

BASIC CHEMISTRY FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE:

A CONCEPTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY

SEPTEMBER 2009

BY SCOTT GRAHAM

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89 Ac 227	90 Th 232.038	91 Pa 231.036	92 U 238.029	93 Np 237.048	94 Pu 239.048	95 Am 243.061	96 Cm 247.070	97 Bk 247.070	98 Cf 251.083	99 Es 252.083	100 Fm 257.103	101 Md 258.103		

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Acknowledgments

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Abstract

This paper presents a multi-level, developmental conception of Civil Society Capacity (CSC). Informed by representatives of leading civil society organizations and government agencies with a capacity building mandate in British Columbia, the CSC concept explicates the characteristics of civil society change agents, the general developmental phases of civil society agents, as well as the peripheral and intersecting aspects of community life that shape and are shaped by civil society. Funders, leaders of community organizations, community development program designers and evaluators, as well as students of civil society and community development may find this paper useful.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Methodological Approach to Concept Development	2
3. Civil Society Capacity (CSC)	4
3.1. Power, Community Development Discourses & Forms of Change: Forces in and of Civil Society	4
3.2. Individuals	9
3.2.1. Personal Capacities	9
3.2.2. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation	12
3.3. Groups	16
3.3.1. Group Capacities	16
3.3.2. Phases of Group Development	19
3.4. Nonprofit Organizations (NPOs)	23
3.4.1. NPO Capacities	23
3.4.2. Life Cycle of NPOs	26
3.5. Non-Profit Sector (NPS)	31
3.5.1. NPS Capacities	33
3.5.2. Rhythms of Change in the NPS	34
4. Geographic Community & Civil Society Capacity	37
4.1. Seven Forms of Community Capital	38
4.2. Phases of Community Development	40
5. Concluding Discussion	44
References	45

List of Figures

Figure 1: Personal Capacity and Phases of Citizen/Resident Participation	15
Figure 2: Group Capacity and Group Development	22
Figure 3: Nonprofit Organization Capacity and Phases of the NPO Life Cycle	30
Figure 4: Summary of Types of NPOs	32
Figure 5: Nonprofit Sector Capacity and Rhythms of Change in the NPS	36
Figure 6: Sectors, Capital, and Phases of Development in Geographic Communities	43

1. Introduction

C. Jung (1933) once remarked that people, especially their personalities, are similar to chemical substances because they can react to and be transformed through an encounter with the personalities of others. Although Jung (1933) uses the chemistry metaphor to think about the dynamics of personalities and interpersonal relations, the metaphor can also be used to think about the many parts and complex processes inherent in and connected to civil society. Civil society, similar to at least some branches of basic chemistry, involves a vast assortment of conceptually distinct elements, a myriad of relationships between known elements, as well as a wide range of changes resulting from encounters between elements. Although the behaviour of distinct civil society agents and the many coalitions internal to the civil society sector, as well as the impact of these factions upon society as a whole, can not be reduced in the same way as the elements and compounds of chemistry, there is an emerging consensus that civil society and its indwelling capacities are reducible to certain fundamental characteristics.

Working with questions regarding civil society capacity, and its close relative community capacity, are practitioners and scholars in the fields of health promotion (Fawcett, et al., 1995; Goodman, et al., 1998; LaBonte & Laverack, 2001), biodiversity conservation (Teixeira & Zangui, 2005), urban planning (Gittel, Newman, & Ortega, 1995), community development (Glickman & Servon, 1998; Spruill, et al., 2001), social policy (Casswell, 2001), and international aid (Sen, 1999), each of whom have contributed important concepts, practices, and evaluation measures to this diverse field of theory and practice. Despite differences in subject focus, the meanings of capacity (related to both the notion of community and civil society) that are employed across these professional and academic disciplines are united by the democratic idea that people should be meaningfully involved in processes of relationship building, community-based learning, participatory planning, and joint action that improve life on earth in some way.

This paper draws from academic and practice-based sources to develop the Civil Society Capacity (CSC) concept. The paper begins with a description of the methodological approach to developing the CSC concept, which is followed by a definition of civil society capacity and a discussion of the forces and forms of change at play in developing civil society capacity in British Columbia. Next, four civil society actors and their respective phases of development are described, which is followed by a discussion of the relationship between civil society, other sectors in a community, seven forms of community capital and the general phases of community development. A concluding discussion finalizes the paper, which addresses a major limitation of the CSC concept, and remarks upon the implications of the CSC concept for future civil society research and capacity development programming.

2. Methodological Approach to Concept Development

In recent years in British Columbia, there have been several provincial, regional and local initiatives to build common understandings of and strengthen the abilities of civil society to positively impact community life. At the local level, community social planning councils and other community development agencies play pivotal roles in working toward these types of goals. At the provincial level, the BC Government Non Profit Initiative (GNPI) has and continues to advance some important descriptions about the current role of civil society in community development work, as well as the relationship between civil society actors, especially non-profit organizations, and the BC provincial government. What unites these initiatives is a shared belief in the value of civil society and the conviction that investments in its strength and sustainability are worthwhile.

Crisscrossing the work of civil society in BC are ongoing questions about what constitutes civil society, especially its capacity to contribute to positive community change. These questions are a healthy part of civil society but also underline a lack of a shared understanding among civil society practitioners, as well as public servants, about what is meant by the term civil society. It is this lack of a shared understanding of civil society capacity that serves as the motivation for developing this paper, which creates a response to questions about the major constituting elements and developmental processes intrinsic to civil society in British Columbia.

Three questions guide the construction of the CSC concept: (a) What are the qualities and developmental phases of civil society change agents?; (b) What are the major community development discourses that inform and are informed by the actions of civil society actors in British Columbian communities?; (c) How is civil society situated in relation to other aspects of geographically defined communities?

Employing a participatory qualitative research method, the project to create the CSC concept aimed to cultivate a shared understanding of the meanings of civil society capacity, and to a lesser degree community capacity, among practitioners, funders and public servants in the British Columbia context. The project developed incrementally over the course of one year, involved over 150 participants, and was jointly supported by the Vancouver Foundation, Voluntary Organization Consortium of British Columbia, Capacity Development Consortium of BC, Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership, Canadian Rural Partnership, as well as the lead research organization, the Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia.

The research method included multiple points of engagement with practitioners, both government and non-government, and consists of five activities that are defined below.

1. Research and analyze academic and professional literature related to questions about civil society, community capacity, and community development discourses in BC;
2. Develop draft CSC concept for critical review in workshops with project participants;
3. Conduct two half-day workshops with civil society actors and community capacity developers from government and non-government organizations to engage critical questions about the draft CSC concept,
4. Revise draft CSC concept according to participant input;
5. Host a world café conversation that convenes civil society actors and community capacity builders to engage the draft final CSC concept, eliciting participant suggestions for how to improve it.
6. Integrate participant input into CSC concept and present final concept to project participants.

The CSC concept development method was limited to tasks that addressed conceptual questions about civil society capacity, and to a limited degree community capacity, and so did not consider the pragmatic dimensions of this field of work, such as strategies to build capacity or indicators of civil society capacity.

3. Civil Society Capacity (CSC)

The practice of developing concepts for understanding any aspect of human life involves tradeoffs between various criteria, such as preserving the strengths of existing ideas in the literature, establishing economy of scale, rigor of articulation, and demonstrating significance and utility in future theoretical and empirical research, as well as practice-based work. The construction of the CSC concept is an attempt to strike a balance between these criteria.

This section consists of definitions and classifications. Definition and classification are, in a sense, two parts of the same conceptual challenge. The first specifies what the entities in a sphere of activity have in common; and the second explains the ways in which they differ. Below, a set of definitions related to the term civil society capacity is presented, which is followed by the lengthier task of classifying the differences among the multiple and various qualities ingredient to civil society capacity.

Borrowing from Heinrich and Khallaf (2005), civil society is the spaces and places outside of state and private sectors, as well as family structures, where people associate to advance common interests. The broad contours of this popular definition invite questions about the types of capacities inherent in civil society. Simply put, civil society capacity is the characteristics of the individuals, groups, non-profit organizations, and non-profit sectors that express interest in and/or demonstrate a capability to advance common interests. How civil society capacity is developed and for what aim it is built principally depends on: (a) the types of community development discourses that are at play in the socio-economic milieu of a given civil society actor or set of actors; (b) how power is exercised through the production of community development discourses in the relations between civil society agents and other actors in the community, including state and non-state actors; and, (c) the nature of the changes that result from the joint process of exercising power and producing community development discourses. Directly below, these forces in and of civil society are discussed in broad brush strokes.

3.1. Power, Community Development Discourses & Forms of Change: Forces in and of Civil Society

Much of the work undertaken by civil society change agents assumes people are essentially good, and it is both possible and desirable to engage people, locally and globally, in activities that move people toward healthier relationships between one another and everything else in the world. In British Columbia, there is a remarkable diversity of civil society change agents, many of which are formal institutions that translate the above belief into targeted education

and action programs that aim to achieve particular types of community development goals. Advocating for development goals generally involves a process whereby an outside community development “expert”, planning and/or policy advisor works with a group of local leaders to facilitate the integration of new community development ideas into action programs at the local level.

How this process works and the results of such efforts varies widely but can be partially explained in terms of the exercise of power through the production of development discourses. So what is power and what are discourses? French philosopher M. Foucault (1978) describes power not as an institution or a structure, but rather as “the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (Foucault, 1978, 93). As such, the Foucaultian version of power is productive and circulatory, or “something that functions in the form of a chain. It is never localized here or there...never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. (Foucault, p.34) Power in this sense exerts a positive and productive influence on civil society and community life, serving as the life blood to local projects that introduce new ways or reinforce existing ways of organizing local human activities.

Community development discourses are the act and product of writing and/or speaking in strategic ways that advance certain visions of how communities should be ordered, and are a central means through which power is exercised by civil society change agents and community capacity builders alike. Examples of how power is exercised through discourse production include policy dialogues, community conversations and workshops, public debates, political speeches, news stories, research reports, etc., each of which instantiate some community development ideas over and against other development ideas. One of the primary objectives of discourse production is to influence public perception of some aspect of our shared world, with a view to facilitating the development of new community norms and or preserving existing norms (e.g., rules and actions that justify certain ways of being and delegitimize other ways of being). Although an in-depth Foucaultian analysis of the relationship between the exercise of power and the production of development discourses in even a single BC community is beyond the scope of this paper, it is instructive to discuss seven major discourses that are used in an ongoing way to influence the community development goals in many BC communities.

The following seven descriptions of development discourses in BC are informed by a review of sixty three government and non-government organizations with a provincial or regional mandate to either strengthen BC’s civil society and/or build community capacity.¹ The major characteristics of each discourse are described below, including a reference of a scholarly

1. The list of organizations included in this analysis was developed through the concept development workshops and world café. As such, the list was not comprehensive but rather a sample of BC based organizations with a capacity development mandate and an interest in creating a shared understanding of the major concepts in this field of work.

and/or internationally endorsed articulation of the given discourse. A few examples of organizations that are currently using and/or producing the given discourse in BC are also presented.

1. *The health promotion discourse* encourages several kinds of healthy human behaviors, including physical exercise, healthy eating, etc. (Bandura, 1998). In BC, the promotion of health is frequently advocated through the multiple determinants of health framework, which recognizes the interconnections between health and other aspects of the human experience, such as the built environment and income security. The promotion of health through the multiple determinants of health framework has encouraged the use of integral approaches to health discourse production in BC, which is employed by government initiatives like BC Healthy Communities and non-government agencies such as the BC Healthy Living Alliance.

2. *The sustainability discourse* can be traced back to ideas articulated in the Brundtland Report (1987) and Agenda 21 (1992), both of which emphasize a multi-sided approach to development that is centered on an ethic of care for earth and future generations (Thompson, 1997). The sustainability discourse encourages human behaviors that reduce the human footprint on earth and delegitimize activities that harm the planet. Community sustainability planning projects, awareness raising campaigns, green initiatives of various types all take shape from and give shape to the sustainability discourse in BC. In BC, the Fraser Basin Council, World Wildlife Federation, and Friends of Wild Salmon are examples of organizations that champion the sustainability discourse. Many municipal governments are also advancing this discourse under the auspices of sustainability planning (i.e., Whistler, Dawson Creek, etc.)

3. Many of the contemporary ideas inherent in the *social justice discourse* extend from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The social justice discourse encourages activities that cultivate socio-economic parity between population groups and aim to transform all forms of oppressive attitudes, behaviors and systems in society. (Miller, 1999) The social justice discourse promotes poverty reduction strategies, adult literacy programs, human rights advocacy work, etc. A few BC organizations who produce many of the strands of the social justice discourse, especially the poverty reduction branch of the discourse, are the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (BC Office), PovNet, and First Call.

4. *The community economic development discourse* is closely related to the sustainability and social justice discourses in that it encourages environmentally respectful economies and socially just modes of employment and related economic

developments. The community economic development discourse justifies diversified local economies that seek to replace imported goods and services with local goods and services. (Galaway & Hudson, 1994) The community economic development discourse animates and is animated by local cooperatives, fair-trade purchasing policies and the social enterprise work of non-profit organizations. Enterprising Non-Profits, Centre for Sustainable Community Development, Community Futures Development Corporations, and the Centre for Community Renewal are all working to advance the community economic development discourse in BC communities.

5. *The Indigenous rights discourse* advocates for the land title, rights and cultural estate of First Nations in what is now called British Columbia. This discourse encourages decolonization processes that address historical injustices such as the residential school system and the displacement of Indigenous peoples (Tully, 2000; Alfred, 2005). It is a particularly strong discourse in BC given the ongoing application of the BC Treaty Process to the relationship between First Nations and provincial and federal governments, which aims to settle land claims of First Nations in BC. The Union of BC Indian Chiefs, BC Treaty Commission, United Native Nations, and the Centre for Native Policy and Research are examples of organizations that produce some branch of the Indigenous rights discourse in BC.

6. *The multiculturalism discourse* encourages initiatives that welcome and integrate immigrants and newcomers into BC society, and foster social inclusion and respect for cultural differences. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1985) provides the legal instrument for advancing this discourse through policy initiatives in BC and throughout Canada. There are a range of provincial government initiatives that advance the multiculturalism discourse in BC, including BC Anti-Racism and Multicultural Program (Welcome BC, 2009). Additionally, a range of nongovernment agencies also contribute to the production of the multiculturalism discourse, including the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC.

7. *The arts discourse* is becoming increasingly robust in BC communities due to funding support for art projects from community foundations, 2010 Legacies Now and the BC Arts Council. Substantiating these investments in art is the growing academic literature that argues for using art as a central mechanism in community development, (Kay, 2000) as well as the effectiveness of the BC arts community in advocating for continued support of art. Community based organizations such as Headlines Theater in Vancouver offer a good example of how art is being used to prompt community development in social and economic issue areas.

The above discussion demarcates the qualitative differences between development discourses, illuminating the ideological home of many of the focus areas of civil society and community development change agents in BC. Identifying the major discourses operant in civil society and community development in BC is important to the task of developing the CSC concept because it makes explicit the types of ideas that are at play in most BC communities. Moreover, it provides additional analytical tools for understanding how change happens in civil society and communities in general. Although presented as distinct, the aforementioned discourses are entangled with one another in many communities, especially those communities with the capacity to secure funding to pursue multiple developmental directions at once.

To speak of power and development discourses begs questions about how change happens. Some change theorists suggest that there are three forms of change that can result from activities in a community. Grove, Kibel, & Hass (2005) argue that change can be categorized in the following terms: episodic change, developmental change and transformative change. Episodic change is defined as the cause and effect form of change. Typically, episodic changes are time-bound results that are stimulated by actions of a given program and/ or its participants. Developmental change, on the other hand, occurs across time and is inclusive of advances, moments of inactivity and set backs, which are all part of a rhythm of activity that changes according to a wide range of local conditions. Results of developmental changes are open-ended and less predictable than results of episodic changes. Finally, transformative changes represent fundamental shifts in individual, group, organizational, sector or community values and perspectives that seed the emergence of fundamental shifts in behavior. According to Grove, Kibel, & Hass (2005), transformative changes represent a crossroads or an unanticipated new direction taken for an individual, group, organization, or community, whereas episodic and developmental results are not nearly so unexpected or so potentially profound in their consequences.

In sum, civil society agents exercise power in diverse ways, are potentially capable of producing development discourses and can experience any one or combination of the above forms of change as they progress toward or regress from their chosen development goals. In the sections below, the four types of civil society agents, as well as their respective capacities to work with others for common interests, are discussed. The unique characteristics of each agent are also briefly discussed in terms of their general phases of development.

3.2. Individuals

Although the definitions, strategies, and indicators of civil society will differ between bodies of literature and professional practice areas, most scholars and activists recognize that the overarching goal of strengthening civil society and developing communities is to work with individuals in a participatory process through which they become increasingly capable to choose and act in personally meaningful ways, and can in turn work with others for mutual benefit. During one of the CSC concept development workshops, one participant echoed this sentiment by asserting that civil society capacity development “all starts with the individual” (Thomson, 2008, p.10).

For this reason, the CSC concept emphasizes the central role of the individual in civil society activities. An individual is a person separate from other persons who possess her/his own rights, responsibilities and sense of self. The personal capacity of an individual to participate in civil society consists of the ability to develop and use personal resources to engage in a process for positive change. This section defines the eight foundational characteristics of this ability by describing the major types of personal capacity required for participation in civil society and community life in general. The narrative below provides a backdrop for a discussion of the relationship between personal capacity and Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of citizen participation.

3.2.1. Personal Capacities

The capacities of people engaged in civil society work can be usefully divided into the following general categories: awareness, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, intentions/behaviour, identity, relations to others, and income security. Below, these terms are defined and used to explain forms of personal capacity that are required for involvement in civil society.

Awareness, or sense perception, is one of the first ways that people experience the world, including the public aspects of their life, and it involves a stream-like process of in-taking and apprehending things (i.e., information, objects, space, etc.) by sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste (Smith, 2002; Crane, 2001). Awareness as a form of personal capacity to participate in civil society activities involves an attentiveness to one’s abilities, as well as current affairs and the relationship between what one seeks to change and what others are doing in the same sphere of activity. There are several examples of when awareness is noted in the literature on personal capacity, for example Dodd and Boyd (2000) assert that personal capacity involves an awareness of personal power in a group. Dodd and Boyd (2000) also note that personal capacity entails an awareness of general policy trends on pertinent issues.

By contrast, knowledge as a form of personal capacity is the product of the process of organizing sense perception data about community development issues and assets into mental constructs that have an enduring quality. Knowledge is dynamic and shares a

complex relationship with one's awareness, feelings, as well as one's beliefs. Knowledge is often characterised by a confident and demonstrated understanding of a subject, potentially with the ability to use it for a specific purpose. Several kinds of knowledge have been identified as ingredient to a person's capacity to engage in civic life, including: knowledge of and/or a feeling of belonging in a community (MacLellan-Wright, et al., 2007); knowledge of one's own strengths and weaknesses, and to know and set one's own boundaries; knowledge of government and non-government structures and systems and the role they play in the policy-development process (Dodd & Boyd, 2000); as well as knowledge of community issues (Frankish, et al., 2003); knowledge and/or understanding about how public policy is made (MacLellan-Wright, et al., 2007).

Knowledge about civic matters is closely related to one's beliefs about personal agency, civil society, citizenship, and the role of the state in people's lives, etc. Although the term belief does not emerge in the literature about the role of the individual in civil society as often as the term knowledge, the relationship between knowledge and beliefs is nevertheless important to understand if we are to paint an accurate picture of personal capacity. Social psychologists Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) have demonstrated that beliefs are, at least in part, similar to knowledge in that they are both mental states that form in a person's mind through a process of "direct observation or information received from outside sources or by way of various inference processes" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p.7). However, knowledge ultimately differs from beliefs on the grounds that knowledge does not necessarily influence a person's course of action, whereas a belief or belief system influences a person's course of action by shaping one's attitudes and intentions to act. Generally speaking, beliefs are formed from knowledge and can be conceived as types of consolidated and justified knowledge – knowledge that one holds as truth – for example. The totality of a person's beliefs serves as "the informational base that ultimately determines his [her] attitudes... and behaviours" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 8). Examples of beliefs that are either explicitly named or implied in civil society literature include: belief in universal human rights and needs; belief in multiculturalism; belief in social values such as respecting others (Dodd & Boyd, 2000); belief in the value of participatory democracy and related processes; belief in one's own capacity to contribute to community change processes; belief in the essential goodness of people, etc.

As Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) suggest, these types of beliefs underlie the formation of attitudes insofar as an individual's attitude toward something or someone is based on her/his salient beliefs about the thing or person in question. An attitude leads to a set of intentions that indicate a certain amount of affect toward the person or thing in question. Each of these intentions is related to a specific behaviour, and thus the overall affect expressed by the pattern of a person's actions with respect to the phenomenon in question also corresponds to her/his attitude toward the given phenomenon. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975,

p. 12) Attitudes are typically categorized in terms of favourable, unfavourable and/or neutral in relation to specific things, people, and related phenomenon. Given the emphasis on attitudinal change (i.e., changing racist attitudes, etc.) in literature about civil society it is helpful to highlight that attitudes are ingrained, complex and bound together with many other facets of a person. Thus, to seek changes in attitudes requires initiatives that, at the very least, raise new awareness, impart new knowledge, and cultivate new beliefs. Two examples of personal attitudes that have been identified as requisites for meaningful participation in civil society are a favourable attitude toward peer support activities and peer-to-peer learning experiences (Thomson, 2008) and an unfavourable attitude toward social exclusion.

As Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) argue, intentions to act can be specific or general, and always distinct from attitudes in that they are more strongly related to behaviour than are attitudes, working as a bridge between what one actually does and one's attitude toward the phenomenon in question. For example, at the most specific level, a singular civil society agent intends to write a letter to a political leader with respect to a given subject in a specified situation at a given point in time. On a general level, a singular civil society agent intends to support a two-year democratic reform process with some bundle of actions with respect to different reform themes in unspecified situations at several points in time during the next two years. Despite their differences, both general and specific intentions are united because both are subjective probabilities [to] perform some observable behaviour or set of behaviours in the world (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 228).

The overt behaviour of a singular civil society agent will correspond to her/his intentions for action. For Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), intentions must be discussed in relation to specific behaviours. We can see this kind of coupling of behaviour and intention in the work of Dodd and Boyd (2000) when they identify "conflict resolution skills with the intention of both achieving goals and improving relationships" (Dodd and Boyd, 2000, p. 7) as a form of personal capacity. Beyond this one exception, most references to the behavioural dimension of personal capacity do not engage questions of intentions and are instead narrowly focused on measurable skills and/or abilities, including: skills to mentor informal leaders (MacLellan-Wright, et al., 2007); facilitation, research, planning and evaluation skills (MacLellan-Wright, et al., 2007; Dodd & Boyd, 2000); skills to develop personal relationships (Dodd & Boyd, 2000); communication skills and listening skills, including intercultural communication skills (Dodd & Boyd, 2000; Thomson, 2008); critical thinking skills (MacLellan-Wright, et al., 2007); skills to participate in public policy decision making process (MacLellan-Wright et al., 2007; Burby, 2003; Gibbon, et al., 2002), and so on and so on.

Although the foregoing bundle of personal capacities are conceptually distinct, rarely are they developed and exercised separately or independent of cross cutting contexts. Instead,

the singular civil society agent is multi-sided and ever-changing through her/his relations to others and the dynamics of adopted, inherited or self-created identity-markers, such as gender, family descent, socio-economic status, age, ability, religion and/or spirituality, sexual-orientation, nationality, etc. These defining personal features embed us in particular kinds of familial structures, social groups, formal associations and aggregate groups where we form relationships to others that can both contribute to and prohibit the development of our capacity to be meaningfully engaged in civil society. The interplay of how we enact our respective identity markers, the processes of shaping and re-shaping our identities by both our own will and through the influences of family, groups and other formal organizational structures to which we belong amount to a complex phenomenon that demands description beyond the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, this complexity is important to note because personal identity, the development of identity, and the role of diverse relationships in shaping identity are central to one's personhood and therefore one's ability to engage in community change activities.

The final aspect of a person's capacity to participate in civil society is her/his income security, as well as related forms of basic human security, such as food security and safe, affordable and decent housing. People who live at the edges of or under poverty line thresholds are often limited in their ability to choose how they will be involved in civil society because much of their time and resources are invested in survival. Possessing adequate income often translates into increased degrees of freedom to participate in some aspect of community life. Without personal and/or familial income security, the prospect of meaningful and sustainable involvement in civil society and community life more generally is a distant prospect at best.

These nine types of personal capacity are deeply interconnected and involve many dimensions, the sub-parts of which can not be fully explored in this short paper. However, despite the many sides of personal capacity, it is only one small quality of the whole person. In tracing the general contours of personal capacity, we can see what is involved in and/or required of human development processes that seek to increase public participation in civil society activities, and community life more broadly. Below, the nature of personal capacity at different levels of citizen participation in governance activities is reviewed.

3.2.2. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

Perhaps one of the most widely used constructs for making sense of citizen involvement in governance activities is Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation, which is an eight-leveled metaphor for understanding different types of citizen participation. Below, each rung of the ladder in Arnstein's ladder of participation is briefly explained in relationship to the personal capacities described above.

In Arnstein's ladder, the bottom two rungs are defined in terms of manipulation and therapy – the two states of citizen non-participation. Activities at these two bottom rungs are characterized by decision-makers who design public processes that aim to manipulate citizens through education and incentives with a view to facilitating their approval of pre-conceived ideas about the developmental directions and/or regressions of a particular part of public life. The therapy level of citizen participation involves decision-makers with an agenda to cure citizens' 'ill-conceived ideas' for public policy through public awareness raising campaigns, education, dialogues, etc. At the nonparticipation levels, citizens are generally unaware of the meaning of public policy and largely unaware of how to engage issues affecting their community. They will not possess knowledge about the political and legal context in which the given process is transpiring or the real impacts of their consent, or they will be powerless to acquire such knowledge. Finally, they will be unskillful at community organizing and will disbelieve the assertion that they have the capacity to affect change, waiting for someone else to do something.

Tokenism describes the next three rungs in the ladder, which consist of informing, consultation, and placation. Tokenism is a slight progression from non-participation phases insofar as it involves public processes that allow people who are traditionally excluded from public policy making process to hear about the plans of decision-makers and to respond, in a limited way, to the proposed plans. For instance, a public policy dialogue will always provide information to participants and will involve the intake of people's views, but under tokenistic conditions, participants will lack the power to insure that their views will have an impact on the shape of public policy. As such, tokenism is characterized by a lack of follow-through and no assurance of making consensus changes identified by citizens.

According to Arnstein (1969), placation is a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow traditionally excluded citizens to provide direct advice on public policy directions. Exercises in placation will generally include promises of follow through and remarks about how the given engagement exercise is going to be different this time around and will ensure people's concerns are acted upon. In the final analysis of a placation exercise, decisions are made by power-holders who erase earlier promises and create distractions away from the final choice, hoodwinking the citizenry. For example, under a placation scheme, a task force that is asked to advise on a public policy matter will not possess the power to implement the suggested directions because the power to make decisions rests with an elite decision-making group who only ever wanted the guise of public input – not the full grip of citizen control.

Citizens and citizen groups who participate in tokenistic public policy development processes will generally possess an awareness of the issues affecting their community and will know about how the existing decision-makers conduct the business of forming public policy. They

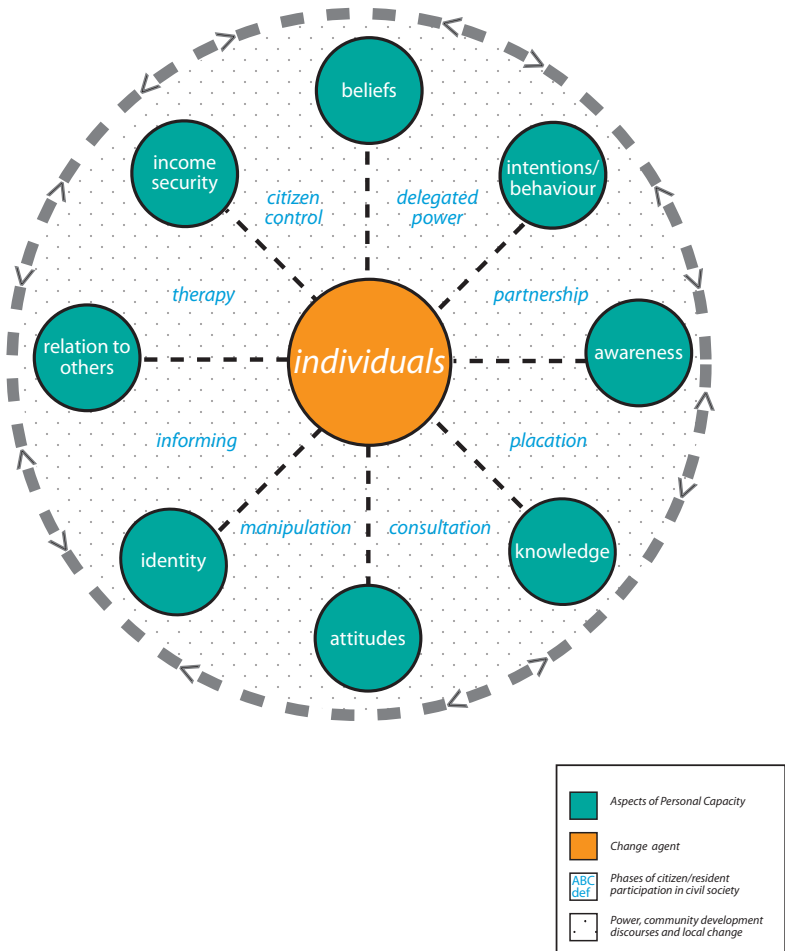
will carry a favourable attitude toward the process and intend to participate as much as they can; however, they will not have the relationships with decision-makers that shifts the nexus of control toward citizens and the given accountability structures do not have any power to hold decision makers to citizen-designed tasks. They will believe in democratic process and the role of citizen involvement in public policy developments. They are able to articulate their positions clearly and with supporting evidence, but harbor suspicions that their best efforts are sometimes an exercise in futility.

The top three levels of citizen participation (e.g., partnership delegated power and citizen control) are characterized by increasing degrees of decision-making power in the hands of citizens. Partnerships equalize the power differentials insofar as citizens and citizen groups are able to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional power holders, while the final say on public policy matters will generally stay in the hands of elected officials. Delegated power devolves decision-making power and managerial responsibility to non-government bodies, providing limited accountability oversight. Citizen control is best referred to as full participatory democracy where the majority of decision-making seats and full managerial power is held by organized groups of citizens. Participatory budgeting in Brazil and community development work in many remote and rural communities offer examples of citizen control either because systems have been created to ensure citizen control or senior levels of government can't be bothered to set up shop in remote areas and leave the people largely self-governing. The personal capacities required at the citizen power levels include a strong knowledge of the rights and responsibilities inherent in positions that demand transparent decisions about public matters, positive attitude toward the work and the intention to continually improve the public realm, conflict resolution skills, strong relations to the citizenry, as well as identity markers in the control group that reflect the diverse identities of the citizenry.

Although Arnstein's eight phase model of citizen engagement is an over-simplification of a complex and finely nuanced area of study, it does provide a useful illustration of the fact that there are significant gradations of citizen participation. Arnstein's concept of citizen participation contributes to the CSC framework an understanding that personal capacities are important to the health of civil society and that attempts to build personal capacities should consider the citizen engagement climate of the environment in which the capacity building work is happening. As such, personal capacity development initiatives ought to operate in conjunction with structural capacity building initiatives so that empowered citizens have welcoming frameworks to engage.

To summarize personal capacity and the phases of citizen/resident participation, a diagram is presented below that illustrates the presence of power, development discourses and forms of change in the lived experience of individuals engaged in civil activities.

Figure 1: Personal Capacity and Phases of Citizen/Resident Participation



3.3. Groups

Civil society is resplendent with ad hoc and non-formal groups. Defined as two or more individuals who are connected to one another by non-formal social relationships (Forsyth, 2006, p.2-3), groups are generally the starting point for community change processes because they are easier to join or form and can be collapsed quite simply in comparison to formal organizations, which involve more legal and administrative processes. Who we are and how we participate in the activities of our shared world depends in large measure on the kinds of groups with which we associate. Since the early part of the 1900s, academic researchers, especially anthropologists and social psychologists, have spent considerable time examining the phenomena of human groups, using different lenses and research methods for their examinations.

All human groups, including those identifying with civil society, whether large, small, structured or loose, are all based on a sense of shared interdependence among their members (Turner, 1987). The implications of this fact for the study of groups are multiple and various, which is evidenced by the work of Brown (1999), who studies how group dynamics and identity formation processes in groups. Moral philosophers, also contribute to the discourse on groups, including May (1992) who argues that groups use particular kinds of techniques to create themselves as distinct entities, and apply a set of procedures (formal and informal) for socializing new group members into pre-established patterns of group life. The abundance of theories for making sense of groups makes the task of describing the capacities of groups in civil society a challenging one since there are so many group concepts from which to choose. The select group domains and elements featured below merely scratch the surface of possible ways of defining civil society group qualities.

3.3.1. Group Capacities

Comprised of individuals, groups and group capacity to contribute to civil society activities mirror personal capacity in large part, but also include a set of qualities inherent in human interaction for and collective action on some issue in the world, generally with a view to some mutual benefits for members of the group. With such far reaching definitions of groups and group capacity, imagining the types and reasons for civil society groups is a staggering exercise. Typically, civil society groups are peer lead and have single and/or multi-issue agendas for community change. Anti-poverty groups, women's action coalitions, diversity groups, water conservations working groups, etc., are a couple of examples of common names for civil society groups. Regardless of the interest of a civil society group, they will be united in a common structure that consists of five basic parts: group interaction; group interdependence; group structure; group goals; and, group cohesion. Each of these basic group parts are described below.

Group interaction is comprised of two related elements: task interaction and relationship interaction. Task interaction is “all group behaviour that is focused principally on the group’s work, projects, plans and goals” (Forsyth, 2006, p.10). Although relationship interaction is inherent in task interaction, the primary reference point for relationship interaction is the social and interpersonal relations that take place within the context of group life. This basic distinction is perhaps one of the most enduring distinctions in the literature on groups, featuring prominently in discussions about leadership in groups, specifically questions on the degree to which leaders should focus on task actions versus the feelings of group members (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977).

Group interdependence refers to the interplay of actions in the space between members of a group (Baron, et al., 2003). Simply put, the interdependence of a group means one member’s feelings, experiences and actions can come to be influenced in whole or in part by others. According to Johnson and Johnson (2003), there are two central kinds of group interdependence. Social interdependence exists when people share common goals and each person’s outcomes are affected by the actions of others, whereas social dependence occurs where the “outcomes of one person are affected by the actions of a second person but not vice versa” (Johnson & Johnson 2003, p. 94).

Group structure consists of three interrelated parts: size, norms and roles. With regard to size, suffice it to say that large groups function differently in a number of important respects to smaller groups. For instance, in smaller groups a higher proportion of people are likely to participate and there is potentially more time for each to engage in group life. Moreover, a smaller group can provide a space in which speaking or acting is not as anxiety-ridden as it would be in a larger group. By contrast, large groups are more likely to be more diverse and include people with a range of skills, which can allow for more specialization of group work and a feeling of anonymity. Large groups may foster an environment that leads to “less social responsibility... which in turn will often lead to less task involvement and lower morale on the part of many group members as size increases” (Baron, et al., 2003, p.7). However, a large group with strong and supported leadership that effectively coordinates group work and makes decision making processes inclusive can preserve the close knit feeling of a smaller group structure.

The second part of a group structure is group norms, which typically define what is normal, right, and true for the life of the group in question (Baron, et al., 2003), whether they serve as rules of conduct that indicate what attitudes and behaviour might be expected or demanded in particular private and public group situations. As such, group norms do not necessarily dictate what will happen in the group, but rather what group members think ought to happen. Group norms are central to group structures because they serve as a unifying force for the life of the group, enabling it to survive and/or to achieve the goals that

it sets for itself. As such, groups are major carriers and producers of norms and play a pivotal role in advancing certain kinds of developmental directions in civil society through their internal group work and the group's work with others.

As the third part of a group structure, roles serve as the bundle of expectations and attributes that are linked to different social positions within a group. An example of a role in a group is the chair of an ad hoc committee who takes a lead role in developing agendas and facilitating meetings. As with all other aspects of a group, there are various different ways of categorizing types of roles, including: inquirer, recorder, reporter, etc. These different types of group roles can be either assigned and formalized, which is often the case in more established groups, or roles can emerge through a combination of the demands of the external environment and the interactions of group members. Regardless of how roles develop, they are fundamentally important to group structure since they "define the formal structure of the group and differentiate one position from another" (Johnson & Johnson, 2003, p. 24). As a final note on group roles, it is instructive to remember that how group roles are filled is sometimes similar to how teams are chosen on the playground at school, the different positions or roles are usually linked to pre-existing status and power of members of given group.

Group goals refer to the overarching reasons for why a group exists. Group goals are statements that address the following kinds of questions: What does this group do for its members? What kinds of change does it aim to make in: (a) the group; (b) the environment in which the group exists; and, (c) the people who are aware of the existence of the group? Goals are so vital to the life of a group that if a group does not have a set of common goals, "the group will not survive or be effective" (Benson, 2000, p. 66). Groups that have an agreed upon suite of goals have what can be called a goal structure. Benson (2001) argues that there are two different kinds of goal structures: cooperative and competitive. A co-operative goal structure develops when the individual goals of members are visible and similar, whereas "a competitive goal structure emerges where the individual goals of members are hidden or seen as different or opposed" (Benson, 2001, p. 67). Whether a group has a competitive or a co-operative goal structure, most groups will articulate their particular goals in a document that they use to communicate what they aim to achieve to new members and/or outsiders. Such a document is major expression of the capacity of the group to act as a group for some shared purpose.

The final characteristic of groups can be referred to as group cohesion, which refers to: the feelings of connectedness that each member shares with regard to other members of the group; the collection of attitudes and activities that tighten the bonds between individuals and strengthen group members' affinity for the group as a whole; and, outsiders' perception of the group as a cohesive entity. Group cohesion is a soft characteristic of groups and

refers to all of the qualities of a group that can not be reduced to quantifiable elements of a group, such as the number of group members and goal statements. As such, the notion of group cohesion aims to account for the fact that “groups are not merely sets of aggregated, independent individuals; instead they are unified social entities” (Forsyth, 2006, p.13). As a primarily subjective aspect of groups, the particular elements that define group cohesion will largely depend on the norms shared in common by group members, as well as the goal structure of the group.

These five characteristics of groups provide a useful framework for thinking about what constitutes a group, and provides the informational basis to ask questions about group development. What are the different phases of group development and what is the status of each of the aforementioned aspects of a group at each stage of development?

3.3.2. Phases of Group Development

Perhaps the most popular and widely used framework for thinking about how groups develop was created by Tuckman (1965). Tuckman suggests that groups go through five phases of development: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning. Below, Tuckman’s group development framework has been adapted to coincide with the five group qualities discussed above.

The first group development phase is called forming, which generally consists of several people gathering in a shared space for the first time to get acquainted with one another, orient themselves and/or participate in the development of the direction of the group. For example, a meeting is convened for individual conservationists (most of which do not know one another) to come together and think about cleaning a local stream that is polluted. For such a group, the forming stage would not include any commitment to taking action, but rather would provide an opportunity for the group to determine if they would like to clean the stream together. At a first meeting of this group, people are looking for acceptance and are seeking to define their tasks in the group and their relationships to others in the group. In terms of group interaction, the group is strictly concerned with relationship interaction and does not engage task items because there is not yet a clear sense of the scope of work and approach to the work. Similarly, there is little to no interdependence among group members due to the fact that group members are getting acquainted and will likely not trust one another enough to enter into a relation of interdependence. Additionally, the group does not have a set of stated shared norms nor does the group have a set of roles for different group members, with the exception of the group convener who would likely facilitate the gathering. The most basic group goals may exist by the end of this phase of development, such as an agreement to meet again at another specified

time to further explore the stream cleaning idea. Although there may be varying degrees of cohesion between certain members of this newly formed group (i.e., two people subscribe to the same environmental philosophy, etc.), the group as a whole has little to no cohesion. The conservationist group moves from the forming stage to the storming stage when all members have a shared understanding of who is involved and when the group shall meet again.

The second group development phase is called storming. When storming, the conservation group members take positions on issues important to the group, oftentimes generating an argumentative and emotional environment. As a result, group members wrestle with emerging power relations and related conflict between members. There is an abundance of relationship and task interaction among the group at this phase since the members will be making decisions about whether the group can stay together to form norms for ongoing work. A mixture of social interdependence and social dependence characterizes the group at this phase since some group members will reciprocate effort and positive input and others will not. As with the forming stage, the storming stage does not entail the development of norms and clearly defined roles are not yet set; however, through the storming phase, roles are starting to emerge, which can sometimes mean that some group members leave the group if it becomes clear that their preferred role is not available. Overall, there is uncertainty among group members regarding who is responsible for what tasks, and as a result, there is a very low level of work in the group and a looming question among some members about whether the group should even exist. A basic goal structure is in place, which is mainly competitive in design, but may include cooperative elements. Should the group tilt toward the norming stage, ingredients for potential cohesion begin to show themselves, such as a shared hope among the declared leaders of the group that the storming phase will pass and a sense of unity will bring the group together at some point to undertake the work in question. The conservation group moves from storming to norming when most of the major conflicts have been resolved and the group shares a collective will to move forward and set the normative contours around its work together.

At the norming phase, the conservation group is characterized by a strong dependence on a designated group leader for direction. The argumentative environment and climate of conflict that characterizes the storming phase have been replaced with a group desire to work together to achieve the task of cleaning the stream. There is a commitment to formalizing the group's structure, and developing a common understanding of the group's goals, roles and responsibilities of different group members. As such, norming includes intense relationship interaction since group members need to relate across their differences to reach agreement on how the group will work. This accelerated relationship interaction can often lead to a strengthening social interdependence among group members, which begins to develop into group cohesion. The norming phase concludes with a strong sense of

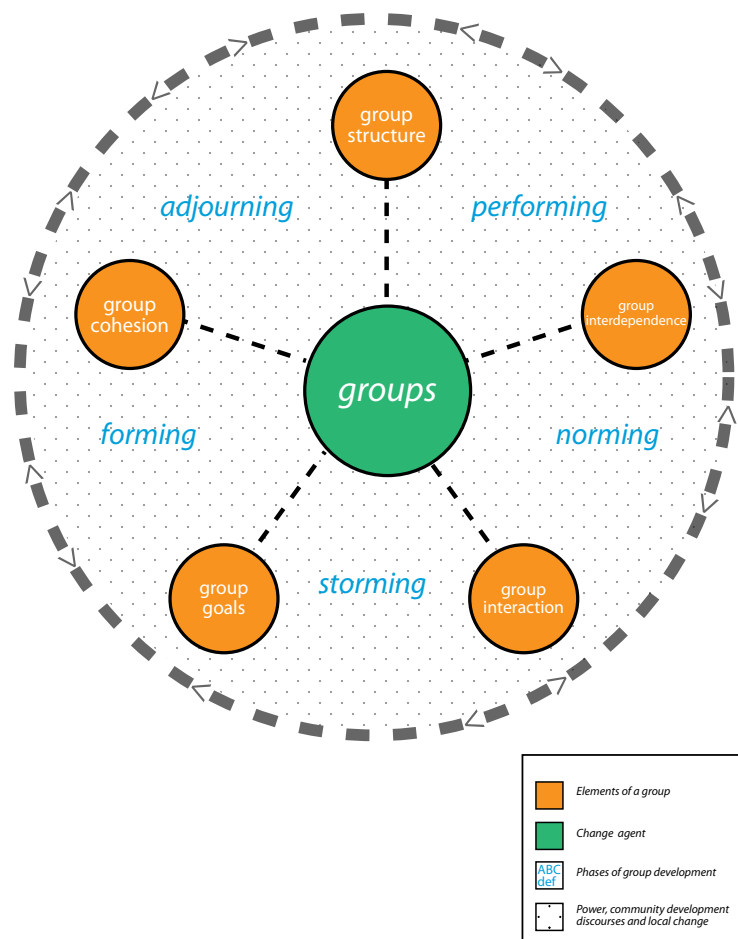
order and direction among group members, providing the requisite foundation upon which group members can take action.

At the performing phase, the conservation group is characterized by coordinated group interaction, which translates into the accomplishment of the stream cleaning task. Group members are able to express themselves freely and there are clear procedures for dealing with conflict in a healthy way. The different roles of the group are clearly defined, respected and utilized to achieve common goals. The goal structure of the group is clear, effective and used frequently to monitor progress. A clear process is used to assess failures and the group is able to reach agreement on solutions in an efficient manner. Group cohesion is very strong and expressed throughout the accomplishments of the group, as well as in the process for how the group deals with set backs in their work. The conservation group moves from the performing phase to the adjourning phase when it has accomplished the task of cleaning the stream.

The final phase of group development is called adjourning, which marks the end of the life of the group insofar as the group goals have been achieved and the given project has been completed. The process of adjourning the conservation group involves a series of group interactions for marking the final engagement with the group structure and the cessation of formal interdependence between group members. Group cohesion is at its strongest at this phase since the group has cleaned the stream and managed to work through their difficulties in a way that ultimately strengthened the group. This final meeting offers group members an opportunity to reflect on their performance in the group, specifically what they take away from the group experience, both positive and negative. Reflective moments require that the group continues to maintain strong interactions between members, and as such, the strength of group interdependence decreases as people prepare to detach from the group structure. The adjourning phase ends when all members have agreed to disassemble the group, or have decided to put the life of the group on pause until the next time it is required.

In an era of mega strategies for social change, the role of groups in social change processes is often overshadowed; however, change work of enduring value is often the product of non-formal groups. The important function of groups and group work in civil society justifies the inclusion of groups as a type of change agent, serving as the second major feature of the CSC framework. The diagram below represents the major elements of group capacity and the developmental phases of a group.

Figure 2: Group Capacity and Group Development



3.4. Nonprofit Organizations (NPOs)

In every geographic community, there can be many different types of organizations to consider, including businesses, First Nations governments, municipal, provincial and federal government agencies, as well as non-profit organizations. Although a review of each of these different kinds of organizations, their distinct capacities, as well as their developmental phases would be interesting, only non-profit organizations (NPOs) will be discussed in this paper because of their leadership role in civil society and their general role in cultivating community well being.

Simply defined, NPO capacity is the knowledge, abilities, skills and behavior of individuals, as well as the institutional structures and processes that enable an organization to meet its mission and goals in an efficient and sustainable way.² What counts as a type of organizational capacity and how such capacity ought to be built depend on a range of factors, including whether a NPO is small, medium or large, and at what phase of development the NPO is at within the organizational life cycle (Lester, 2004). Below, the central capacities of NPOs are delineated and briefly explained.

3.4.1. NPO Capacities

The first domain of NPO capacity can be described as its strategic framework, which is the purpose, design, and direction that provides an organization its legal and management structure (Allison & Kaye, 1997). The strategic framework consists of four elements: aspirations, governance model, program/service delivery model, and communications and marketing. The aspirations of a NPO are the normative aspects of an organization and generally include its mission, vision, guiding principles and overarching goals. The governance model of an NPO includes its organizational structure (i.e., Board of Directors, etc.), decision making processes (i.e., consensus, etc.), legal documents (i.e., constitution, etc.) as well as its policy and procedure documents (i.e., purchasing policies, etc.). A NPO's program and service delivery model constitutes the third element of the strategic framework, which includes departmental and program plans for how specific initiatives will be delivered and assessed. Communication and marketing of key organizational messages and services make up the fourth element. There are several sub-elements inherent to communication and marketing, including branding, marketing strategies, and corporate communications plans, which can involve protocols for relating to media, procedures for internal communication, etc.

The second domain of NPO capacity is its relationships, which there are four in total. The first and perhaps most common can be referred to as inter-personal relationships, which

2. This definition was developed by the Capacity Building Task Force of the BC Government/Nonprofit Initiative. For more details on this initiative, see: <http://www.nonprofitinitiative.gov.bc.ca/documents.html>. Several BC organizations were involved in framing this definition, who also play ongoing roles in building nonprofit organizational capacity, including: Centre for Non-Profit Management, Centre for Sustainability, and the Centre for Non Profit Development.

involve a NPOs interactions between NPO staff/volunteers and the people who access the goods and/or services of the given NPO (Dyer, et al., 2002). The second major type of relationship is intra-sector relationships, which are often created to engage in mutually beneficial activities, such as securing funding and/or advocating for policy changes. Where intra-sector relationships are formalized, Memorandums of Understanding, or other formal binding documents are developed. Informal intra-sector relationships, on the other hand, are less rigid and consist of activities such as information sharing and providing letters of support for different projects (Watchtendorf, 2000). NPOs also have relationships with different government agencies, which usually exist because of funding agreements or fee-for-service contracts (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2002). Finally, NPOs have multiple different types of relationships with businesses, such as simple customer relationships when NPOs purchase goods and/or services, and occasionally, NPOs partner with businesses on joint community development projects (Chung, 2004).

The third domain of NPO capacity is human resources (Pynes, 2004), which consists of people and their skills, attitudes and knowledge, as well as the battery of strategies to recruit, retain and plan for succession. There are two major types of people involved in a NPO, each of which possess a set of skills, knowledge and attitudes that are integral to their work within the given NPO. Volunteers are common to most NPOs and include a range of categories, including Board of Directors, committees, program volunteers, and student interns. For most but not all NPOs, staff are also major aspect of capacity, including Executive Director, senior management personnel, program and service staff, as well as administrative and information technology staff. The second element of human resources can be defined as a capability to strategically plan for ongoing recruitment, training and retention of staff. Human resource planning is a multi-faceted process and can include the following types of corollary plans for making the work experience of people a positive one. Wellness plans, professional development plans, health benefit plans, and cultural inclusion plans are a few examples of human resource planning documents.

The fourth domain of NPO capacity is research and development, which involves the following elements: research and organizational learning; evaluation, planning and program development; and, innovative thinking and reflection. Although not all NPOs have the time or resources to engage in research and/or organizational learning about issues related to their programs and projects, many NPOs conduct at least some basic research and most organizations have staff and/or volunteers that facilitate some form of organizational learning about important matters affecting the organization and/or its environment (Jones & Hendry, 2005). Examples of research include the development of an environmental scan or statistical research on the population groups that utilize the services of the NPO. Organizational learning is any educational process that engages staff and volunteers with the research findings, or any other information that is pertinent to the functioning of the organization. Internal lunch and learn programs where staff and volunteers share information are an example of organizational learning.

Complementing the act of researching and learning is the NPO practice of evaluation, planning and program development (McDavid, 2006; Kaplan, 2003). These elements of research and development have become one of the most important features of NPO capacity because government and foundation funding are often tied to an NPO's capacity to articulate how a program will work and what kind of result the program will achieve. Given the multi-sidedness of NPOs, it is important to note that evaluation, planning and program development generally take place in three distinct areas of an NPO and will vary according to the area in question: (a) mission-driven and/or service driven priority areas (i.e., departmental plans, program logic models, etc.); (b) NPO operations, including inter-functional coordination of internal activities (i.e., administrative procedures and policies, etc.); and, (c) social enterprise and other types of business development (i.e., cost/benefit analysis, business plans, etc.).

The final element of research and development is innovative thinking and reflection, which are ideally tightly woven into the whole fabric of all foregoing elements and other relevant characteristics of NPO capacity. Innovative thinking and reflection are integral to the cause of continually improving the work of a NPO, propelling it toward greater local relevancy and more effective actions. Having time to engage in innovative thinking and reflection is not commonly realized in many NPOs since such an undertaking requires adequate resources to imagine, design and plan, implement and evaluate innovative program ideas. It is important to note that the troubling side of the ideal of innovation is that it can foster a climate in which highly successful pilot projects are perpetually implemented, but never continued for the sake of making resources available for more innovation.

The fifth domain of NPO capacity can be usefully described as NPO systems and infrastructure. The broad notion of NPO systems encompasses financial and administrative management systems. Financial management systems includes activities and protocols, such as cost and time tracking processes, standard accounting procedures and systems for handling accounts payable/receivable. Administrative systems relate to activities such as how mail is handled, how equipment and rooms are booked, and how the telephone system is managed. These systems, and related characteristics of NPO capacity, are structured according to the basic physical and technological infrastructure of a NPO. Physical infrastructure includes the myriad of office space, furniture, ramps for people in wheel chairs, etc. Technological infrastructure includes computers, software, photocopiers, fax machines, etc. Taken together, these two kinds of infrastructure give shape to the operating environment of an NPO.

The sixth and final domain of NPO capacity is the funding model of a NPO, which consists of two inter-related parts. The first part is the NPO sources of funding, which include funding from governments, philanthropic organizations, corporations, First Nations governments,

international intergovernmental organizations, organization members, etc. The second part of the funding model for a NPO is the mechanisms for generating revenue, which includes social enterprise, service contracts, fee-for-service, donations, membership fees, etc. Inherent in the funding model of a NPO are three general financial performance measures, which can be usefully defined in terms of fundraising efficiency, public support and fiscal performance (Ritchie & Kolodinsky, 2003).

Of course, there are additional granular levels of analysis that could be explored in an examination of the capacities of a NPO; however, the foregoing overview will suffice in order to accommodate description of the developmental phases of a NPO. Below, a version of the NPO life cycle is described in a manner that integrates the NPO capacities reviewed above.

3.4.2. Life Cycle of NPOs

Similar to most living things, NPOs undergo changes over the course of their life and as such can be explained in terms of life cycles (Simons, 2001). The following section provides a model for understanding the organizational life cycle in terms of six phases: gestation, incorporation, strategic and operational planning, happening, stasis and conflict, and the dissolution phase. Although a given phase is conceivably distinct from other phases in the life cycle, a NPO can find themselves in more than one developmental phase at a time. For example, a NPO that is engaged in strategic and operational planning can also be engaged in activities, which locates it in the happening phase. Additionally, a NPO can have several staff that do not get along, straining the cohesiveness of the NPO and tilting some aspects of the NPO toward the stasis and conflict phases, while at the same time other staff work well together and are high achievers as a group. As such, it is valuable to remember throughout the reading of this section that each phase in the organizational life cycle is generally porous and most NPOs will move in between different phases (especially the happening, planning, and stasis phases) several times over the course of its life time. It is these three phases that are particularly important to the task of thinking about NPO capacity since these phases are home to the most dramatic changes in a NPO. Although the NPO lifecycle that is presented below follows a linear trajectory, the actual movements of a NPO are actually characterized by curving oscillations between developmental phases.

The first phase in the NPO life cycle is the gestation phase. This phase corresponds with the performing phase of the group life cycle discussed earlier, which assumes that a group of people has formed a normative order to organize their work and has demonstrated the capacity to act together. The gestation phase involves agreement among group leaders to turn their informal group into a nonprofit organization. At this phase, group members are exploring their options, and are engaging in research and dialogue about the aspirations

and governance of their NPO. Aside from the volunteer members of the group, there are no other human resources to speak of and there is little to no financial resources at this phase. Similarly, the group has no formalized systems and infrastructure, with perhaps the exception of a basic web site and access to basic communications services that are provided by one of the group members. The group has established some relationships with other nonprofit organizations, as well as private and public sector entities, and is speaking openly about the prospect of forming a nonprofit organization. A group moves from the gestation phase to the incorporation phase when it has a clear set of options, a collective willingness to make a choice as well as a time slot reserved to decide about the best arrangement for becoming a legal entity.

The incorporation phase is the second phase in the organizational life cycle and is characterized by a set of legal documents that transform the given group into an organization by articulating the aspirations, governance and specific legal nature of the given nonprofit organization. The milestones of this phase of development include: certificate of incorporation, constitution and by-laws, certificate of charitable status (optional), proposed budget, and a legal board. Several other domains of nonprofit organization capacity develop at this phase as well, including a suite of policy and procedure documents that outline the rules for how the organization will undertake its work. As the organization changes and experiments with different kinds of activities, these documents will likely be reviewed and revised by staff and the Board of Directors on an as need basis. If the organization is handling money, then accounting procedures will also be established at this phase, as well as any other relevant administrative policies. Although some newly minted NPOs will immediately hire staff and will need to develop the requisite human resource policies and procedures, most NPOs at this phase in the life cycle will not hire staff at the incorporation phase. An NPO moves from the incorporation phase to the strategic and operational phase when it is in possession of all requisite legal documentation, and the board of directors and any staff are committed to the directions of their NPO.

Phase three in the NPO life cycle is the strategic and operational planning phase, which can include the development of an environmental scan of the operating environment, an articulation of a suite of short and long term strategic goals, as well as a plan that operationalizes the organization to achieve the stated goals. Ideally, this phase is frequently engaged by a NPO over the course of its life since it establishes and re-establishes the framework for how the NPO will interact with its environment and adjust to changes in its operating environment. Also, NPOs will generally use this phase to build on their strategic framework by developing program delivery model(s) and communication strategies that inform the relevant public about the NPO and the types of goods and/or services that it provides. Although NPOs will articulate their operational plan in different ways, most will include some basic research that supports the need for the select project/program, as well as

a description of the target audiences, program objectives, outputs and intended outcomes. As such, the establishment of evaluation schemes is also part of this developmental phase because NPOs will require indicators of success and performance measurement strategies to assess their impact. Since an NPO will enter, exit and re-enter this phase of its life cycle on several occasions, it is important to note that this phase also serves as the space and time for innovative thinking and reflection for an NPO. An NPO that has undertaken several initiatives to meet its strategic goals will, ideally, have a wealth of lessons learned that can inform decision making processes regarding project and program design.

Moreover, the strategic and operational planning phase can sometimes include the formation of relationships with other NPOs, businesses and/or government agencies wherever such relationships advance the goals of the NPO. Questions about human resources are likely part of this phase of development, both voluntary and paid staff. However, it is possible that strategic and operational planning activities are strictly for a working board, in which case paid staff would not factor into this phase of the NPO life cycle. Financial resources, systems and infrastructure enter into this phase of development wherever the NPO is planning its projects in a manner that requires financing, whether for staff, capital costs, system upgrades or other program related costs. A NPO moves from the operational and strategic planning phase into the happening phase when it has completed the documents (i.e., department plans, organizational strategic plan, etc.) that articulate the collective will of the relevant members of the organization for how the NPO will implement and assess its work.

Phase four is the happening phase, which is the phase when the NPO is interacting with the communities it serves. At this phase, all of the foregoing ground work is put into practice, which is ideally characterized by a vibrancy of board members and staff, and a demonstrated appreciation of the NPO from the people and places that the NPO serves. Ideally, this phase involves effective projects/programs that are well marketed, each of which is evaluated according to pre-established measures of success. The mission of the NPO is well known to relevant members of the public and strongly supported by staff and the Board. Contracts are in place for project and program staff, as well as any other relevant human resource supports, such as professional development and cultural inclusion plans. The NPO is also in compliance with the regulatory regime of government. The NPO has adequate financial resources and is using an appropriate combination of different mechanisms for generating revenue. Any systems and infrastructure that is required to effectively run programs and projects are in place. Relationships between the NPO, its clients, volunteers, business partners, government agencies and other NPOs are engaged through the project and programmatic activities, which manage to confirm existing relationships, cultivate new relationships, and reveal those relationships that should be reconsidered and potentially abandoned.

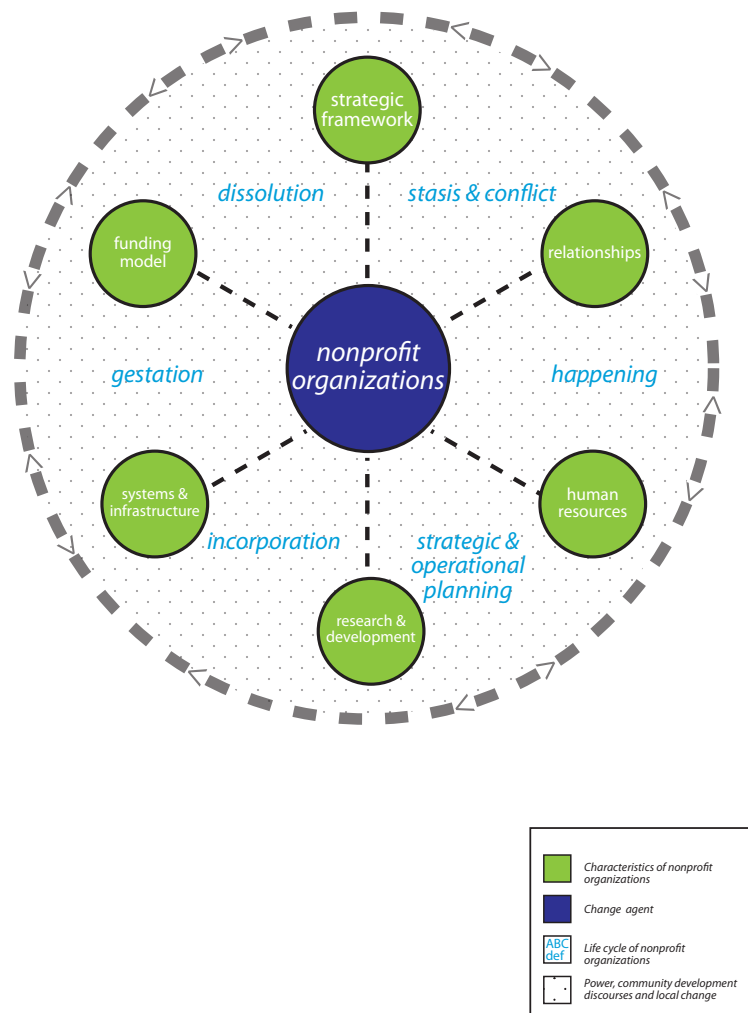
The picture above is clearly the ideal expression of the phase; however, it is important to note that there are gradients of effectiveness within the happening phase. For example, where a NPO is experiencing a financially difficult year due to a reduction in funding from a major supporter, the given NPO will likely still engage in activities that locate it in the happening phase; however, it may do so in a down-scaled way. A NPO moves out of the happening phase into the stasis and conflict phase when most of its staff and board perceive the NPO as being stuck in a routine of hum-drum activities that are punctuated with conflict, and patched over with mediocre solutions that no one is really happy with.

As the fifth phase in the organizational life cycle, the stasis and conflict phase is similar to the human experience of being depressed, full of angst and in conflict with others. This phase involves a series of internal and external qualities that have paralyzed the NPO from realizing its potential and taking proactive steps toward a stronger and healthier way of interacting with the world. Some of these qualities include: an absence of strong leadership from both the staff and board; a high proportion of new and relatively unfamiliar staff and board members who have different visions for how the NPO should work; ineffective and/or irrelevant programs and projects that are causing frustration in the communities that are served; and a precarious and unreliable financing environment. Other qualities that characterize this phase include competing views among staff and board members about what is wrong with the NPO and what needs to be done to fix the problem. A crisis of leadership can also emerge in this phase whereby different factions develop, which turn people against one another and pit small groups in the organization against each other. An undergirding tension marks most meetings and the tension occasionally erupts in a conflict between the more vocal staff and/or board members. Relationships with external partners are strained or severed, staff resign in high numbers, and the question about folding the organization are frequently engaged. A NPO moves from the stasis and conflict phase into the dissolution phase when the Board of Directors declares that the process of collapsing the organization is imminent and develops a plan for taking the legal steps of dissolving the NPO.

The sixth and final phase is the dissolution phase, which is the final step of an NPO before becoming a part of history. In this phase the organization is unable to operate for legal and/or social reasons. Legal reasons for dissolving the NPO include contraventions of the provincial legislation governing nonprofit organizations resulting in a requirement by the state to cease all operations and formally dissolve the organization. Some social reasons have been noted above, but also include such phenomenon as a lack of interest among the Board to continue the work, and/or changes in the operating environment that lead to the evaporation of community need for the work of the NPO. Depending on the circumstances of the dissolution, the NPO may celebrate its work, or the collapse may also be a sad affair and is discreetly undertaken by a few of the remaining board members. The completion of the dissolution phase is the absence of all traces of the NPO in question.

In Figure 3, the capacities of nonprofit organizations and the phases of the nonprofit life cycle are presented.

Figure 3: Nonprofit Organization Capacity and Phases of the NPO Life Cycle





3.5. Non-Profit Sector (NPS)

The non-profit sector (NPS) is a distinct entity that is multi-faceted and subject to phases of development that are similar to other types of civil society actors, especially nonprofit organizations – the constituting element of this category of civil society. Defined simply, the NPS is the totality of, as well as inter-organizational practices for and structures between all NPOs in a given jurisdiction. Although an old quality of modern society, it is only since the early 1990s that the NPS has become a serious topic of research. Leading NPS scholars such as Salamon and Anheier (1992a) have argued that the lack of attention historically paid to the NPS around the world is because of limited data sources on the sector, different national boundaries around the sector, and the use and mis-use of concepts designed to depict the agents within the sector. Salamon and Anheier (1992b) address the historical limitations of defining the NPS by creating a structural/operational definition of the sector.

Five core structural features distinguish the organizations that comprise the NPS from other types of groups and institutions in most jurisdictions around the world. The organizations that fall within the category of the NPS are: “(a) formally constituted; (b) nongovernmental in basic structure; (c) self-governing; (d) non-profit-distributing; and, (e) voluntary to some meaningful extent” (Salamon & Anheier, 1992a, p. 1). Based on this definition, Salamon and Anheier (1992b) create the International Classification of Nonprofit Organizations (ICNPO), which is divided into twelve major activity groups, including a catch-all “Not Elsewhere Classified” group, each of which are in turn further subdivided into twenty-four subgroups. The following table summarizes all twelve major categories of organizational types (or subsectors) that are included in the ICNPO.

Figure 4: Summary of Types of NPOs

Major Activity Area and Definition
1. Culture and recreation: Organizations and activities in general and specialized fields of culture and recreation.
2. Education and research: Organizations and activities administering, providing, promoting, conducting, supporting and servicing education and research.
3. Health: Organizations that engage in health related activities, providing health care, both general and specialized services, administration of health care services, and health support services.
4. Social Services: Organizations and institutions providing human and social services to a community or target population.
5. Environment: Organizations promoting and providing services in environmental conservation, pollution control and prevention, environmental education and animal protection.
6. Development and housing: Organizations promoting programs and providing services to help improve communities and the economic and social well being of society.
7. Law, advocacy and politics: Organizations that work to protect and promote civil and other rights, or advocate the social and political interests of general or special constituencies, offer legal services and promote public safety.
8. Philanthropic and intermediaries and volunteerism promotion: Philanthropic organizations and organizations promoting charity and charitable activities.
9. International activities: Organizations promoting greater intercultural understanding between peoples of different countries and also those providing relief during emergencies and promoting development and welfare abroad.
10. Religion: Organizations promoting religious beliefs and administering religious services and rituals.
11. Business, professional associations and unions: Organizations promoting, regulating and safeguarding business, professional and labor interests.
12. Not Elsewhere Classified

Each major activity area constitutes a subsector of the NPS, each of which will either possess or contain the potential to develop a set of collective capacities to identify and advance common interests. To talk about what characterizes these collective capacities, we must first acknowledge that much of the capacity of the NPS is simply the capacity of NPOs. However, beyond the distinct capacities of NPOs, there are several capacities that are unique to the NPS and its many subsectors. When project participants were asked questions about what constituted NPS capacity, many noted that NPS capacity involves inter-organizational practices and governance structures that are designed and implemented by leaders of distinct NPOs for the benefit of their respective subsector within the NPS, or the NPS as a whole.

3.5.1. NPS Capacities

The inter-organizational practices and governance structures that unify combinations of NPOs in either the same or in a different sub-sector within the NPS make recognizable the distinct composition of the NPS, or any of its subsectors, as an agent in civil society.

The collective ability of sector agents to learn together about developments that affect the operations of sub-sector agents was repeatedly noted by CSC concept development participants as a central form of NPS capacity. There were two examples of learning capacity provided by participants, including professional learning exchanges with other sectors (e.g., public sector and business sector), as well as place-based learning initiatives, such as site visits, sector dialogues and learning-focused workshop series that are designed to facilitate peer learning.

A shared ability to meet together and engage in collective analysis of issues and assets, plan developmental directions and establish sector governance structures were also noted as capacities. Specifically, participants noted sector-specific indicator monitoring initiatives, and related practices to use such information to plan for collective action as key forms of capacity. Strategic social development plans, literacy plans, early childhood development plans were identified as examples of action plans that seek to organize the NPS and/or its subsectors.

With regard to governance structures that are unique to the NPS, participants noted network structures, which is also noted by Gudz (2004), community of practice structures, and/or leadership councils for the entire sector and/or sub-sectors within the NPS. Additional mechanisms for establishing sector governance structures include statements of shared values and general goals, such as compacts, declarations, and charters.

Depending on size of the community, workshop participants noted that sector and/or sub-sector capacity also includes the collective knowledge of sector agents, as well as knowledge management. Specifically, participants noted that the existence of geographically defined inventories of networks, coalitions and inter-organizational working arrangements, as well as inventories of programs and projects were types of NPS capacity. Integrated service delivery models and related evaluation strategies, feedback processes and the time to adapt strategies based on evaluation results were also noted as key forms of NPS capacity.

3.5.2. Rhythms of Change in the NPS

As a social entity driven by people, the NPS experiences change and development in similar ways to other agents in civil society. However, given the many different agents, practices and governances in the NPS, it is difficult to imagine a model of development that would account for the different phases of change experienced at the sector, or subsector level. Albeit an imperfect fit for the job, the five rhythms of social change as articulated by the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation (hereafter Harwood) offers a useful heuristic for arranging an analysis of how developments happen in the NPS and how the NPS experiences change.

The first phase of community change noted by Harwood (2009) is the waiting place, which, for the purposes of this paper, involves a collective sense among employees and volunteers in the NPS that the sector as a whole, or one of its subsectors, is not working properly, there is no leadership in the sector to engage stakeholders in learning, and collective analysis and action planning are mostly non-existent. Additionally, no network structures exist and there is limited collective knowledge about how to go about creating such structures. Moreover, there are no compacts between agencies who share overlapping mandates, instead such groups fight over money, projects and clients. Clients and/or members of NPS organizations feel mostly disempowered because there are no opportunities to involve their voice in discussions about how the sector should work, and no opportunities to celebrate any successes that do materialize. In other words, the sector is fragmented, often divisive and entirely non-cooperative when it comes to joint funding applications and multi-organizational projects. Also, at this phase of sector development, people are reliant on outsiders for assistance and are willing to wait for someone else to solve their problems.

The second phase of sector development as suggested by Harwood (2009) is impasse, which connotes the bottom of as bad as it can get. The Harwood Institute notes that “in this stage, unlike in the Waiting Place, there is a sense of urgency in people’s voices; people are tired of waiting. But while people want change, they lack clarity of what to do” (Harwood, 2009). In relation to the NPS, the impasse phase includes some efforts to convene as a sector and address existing problems; however, while such efforts include signs of hope, the old divisive patterns still undercut attempts at change and the sector sometimes remains stuck. Similar to the waiting phase, the impasse phase consists of a poverty of peer learning, collective analysis and action planning. The primary difference is in the attitudinal climate of the members of the sector, which is characterized by despair and impatience with the current circumstances and a desire to see change happen immediately.

Phase three in the Harwood (2009) model is called the catalytic phase, which consists of small and decisive steps by a small number of people in the sector who are tired of talking

and have started to act for change. Basic forms of peer learning begin to materialize at this phase, which develop into basic action plans, and networks around thematic development areas. These basic steps offer signs of hope and more people start to engage in the peer learning and planning activities. New groups are formed and the spirit of sector change encourages discovery and visioning for the future. Periodically, tensions arise in meetings between the emerging hopeful directions and the old story of hopelessness and inaction.

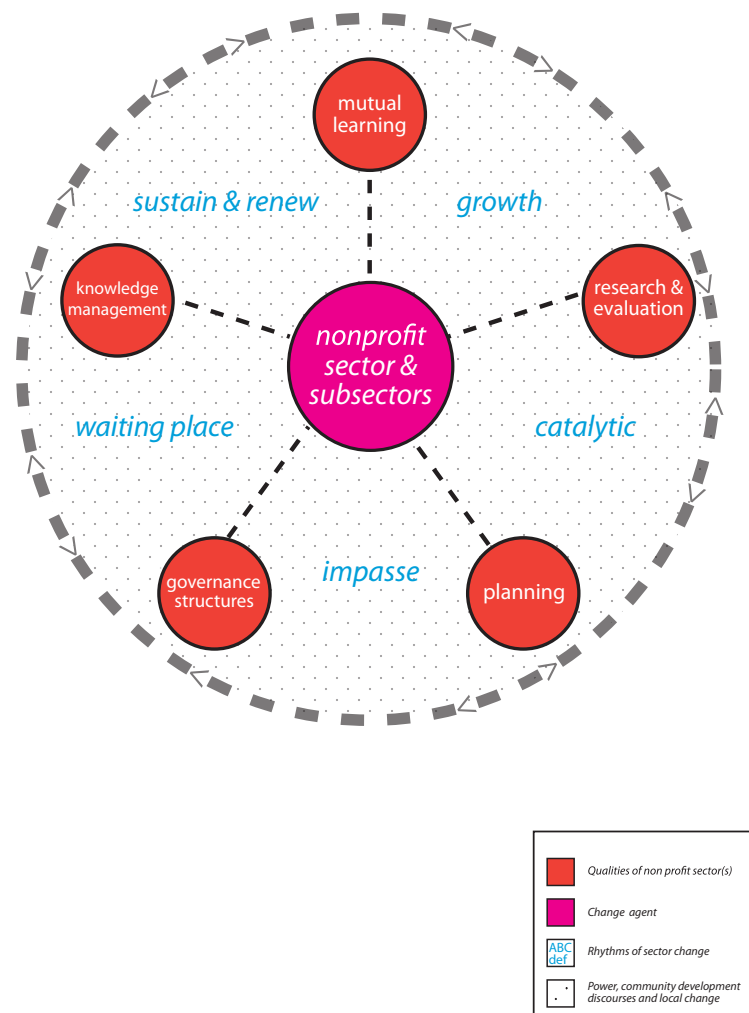
The growth phase of NPS sector development is a period of eclipse whereby the old narrative of hopelessness and inaction are marginalized by the story of hope and positive change. The catalytic phase of learning, planning and networking is spawning new leaders in NPOs in many subsectors. This new leadership makes possible the expansion of networks, creation of service integration models, indicator monitoring projects, and various other types of multi-organization projects that maximize the strength of the NPS to benefit the community.

The fifth and final phase of NPS development is called the sustain and renew phase, which involves a deeper level of engagement with sector issues that have not been adequately addressed through the basic peer learning and system organization/re-organization work that took place in the previous phase of development. NPS members at this phase may be prepared to address the troubling historical injustices that underpin the development of their sector and their community, such as institutionalized racism. This phase also involves the crystallization of new sector norms, which is evidenced in charters, compacts and declarations that seek to sustain the new approach to organizing the activities of the sector or its sub-sectors.

In the illustration below, the major characteristics and developmental phases of the NPS is presented.

The NPS, its many subsectors, and rhythms of change serves as the largest category in the CSC concept. However, it is important to note that the NPS and civil society differ in that NPS includes only NPOs, whereas civil society includes NPOs, groups and individuals, as well as the relations between these agents and the space and time for gatherings. In the same way the NPS fits into civil society, civil society fits into geographic communities – a relationship that is discussed immediately following Figure 4, which depicts the capacities and developmental rhythms of change in the Nonprofit Sector.

Figure 5: Nonprofit Sector Capacity and Rhythms of Change in the NPS



4. Geographic Community & Civil Society Capacity

As part of the process to develop a conception of CSC, project participants were asked to share their understanding of the types of local assets that have relationship to civil society. In this section, participant ideas about this relationship have been incorporated into a working definition of a geographic community (the primary locus of civil society activity), as well as a discussion of seven types of place-based community assets, which are later explained in relation to a practitioner's model for understanding the developmental phases of a geographic community, and some general roles played by civil society in community development.

Based on participant input, a geographic community can be defined as the space, infrastructure, resources, people and other living things that co-inhabit geographically defined boundaries. Civil society, with its many actors and processes, is always embedded within the life of particular geographic communities, and many of its actors are simultaneously enmeshed in virtual internet-based communities of interest that cut across geographic boundaries. Examples of multi-location expressions of civil society are international human rights campaigns and labour movements. Even when localized civil society actors are connected to national or international civil society movements, each geographically unique expression of civil society will possess its own types of capacities to effect change, which will at least partly reflect and/or resist the values of the people that live in the given community, as well as the nature of the institutions, infrastructure and environment that frame the spaces and routines of daily living.

Given this two fold expression of civil society (i.e., global and local), it follows that civil society seldom exists independently of place-based actors and resources. To understand civil society capacity therefore requires an attentiveness to the relationship between civil society and other major aspects of a typical geographic community. In doing so, it is possible to more clearly see the edges of civil society capacity, the relationships between civil society actors and other community actors, as well as the types of assets that support the continued existence of human activity in a given community.

Participants noted that in addition to civil society actors, geographic communities are home to diverse expressions of the government sector (e.g., First Nations, municipal/regional, provincial and federal), the business sector (e.g., consumers, small, medium and large businesses, goods and services, etc.) as well as families, including kinship families, families of co-residence and the traditions of families. In addition to these major sectors, participants repeatedly made reference to the common occurrence of multi-sector initiatives within communities, or projects where government, civil society agents, and the business sector

work together for mutual benefit. Participants also noted that in smaller communities, leaders often play formal and informal roles in each sector, crossing sectoral boundaries on a daily basis. One participant noted: “In some communities where I work, I have met City councilors with large families that are also business people who serve on the board of directors for several nonprofit organizations.” This example underscores the point that civil society actors are generally actors in other sectors as well, and often cross-pollinate actionable ideas in many different spheres of community life. Thus, even though there are qualitative differences between sectors in a given community, the work of community leaders with many hats will often blur these distinctions. However, what these sectors share in common is a reliance on local assets, otherwise known as community capital. In total, project participants identified seven forms of community capital, each of which is discussed below.

4.1. Seven Forms of Community Capital

Community capital is a concept that has become increasingly popular in recent scholarship about and the practice of community development, especially in the areas of sustainable community development (Roseland, 2005), healthy communities (Hancock, 2001) and entrepreneurial communities or community economic development (Flora & Flora, 1993). As an analytical tool, community capital is a set of categories that account for the assets existent in a community. Roseland (2005) defines community capital as the set of local assets from which a community receives benefits and on which the community depends for its continued existence. An adapted version of Roseland’s (2005) work on community capital is employed to articulate the local types of assets that play some role in wrapping around and/or intersecting the four civil society change agents noted above, as well as the different developmental phases that such agents experience.

Perhaps the most well known form of community capital is human capital, which includes personal capacity to participate in civil society, but also “the knowledge, skills, competencies and other attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal social and economic well-being” (OECD, 2001, p.18) that are existent in all sectors (i.e., private, public, etc.) in a geographic community. Connected to human capital is social capital, which is sometimes referred to as the glue that holds communities together or “the networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam, 2000, p.19). Social capital reminds us that people need each other to promote knowledge exchange, cultivate trust and encourage collaborative actions if they are to create healthy social interactions within their community. Some representations of social capital are statements of shared vision and values, regular and productive community meetings, as well as moments of celebration of community work. Civil society actors are often attributed

with playing a leadership role in building social capital because of their efforts to develop and implement multi-sector approaches to community problems, often referred to as comprehensive community initiatives or CCIs.

Inseparable from social capital is cultural-historical capital, which can be defined as a myriad of personal and inter-personal activities that are generally identified as parts of local culture and history, including artistic and/or everyday expressions about “how things are done around here”, as well as objects and representations that reflect different traditions and values (i.e., Totem poles, media productions, museum exhibits, municipal emblem, flag, etc.). In many BC communities, cultural-historical capital is multi-sided in that it combines many stories of people who are either indigenous to a land or have settled on the land from elsewhere. Sometimes these stories are conciliatory and sometimes conflictual, depending on the degree to which the community has engaged in truth and reconciliation work related to the historical injustices of the past and the relationships between the past and current systems and structures of discrimination and racism.

Governance capital involves the development and application of rules and decision-making processes that shape local human activity, and therefore such capital includes legal and political dimensions. The legal side of governance capital includes education about national and provincial laws, municipal by-laws, and the enforcement of such laws so as to ensure justice and safety for all people. The political dimensions include: (a) the machinations of public and closed-door debate between elected officials and community leaders about how the regulatory frameworks for a given jurisdiction apply to a specific community; and, (b) the activities of civil society agents to cultivate community governance processes with a view to, for example, keeping local resources under the control of local residents.

In addition to the foregoing forms of capital, there are a bundle of three deeply interconnected forms of community capital that are comparatively more material, namely: natural capital, physical capital and economic capital. Roseland (2005) defines natural capital as any stock of environmental assets that yields a flow of valuable goods and services into the future. Roseland (2005) further suggests that environmental assets can be usefully divided into three categories: (a) non-renewable resources, such as minerals and fossil fuels; (b) the finite capacity of natural systems to produce renewable resources such as food crops, forestry products and water supplies; (c) the capacity of natural systems to absorb our emissions and pollutants without side effects. Dependant on natural capital is physical capital, which involves the time spent producing resourceful materials such as machinery, plants and facilities that can later be used in producing other products (Roseland, 2005). Physical capital will also include the public spaces that are host to community change initiatives, such as parks, town squares and community meeting halls. Since civil society agents will often organize in public spaces, they are highly reliant upon the existence of

physical capital. Economic capital, on the other hand, consists of the resources (i.e., money, etc.) that are used to achieve security in a person's material life. Roseland (2005) notes that economic capital can be looked at in the way we allocate resources and make decisions about our material lives.

These seven forms of capital are essential to the health and sustainability of human communities. The quality of any one of these forms of community capital will largely depend on where a given community is located in the cycle of community development. In the following section, community capital is discussed in relation to four phases of community development.

4.2. Phases of Community Development

Although each community develops in a somewhat distinct way, and while the role of civil society in community development work can vary widely from place to place, most civil society actors and community development practitioners agree that communities develop in incremental phases – both forwards and backwards – and sometimes in transformational ways. This is not to say that community development is linear or predictable, but rather more like a game of snakes and ladders insofar as a community can make several moves toward a goal, moving upward and onward for a time and after sudden changes in community leadership and local capital the community slides backward and gets stuck in a place far from its ideal vision of community life. Working from this understanding of community development, the Centre for Innovative and Entrepreneurial Leadership (CIEL), created the Communities Matrix, which is an analytical tool that outlines four general phases and eleven sub-stages of community development. This section uses CIEL's (2005) Communities Matrix concept to explain the qualities of community capital at the major developmental phases of a community, and roughly sketches the state of civil society actors at each developmental phase. Although the development phases below closely mirror those phases of development in the NPS, they are different in that they include considerations of the environment, infrastructure, the economy and other aspects of community life.

CIEL (2005) identifies the chaos phase as a common state of existence for many communities. The chaos phase is portrayed by turmoil and conflict among people, who use their spare time and energy fighting with one another, crippling group and organizational efforts to frame and address community issues. Finger pointing across and within different sectors is common at this phase of development and social capital is weak. There are no multi-sector place-based learning initiatives to prompt the development of new thinking, attitudes and skills. Public spaces are mainly inhospitable. Overall, the capacity of civil society agents to affect change is very weak and efforts to develop consensus for a public agenda

for change are often sabotaged by uncompromising interest groups. Only a few leaders make decisions for major community developments, and population groups such as youth, elders, and people on a low income are excluded from decision making processes. Instances of domestic violence may be high and there is little to no public discourse about such issues and related root problems. The market value of natural capital may have dropped drastically and the local economy is in a depressed state and the funds to maintain physical capital do not exist (or, the local economy is booming and a collective interest in profit making has eroded an ethic of care for community well being). A community may move out of a state of chaos and into the emergence phase of community development when it has exhausted its interest in blaming and fighting, and has at least partly abandoned its acceptance of the status quo in search of a greater common good.

At the emergence phase, mutual finger pointing and indifference are combined with a collective will of some leaders in different sectors to sit together and discuss community issues, assets and developmental directions. The emergence phase is a messy mix of signs of progress with signs of old debilitating patterns of interaction between community members. Generally, leaders from different sectors form a working group(s) at this phase to try and build on the best qualities of the community but their work is pocked with moments of disappointment, frustration and failure. Although leadership at this phase can come from any sector, civil society actors with multi-issue agendas often play important roles in convening meetings and facilitating dialogues. Most community leaders will agree that capacity in each sector is weak, and overall social capital poor, and therefore there is consensus that community-based learning is a necessary step toward planning and action. The community will likely invite outside leaders and experts who have experience with community development and local change processes to speak about strategies for change and the role of each sector in a change process. These proposals from outsiders are met with mixed reviews as old negative attitudes toward change are still partially at play in this phase of development. Discussions among community leaders about pathways of diversifying the local economy and creating new jobs stir the imagination of the business community and the thinking of civil servants with an economic development mandate. When the community is equipped with the knowledge and skills it needs to engage in planning work, and possesses a sufficient amount of trust to go through a planning process, it is possible for it to enter the third phase of community development.

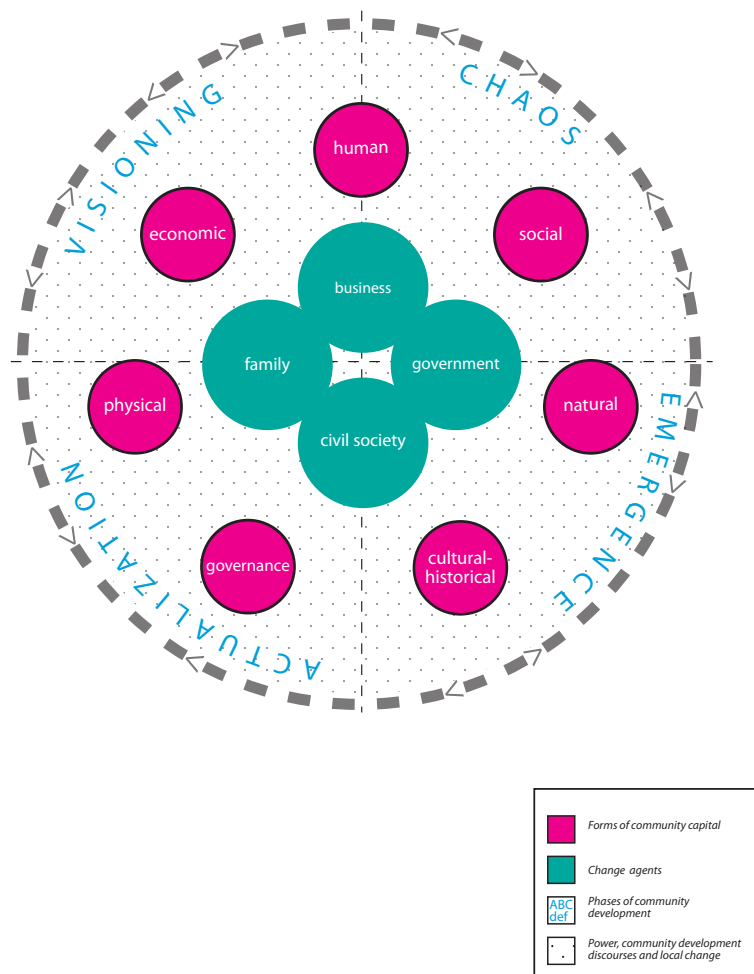
According to CIEL (2005), the third developmental phase for communities is visioning, which includes simple and advanced forms of planning for the future. Strong signs of social capital accent this phase of development in the form of moments of agreement among community leaders that are formalized in public planning documents. Civil society agents consistently volunteer time, effort and resources to support the inclusion of diverse voices in the act of shaping a future vision and plan for the community. Adequate organizational capacity exists

in the leading non-profit organizations of the community who are able to articulate the value of integrated services within their own sector, as well as their interest in collaborating with businesses and government agencies. However, such assertions are mainly hopes since the reality of actual integration within and between sectors is still a distant reality. Also at the visioning phase, historical injustices have been named through one of the localized planning processes and plans for formal truth and reconciliation process between people and/or groups has and/or is taking place. The local economy is demonstrating signs of diversification through new business plans, and there is a pride in existing physical capital, even efforts to imagine creative uses of existing assets for new uses are taking place, such as using old industrial complexes as urban parks and art galleries. Even though all community agents will not simultaneously transition into the fourth phase of community development, the move from the visioning phase to the actualization phase will include most community agents who possess sufficient capacity to transition and share an appreciation of the relationship between community capitals, as well as strong trust to work together over time according to a set of plans for action.

As a type of ideal state of community life, the actualization phase involves community leaders who are continually working across sectors, designing and testing innovative program ideas that contribute to community well being. Advanced reconciliation between different groups has taken place and novel cross-cultural and cross-sectoral coalitions and partnerships have formed and drive action in key issue areas. Most forms of community capital are very strong and the diversity of civil society agents offers many ways to affect local change and ensures that nearly everyone has a forum to express their views on community life and future directions. Citizens/residents have developed and participate in locally controlled, or at least locally informed, decision-making processes. Accords are developed and signed by different sectors to work together on issues that affect the whole community, such as food security charters or petitions for accessible, affordable and green transportation. Blended value schemes characterize the work of groups and organizations in each sector and the overarching sense of optimism for the future colors most activities in the community.

Albeit informative, such a simplistic description of how a generic geographic community progresses toward improved states of quality of life misses many key considerations and is therefore partial at best. Nevertheless, to fail to include at least some discussion about different phases of community development is to fail to provide a narrative that can, at least partly, locate civil society agents within larger cycles of community change. In Figure 5, the major sectors, forms of community capital and phases of community development are represented, all of which are, like the change agents and development phases noted above, influenced by and simultaneously influencing how power is exercised, what kinds of development discourses frame local development processes and to what degree change happens in a community.

Figure 6: Sectors, Capital, and Phases of Development in Geographic Communities



5. Concluding Discussion

CSC is a multi-level, developmental concept that synthesizes ideas from a wide range of academic disciplines and professional fields regarding the basic composition of civil society capacity, especially the expressions of such capacity within British Columbian communities. Civil society capacity is a poorly understood asset in many communities in BC, as well as in other jurisdictions, and this paper has aimed to address this issue by articulating four distinct change agents, namely individuals, groups, nonprofit organizations, and the nonprofit sector – each of which exercise power, engage community development discourses and undergo big and small changes in both geographic communities, as well as communities of interest that cut across geographic boundaries. As such, to understand civil society and its collective capacity to influence change in a particular place involves recognizing its relationships to different forms of community capital, the multiplicity of local issues, and the many players in the business sector, government sector and resident families.

As an imperfect concept in need of further refinement, it is important to note at least one major limitation. Although each of the five models of development presented in this paper go some distance to explain how each type of agent can move from troubled phases of activity to more progressive and empowering phases, the simplicity of these models risk mis-naming the complex reality of how civil society change agents, as well as whole communities, acquire the capacity to participate in community change work. These models under-describe the types of and relationships between community issues (e.g., individual, structural and systemic issues) and how to use existing assets to address such issues. An exercise that more thoroughly describes these phases of development, especially the issue types that exist at each phase, could deepen our understanding of and practice of building capacity in civil society and communities more generally.

Albeit limited in at least one major way, the CSC concept is a useful analytical tool because it can inform empirical research on civil society capacity, and can provide a sturdy frame of reference for the creation of assessments of civil society capacity, the design of capacity development initiatives, as well as evaluation frameworks for measuring the efficacy of civil society capacity development projects.

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THIS PAPER PRESENTS A MULTI-LEVEL, DEVELOPMENTAL CONCEPTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY (CSC). INFORMED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF LEADING CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES WITH A CAPACITY BUILDING MANDATE IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, THE CSC CONCEPT EXPLICATES THE CHARACTERISTICS OF CIVIL SOCIETY CHANGE AGENTS, THE GENERAL DEVELOPMENTAL PHASES OF CIVIL SOCIETY AGENTS, AS WELL AS THE PERIPHERAL AND INTERSECTING ASPECTS OF COMMUNITY LIFE THAT SHAPE AND ARE SHAPED BY CIVIL SOCIETY.



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