).

Most respondents confined their answers to the local scene, thus largely avoiding the point of the question, and some adopted a rather negative tone. "Personally I don't think community groups significantly influence waterfront development much at all, as a general process" (Van). One respondent drew a distinction between short-term and longer-term effects. "In the short term it would appear not at all, in the long term it would appear quite significantly" (Kgn). At a time when huge residential towers were proposed for part of the Kingston waterfront, community groups "galvanised a significant part of the population and got a fair bit of money together and engaged professionals who could help in their argumentation and had a very significant impact on the political process. That took a tremendous amount of time and effort, all volunteered of course ... but generally people don't get too excited about things in a city like this" (Kgn).

Another interviewee drew attention to the intensity of day-to-day interchange between policy- and decision-makers and community groups involved in waterfront change. "The role of the community group is played on a daily basis with the Waterfront Development Corporation and with the City and with a number of other kinds of interlocking community groups ... so that I would say hardly a day goes by that it doesn't occupy a significant amount of time and that is reflected in design, it's reflected in lobbying to retain business on the waterfront, it's reflected in the absolute push to have the waterfront kept as a public access area and it's reflected in our support for such things as residential development along the waterfront, so as to bring the community back to the waterfront" (Hfx).

There have been two or three occasions when community groups have significantly affected waterfront redevelopment plans in Vancouver. As one respondent described, "When a freeway was proposed, the community banded together and said no and in fact changed the initiative, the funding and the government! More recently, when a waterfront casino was proposed, a very similar grass-roots initiative effected change right up to provincial government level and

that was purely through the work of community groups" (Van). Another group representative claimed: "We like to think that we were a fairly instrumental part of defeating that proposal ... yeah, we killed it" (Van).

2.4 Types of community group

Respondents were next asked to indicate the types of community group active in the particular port city concerned. The question was intended to relate to groups with some clear connection with the redevelopment of urban waterfronts, given the context of the project, but was interpreted by some respondents rather more widely. Interviewees in Kingston and especially Vancouver were keen to indicate a very substantial number of community groups - around 20 and 50, respectively - and most offered some kind of typology distinguishing between neighbourhood associations, more broadly-based issue groups, and organizations of a more official kind. Some groups have been active for many years while others come and go as a reflection of current issues and preoccupations. Most of the support for such groups is voluntary, and clearly provides many people with a satisfying framework and outlet for their local and wider interests. "I guess it's very rewarding to live in a community where it doesn't matter what the issue is, there are people who will take an active role and not necessarily an antagonistic view - it's a 'work-towards-a-solution' kind of attitude" (Hfx).

2.4.1 St John's

Respondents in St John's revealed a range of environmental groups with a particular concern for the river systems and for cleaning up the harbour - in "making sure that the waters that flow into the harbour are as ecologically friendly as they can be" (StJ). *Action Environment* is considered an activist group, interested in any environmental problems, including the harbour, and known for taking a rather hard line - 'this is wrong, so fix it'. The *Grand Concourse Authority* is developing walkway and trail systems connecting various green spaces around the city, including the harbourfront area, and regards the development of public access to waterfronts as a major objective. This group is also concerned to promote historical awareness - "making sure that citizens and visitors are aware of the importance of St John's Harbour in the development of this city because it was essentially the reason for our being here" (StJ).

A complementary citizens action group known as *St John's Clean and Beautiful* - described as "a beautification, anti-litter, let's change your mind about how your city should look" (StJ) kind of group - is concerned about the harbour/waterfront area in the context of the city as a whole. A more broadly-based organization is the *St John's Harbour ACAP*, Inc., a component of the Canadian federal government's Atlantic Coastal Action Programme (ACAP) set up in 1993 as part of the national Green Plan (Canada, 1990). ACAP is designed to lead to the development of plans for managing the coastal environment of 13 project areas including St. John's, and in a local context is concerned with the urban waterfront zone within the context of coastal protection, conservation and management as a whole but most particularly with the quality of the harbour waters. Within the urban area a very different community group is the *St John's*

Downtown Business Commission. All these groups have an interest in the development of the urban waterfront, all use community energy and rely on the interest and commitment of individuals, and most get some level of government support.

2.4.2 *Halifax*

With just a touch of exaggeration, a Halifax respondent claimed that "If you reach into a dictionary and pull out almost any word you'll find a community group that's linked with it" (Hfx), and continued: "There's everything from community groups that work in conjunction with the Waterfront Development Corporation, the Downtown Business Commission, the recreational groups, the volunteer power and sail training organizations that work very much in conjunction with auxiliary coastguard bodies, and all these people work and participate in these things on a volunteer basis ... From the very serious volunteer boards of the Economic Development Partnership which is looking to develop major business in the downtown to the volunteer groups that are working with the yacht clubs, we have a huge variety of groups with distinct waterfront-related interests" (Hfx),

A community group of central interest in terms of the urban waterfront and its continuing development in Halifax is the *Waterfront Development Corporation* which is basically a Crown Corporation but has been given a mandate to provide a leadership role for the shared interests of many other volunteer groups in a co-ordinated manner. In a different but complementary way, the Nova Scotia Division of the *Community Planning Association of Canada* (CPAC) has played an important role in guiding interest towards the Halifax waterfront, but the recent creation of a Greater Halifax Metropolitan Area has involved some restructuring of this and other local associations and groups. This restructuring has produced what some perceive as a wider gulf between government and communities, and some reaction from elected officials along the lines of: "Look, you elected us for three or four years, leave us alone, let us run this thing, we don't want to have to waste our time" (Hfx). Citizens' groups may accept this view for a while, but "when there's a good hot issue, suddenly they come out of the woodwork" (Hfx).

2.4.3 *Kingston*

A broad categorization of community groups in Kingston would include social assistance groups, charities, and politically-motivated groups "trying to change the ground rules so as to preserve, conserve or advance something that the group may see as valuable" (Kgn). Within this latter category, there are, as elsewhere, neighbourhood groups and community-wide groups concerned with issues of short- or longer-term relevance and interest. Those concerned with environmental issues include the *Little Cataraqui Environment Association*, concerned with water quality, riparian development and water use along the Little Cataraqui Creek close to central Kingston.

Among neighbourhood groups in Kingston the *Sydenham Ward Tenants and Ratepayers Association*, established in the late 1960s, occupies an important place because the ward's geographical area includes the central waterfront zone. The Association has a long history of close involvement with waterfront development plans, projects and achievements, including major inputs into waterfront master plans. The group puts out a newsletter and "carries a watching brief on the activities of the City Council and then becomes very active when there's a threatened development down there" (Kgn). In a not dissimilar way, the *Portsmouth Villagers' Group* exists to protect the character of the 'village' of Portsmouth, located west of central Kingston and incorporated within the City in 1948. This group was formed at the time of the 1967 Olympic Games centred on Montreal when Portsmouth was used as a yachting base and there was a threat of rapid, substantial and potentially unacceptable waterfront development. Both groups represent areas with "a particular quality of life that makes living in them special, and ... they feel they have something to protect" (Kgn).

Perhaps the best-known issue-based group in the city is *Vision Kingston*, designed "to create a vision for the future of Kingston, and see it carried out" (Kgn). The group originated in response to the 1991 Official Plan for Kingston, and one of its goals is "to encourage the implementation of master plans for the downtown and the waterfront" (Kgn). The group is focussed around encouraging development compatible with neighbourhood character, monitoring change and influencing the planning process, and challenging administrative and political decisions when necessary. One of Vision Kingston's 'community values' highlights respect for the natural environment and aims, "in the on-going evolution of the city, to respect, protect, preserve and improve by every reasonable means the groomed environment (parks, walkways and water vistas), the underground environment (water mains, treatment plants and sewers) and what remains of the natural environment" (Kgn).

2.4.4 Vancouver

"Lots of community groups exist in Vancouver ... probably well over 50 representing different geographical areas, different interests" (Van). "There's just tons: I wouldn't even know where to begin, there are so many different layers of people who consider themselves a community and operate in a certain sphere" (Van). "There's a cavalcade of community groups in Vancouver and they vary both by type and mandate, but they are usually coming together in response to a perceived or real change - in terms of physical form, social make-up, the liveability and feel of the city and also the vision of where the city should be going ... There are dozens and dozens of groups in each of these categories right across the city ..." (Van).

These comments indicate the vitality and variety of community group structures in a large Canadian port city - Vancouver is of course Canada's principal ocean port but the only large city included in this project (Wynn and Oke, 1992) - but do not facilitate the identification of community groups with special relevance to urban waterfront change. Several

such groups exist, however, and have some influence on the physical evolution and social character of relevant urban areas. One such group is the well-known *Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA)*, formed in 1973 with the object of improving housing, incomes and recreational facilities for local people (Hasson and Ley, 1994b). DERA actively participates in many local, provincial and national committees and coalitions. A related group is the *Carnegie Community Centre Association*, based in one of the most widely used community centres in North America. Both are active in the eastern fringes of the city's central core, an underprivileged area characterized by many social problems which these and numerous other associations seek to address, located close to the port-industrial waterfront zone stretching along Burrard Inlet.

2.4.5 *Victoria*

The contrasts between the socio-economic and developmental complexities of Vancouver and the relatively ordered calm of Victoria, the BC provincial capital on Vancouver Island, could hardly be greater. Victoria displays, however, a considerable variety of community associations of the kinds identified in other Canadian locations. The city is divided into neighbourhoods, for planning purposes, and each has its community association: the *Downtown Blanshard Advisory Committee*, the *Fairfield Community Association*, the *Oaklands Community Association*, the *North Jubilee Neighbourhood Group* etc. These geographically focussed groups are "not so concerned with politics as with environmental issues" (Vic). A different type of neighbourhood association significant on the Victoria waterfront is the condominium owners' group (known locally as 'strata' groups) which exists to protect the interests of residents in developments such as the controversial Songhees area overlooking the harbour.

Issue-oriented groups are perhaps less well represented in Victoria than in some other larger cities, but there is no absence of concern. Such groups are characteristically less permanent than the neighbourhood groups. "When there's an issue all the people who live near that issue become an association; the association has no long-term independent life. It dies between issues" (Vic).

Two groups are of particular interest in the context of Victoria's harbour area and urban waterfront. The *James Bay Neighbourhood Environment Association* is, in one sense, much the same as other neighbourhood groups in Victoria in that its primary purpose is to monitor socio-environmental conditions within a specific urban zone. However, James Bay is the name of the innermost part of Victoria's harbour, and the residential area which takes its name from the Bay is part of the city's central core traditionally associated with the activities of the working harbour. As the functions of the harbour have changed substantially in recent decades, so the character of the James Bay residential area has also been modified.

A second group, complementary in many respects to the James Bay Neighbourhood Environment Association, is the *Victoria/Eskwimalt Working Harbour Association*. This is described as a single-issue group although in fact it has emerged from about twelve different

interest groups that have frequently been at odds with each other in the past. "We set it up and achieved the definition of the harbour as a community, and it's achieved within the city's planning structure the designation of the harbour as a planning unit" (Vic). An associated body is the *Harbour Advisory Committee* which includes representatives from a wide range of organizations including those mentioned above, and acts as a bridge between them and the urban and provincial government bodies with which they have to deal. Linkages are also multidirectional with the usual commercial organizations such as the *Chamber of Commerce* and *Tourism Victoria* which surprisingly "have less political influence, in a direct way, (and) daren't appear in isolation to advocate a cause because they are perceived to represent Business which in Victoria is, even today, not necessarily regarded as a good thing" (Vic).

2.5 Aims and achievements

Finally in the first part of the interviews, each respondent was asked to indicate the range and level of activities of the particular group which he/she represented. This produced a series of contrasted perspectives on the changing waterfront and on the relationships between the community groups and the official organizations with which they are connected.

2.5.1 St John's: sewage, streetscapes and a sense of history

In St John's, the *Atlantic Coastal Action Program* (Environment Canada, 1993a and b) has developed a comprehensive environmental management plan in 1995-97 designed to resolve the problem of harbour pollution caused by sewage and storm-water drainage. "We have had considerable success in raising the issues publicly and also in getting different levels of government to come together around a table and try to get their heads around how we can redress the problems" (StJ).

Meanwhile, the *Downtown Development Commission* is involved in basic streetscape improvement that includes the waterfront, but does not always see eye to eye with the St John's Port Corporation. The *Johnson Family Foundation* reveals a complementary approach: "We want to make sure that our harbour is never shielded from the general public ... We have a working waterfront that is very accessible ... the Port Corporation officially discourages people from walking on the marginal apron because it's a dangerous place to be, (but) we want to make sure they don't ever put up an eight-foot chain-link fence ... We want to focus on historical significance and make sure that everybody is aware and *appreciates* ... Here in Newfoundland we often take things very much for granted and we often don't realise that some of the features that we have here are unique" (StJ).

2.5.2 Halifax: comprehensive integration

The *Halifax Downtown Business Commission* is somewhat further advanced in its policy of promoting a safe, clean, active and attractive environment for local people and visitors, in the daytime and in the evenings, in the central urban area including the waterfront zone. "We're a peninsular city, with business activity from the second to the twenty-first floor by day, and an

extremely active cultural scene - everything from pubs to symphonies - in the evening. We're trying to meld those things together, redeveloping unused office buildings into residential space, encouraging the re-use of under-utilised waterfront lands for residential development, while retaining public access along the waterfront so that everybody can enjoy it ... That's our primary goal" (Hfx).

2.5.3 *Kingston: vision and disillusion*

Such issues and policies seem relatively straightforward. The experience of some Kingston groups, however, appears more controversial and, at times, acrimonious. Idealism surfaces alongside disillusion and disappointment. The aim of *Earthling Communications* is to create a vision of the waterfront that is detailed enough to influence official planning activities and procedures in an informal way. The group's platform is environmental, recognising the integrity of the ecosystem and the relationship between water and land, working towards a green infrastructure combining economic and health objectives. *Vision Kingston* also aims to help the City to establish a vision for its future and to see it carried through. This group's viewpoint implies that "the City has no vision and has a great deal of difficulty in coming to grips with the idea that they need to have one ... Kingston is a very traditional, dyed-in-the-wool, staid kind of community where there's an innate superiority in anything that is done, without much reflection and examination" (Kgn).

The *Sydenham Ward Tenants and Ratepayers Association* has had some success in influencing Kingston city council decisions on such waterfront issues as tree-planting, building restoration, student behaviour and noise abatement. When a windsurfing school became a jet-ski club, legal intervention soon quietened things down. "There was a proposal to put a waterfront park in front of City Hall - the City sent its Director of Parks and Recreation around to look at parks ... he went to St Louis, came back and designed this park and then had a public meeting. We got an urban designer from Ottawa to do a critique of the park, but ... all the City wanted to do was to have the meeting and say you've had your say and go ..." (Kgn).

"They say we're thinking of doing a park and we'd like your ideas, then they present what they're going to do, then if there's nobody screaming and yelling about it, they go ahead and do it - or even if there is, they've had their token meeting. You get a very jaded view of politics that way. So we didn't prevent it, and now we have various schemes for getting rid of it, the most positive of which is to restore the Battery that was there before. That would be a terrific waterfront project. So that was one of our unsuccesses" (Kgn).

2.5.4 *Vancouver: amenities and gentrification*

The question of establishing a vision for downtown neighbourhoods including urban waterfronts also surfaced in British Columbia. In parts of Vancouver, as in Kingston, there is concern that gentrification threatens the character of a waterfront neighbourhood and the housing of lower-income residents. The *Carnegie Action Project*, initially devised by the

Carnegie Community Centre Association to confront the waterfront casino proposal, moved on to address housing issues in the context of the changing balance in the downtown eastside between longer-term, lower-income residents and incoming higher-income residents perceived (as in many other comparable locations around the world) to distort the local housing market as well as the wider socio-economic structure.

In a comparable but perhaps conflicting way, and again as a reflection of widespread concern, the *Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association* has expressed "a strong desire that industrial land be converted to a higher public use, that it be more accessible to residents, tourists and downtown workers" and that "any waterfront redevelopment that has residential land use as part of its proposal should also contain schools, community centres and other public amenities so that it forms a contained neighbourhood, not just high-rises without supporting amenities" (Van).

2.5.5 Victoria: a working harbour?

The Harbour Advisory Committee in Victoria is also trying to promote a perception of the harbour in the long term, now that the harbour is recognised as a community and as a working environment. The relationship between port of Victoria and the federal government has changed as a result of introduction of a new national marine policy in 1995 by the Minister of Transport, David Anderson (who is also the Member of Parliament for Victoria) (Transport Canada, 1995). "The harbour is in more danger now than it has been in a hundred years of federal management ... with local management, if they screw it up there won't be a harbour when we've finished with it. So the role of this community association, the Harbour Advisory Committee, is to ensure that the management of the harbour is not made up of apartment developers and condominium owners, but that it's actual port people who are looking after it, and that they're doing their job, maintaining it as a working operation ... But the role of community overseer is ... difficult" (Vic).

3.0 PROPOSITION SETS

The second part of the interview comprised a series of *seven* propositions which raised, progressively, a series of issues to do with community groups in general and with the character and activities of the group represented in particular. The topics covered broadly concerned the general and local contexts, the activities of the group concerned, the effects of those activities, comparisons with other places and with the past, and a theoretical overview. Each proposition was presented within a 'set' of three parts: (a) An introductory statement, to establish the scene; (b) a proposition, with which the respondent might or might not agree, wholly or partly; and (c) one or more supplementary questions, to guide the respondent's thinking. Responses to each of the proposition sets are reviewed here in turn.

3.1 Proposition Set 1: are community groups a positive factor?

There was almost unanimous agreement, as might perhaps have been expected, to the first proposition, based on the view that community groups have a role to play in waterfront redevelopment in Canada, alongside administrative, political and commercial organizations of various types and at different levels. The question at issue in this proposition set is whether such groups are a *positive* factor in the process of waterfront change, actively promoting 'successful' outcomes, or whether, by implication, such groups can fulfill a negative or a neutral role.

Table 4: Proposition Set 1

<i>Introductory statement</i>	
Canadian waterfront redevelopment involves governments, planners, port authorities, developers and communities.	
<i>Proposition</i>	
THE INVOLVEMENT OF COMMUNITY GROUPS IS A <u>POSITIVE</u> FACTOR HELPING TO PROMOTE SUCCESSFUL WATERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT SCHEMES.	
Do you agree or disagree with this proposition, in general, in the context of Canada as a whole?	
<i>Supplementary questions</i>	
Here is this port city, do community groups play a part in waterfront redevelopment policy formulation and implementation ?	
If so, would you describe their role as	dominant very significant significant relatively minor negligible ?

3.1.1. Canadian national perspectives

Most respondents felt able to comment positively about the role of community groups in this context in Canada as a whole. 'One of the things about Canada that sets us apart from some other countries that may move a little faster in terms of making decisions and biting bullets and things of that nature is that we do like to consult! We always have a commission or a committee or a community hearing, and when you're a vast country with a small population like we are it's very easy if you are interested to have your voice heard, and we like to take advantage of that' (Hfx).

While recognizing that influences may be positive or negative and that open-mindedness, 'not unduly swayed by particular activists or political perspectives' (Hfx), is a highly desirable component, many respondents were inclined to the view that community groups involved in waterfront redevelopment in Canada constitute 'a positive force ... and a very necessary force' (Vic); and most stressed the need for a balanced view involving business interests, environmental concerns and tourism perspectives alongside planning procedures. 'I don't think anyone has a monopoly on what the best idea is ... and the final outcome will entail compromise' (Van). In this search for acceptable solutions to waterfront development issues, 'community groups can be very irritating ... but the long-term effects are that we change the way people look at doing development' (Van). ... Groups can nip at the heels of the situation and lob ideas into the debate and hopefully educate people ... one of our major roles is educating people who don't understand the community context, or sometimes even just what people find important in their lives' (Van).

Many stressed the importance of consultation and cooperation rather than confrontation and underlined that, contrary to popular perception, 'we're not always in an adversarial position with the City' (Kgn). But 'it depends ... in very large degree on the *way* in which the citizens are involved ... If citizens can be involved in the early stages of proposals the chances I think are far greater to have them play a positive role, provided that they approach it with a mind set that is open enough to listen ..., avoiding confrontation' (Kgn). Community groups do not usually have one voice, although they may be working towards one larger vision; greater use of focus groups to ventilate problems sometimes helps - 'sure, a lot of the time you don't hear anything new but, once in a while, bingo!' (Kgn). Ultimately, the objective of cooperative development is to see waterfront redevelopment on a scale and of a kind that is beneficial to the community as a whole.

3.1.2 *Time perspectives*

Respondents were very conscious of the impact of time on changing spatial patterns. In local, detailed terms, a Kingston participant observed that 'planning permission is granted ... and then remains with the land *ad infinitum* ... that's a major problem with development of any kind but particularly on the waterfront ... other things happen in the meantime, and then the original proposal may become completely out of sync with what's gone on since it was granted ... So time limits on these things would be wonderful ...' (Kgn).

In another sense, citizen participation varies with the stage of implementation of a scheme. Groups may have relatively minor impact at the beginning, when decisions are made to redevelop a waterfront zone. Business groups, chambers of commerce, urban authorities and landowners have a bigger stake in the process at that initial stage, while citizens observe from the sidelines. During the more detailed planning of a project, however, 'citizens are consulted fairly routinely and systematically, and ... their significance increases as you get further into the implementation of a project' (Kgn).

Looking at the problem in a longer-term time perspective, over a sequence of decades, some participants made the point that 'in an historical sense, it's all relative ... Community opinion thought at one time that it was quite alright to build large ugly hotels or apartment blocks along the urban waterfront, or tanneries, or ... other environmentally unfriendly industries' (Kgn). It is now widely appreciated that urban waterfront change in Canada was significantly influenced by community groups in the 1970s at a time when a culture of citizen participation was strongly developed. Prior to the 1970s, earlier waterfront projects did not have this level of citizen input. It is not entirely clear that this culture of citizen participation is as flourishing in the 1990s as it was twenty years ago. It can be argued that citizen participation peaked in Canada in the late 1970s, and that the 1980s saw a move away from that level of involvement and partnership.

3.1.3 Multi-directional perspectives

A St John's respondent drew a distinction between redevelopment with an 'outward' focus on overall achievement rather than an 'inward' focus on community impact and involvement without which no redevelopment can be wholly successful. More generally, although much discussion centres on the attitudes of community groups towards urban authorities and developers, it is recognised that the attitudes of municipalities towards communities also need to be taken into account. 'When there is failure', a Kingston respondent claimed, 'it is because of a lack of policy on public involvement on the part of municipalities ... there's very little experience on the part of many municipal officials in the public participation process, so there is no thorough understanding of what public participation really means and no clear recognition of the public as a significant partner in the process' (Kgn).

Cooperation between community groups, sometimes perceived as facing a common enemy, sometimes in the interests of policy rationalization, is widely accepted as sensible ... 'I think it's important ... that people get all their ducks in a line and make sure they're all headed in the same direction ... to make sure we look like we're working as a team and not as a bunch of individuals' (StJ). Collaboration between groups specifically concerned with water quality, tourism and commercial development, in refining planning objectives in conjunction with port and city officials, was widely seen as an effective *modus operandi* 'that would have a lot more clout that if we just do our own things' (StJ).

3.1.4 Positive and negative reactions and effects

In every port city involved in this investigation, participants gave examples of ways in which community group involvement in processes of waterfront change has, despite problems, yielded many benefits. A Victoria respondent, who might have been speaking for the revitalizing waterfronts of all Canadian port cities, claimed that 'there is no doubt in my mind that we are where we are today as a result of the involvement of community groups' (Vic). The end result of this involvement has been 'that buildings are more compatible with their

surroundings ... and some major projects have been subjected to very long, detailed public scrutiny and as a result plans have been substantially changed' (Kgn).

When in the 1970s a huge building was erected on the Halifax waterfront, 'people suddenly realised what it meant to have the harbour view taken from us ... so the preservation of view-planes became an issue and key views are now retained for all time ... It was public pressure that caused this to happen' (Hfx). The Historic Properties - 'probably the thing that makes Halifax more significant than any other factor from a tourist viewpoint' (Hfx) - now provide the core of an attractive, lively downtown area that could so easily have been bulldozed down, had citizens' groups not intervened. 'Most thinking citizens of Halifax would agree that community groups (although developers and others may regard them as irritants) are regarded positively ... we are indebted to the dedicated people who spend their time and energy and talents, usually with little reward ...' (Hfx).

In specific port cities, the role of community groups was sometimes criticised. In St John's, for example, a respondent noted that 'the Downtown Development Corporation, which should in fact be devoting more attention to the benefits that can be gained from developing a focus around the harbour, essentially turn their backs on the waterfront and look more towards the main commercial streets of the downtown area ...' (StJ). In the larger urban environments it is more difficult to develop and sustain an effective community group, whereas it might be desirable for them to play a large role, I have no sense that this is happening ... it strikes me as a function of geography and demography' (Vic). In Vancouver there are problems of scale between the city authorities, the port corporation and the relatively minor but very numerous community groups, quite different from St John's or Kingston. Traditionally the port has tended to avoid direct relationships with communities and groups, regarding the City Council as its natural partner in local development.

3.1.5. Dominant or negligible influence?

In response to the request to describe the role of community groups in the specific port cities under consideration on a scale ranging from 'dominant' to 'negligible', most respondents chose the middle option - 'significant' - although in a few cases there was an inclination to move towards 'very significant' or even 'dominant'. Understandably, no-one was prepared to describe the role of community groups as 'relatively minor' or 'negligible', except in the short term. 'Yes, they can have a positive influence, it may not always be significant or dominant ... (and) certainly not negligible; they're definitely *there* ... and the degree of significance depends on what the development entails' (StJ). 'At the beginning of the planning process, citizens were very significant, but they got marginalised ... by the professional planners' (Hfx). 'It is hard to say whether they play a significant role in policy formulation ... but they certainly do in getting views heard' (Hfx).

A common view was that community groups, in the short term, have relatively little direct influence, but can become very positive in the longer term. Partly this is a result of the

interaction of complementary organizations and their differing ideas and perspectives. 'Eventually the bureaucrats steal the good ideas that unofficial groups present, and once they feel they can call them their own they pretty much adopt the best ideas that are around' (Kgn). 'So it's only indirectly that community groups play a part in policy formulation and implementation' (Kgn).

Inevitably, perhaps, relationships between groups and urban authorities change according to the degree of convergence of opinion on development issues. 'Sometimes the community organization weakens and the Council tries to take more power back to itself ... the ebb and flow of power depends on how close to the community view of what's going on the results being achieved actually are ... If councils get off-track, community groups will form to bring them back on-track, and then the community groups may back off and even die. So, it's a fluid process, that's what I'm saying' (Vic).

3.2 Proposition Set 2: local motivation or concern for wider issues?

Given that a wide variety of community groups concerned with waterfront redevelopment exists in Canadian port cities, and that this variety shows a substantial degree of dynamism as a reflection of local issues, Proposition Set 2 directs attention to the relationship between local and global concerns as motivating factors for involvement in community group activity. Many respondents referred to the old adage 'think globally and act locally', although some (intentionally or otherwise) put it the other way around. The supplementary question was generally ignored, having been dealt with in the open-ended questions that preceded the Proposition Sets.

Table 5: Proposition Set 2

Introductory statement

Community groups (defined by the issues they confront rather than by the specific locations they live in) come in a wide variety of types.

Proposition

THE VARIETY OF TYPES OF ACTIVE COMMUNITY GROUPS AND THEIR VITALITY DEPEND ON CONCERN FOR LOCAL ISSUES RATHER THAN ON WIDER CONCERN ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT IN GENERAL.

Do you agree or disagree with this proposition, in general and in a local context?

Supplementary questions

Can you indicate (with examples) the variety of types of community group in this port city, and suggest how these groups might be classified?

There was widespread but by no means universal agreement with the proposition and an underlying feeling that this was a very large question that could not be satisfactorily answered without a good deal of thought. Two Kingston respondents emphasised inter-related aspects of the global/local balance inherent in the proposition: 'The groups with the widest interest in the environment in general have the least time to spend on local redevelopment issues' (Kgn); and 'The immediately available, easy-access, local issue brings in a full range of people from those with a very narrow, personal focus to those who view the issue in some global sense as philosopher kings ... they're all going to be there in the same community group' (Kgn).

3.2.1 Local motivations

A substantial majority of respondents took the view that the motivation for involvement in community groups involved in waterfront redevelopment comes essentially from local sources rather than from wider environmental concerns projected onto a local stage or from a balance between the two. 'Local issues trigger activity and provide the energy' (Vic). 'People come from a local context and get their energy from the immediacy of what's going on' (Vic). 'Vitality depends a great deal on an issue that is probably going to affect people negatively' (Kgn). People become involved 'when they feel threatened personally in their own homes and communities' (Kgn). 'What people really want is to grab a picket sign and deal with a problem that's right on their doorstep - that's where you get the most fiery zeal and the largest numbers of people who get really involved' (Van).

Clearly, 'local issues trigger people's involvement' (Hfx) and when an issue subsides or is resolved, 'people just don't show up for meetings any more and that's the final test (Van). Many community group members, however, draw on wider concerns and some have an appreciation 'for the larger context and the connectedness of what they're doing to the wider environment' (Kgn). From Newfoundland, two participants claimed that 'people do look outside their own community, although it's often the local issues that galvanise them' (StJ); and that 'the people in St John's, the interest groups of the waterfront area, are definitely wearing blinkers ... yes, the Province and the country are important to them, but community groups have to be very focussed on what they're doing ... (StJ).

3.2.2 Global concerns

Some respondents, albeit a minority, were concerned to emphasise the wider, global environmental concerns of at least some members of community groups. Many such groups naturally comprise a wide range of opinion and perspective, as an interviewee from Victoria explained: 'Community groups attract strong-minded, opinionated people with wider views on local environmental issues who frequently have a great deal to say at meetings and take up a lot of time ... but community groups would not be as healthy as they are without other people bringing in that wider perspective ... Sometimes we do get tunnel vision and it's important that we develop and retain a broader perspective' (Vic).

In reality, community groups and their interests are often far more broadly based than their activities in relation to specific issues might sometimes suggest. A relevant example comes from Kingston, where two waterfront areas close to the city, the Little Cataraqui Creek and the Great Cataraqui River, have both been designated as significant wetlands at the Provincial level. Wetlands in Canada, as worldwide, are disappearing at an alarming rate, and in Kingston a community group, the Little Cataraqui Creek Environment Association, has been very active in promoting a broadly-based approach towards preserving the wetland areas of the Kingston waterfront as a whole. The group uses individual specific local development proposals to set the stage for their arguments but their real concerns are far more widely based.

For such groups, and for some of the time, community group activity involves the projection onto a local stage of concerns that are rooted in a far wider understanding and appreciation of environmental issues. A Halifax respondent put this succinctly: 'The ability of community groups to volunteer their time and resources on local issues is generally based on a wider and broader concern about life in general and the environment' (Hfx); and from Kingston came the view that the vitality of groups 'depends on the leadership being able to convince people that a global concern is of great local significance here and now' (Kgn). Using global examples to provide the necessary ammunition to fight local issues is a technique to which several respondents made reference, for example in Vancouver: 'How will this issue affect our community and are there examples elsewhere that we can find that can prove our case? (Van)

3.2.3 Interdependent views

An underlying recognition of the interdependence of local and global concerns and motivations was identifiable in numerous responses, but the clearest expression of the fact that local and global issues cannot in reality be separated came from opposite ends of the country. A Vancouver respondent explained how a group's horizons had been enlarged as experience grew and wider opportunities surfaced: 'We started with local issues but soon we saw that we could not progress properly unless we started dealing with some of the larger issues as well ... our vitality depends on both local issues and broader concerns' (Van).

In a complementary way, a St John's interviewee pointed out that local problems are never satisfactorily dealt with unless individuals are committed philosophically to correcting or changing them. 'The concern for local issues is often driven by a concern for the environment in general ... Community groups with a local concern are often interested in that local concern because of their wider interests ... It is those individuals with a wider concern who identify the local issue ... they seize a local issue which is running counter to their philosophy about the environment ... But you can't have an active community group unless you have a local issue, so the identification of the local issue is what keeps the community group active' (St.J).

3.3 Proposition Set 3: reactive, proactive and interactive involvement

Proposition Set 3 (Table 6) is concerned with the origins, growth and involvement of community groups and the relationships between groups and with other organizations such as planning departments, city councils and government departments. On the basis of the premise that community group involvement in the revitalization of urban waterfront zones is sometimes reactive, sometimes proactive, and usually interactive, the proposition states that groups are *normally* reactive rather than proactive.

A majority of respondents agreed with the proposition, with reservations and qualifications, strong emphasis on the word 'normally', and some reaction to what was taken to be oversimplification but was actually designed to be a provocative framework for reaction, opinion and experience. There was undoubtedly a general appreciation of balance between reactive, proactive and interactive involvement, and a number of interviewees showed awareness of a progression from a purely reactive state to a more positive proactive or interactive condition. There was a feeling that some groups might be reactive, and others proactive, depending on the nature of the issues or problems they faced; and also that community groups, like individuals, are normally reactive, at least to start with, but may develop beyond that point as circumstances change.

Table 6: Proposition Set 3

Introductory statement

Community group involvement in the revitalisation of waterfront zones is sometimes reactive (responding to situations), sometimes proactive (taking an initiative, trying to get things done) and usually interactive (with official and professional organizations).

Proposition

COMMUNITY GROUPS INVOLVED IN URBAN WATERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT ARE NORMALLY REACTIVE RATHER THAN PROACTIVE.

Do you agree or disagree with this proposition?

What evidence leads you to this opinion?

Supplementary questions:

Can you illustrate reactive, proactive and interactive approaches (here or elsewhere, in your group or others) ?

Several respondents put these points succinctly. 'The reason for the formation of a community group is *usually* reactive but then once having become established, being proactive is part of their activity and being interactive is *always* essential' (StJ). 'When a condominium tower is proposed, all of a sudden you discover that there are all these people who care ... but no-one was saying anything much about the vacant lot' (Hfx). 'For the most part they're reactive, they don't do anything until somebody makes them feel threatened' (Kgn). 'My experience has been that *normally* community groups are reactive. There's a specific proposal, they react to it, they don't offer much in the way of solutions or compromise, they simply don't like it and they want the Council to turn it down' (Kgn)

Some respondents also drew attention to the distinction between reaction to immediate issues and proactive thinking about longer-term visions. These ideas were expressed in both small and larger port cities, but were particularly emphasised in Vancouver where, in the city as a whole, the number of community groups is substantial, dynamic and effective. 'Change leads to the formation of many community groups. Change occurs and requires dealing with. It's often not by design, hence there's often more of a reactive approach than a proactive. There are enough proposals for developments, infrastructural changes and social services that require a response at the local level, that there's often not enough time or energy to push those forward and also think about twenty years hence ... Although there are civic leaders and local people who are concerned about small changes of the day and about what they mean collectively in the long term and how that can affect the vision for the city, so people aren't exclusively concerned with the here and now' (Van).

3.3.1 *Reactive involvement*

Interviewees were asked to illustrate reactive, proactive and interactive approaches on the part of community groups involved in urban waterfront redevelopment. Continuing the discussion about reactive and proactive involvement, a Vancouver respondent underlined that 'Most waterfront redevelopment planning doesn't come from community groups, it comes from developers and urban planners, and schemes are presented to community groups for their response. So just by the nature of the process, groups tend to be reactive rather than proactive' (Van).

Many community groups, if they are issue-related, are generally 'formulated in reactive mode because somebody has put something on the table about which they have a concern. Generally, if people are supportive of something they don't go form a group, but they do if they're opposed to something' (Hfx). Reactive involvement is clearly illustrated by the harbour clean-up campaign in St John's, led by the *Atlantic Coastal Action Programme*, and by the search in Kingston for compatibility of land uses and water uses in what is now primarily a recreational port, where community group activity has been mostly reactive 'because of the type of change that has been thrust upon us, for the most part ugly' (Kgn).

A recent proposal for a waterfront casino on Burrard Inlet in Vancouver came from the private sector, and interest was expressed by government, but this quickly led to negative reaction from established community groups such as the *Downtown Eastside Residents Association (DERA)* and to the formation of new community groups sponsoring studies from socio-economic and land-use perspectives. These in turn spawned government studies and reactions which led to a synergy at the local level against the proposal. The government backed down in the face of strong reactive opposition mobilised by community groups, although the proposal has resurfaced in an alternative form.

The *Working Harbour Association* in Victoria was reactive in origin to the fact that 'the harbour was dying, to the development of condominiums, the sterilization of the waterfront and gentrification of the harbour ... We used to argue that we have thousands of fjords in British Columbia and we don't need another one lined with walls instead of trees - so it was truly reactive to start with, as we began to develop a political profile, it became necessary to stop just saying no' (Vic). Another Victoria respondent claimed, however, that in another sense the *Working Harbour Association* 'has been normally proactive, has tried to take the issues out to the public, to the politicians, designing and setting up meetings and so on ... but you know, it's a volunteer group, and we can't be everywhere at once!' (Vic).

Victoria Harbour illustrates very well the conflicts that arise between different groups of waterfront users, whether or not these are organized as community groups. Boat owners, maritime service operators and other harbour users in a navigational or port context are often reactive, liking the *status quo*. If the local Chamber of Commerce proposes changes, they see increases in port charges on the horizon. Homeowners' groups around the harbour, however, are more likely to react strongly to the introduction of new services - as when a helijet passenger service was supported by the business community because there was a need to be filled in transportation terms, but caused a lot of negative reaction from local residents because of noise and water pollution.

3.3.2 Proactive involvement

Many respondents emphasised that it is, in fact, very difficult to become proactive. 'How do you decide, as a group of volunteer amateurs with no money, no staffing, and limitations on time ... how do you do the necessary data-gathering, planning work and all that kind of stuff to develop a harbour plan - you can't! It is incredibly difficult to do the technical work involved in any proactive group' (Vic). It is also not always clear what is proactive and what is reactive: it was argued by a Kingston respondent that, for example, campaigning for a bicycle path around a waterfront is actually being reactive to a lack of opportunity in the present urban environment rather than looking ahead in a proactive capacity.

However, many interviewees introduced examples of involvement with waterfront redevelopment in ways they regarded as proactive: in Halifax, the *Pier 21 Society* has come together to promote the rehabilitation of the historic Pier 21, Canada's equivalent of New York's Ellis Island; a waterfront park has been successfully introduced close to a deprived urban area in downtown Vancouver, thanks to *DERA*'s persistent intervention; in Kingston, the *Little Cataraqui Creek Environment Association* is a proactive organization, illustrative of a type of group providing input on a proactive basis in an ecological context involving restoration, public access and inter-group cooperation.

As part of a larger project aiming to develop a continuous waterfront trail system in St John's, the *Johnson Family Foundation* has pursued a proactive policy on the urban waterfront - 'Our work on the St John's harbour front has been entirely proactive ... we are establishing a walkway along the harbour with interpretation of the social and cultural history of the harbour and its significance in the development of the city' (StJ). Similarly, in Kingston, citizens' groups including the *Sydenham Ward Tenants and Ratepayers Association* and *Vision Kingston* have been actively involved in a City Council initiative to develop a waterfront walkway, now largely completed.

In Vancouver, many groups and citizens are actively trying to affect land use and economic change 'to prevent the city having the pollution and environmental problems seen by our neighbours in California ... by changing patterns of land use and development *long* before it's a crisis situation. This is proactive, and interactive too. Not all community groups work closely with government ... many of them work closely among themselves *deliberately* to try to build up sufficient local will so that government will react to their initiative' (Van).

A Kingston respondent commented that 'we have had incidents where community groups have gone totally the other way and been very proactive, where they have come forward and and they have given reasons why they do not like a project and have offered a definite solution ... An example is the Gibson Dock proposal where a developer wanted to put up a six-storey hotel out on the end of the wharf ... but there were navigational problems in the harbour, and waterfront land-use problems, so Vision Kingston came back with a very interesting proposal that envisioned filling in the area between two docks, moving the building back towards the land and creating a large open public waterfront space ... So they, the group, had produced a very positive alternative' (Kgn).

Tourism organizations, too, realise that they will be more effective if they are proactive, and have taken steps to become so. As more and more visitors come to Halifax, for example, tourism organizations (which are, in a sense, community groups) have realised the need to provide better training for those employed in the industry as a whole - from hoteliers to taxi drivers - in order to provide for visitors a better experience. 'Other groups ... whose purpose may not be related to a particular issue, see some things happening and they take a proactive stance because a particular proposal has down-the-road impacts on their overall objectives'

(Hfx). Such a group is the *Downtown Business Commission* made up of active Board and Committee members who see potential and want it realised, and so have to be proactive.

A classic example of successful community group reaction, in a sense, centres on the famous Block D, a piece of prime waterfront land in Kingston that is still vacant and somewhat derelict after unsuccessful attempts on the part of developers to use it for a condominium tower, a 10-storey speculative office building, an hotel and convention centre. The *Sydenham Ward Tenants and Ratepayers Association* objected strongly, the development did not go ahead (for financial reasons), and the block was re-zoned (re-classified in terms of permitted land use development) despite community group appeals to the relevant provincial authority. Although the most recent proposed development failed to mature for financial reasons rather than as a direct result of community group objection, the controversy surrounding the block, which still continues today, greatly heightened the awareness of Kingston citizens and of the City Council to the sensitivity of the waterfront zone in a developmental context.

3.3.3 *Maturation*

A number of community group representatives made the point that groups often start out by being basically reactive and then become more proactive as time goes on. Some saw this as part of a normal evolutionary process for community groups, 'to mature as organizations to the point where we can now include the interactive component' (Van), as one respondent put it. Two separate Kingston representatives claimed, first, that 'our organization is very proactive, as a result of being involved in the strategic planning process, so the surveys, the think tanks, the annual reviews of the plan have become part of our maturation as a group' (Kgn); and, second, that 'we try to present a rational, non-reactive position in forums with a lot of other groups that are very reactive ... so I hope we're being helpful in a more general sense, beyond just presenting our own position ...' (Kgn).

Vision Kingston claims to be 'rooted in a reactive, reactionary kind of history ... but we needed to take a positive, direct and assertive stance and not wait and react but set up a longer term organization and suggest basic, constructive modifications to regulations, policy and so forth' (Kgn). However, as a group leader explained, 'it takes a while, in this culture, to get people mad, or angry ... The piss-of factor has to be fairly significant before they do anything. Once they're sufficiently pissed off, then they'll take action ... and then it's possible to lead them into a proactive or interactive state, channelling energy into more constructive dimensions, but it's impossible, given our society, without the reaction to start with' (Kgn).

3.3.4 *Interactive involvement*

Many groups claimed to be interactive on the one hand with other groups in their location, and on the other hand with the various levels of urban, provincial and federal government. A degree of scepticism sometimes crept in at this point. 'All governments have spouted the need for public consultation ... even though they usually knew where they wanted to go well before

'they did these things' (Kgn). However, in St John's, the *Johnson Family Foundation* has worked closely with the *Downtown Development Commission* and the *St John's Port Corporation* on the harbourside walk project. In Toronto, beyond the scope of this particular study, a *Community Confederation of Residents and Ratepayers Association (CCORRA)* was involved for some years in the central waterfront planning committee. In Kingston, various groups are taking an interactive approach to the redevelopment of the Lake Ontario waterfront, working very positively with economic development interests, big business, and community groups in 'a very non-confrontational, facilitating, assisting, stimulating manner' (Kgn). In this context, if a group meets strong opposition, 'they simply back off and wait for another opportunity to come in in a more positive way' (Kgn).

3.4 Proposition Set 4: emulation, influence and sustainable development

The fourth Proposition Set presented interviewees with a number of inter-related ideas rooted in the essential objectives of community groups, on varying time-scales, and associated with the question of learning from experience elsewhere. Most respondents found themselves broadly in agreement with the general thrust of the proposition, but had fun dissecting its various components and supporting some ideas while introducing a dissenting note elsewhere.

From a practical standpoint the wording of this proposition proved more successful than had been anticipated. All respondents found it reasonably straightforward to deal in turn with various ideas presented (although not always very coherently) and to relate these ideas to their own experience. The supplementary questions, in particular, purposely worded in a very specific way, successfully elicited a wide range of qualified opinions.

Table 7: Proposition Set 4

Introductory statement

Whether proactive, reactive or interactive, community groups exert influence based, in part, on the emulation of success elsewhere.

Proposition

COMMUNITY GROUPS ARE MAINLY CONCERNED WITH TRYING TO INFLUENCE DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES, AND TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

Do you agree with this proposition?

Supplementary questions

Do you accept the idea of emulation? Does emulation work?

Responses to PS4 can be presented broadly under three subheadings: the question of influence on the decision-making processes; the idea of emulation; and the prospect of achieving sustainable development.

3.4.1 Influences on the decision-making processes

There was broad agreement that community groups do attempt to influence decision-making processes, and that that is their main concern, their *raison d'être*. Many groups are established to be reactive to a particular thing - 'that's often the reason why groups were established' (StJ), 'to keep developers' feet on the ground (Kgn). 'Community groups are grass-roots organizations, stakeholders in improving their own habitation, moreso than governments may often give them credit for' (StJ).

Some respondents provided insights into how community groups operate, or into their perceptions of themselves. A readiness to accept changes, not all of them welcome, is sometimes necessary. 'In some cases a community group will realise that, although a decision hasn't already been made, they get the drum-beat, and their goal is to get changes they can live with' (Hfx). Relationships between community groups and other parties in the decision-making process are often interesting, and the role of community groups may be significant. 'When it gets down to the brass tacks of this, community groups begin to draw the lines between everybody else' (StJ). The search for an acceptable outcome, moderated by community group attitudes and perceptions, is of primary concern. 'We're fighting to ensure the viability of the community as it stands now ... which is kind of being eaten away by all these mega-projects, including those on the waterfront' (Van). The adaptation of plans and the amendment of policies are primary community group objectives, in the eyes of most respondents, rather than the formulation of policies. 'I don't think many of the substantial waterfront changes we have seen - hotels, the casino, improved access, recycling of buildings - were a result of strategic inputs by community groups ... what happens is that professional planners have great ideas which get modified by community groups' (Hfx).

Dissenting voices, however, claimed that 'only a small proportion of community group members thinks fundamentally enough to worry about the decision-making process' (Kgn); and that 'community groups are *not* mainly concerned with trying to influence the decision-making process but are becoming more involved in actually having an impact on their neighbourhoods or geographic areas and are forging new partnerships to make things happen in their own community' (Van).

Some respondents, while agreeing that community groups are concerned with trying to influence decision-making, did not agree that this is their *main* concern. Some sought to distinguish between the process and the decision, claiming interest in the latter rather than the former. Others were concerned about the levels at which decisions are taken: 'We would like to go beyond the point of being able to influence decision-making, to the point of devolving the decision-making to the community level' (Van). Elsewhere the arguments came back to

action rather than discussion: in St John's, for example, a respondent claimed that 'The groups that I'm familiar with here in St John's and elsewhere in Canada often galvanise around particular issues but very often their thrust is action ... They don't just want committee meetings, or research, they want to carry out projects, to achieve things on the ground' (StJ).

An interesting viewpoint came from a Kingston respondent who took the view that many community groups think of themselves as trying to influence the decision-making process and assume a separation between the decision-makers and themselves. The view that community groups *are* the decision-makers involves a different approach. The idea that 'we are the government' is of course not new, but in an urban waterfront redevelopment context it is unusual to find a less confrontational, more wholesome view of authority as elected representatives and community members.

3.4.2 Emulation

The introductory statement preceding Proposition 4 included a reference to the emulation of success elsewhere as a basis for community group activity, and interviewees were asked whether they accepted the idea of emulation and whether they considered that it worked. This set of ideas produced mixed reactions, sometimes quite strongly expressed.

Some respondents were concerned to assert their independence and character, and to reject the notion that they might be suspected of borrowing someone else's ideas, however successful. Curiously, perhaps, this view was most forcefully expressed at Canada's extremities, in St John's and Victoria, where a sense of individuality is perhaps most apparent. 'Here in Newfoundland I don't think groups are necessarily emulating success elsewhere; we tend to be very insular here and to think more independently, maybe, than the rest of Canada' (StJ). 'We see emulation as an internal thing based on our history ... we think we know what is right for this community ... Maybe I'm a bit over here on this but arguments tend to be community based as opposed to a broader perspective. I'm not convinced that emulation works and it does not appear to be a major component of policy' (Vic).

There was, however, an appreciation that comparisons, as well as other people's successes and failures, can be instructive. What might work in one location might be totally inappropriate elsewhere. But observing, and learning, is a positive process. 'Even though a model developed elsewhere is not something that may be totally applicable to what you're doing, it may germinate some ideas for you' (Van). 'The ability to learn from others, from their successes and failures, is vital' (Hfx). 'Emulation comes with partnership ... and is certainly helpful' (Hfx). There may be difficulties, however, in achieving such a wider perspective. A Kingston respondent proposed 'an élite view of emulation - based on contributions by people well-travelled within or outside Canada - a view promoted by a few and maybe eventually supported by the group' (Kgn).

The need to cultivate distinctiveness has long been recognised as a principle of waterfront redevelopment schemes. All locations are unique, in one sense, but many of the elements of waterfront revitalization projects are common, so that some developments have been criticised for emulating success elsewhere rather than cultivating special, often unique, local characteristics. There is widespread awareness of this issue in Canadian port cities. From St John's there came the view that 'I think you could take a little piece of the pie from Halifax or Vancouver and other port cities and look at our area and steal good ideas ... (but) we can't afford to make our downtown waterfront look like Halifax because people won't bother to come here so we have to achieve a different variety of things and a different look in our area in order to be unique ... You can pick and choose different things from other port cities but you still have to come up with your own streetscape' (StJ).

The positive cultivation of difference has clearly become a hallmark of Canadian waterfront redevelopment in the later 1990s. However, there are questions to be asked about the balance between differences and similarities. 'People say such-and-such a place did this for their port and it worked really well. The first reaction is usually, that's fine for them, their circumstances are different. What about us here - we're different! I don't think that idea's particularly valid because there are far more similarities than differences, but people do like to pride themselves on being unique and so I think the idea of emulation is not a very useful concept. Because of the generally prideful way they approach things in Kingston, emulation can be important from the point of view of encouragement. Does it work? Well, sure, in so far as people are encouraged, from a spiritual rather than a material perspective' (Kgn).

Emulation also creates other problems, to do with the imagination, and with appropriate comparators. 'People have a lot of difficulty visualising what something would look like, or be like, or feel like. Politicians, particularly ... But what is largest or goes fastest isn't necessarily the most successful' (Kgn). Emulation certainly works but only if it can be demonstrated that the context is comparable. A lack of local precedents can be a difficulty. Within Canada, the experience of Collingwood (Ontario) was sometimes cited as a good example of the successful amelioration of a formerly polluted lakeshore environment for multifunctional purposes including recreation. 'The lack of models was a significant problem in Toronto ... people just weren't familiar with the concept of a hard-edged urban waterfront with buildings next to it' (Kgn).

Whether emulation is a significant factor in the perspectives adopted by community groups appears to depend to a considerable extent on the origins of the group, its original purpose, its structure and its funding. Some groups, especially those with limited finance, focus exclusively on local issues for the present time and the immediate future, and have little time or money or expertise to spend on longer-term or wider-ranging issues. Not all groups take a long-term view; many are formed specifically to achieve a short-term change and will form and re-form as the issues they are involved with come and go.

Developers, too, often attempt to emulate their own success elsewhere, but this sometimes backfires. One of the reasons why the proposed casino on the Vancouver waterfront was not approved was recent failure elsewhere: 'Just at the time we were in the middle of fomenting our little rebellion here against that proposition, another one proposed by the same company got knocked down in the USA. That was the first time they had failed in putting in a casino, and part of the reason they lost here was their arrogance' (Van).

Ultimately, the search for individuality resurfaces. In Vancouver's downtown eastside, a group representative claimed that 'we're trying to avoid the fate of most places ... and to create something unique. Waterfront redevelopment has basically pushed out the poor communities that have been along the waterfront and redeveloped it for up-scale offices and condos or whatever ... Basically we're trying to avoid that' (Van). Kingston asserts its individuality in a different way, suggesting that the city 'would benefit from being the kind of place that doesn't have a casino ... I don't think this town is quick to jump on the bandwagon and emulate success somewhere else or assume that it would transplant here' (Kgn). Final verdicts on emulation seemed to be that 'Individuals do that a lot, but not community groups; it doesn't work' (Hfx); and that 'the quality of life is a bigger issue' (Kgn).

3.4.3 Achieving sustainable development

There was a predictable reaction on the part of interviewees to the inclusion of the notion of sustainable development at this point in the sequence of Proposition Sets, and a predictable inclination to interpret this much-used and much-abused vogue phrase in local rather than global terms. Some respondents were instantly dismissive: 'I haven't the faintest idea what sustainable development is ... despite having tried to study it for several years' (Kgn). Others were more sympathetic: 'sustainable development is mostly like motherhood, it's got to be otherwise we won't last' (StJ); 'pretty well everything we do is in tune with that notion' (Van). Sustainable development was described by one respondent as 'clearly a concept for our time and for the time to come' (Kgn), and by another as 'a nebulous concept ... we talk about it but it's hard to get a handle on exactly what it is or what it will mean in the future' (StJ). It is quite likely that both are correct.

Despite uncertainty, many comments on the idea of sustainable development seemed broadly supportive. 'People do think about environments for their children, and about waterfront buildings that may be around for 100 years, but a majority of community groups, operating in reactive mode, may not fully understand the concept of sustainable development' (Kgn). There was also a common feeling that the eyes of most community groups, in this context, are focussed on the here and now, or at least on the immediate future, rather than upon long-term sustainability. 'I'm not sure that community groups think far enough ahead; they're more worried about what they're going to look across the street and see' (Kgn).

From British Columbia there came two interesting viewpoints on sustainability in a different but community-based local sense, both concerned with the maintenance of the urban

waterfront in a rapidly changing port city as a working environment. In Victoria, where the development of condominiums on the urban waterfront has proved very controversial, a local interviewee suggested that 'Some people might regard the building of condominiums as sustainable development, because land prices and taxes go up, so the developers and the city officials are pleased; but the income for the community as a whole goes down; instead of having a factory you have a condo which doesn't generate anything; but in the long run it is negative change because you're losing families that can afford to live and work downtown' (Vic).

In Vancouver, somewhat similarly, representatives of the downtown eastside area close to the port zone on Burrard Inlet claimed that 'We want to see a waterfront that's not for any one particular class of people or for profit *per se*; this community historically has been linked to the working port, but the dockworkers and fish canneries and railyards and stuff are fast disappearing, replaced by the artsy-fartsy look-at-the-mountains kind of waterfront. People down here have much more sympathy with freight terminals than with cruise ship terminals; so we have a different view of sustainable development, from an environmental standpoint, and we're working in terms of the history of the community as well' (Van).

3.5 Proposition Set 5: the necessity of community group support

The fifth Proposition Set produced strong disagreement between participants, not only in respect of various components of the proposition itself but also in relation to the introductory statement to which some respondents took exception. Additionally, some interviewees had difficulty with the supplementary question, while others provided contrasted perspectives on useful examples. As one respondent put it, 'I think this proposition could take a day to discuss' (Hfx). Overall, the reactions to a proposition set that had been deliberately designed so as to accommodate a variety of opinion supported the arguments in favour of the effectiveness of this methodology. Evidence from the transcripts is grouped here under three subheadings derived from the introductory statement and from the the key points of the proposition and the supplementary question.

3.5.1 An increasing level of involvement?

Whether there is *normally* an increasing level of community involvement as waterfront redevelopment schemes evolve, as initially assumed to be the case, was accepted by some interviewees but questioned or contradicted by others. A St John's respondent distinguished between active involvement and general awareness: 'As redevelopment on the waterfront takes place there is an increasing level of community *awareness*, not necessarily *involvement*' (StJ). A Kingston interviewee differentiated the pre-decision and post-decision situations: 'There tends to be an increasing level of community involvement during the conceptual stages and the development of drawings up to the point of decision. Thereafter, in the implementation stage, it's quite rare. We tend to trust our public officials to do what they say they're going to do' (Kgn).

However, as another participant from St John's put it, 'There is every reason for community groups to keep pushing, to keep their profile up ... Once they feel they've had some impact there's no reason to stop, because when the next door is opened there's another reason to make sure that policy-makers are aware that groups are out there, constantly interested' (StJ). And from a developer's point of view it is normally, but not invariably, important to have community group support when a proposal goes to a City Council.

Table 8: Proposition Set 5

<i>Introductory statement</i>
As waterfront redevelopment schemes evolve, there is normally an increasing level of community involvement
<i>Proposition</i>
COMMUNITY GROUPS HAVE BECOME A POWERFUL INFLUENCE ON THE PROCESS OF STRATEGY FORMULATION, AND WATERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT SCHEMES DO NOT REACH A 'TAKE-OFF POINT' WITHOUT COMMUNITY GROUP SUPPORT.
Do you agree or disagree with this proposition?
<i>Supplementary question</i>
Can you identify and characterise a critical take-off point or period in terms of your own scheme or location, and the role of community groups at that stage?

3.5.2 A powerful influence?

Similarly, respondents presented a wide range of opinion on the question of whether community groups have become a *powerful* influence on the process of strategy formulation in the context of urban waterfront redevelopment. There was widespread agreement that, in some circumstances, community groups comprise a significant, sometimes quite influential, entity; and that, broadly speaking, such groups have become relatively more important in recent decades. 'What we find over time is that governments have become much more sensitive to the role of public participation and public consultation in their decision-making ... compared with 20 or 30 years ago' (StJ). Nevertheless, this is a very difficult subject on which to generalise.

Some basic aspects of the relationships between various actors in urban waterfront redevelopment situations were outlined by a Kingston respondent: 'I question whether there's a perception on the part of decision makers or on the part of those who propose development that before they initiate much they're going to seek support from community groups ...

Developers propose something, the City Hall decision makers tend to be receptive initially, and then the community groups come into action ... Then, depending on the strength of the community groups' arguments, the developer may modify his proposals, the City may approve these changes, or the City may influence the developer because politicians don't like to have angry groups parading in front of them' (Kgn).

The ability of a community group to have a powerful influence on the process of strategy formulation is severely reduced in situations where waterfront redevelopment strategies are designed for purposes of political expediency, where a government establishes an executive organization with regional development funding. Community groups formed in a reactive context can have some influence, especially if the consultation process is ongoing through the strategy development stage. But where community groups are initially proactive, where redevelopment is based at the community level, certainly it can't take off without continuous and ongoing community group support.

There are also contrasts in a financial context. From Newfoundland, there came the view that 'In terms of influence there is a difference between 'non-funded, close-to-the-heart groups and funded groups who have backing and may be able to shake the tree a lot quicker than the ones without ... Money talks, especially in a city that's fairly poor right now and in a Province that's struggling a bit' (StJ). A Kingston participant drew a financial contrast between past and present: 'There are examples of urban waterfront redevelopment projects launched without community support in previous decades, if there was money available. In the 1990s where there's no money, the community drives the process (Kgn).

But redevelopment sometimes takes place with or without community group support. This is not always necessarily a negative aspect, as community group influence may be a little misguided, perhaps 'too finely focussed to be good for the redevelopment as a whole' (StJ). 'Community groups are sometimes seen as special interest groups that may not necessarily reflect the views of the wider community, but if the wider community is silent, who are you gonna talk to?' (StJ).

In Halifax, where the outcome of waterfront redevelopment schemes is regarded as broadly successful, there is strong community-group support for a successful annual Buskers' Festival on the waterfront, important to the local economy; whereas proposals for a new harbour sewage treatment plant proved unacceptable to community groups, for financial and environmental reasons. There is nevertheless some resentment on specific issues and on the overall position of community groups as players on the field. 'I don't think community support mattered a damn when the provincial government finally decided what they were going to do. They created an entity (the Waterfront Development Corporation) to make it happen, and citizens groups have not been essential to the process ... The community groups were essentially marginalised, for example, when the decision was taken to demolish the Irving Arch

at the foot of Sackville Street, the last of nine historic wooden arches leading through from the city streets to the waterfront' .

3.5.3 The idea of a take-off point

Interviewees interpreted the idea of a take-off point in a variety of ways, and maintained the metaphor by talking about 'crash points' when proposed development fail, 'landing points' when things come together satisfactorily, and 'reaching cruising altitudes' as a stage when community enthusiasm tends to wane somewhat. A basic contrast emerged between what can be achieved on land owned by the federal government and its agencies (such as Ports Canada, recently restructured), which have tended to disregard local community group opinion, and land under municipal zoning restrictions and provincial legislation, where a take-off point in a developmental context cannot be reached without community group support.

Contrasts also emerged between locations (such as St John's) where waterfront redevelopment has to date been undertaken on a relatively modest scale: 'I feel that we really haven't taken off yet, we're still in the mobilisation framework, waiting for things to start happening ... There doesn't seem to be a whole lot of attention given to harbour front development in this community' (StJ); and other locations, notably Victoria and Kingston, where community group involvement in the substantial amount of waterfront redevelopment that has been achieved has itself been very considerable. In Kingston, the Sydenham Ward Tenants and Ratepayers Association has been in the forefront of continuing debates about the controversial and still undeveloped 8-acre Block D on the Kingston waterfront. In Victoria there is a view that 'it would be absolutely out of the question for schemes to reach take-off point without community group support ... They don't get to the Planning Department without having basically a sign-off from community groups ... We say right off the top if you're coming with a high-rise condo project, forget it, and in this part of the city the community groups have a great deal of clout' (Vic).

Many respondents took up the question of when, during the long and often tortuous process from conception to completion, the most critical take-off point might be said to be, assuming community group involvement at some stage. Several argued that the sooner community groups become involved in the process, the better it is for all concerned. 'A critical take-off point is right at the beginning. If someone is floating an unacceptable idea, community groups can be extremely effective in defeating it even before it gets off the ground ... that's what I would call not a critical take-off point but a critical crash point' (Van). 'The key take-off point is getting the public involved at the earliest stage possible ... and to stay involved, on top of the process, all the way through. One of the worst things that can happen is to have a project go through a lot of hoops and whistles and all of a sudden a community group shows up at crunch time saying they've got a big concern ... A developer who has put a lot of time and money and effort will obviously say, 'Why didn't you come out sooner?' ' (Kgn).

In some cases, the critical take-off point may come a little later, as a scheme matures or when opposition seems negligible. In Vancouver, a critical take-off point in the redevelopment of False Creek involved a choice between two contrasted planning visions, one based on integrated redevelopment within the fabric of the city, the other an intriguing but somewhat foreign concept inimical to the city's character. Although community group opinion was initially divided, a decision in favour of the integrated alternative turned to some extent on the balance of local grass-roots attitudes. Schemes requiring community group support can reach take-off point when there is sufficient lack of opposition, however, as no opposition is taken to be agreement. 'I think that's more significant than actual positive community group support, because where such support occurs the political people tend to be suspicious of group motivation and are less likely to move in the direction groups want. That's a bit of a backdoor approach to this question, but I believe it's the motivation of opposites: if there's no opposition, then it's OK; if there is opposition, politicians become suspicious and assume a hidden agenda' (Kgn).

Relationships between community groups, developers and urban authorities are critical to the outcomes of waterfront redevelopment projects, and within this triangular framework the take-off point might be defined as the moment when all parties agree on what is going to happen. Such a point might be arrived at as a result of community group pressures, taken to the point that politicians could not maintain their credibility without making the project their own. 'It's like exposing the emperor without clothes, and the emperor has to run off and put some clothes on ... If you state the obvious in a way that is irrefutable, they have no option' (Kgn).

The triangular relationship assumes a different character when one party does not recognise the validity of another's viewpoint. A Vancouver community group representative commented that 'We had it pointed out to us many many times during the course of the consultations about the proposed casino, and then when the proposal was unveiled and we really started opposing what was going on, that there was *nothing* to make Ports Canada listen to anything we had to say' (Van). Another set of relationships - quadripartite rather than triangular - between developers, governments, community groups and trades unions also affects outcomes, the last-named being normally supportive of community groups but sometimes in the interests of job creation acting like developers. In the Vancouver casino case development was ultimately stopped, technically, not by community group action but by the provincial government's refusal to change British Columbia's gaming laws; but one of the critical factors in the situation that led to the grounding of the proposal was undoubtedly the strength of community group opposition.

3.6 Proposition Set 6: politico-economic realities

The purpose of the sixth proposition set was to invite comment and opinion from community group representatives on the essential driving forces underpinning waterfront redevelopment in their specific locations at the present time, in comparison with past times and with places

elsewhere. The assumption made in the introductory statement, that lessons from the past and comparisons with other locations today are important sources of information when current waterfront redevelopment plans are being considered and implemented, was generally accepted without comment. The proposition itself was intended, like earlier propositions, to place the interlocutor at one end of a spectrum of possible opinion, in a position that some might regard as obvious but others might seriously question in various ways and to varying extents.

Table 9: Proposition Set 6

Introductory statement

The processes of urban waterfront redevelopment, and community involvement in them, are informed by lessons from the past and by comparison with other locations now.

Proposition

THE OUTCOMES OF WATERFRONT REDEVELOPMENT PLANS DEPEND NOT ON HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OR ON EXPERIENCE ELSEWHERE BUT ON POLITICO-ECONOMIC REALITIES HERE AND NOW.

Do you agree or disagree with this proposition? Please give your reasons.

Supplementary question:

Can you provide evidence of ways in which experience from other places (in Canada or in other countries), or records of earlier developments, have influenced local attitudes, plans or outcomes here?

3.6.1 Economic, political and social concerns

So, in fact, it proved to be. Many respondents agreed with the proposition, but few did so wholeheartedly or with any sense of enthusiasm. 'Tragically, I agree' (Vic). The view that the outcomes of waterfront redevelopment plans depend on politico-economic realities today, and not on historical evidence or on experience elsewhere, was considered by some to be realistic, even self-evident.

Within the spectrum of possible responses, the most extreme position was taken by three Kingston interviewees. 'I fully agree ... it's the politico-economic realities here and now which drive virtually all processes and that certainly includes waterfront redevelopment. Why? Because all important decisions are taken by elected officials who have a vote and who are hugely conscious of the public response ... Any decision they take reflects the *immediate*, I would say *socio-politico-economic* realities, with very little concern for past development or models or anything ... Historical evidence, and experience elsewhere, play an *extremely* minimal role except where it supports the political position of the people in place right now. So

it's a pathetic sort of thing, but it's true' (Kgn). 'I would agree that it does not depend on historical evidence ... partly because of the changing nature of the decision-making group ... and the Council is notorious for not learning from the past ... and I don't think they've really learned from other people's experience either. The political and economic realities are what makes their vision very short term' (Kgn).

Another view, from a very different context but coincidentally from Kingston, also took up a firm position at this end of the spectrum. 'I would definitely agree with this proposition. Although historical evidence may have a bearing on the final form or the composition of a certain project, the experience here in Kingston has always been that the political climate of the time and certainly the economic realities of the situation determine whether a project goes ahead' (Kgn). In the case of the still vacant Block D on the Kingston waterfront, a long-running debate between developers, planning officials and community group representatives has continued through a variety of economic and political changes; the view from City Hall is that economic realities continue to present the development of this prime site.

Other respondents who fundamentally agreed with the proposition were more guarded in their approach, and seemed prepared to admit the relevance and significance of historical evidents and locational contrasts and comparisons. From St John's, for example, came the following response: 'I think that the emphasis is really on political and economic realities ... Historical evidence and experience elsewhere are all well and good, but when it comes down to the bottom line - certainly here in Newfoundland - the economic reality even moreso than the political reality is what calls the shots for the day' (StJ).

Another respondent took a broader view of the waterfront redevelopment movement, pointing out that waterfront redevelopment depended on economic realities as the movement began to gain momentum in earlier decades. 'When we had functioning ports there was such a strong economic development rationale behind them that nobody suggested that a port ought to be shut down so we could have a nice park ... but when the port went away, things were up for grabs, and the politico-economic realities of the time were quite important (and) historical evidence and experience elsewhere were also important at that time ... but not now' (Kgn).

3.6.2 History and elsewhere

In contrast, some respondents took the view that historical evidence and experience elsewhere are vitally important components of the decision-making and plan-implementation processes, and that although these processes are affected by present-day politico-economic realities, such realities do not by any means totally control the situation. A Vancouver respondent commented that: 'I disagree with Proposition Six, but I have a caveat. The outcomes of waterfront redevelopment plans *do* depend on historical evidence and experience elsewhere, but they are also *influenced* by politico-economic realities here and now. Politico-economic realities here and now are *not* the sole determinants of the outcome' (Van). Major developments such as the False Creek North multi-million-dollar projects are well grounded in

current politico-economic realities but are clearly affected by community attitudes, historical perspectives and experience elsewhere.

Support for this viewpoint came from Halifax where respondents were also anxious to underline the individuality of place. 'It really does depend on the waterfront about which you're talking ... in Halifax there is a tremendous sense of history in this community and a tremendous appreciation for experience elsewhere. We want people to enjoy a busy waterfront - people doing things, people watching things, people sitting on boxes smoking pipes and watching other people doing things - and this comes from our historical perspective ... Outcomes do depend on historical evidence, they do depend on our appreciation of experience elsewhere and there is a significant and simultaneous influence from the politico-economic reality of the day' (Hfx). 'I think we are substantially influenced by what happens elsewhere ... everybody is using, trying to adapt what is in fact largely common knowledge and experience to the geography and the historical experience of their own port city ... and Halifax is no exception to that' (Hfx).

3.6.3 Interdependence

In between these two polarised opinions there came a number of respondents who took a more balanced view and regarded the three key elements of the proposition - history, other places, and the local economy - as essentially interdependent in the context of waterfront redevelopment. 'I think it's half and half', claimed a Victoria respondent. 'You have to assess what has gone right elsewhere, not to do so would be rash and stupid ... You have to know what the downsides are ... I see our model as being as fusion of a lot of things that have gone right and wrong between the harbour commission, the business scene, and the community groups. Where harbour commissioners have not listened to local community groups, the outcome has not been successful ... and in terms of politico-economic and social realities, the bottom line is jobs' (Vic).

There was a recognition on the part of some respondents that the proposition was intentionally phrased in too polarised a manner. 'I don't entirely agree and it's a bit of a circular discussion ... Unless you take a very broad view of politico-economic realities and incorporate community groups into that concept, I don't think that the proposition is entirely valid' (Vic). 'I agree and I disagree. Politico-economic realities are a stimulus, in much the same way as local issues are a source of vitality for community action. However, how we got to those politico-economic realities is because of our history. And the solutions we seek are from peeking elsewhere. You learn not to do things or to do things by peeking elsewhere and relying on the lessons that you see in other communities. So, it's more complex than the statement in your proposition' (Kgn).

Numerous respondents recognised the interdependence of the various components involved. 'Everything in this proposition has its place in St John's' (StJ). 'I don't agree that one of them is more important than the others ... they're intertwined and interdependent ... (but) it's easier to see one becoming more dominant when it's in terms of failure rather than a success' (Hfx). Some, however, sought to underline one or other of the components while accepting the

relevance of each. Support for the proposition in this context came from two Kingston sources: 'I'll have to rank current political-economic realities as number one, but ... history and experience elsewhere are like close second and third ... I don't see it as either/or, or yes and no' (Kgn). 'It's a matter of emphasis. The *dominant* force influencing the outcome is the politico-economic realities of the here and now but I wouldn't say that historical evidence or experience elsewhere is not a factor' (Kgn).

Interviewees supporting the validity of an historical approach seemed inclined to the view that modern Canada takes too little notice of its history. 'We don't look as much to history as we should' (StJ). 'We tend to look at our history but not very far back - yesterday as opposed to 20 or 30 years ago ...' (Vic). There was, however, strong support for the incorporation of historical perspectives: 'We have strong initiatives within Kingston but we also look elsewhere for guidance and advice and examples - in relation to what might happen to our historic Fort Henry, for example, and the waterfront around it' (Kgn). 'The ingredients are here for something wonderful because of the combination of heritage and natural environment ... diversity and a rich cultural heritage, within a very small area' (Kgn).

A respondent in Victoria raised an interesting point in this connection, pointing out that a majority of inhabitants in many Canadian port cities are relative newcomers and may therefore lack a sense of local history. This point may be particularly true of Victoria, known as a favoured retirement location because of its relatively mild climate. 'This historical evidence thing is tough ... Many people in this town are fairly recent arrivals ... There were over twenty sawmills here thirty years ago - all now gone, and very quickly. I don't have that personal perspective but the people who started the Harbour Association did, they had jobs in those mills and they were seeing them disappear ... so the historical perspective is driving them to be proactive in harbour issues' (Vic).

Comparisons with elsewhere, and lessons derived from other locations, were generally not regarded as especially significant by most respondents. Exceptions, however, were two St John's interviewees who claimed that 'Outside influences or experience are often the thrust that drives development in our own community, though politico-economic realities have to be right as well in order for it to happen' (StJ). 'I agree partially ... the driving force would be politico-economic realities here and now but a large part of it would be based on looking at experience elsewhere' (StJ). Elsewhere there was a tendency to disregard external experience almost as irrelevant: 'We tend to discount a lot of what's happening in other locations. It's very difficult to compare Victoria with, say, Vancouver. They're so completely different' (Vic). In specific instances, however, the experience of other locations can be very helpful. A Vancouver group representative indicated that: 'We fought the proposed casino here on the basis of the experience of other cities, particularly in the USA, and on what those kinds of casino resorts did to their communities; that's what we got public support on' (Van).

Only one respondent took up the philosophical idea of what constitutes reality. 'It's difficult to relate to someone else's idea of reality ... because that depends on their context ... If somebody says this is true, you might say what truth?, whose truth? in what context is this true? So it's hard to know whose parameters apply here' (Van). Also from Vancouver, but from a different quarter, there came a rather more equivocal viewpoint, involving no strong agreement or disagreement with the proposition, but an acceptance within a community-based perspective of waterfront redevelopment that all the issues raised in this proposition set have considerable validity. 'This is an interesting question ... I think I'm probable leaning more towards the realities than the historical evidence but I think that Vancouver does have some very strong themes that it adheres to about waterfront redevelopment and what neighbourhoods should look like ... One of the themes that's come to the fore is public access, and that's because of our history ... experience elsewhere plays less of a role here ... we have well-established distinctive neighbourhoods, and that's a characteristic being emulated in our waterfront redevelopment' (Van).

3.7 Proposition Set 7: legal limits and community tolerance limits

The seventh proposition set (Table 10) is based on the idea that there are, of course, *legal limits* to what can be done on the waterfront, like any other kind of planning-related change or context; but there are also *community tolerance limits* towards which a community wants to push, or beyond which it would not willingly go, or against which it will fight. Figure 2 expresses this relationship by representing, in between geographical space and a legal ceiling, the objective impact and the perceived impact of planners' interventions, and the more varied community tolerance limits which occasionally push through the legal ceiling.

Predictably, perhaps, interviewees interpreted these ideas variously and their comments had more to do with politics than with transport, although there was a widespread recognition of the importance of their waterfronts in their cities and of the importance of water in people's lives. Some had trouble coming to grips with the concepts involved, and a common reaction was '*I'd never thought about it quite like that*' - but there was also a common recognition that 'balance' and 'compromise' are ultimately key words in this context.

In most places - St John's, Kingston, Halifax, Victoria - there was also some agreement that the biggest problem in the downtown area in port cities is the waterfront zone, and in some cases the biggest problem within that zone is that there aren't enough people living there. Another common thread was a basic perception of the harbour as a wealth generator, developed for industry, commerce, housing, recreation and tourism in a balanced way.

What prevents this being achieved? At one level, the proposition provided a last chance to uncover some curious conflicts between and within community groups, broadly defined, as in St John's between the long-time residents known locally as *liv'eres* and the newer business people with development money; or the perceived social separation between those living south

or north of Princess Street in Kingston; or the irritation caused by community activists who seem to oppose things just for the sake of being seen to do so.

Table 10: Proposition Set 7

Introductory statement

There are legal limits to change in any planning context, and there are community tolerance limits. *See Figure 8.*

Proposition

THE RECOGNITION OF COMMUNITY TOLERANCE LIMITS IS THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE OF COMMUNITY GROUPS INVOLVED IN URBAN WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT.

Do you agree or disagree with this proposition?

Please give your reasons.

Supplementary questions:

What are the main obstacles in *this* port city to the recognition of community tolerance limits?
How could these obstacles be overcome?

Others, more philosophically, underlined inappropriate political structures, too often emphasising the negative rather than the constructive: 'Our procedures, our processes, don't give us the capacity for creating good things; they don't put the creation of good things as a priority, they don't allow us to build collectively, although they do allow us to fight bad things to a certain extent' (Kgn). Some went so far as to say that true democracy in Canada is still a long way off, and there is a widespread mistrust of 'average' people and those who have not been elected. Others cited the complexity of decision-making processes, the inflexibility of some authorities (such as the *St John's Port Corporation*) and, of course, time and money.

Ultimately, development and redevelopment on the waterfront is an education process, despite the often blinkered views of policy makers or of developers who think there is no legal limit (they just get it changed) and the antagonistic attitudes of some community groups leaders - 'we're normally dealing with somebody who has the right to do something and now we're going to beat them down ...' (Vic). So there is a basic need to move towards a comprehensive overview, reflecting the wider community, but there is a basic difficulty of conveying a

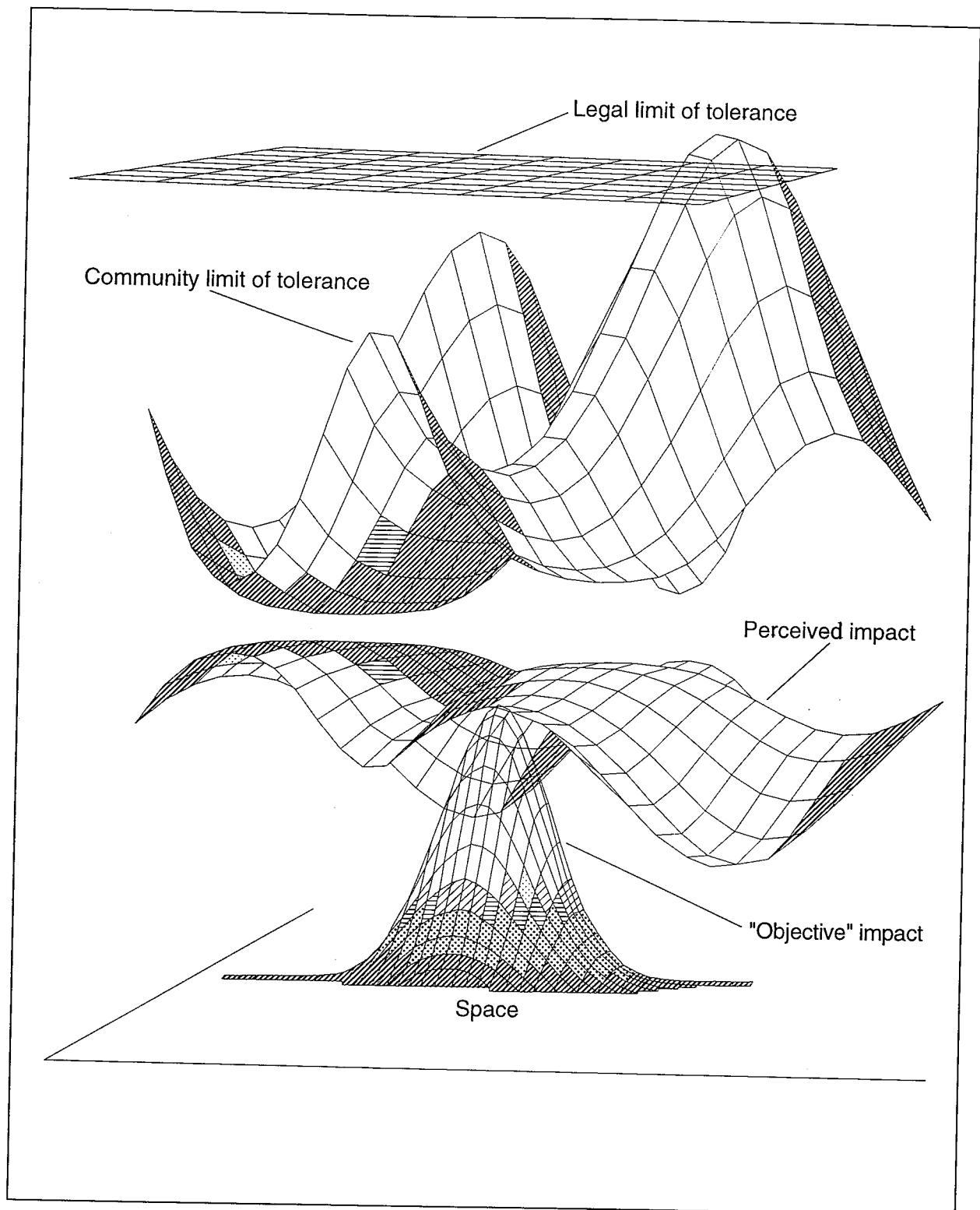


Figure 2: An explanatory model of variations in levels of tolerance to environmental impact
(after Pinder, D. A., in Clout, H. *et al.*, *Western Europe: geographical perspectives* (London: Longman, 1985)).

balanced view of the benefits versus the downsides. Specific issues, such as the famous Block D on the Kingston waterfront, or the casino controversies in Halifax and Vancouver, have the effect of polarizing opinion. There is often objection for its own sake from community groups who often feel they have to profess to go well beyond the planners' objectives so as to fall back ultimately on an acceptable compromise - 'if a developer wants a 12-storey block a groups says six and you get eight' (Kgn).

In the end, politics is the art of the possible - and a process of conflict resolution. The best politicians and planners are the ones that know the shape of the community tolerance surface exactly and instinctively for their community. 'Our vision of what this city could be is *inclusive* - it includes the middle classes and the rich condo-owners, but we want to see a better city for everybody, beyond the vision that's being projected right now by any of these people ...' 'Bridges have been built over the last few years, which is why issues no longer just echo and reverberate in this neighbourhood any more, they're kind of city-wide, which is kinda neat' (Van).

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

Three specific aims of this project were established at the outset: to sample the range of community group opinion in a variety of types of cityport in Canada, and the character and activities of such groups; to assess the degree to which community views influence the processes and pattern of change, with special reference to tolerance limits; and third, to discover whether there exists a common pattern of reactive and proactive criticism across a range of cityport types and community groups in Canada, or whether opinions and activities are essentially place-specific.

Conclusions can be briefly outlined. The first objective has been attained: the project unveiled a larger number and greater variety of community groups than had been supposed, and discovered some details of their character and activities. There is a clear distinction, at least in theory, between geographical, area-based or neighbourhood groups on the one hand and problem-associated or issue-based groups on the other, but the two types are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Community groups, in all their variety, also offer another kind of spectrum, from the broadly-based issue groups concerned with socio-economic conditions within a substantial and problematic urban area (such as *DERA* in Vancouver) to the narrowly-focussed neighbourhood groups concerned above all to protect their own character and privileges (such as the 'strata' groups in Victoria's waterfront condominiums).

Another spectrum is provided by the degree of involvement with the urban waterfront, which varies from quite limited to almost total; for some groups (such as the *Johnson Family Foundation* in St John's), the urban waterfront involves only a small part of what they do; while other groups, such as the *Waterfront Development Corporation* in Halifax or the *Harbour Advisory Committee* in Victoria, count the urban waterfront as their primary concern.

There is also much variation in the degree to which a group is in any sense 'official'; at one extreme, a small group of volunteer citizens form an action group to protect and enhance their immediate urban environment; in another part of the wood, a group of businessmen set up a more formal system for urban improvement, with implications for the waterfront. Charitable foundations, government agencies and other bodies are all closely involved with, and reflective of, the grass-roots community attitudes and sometimes actively seek to initiate such groups. A diagrammatic model representing the interaction and interdependence of community groups in societies and areas might become rather complex, but might be attempted in a revised version of this paper (West, 1989).

A variety of views have already been revealed on the question of the degree to which community views influence the processes and pattern of change on Canadian urban waterfronts. Two assessments may be proposed: first, that community groups' influence varies substantially according to the quality and vitality of group activities and the accuracy with which group operations are targeted; second, that there is often a substantial time-lag between the initial growth and development of a group and a realisation that its activities are actually having some effect. Group impacts thus vary substantially in a spatial sense and over time.

It appears that there are many common elements in the objectives and achievements of community groups involved in waterfront change in port cities, despite the diversity of the places involved and of the groups themselves. It is reasonably clear that there exists a common pattern of reactive and proactive criticism across a range of cityport types and community groups in Canada, and that opinions and activities are not exclusively locally-orientated. It is inevitable, however, that many ideas and actions remain place-specific: Canada is a big country, and people in one port city often do not know very much about what goes on in many others. Many group activists, however, are only too well aware that the problems they face on their urban waterfronts are commonplace in port cities and other urban places, not only in Canada but around the world (Hoyle, 1996; Jauhainen, 1995). While some may at times seem to adopt a localised, even blinkered approach to issues in their own backyard, many more appreciate the universality of relationships between ports and people, between environment and society, and between land-space and water-space. The shared vision that many seek but rarely find belongs not only to the local context of a specific port city or a familiar urban waterfront but to the global environment which we all share. As in so many other fields of activity and enquiry, the Canadian data examined in this project clearly illustrate issues and principles of widespread international relevance, interest and concern.

Note

1. Quotations from interview transcripts are identified by location, not by interviewee. StJ = St John's, Newfoundland; Hfx = Halifax, Nova Scotia; Kgn = Kingston, Ontario; Van = Vancouver, British Columbia; and Vic = Victoria, British Columbia.

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