The Good Fight: The development of dialogue in Canadian cohousing communities

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Abstract

The Good Fight: The development of dialogue in Canadian cohousing communities (2020)
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Deliberative processes and participative practices have received growing attention in business ethics, as well as in management, organization, and design studies. There is a sense that this "systemic turn" may have a role in fostering responsible business conduct and sustainable development. In this work, I examine dialogue as a central feature of deliberation and as a collaborative approach for developing shared understanding in conflictual situations. I examined the literature to better understand under what conditions dialogue is more likely to emerge, in order to understand how it may be induced to help address conflictual situations. As relational engagement is suggested as a moderator for the emergence of productive dialogue, I consider these issues by exploring a context whereby relational engagement is a central organizational aim, collaborative housing (cohousing) communities. Within such a context I can identify additional processes and mechanisms that help encourage dialogue in challenging situations. These not-for-profit intentional communities first materialize as real estate development corporations meant to develop high functioning neighborhoods for members. I chose to study the successful resolution of contentious issues within completed cohousing communities using an inductive embedded multiple cross-case analysis, and in so doing several processes and mechanisms that facilitate the emergence of dialogue are noted. The consensus-seeking nature of cohousing communities appears to direct members towards creative deliberative processes that can induce productive dialogue as tensions arise. The demands of working in a deliberative manner led to the creation of dialogical spaces and encouraged the proactive development of dialogical skills. Finally, the outcomes of these dialogues are not always agreement but can be agonistic, as it appears that the shared understanding created by productive dialogue allows community members to live with these differences. This study allows us to consider the antecedent and structural conditions that facilitate the emergence of dialogue when it's needed and reconsider the relationship between consensus and agonism.

For Imogen,

apes *debemus* imitari

Let us imitate the bees

We also ought to copy these bees, and sift whatever we have gathered from a varied course of reading, for such things are better preserved if they are kept separate; then, by applying the supervising care with which our nature has endowed us, – in other words, our natural gifts, – we should so blend those several flavours into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence it came.

(Seneca, 1925, Chapter LXXXIV)

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and purpose

Management oriented deliberative democracy scholars are actively considering issues of deliberative thinking and decision making (Goodman & Arenas, 2015; Stansbury, 2009), and dialogue (Ferraro & Beunza, 2018), especially in multi-objective organizations which often manage numerous, possibly conflicting objectives (Battilana, Fuerstein, & Lee, 2018; Mitchell, Weaver, Agle, Bailey, & Carlson, 2016). There are questions of how to run such organizations (Hielscher, Beckmann, & Pies, 2014) and how their members should engage one another, especially around conflict, as the potential costs of conflicts on the individuals and relationships involved are important (Tjosvold, 2008; Tjosvold & Janz, 1985).

Yet, there is a clear thread among a range of scholars welcoming the creative potential of the more challenging aspects of deliberation (Disalvo, 2010; Nemeth, 1996; Rhodes & Harvey, 2012) which may come through conflict – e.g., dissensus (Rancière, 2015), the pluralistic agonism of 'vibrant clashes' (Mouffe, 1999, 2013, 2017), etc. – as members may seek out creating new, shared understanding (Isaacs, 1999, 2001), knowledge (Tsoukas, 2009), innovative paths forward (Follett, 1925; Shipper, Manz, & Stewart, 2014), via the constructive resolution of an issue (Isaacs, 2001; Tsoukas, 2009) or by agreeing to disagree in a civil manner (Mouffe, 1999). From this perspective, conflict is perceived as both necessary and productive in seeking alternatives in a participatory process, and a starting place for social change (Brand, 2020).

One way to explore developing more deliberative communication is through dialogue, especially in the context of the productive resolution or 'dissolution' of conflict through intentional dialogue (Isaacs, 2001; Tsoukas, 2009). While deliberative communication is likely key for many aspects of organizational life, in situations involving conflict, it is likely even more important given the increased difficulty members may have in continuing the "sustained inquiry into the processes, assumptions, and certainties of everyday experience" (Isaacs, 2001, p. 713) necessary to support the constructive resolution of conflict.

The existing research has established several advantages that may result from the use of productive dialogue and collaboration between corporations and various kinds of stakeholders (de Bakker, den Hond, King, & Weber, 2013; Goodman, Louche, van Cranenburgh, & Arenas, 2014; Logsdon & Van Buren III, 2009; Moog, Spicer, & Böhm, 2014; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007), as well as

within organizations to address conflict in teams (Tjosvold, Wong, & Feng Chen, 2014), hasten innovation (Shipper et al., 2014), improve coordination (Isaacs, 2001), develop better solutions (Isaacs, 1999) and facilitate organizational learning (Tsoukas, 2009). Despite the opportunity presented via the effective use of productive dialogue within and between organizations, the literature has not provided a clear description of the processes and mechanisms involved in the unfolding of a productive dialogue (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016; M. H. McDonnell, King, & Soule, 2015). While recent work has been advanced a model in the case of stakeholder engagement (Ferraro & Beunza, 2018), there exists a gap in the literature within organizations.

In pursuit of understanding how organizations adopt a more collaborative approach to addressing conflictual issues as they arise, I examine the context of collaborative housing (cohousing) communities to understand the processes and mechanisms that underpin their approach to inducing dialogue among their members.

1.2. Study overview and central research question

Given the significance of these inquiries, I ask what are the processes and mechanisms which support organizational members' ability to constructively resolve conflict? I answer this question through a multi-case embedded study of the lifecycle of 43 conflicts in 11 cohousing communities in Canada. Cohousing is a form of intentional 'living in community' whereby organizational members come together to actively participate in the design, development, and subsequent management of their community via a consensus-seeking, dynamic form of governance; thus, an ability to overcome and productively resolve conflicts while maintaining and enhancing relationships is essential.

Within Canada, cohousing communities' physical and formal legal structures vary and may resemble condominium associations or housing cooperatives in that residents have private living spaces and shared public communal spaces with specified household responsibilities and shared obligations. However, cohousing is not just the physical and legal structure, it is "a model of governance" (McCamant & Durrett, 2011; Windsong Community) whereby community members intentionally choose to actively participate in the creation and management of their communities through a process of self-governing and consensus-seeking, rather than through the delegation of decision making to professional managers or a minority subset of engaged residents. Often these communities develop sociocratic or dynamic governance models (Romme, 1999, 2003, 2004a; Romme, Broekgaarden, Huijzer, Reijmer, & van der Eyden, 2016; Romme & Endenburg, 2006; Romme & Van Witteloostuijn, 1999) to support their ability to enhance their capacity to govern, organize, and learn over time (Romme et al., 2016).

The findings from this study suggest several interesting points around how dialogue is integrated into members' regular interactions, to strengthen relationships through productive conflict resolution. First, while specific processes between groups and individual conflicts can vary, the resolution of such issues requires clear processes and approaches to communication which members regularly practice together, whether there exists conflict or not. Thus, when a conflict does arise, members have a clear and practiced understanding of the relevant processes. Second, members often separated dialogue from the decision-making processes of the larger group, to allow the subset of members most actively engaged in the conflict to attempt to generate a shared understanding around the issue in question via event with specific sets of practices (e.g., heart circles, fireside chats, mediated discussions). After, and only if needed, engaged parties could bring a resolved recommendation or recommendations back to the full organization for decision making. Third, within these dialogues members often engaged in some kind of perspectival shift, for example, adopt a charitable approach to the ideas of their neighbours or a collective mindset around resolution, thereby allowing them to hold the person(s) with which they are having conflict as whole people beyond the conflict, rather than simply as objects of the conflict. This process allowed many members to reduce their own emotions surrounding conflicts, further supporting their ability to suspend judgement and engage with different viewpoints. For these resolved conflicts, this process was sometimes enough for members to eventually develop a shared solution or decide to peaceably 'agree to disagree' and move on.

This study addresses calls for a deeper understanding of how dialogue is practiced in specific settings in order to better understand the impact of these processes on the coordination and integration of action (Kreiner, Jacobsen, & Toft Jensen, 2011). This research also responds to the call for field-level studies of deliberation as an organizational strategy within the context of trends in the larger political economy (C. W. Lee & Romano, 2013). Given that dialogue may not be willed into existence at a moment's notice, understanding how to cultivate it through intentional processes developed over time is pertinent to understanding deliberative democracy at an organizational level. By highlighting conditions that promote successful dialogue and processes supporting intentional deliberation and conflict resolution in real-time, we deepen our understanding of the dynamics of such discussions and their potential impacts (Tjosvold et al., 2014) and provide insights which may apply to organizations more broadly seeking to improve their deliberative practices.

1.3. Definition of terms

The following is a brief clarification of a few terms that appear in this study.

1.3.1. Dialogue

Dialogue is often used as a synonym for any kind of two-way communication. For this study, I would like to use the term more precisely to mean a form of oral communication to create a *mutual understanding* between participants via a continuous examination into the processes and expectations that are central to our everyday experiences (Bohm, 1996; Isaacs, 1999, 2001). This is a form of communication that demands *reflexivity* of its participants and as a consequence, it is particularly well suited for situations of complexity where a need for shared understanding is highest.

1.3.2. Consensus

Consensus is a general agreement between people or a group of people. Consensus is thought to be accomplished by coming to a mutual understanding of an issue, via deliberation (Habermas, 1984).

1.3.3. Agonism

For this work, agonism is a kind of non-violent political difference (Mouffe, 1999, 2013). Agonism is perhaps most easily understood when compared to antagonism: antagonism is an exchange between enemies, whereas agonism is an exchange between adversaries (Mouffe, 2013). Agonism assumes a certain level of shared respect between parties engaged in a process of dissensus.

1.3.4. Dissensus

In brief, dissensus the opposite of consensus (i.e. general agreement), in that it is related to controversy, difference, and disagreement. Often dissensus is meant to be a form of very fundamental political disagreement (Rancière, 2004), rather than a simple difference of opinion.

1.4. Outline of the dissertation

This introductory chapter outlines the background and objectives of this research and situates its central questions within the literature. Chapter 2 provides a conceptual framing of the study with a review

of the literature and theory most relevant for this study. Chapter 3 provides additional contextualization on the empirical setting of the research, cohousing, to better acquaint the reader. Chapter 4 outlines the study's research methodology and profiles the specific sample of the research. Chapter 5 provides a description and analysis of the data structure resulting from the research. Chapter 6 summarizes the study's principal findings and offers conclusions and next steps. This is followed by references, a postscript on the writing of this thesis, and appendices.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1. Introduction

Deliberative democracy has received growing attention in several domains, from business ethics to design studies. Deliberation has long been considered a valued part of the process of democracy and modern theories rely on models of reasoning described as transformative (Held, 2006), which are rooted in Habermasian principles of *communicative action*, themselves based upon the idea that those impacted by the decisions made by both business and government should be allowed to consent to these actions, but only after engaging in a process of rational and free discussion (Carter, 2002). Those advocating this approach are looking for ways to increase the opportunities for citizen engagement in making choices that affect their lives, with the understanding that a variety of such occasions might contribute to enriching the democratic nature of our cities and nations, thus the development of systems that are both more equitable and responsive to a larger number of stakeholders (Gutmann & Thompson, 2009; Warren, 1992).

Among the interests of management-oriented deliberative democracy scholars are the issues of deliberative thinking and decision making (Goodman & Arenas, 2015; Stansbury, 2009) especially in multi-objective organizations which likely manage multiple, potentially conflicting objectives (Battilana et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2016). There are questions of how to run such organizations (Hielscher et al., 2014) and how their members should engage one another, especially around conflict. This makes sense given the potential costs of conflicts on the individuals and relationships involved (Tjosvold, 2008; Tjosvold & Janz, 1985). Yet, there is a clear thread among scholars welcoming the creative potential of the more challenging aspects of deliberation which may come through conflict – e.g., dissensus (Rancière, 2015), the pluralistic agonism of 'vibrant clashes' (Mouffe, 1999, 2013, 2017), etc. – as members may seek out creating new understandings (Isaacs, 1999, 2001), new knowledge (Tsoukas, 2009), innovative paths forward (Follett, 1925; Shipper et al., 2014) through their constructive resolution (Isaacs, 2001; Tsoukas, 2009); simply 'agree to disagree' in a civil manner (Mouffe, 1999). From this standpoint, conflict is perceived as inevitable, necessary, and productive in seeking alternatives within a given participatory process.

One way to explore developing more deliberative communication is through dialogue, especially in the context of the productive resolution or 'dissolution' of conflict through intentional dialogue (Isaacs, 2001; Tsoukas, 2009). While deliberative communication is key for many aspects of organizational life, in situations involving conflict, its significance is likely greater given the increased difficulty members

may have in continuing the “sustained inquiry into the processes, assumptions, and certainties of everyday experience” (Isaacs, 2001, p. 713) necessary to support construction resolutions of conflict. However, to date, the literature has not provided much of a description of the processes and mechanisms involved in the unfolding of a productive dialogue (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016; M. H. McDonnell et al., 2015).

As the goal of the research project is to describe the processes and mechanisms that contribute to productive dialogues in Canadian collaborative housing (cohousing) communities, this chapter contextualizes the present research with a particular emphasis on the body of literature and theory related to dialogue. A selective review of relevant literature was conducted to provide a holistic understanding of dialogue and its role in addressing conflictual situations in groups and organizations and to identify gaps in the literature. The existing research has established many advantages that may result from the use of productive dialogue and collaboration between corporations and various kinds of stakeholders (de Bakker et al., 2013; Ferraro & Beunza, 2018; Goodman et al., 2014), as well as within organizations to address conflict in teams (Tjosvold et al., 2014), hasten innovation (Schippers, West, & Dawson, 2015), improve coordination (Isaacs, 2001), and develop better solutions (Isaacs, 1999; Tsoukas, 2009). Despite the opportunity presented via their effective use of productive dialogue within and between organizations, the literature has not provided a clear description of the processes and mechanisms involved in the unfolding of a productive dialogue (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016; M. H. McDonnell et al., 2015). While work has advanced a model in the case of stakeholder engagement (Ferraro & Beunza, 2018), there exists a gap in the literature within organizations.

What follows is a review of articles from top peer-reviewed journals from disciplines such as management, design, and interdisciplinary studies. Moreover, as some influential writing on dialogue and constructive conflict come from non-peer-reviewed journals, exceptions were made in the case of these contributions (Bohm, 1996; Follett, 1925; Isaacs, 1999). Part of the challenge of this approach was the common use of terms such as “dialogue” which is used quite liberally the broader research community to describe, for example, cross-disciplinary discourse or any means of direct stakeholder engagement and/or co-creation. As a consequence, I included some related search terms to orient my reading accordingly. The Web of Science database was searched using a term such as “dialogue,” “productive dialogue,” “constructive conflict,” and “agonism” in article titles, abstracts, and author-supplied keywords. This review was modelled on previous literature reviews that use a comparable methodology (Walls & Paquin, 2015; Wassmer, Paquin, & Sharma, 2014). The following review starts with a brief overview of the concept of deliberative democracy, to ground the literature on dialogue within this emerging literature. This is followed by a thorough review of the term dialogue as it is to be applied in this study.

2.2. On deliberative democracy

Deliberative democracy has received growing attention in several domains, from business ethics to design studies. The central role that business increasingly plays in the daily lives of citizens has led to calls to directly address the challenges that arise from this source of unelected power within democratic societies (Felicetti, 2018). Popular discourse presents the notion that many of the main challenges faced by contemporary society are routed in the disproportionate power wielded by organizations, such as environmental sustainability (e.g. Klein, 2015) and issues of social justice (e.g. Taibbi, 2014). Academic literature has likewise made the argument that businesses' growing involvement in providing services and making decisions challenges the existing structures of democratic governance, and forces us to consider questions of the scope of action that firms can reasonably engage in (A. Schneider & Georg Scherer, 2015), and call for the development of mechanisms to increase firms' accountability in pursuit of an increase to firms' responsibility to the larger public (Kobrin, 2009). Businesses are expected to engage on a growing number of complex issues (Felicetti, 2018), and globalization has weakened the regulatory powers of state actors by shifting production towards states with weaker regulations, and as a consequence, firms must face legitimacy challenges that go beyond compliance with any given regulatory environment (A. Schneider & Georg Scherer, 2015). Moreover, if we are to pursue sustainable development of the deepest and most resilient sort in a manner that looks to close the gaps in welfare, health, and justice that exists between those in power and those in poverty we need more democratic forms of innovation and governance, which enable more citizen participation in the decisions that affect their everyday lives (Ehn, Nilsson, & Topgaard, 2014).

Deliberation has long been considered a valued part of the process of democracy and modern theories rely on models of reasoning described as transformative (Held, 2006), which are rooted in Habermasian principles of communicative action, themselves based upon the idea that those impacted by the decisions made by both business and government should be able to consent to these actions, but only after engaging in a process of rational and free discussion (Carter, 2002). That is, a democratic society can be understood as a "self-organizing community of free and equal citizens" who coordinate commons issues via common reason (Habermas, 1996, p. 6). There is an emergent sense that, in a true democracy, deliberation cannot be limited to state institutions only (Chambers, 2012) and thus organizational deliberation is one of several steps needed in the path of building a democratic society more broadly (Felicetti, 2018). The literature suggests that deliberative practices can indeed contribute to new and still unexplored ways to organize firms and the economy more broadly (e.g. Elster, 1997; Fung, 2003; Phillips, 2008).

However, despite democratization of firms themselves or "workplace democracy" being was a central focus on early deliberative scholarship (e.g. Dahl, 1985; Pateman, 1970) writing that leverages this usual Habermasian view of deliberative democracy within the field of business ethics has typically focused on the opportunity of deliberative interactions among and between firms while overlooking the potential for firms themselves to engage in internal practices of deliberative democracy (Felicetti, 2018). Central to this shortcoming is surely the notion that deliberative democracy posits that engagement with disagreement via communication *among equals* is the driving force behind democratic engagement. This aspect of deliberation "between equals" can be a difficult concept to investigate within the current construct of firms and workplaces. However, cooperative and more purpose-driven organizations and enterprises present an interesting case for researchers considering practices that of democratic organizations (e.g. Hyde, Rothschild, & Whitt, 1988; Malleson, 2014), as might be firms that practice more dynamic forms of governance (e.g. Romme, 1999, 2003), further explored in Section 3.1.2. There exists something of a systemic turn in the literature around organizational deliberative democracy in that is more thorough, in that it percolates to different levels of organizational life, and is not left to large plenary discussions among various actors, parties, and stakeholders (e.g. Chambers, 2012; Owen & Smith, 2015).

Currently, management-oriented deliberative democracy scholars consider the issue of deliberative thinking and decision making (Goodman & Arenas, 2015; Stansbury, 2009), and while the construct of deliberative democracy has expanded and developed in recent history (Curato, Dryzek, Ercan, Hendriks, & Niemeyer, 2017), of central importance is the idea that in a democratic organization decision making should be based on dialogue which is respectful, inclusive, and skilled (Dryzek, 2010). Of course, there are questions of how to run such organizations (Hielscher et al., 2014) and how their members should engage one another, especially around conflict. This makes sense given the potential costs of conflicts on the individuals and relationships involved (Tjosvold, 2008; Tjosvold & Janz, 1985). In fact, because of the high demands that deliberation places on individual citizens, who may be more or less prepared for deliberation, some are skeptical of the prospect of greater levels of deliberation (S. Rosenberg, 2013), thus the need to investigate contexts whereby deliberation has been largely productive.

The concept of deliberative democracy is not without its critics, and central concern is the issue of the relationship between seeking consensus via deliberation and the management of dissenting views. Rancière (2004) proposes that, at the political level, deliberative, consensus-seeking democracies have been anything but utopian for the fairly obvious notion that people have differing values. The pursuit of consensus, which was meant to pacify the kinds of conflicts that naturally arise from divergent philosophies of social struggle, has brought about ethnic and religious conflicts, as well as racist and

xenophobic movements (Rancière, 2004). He suggests that identification of democracy with consensus is highly problematic and that "consensus means erasing the contestatory, conflictual nature of the very givens of common life" (Rancière, 2004, p. 7). Mouffe (1999) likewise rejects any analysis of democracy that emphasizes values and deliberation, as the pursuit of consensus or general agreement between parties doesn't leave room for the passions and emotions common to difficult human interactions. She concludes that the idea of seeking consensus in a polity may simply be idealistic and escapist, as the only way to effectively manage a pluralistic democracy is to leave room for differences to emerge with the understanding that more information or deliberation will not always lead to agreement. There is a sense that in looking to achieve consensus, we may lose the benefit of leveraging a diversity of perspectives in the first place (Cuppen, 2010). Controls on complexity or attempt to reduce conflict have the potential to impede the development of a shared understanding and the promise of innovation (Buur & Larsen, 2010).

Mouffe calls for an increase in the institutions and discourses that "foster identification with democratic values," and a greater acceptance of the kinds of disagreement that are inevitable in conditions of diversity, via the concept of agonism (Mouffe, 2000). Agonism allows for a "vibrant clash" of positions without devolving into extreme individualism or intense conflict that you might expect from a situation of antagonism (Mouffe, 2000). Rather than developing enemies, within an agonistic context, you may have an adversary whose views you do not accept, however you do accept *their right to have those views*. Mouffe suggests that it's time to see democracy as a *process* rather than a static state, as a project that will never be quite complete, insisting that the moment we can all agree on the most important issues of the day is the moment we have formed something closer to a totalitarian state than a free, pluralistic state, as democracy is always something of a struggle (Zournazi, Mouffe, & Laclau, 2003). The crucial question for Mouffe is thus how we might transform a context of antagonism into one that is instead more conducive to agonism (Mouffe, 2000).

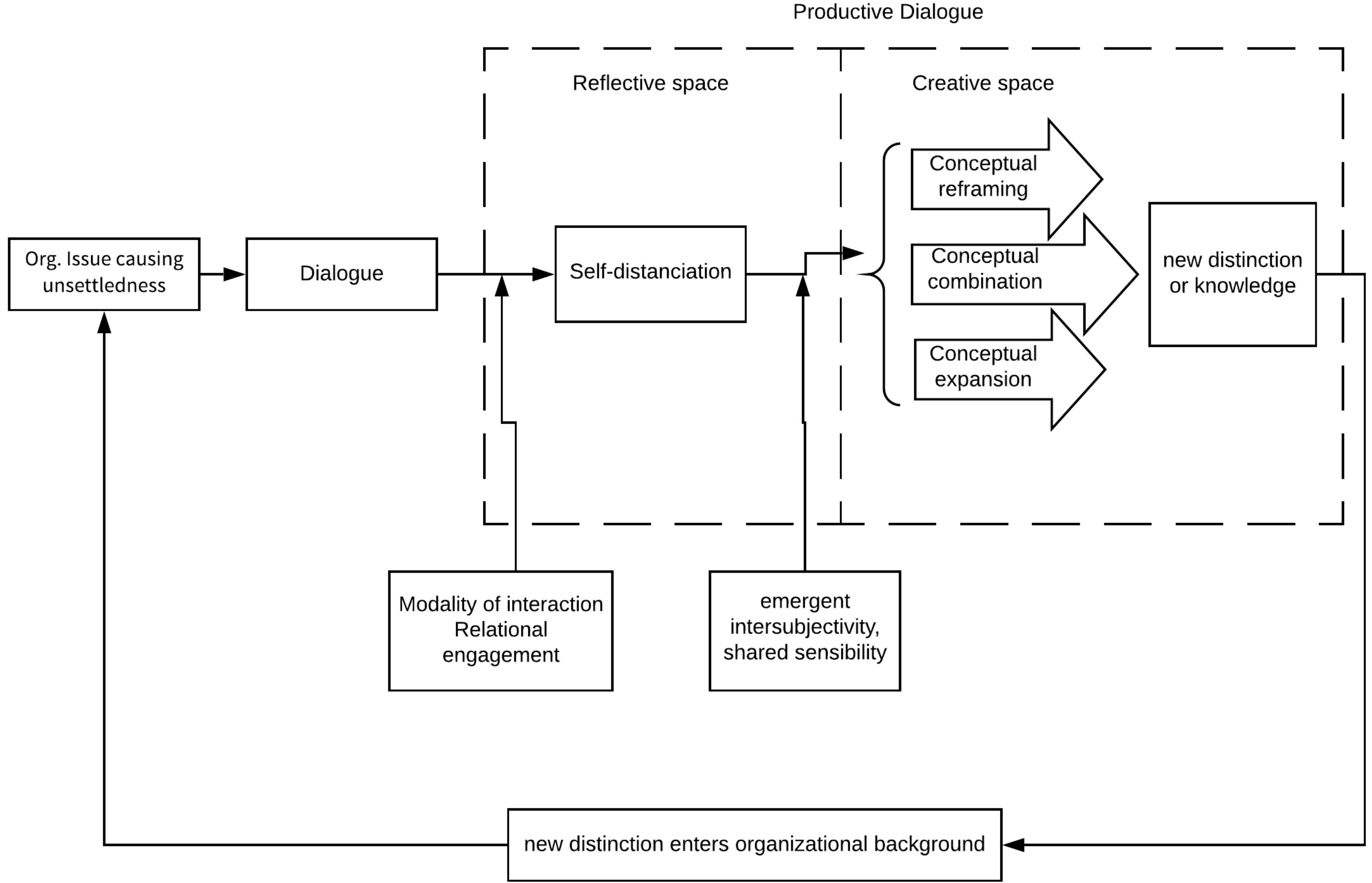
2.3. What is meant by dialogue?

Dialogue is a collective activity between at least two people who take turns speaking, allowing participants time to not only listen to the other but also to consider their responses to what is being shared with them (Bohm, 1996; Isaacs, 2001; Walton, 1998). In this way, dialogue is an iterative process of sense-making and contextualization (Buchanan, 1992) derived from the fact that people see and experience the world differently, and these inevitable differences occasionally provoke a need for greater reflection by participants. The intention of dialogue is thus distinct from other forms of conversation such as debate, discussion, negotiation, and brainstorming. That is, the intention of debate is to achieve a

victory, the intention of negotiation is to come to an agreement, the intention of a discussion is to make a decision, and finally, the intention of brainstorming is to generate new ideas (Bohm, 1996; Gerard & Ellinor, 1998; Isaacs, 1999). Dialogue is a shared process to create a mutual understanding, via a continuous examination into the processes and expectations that are central to our everyday experiences (Isaacs, 1999). In complex situations, it can be difficult to engage in a productive negotiation or brainstorm without first having a shared understanding of the context and dialogue is one process that can help new insights surface (Isaacs, 2001). Tsoukas suggests that a dialogue becomes productive and can lead to the creation of new insights and knowledge when it enters a process that allows for conceptual expansion, combination, and re-framing, that when accepted, fade into the organizational background (2009).

While each of the participants in a dialogue might have initial hopes or intentions in terms of an outcome for this interaction, dialogues are improvisational and open-ended in such a way that those involved do not know the end results in advance (Raelin, 2014). Because dialogue is a shared process to deal with complexity it is something undertaken under conditions of uncertainty and is never wholly predictable. Dialogues can be considered a social technology that can accelerate the processes of clarification and learning in a group of people with different backgrounds (Kreiner et al., 2011). Briefly put, dialogue is a shared deliberative and creative process; what is created is a new understanding (Isaacs, 1999) or new knowledge (Tsoukas, 2009). A model of productive dialogue that brings together the strengths of Tsoukas and Isaacs models is depicted in Figure 1 on page 12.

Figure 1 A model of a productive dialogue



2.4. Why engage in dialogue?

Existing research has established numerous advantages that result from dialogue and collaboration between corporations and stakeholders (de Bakker et al., 2013; Goodman et al., 2014; Palazzo & Scherer, 2008), as well as within organizations to address conflict in teams (Tjosvold et al., 2014), hasten innovation (Manz, Shipper, & Stewart, 2009; Shipper et al., 2014), improve coordination (Isaacs, 2001), and develop better solutions (Isaacs, 1999). Dialogue enables participants to address shared concerns, develop flexibility in working together, and understand each other's limitations (Logsdon & Van Buren III, 2009). Within the management literature dialogue is largely presented as a technique that helps to uncover and shift issues before they are problems within or between organizations (Isaacs, 1999; Raelin, 2012; Tsoukas, 2009). Increasingly, dialogue is presented as a part of the process of deliberative democracy (Ferraro & Beunza, 2018), participative design (Lucero, Vaajakallio, & Dalsgaard, 2012; Luck, 2003; Turhan, Doğan, & Dogan, 2017), and other forms of collaborative creativity (Sawyer & Dezutter, 2009), as management and design scholars consider how organizations (Goodman & Arenas, 2015; Hielscher et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2016) and state actors (Hall, Gilbertz, Anderson, & Ward, 2016; Palmås & von Busch, 2015; Sanoff, 2008; Smedby & Neij, 2013) can and/or should engage various stakeholders in the management of complex challenges that have social and environmental impacts. As outlined above, dialogue is a practice that is particularly suited for collaborating in conditions of complexity.

Dialogue's strength is its propensity to allow participants to distance themselves from their existing understanding of the world and their ideas and adopt a more *reflexive mindset* (Bohm, 1996; Buber, 1996; Habermas, 1984; Isaacs, 1999; Tsoukas, 2009). Such a mindset makes it possible for participants to recognize that there can be a separation between oneself and one's existing points of view, allowing the participant to consider these ideas from an others' perspective (Isaacs, 1999; Schön, 1983). One is thus better able to realize what the other person is thinking and why, without judgment (Bohm, 1996). A degree of reflexivity emerges via self-consciousness, deliberation, or norm interpretation and development, and in doing so can invert the common understandings of context and accompanying expectations (Archer, 2000; Bohm, 1996; Giddens, 1984; Herepath, 2014; Raelin, 2014; Schön, 1989). In this way, dialogue allows participants an opportunity to learn their way out of institutional and psychological barriers that might otherwise limit their thinking (Giddens, 1984), allowing them to free themselves of inherited systems of perception, thought and action (Bourdieu, 1990; Endrissat & von Arx, 2013; Jordan, 2010), as participants are no longer seen as in opposition to one another, but rather are

"participating in [a] pool of common meaning which is capable of constant development and change" (Bohm, 2006, p. 175).

Dialogue may move what could become an irreconcilable conflict into a constructive moment, taking what Tsoukas (2009) refers to as a moment of "unsettledness" and allowing it to be a catalyst for creativity within a group (Follett, 1925). Research from a variety of fields points to the notion that "open-minded discussion" is at the foundation of constructive conflict (Tjosvold et al., 2014). Conflicts can be considered constructive when the participants believe that they have gained more benefits than costs by engaging in the issue (Deutsch, 1973). A climate wherein disagreements are purposefully shared, heard, and are promoted by management can potentially benefit an organization in numerous ways, including improving decision making, increase connectivity, and sharpening the functioning of the organization (Dmytriyev, Freeman, & Haskins, 2016). By engaging in discursive activities such as the establishment of facts, interpreting meanings, and sharing opinions, the participants of a dialogue are agents in the co-construction of knowledge and the eventual actions that may emerge from them (Raelin, 2014). Conflict is not always considered a negative thing in the literature; the notion of conflict as a constructive (Follett, 1925) or potentially positive thing (Tjosvold, 1991) is not new. The term *constructive conflict* was put forward in 1925 by Mary Parker Follet when she suggested we consider conflict as neither good nor bad, but rather as an expression of difference; an inevitability that organizations should look to benefit from.

Conflict's negative reputation is not without merit, as it can "wreak havoc" (Tjosvold, XueHuang, Johnson, & Johnson, 2008) in all kinds of relationships, and when not managed effectively can be costly for participants of the conflict (Tjosvold & Janz, 1985). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that avoidant behaviour is common. Conflicts are often poorly managed because they require so much of participants (Tjosvold et al., 2008), and when our prior experience of dealing with conflict is negative, we become pessimistic of the outcomes of conflict management. This also has the effect of increasing rigid thinking by participants, which blocks the development of generative dialogue (Carnevale & Probst, 1998; de Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012; Mather, 2009). That is, while dialogue asks participants to engage with an emerging unsettledness and reflect on its origins, many are lacking the positive experiences that make such a practice inevitable or even possible.

Despite being a common approach to conflict management, avoidant behaviour rarely helps an unsettled situation and is widely regarded as both ineffectual and potentially very damaging (C. De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008; Carsten de Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001; Tjosvold et al., 2014). Conflicts are the symptom of a need to address an issue; unresolved issues often act in the same way as an untreated wound: they fester and grow without treatment (Bacon & Blyton, 2007; Eisenhardt, Kahwajy, &

Bourgeois, 1997; Nemeth & Owens, 1996; Tjosvold et al., 2014). Learning how to face these issues productively is advantageous, especially as moments of unsettledness are an inevitable outcome of working in diverse teams (Tjosvold et al., 2008), and can be either constructive or destructive (C. De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008; Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, 2006). Moreover, there is evidence that it may help individuals within the organization as people who resolve conflicts openly and constructively feel more connected to others in the organization (Tjosvold et al., 2008).

By engaging with, rather than hiding from issues that cause unsettledness within themselves, people can practice a reflective form of creative thinking, by considering issues from different perspectives, asking triggering questions, and seeking a shared understanding of complex issues (Miron-Spektor, Gino, & Argote, 2011). Knowing that unsettledness and conflict are part of working with groups of people, as "conflict is rooted in difference, and people are and always will be different" (Schulman, 2016, p. 20) it becomes important to understand how dialogue emerges, and what may facilitate productive dialogue in particular.

2.5. Factors influencing the emergence of productive dialogue

There is a suggestion in the literature that looking to operationalize dialogue is inherently difficult, or that productive dialogue cannot be "willed" into existence (Isaacs, 2001). We learn instead that the need for dialogue may emerge due to conflict (Tjosvold, 1991, 2008; Tjosvold et al., 2014), tension (Gaim, 2018), a breakdown in polite discourse (Isaacs, 1999), or unsettledness (Tsoukas, 2009). As the central question of my thesis relates to the processes and mechanisms that enhance organizational members' ability to constructively resolve conflict via dialogue, I have looked to tease apart what we understand about the factors that contribute to (or inhibit) the emergence of dialogue to identify gaps in the existing literature. This analytical approach was drawn from existing research where content-analysis based literature reviews and studies discuss enablers, limiters, and consequences of various social phenomena (George, Rao-Nicholson, Corbishley, & Bansal, 2015; Ramachandran, J., Pant, A., & Pani, 2012; Sharma, 2018). The results of this approach are in Table 1 on page 21 and are detailed in the following sections.

For this study, antecedents are factors or conditions that may facilitate dialogue, prior to its immediate need to manifest. Enablers are factors that facilitate dialogue in conflictual conditions. Conversely, limiters are factors that inhibit the development of a dialogical response to conflictual conditions. Consequences are the results of dialogue, both positive or negative on participants and/or the wider community. These factors have been further segmented based on whether they are primarily related

to the structure, process, or perspective of the organization. Perspectives refer to the approach that a member of the organization takes to consider the situation in need of resolution (Westenholz, 1993). Structure refers to the nature of the organization (hierarchical, bureaucratic, dynamic etc.), and processes refer to the nature of the approach to completing a task (Gaim, 2018). The purpose of this subdivision is to identify potential gaps in the literature, with an understanding that there is complexity underpinning these relationships. For example, organizational perspectives are likely in some way reflected in both the structures and processes of an organization (Gaim & Wåhlin, 2016).

2.5.1. Processes

Processes are addressed in some detail in the management-oriented literature when considering the limiters, enablers, and consequences of dialogue, however, there appears to be a gap related to the antecedents.

Isaacs proposed a cycle of dialogue based on the work of C. Otto Scharmer (1998). In this model, participants cycle through four fields, each representing a different quality of shared meaning that emerges in the group. Each of these phases, which he describes as having been initiated by a distinct kind of crisis, involves choices and careful navigation of each crisis for both individuals and the collective (Isaacs, 2001). The initial two stages of dialogue include politeness or shared monologues and this can be followed by a breakdown that requires skilled conversations (Isaacs, 1999). Firstly, it is relatively rare for participants to move from a non-reflexive, even defensive space towards a reflexive space when dealing with a complex or contentious issue (1999). That is, when a discussion moves from politeness to breakdown, which is a tense and conflictual space, many people move the conversation back to politeness rather than engage with the conflict (Isaacs, 1999), as dialogue is cognitively demanding (Shaw et al., 2011). However, with skillful conversation, participants may move towards a two-phase field of inquiry. These two phases are reminiscent of Tsoukas' "productive dialogue." Firstly, the participants enter a reflexive process that requires participants to distance themselves from their existent ideas. This may be followed by the more creative stage of dialogue, which Isaacs calls "flow" or "generative dialogue."

Productive dialogue facilitates conceptual expansion, combination, and re-framing of the issues (Tsoukas, 2009), recalling Follet's notion of integration, which is when a solution has been developed that meets the needs of both parties, with neither side needing to make a sacrifice (Follett, 1925). This is contrasted with the tendency to settle via compromise, to simply end a controversy. She proposes that such compromise arises from a misunderstanding of real needs, and leads to a lost opportunity for real learning (Follett, 1924). Integration of these needs involves invention or finding a "third way" (Kolb,

1995) and requires understanding the problem from the perspective of all participants, a willingness to listen, and voice one's views without avoidance of conflict or defensiveness. It's not clear if such integration is always possible. Moreover, that a dialogue becomes productive and stays productive is also not something that can be taken for granted, as it is common to go back into previous stages of the dialogue (Isaacs, 1999).

The design literature presents a particularly rich array of methods meant to enable stakeholder engagement, as practitioners have long understood the importance of involving diverse groups of users in the generation and testing phases of novel solutions to shared problems. There are a variety of methods, techniques, and events intended to inspire design participants in practices around ideation and concept development (Sanders & Stappers, 2012). Such methods include but are not limited to scenario building (Diaz, Reunanen, & Salmi, 2009), mood boards (Taffe, 2018), and prototyping (Durrant et al., 2018). Facilitating participation has become one of the cornerstones of co-design (Ehn et al., 2014; Manzini & Coad, 2015). Co-design is often said to be rooted in a shared dialogue between designers and stakeholders (e.g. Lucero et al., 2012), though dialogue is rarely defined in the way that it has been in the management literature to include suspension and conceptual transformation, but rather a kind of shared discussion or feedback mechanism. Co-design supposes that stakeholders, such as the end-users of a particular product or service, possess insights into the domain that designers are trying to tackle and should therefore be able to contribute effectively via involvement in the design process. At its most dialogical, the client and designer relate in a manner where one can address the gaps in the knowledge base of the other, or as Lawson puts it, "the client is not capable of knowing what the options are and we [the designers] are not capable of understanding what the end product is for" (Lawson, 1994). In this way, we can understand co-design, at it's best, as a process of creating a new, shared understanding between the designer and the user of a particular product or service.

Several researchers reference of Habermas' theory of collective reasoning (1984) when considering if participants in a deliberative process may be able to engage in productive dialogue (Ferraro & Beunza, 2018; Goodman & Arenas, 2015; Patzer, Voegtlin, & Scherer, 2018; Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). Habermas (1984) suggests that there are two mechanisms for social coordination of individual actions: strategic action and communicative action. In the context of *strategic action*, an individual is oriented towards their own personal success and their action is so oriented: they see others as instrumental to their individual success and seek to influence them accordingly. Buber made a similar distinction when writing on dialogue specifically (1996), describing this strategic, instrumental relationship as an "I-It" relationship. This kind of relationship is instrumental, in that each person sees the other as a source of something they need/want (i.e. it) rather than as an individual in their own right. Access to the "it" rather

than a connection with the other is central in this kind of exchange. This can lead to minimal levels of cooperation and include behaviours that are ultimately aimed at maximizing or protecting individual or sectional advantages, with the potential to lead to conflict-ridden conversations. That is, in seeking a win using the mechanism of strategic action individuals are more likely to engage in *debate,* not dialogue.

In contrast, when individuals engage in *communicative action* (Habermas, 1984), participants are seeking to undertake actions to reach a shared understanding, as in a productive dialogue. This kind of engagement requires that each participant recognizes the self of the other person in the relationship. This "I-Thou" perspective (Buber, 1996) is a subject-to-subject relationship, based on a shared sense of respect, mutual responsibility, and caring for the other participants (Raelin, 2014). For this to happen, each participant should be interested in truth and coherence, rather than simply being proven right. In this way, one must be willing to, at least temporarily, abandon or suspend, one's old ideas and intentions (Bohm, 1996), or, using Tsoukas' language, one must be willing to engage in *self-distanciation*. It's via this self-distanciation that people may be able to develop a shared understanding, allowing for the creative unfolding of a productive dialogue.

This is not to suggest that engaging with conflict in a dialogical manner will inevitably lead to agreement. Habermas' assertion that engagement in communicative action enables the rational judgment of a universal set of propositions and thus the suitability of social norms or practices (1990), has been rightfully criticized for avoiding of the possibility of a plurality of such truths (Mouffe, 1999, 2017; Rancière, 2004).

2.5.2. Perspectives

Contextually, constructive disagreements are more likely to arise in organizations that treat conflict as a space for possibilities rather than as something that should be addressed with silence, disruption, or close-mindedness and discontent (Dmytriyev et al., 2016). Habermas suggests that communicative action is more likely to emerge in a context where people are free and equal, lacking in any form of coercion (1993), where the modality of interaction between participants, or how people relate to one another, is relational rather than calculated or instrumental (Tsoukas, 2009).

As previously outlined, dialogue is enabled by the adoption of deliberative stance (Owen & Smith, 2015) or a more reflexive mindset (Bohm, 1996; Buber, 1996; Habermas, 1984; Isaacs, 1999; Tsoukas, 2009), as such orientations make it possible for participants to consider an issue from another's

perspective (Isaacs, 1999; Schön, 1983). Reflexivity emerges via self-awareness and open discussion with the other and makes it possible to upset the common understanding of and approach to an issue.

Conversely, dialogue is inhibited by a defensive position (Isaacs, 1999), a preference for avoidance (Carsten de Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001; Tjosvold et al., 2014), an instrumental or calculated modality of interaction (Habermas, 1987; Tsoukas, 2009), inappropriate framing of the issue (Gaim & Wåhlin, 2016), and negative prior experiences with conflict (Tjosvold, 2008).

A productive dialogue is characterized by a lasting perspectival shift, which includes the development of a shared frame that is influenced by the understanding and contributions of group members, which over time, fades into the background of organizational knowledge (Tsoukas, 2009). Furthermore, people who resolve conflicts openly and constructively feel more connected to others in the organization (Raelin, 2014).

2.5.3. Structure

There is conspicuously little attention paid to the structure of organizations in current theorizing around dialogue. However, Isaacs suggests that context is central to the facilitation of the emergence of dialogue (2001), as dialogue combines technical mastery with tacit expertise (1999, 2001), and as such it's likely to take considerable practice. Isaacs contributes the notion of the need to a specific context to facilitate dialogue, which he calls "the container," a kind of safe space that might support the emergence of a productive dialogue. Members of an organization need opportunities to train these kinds of skills. In this way, the right kind of design for interaction would include a process to develop a kind of muscle memory that is more likely to default reflexivity rather than defensiveness in participants. In the same way that Olympians are not first-time participants in their sports, but rather gradually introduce more stress on their bodies to develop strength and skill, members of an organization may need opportunities to engage with one another in less unsettled times, to exchange and listen to another, to try to understand the perspectives of the people they work with before the situation is too taxing.

In such a place as "the container," the group should agree to step back from the desire to simply fix the system and instead move towards an exercise of exploring the foundations of the current system itself and its underlying norms and perceptions (Isaacs, 2001). In this way, the container acts as something of a ''propositional map'' to guide the practice and emergence of dialogue (2001). There are four key aspects to creating a container: listening, respect, suspension of judgment, and voicing (Isaacs, 1999). Listening and facilitation skills are key skills that can allow an organization to engage in such a

process (Dmytriyev et al., 2016). Issacs suggests that engaging in dialogue "takes constant repetition, over years, with the understanding that one will always be learning" (Isaacs, 1999, p. 80). This might be viewed as a practice rather than a tool to be taken out and polished when needed, as learning is incremental and a self-transforming process (Ostrom, 1990).

2.6. Conclusion

Dialogue can facilitate several processes in organizations; it can be an important strategy in addressing conflict in teams (Tjosvold et al., 2014), help an organization become more innovative (Schippers et al., 2015), improves coordination (Isaacs, 2001), and develop better solutions (Isaacs, 1999). However, the literature has not provided a clear description of the processes and mechanisms involved in the unfolding of a productive dialogue (Briscoe & Gupta, 2016; M. H. McDonnell et al., 2015), especially as this relates to the antecedents of dialogue and the structures that may facilitate them. More research is needed to better understand the conditions that promote open-minded discussion and deepen our understanding of the dynamics of such discussions (Tjosvold et al., 2014). The literature also suggests that we need to study and understand how dialogues are practiced in specific settings in order to better understand the impact of these processes on the coordination and integration of action (Kreiner et al., 2011). If not "willed" per se, are certain structures better suited to adopt the processes and perspectives that are often associated with dialogue?

Table 1 Antecedents, limiters, enablers and consequences of dialogue

	Antecedents	Limiters	Enablers	Consequences
Structure	equity of participants	hierarchy	freedom of association the creations of a container	
Process	shared monologues polite conversation	improvisational and open-ended, no clear outcome at the outset cognitively demanding – needs space and time framing competing demands as a dilemma rather than a paradox.	framing competing demands as a paradox rather than as a dilemma skills: listening, respect, suspension of judgment and voicing, facilitation practice makes practiced	facilitates conceptual expansion, combination, and re-framing of the issues allows participants to more easily generate alternative hypotheses, explanations, and theories than on their own accelerate the processes of clarification and learning in a group of people with different backgrounds co-construction of knowledge and the eventual actions that may emerge from them
Perspective	unsettledness conflict	avoidant behaviour calculated, or instrumental modality of interactions negative prior experiences of dealing with conflict	an inter-subjective, or relational modality of interaction reflexive mindset or a deliberative stance self-distanciation	facilitates the creation of new knowledge and insights in organizations sense-making and contextualization feel more connected to others in the organization Creates a mutual understanding

3. Empirical Setting: Collaborative housing

The goal of this research project is to describe the mechanisms and processes that contribute to productive dialogue in Canadian collaborative housing (cohousing) communities. Because this is a relatively rare form of housing in Canada and may be easily confused with other forms of housing development or intentional community living, it's worth providing a thorough introduction to the reader to clear up any potential confusion. What follows is an introductory explanation of what cohousing is exactly, when it formally emerged, why, and for whom. This is followed by a description of the current Canadian context, the specific setting of my research.

3.1. Cohousing in brief

3.1.1. Where does cohousing exist?

The emergence of cohousing is shaped by different market forces and regulatory contexts, however, it exists in various forms in countries around the world (Vestbro & Horelli, 2012). It is most commonly associated with twentieth-century Northern European models of housing such as the Danish bofællesskab (i.e. sharing community/cohousing) and Swedish kollectivhus (i.e. collective house) (Vestbro, 2000). Since the first application in North America in the mid-1980s, at least 165 projects have been built across the United States in a variety of contexts (Boyer & Leland, 2018). There are currently 19 completed communities in Canada.

3.1.2. What is cohousing?

Cohousing is a form of not-for-profit intentional community-led development, whereby residents participate in the project's design, development, and management. Once complete, each household has exclusive access to a fully functional housing unit, while also sharing access to additional shared amenities managed in common. The commons include a mix of interior and exterior spaces, which vary in relation to the size and context of the community and can include elements such as a common house, common grounds and gardens, and parking. The common house, a central feature of cohousing, acts as a hub for community activity and contains an array of spaces useful for communal or individual pursuits such as a large kitchen and dining hall, guest rooms, meeting space, workshops and other spaces as determined by the residents. Examples of common house facilitates are depicted in images found in section 10.1, found on page 127.

The term cohousing was coined by architects Kathryn McCamant and Charles Durrett, who have been notable champions of the concept in the United States (Boyer & Leland, 2018). Through their publications and consultancy, they have also had an important role in the development of cohousing in Canada. As each project is lead by a different community, they all develop their own identity, history and culture (Boutinet, 2004). Moreover, established communities vary in terms of size, design, and ownership models. However, according to McCamant and Durrett, most communities share six characteristics (2011): participatory process, designs that facilitate community, common facilities, complete resident management, self-organizing, collective approach to decision-making, and no shared income. This last point, a negation, is offered mainly to dispel misconceptions around cohousing, such that they function as a commune or some other forms of Utopian intentional community (Jarvis, 2015).

Cohousing can be easily confused with other forms of housing models such as condominiums, cooperatives, ecovillages, and co-living; these are distinct, but not mutually exclusive concepts. In terms of legal designation, a cohousing community may be a condominium or a housing co-operative. Cohousing is not a legal structure, but rather it is an approach to neighbourhood design and governance (explained below). Likewise, a cohousing community can be found within an ecovillage (e.g. Groundswell within Yarrow Ecovillage in Chilliwack BC), or a more conventional master-planned community (e.g. Silver Sage Village within Holiday Neighborhood in North Boulder, Colorado). Finally, a member of a cohousing community might opt to share their personal living space with a non-familial person, thereby being in a co-living arrangement within a cohousing community. Table 2 concisely compares these different models along key variables to clarify the position of cohousing in relation to other models (page 25).

Briefly, each of these models has a different core purpose which in term influences the ownership structure, governance, financing, and creation of these communities. Co-living is the kind of arrangement where two or more non-related people will share one home; co-living is another way to describe being "roommates." If the occupants have any formal legal arrangement between themselves, this can take the form of a co-tenancy agreement.

Condominiums (sometimes also called strata) is a legal form of ownership whereby each homeowner has both a private dwelling and a share of the ownership of certain common elements and assets found in the building and/or community. Typically, condominium owners are part of a housing association that elects a board to govern the common property ("Condominium Basics," 2018). These homes are often developed by a private, for-profit developer, sold on the open market, and are financed with a mix of private equity and bank loans.

On the other hand, housing cooperatives are legal associations that provide housing at-cost for its members; each member of the housing co-operative has a private household and a share of the common elements. As legal co-operatives they are self-governing, in so much as members all have a vote in decisions (Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, n.d.). Financing of these projects is varied, depending on the initiator of the project, which is often a mix of governmental and not-for-profit agencies. Cooperative membership is often not market-based, member selection is made by existing members of the community, often the board of directors.

Finally, EcoVillages are a form of intentional community with a central aim of social and environmental sustainability. This may include participative processes, and a flexible model of development, which may include a land trust and/or a cooperative legal structure. There may also be agricultural production and shared income (Gilman, 1991). The financing and resale of the homes found in an ecovillage will be in part dictated by the legal structure of the community.

Table 2 Housing typologies

	Housing Cooperative	Condominium	Cohousing	Co-living[1]	Ecovillage
Definition	A cooperative is a legal designation, subject to registration under the Canada Cooperatives Act (S.C. 1998, c. 1).	A real estate project with a mix of private & commonly held assets.	A self-managed real estate project with a mix of private homes & commonly held assets. Each community selects the legal structure that makes sense in their jurisdiction.	Two or more non-related people sharing one home.	"a human-scale settlement consciously designed through participatory processes to create regenerative communities and lifestyles…. work with the four dimensions of sustainability: social, economic, ecological and cultural."[2]
Purpose	Typically, a not-for-profit housing model developed as affordable rental housing.	Typically, this is a means of developing market-rate housing, developed for profit, held as an investment by occupants.	Intentional community, not-for-profit housing developed by and for the members, with the intent of facilitating community ties.	To share a home. The rationale might be to save on costs (split rent) or increase social interaction.	An intentional community with a central aim of social and environmental sustainability. May include some production and shared income, which may include co-living arrangements.
Ownership Structure	2 cases: non-ownership (i.e. non-equity or continuing) and ownership (i.e. equity or strata). Non-equity: members are tenants and subject to those forms of agreement. Articles of incorporation and bylaws and occupancy agreements specify the cooperative's rules (including around resale in the case of the equity coops).	Individual ownership of homes & common ownership of shared amenities.	Most often legally structured in the same manner as a condo, though some are legal cooperatives.	Most frequently this is a co-tenancy agreement. Some co-ownership examples exist.	Varies, may include a land trust, cooperative structure. Generally, a not-for-profit approach to housing development.

	Housing Cooperative	**Condominium**	**Cohousing**	**Co-living**	**Ecovillage**
Governance	Size dependent. Smaller projects will include all members in governance, but larger will be led by elected representatives (board of directors).	Managed by a homeowners association made up of members (unit owners). The board of directors is elected by the membership.	Described in a variety of ways, but most commonly non-hierarchical, consensus-based, and/or consent-based (not governed by the board).	Variable, if any.	Managed by all members, many started with consensus, but have moved towards consent-models such as sociocracy.
Timing of the creation of the community	Varies. Most members are not involved in the early stages of cooperative design and development.	After the project is built and delivered to the purchasers.	Typically, the community starts formation before the purchase of a site for the neighbourhood and grows as the project moves through development.	Variable, if any.	Typically, the community starts formation before the purchase of a site for the neighbourhood and grows as the project moves through development.
Financing	A mix of governmental and NGO initiatives.	A mix of private equity and bank loans (contingent on sales)	A mix of private equity and bank loans (contingent on sales).	n/a	Varied. A mix of private equity and bank loans (contingent on sales).
Resale	The BoD selects new members; controls on speculation.	Rules and Regs in the Condominium Act, market-rate unless covenants are in place. Seller's responsibility.	Typically, the same as a condo. Higher need for education to encourage self-selection.	n/a	Varied. Depends on the legal structure of the organization.

Physical Design

Being intentional communities, cohousing neighbourhoods are purpose-designed and built to reflect the desires and financial capacity of the households that form these communities. Depending on the context, cohousing communities can be made up of one or many buildings. Images found in Section 10.2 on page 130 depict several projects found in Canada and demonstrate the variety of building typologies that can lend form to cohousing communities. A common feature of these communities is the economical use of private space. Private homes in cohousing communities are smaller than average new homes, approximately 60% of the size of typical new homes in the United States (McCamant & Durrett, 2011). Space reduction occurs in the kitchen, dining room, guest rooms, and living rooms, as many of the occasional celebratory functions of these spaces are taken up in the common house. Private homes tend to be tightly clustered around common spaces. As the design of cohousing evolves, the limits to environmental design are further pushed. Since the earliest examples of this model of development, the sizes of private dwellings in American cohousing communities have been cut nearly in half, in response to changing family sizes and as residents learn to use the community spaces as an extension of their homes (McCamant & Durrett, 2011). This is true in Canada as well as more communities are developed on more constrained urban sites, in cities like Vancouver, Ottawa and Quebec City. Moreover, to meet the needs of the ageing population who want to down-size and age in community, seniors-oriented communities are popping up in places like Sooke and Saskatoon.

While common space is becoming rather customary in many North American housing models, as approximately half of Americans live in housing with some shared facilities or space (Jarvis, 2015), the function of these spaces is somewhat different than in cohousing. In most conventional scenarios common space provides a boundary between private spaces, whereas in cohousing communities common space, such as the common house, is the central point around which private spaces are anchored (Fromm, 1991). That is to suggest, that it's not the presence of this space but rather it's programming that builds a sense of community in cohousing. The sense of community that emerges out of cohousing developments is not a happy accident nor left to chance - cohousing is intentionally designed to encourage regular and meaningful interaction between members, both physically and organizationally.

Organizational design

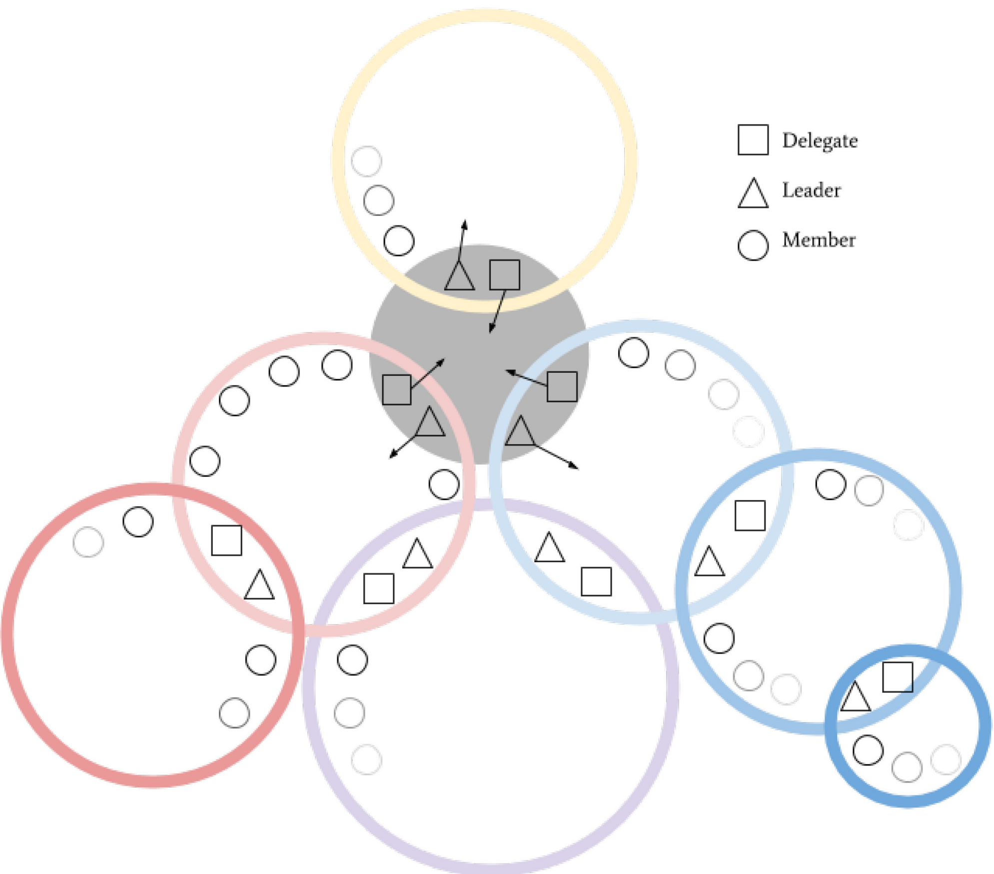
While cohousing does tend toward certain physical features, such as extensive commons, its primary distinction from other housing alternatives is the placement of residents at the center

of the design, development, and day-to-day management of the neighbourhood (Boyer & Leland, 2018). This key differentiating feature of cohousing contradicts the paradigm of housing as an off-the-shelf commodity (Boyer & Leland, 2018; Harris, 2009). As part of the process of physical development (outlined below), each cohousing community also intentionally creates its governance model, with the goal of not only managing the community effectively but also building connections and interdependencies between neighbours. All share some characteristics based on a desire for participatory process and collaboration, such as seeking consensus or consent from all households in decision-making. While there are many approaches to designing an organizational structure to facilitate agency and collaboration (M. Y. Lee & Edmondson, 2017; Manz et al., 2009; Romme & Van Witteloostuijn, 1999; Semler, 1989), one model that is increasingly common in cohousing communities is the sociocratic governance model, Sociocracy provides a studied model which is representative, if not the same, as the dynamic systems of governance found in most cohousing communities. It is a form of governance that is predicated on the notion that people are equal and that this equality might be expressed not by vote taking, but by collective reasoning, whereby decisions are made once a proposal is considered satisfactory to each member (Boeke, 1945). Romme studied this model with the help of Dutch entrepreneur Gerard Endenburg, who is credited with formalizing the sociocratic model that is used more widely by organizations today (Romme, 2003; Romme & Endenburg, 2006; Romme & Van Witteloostuijn, 1999).

The primary purpose of this model is to enhance the capacity of the organization to govern, organize, and learn from itself (Romme et al., 2016). This model of organizing accepts that structures are multifaceted, dynamic, and ever-evolving through dialectical interactions (Raelin, 2014). Decision making occurs at different levels of the organization (hierarchically) by groups or circles using informed consent. In the case of cohousing, this might mean that while all members are invited into the process of community governance via regular all-members' meetings or general council, some decisions might be intrusted to sub-circles or teams, made up of a smaller grouping of the same members (see example Figure 2, page 29). Information is communicated bilaterally by virtue of the overlapping membership of these circles. Such a dynamic design facilitates informed consent at all levels without requiring as many regular plenary discussions and allows groups to delegate or mandate day-to-day decision making to smaller teams working at the level most affected by that decision (Romme & Endenburg, 2006). Informed consent arises in that participants can express and discuss their objections to a proposal in advance of its advancement, in smaller teams that are more manageable for such deliberations

(Romme, 2004b). The impetus of this kind of decision-making is to create a formal space for any dissenting perspective to be fully communicated and explored by the group. That is, naming difficult issues allows the groups to inquire into them; this is a framework to bring forward tensions and to address them proactively.

Figure 2 An example of Sociocratic double linking



This is not to say that consent seeking is without its challenges. Despite its intention, the model may provide an advantage to those with a more robust set of resources or skills (Raelin, 2014), as is the case in more traditional organizational designs. Ospina and Saz-Carranza refer to these conditions as a set of seeming paradoxes that exist between collaboration and confrontation as well as between unity and diversity (2010). The case of cohousing provides an interesting case for the investigation of such paradoxes, given the intentionality of these communities.

There is conspicuously little attention paid to the invisible architecture that leads to the long-term viability of cohousing communities in particular (Jarvis, 2015). This might be due to

the practical bias of much of the writing on cohousing, its central aim being to support the development of more cohousing communities, where it's felt that while "the participatory development process establishes the initial sense of community, it is the physical design that sustains it over time" (McCamant & Durrett, 2011, p. Kindle Locations 701-702). This perspective suggests that the project of creating cohousing communities is object-based (Boutinet, 2004), whereby a central aim is the creation of a unique collection of spaces that may benefit the occupants in ways that their previous homes could not. However, it could just as easily be said that design work of creating these communities is the by-product of the achievement of social aims, in that design and development work is ultimately achieved through the effective management of member collaboration, making this more of a social project (Boutinet, 2004), which drives the development of the physical development project (Matthews, 2007).

This bias towards physical design is not only problematic for forming groups, but it makes it difficult to know if there are perspectives, processes and/or mechanisms related to this model of governance that might be transferred into existing non-cohousing communities – and this is where the greatest impact of the research of cohousing likely lies: in guiding existing neighbourhoods towards more sustainable and/or democratic practices. As Ostrom suggested, private individuals "are credited with little or no ability to solve collective problems among themselves. This makes for a distorted view of some important economic and political issues" (1990, p. 215). Cohousing is a clear example that some individuals can solve collective problems together, but how they do this successfully is not thoroughly documented.

3.1.3. Why do people choose cohousing?

Cohousing allows members to live materially simple but relationally rich lives. These are not-for-profit community-led real estate development organizations formed with the explicit intent to create a neighbourhood where people know their neighbours to share in the joys and labours of life. This approach to neighbourhood development emerged alongside a variety of changing social norms: the increased number of women in the workforce, the decreasing number of children in the home, and the greater need for the informal labour of the home to be shared (McCamant & Durrett, 2011; Vestbro & Horelli, 2012). In North America, the single-family detached home still makes up almost 70% of the American housing stock (McCamant & Durrett, 2011). Yet the "dream home" ideal of a suburban, detached single-family dwelling has attracted several pointed criticisms.

The detached home, connected to work, school and friends via a network of increasingly congested roadways, has often been held responsible for environmental and social degradation (Johnson, 2001) and the collapse of prosocial institutions (Putnam, 2000) as people spend more time commuting than communing, contributing to more sedentary and less social daily lives (Sanguinetti, 2012). Moreover, this model of housing has long thought to no longer support the current demographic makeup of average households (Franck & Ahrentzen, 1989), having been conceived of at a time when it was safe to assume that the typical household was composed of a working father, stay-at-home mother, and two to four children (McCamant & Durrett, 2011; Sanguinetti, 2012). In Canada, family sizes have been on a continuous decline since the 1960s: we are having fewer children, single-parent households have doubled, and there has been a three-fold increase in the number of people living alone (Milan & Bohnert, 2012). The housing market has been slow to respond to the distinct needs of these growing markets.

The condominium market can and does address some of these issues by providing smaller, somewhat more affordable spaces, with less maintenance borne by the occupant. Moreover, the emergence of green building has the potential to increase the efficiency of North American homes. However, research into sustainable real estate development demonstrates that it does not follow that design for energy efficiency leads to sustainable patterns of behaviour, even energy efficiency (Hendrickson & Roseland, 2010; Hendrickson & Wittman, 2010; Socolow, 1978). There is growing evidence that LEED buildings on their own are not doing an adequate job of consistently reducing energy demands (Newsham, Mancini, & Birt, 2009; Scofield, 2009). In fact, LEED buildings can be wonderful examples of the "rebound effect", in that it has been demonstrated that "efficiency gains are being overrun by increases in consumption" (Hendrickson & Roseland, 2010, p. 39). This can happen for several reasons, not least of which relates to the increasing size of the family home; the average size of a new American home having increased almost 1,000 square feet since the late seventies, to an average of just over 2,500 square feet (New Residential Construction, November 19, 2019, 2019; Table Q-6. New Privately Owned Housing Units Completed in the United States, by Intent and Design, 2019). As we've seen above, homes in cohousing communities are smaller than average, this means there is less space to heat and cool, residents of a cohousing community use 50 to 75% percent less energy for heating and cooling than they did in their previous homes (McCamant & Durrett, 2011). They also have less space to fill with materials such as furniture, appliances, and consumer goods. On the neighbourhood level, cohousing developments occupy less than half as much land as the average new subdivision for the same number of households as there is a tendency to cluster

homes on sites, and 75% less land as the same individuals did before moving into cohousing (McCamant & Durrett, 2011). Consequently, many cohousing projects include large amounts of shared natural and landscaped green space, often used for recreation and to produce some fresh food for members of the community.

Moreover, condominiums do not address one of the central reasons that people seek out cohousing neighbourhoods: the promise of a community that focuses on building relationships in addition to physical space (Christian, 2009; Fromm, 1991; McCamant & Durrett, 2011; Meltzer, 2000). Research supports the notion that members of cohousing communities engage in socially supportive behaviours more often than people in comparable contexts (Markle, Rodgers, Sanchez, & Ballou, 2015). Community members frequently cook and eat together, share rides, and tools. In an attempt to address the solitary lives of an increasing number of North Americans, members of these communities can develop a network of people that occupy a relational space somewhere between friends and typical neighbours, and in the process, they seem to build small sharing economies that, in some cases, spread beyond property boundaries into the wider towns and cities that have welcomed the development of such communities.

3.1.4. How are cohousing communities created?

These communities are each created by and for their occupants. That is, members form an organization with the express aim to meet an unmet demand in the real estate market for housing that balances the privacy of individual homes with the desire for a deeper experience of community. Alongside the typical real estate development process (outlined below), cohousing communities have a parallel process of organizational development, where they establish shared values, decision-making models, agreements, etc. to work together on the real estate and community project they have set out for themselves. The duel process of both building and community development is long, laborious, and “reframes the meaning of housing, from a ready-made consumer product to a skilled and social process” (Boyer, 2018). That said, most of the units currently developed as cohousing are market-based housing, in that they can be sold on the speculative market without any specific restrictions around pricing. Exceptions to this rule are the minority of affordable units are part of some of the communities or those that are housing co-operatives. Fromm (2000) described several extant models of North American cohousing development: the project, lot, expanding neighbourhood, and streamlined process models.

Thus far, the project model is the most common model in both the United States (Fromm, 2000) and Canada, this is a model whereby the community acts as their own developer. That is, these organizations seek out and secure land and financing, organize professionals in a manner to design, seek approvals, develop, market, and build these neighbourhoods. Bearing in mind that the real estate development process is often simplified to a fault (Kohlhepp, 2012), typically, the design phase of a real estate project comes after a development site has been secured and site parameters for development have been clarified with the city or region of development. Working with design professionals such as architects and engineers the site is planned out and buildings are designed according to a design brief outlined by the developer, in this case by the community itself. Once approvals have been obtained from the city or region, the development phase begins as units are sold based on available plans. Depending on the conditions of the construction financing, construction of the building(s) will start once a certain number of units have been sold, typically in the range of 70%-80% of the units in the project. The substantial up-front investment required to purchase the land and pay for the soft-costs of development (e.g. professional fees and services), means that this model of development requires a substantial cash outlay by many of the members of the community, often before residences can be sure the project is going ahead. Moreover, participants are often jointly and severally liable for the financial obligations of the development project, and this great leap of faith can surely present challenges for communities of wildly divergent levels of wealth.

In the case of the lot model, a site is purchased and subdivided into lots, which are sold on the general housing market. These market homebuyers are responsible for the design and construction of their own private homes. The sale of each lot contributes funds into a common pool of funds for the construction of common facilities including the common house (Fromm, 2000). This requires less of an up-front investment by the community, but may also involve less group coalescence around the shared project of the community development as members may spend more time focused on the development of their own private homes (Fromm, 2000).

The expanding community model (also called retrofit cohousing), occurs when members buy adjacent homes in existing neighbourhoods and encourage others to join the community. Over time, fences are removed, creating a large common area made up of the rear yards. A prime example of this model is N Street Cohousing in Davis, California. The first two houses were built in 1986 and the community has grown to include 19 households. In 2005, a common house was built to serve the established community.[3]

The final model, the streamlined process, occurs when the concept is spearheaded by a professional real estate developer, who agrees to work for a fee. This model is exemplified by the work of the Wonderland Hill Development Company in Boulder Colorado.[4] The development process is said to be streamlined by having an experienced cohousing community developer control the site, the design, the financing, thus placing certain limits of group decision-making. This arrangement can be more cost-effective, as experienced developers can leverage previous lessons and existing professional networks while also often having access to preferential rates for financing. The whole process may also be faster in that there are limits placed on the amount of deliberation needed by the residents (Fromm, 2000). Provided the developer understands the purpose and nature of cohousing, working with an experienced developer provides the group with many advantages. The process of real estate development is "a complex, time-consuming, capital intensive, multi-disciplinary, externality-generating, public-private endeavour," (Kohlhepp, 2012, p. 3) and a key success factor in the multi-family real estate development in Canada is having a high prior success rate (Irigoyen, 2019). It has to be said that, that not unlike a lot of other business ventures, most cohousing communities do not get off the ground, so a successful approach to a streamlined process presents a path to better meet the needs of the market. According to community facilitator Diana Leafe Christian 90% of intentional communities are unsuccessful (2009). This number comes from a comparison of intentional communities and ecovillages in North America listed on the Communities Directory over some time, and how many became built communities over time. Working with an experienced developer could have many advantages, including the ability to attract people who are unwilling or unable to take the "leap of faith" described in the project model.

Regardless of the model used, many forming communities have worked with cohousing consultants, who act as project and community managers for the community. This is a service that often assists with both the real estate and community development process and allows each community to benefit from the lessons learned by previous projects. Even in the case of the streamlined process, a cohousing consultant may work with the developer to help build the community aspect of the project. For example, Wonderland Hill Development Company had a productive relationship with Kathryn McCamant's Cohousing Solutions. This points to a notable condition of this approach to real estate development; the communities learn from one another. Most of the communities have worked with cohousing consultants and most of these people have experience initiating and/or living in communities themselves. Moreover, many of these communities welcome visits from people who are looking to form or join a community. A few

people have moved between communities or have family members in different communities. Consequently, it's not uncommon for communities to share best practices.

Regardless of the model adopted by the community, after the building development and construction is complete, the development corporation is dissolved and this is followed by the birth of a non-profit housing association or co-op, which manages the community; they maintain the buildings and grounds, manage the budget and animate the community via this new organization.

3.1.5. For whom are cohousing communities developed?

Research has demonstrated that cohousing is an appealing model of housing to a diverse and representative sample of the United States housing market (Boyer & Leland, 2018). However, one criticism of cohousing is its lack of diversity (Fromm, 2000; Williams, 2005). The research has largely pointed to cohousing being a model of development available to well educated, middle-class, white Americans (Sanguinetti, 2015). Specifically, when compared with the 2010 U.S. Census population, cohousing residents are, on average, older, disproportionately female, more educated, and have a higher household income. Almost all the residents are white and politically Democratic (Boyer & Leland, 2018). Except for the gender divide, this kind of demographic is quite similar to both early-adopters of innovative consumer products more generally (Tellis, Yin, & Bell, 2009) and new home purchasers. Retrofit cohousing, which doesn't rely on new housing construction, is made up of members that are typically younger and more racially diverse than the project model of cohousing development (Sanguinetti, 2015). However, there are currently fewer examples of the retrofit model.

3.2. Cohousing in Canada: The first 20+ years

While there are numerous examples of community-oriented developments in Canada that go by other names, such as ecovillages and co-operative housing, the first community-led neighbourhood development project in Canada that was conceived and purposefully built using the model of "cohousing" is the award-winning Windsong Cohousing project located in Langley BC, which opened its doors in 1996. Since then, 18 additional cohousing projects have been built around the country.

At the time of writing, there are a total of 457 homes found in cohousing communities in Canada, and projects range from 7 to 42 units, with an average of 24 units. Most of these communities are located in British Columbia, the remaining project are scattered across the country, from Quebec to Alberta. Based on a survey of the members of communities investigated in this study members of cohousing communities in Canada live in relatively small spaces (with an average size of 99.6 m^2 or 1,072 ft^2). Most members had downsized considerably to move into these neighbourhoods. Of those who downsized, there was an average decrease in private space of 69.21m^2 (745ft^2). This facilitated by the regular use of commons amenities. The average amount of built common space in these projects a little is over 4,000 ft^2 (372 m^2), an average of almost 200 ft2 of built common space per unit of housing. In terms of shared exterior commons, the range varies considerably; rural and suburban projects contain larger exterior commons for reasons of zoning and the availability and price of land in those areas. Nine of the communities are urban, seven are rural, the remaining few located in what might be considered a suburban environment. As a consequence of these different contexts, there is a diversity of housing typologies found across Canada: apartment style, townhomes and duplex development, single homes, and mixed models. These findings are concisely described in Table 3 on page 37.

The reason why members chose to create cohousing communities is varied, but there are common themes that guide their development and management. In looking at common words that make up the vision, mission and values statements shared by completed communities in Canada (see Table 4 on page 39), we see that the community aspect of these projects seems to prevail over environmental concerns, though these too are present in many of the statements. Words like “community,” “support” and “sharing” are pervasive in these statements. Interestingly, another common feature of these statements are references to issues of the individual and of privacy, in that words like “individual,” “personal,” and “private” appear in most of these declarations; highlighting the goal of striking a balance between private and shared, independence and interdependence.

Table 3 Summary of completed Canadian cohousing communities (as of Jan 2020)

Name	City	Prov	Occupied*	# units	Common house (sqft)	Common space/ unit	Reno / New	Dominant building typology
Belterra	Bowen Island	BC	2015	30	3346	111.5	New	townhomes/duplex
Cohabitat Québec	Quebec City	QC	2015	42	8500	202.4	Mix	apartment style
Cranberry Commons	Burnaby	BC	2002	22	3400	154.5	New	apartment style
Creekside Commons	Courtenay	BC	2007	36	3500	97.2	New	townhomes/duplex
Denman Island	Denman Island	BC	2008	15	2200	146.7	New	Single homes
Groundswell Cohousing	Chilliwack	BC	2014	31	3890	125.5	New	townhomes/duplex
Harbourside Cohousing	Sooke	BC	2016	31	3900	125.8	New	apartment / townhomes
Heddlestone Village	Nelson	BC	2015	24	5000	208.3	New	townhomes/duplex
Middle Road Community	Nelson	BC	1996	11	4000	363.6	Mix	Single homes
Pacific Gardens	Nanaimo	BC	2009	25	8000	320.0	New	apartment style
Prairie Sky Cohousing Coop	Calgary	AL	2003	18	3200	177.8	New	apartment style
Prairie Spruce Commons	Regina	SK	2019	21	3000	142.9	New	apartment style
Quayside Village	North Vancouver	BC	1998	19	2600	136.8	New	apartment style
Radiance Cohousing	Saskatoon	SK	2018	8	1120	140.0	New	townhomes/duplex

Name	City	Prov	Occupied*	# units	Common house (sqft)	Common space/ unit	Reno / New	Building typology
Roberts Creek Cohousing	Roberts Creek	BC	2005	31	2840	91.6	New	single & townhomes/duplex
Terra Firma Cohousing	Ottawa	ON	1998	7	1250	178.6	Mix	townhomes/duplex
Vancouver Cohousing	Vancouver	BC	2016	35	6500	185.7	New	apartment style
Windsong	Langley	BC	1996	34	5000	147.1	New	townhomes/duplex
Wolf Willow Cohousing	Saskatoon	SK	2012	21	4500	214.3	New	apartment style

Table 4 Word frequency count of mission statements by Canadian cohousing communities

Word	Count	Weighted %	Similar Words
Community	75	5.56	communal, communally, communicate, communication, communities
Live	22	1.63	live, lively, lives, living
Respect	19	1.41	respect, respected, respectful, respecting
Making	17	1.26	make, makes, making
Support	17	1.26	support, supported, supporting, supportive
Create	16	1.19	create, created, creating
Sharing	15	1.11	share, shared, sharing
Using	15	1.11	use, used, using
Social	14	1.04	social, socially
Celebrating	14	1.04	celebrate, celebrated, celebrates, celebrations
Decision	14	1.04	decision, decisions
Environment	14	1.04	environment
Individual	14	1.04	individual, individuality, individually, individuals
Sustainable	14	1.04	sustain, sustainability, sustainable, sustainably
Actions	13	0.96	action, actions
Encouraging	12	0.89	encourage, encouraged, encouragement, encourages
Personal	12	0.89	personally
Responsible	12	0.89	responsibilities, responsibility, responsible
Together	12	0.89	together, togetherness
Connections	11	0.82	connection, connections
Life	11	0.82	life
Members	11	0.82	member, members
Values	11	0.82	value, values
Resources	10	0.74	resources, resourcing
Care	9	0.67	care, caring

At the time of writing, there are upwards of 20 projects forming or in development throughout Canada that are sharing their projects' progress publicly. The current number of forming communities suggest there is a demand for this model of housing. Projects described as "forming" are those collectives with various levels of commitment to membership. Some forming groups have identified potential sites for development but have yet to purchase land as an asset owned by the members' corporation. A group can be described as "in development" once they have secured land that its suitable for development and are actively investing substantial levels of capital into the execution of the project.

All but two established Canadian projects appear to have used the project model of cohousing development. The resulting projects are mostly newly constructed, and only on three occasions have communities in Canada made use of existing buildings for part of the project. For example, Terra Firma in Ottawa started with neighbouring historic townhomes, which were eventually joined via an addition, which included some built common space (see image on page 130). Moreover, in the more than 20 years they've been part of the Old Ottawa South neighbourhood, they have attracted associate members as friends and family members moved into houses on the same block and participate in some community activities, in the manner of the expanding neighbourhood model. One community, a co-operative located on Denman Island, opted for something more akin to the lot model of development, where land is secured and lots are sold or, in this case, rented to members, who are responsible to build their own home within certain design parameters developed by the community (e.g. max size of the building, setbacks, etc.).

As in the United States, cohousing communities in Canada make use of consensus- or consent-seeking decision-making processes. With few exceptions, such processes are neither familiar nor common in the daily lives of residents before becoming members of these communities. Of the communities visited for this research project, most make use of smaller committees to break down the various elements needed to manage and animate the community once it has been built, but how they are structured, and how they came to these structures is varied. A common structural breakdown includes tasks related to 1) use and animation of the commons, 2) maintenance of the grounds 3) maintenance of the buildings, and 4) general administration. Some communities have adopted a sociocratic model of governance early in their formation, such as Cohabitat Quebec, while others are moving towards this model after many years of working from a different model, such as at Windsong Cohousing.

Legally and physically Canadian cohousing shares a lot in common with condominium development, given that many of these projects are legally structured as condominium or strata projects. Just as with these types of projects, residents pay a monthly fee to be part of a homeowners' association and to cover the shared costs of managing the buildings and grounds. However, the differences around collaboration and relationship building are what sets this housing model apart; this empirical setting provides an example of how citizens can effectively organize and form a democratic enterprise to co-create a solution for the issue of sustainable housing not currently provided by the market or government.

4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction

The central question for this work aims to better understand the processes and mechanisms that contribute to productive dialogue in collaborative housing communities. There are several reasons for the selection of this particular empirical setting. Firstly, the modality of engagement can be assumed as relational, given the intentional nature of these communities. Engagement of members in these communities is central, and this is relevant in the study of dialogue as relational engagement is proposed as a mediator of dialogue (Tsoukas, 2009). Secondly, the inherently personal nature of the context, which includes members' homes and families, makes the context disposed towards difficult to navigate tensions. Finally, these communities make use of a form of organizational design that is not written on extensively in the literature but relates to emerging interests in issues such as systems of dynamic governance (Romme, 2003; Romme & Endenburg, 2006), organizational democracy (e.g. Hielscher, Beckmann, & Pies, 2014; Sabadoz & Singer, 2017) and participative design (e.g. Björgvinsson, Ehn, & Hillgren, 2010; Manzini & Rizzo, 2011; Storni, Binder, Linde, & Stuedahl, 2015).

4.2. Research question

Answering the question "what are the processes and mechanisms that contribute to productive dialogue in Canadian cohousing communities?" can provide some insight on *how* members of these communities have prepared or are brought through a process that allows them to engage together in productive dialogue in pursuit of some kind of resolution to contentious issues. Here the term mechanism means a system or set of established procedures that accompany a productive dialogue. In this way, a mechanism may include a specific process, by which I mean a series of actions or steps taken to induce a productive dialogue in these communities.

With this in mind, I chose to study the *successful* resolution of contentious issues within completed cohousing communities using an inductive embedded multiple cross-case analysis. These cases were selected specifically to learn from the positive, dialogical experiences of members of these communities in dealing with *key events*, in this case, contentious situations and the various kinds of *processes* used to address them. Adopting this kind of appreciative lens when considering contentious issues allows us to consider what helps to bring life to these

organizations as we learn from their most effective dialogical moments, according to their members.

4.3. Research design

This qualitative study takes a multimodal approach to answer its central question in that I make uses of grounded theory and case studies to draw conclusions. While these may be considered distinct methodologies, it is not uncommon for researchers to integrate them into one study (Creswell, 2007), as in the case here. Qualitative data, like those that will make up this research project, have a particular strength for comprehending issues pertaining to processes, due to their ability to describe in rich detail phenomena that evolve over time (Langley & Abdallah, 2011). Qualitative research is particularly relevant with more explorative research questions (Badke-Schaub et al., 2010), and for this reason, many researchers make use of grounded theory. This approach to inquiry intends to move beyond description to generate or discover an abstract analytical schema of a process, interaction or action (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Creswell, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), and the resulting theory is both developed *from* and grounded *in* data provided by participants (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & de Eyto, 2018). There are two dominant approaches to grounded theory: the systematic procedures of Strauss and Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and the constructivist approach of Charmaz (2005, 2006). This dissertation relies more on the former, while also referencing procedural approaches of those who have managed to develop accepted methods in the field of management, with process data as described in Langley & Abdallah (2011) and Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton (2012).

Case studies are a suitable method to investigate a current process within its natural context, especially as delimiting the context and these processes is not obvious, and an embedded case allows one to consider more than one sub-unit of analysis (Yin, 1995). In much the same way as a straightforward case study, an embedded case study methodology allows the researcher to integrate quantitative and qualitative methods into one research study (Scholz & Tietje, 2002; Yin, 1995). The identification of sub-units allows for a more detailed level of inquiry. A study that makes use of multiple cases may result in better-grounded and more general theory than the analysis of a single case (Eisenhardt, 1989).

With this research project, I am looking at participants' retelling of certain events as cases that transpire within specific communities, each with their own context. As the goal of the research project is to describe the processes and mechanisms that contribute to productive

dialogues in such communities, this is an appropriate approach of inquiry, as the boundaries between the phenomenon of interest and context are not immediately apparent at the outset (Scholz & Tietje, 2002).

4.3.1. On maintaining academic rigour with a qualitative study

One of the major challenges of doing qualitative research on organizational processes has less to do with the collection of the data, but rather with the process by which we may make sense of such volumes of data to generate valuable theoretical contributions (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012; Langley & Abdallah, 2011; Maher et al., 2018). There are guidelines and suggested procedures in analyzing this kind of data, but no hard rules (Patton, 2002). For this reason, I will lean heavily on the approaches of those who have managed to develop accepted methods with process data as described in Langley & Abdallah (2011), and Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton (2012). Design research also shares many of the features of the qualitative analysis process found in grounded theory (Maher et al., 2018). While the requirements of reliability, replication, and validity are generally related to a demonstration of rigour in quantitative studies, these concepts are less applicable to qualitative studies such as this one (Maher et al., 2018). Trustworthiness, a construct built up of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability is considered a more suitable criterion for evaluating qualitative studies (Creswell, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

The credibility of a given proposal ensures that the study captures that which is set out to measure and that this data is a fair representation of the reality faced by the informants. There are a few paths to address the issue of credibility such as a "prolonged engagement" within the context (Creswell, 2007, p. 207). Staying on-site and talking formally and informally with members throughout my stay has been central to understanding the relevance and "truthfulness" of the findings shared here. Transferability relates to the ability of the findings from this study to be transferred to other settings or contexts. A thick description of both the concept of collaborative housing and the communities themselves are provided (see Section 3, page 22) to allow the reader a better understanding of the context so they can assess for themselves if this context provides transferable insights on their situation or not. Dependability ensures the process of executing the research design is described in enough detail to facilitate replication of this work by another researcher; this will be outlined in the following pages. Confirmability is analogous to objectivity in quantitative studies, where the goal is to acknowledge the researcher's biases. Admittedly, I'm not completely objective when it comes to the empirical setting: I believe there is

something of value to the nature of these communities, and have become something of a champion of cohousing in the process of doing this research. That this study takes an appreciative lens in considering the nature of these places aligns with this orientation, in that I'm most interested in understanding what helps to bring life to these particular organizations when they are at their most effective for their members.

4.3.2. Sampling

I made use of Lincoln and Guba's (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) guidelines for "purposeful sampling" in choosing communities and informants. At the organizational level, I chose to focus research on completed and occupied cohousing communities. By purposefully focusing on cases within communities that had already successfully designed, developed, and inhabited their neighbourhoods, rather than communities that were forming or in development, I was more likely to encounter exemplary organizational practices around conflict resolution, representing a "sampling the best" of such organizations (Patton, 2002). Within such organizations, I was able to find informants who would be most able to address the main research question concerning the processes and mechanisms which support organizational members' ability to leverage dialogue to constructively resolve or 'dissolve' conflict in ways remain supportive of themselves and the organization.

Real estate development is a complex and risky industry and designing one's home can be an incredibly personal process. Organizations that successfully negotiate and manage the development of a neighbourhood using deliberative and deeply democratic principles such as consensus-seeking in decision making have something to teach us about managing such processes effectively. While studying these critical cases of addressing tense and conflictual situations may not permit broad predictive generalizations to similar situations across other kinds of organizations, this approach can point to some logical generalizations (Patton, 2002) whereby, if these similar processes worked in different communities, they may also work in similar relationally-rich contexts.

In terms of the sampling key events, I isolated the description of events that appeared to be most pertinent to the question of how conflict was effectively resolved in the community, with particular attention to the issues that were resolved in a dialogical manner. I sampled the events purposefully, in that they were not selected in pursuit of empirical generalization, but were rather aimed at generating some insight on the phenomenon of the emergence of dialogue in response to

conflict or tension in these communities (Patton, 2002). Further, I employed a criterion sampling method (Patton, 2002) to focus my analysis on events that seemed to best fit the notion of a truly contentious event within the community that was addressed with dialogue. As outlined in the analysis section, I focused my sampling on events that happened in the community that was described in emotional terms and/or took numerous attempts to address. These are events that informants found to be very challenging, stating, for example, "I was really pissed off and I never felt that angry before at a meeting," (U_02) or "and so we had a meeting and you know there was a little crying and stuff" (U_03). In sampling this way, I'm able to be sure that I'm learning from events that were felt to be truly challenging, rather than straight forward.

4.4. Data collection

The two main data sources are interviews and archival materials. Archival materials are a mix of internal and external materials. Internal sources include policy such as conflict resolution processes, models for consensus- or consent-building, and information collected on community websites. External sources include articles written by community members for the Canadian Cohousing Network (CCN), as well as articles and book chapters written about the communities visited. This archival material was central in locating potential communities to participate in the research project, as communities were identified via the CCN past and present members, as well as via their historic tables of forming and developing communities.

Communities were first identified via a web search starting with the listing of members of the Canadian Cohousing Network (CCN). Additional communities that were not current members of the CCN were discovered via a review of the archived newsletters of the CCN, a search of Canadian cohousing communities on the "Directory of Communities" found on the Foundation of Intentional Communities website, as well as a broader web search using the terms "collaborative housing," "cohabitat," (the French term for cohousing) and "cohousing," on a province-by-province basis. A list of communities that were "completed," "in development" and "forming," was maintained, until such a time that the criterion for inclusion in the study became completed cohousing community within Canada. Communities that were outward-facing were first contacted, that is, these were communities that members of the CCN and/or had a website describing themselves as a cohousing community where they shared some of their background with the public. Communities that were less outward-facing were contacted by email and only included in the study if they still considered themselves a cohousing community. An example of a

community that was excluded from the study was one that had been a former member of the CCN and had intended to follow the cohousing model, but for pragmatic reasons instead developed as an ecovillage with a certain degree of co-living rather than private homes. Moreover, I opted to focus my data collection in English speaking communities, as there is only one French-speaking community in Canada, and I didn't want to run into issues of translation and cultural differences between French and English-speaking Canada.

I contacted all the completed communities in English-speaking Canada that identified themselves as cohousing neighbourhoods, and invited them to participate in the research project, with letters explaining the research project sent via email. I first needed permission from each of the communities for member participation in the study, and after permission was obtained from the organization, individuals were invited to sign up for the study via internal postings in the communities, via listservs, Google Groups postings, and/or physical bulletin boards. Typically, one member of the community was tasked with assisting me in terms of meeting members of the community for interviews. Of the 16 communities contacted 12 communities agreed to be part of the research within a time that made it possible to visit these sites. In a lead up to a visit to the site, members signed up for an interview time, and often, while on-site, additional members would choose to participate in an interview if time permitted. I was not able to visit one of the communities that had invited me and arranged my visit due to a snowy mountain pass. In total, 84 informants in 11 communities were visited over a period of 8 months.

Given that the research considers the resolution of issues that were at one time considered contentious by these communities, the names of participating communities as well as the names of informants have been altered to provide some anonymity to participating communities and informants. Each community has been randomly assigned a name made up of two components: a randomly selected Canadian tree species and the term "coho," a common abbreviation for cohousing. Each informant is given a code based on the initials of the assigned community name and a unique number. It may be the case that complete anonymity for all participants and their communities may not be possible (Van Den Hoonaard, 2003), especially given the insularity of the research context. The level of anonymization is provided here is done as a basic courtesy to those that participated in the research project.

While visiting a community, I took field notes, photographs, and accepted documentation from community members. Visits to the community often included staying on-site in a guest room in the common house for one or more nights, which allowed me to be invited to participate

in site tours, which were recorded when possible, and community activities such as community meals, games nights, and walks in the wider community. The semi-structured interviews were voluntary and conducted in person, with one exception, which was conducted over Skype. These interviews were from 45 minutes to 3 hours in length. I was able to speak to between 4 and 14 members of each community, leading to the capture of more than 98 hours of interview recordings. Some of the informants were long-time members of the community, while others were relative newcomers; most were owner-occupants, but several were renting in the community. By virtue of the design of these organizations, all informants had direct experience with decision-making in the community. Table 5 on page 49 provides this kind of summary level data regarding the data collection.

To better understand how members of these communities were able to satisfactorily address contentious issues, the focus of a portion of the data collection was to identify examples of such situations within their community. These particular events, or incidents, are the unit of analysis for this study. Informants are each a member of a particular community, so while the formal unit of analysis is a particular incident, individual and community level considerations are intertwined with such events that necessitate a more holistic analysis (Patton, 2002). In addition to describing the initial situation, they were asked to explore the path that was taken to achieve this satisfactory resolution. This required the articulation of the issue, the naming of the parties involved, an elaboration of the steps taken to address the issue as well as the outcome of this process. Identifying personal information has been suppressed to protect the privacy of community members. Additional information regarding conflict resolution was captured via general reflections on the topic, offered by the informant at other points during the interview.

Table 5 Log of evidence collected in participating communities

	Alias	**Informants #**	**Running time**	**Reflexive remarks**[5]	**Marginal remarks**[6]
Site visit and Interviews	Aspen Coho	10	11 h 30 m	9	6
	Lodgepole Pine Coho	14	16 h 45 m	12	12
	Northern Red Oak Coho	4	5 h 58 m	3	3
	Sugar Maple Coho	10	12 h 15 m	10	4
	Redcedar Coho	10	10 h 45 m	6	6
	Paper Birch Coho	9	9 h 50m	13	6
	Larch Coho	6	7 h 57 m	4	5
	White Spruce Coho	4	3 h 22 m	5	3
	Balsam Coho	5	5 h 10 m	2	4
	Jack Pine Coho	7	8 h 7 m	3	6
	North American Beach Coho	5	6 h 27 m	5	5
		84	**98 hours 6 mins**	**72**	**60**

Documents and Archival Records	Canadian cohousing Association	11 years of newsletters, 20 editions, contributions from existing, forming and developing communities.
	From communities	Website survey including the community's physical description, professional development team, shared value, and mission statement. Available for all but two communities. Conflict resolution policies, communication guidelines, newsletters and organizational models available for a subset of communities visited.

4.5. Instruments

The initial interview protocol was focused on a limited number of research questions and anticipated possible follow-up questions, while not being leading in nature (Corley, Gioia, & Hamilton, 2013). The interview protocol is found in Section 10.3 on page 132. Adjustments were made early in the process in response to the experience of interviewing communities members and followed a few twists and turns as issues that were believed to be of interest faded from the spotlight and other questions came to the foreground; all par for the course in discovering grounded theory (Corley et al., 2013; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For example, the issue of the formation of trust in such communities seemed initially very interesting in my investigation, but as my conversations continued it was clear that there was a lot of goodwill, faith in the process, feeling of belonging, and a sense of scarcity in the availability to participate in such projects all of which may have motivated informants to participate rather than any explicit descriptions of trust in other people. Trust only became a clearly articulated part of their experience of living in a community as people successfully worked through challenging processes together.

4.6. Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, I assume that the realm of organizations is socially constructed and that the people that make up this study and the organizations they manage are ‘‘knowledgeable agents,’’ that is, these people know what it is they are trying to do within their communities and that they are capable of explaining their thoughts, intentions, and actions (Corley et al., 2013). By choosing to approach the interview process free from the terminology of existing theory, I was able to avoid framing the participants’ ways of making sense of their situations and avoided imposing a preconceived understanding of their experiences before hearing them out (Corley et al., 2013).

4.7. Limitations

Participation in the interview was purely voluntary, both at the community and individual levels. It is possible that the communities and individual members in some way represent a biased subsample of the populations of these communities, in that the people who were eager and willing to talk about their experiences are in some way different than those who did not wish to speak

with me. The invitation to participate was open and, as I had to receive consent from the organization before arranging interviews with individual community members, the opportunity to participate in the research project was shared within the communities.

As the cases selected for this study were considered positive experiences by the interviewees, they are not meant to be representative of the kinds of contentious situations faced in these communities more generally. In this way, and as with many studies based on grounded theory, findings may be considered inconclusive, suggestive, and incomplete (Charmaz, 2005).

4.8. Data analysis

The analysis was an iterative affair as interviews took place between September 2016 and March 2017, while I was visiting the communities and continued after this process for a lengthy period. Each site visit was preceded by a review of organizational information available on the internet and association newsletters. There was also time to write memos, as well as organize and review data between interviewing different people. In this way, interviewing and analyses intermingled in a way that has been described by other researchers (Langley, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997).

4.8.1. First-order terms/concepts

I started the analysis by open-coding, to both identify initial concepts in the data and group them into categories. As much as possible, the first phase of conceptual coding used first order (Maanen, 1979) or in-vivo (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) codes, that is, I made use of the language used by the informants or a descriptive phrase that looked to approximate and abbreviate the sense provided by the informant. Interviews had been recorded and the audio files were imported into NVivo and I coded directly on the audio files without transcription. The number of categories coded on the first review of informant interviews was extensive with 50 first-level nodes, some of which were further sub-divided many times over. Some of these nodes were related to the research question under investigation for this thesis (i.e. conflict [constructive, avoidant, unresolved]), while others may be valuable for future studies. However, there was a sense, for an extended time, that I inadvertently experienced the notion put forth by Gioia that "you gotta get lost before you can get found'' (2004). There was the distinct feeling that I had coded too many separate concepts from the interviews, and yet, I did have occasion to revisit the

data and reveal discussions that did not initially appear pertinent until further conversations were reviewed.

As the research proceeded, I looked to isolate the codes that appeared to be most pertinent to the question of addressing conflict in the community, with particular attention to the issues that were resolved satisfactorily. I sampled the events purposefully, in that events were selected not in pursuit of empirical generalization, but aimed at generating some insight on a particular phenomenon (Patton, 2002), in this case, the satisfactory resolution of conflict. I manually transcribed the participants' reflections on these key events and general reflections towards addressing conflict in NVivo. Minimizing transcription in this manner was done to lessen the cost of transcription as well as to focus transcribed content on the relevant passages alone. In hindsight, I would not recommend coding directly on the audio as the primary means of coding the data, as keyword searches are limited to previously coded nodes, and in place of coding every phrase uttered by the informant this required frequent revisiting of the recordings. While these recordings were more detail-rich, full of expression and emotion not captured by black-on-white text transcriptions, this required a great deal more time, a quiet setting, and attention to interact with the data.

In total, 153 events were noted and transcribed, with a range of 1 to 8 events noted per informant. Many of these events were noted in direct response to questioning around describing constructive conflicts in the community, while others were reflections that arose in response to other parts of our conversations. Before conducting the second level of analysis, I employed a criterion sampling method (Patton, 2002) to focus my analysis on events that seemed to best fit the notion of a truly contentious event within the community that was addressed with dialogue. Firstly, as I was looking for events that were addressed via a dialogical process, I focused in on events that were described in emotional terms and/or took numerous attempts to address (see Table 6, below for examples of signals of this criterion in the words of the informants). Secondly, I eliminated conflictual situations that took place between the organization and an outside party, to focus on issues within the organizations themselves, where the nature of the participants' relationship could be described as relational.

Table 6 Examples of signs that a conflictual event was contentious

Event #	Signal
U02	I was really pissed off and I never felt that angry before at a meeting.
U03	It was a very tense meeting that was in town and I remember just sitting there and kinda feeling sick. [thinking] 'oh god, what have we gotten into?'
U05	There was money on the line, so something like that can become emotionally charged for people - so there were a lot of fruitful discussions and although it was tense at times and there was a lot of anxiety around that. … They wanted to have more discussion around it, and we did. So, it took two or three special meetings over and above our normal monthly council meetings. I seem to remember a period there where we had 2 or 3 a month. Just on this [detail] topic.
U08	Those kinds of things aren't tidy because there are emotions behind them, and there are concerns behind them.

In addition to the description of specific contentious events, I also retained in a separate list of general reflections on addressing conflict when I felt they may shed light on approaches to conflict found in the community and could help further explain the specific events described by the informants. For example, some community members named a process used to talk about a contentious situation (e.g. fireside chats, heart circles, sharing circles), that is later described in greater detail, but in a more general sense later in the same conversation. These general reflections were separated from the events using a separate code.

In summary, each case selected for this study is presented as an event, a pain-point in the community that, in turn, resulted in a dialogical process meant to address the issue, which informants found to have been resolved satisfactorily. In total, I was able to identify 43 conflictual events that were resolved in a manner that made use of productive dialogue and resulted in a satisfactory resolution according to the informant. Some of these events took place while the communities were in development, and others took place while they were living in the community. Members of newer communities were more likely to recall conflicts from the time the community was in development. Also included are 58 general reflections on the processes around and perspectives towards conflict in the community.

A representative sample of several conflictual events that are included in these first-level concepts has been briefly described in Table 7 on page 56 to provide some clarity on the range

and nature of these issues faced by members in these communities. These issues range from the development or rewriting of policy around pets or rental of shared spaces to how the community responds to the desire to protect their landscape from a hungry herd of deer.

Table 7 Sample of summary description of key events

U10	Charging for guest rooms	In development. Issue of what/if to charge for the guest room. Strong opinions on either side. On the one hand, the point of the project was to share resources and make it possible for people to live with less private space, shouldn't then be charged for the shared space they are already paying for. On the other hand, people wanted to be sure there wouldn't be an abuse of the use of the room and that the people who used it would essentially assure its upkeep. Discussion held allowed people to understand where either side was coming from. The informant was able to understand the perspective of people who did not want to include a charge, and those people were able to understand concerns over abuse and costs to manage the space. This allowed them to develop a 3rd path solution: a suggested voluntary donation for the use of the rooms. The recommended amount was set to the approximate cost of upkeep and laundry etc. Further supported at a later date by information provided by the finance committee that discovered that they would face tax implications for a mandatory charge.
U11	Deer fence	In community. Question of how to deal with the deer on the property that likes to eat their plants. Suggestion to fence the periphery of the property was controversial, as it would essentially make the community a gated one, which some felt went against the ethos of the community. The other side of the argument is that people wanted a rich environment full of plants and the deer were making that difficult. There was no shared belief on the role of deer in the community, and as a result, this issue was very painful as it was hard for people to see eye-to-eye on it and it became very emotional. The conflict seemed to demonstrate how two sets of values in the community can butt up against each other. There were numerous attempts to solve the issue together, research was conducted on alternative measures, which were presented, but they came up short. The community finally decided that everyone could fence their private yards if they chose to, but that the decision to make major changes to the rest of the site would be abandoned as they could not reach consensus. They had already agreed to fence the food garden, but the other areas on the site, which included berries and new trees were still being sampled by the local deer. Even though this was an emotional (mention of tears at meetings) and an agree-to-disagree outcome, numerous members of the community shared this event as an example of a satisfactory outcome. One member suggested this was less than satisfactory, so even how this was experienced varied.
U12	Dog policy	In community. Initiated by people who liked having dogs in the community. Started with a process of advice seeking, inviting people into a process of deliberation. Conceptual reframing of the issue chose to look at dogs as an asset to the community rather than a threat, this helped reframe the discussion. Included seeking additional research and reference to local and provincial bylaws. They had a pre-emptive dialogue and several informal meetings to talk about this with a variety of members in the community, include those that had a different view from the initiators. Those initially against the change came to understand the “almost spiritual” connection that others had with animals even if they did not have that themselves. The policy was changed to address certain fears around aggressive animals without closing the door to typical, non-aggressive pets. Initiator felt it was a long and hard process, but it passed since they had pre-empted the decision-making process with other conversations (fireside chat and meeting at home) and were able to address people's fears within the proposal.

U14	Pet policy	In community. People had different feelings about dogs roaming on the site off-leash. Some wanted their dogs to have this freedom, others did not trust that this was a good idea. The informants pointed out that they could have simply adopted a common bylaw, which is what they ended up doing… but the process of seeking an agreement made them undertake a deep discussion that went as far back as to address "what is wildness?" etc. They implied that this was something that happened with some frequency, that in trying to adopt some seemingly basic set of principles they ended up discussing the assumptions that underpin the common outcomes so that they might challenge them. In the process of having this discussion, it became clear that some people had some fears around the animals that could be addressed with an informal meet and greet with those interested in doing that. They adopted a policy that they describe as common for strata etc., but they also talked about an opening to having an off-leash area on the site at one point.
U15	Outlining the goals of the project	In development. In the early days of the project, the community was looking for ways to make the community more financially accessible and had deliberations around the basic goals of the project, including the need to follow local bylaws and the inclusion of energy sources on site etc. There are a minority of people in the community who do not uphold the authority of these governing institutions and their requirements, so this became a point of some contention. One informant talks about a willingness to step away from the project if their personal needs did not conform with the goals of the larger group. Through a process of deliberation that takes considerable time and patience, they recalled the guiding principles of the community (one of which was to inspire others), and the community opts to follow a path that is inclusive of a broader set of people's basic needs (energy on-site, and following basic bylaws), as they come to understand that they might not be able to attract and retain a sufficient number of community members in the process of trying to make the project financially accessible in the way initially proposed. The people on the more extreme end ended up compromising to abide by these values to live with the other members of the community.
U19	Tree planting policy	In community. The landscape team was tasked with developing a policy around planting trees on the site. There was a sense that the general council did not trust them to plant the trees on the site, that this was a restriction on the desires of people in the community to plant trees. They had to develop a formal process. Informant expressed frustration with this constraint, but also a deep desire to have some consensus on where they were doing what with trees on the site. They said this tension created a real disagreement within their group and between the team and council… but in that disagreement and in pursuit of some agreement they had a very intense conversation where they were able to, as a team, speak "from their hearts." They share how the issue was initiated from a very "me/I" perspective, and that part of what allowed them to pull back was the reminder that the way decisions happen in this community is by looking for solutions that bettered the community overall. This allowed them to set up a still-evolving process that includes being able to explain the impacts and needs of the tree, and then seeking advice from others with this complete information.… To check the temperature on the suggested planting.

U20	Renovations in the common house	In development. They needed to renovate part of the common house in the community and a proposal was put forth to the general meeting. Another member pulled a red card to block the proposal, suggesting that it was half baked. The proposal was rejected for a lack of details, the proponents needed to go back to the drawing board before presenting the proposal again. The informant pressed that this highlighted the need or ideas/proposals to "smooth the way" for acceptance by the general council. This includes "respecting the group and trusting the process" enough to accept the kickback that some ideas get and a means to improve the proposal. The informant suggests that this involves a mix of advice-seeking and the language that people use to talk with one another, citing Rosenburg's NVC model of communication as helpful in clarifying the needs of the various members of the group. The proposal was improved with input from the person who blocked the proposal (possibly others as well) and the renovations were done.

Indigenous concepts

Key phrases or terms that emerge through the interview process that seem to capture some essence of their experience in these communities can be called indigenous concepts (Patton, 2002). For example, "consensus" is a defining feature of cohousing (McCamant & Durrett, 2011), but in practice, it means different things to different communities. Rarely do these communities make use of a pure form of consensus, but rather consensus is an ideal that most communities strive for in decision making. Given the relationship between consensus and agonism proposed in the literature (Mouffe, 1999), it's important to be transparent concerning this construct in this particular context as consensus is a goal, not a legal requirement in most cases.

Another common, comical phrase that came up in many communities in considering tense moments, and their engagement with the tension: "Is *this* the mountain I want to die on?" Not surprisingly, the answer is most often no. Many members shared with me that this was a phrase that they had learned from one of the consultants that had accompanied them along on the path of developing the community and struck more than one member of more than one community as a useful way to check their thinking in tense moments as it acted as a pathway to self-reflection. Among other things, this simple question allowed them to remind themselves that they should be approaching decision making on behalf of the community and not from an exclusively personal perspective

Such concepts and the tools used in the process of seeking consensus are outlined in appendix 10.4 on page 135.

4.8.2. Second-order themes

In the second phase of the analysis, I made use of axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify similarities and differences in the first-order categories, and aggregated corresponding categories into second-order themes. To do this I reviewed the first-order concepts and gradually broke apart each informant's contribution, sometimes sentence by sentence (Glaser, 1978), each iteration of these second-order constructs revealed themselves as common and distinct constructs. These second-order themes, which can be seen in Figure 3 on page 60, include perspectives taken by the informants (e.g. adoption of a collective or charitable perspective), processes undertaken by the group or members of the group (e.g. advice seeking, fireside chats, etc.), outcomes of events. The emergent themes can be seen below.

Figure 3 Second-order themes

Emergent 2nd order themes

Structure: Self selection
Structure of decision making
Process: Recall guiding principles
Perspective: Principle of Charity
Perspective: Long term lense
Perspective: Collective identity
Personal growth
Persepctive: engage with conflict
Listening events
Letting go
Facilitation skills
Communicatrion training
Advice seeking

4.9. Aggregate dimensions

Finally, I was able to gather similar themes into principal dimensions that make up the basis of the emergent framework. In this theoretical realm, I identified themes that help to describe and explain phenomena that were observed in this 1st order structure (Corley et al., 2013). I tried to focus attention on concepts that had less adequate theoretical referents in the existing literature, such as those related to the antecedents and enablers of productive dialogue. Also noted are dimensions that support the existing literature, such as the notably creative elements of dialogue, such as conceptual reframing which appeared in the discussion of processes of resolution. This process was not as nearly linear as this outline suggests, instead it was a rather iterative process that involved a lot of sorting and resorting of the related phenomenon in pursuit of thematic abstraction.

Having completed this ordering of both 1st order terms and 2nd order themes along with their associated aggregate dimensions, I had the basic ingredients to build a data structure – a clearer visual depiction of the contents within my initial mountain of interview and archival data. The complete data structure and these themes will be reviewed in more detail in remaining the chapters of this work. Such data structures act as a kind of map, outlining the process that a researcher takes moving from raw qualitative data towards terms, themes, and constructs that are more amenable to analysis than raw data (Corley et al., 2013). This is an accepted tool in establishing rigour in qualitative research (Corley et al., 2013; Pratt, 2008; Tracy, 2010). In principle, elaborating such a structure can facilitate thinking from a more objective stance, and thus simplify theorizing as I can now look to compare these emergent dimensions to the existing literature in pursuit of confirming existing theory and/or addressing gaps with my findings (Corley et al., 2013). Moreover, in addition to outlining these terms, themes, and dimensions, in terms of their relationship to the literature, in the following chapter I will also describe the relationships between them in pursuit of the development of a dynamic model, which is grounded in the data and can present the informants' experiences in theoretical terms.

5. Findings

As the goal of the research project is to describe the processes and mechanisms that contribute to productive dialogues in Canadian cohousing communities, what follows is a description of the findings from the data structure outlined in the previous section. The data structure itself is illustrated on page 67. These findings point to several themes around how dialogue is integrated into the experience of members of Canadian cohousing communities. There are common processes and mechanisms across communities that seem to relate to informants' experience of successfully resolving conflicts in community. These common elements include the particularities of the context itself (being consensus-seeking), the spaces they purposefully create to make room for people to work through their differences, the skills they purposefully build in communication and facilitation, the tendency to shift perspectives while addressing tensions, and finally, the acceptance that consensus is not always easy or even possible.

5.1. Dialogical context

An important mechanism that induces dialogue in these communities is the very nature of them, namely, the freely shared commitment to a process of seeking consensus. This part of the data structure includes both the deliberative nature of decision-making and the aspect of self-selection, or freedom of association of the constituent members of these communities. Typically started as real-estate development corporations, these organizations eventually convert into a housing association once the development work is complete. Given that, for the most part, these communities are market-based housing, people can opt-out of these communities if they are not satisfying their needs. For example,

> If this project is not right for me, I'm more than happy to step aside, I'll support you, but that's not for me, I need this and that...' I had my vision; I wasn't willing to fight for it. I would rather step aside not block things. Let them do it. (U15_A)

> It's easy to respect people that you like. The odd time there were [difficult people] and thankfully, they self-selected themselves out. (GR3_A)

> If they are forced to sit in that circle and listen - *the keyword is 'listen'* - to the forty other voices that are different from their perspective... you don't have to tell them that they are out of alignment with the rest of the group. Nobody has to point it out to them out. It's just obvious. (U27_A)

When people join, they do so with an understanding that while the organization may be legally registered as strata or condo corporation, the communities also have a broader purpose with certain expectations around household engagement. Moreover, they share a mandate to operate using consent or consensus-seeking decision making, meaning that they operate differently from most housing associations, and in fact, differently from most organizations more broadly. As major decisions will be arrived at collectively: the people (dēmos) hold the power and build the rules for engagement (-kratia). That is, they are democratic in the truest sense of the word. This presents certain challenges in terms of structuring governance in the community so that consent can be sought on all major decisions.

It's worth pointing out here an interesting feature related to this particular model of intentional living that only became obvious in talking with these informants. When cohousing is described, as I have done in Chapter 3, there is often a list of characteristics attributed to McCamant and Durrett (2011), which includes one negation: no shared income. This negation is there primary to differentiate cohousing from other historical examples of intentional or Utopian communities, such as the Oneida Community, or more recent examples such as the Twin Oaks Community, where labour and income are shared. However, there is another important negation that is less explicit, but that seems relevant to point out here concerning the structure of governance and practices that flow from this structure. In Canadian cohousing communities, there are no universally shared beliefs*.* Households co-develop and share a set of *values*, for example, a mission statement and/or a list of guiding principles, but there is never an explicitly stated way of understanding the world. This is tightly tied up in the notion that these communities are democratic and are without formal leaders. No one person is the keeper of truths, as you might find in historic utopian communities such as John Humphrey Noyes the "perfectionist" leader of the Oneida Community, the self-declared prophet Johann Georg Rapp of the Harmony Society, or even celebrated singular vision of utopian designers like Le Corbusier.

In contrast with beliefs, values are abstract. This abstraction creates room for flexibility, growth, and different approaches to action in response to new ideas. It creates room for the kinds of constructive conflict that can lead to new ideas and understandings. The holder of a particular value ends up interpreting potential actions in relation to their values when faced with a decision, rather than referring to a belief about what they should do given a certain set of circumstances. A good example from the events in this study is the conflict around addressing the persistent presence of deer in the common property. What does it mean to care for the earth, when a part of "nature" is eating another part of "nature?" Such an issue presents an opportunity for an

interesting and/or frustrating discussion on the relative value of both deer and shrubs. The process of engaging in such deliberation can emerge when there is a shared valuing of equity and respect for the viewpoints of others. Regardless of the systems set in place, in such a deliberative context, members have many opportunities to run into differences while also having a real sense to address them proactively. For example,

> So, if I'm facilitating a meeting and we're going to call a show of cards and there are a fair number of yellow cards,[7] as a facilitator I will probably say, you know I'm not sure if we've quite got this. Is there something we need to change here in terms of the wording or is there a need to come back again with some refinements? You know it's not showing a strong consensus. We want it to show a strong consensus. (GR13_A)

> They red-carded the vote. And - I don't know if you are aware of our process, but they have to agree to host a conversation to work past it. So, they did, and they came back to the group with a modified proposal that everyone voted on. (U8_K)

In self-governing and consensus-seeking organizations members have a shared responsibility to make decisions together, as there is no one else that can shoulder the blame when things go wrong. This is not intuitive for all new members, as one informant suggested "it can be very frustrating until you get on board the idea that the consensual process is important in the long run. To keep relations within the community working well" (GR23_A). Aware of this, conflict resolution guidelines are created by the community and consented to upon joining. Some communities have teams that help people with the process of dealing with conflicts. This kind of organizational model, when operating fruitfully, has a very real need to develop mechanisms and processes to deal with these differences productively, for example,

> The odd red card may come in. Somebody might have a bee in their bonnet about something. That's ok. We just had one like that recently, and the guy that red-carded said 'ok I'm willing to form a meeting to talk about this issue.' Now, it came back exactly how it had come up in the first place, but he had a chance to air that issue and feel better about it. (GR13_B)

The above examples show the relationship between decision making and dialogical spaces, which is explored below. In pursuit of the approval of a proposal, members can agree to engage in a discussion with the proponents of the proposal outside of the decision-making meeting.

5.2. Dialogical spaces

The last example is a common starting point for dialogical engagement in these communities. In pursuit of consensus at meetings, disagreement emerges and, at their best, community members will voluntarily engage in formal and/or informal dialogues outside of the decision-making meetings. That is, a specific space is opened with the intent of talking about a specific issue, not to make a decision, but to create understanding. As outlined above, some of these dialogues are initiated when a strong consensus is not initially possible, creating a space for proponents to work out their differences or come to a new understanding independent of the larger group. For example,

> A fireside chat may get massaged into a proposal, which comes to the council and goes through layers of things and maybe comes to the council and 'no, not quite there yet. Can you guys take this back and work on this component and come back to us?' The fireside chat is an open conversation about the topic without having to be recorded, sometimes it is, it's just to get the issue brewing. It's like getting the stew pot out and throwing a few things in and letting it simmer a little bit. (GR10_A)

These dialogues may also be pre-emptive, as when community members seek to build better proposals and start with a process of seeking advice in the community. Overtime as one is invited to such a space, one comes to understand the purpose of such meetings and how they work to assure that everyone is heard. The purpose of such spaces isn't decision making so much as to make space to better hear the concerns of their neighbours. This process, however, can be used to effectively build better proposals for later discussion.

> I actually have to do a little bit of what I would call lobbying... now when I'm attached to an idea, I would probably informally talk and find how people feel about it and if I feel that nobody likes it, I don't even bring it up at a meeting. You pick your battles. (U16_B)

> I had an initial meeting here at the house; a 'check the temperature' sort of thing. (U12_C)

Finally, a dialogical space may be called by members to address unsettled feelings that are not related directly to community decision making. For example, when a community member senses a mismatch between their expectations and experience in the community, they may initiate a conversation to see if others feel the same way.

> We do these things called heart circles... someone is feeling not quite right in the community, or something. We'll often call a heart circle and we'll sit on pillows

and listen and chat it out. You know, if someone is feeling there is some issue that has divided people or something. (GR36_A)

It's just basically [let's say] there's a bunch of us that want to talk about the fact that so-and-so has a 14-foot-long boa constrictor and we've had people missing in that area… and so we just thought we better chat about it. And so, anybody that's interested in that - could be 3 or 4 people or sometimes 8 or 9 people - will come and will just come and have a chin wag about it. We're trying to understand 'is there an issue here?' (GR06_A)

And so, one person got tired of that [status quo around meal sharing], called a fireside chat and had this great conversation about community meals and since then there has been a cook team and meals, and it seems to be working well. (U9_C)

Table 8 Data structure

1st Order concepts	2nd Order Themes	Aggregate Dimensions
I had a meeting here, a 'check the temperature' sort of thing.	Advice Seeking	Dialogical spaces
When we consult with other people and teams that's our opportunity to hear their wisdom and to make better decisions and to move the whole crowd together. It may be a lot slower but it brings everybody along with us.		
Or if there is something contentious doing some discussion before it gets into the big place (larger meetings).		
We do these things called heart circles... someone is feeling not quite right in the community, or something. We'll often call a heart circle and we'll sit on pillows and listen, and chat it out.	Voluntary Sharing events	
So, we had a big heart sharing after that. Because there was a lot of accusation... And it was very powerful. The heart sharings are incredible.		
And so, one person got tired of that, called a fireside chat and had this great conversation.		
So, what I like to try and do is to get outside of that and turn it upside down and see what happens.	Facilitation / Framing	Skill Building
This is where the gift of good facilitation is so important… people who do that as their job just understand how to reframe a situation.		
The better facilitated they are, the better it gets done.		
It's a "Fucking Growth Opportunity" you know, you are continuously challenged. But on the other side - that's exactly what you want!	Personal Growth	
We have to be in a position of learning to accept that we can evolve to a place of forgiveness, where we are, we do find ourselves having different perspectives sometimes. And that is nothing short of a spiritual practice, or whatever you want to call it. It's deep, deep work.		
Damage and pain - it helps us to grow and understand who we are. And unless we can acknowledge that and go through it... If we keep pushing it away, you know... [we'll never grow].		

Quote	Code	Theme
We did a compassionate communication workshop and exercises on how to listen to one another in lots of different ways.	Communication Training	
There were clinics, with [consultant] at the beginning.		
We are taking Non-violent Communications workshops now, which is making a big difference. We are doing that every Thursday evening.		
You agree that even if you are not going to like each other very much for a while (or ever) you are still in connection with each other and you have respect for each other.	Long term view	Perspective-taking
That can be very frustrating until you get on board the idea that the consensual process is important in the long run.		
I've learned that every once in awhile, I have to say 'you're gonna be with these people the rest of your life.' And so, I just, sometimes I will be a little more tactful than I might otherwise be.		
What is the very first thing we do? We treat the other as if they have good intentions. We assume the other person has good intentions. So instead of the idea of 'I know what I'm doing, and you're an idiot' you have to stop that. You have to stop yourself from your automatic reactions.	Charitable starting point	
So, what we've decided is when this person finally brought this stuff in, and it was all done with the best of intentions, they thought that we would want it.		
You assume goodwill, even if you don't feel it.		
Genuinely and constantly remember that first, you look at the good of the whole and then you look at what you want.	Collective Identity	
You are making decisions not for yourself, don't dig your heels in, you make decisions for the good of the whole.		
That was totally a "you" answer and not a "we" or a "me" answer.		
One of the values in the mission statement was to respect other people and their opinions.	Recall guiding principles	
The idea of blocking has to come from community values... Not so surprising to get a group of 45 people together, to find that there are only actually, probably 4 or 5 values that we all can totally say that we share.		

We always kept the core values of what we brought - and reminded ourselves, numerous times - throughout the process, when we came to tough decision making. You know, it was like, 'let's remember this is where we came from and this is the design that we really wanted to uphold, these were keys aspects to our original design.		
So, when you have a meeting and you want to do a certain project, but then you get 5 or 6 people and they have their opinion of what they would like to do, we learned to accept that.	Decision-making structure	Dialogical context
If you want stuff to happen like this [snaps fingers] it's going to be painful for you. but what comes out of it at the end is that everyone gets to say something about it. and to be heard and maybe to be considered.		
Some people were trying to sort of push something through, to just go ahead and do it, you know? We had a red card, which meant we had to stop.		
Form your value statements early on and be clear about what you want this community to be like. That's not in a specific sense but get some of the real core stuff down so that is whom you attract to your community.	Self-selection	
If this project is not right for me, I'm more than happy to step aside, I'll support you, but that's not for me, I need this and that... I had my vision; I wasn't willing to fight for it. I would rather step aside not block things. Let them do it.		
If they are forced to sit in that circle and listen - the keyword is *listen* - to the forty other voices that are different from their perspective... you don't have to tell them that they are out of alignment with the rest of the group. Nobody has to point them out. It's just obvious.		
We had a whole circle meeting and people got to say what they needed to say and eventually, we agreed to disagree.	Letting go	Agonism
Let yourself let go of things that matter to other people and maybe don't mean so much to you…		
It got resolved by letting go. You know really, it's not worth the angst over this that it's causing. Let's just let it go.		
Because conflict- we cannot avoid conflicts. The only thing we can do is try and manage them and keep them small.	Willingness to engage in conflict	
If you can accept that conflict is natural and that there is probably not an ideal process, but you have to keep trying different ways to address conflict, then you'll be ok.		
Conflict is probably the least likely thing to be resolved just by policy or by structure. It's too delicate, too emotional.		

5.3. Dialogical skilling building

An important mechanism described by informants in enabling dialogue relates to the skills of individuals within the communities. Many community members stressed the importance of building their skills in communication and facilitation before and while living in the community. This need was often linked to the consensus-seeking nature of the community:

> Using a consensus-based form of decision-making asks of you an enormous amount of self-awareness and willingness to change. It asks of you a commitment of being honest with yourself, being authentic, being willing to step into what might not be very a comfortable conversation. To develop your communication skills to listen. (GR14_A)

While most informants were well-educated people with the kind of professional experience that would grant them ample experience in working with others, many recognized that they needed to improve their communication skills to live and work effectively in such a context. As a result, many communities purposefully build such skills together early in their formation, for example, "we did a compassionate communication workshop, which included exercises on how to listen to one another in lots of different ways" (U27_B), or after having lived together for some time,

> We are taking non-violent communications (NVC) workshops now, which is making a big difference. We are doing that every Thursday evening. We have a facilitator come. So, we are learning how to deal with things. Because it is all about needs. People are seeking to fulfill a need. And usually, that is what we interpret as something that they are doing to us. And really, they aren't... I have seen people who are a bit more practiced in it definitely using it and I am kind of learning from them because I'm pretty new at it. But I'm now seeing how they are using it… Yeah! It's really great that quite a few community members are going. So that means that it is going to permeate the community. We are going to grow together as we practice this. [it's been going on] Since last fall, but more people have joined in. (GR34_A)
>
> I think Marshall Rosenberg's work on NVC is a really good tool and we're going through that process now and run workshops. And his perspective of NVC is kind of like a spiritual practice that can heal a community. From my perspective, it's just really a useful tool, and it has been so far, in managing conflicts before they get to be too large. (GR43_A)

Moreover, they practice these skills at regular intervals, for example via the common practices of meetings, such as check-in and check-outs, which create room for personal expression, deep listening, and empathizing. We see this training manifest in the way that

members reflect on how they addressed conflicts in the past, by considering questions such as "…'what is her need?' What does she *need* from me? Rather than say, 'she's stupid because she says this'…" (GR33_B).

One frequently cited outcome of all this skill-building is the sense of personal growth members can experience in living in these communities as part of the process of dealing directly with conflictual situations.

> We have to be in a position of learning to accept that we can evolve to a place of forgiveness, where we are, we do find ourselves having different perspectives sometimes. And that is nothing short of a spiritual practice, or whatever you want to call it. It's deep, deep work. And I have experienced such incredible breakthroughs in that regard. I've been at meetings with people where people are shouting and yelling at each other and crying and, like, accusing one another of things, pointing fingers, spitting. To then… those same people all like sharing their hearts and, like, letting out their deepest fears in front of one another. And coming to not only resolve but completely *dissolve* the issue - nothing sticky! I have living examples in front of me, that I see on a daily basis, of people I thought I could never stare at their face again without shuttering... who I am close to being best friends with! (GR59_A)

> The whole thing of honeymoon and crash[8] and coming out of it - that's a whole personal growth process. It's not that I'm just getting used to the community. It's me, learning. And even in the first year that we were here, I remember [spouse] and I said to each other 'can you believe how much we've learned in having to field all this conflict?' Even in that honeymoon phase, we had grown so much, and we had learned so much. (GR54_A)

> It's called an F.G.O. Do you know what an F.G.O. is? It [cohousing] is a way to live because, in general, especially for people who are single, it's you start living in a bubble - in that you become self-righteous because nobody is challenging you. [talks about a personal challenge in the community]. So yeah, it's what you call an F.G.O. It's a "fucking growth opportunity" you know, you are continuously challenged. But on the other side - that's exactly what you want! (GR33_A)

> So, for me, because I like to be safe and, in the background, it's hard. But, this kind of stuff is fun - in those meetings - *oh here we go*! Check in again or whatever, that would be hard for me. But I've gotten better [at speaking up?] Yeah, I actually like being *in* the meetings (U03_B).

> Well, the whole thing about living in a community is that the interpersonal piece is massive. So, it's like, how do people relate to each other? How do people get along? How do people make decisions together? This is a huge part of cohousing. And a lot of it is underneath - it's just something that starts and happens. But, you know, creating a culture around that is really important, so we also tried to do that within our values statements and our guidelines. You know, how do you do this? You do talk to your neighbours about stuff, you do work those things out. (GR09_A)

As noted above, informants referenced Rosenberg's non-violent communication as a useful practice (M. Rosenberg, 2015), but there were other approaches used as well, such as Quaker listening practices which were common to a few of the communities. To put it briefly, they didn't need to re-invent the wheel when it came to preparing for and living in these communities, they borrowed heavily from different domains in order to support their experiences in this new kind of community. They learned together and from one another.

In addition to training in communication more generally, facilitation skills were a key theme in the recounting of instances successfully resolved conflict. Several informants pointed to the importance of a facilitator in helping participants reframing this issue at hand, stating, for example, that "people who do that as their job just understand how to reframe a situation" (U43_C). Informants recounted specific structured exercises that allowed members of the community to understand the actual range of differences in the community, for example

> There was one really interesting exercise that we used to begin to shave this one down. Where we were in our big meeting room and we said here is an imaginary line down the middle of the room, if you favour the most money you'll be close to this side of the room, whereas if you favour setting aside the least amount, you'll be down at this end, and if you are somewhere in the middle, you'll be somewhere in the middle of the room. It was very interesting to see the collections of people who gathered on that occasion. And I think that helped us to understand what we ended up doing, which was to meet in the middle. Most people were clumped around the middle. (U13_A)

They also recounted the reliance on facilitators for less formal guidance on how to approach other members on difficult topics. For example,

> So, I talked to a neighbour who is an amazing facilitator about it and she encouraged me to go to this other neighbour and engage with her 'in curiosity.' ... I'm satisfied with how that went, and I think the 'engaging with curiosity' was good because it encouraged me to ask questions that I would not initially have asked. (U43_A)

It's perhaps not a surprise then that communities will often seek additional training in facilitation for their members. For example, a series of workshops called "BC's Facilitation Intensive Series" was organized and taken by members of nine communities on the west coast of Canada, allowing members of different communities to share the costs of specialized trainers and to share best practices between communities (Welling, 2010). Such workshops allow members to rehearse useful techniques such as reflective listening, summarizing, and dealing with

emotionally charged decisions. The outcome of such facilitation skills often includes a shift in participants' perspectives.

5.4. Dialogical perspective-taking

We can see from the above section that the role of the facilitator is often to encourage participants in a contentious issue to shift their current way of looking at a given issue. Furthermore, the experiences of personal growth seemed to make individuals better able to move towards a perspective more conducive to dialogue, such as a suspension of one's own beliefs and a willingness to engage with both their neighbour and their own reactions to a given situation. This kind of perspectival shift was an experience shared by many informants in a few different ways: adopting a charitable perspective, a long-term view and/or a collective identity, or a recall to guiding principles.

When adopting a charitable perspective, informants would share notions as "you assume goodwill, even if you don't feel it" (GR24_A), "so, what we've decided is when this person finally brought this stuff in, and it was all done with the best of intentions, [bringing in stuff] they thought we would want" (U29_C), or

> What is the very first thing we do? We treat the other as if they have good intentions. We assume the other person has good intentions. So instead of the idea of 'I know what I'm doing and *you're* an idiot,' you must stop that. You have to stop yourself from your automatic reactions. (U19_D)

It was not uncommon for informants to also share mantra-like statements related to the collective mandate of the community, such as "genuinely and constantly remember that first you look at the good of the whole and then you look at what you want" (GR14_B), or "You can't participate in gossip, because it hurts the community, you have to shut it down." (GR1_C).). Such a communal perspective was often facilitated via a process to purposefully recall the organization's central purpose, such as the mission or vision statement, before advancing possible solutions as a kind of check for collective legitimacy, for example:

> We always kept the core values of what we brought - and reminded ourselves, numerous times - throughout the process, when we came to tough decision making. You know, it was like, 'let's remember this is where we came from and this is the design that we really wanted to uphold, these were keys aspects to our original design.' (GR52_A)

> That was like an affirmation in meetings when things would get difficult or we would go through a period where there was a lot of differing viewpoints, we could come together over this shared commitment to the idea that having differing opinions is not a bad thing. and that we could get through it, we had a process to get through it. (U32_I)

Reminding people that decisions around managing the commons were "we, not me" decisions appeared to help informants momentarily suspend their personal interests in pursuit of a collective solution or approach to an issue. Informants also occasionally adopted a long-term perspective that helped engage with their neighbours more civilly, for example stating, "I've learned that every once in a while, I have to say 'you're gonna be with these people the rest of your life.' And so, sometimes I will be a little more tactful than I might otherwise be. That's a very, very important thing" (GR37_A), or

> You have to live with the people you have conflicts with - and that's a scary thought! I can't just say, you know, "fuck you!" to my neighbour and then move when it becomes unbearable. It's like, no, I have to actually go and talk to my neighbour and we have to work this through. (GR19_A)

> Instead of reacting right away, I would try and sit and figure out where somebody else is coming from. Instead of saying 'my viewpoint is the way' - more reflective, I would do a lot more reflective listening. That just helps to create more connection... and being willing to engage in conflict. Because I'm more of an introvert, I would tend to disappear… It was a gradual process. (GR55_A)

> … [there has to be less avoidance] than in a conventional neighbourhood, because you kind of have to deal [with it] here. You're living right beside these people and you're doing consensus. It's not like you can just drive your car in your garage, shut the door, and pretend that that neighbour that you don't like doesn't exist. So, there is more of that [dealing directly with conflict] than in a conventional neighbourhood, in my experience, but it's still not easy. (GR08_A)

The intentionality of these places seems to give members something to return to in addressing hard conversations: a renewal of the shared commitment to living collaboratively. This presented an opportunity to shift perspectives in addressing hard conversations in a more considerate manner.

5.5. Agonism in deliberation

Finally, my findings point to the possibility of agonism as a satisfactory outcome of a conflict within a context of consensus-seeking deliberation. There are times when despite the context, spaces, and skills, members were still unable to come to an integrated solution,

compromise, or even a common understanding of the central issue causing tension between members. Yet these instances were still shared as an example of a conflict that was successfully resolved for the informant. Participants in the conflict may have a different interpretation of the vision of the community or they may point to different sets of "facts" that no amount of deliberation was able to clear up. Informants shared a few instances of long and challenging tensions that were never resolved per se, but the process and outcome felt nonetheless satisfactory by informants. For example,

> We had a whole circle meeting and people got to say what they needed to say and eventually, we agreed to disagree. It split the community right down the middle. There were hard feelings, but people encouraged each other to talk about this stuff. It wasn't gloriously resolved, but we kind of just let it go. (U45_A)

Included in these reflections was an appreciation of the importance of diversity in these communities and further afield. These dialogues, initiated through disagreement, forced participants to reflect deeply on their own personally held beliefs and informants shared a genuine appreciation of this.

> We have to compromise. We just have to compromise. A lot of what people have to get over in order to avoid disappointment and bitterness, we actually like… it's really deep work! You have to come to accept that values are so important to you, are just values that are important to *you*. They are not the same for everyone else. That's like a deep acceptance of otherness. You know, we talk about diversity, but it's actually really hard work. (GR21_A)

As we see above there are two components of agonism in these communities: the willingness to engage in conflict, and the process of letting go when it's understood that consensus is not possible. We learn from informants that conflict is something they experience as part of the process of living in such a community, making statements such as "we cannot avoid conflicts. The only thing we can do is try and manage them and keep them small" (GR43_B), "damage and pain - it helps us to grow and understand who we are. And unless we can acknowledge that and go through it... If we keep pushing [conflict] away, you know... [we'll never grow]" (GR18_A), and "you know, not many people like dealing with conflict, but if I have to do it, I will. And it usually turns out fine, but it's uncomfortable" (GR12_A).

As these last quotes suggest, part of what makes conflict acceptable is prior experience with successful conflict resolution, as well as the perspective that addressing conflict is an opportunity for growth. Many informants shared how taking the time to get into these kinds of issues occasionally provided them with some reward, for example, "We came to an agreement

and it was common ground. It felt like it wasn't a compromise. It was common ground. And it was one of those moments where not only I but other people you could just see *'oh! that was great*! What an experience!' And then it became a shared experience. Wow" (U19_C). Over time members express trust in either the process or the perspectives taken by both themselves and other community members in civilly approaching contentious topics or events.

> I have some trust that people are going to be willing to show up and talk about it and work it out. It's all there, it's a microcosm of the world - but I feel like, I can do this. You know, if I've pissed off someone, but I can do something about that that is productive. If someone is pissed off with me, it's not the end of the world.... and that is not something I've had a lot in my life. (GR17_A)

Secondly, there is an acceptance of difference and a willingness to let go of an issue and to accept that consensus, while a valiant pursuit, is not always possible in a context of a diversity in needs and experiences that you can find in these communities. As one informant put it, "the idea of blocking has to come from community values... But it shouldn't be surprising that when you get a group of 45 people together, to find that there are only actually probably 4 or 5 values that we all can totally say that we share" (GR44_A). Moreover,

> The absolute juice and the absolute conflict... you know, that diversity is what makes us sustainable.... to have lots of different ages, lots of different demographics ... elders, young people, single people, the whole gambit. That's where most of the conflict comes in because of different perspectives and different stages of life. So, you can't have one without the other. The only thing we can work on is the non-reaction to the conflict. And what I mean by non-reaction doesn't mean, I'm simply not going to communicate, and I'm going to put up a wall. It means I'm still in connection with that person. I'm resonant with that person, although, our perspectives are different. And that isn't like... how do you learn that? The only way you can learn that is to practice. So... yeah, it's a lot of practice. (GR31_B)

These "agree-to-disagree" or "letting go" situations point to the possibility that people can accept real differences while still *in pursuit of* consensus.

> So there were lots of things proposed and in the end, it became, and this was one of the issues where there wasn't consensus - or it was consensus in the sense that some people stepped back and said 'we don't agree that that is a good solution for our dogs, but we can't actually offer a better solution that everyone is happy with.' [You ask yourself] Can you give it up? Can you let go? In the end, it was a 'let go' moment. (U14_B)

> It got resolved by letting go. You know really, it's not worth the angst over this that it's causing. Let's just let it go. If these people felt so strongly about [specific issue] … ok, *really*? It did end up well because the people who let go - there were

> about four of us - let go in a way that was not - you know – we wouldn't carry this through to other areas or issues. (U37_A)

As mentioned previously, there does appear to be a certain degree of self-selection in these communities, so there is likely a limit to the amount of letting go that any one member or household would be willing to accept, as one informant put it "you don't want too many of those. especially if you are the person who has let go 5 or 6 times. You start not to like this" (U14_B). Moreover, some issues are easier to let go of and learning to pick your battles seems to be a skill people develop over time, for example, "you need to learn to let yourself let go of things that matter more to other people and maybe don't mean so much to you and, you know, just not hang onto that and not let it be keeping you up at night." (GR57_A)

Not only do many members of these communities accept that conflict is part of the process of seeking consensus, but they are also aware that consensus is a means and not an end. Consensus is a means of building relationships, a shared understanding, and a stronger community – and sometimes you can do this by agreeing to disagree via a dialogical process. We see that in this way consensus-seeking deliberative practices are not mutually exclusive from agonistic perspectives or outcomes.

5.6. Analysis

By considering the successful resolution of conflictual situations in the relationally rich context of Canadian cohousing communities we can look for additional patterns that arise by considering the emergence of dialogical engagement in the process of managing tense and conflictual issues. Dialogue as an iterative discursive activity that can emerge as the result of unsettledness in the community, such as the appearance of a contentious proposal or a disagreement over the interpretation of shared agreements, and is a frequent feature of conflicts that are said to have been resolved satisfactorily in these communities. By identifying the mechanisms that promote successful dialogue and the processes that support intentional deliberation and conflict resolution in a such a context, we deepen our understanding of the dynamics of such tension-filled deliberation and their potential impacts (Tjosvold et al., 2014) and provide insights which may apply to organizations more broadly seeking to improve their deliberative practices. A revised model of productive dialogue, that builds on the one presented in section 2, is presented in Figure 4 on page 81. This is revised to recognize the iterative nature of

dialogue in general and the roles of skills in communication and facilitation in getting to a space where productive dialogue might emerge.

There are several mechanisms and processes that either proceed or accompany these dialogues within this context. Consult Figure 4 on page 82 for a visual depiction of the explanation that follows. Firstly, the pursuit of consensus in a context where people share power equally creates numerous opportunities for disagreement. Consensus-seeking doesn't allow members to immediately move towards a process of majority voting in decision-making, which can leave some issues unresolved between those that disagree on the outcomes of such a vote. The member's commitment to collaboration via the organizational imperative to seek consensus, or near-consensus, on major decisions push community members towards the deliberation of proposals and other sources of tension in the community. While many members express occasional frustration with this deliberative process of seeking consensus, they also share a sense that this is central to the relational nature of the communities, and many put in real efforts to create an environment where this can be managed effectively. Central to this, are the development of spaces where dialogue can effectively take place outside of decision-making meetings and the continuous development skills and perspectives needed to engage meaningfully with one another.

There were two clear paths to the use of dialogical spaces. On the one hand, the unsettledness that emerges from a failed proposal or the seemingly unthinking actions of another member can be invited into a dialogical space, such as a one-to-one conversation, a collective chat, or a facilitated workshop. On the other hand, pre-emptive dialogues or advice-seeking helped some members craft better proposals by looking to others to provide them with critical insights before advancing a proposal or idea to the larger group. Whether or not advice seeking was first undertaken we see that the process of seeking consensus opens the door for dissenting views and that there is a mechanism in most of the communities to move these conflictual conversations into a dialogical space.

The ability for this dialogical space to move towards a productive dialogue appear to be mediated by the dialogical skills of the participants, and the adoption of one or more dialogical perspectives. The foundational work of communication training and practice undertaken by members in these communities set up the conditions for success in dealing with these difficult events is an important mechanism that seems to be missing in the literature. We know that conflict demands a lot of its participants (Shaw et al., 2011), that citizen deliberators may not have the competence that deliberation requires (S. Rosenberg, 2013), and we know that practice

allows people to develop a tolerance to these demands, or a capacity to manage them effectively (Isaacs, 2001). Before having people engage in challenging deliberative practices, this kind of shared rehearsal may help better the situation. In addition to the work of individual members, facilitators are often present in such sessions and are noted for their tendency to help participants conceptually reframe, expand and/or combine ideas.

Finally, one of the unexpected outcomes of some of these productive dialogues was the dissolution of the initial tension, without the resolution of the conflict itself. That is, agonism is an acceptable outcome of the pursuit of consensus in these communities, at least in some instances. While the pursuit of consensus may at first appear to reject agonism, this does not appear to be the case in these communities. On the one hand, we do see instances where the pursuit of consensus can lead to a certain degree of self-selection: some people remove themselves from the context when they are not able to have their own way. However, we also observe several instances whereby informants describe an agonistic outcome, often described as a process of "letting go," as a satisfactory conclusion to a course of conflict resolution. Members site agonistic outcomes and dissensus in decision making as both necessary and productive in general terms, as they appear to relate agonism as emerging *from the pursuit of consensus* in their communities. It's only in the exercise of trying to understand each other enough to come to an agreement do they learn that this is not always possible, and it is for this reason that pure consensus is only rarely a terminal requirement for decision making in these communities. Consensus is the proverbial moon that the communities shoot for. Even if they do not achieve consensus every time – and the events they described here suggest that they do *really* try – they may be able to be satisfied with the development of a shared understanding, if not general agreement.

5.7. Conclusion

We see in the case of Canadian cohousing communities that there is a solid foundation laid in the creation of a context to allow dialogue to flourish. To borrow Isaacs' term (1999), many of these communities appear to successfully create a "container" in which dialogue may emerge, and in so doing, create a larger context that is primed for dialogue. Some of this work is preparatory, such as the development and practice of dialogical skill-building, both in terms of communication and facilitation training. Some of this work is procedural, in the way that contentious issues are allowed a space of their own to be investigated in a way that is felt to be

productive – either pre-emptively via a process of advice-seeking or after the emergence of the issue, when the discussion is moved outside of the framework of decision making, allowing space to establish facts and a shared understanding of the issue in question.

There are several paradoxes in these communities, only one of which is relevant to this study, and that is the idea that in seeking consensus, dissensus becomes all the more possible. In setting up processes where people regularly practice contributing and being heard, you open the very real possibility that one might contribute a dissenting opinion, and this is what happens in these contexts. It's important as we study democratic organizations, such as those presented here, to consider the notion of consensus as a process rather than an outcome. As such, I've referred to these communities as "consensus/consent seeking" rather than consensus-based organizations, as consensus is most often a goal, not a rule. The members of most of these communities have learned from consensus-based organizations in the past and have incorporated fail-safes in their decision-making model to guard against the tyranny of the minority (Freeman, 2013). However, it does not follow that they simply take a vote on matters at the first sign of tensions in the community, in fact, it appears that just the opposite happens in many of the situations described as having satisfactory outcomes. When they are operating at their best, they lean in and put in the effort to understand one another. They leverage their dialogical spaces and perspectives to build a better understanding as best they can before proceeding with a proposal. With consensus as a process, people don't always agree to move forward on an issue, because not every issue is worth potentially sacrificing the relationship you've built with your fellow community member.

Figure 4 Revised model of a productive dialogue

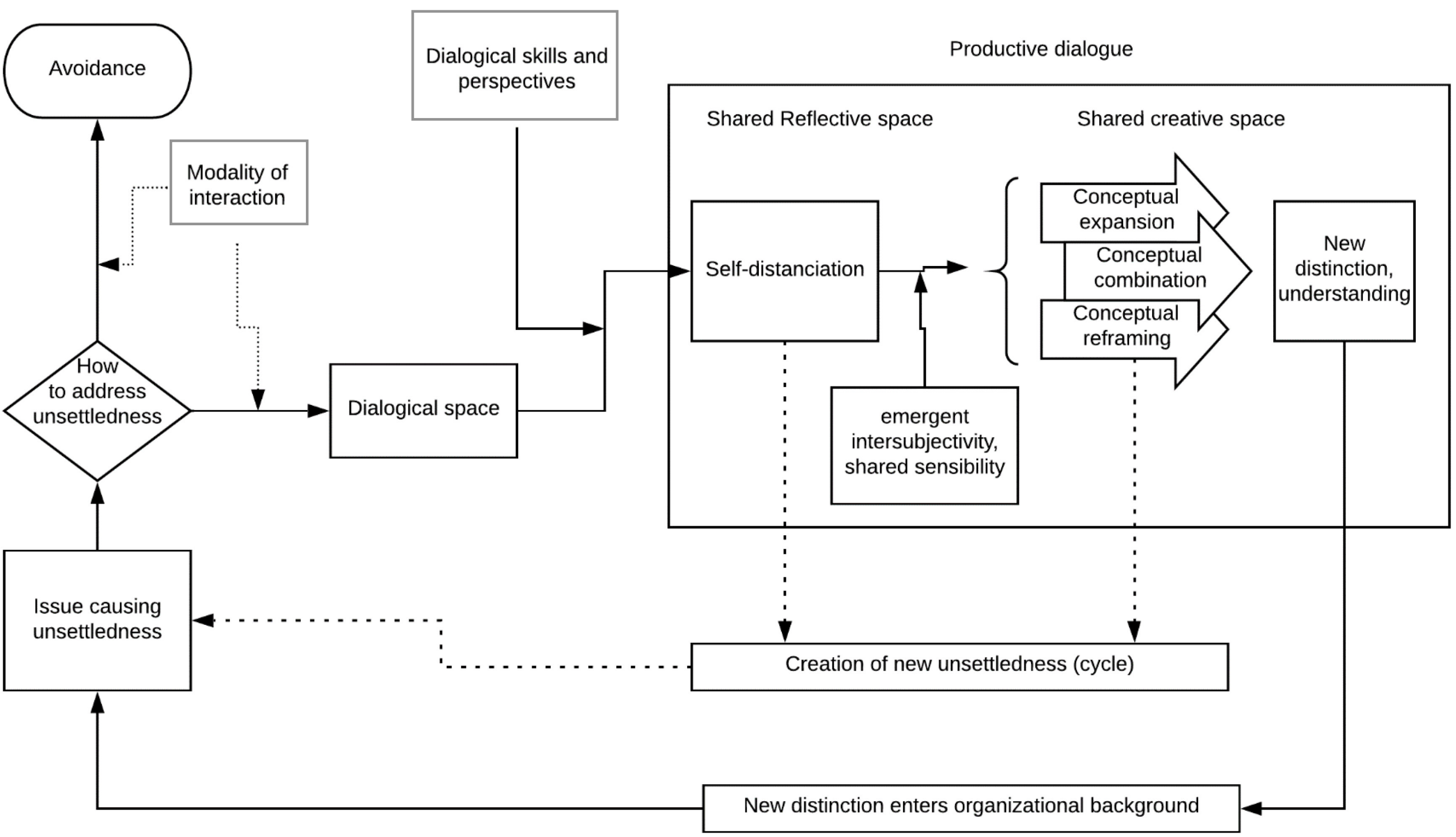
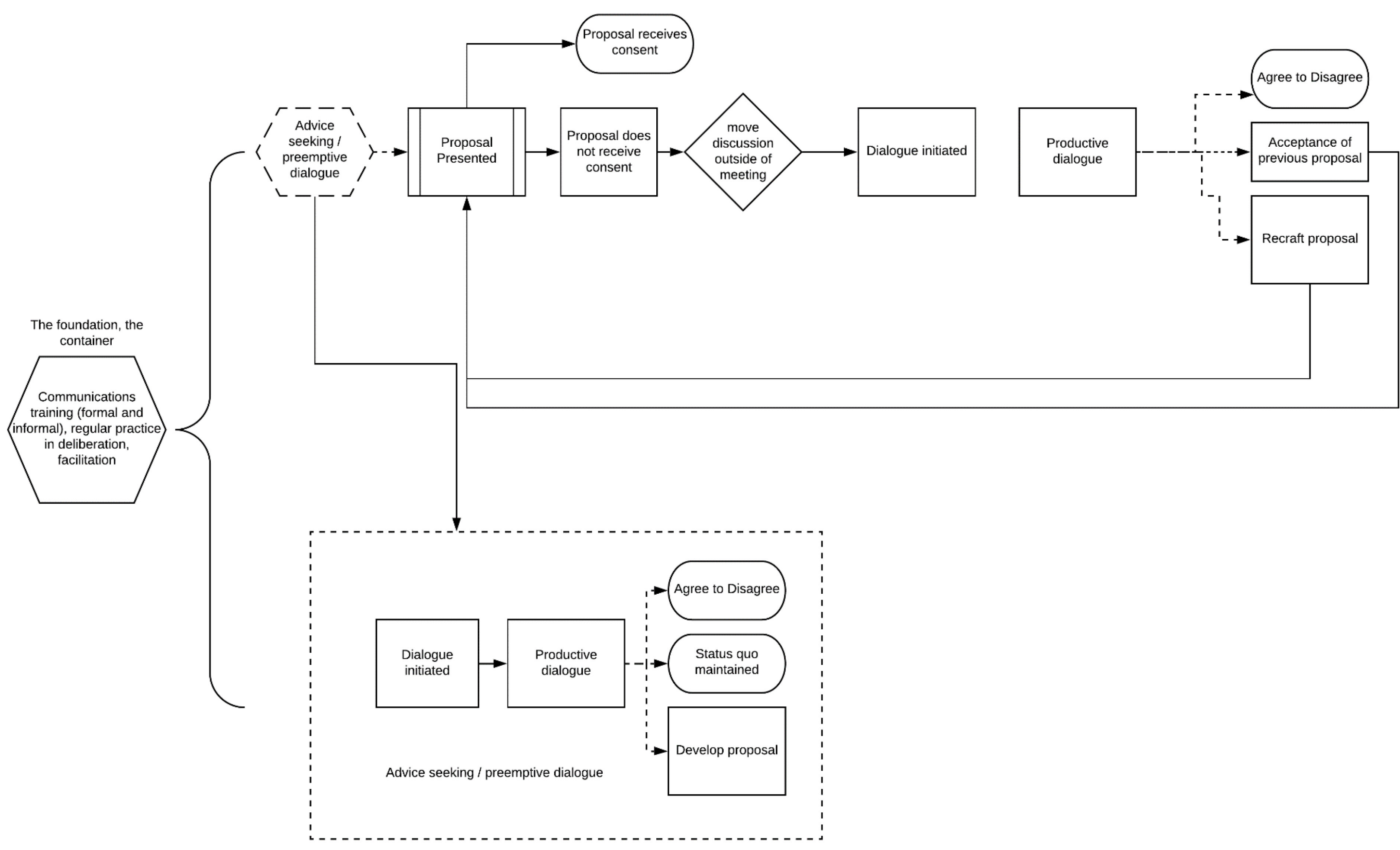


Figure 5 Framework for productive dialogue in Canadian cohousing communities



6. Discussion

6.1. Summary

This research takes an appreciative lens to the analysis of a best-case approach to the emergence of dialogue in organizations. The context is intentionally relational, members are free and equal, and the organizations have managed to co-develop a neighbourhood together, demonstrating a remarkable capacity to collaborate under the immense pressures of a multi-family residential development project. I sought to identify the processes and mechanisms that promote productive dialogue in support of intentional deliberation and conflict resolution in this particular context, Canadian cohousing communities. By interviewing members in several different communities I was provided with an opportunity to learn from the successful resolution of numerous conflictual events and am thus able to note patterns that arise in the lead up to the productive dialogues in these communities. In so doing, we expand our understanding of the dynamics of tension-filled deliberation and their potential impacts (Tjosvold et al., 2014), provide insights which may apply to other organizations looking to improve their deliberative practices (Tjosvold et al., 2014), and consider how conditions within an organization might improve as a consequence of engaging in conflict (J. McDonnell, 2012).

With this study, I was able to document and explore the common paths taken to resolve conflictual events from the perspective of the respondent(s), for example, seeing them purposefully recall a collective identity or establish common ground, before moving towards a number of possible outcomes. Many of these tense or conflictual events emerged via a process of seeking-consensus and yet were resolved in spaces outside of the process of decision making, for example, in a dialogical space of advice-seeking or consultation. Members frequently attributed their willingness and ability to engage in a dialogical process towards the successful resolution of such issues to the foundational, or antecedent, work done in the community, be it in communication or facilitation training and/or their habituation to deliberative processes. Many also shared both their initial frustration with the process of seeking consensus and their eventual acceptance of its value to the community and themselves as members of the community. Participants demonstrated an openness to addressing issues of conflict, or at the very least a remarkable acceptance that this was part of the process of seeking-consensus in these organizations. Finally, an acceptable outcome to the process of consensus-seeking in these

communities can be agonistic. That is, when asked to recall the successful resolution of conflicts in community, multiple informants chose to recount events where despite best efforts, no common solution could be agreed upon, except the decision to (sometimes reluctantly) embrace their differences via a process of letting go.

6.2. Contribution

In addition to answering the question about the mechanisms and processes that encourage productive dialogue in Canadian cohousing communities, my research identified several gaps in the literature which may be partly addressed with this study. The extant literature on dialogue describes with some clarity the limiters, enablers, and consequences of productive dialogue with a particular strength in describing the processes and perspectives that are related to each of these subfactors. What is less clearly described are antecedents as well as any structural subfactors that may contribute to the emergence of productive dialogue in organizations. What follows is an attempt to locate my findings within the current literature, by placing my findings within the ALEC framework developed in Section 2 of this study. A revised table is presented on page 94 in Table 9. [9]

6.2.1. Antecedents of dialogue

As previously noted, antecedents are conditions that precede the need for dialogue, which may nonetheless facilitate its eventual emergence. The literature generally describes the antecedents of dialogue as spontaneous breakdowns in polite discourse (Isaacs, 2001) or the emergence of unsettledness (Tsoukas, 2009). There is a sense that operationalizing dialogue is inherently difficult, or that dialogue cannot be willed into existence (Isaacs, 2001). It's rarely described as part of a ritualized process undertaken by organizations that incorporate this form of deliberation into their ways of operating, which stands in sharp contrast with the reality of these communities. What follows is an analysis of the procedural, structural, and perspectival antecedents of dialogue in these communities in relation to the current literature.

Antecedent: Structure, real democracy needs /pushes for deliberation

While the legal structure of these communities is varied, most are market-based legal condominiums or strata homeowners' associations. However, the collaborative structure of these

organizations is fundamentally different from typical housing associations and most organizations more generally. These organizations each have their own approach to a more dynamic model of governance, which invites all households into a process of shared decision making which is best described in the literature as "a practice of leadership" (Raelin, 2014). This is paramount in the context of self-governing and consensus-seeking organizations as there are simply no other people or processes to blame for negative outcomes. As one community member states, "I get the feeling that one of the reasons is people are invested in this place... It's like, this is us! We've got a problem, it's our problem, and we have to figure it out and deal with it. There's no bad guy in this process. It's all just us" (GR15_A). If there is no one in a position to veto or otherwise dictate a proposal or idea, members have to develop a different approach to negotiating differences. As we will see below, the voluntary, self-governing structure of these communities makes use of a process of consensus-seeking, thereby adopting a process that pushes members towards dialogical processes as they struggle to address the diverse perspectives that members can have on any given issue.

A second aspect of the structure of these organizations in the deliberate creation of dialogical spaces, which are used to address blocks in decision-making and/or in order to induce a hard conversation before it becomes a real problem in need of an immediate solution. In addition to the practices that take place in regular meetings, there are also purely dialogical spaces, such as fireside chats, heart sharings, and listening circles which can be encouraged as a means to work through existing or emergent issues in the community.

Antecedent: Process, seeking consensus

Practice would appear to be an important contributor to the emergence of productive dialogue in organizations (Isaacs, 1999, 2001), but how this can be functionally embedded or in some way supported in everyday deliberation is not described in the literature. These communities demonstrate how disagreement can be given space to be articulated and acted upon once it emerges *in pursuit* of consensus. In the most satisfying cases of dealing with conflict, differences aren't stifled or settled via a majority vote, they are explored. Members regularly attributed the need to seek consensus, a guiding principle for these organizations, as a driver for embarking on some of the lengthy dialogical experiences documented in this study. While avoidance is still a possibility for some people, and surely a tactic occasionally taken by some, it's felt as if it is less of an option in this context, where people had committed to engage with one another as a core aim of the organization.

In the case of Canadian cohousing communities, some attention is given to setting up conditions for success in collective decision making. The existing literature outlines certain skills, such as listening and facilitation, as enablers of dialogue (Dmytriyev et al., 2016; Isaacs, 1999, 2001), but doing so is not intuitive or easy for many people who are used to working with others more instrumentally. Developing a way to embed dialogical practices in efficient but meaningful ways helps to build these skills while also fostering empathy between members in the organizations, prior to the emergence of particularly difficult tensions. For example, general meetings are facilitated to make sure that people have time and space to voice their views. Meetings also often include improvisational dialogical practices, such as check-ins and check-outs, which allows members regular practice on making space for voicing their ideas and listening to others.

The process of consensus-seeking comes with its own set of practices, which can have the effect of pushing people together to address their differences. For example, most communities have adopted a process whereby if a person blocks a proposal they are set on a path to work with the proponent in pursuit of a reconsideration, revision, and improvement of the proposal. This has the effect of limiting blocks to those situations where a person feels strongly enough about a matter that they are willing to engage in that issue collaboratively. In the cases reviewed for this study, these conversations are moved outside of decision-making circles into a dialogical space, in order to create room and time for meaningful engagement with the issues.

Antecedent: Process, building the necessary skills

Many informants did not merely use their communities' decision-making process and dialogical spaces as a means to practice their skills haphazardly, choosing instead to seek additional training in communication and facilitation. This process of training proceeded many of the events described by informants, but in some cases, this was an ongoing practice. Non-violent communication (NVC) is the most often cited communication practice adopted by community members and has the potential to create an environment more conducive to dialogue in a number of ways. Firstly, it encourages people to take responsibility for their words and actions, including their feelings and how they talk with one another (M. Rosenberg, 2015). Secondly, as with other forms of compassionate communication, NVC encourages participants to tame the more combative approach to conflict, namely debate, and move away from notions of "right and wrong" towards an understanding of feelings and needs – both their own and those of their dialogue partner(s) (M. Rosenberg, 2015). Participants are better able to adopt a more reflexive

mindset (Bohm, 1996; Buber, 1996; Tsoukas, 2009) or a "deliberative stance," (Owen & Smith, 2015), which is central to the process of the emergence of a productive dialogue. Other workshops undertaken in communities might relate to compassionate listening or co-care.[10]

Members also highlighted the important role of facilitators (internal to the group or otherwise), who were skillfully able to shift discussions towards creative exercises such as conceptual reframing, or conceptual combining (Tsoukas, 2009), leading to new shared understandings, if not agreement, between members. In most communities, skilled facilitators are central to the process of effectively running decision-making meetings as well as dialogical spaces. Some of these people come to the community with these skills in place, while others develop these skills while in community with training and practice.

Antecedent: Perspective, intentionality, and shared values

Community members co-create the organization's shared values, mission statement, and decision-making processes or are made aware of these and agree to them prior to joining the community, making these voluntary associations with fairly transparent expectations around deliberative decision making. As previously noted, these shared values are quite general and non-prescriptive and serve as a reminder to work in the interest of the community. There are, of course, limits to the number of values that a large group of strangers can agree to, but the most common values shared in these communities include ideas of community, respect, and supporting one another. As we will see below, recalling these common principles becomes an important tool in shifting perspectives towards productive dialogue.

Antecedent: Perspective, conflict is part of the process

Constructive disagreements are more likely to arise in organizations that treat conflict as an opportunity space rather than as something that should be addressed with silence, disruption, or close-mindedness and disgruntlement (Dmytriyev et al., 2016). According to informants, their approach to self-governance has the potential to induce proactive engagement on issues of concern in the community. However, this would not likely be possible if community members feared tension and conflict in community or felt intense and consistent pressure to conform. As was suggested by one member, "you have that opportunity here to really grapple with [challenges] in the way that you don't, you know, on a regular basis" (GR16_A). This is not to suggest that members of these communities run happily towards conflict, but rather that they

leave many openings for it to emerge and possess a shared sense that people will eventually treat each other fairly in the process of seeking a resolution.

Community members stated over and over again the important role of conflict in the community and have a shared language around letting go of issues when they can do so, "is *this* the hill I'm going to die on?" or "will I go up to the wall, for *this*?"[11] and in so doing have developed a language to contextualize their disappointment at not having it their way, while also reminding themselves that not every issue is as significant as it might initially seem.

Antecedents of dialogue in Canadian cohousing communities

This study has identified several antecedent conditions that may facilitate productive dialogues in organizations. These self-governing, consensus-seeking organizations have all taken several steps to create a context that is ultimately amenable to dialogue. Isaacs (1999, 2001) suggests that a context whereby members purposefully create a setting where the members can step back from the desire to simply fix the problem and instead move towards an exercise of exploring the foundations of the current issue is called "a container," and that such a container might support the kinds of productive dialogues outlined in his and Tsoukas' (2009) work. In the case of completed Canadian cohousing communities, we can see that such a container may be induced by the voluntary process of seeking consensus or consent on organizational decision making when members have also developed and practiced the skills of the container, namely respectfully listening to others and voicing their own views, suspension of judgment in dialogical spaces in and around decision making. At the same time, members personally develop the skills and perspectives that might allow them to build confidence in their ability to engage with others in managing tensions as they arise.

6.2.2. Enablers of dialogue

Enablers are factors that facilitate dialogue in conflictual conditions, these are the structural, perspectival, and procedural elements that are used at the time that a situation calls for dialogue. As we've seen, the skills required for dialogue take practice and while the groundwork may be laid early, participants in conflict still have to be able to leverage these skills in the heat of the moment. The conflicts that were resolved successfully in these communities not only pointed to the important role of a dialogical context in these communities, but to the application of the skills and processes they have learned in advance of running into these difficulties.

Enabler: Perspectives, reflexivity

There are a few ways that we can see, in practice, the adoption of perspectives that would support the emergence of dialogue in Canadian cohousing communities. The literature proposes that a reflective mindset (Bohm, 1996; Buber, 1996; Isaacs, 1999; Tsoukas, 2009) or a "deliberative stance," (Owen & Smith, 2015) is central while being in dialogue with another. In explaining the process of addressing challenging tensions in the community, I heard various ways participants shifted their initial approach towards a more generous, dialogical perspective. We also see the tendency to adopt a subject-to-subject relationship, based on a shared sense of respect, mutual responsibility, and caring for the other participants (Buber, 1996; Raelin, 2014). Such dialogical perspectives can be adopted by the participant themselves, or they can be induced via skilled facilitation and shared processes.

Enabler: Process, making use of dialogical skills

Skills in communication and facilitation can enable a productive dialogue (Dmytriyev et al., 2016), and this is further supported in this context. This showed up in two key ways: shifting perspectives and conceptual reframing. Community members who were skilled in reflexivity and/or facilitation often helped others struggling to engage with one another by encouraging them to adopt a more charitable perspective, adopting a more collective mindset, or to reframe the issue in a novel way.

Recalling common ground seems to be a tool often leveraged by communities to reframe or reset a discussion within the shared interests of the community, allowing them to purposefully adopt what Habermas described as "an idealized we-perspective" (Finlayson, 2005, p. 84). This was often facilitated by purposefully recalling the community's guiding principles, such as the missions and values statement. This concept is described in framing theory as a set of assumptions that actors take to be true as a result of ongoing sensemaking and interaction with one another (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014). This is a context were people purposefully co-create a set of shared assumptions and return to them time and again in a productive manner. In this way, when they are struggling to relate to one another, they can point to a set of values that they had previously committed to and compare their own position to these principles.

Invoking these prior commitments to one another seemed to help direct people towards more productive deliberation, recalling the literature around leadership in democratic organizations as a practice, where members pull from the various protocols, reports, and other

artifacts that ground the mission of the organization (Oborn, Barrett, & Dawson, 2013; Raelin, 2014; Sergi, 2013), in order to collectively make decisions. When reflecting on what helped to engage people in a tense deliberation, members would often suggest that "the facilitators are good and they really try to pull out of people what they think" (U8_L). Members also share particular exercises used to invite people into the process of deliberation, which allowed, for example, a few people on the extreme ends of an issue to see that they were very much in the minority and not speaking on behalf of the group. This allowed some members to distance themselves from their existing understanding of and their ideas about the issue at hand (Bohm, 1996; Buber, 1996; Isaacs, 1999; Tsoukas, 2009), and see the issue in a new light.

Enablers of dialogue in Canadian Cohousing Communities

My findings support much of the existing literature as it relates to enabling dialogue. Reflexivity is part of the process of suspension, and we see this within this context as participants recall moments of slowing down their initial reactions in order to approach the situation in a way that might be more productive. Skills that advance dialogue, such as facilitation, listening, and communication are central to the development of productive dialogues in these communities and they are leveraged to good effect in moments where conflictual events were resolved in a satisfactory manner.

6.2.3. Consequences of dialogue

Consequences are the results of dialogue, both positive or negative on participants and/or the wider community.

Consequences: Process of personal growth

Conflicts can be considered constructive when the participants believe that they have gained more benefits than costs by engaging in the issue (Deutsch, 1973), and what we see in this context, is that one of the things that might be gained is a new perspective. In this way constructive conflict doesn't only help the organization by addressing a tense issue held between different members of the group, it may also help individuals within the organization, as people who resolve conflicts openly and constructively feel more connected to their colleagues (Tjosvold, 2008). We see this in these communities as people reflect on the process of personal growth that emerges from having to confront these differences. They can better understand both themselves and their neighbours by making these efforts to engage in a dialogical process of

resolution. In the same way that Tsoukas proposes that dialogue can help with organizational learning (2009), we see within this context that it can also help members of the community in their own personal development.

Consequences: Process of agonism

In the case of cohousing communities, it appears that a pairing of the above-mentioned deliberative mechanisms with agonistic perspective can lead to “live and let live,” “agree to disagree” outcomes that are nonetheless considered satisfactory to the participants. Time and again, these moments, which often followed quite elaborate deliberations, were described as a process of “letting go.” While the literature stresses time and again that consensus is something of the antithesis of agonism and dissensus (Mouffe, 1999; Rancière, 2004), that doesn’t appear to be the case here. Rancière goes so far as to suggest that the identification of democracy with consensus is highly problematic in that consensus “does not mean simply the erasure of conflicts for the benefit of common interests. Consensus means erasing the contestatory, conflictual nature of the very givens of common life.” This may be the case when consensus is the proposed ends rather than the means of a deliberative process, which is not the case here. As previously noted, within this context informants shared an openness to dealing with conflict directly, and even see it as a source of connection, understanding, and personal growth. In many ways, they seem to have a certain degree of trust in the process of deliberation that they’ve co-created to provide them with a fair and equitable approach to dealing with differences.

The tolerance for such agonism may be a matter of degree, in fact, some informants recalled tense times that were ultimately resolved by the departure of members who were not able to come to a consensus with the rest of the group. Some may participate in this process until such a time that they feel it no longer accords with their personal interests. That said, my findings do suggest a certain degree of live-and-let-live feels fair to the members of these communities.

Consequences of dialogue in Canadian cohousing communities

My findings support much of the existing literature as it relates to the consequences of dialogue in organizations, while also contributing some additional findings. Dialogue allows participants to reframe the issues at hand and learn to better understand both themselves and their neighbours by making an effort to engage in a challenging situation together. More precisely, informants felt that these addressing these differences, while at times frustrating, contributed

greatly to their sense of personal development. Part of this development included the possibility to eventually accept agonistic outcomes of conflictual situations.

6.2.4. Contributions conclusion

There is a growing interest in democratic practices within both the academic fields of management (Romme, 1999; Romme et al., 2016; F. Schneider, Kallis, & Martinez-Alier, 2010) and design (Binder, Brandt, Ehn, & Halse, 2015; Palmås & von Busch, 2015). Here we have another interesting context whereby we may explore the machinations of dynamic models of governance. A central feature of democratic settings is some blend of communication practices, which can be more or less deliberative, and follow formal and informal practices (Curato et al., 2017); this is demonstrated clearly with the events that make up this study. By considering multiple events in different communities we are able to see common patterns or approaches to successfully addressing tense and conflictual situations. It's worth noting that in this best-case context there is a certain degree of foundational work undertaken by many members of these communities to set up the conditions for success in dealing with the inevitable challenges of democracy.

We currently understand that conflict is both inevitable in dealing with diverse groups of people working on complex problems, in part because it is improvisational and cognitively demanding. If we are to take seriously the call for greater democratic deliberation within and between organizations, we have to consider how to effectively set the grounds for success. Given the demands of this particular context, it's not uncommon for members to seek training in communication and to practice this training in regular intervals, be it via the common practices of meetings, such as check-in and check-outs, which create room for personal expression, deep listening, and empathizing, or via special sessions set up for practice in methods of communication. Informants are largely well-educated and professional, and yet recognize something is lacking in their experience, education, and/or current approaches to communication. Not unlike many of us, they spent the better part of their working days managing primarily instrumental relationships at school, work, and in community, and this more democratic approach to living required a shift in thinking and practice. The reason this form of organizing requires training and practice is that, for many, seeking consensus, dialogue, and shared reflexive deliberation has not been a part of their daily communication toolkit, and some skills needed to do this needs reinforcing, while existing habits of selling, persuading, and debating needed to be tamed.

We also see in some ways that these rational deliberative practices are not mutually exclusive from agonistic practices and that these deliberative mechanisms can induce agonistic experiences that lead to a "live and let live, agree to disagree" stance. The creation of a shared understanding through dialogue does not always lead to an agreement but understanding and this understanding can in some instances be enough for those who disagree to consent to a decision they do not favour, from a place of consideration and deliberation.

Table 9 Revised antecedents, limiters, enablers and consequences of dialogue[12]

Bold text = new contributions from findings; ***Bold italics*** = existing concepts supported by findings.

	Antecedents	Limiters	Enablers	Consequences
Structure	equity of participants **dynamic governance** **dialogical spaces**	hierarchy	freedom of association the creation of a container	
Process	shared monologues polite conversation **process of seeking consent or consensus** **facilitation of meetings** **improvisational dialogical practices** **objection to a proposal comes with the need to seek resolution** **communication and facilitation training**	improvisational and open-ended, no clear outcome at the outset cognitively demanding – needs space and time framing competing demands as a dilemma rather than a paradox.	framing competing demands as a paradox rather than as a dilemma ***skills: listening, respect, suspension of judgment and voicing, facilitation*** ***practice makes practiced***	facilitates conceptual expansion, combination, and re-framing of the issues allows participants to more easily generate alternative hypotheses, explanations, and theories than on their own accelerate the processes of clarification and learning in a group of people with different backgrounds co-construction of knowledge and the eventual actions that may emerge from them **sense of personal growth for individual participants** **agonistic resolution**
Perspective	unsettledness conflict **set of shared values**	avoidant behaviour calculated, or instrumental modality of interactions	an inter-subjective, or relational modality of interaction	facilitates the creation of new knowledge and insights in organizations sense-making and contextualization

	conflict as an opportunity	negative prior experiences of dealing with conflict	***reflexive mindset or a deliberative stance*** ***self-distanciation*** **adoption of a collective mindset, recall to common values**	feel more connected to others in the organization Creates a mutual understanding

6.3. Interpretations

6.3.1. Building the lifeworld

> The most important effect of modernization is not that it makes democracy more acceptable to elites. It is that modernization increases ordinary citizens' capabilities and willingness to struggle for democratic institutions (Inglehart, 2018, p. 135).

As we consider with increasing intensity the need or desire for more democratic practices in organizations and in civil society more generally, we have to consider how we might go about laying a foundation for success within these new models of collaboration. Dialogue is a form of discourse well suited for managing issues of complexity and, if nothing else, the issues we are hoping these deliberative processes might help us with are very complex.

Canada is one of an increasing number of economies that can describe themselves as a knowledge economy and it's within such a context educated members of society, which increasingly represents the average worker, is "accustomed to thinking for themselves – on the job and in political life" (Inglehart, 2018, p. 134). In some ways, this move towards deeper democratic practices is bound up in issues of cognitive mobilization and a mass change in standards towards self-expression values, arising from economic development, and a proficiency in the ability to realize collective action (Inglehart, 2018). Habermas proposes that this is part of the project of modernization (1997). Insights that we can gain from this study is that despite this condition of education and self-expression, there is still a certain degree of re-education undertaken by members of these communities to shift from one way of relating towards a more collaborative and ultimately more reflexive manner.

The empirical setting is an unusual one in the domain of management. However, cohousing represents an example of the practical application of deliberative, democratic principles in civil society. This is an example of a non-governmental, market approach where citizens organize to meet their unmet demands collaboratively. In this way, cohousing supports the idea that deliberative democracy is a realistic, non-utopian approach to building a civil society (Curato et al., 2017). Recent research into deliberative practices (e.g. Goodman & Arenas, 2015) and dialogue (e.g. Ferraro & Creating, 2018) tend towards multi-stakeholder approaches where variances in interests and values are so fundamental, that consensus or even a shared understanding seems less likely than in the context studied here (Rowley & Moldoveanu, 2003;

Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). However, the private nature of homes and the near-constant interaction of members of cohousing communities provides a context where conflict is both inevitable and quite personal making it difficult to manage effectively. In this study, we can see how the machinations of this process unfold and how the structures that these communities adopt push them towards these processes as they encounter challenges in collaboration.

A society is more or less democratic according to how members come to decisions on matters that affect their lives (Habermas, 1996). The communities studied here not only manage their own neighbourhoods democratically, but they design and build them together using the same skills. The dynamic approach that these organizations take to accomplish their goals is important to consider as we look for ways to organize in response to the emergent challenges of climate change and the erosion of democracy. Democratic societies are meant to be transparent with information, with fewer barriers to engaging meaningfully with one another. Theorists considering deliberative democracy draw often draw from Habermas's work in order to advocate for the creation of a public democracy within the current model of representative politics (Gutmann & Thompson, 2009; Held, 2006). In his later work, Habermas proposes that the state should be able to respond to the communicative action of society instrumentally, via the public sphere, thereby extending democratic processes (1996). As previously stated in Section 2, Habermas is frequently cited with these kinds of reflections, as he posits that a functioning democracy must be in some way guided by *communicative action*. This kind of action is said to allow for a gradual evolution of shared assumptions, knowledge, and the kind of wisdom that allows consensus to emerge.

It's worth pointing out that this is a process he specifically associates with something he calls the lifeworld (1996). Briefly, Habermas' social ontology divides the world into two spheres: the lifeworld and the system. Each of these arenas operates with its own set of rules and patterns of behaviour. The lifeworld is the everyday, informal, non-market world we share with others, which includes areas such as family life, culture, etc. The system, by contrast, is the domain of instrumental action. Habermas describes two subsystems of the system: money and power. These subsystems exert certain objectives on agents acting within the system, overt or otherwise. The argument is that the chief interest of the system is the creation of goods and services via a system of integration and this supports an increasingly disintegrated, mobile, and complex society resulting from industrialization and modernization. Given the direction of the dependence of these two systems, Habermas suggests the relationship between the two is parasitic. That is, the

system is a parasite to the host system of the lifeworld. Such relationships can be symbiotic, yet this requires a certain equilibrium to function well in perpetuity.

Habermas argues that the instrumentalizing orientation and operational opacity of the system have the potential to steer agents towards ends that are not ultimately beneficial to the lifeworld. The system can increasingly encroach on the lifeworld in a way that can leave it fragile, unstable, and less able to act on the system, thereby leaving strategic decisions in the hands of markets and/or expert administrators. Such a context may lead to the rise in certain social pathologies, namely apathy, disintegration, alienation, demoralization, and social instability. This might remind the reader of the conditions outlined in Section 3 related to the impact of the current practice of housing development on society. These kinds of pathologies are central to the rationale for the emergence of cohousing and similar approaches to home and community development.

Habermas suggests that modernity will remain incomplete until such a time that we can develop an approach to addressing the problems that emerge alongside all the benefits that the system brings society (1997). In that the communities described here seem to have a particular capacity to support communicative action, this context provides us with something of a blueprint for a successful approach to reinforcing the lifeworld while still working within the constraints of the system. Understanding how the lessons learned here might be effectively shared and transposed into other realms could be an important contribution towards the project of a more resilient and equitable society.

In this way, cohousing can be seen as one approach to reinforcing the public sphere, not because of the physical buildings that they co-create, but because of their practice of deliberation. This key differentiating feature of cohousing contradicts the paradigm of housing as an off-the-shelf commodity (Boyer & Leland, 2018; Harris, 2009), moving it from the system back towards the lifeworld. Doing so effectively presupposes a shared ability to do so efficiently in a context where people are used to the nature of deliberation within the context of the system. This study shows us, that even within an optimal context (e.g. where people are free and equal, lacking in any form of coercion (Habermas, 1993)) people in Canadian cohousing communities often take additional steps to effectively make the switch from strategic to communicative action. This is not to suggest that it's inevitable that people can successfully make the switch from instrumental to communicative action, but it is possible.

6.3.2. Dialogue and design thinking

There are fertile grounds of overlap between the fields of management and design as we consider our collective response to complex issues, such as those related to the transitioning of our current modes of living under a context of human-induced climate change, be it in the context of real estate development or otherwise. One of the oft-tilled fields of consideration is that of design thinking. Over the years, this concept has become something of a darling in both the fields of design and management. One avenue of exploration that is particularly pertinent to this study is the notion that design thinking represents a kind of pop-culture rebranding of what is otherwise known as Participatory Design (Bjogvinsson, Ehn, & Hillgren, 2012). Given the overlap between design thinking and participatory design, the challenges that persist in the latter are likely to be important considerations for the former (Bjogvinsson et al., 2012).

Central to the tenants put forth by design thinking's most vocal proponents is the notion that the designer should move towards solutions that are not simply more *design things* (Brown, 2008; Martin, 2009). There is the notion that designers should implicate themselves in issues of social importance and that design is ultimately a collaborative effort that ties together different people, their experiences and expertise, and that ideas have to be explored in an exploratory, iterative manner with a focus on the human experience of those outputs (Brown, 2008). However, it's worth considering that the very notion of design thinking has become an increasingly muddied concept in both theory and practice. There is some concern that design thinking has become such a common-place idea that the phrase may lose all meaning (Cross, 2010). Moreover, if design thinking means different things to different people, these different approaches likely each need their own approach to implementation.

It is important to first state that it appears as though the management and design literatures apply this term differently (Badke-Schaub, Roozenburg, & Cardoso, 2010; Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla, & Çetinkaya, 2013) and this inconsistency has led some design theorists and practitioners to move away from the language of design thinking towards concepts such as designerly thinking or creative intelligence (Nussbaum, 2011). Two tracks of reasoning may lead to the kind of cross-talk that seems to be emerging concerning the concept of design thinking: the *what* and the *whys* of design thinking. The first bifurcation in the reasoning around design thinking relates to how we are meant to understand the "thinking" part of the phrase and where this thinking specifically takes place. The second area where people may be approaching this

issue with a different set of assumptions relates to the reasons that people wish to make use of design thinking. These two related sets of assumptions will be considered separately below.

The design research discourse is very much rooted in the cognitive aspects of design: how designers think as they work in design. One of the oft-cited streams of this literature is described as the "reflective turn" on the topic of design thinking (Johansson-Sköldberg et al., 2013); we see this especially in the contributions of Schön on reflexivity in practice (1983, 1984, 1990). This track of the literature considers the trained designer, manager, or educator as one who can constantly improve their competence via a focus on the relation between a particular creation and the process of reflection on that creation. What started as a process of post-action reflection, gradually becomes a capacity to reflect-in-action (Schön, 1983). The latter is improvisational and cyclic, learning is compounded with time and leads to an improved capacity of the practitioner. Here we see design thinking as a process that takes time, practice, and personal reflection. On the other hand, the management literature proposes instead that design thinking is something of a method that may be leveraged to create value. It demands a fairly radical shift from linear to abductive logic without this sense of expertise in practice and reflection. There is a clear sense that the management approach, thus far, is "less thoughtful and robust" than the decades-long reflections put forth by design researchers (Johansson-Sköldberg et al., 2013, p. 127). That said, in either case, the thinking takes place in the mind of the designer, manager, or educator, and happens as a consequence of engagement with another. However, the reflexive practice of dialogue suggests that learning can happen between people (Tsoukas, 2009). This distinction of who is doing the thinking in design thinking is especially relevant when we start to consider the relationship between design thinking and participatory, or democratic, processes, which brings us to the second set of assumptions that may have an impact on how different people come to understand design thinking.

Not unlike projects in general (Boutinet, 2004), it appears that design thinking is polysemic in nature, in that there are multiple sets of values that may lead people to be drawn to the construct of design thinking (Bjogvinsson et al., 2012), and these values lend different meanings to this construct in practice. These Divergent approaches to design thinking and deliberative processes are mapped out in Figure 6 on page 101. One approach supports the notion that democracy has an inherent value and we should seek effective means that enable proper and legitimate user participation in the co-creation of the objects and systems that affect them. The other value asserts a consideration of the skills and experiences of others in pursuit of the development of better things, such as objects or services (Bjogvinsson et al., 2012). Both of these

values are legitimate, but only one of these assumptions point to the need to develop a process or infrastructure of enduring two-way engagement. What this means practically is that there are a group of people who are looking to craft better design *things*, while another group is looking to craft socio-material assemblies of negotiation and dialogue (sometimes confusingly called design *Things)*. These divergent approaches to considering the what and whys design thinking are paralleled in divergent approaches to the consideration of deliberative democracy, as seen in Section 2.2, whereby some scholars are interested in "workplace democracy," while others are more oriented towards the conidiation of stakeholder engagement (Felicetti, 2018).

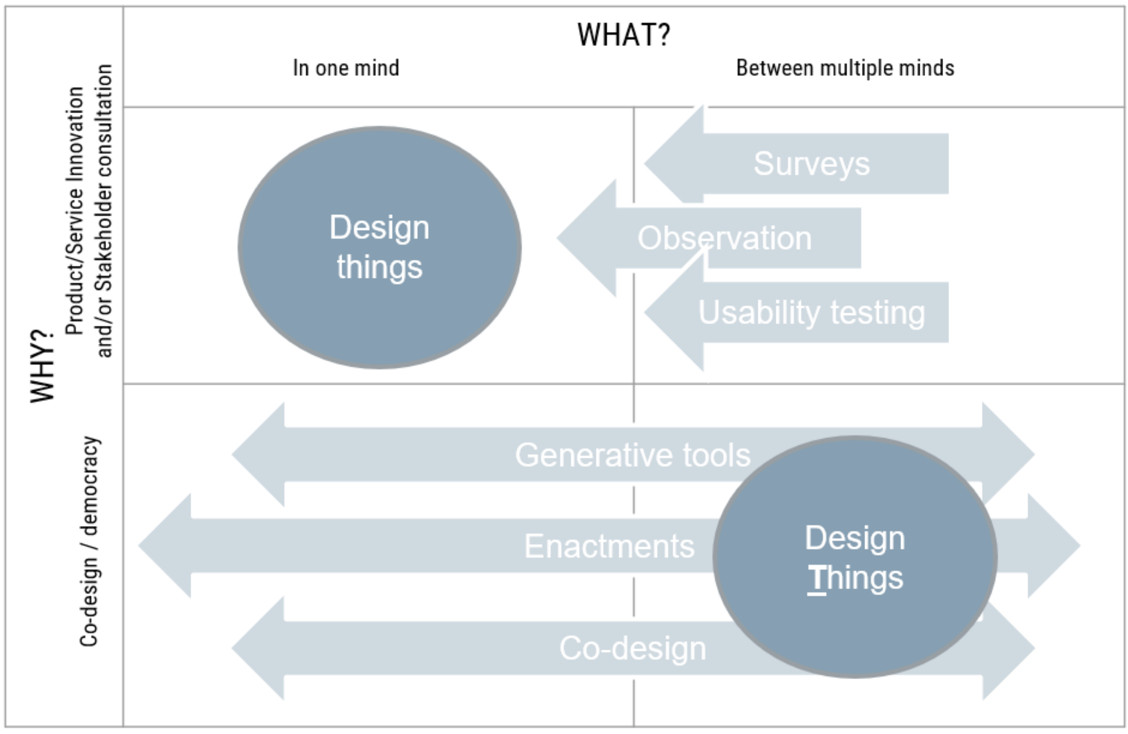


Figure 6 Divergent approaches to design thinking and deliberative processes

These different approaches to design thinking and democracy ultimately require different mindsets on the part of both the designer and participant. User-centered and critical design leverages an expert mindset where the "users" are subjects to be studied and consulted. This mindset is much more instrumental, in that the focus is the execution of a project or "a temporary endeavour to create a unique product or service or result" (*A guide to the project management body of knowledge*, 2008, p. 4). On the other hand, participatory and generative design adopts a more dialogical mindset, whereby the "users" are understood to be co-creators in a process of co-design (Sanders & Stappers, 2012). Both of these approaches require a willingness to empathize with the end-user of a product or service, but only one of these approaches requires a two-way

engagement with participants in the manner exemplified by the context studied here. The need for a two-way, reflexive, and improvisational mode of shared reasoning points right to dialogue as a tool for participatory design that looks to enable democratic processes. In the case of the aforementioned 'design Things,' an organizational design that is able to embed a process of shared reflection would not be "managing as designing" à la Boland and Collopy (Boland & Collopy, 2004a, 2004b) but rather could be viewed as a design that manages.

We see in the particular context studied here, something that should come as no surprise to someone who has studied design thinking from the perspective of a "designer as expert" mindset, this takes time and practice. We don't throw 1st-year student designers into conflictual situations that require them to confront their deepest held assumptions concerning others. We allow them time to build these kinds of skills and still some of the most acclaimed designers seem to regularly be at odds with the actual needs of their clients (Franck & von Sommaruga Howard, 2010). While it may be the case that political communities "characterized by heterogeneity and difference with no shared object of design... are in need of platforms or infrastructures" (Bjogvinsson et al., 2012, p. 116) to engage in agonistic processes within the public sphere, we are well-advised to set up the conditions of success for such contentious deliberations so that they may continue to be effective as decisions become contentious.

As it stands, the foundational theory that supports the concept of design thinking tends to come from design research and the practical concepts tend to come from management literature both popular and academic (Johansson-Sköldberg et al., 2013). The concept of "design thinking as business strategy" is considered something of a redefinition of the concept proposed in the original design literature (Badke-Schaub et al., 2010), and it's in part thanks to this conception that design thinking has been described as something of a powerful myth that lacks empirical support; a PR-type term for what would otherwise be considered creative thinking with fresh eyes (Norman, 2010). This is, in part, due to the interpretation of design thinking in management as something of a useful process that can be plugged into a space oriented towards process efficiency meant to deliver creativity on demand rather than an epistemology or a *way of knowing* (Nussbaum, 2011). An evaluation of the claims made in the management literature regarding the potential of design thinking, to determine if there is value in terms of innovation and management, shared understanding, and detailed description of what is understood by design thinking is needed (Hassi & Laakso, 2011). While the management literature can stand to more clearly reference the theoretical grounding of the literature on design thinking – the opportunity for cross-pollination between these fields is not unidirectional. The designerly thinking discourse

would gain from a deeper relation to existing theories around methods of collaboration, motivation, and the creation of shared knowledge in organizations, as design is rarely a solitary activity (Johansson-Sköldberg et al., 2013).

A core challenge faced by designers is that "the client is not capable of knowing what the options are and we [the designers] are not capable of understanding what the end product is for" (Lawson, 1994, p. 50). This particular problem is ultimately rooted in the lack of a shared understanding between collaborators, something that both Tsoukas (2009) and Isaacs (1999,2001) propose as a potential outcome of the reflective practice of productive dialogue. Looking at the whole design process as a matter of meaning creation provides new perspectives on both design and innovation (Jahnke, 2012; Verganti, 2009). Moreover, the notion of *thinking through design* is a newer approach within the management literature and promises to have a more significant effect on the way organizations are conducting their work (Johansson-Sköldberg et al., 2013). This is ultimately a question of how to manage people and their differences and therefore should be able to draw productively from the various streams of literature from the field of management in how to motivate, engage, and work with people in pursuit of shared goals. The issue is how to manage people under a context of free association and equity, which is currently less common within the field of management.

6.3.3. Alternate Views

These communities may attract a very specific sort of person that is particularly well equipped to manage these kinds of processes. We also know that cohousing has been criticized for not being particularly diverse (Fromm, 2000; Williams, 2005), especially in the case of project model cohousing (Sanguinetti, 2015), which is the most common model included in this study. Self-selection was something that was mentioned by some informants in different parts of our conversation, suggesting that the shared deliberative processes adopted by these communities were in some ways too onerous or slow for some former or potential members. As one member suggested,

> I think that the people whom we've had the most difficulty with are people whose self-awareness is down here [gesture suggests 'very low'] and who've done no work on their own stuff. People who've done work on their stuff are usually at least .... you know, speaking for myself, if I have bad behaviour, I can catch myself and I can apologize, you know, make amends. But some people who just blatantly charge through aren't aware of their behaviours and their effect. (GR42_A)

By virtue of the need felt by many members to seek additional training, this suggests that some people may not have come equipped with all the skills they felt they needed, but at least demonstrated a kind of self-awareness that would certainly be helpful in such a context.

As it's impossible with this study to tease about the processes and perspectives from the people who are a part of this study it would be interesting to see to what happens to the nature of conflict and tensions when you introduce this kind of practice and training to people who aren't part of an intentional community. Such experimentation will be briefly explored later in this section.

6.4. Limitations

This study only points to a pattern of approaches taken in one kind of a rather specific context, as outlined above. There is also the issue that I adopted an appreciative approach, in that I only captured and described events that were felt to be resolved satisfactorily by some members within these communities. It's very possible that some of the same conflicts were seen as failures by other members of the community. It's also very possible/likely that these same processes have led to different results in different situations.

That so many satisfactorily resolved conflictual events in this context relied on a genuine attempt at dialogue highlights its importance, even if it's not proof of its efficacy. These communities are not free from other, less constructive, kinds of conflicts. In fact, a few informants made a similar joke upon being asked to describe a challenging moment that was well resolved. While taking a moment to think they laughed and said, "well, I can tell you about a time where it *wasn't* resolved to my satisfaction!" This suggests that despite all these particular mechanisms, processes, and perspectives, and despite their ability to engage in dialogue cohousing is "about pleasing most of the people most of the time. This is not about trying to make everybody happy and living in a rose garden" (GR40_A). This rather utilitarian framing of the challenges around plurality is helpful. That is, I stand by the importance of learning from the best practices of these communities. They have something to teach us about capacity for relating with one another and what is needed, even in the best-case scenario, to support these kinds of relationships. What it also teaches us is that a reflexive form of deliberation is central to conflict resolution in these communities and it may be assisted by creating purposeful space for deliberation, building the skills needed to make it productive, while also developing an appreciation for the limits of the consensus-seeking process.

A second gap in the literature discussed here relates to how dialogue is influenced by the structure of the organization. While there is a sense that hierarchies will limit the emergence of dialogue (Tsoukas, 2009), alternative structural designs haven't been explicitly tested here. The average size of the communities found in Canada is just 24 units, thus limiting to a certain extent the need for the kind of real hierarchal structuring you can achieve with some of the dynamic models of governance. As we study more organizations that make use of dynamic systems of governance, we may be able to move further away for the assumptions around access to power in tiered organizations. While there are some minor variations in approach from one community to the next, there aren't sufficient differences in the communities to draw these kinds of conclusions here.

6.5. Practical Implications and recommendations

Dialogue is an effective tool for dealing with issues of unsettledness and even conflict in groups and organizations. Its effectiveness comes from the reflexivity it induces in participants, allowing them to make room for other perspectives in their development of a shared understanding of the issue at hand. Despite our understanding that conflict can be constructive in organizations and that open-ended discussions are central to making them so, there is a tendency to avoid engaging with conflict proactively and constructively. One reason that this is the case is the nature of relational engagement in organizations. When relationships are more instrumental, it is hard to engage with others in a way that recognizes the complexity of their inner thoughts and/or the effect of their previous experiences with conflict. Moving towards organizational designs that support relationships of mutual support and concern may allow organizations to better leverage relational processes such as dialogue to develop the kind of shared understanding needed to advance solutions. This might allow organizations to benefit from the creative capacity of more of their members as they build the capacity to reflect on their own thinking and challenge their existing idea in action. However, it does not follow that because your relations are less instrumental, that people will have the right skills to effectively engage in dialogue.

A clear lesson from these communities is that those looking to adopt a more democratic approach to managing their organization should consider creating space for deliberation and dialogical skill-building. Deliberative forms of democracy include practices that are quite unlike our current forms of organizing and leverages a fairly reflexive method of communication that fundamentally shifts how many of us engage with one another. Democracy in this manner butts-

up against our current individualist orientation and presents individuals as interdependent co-created beings made up of "individuals-in-relations" (Gould, 1988). To what extent certain members of society are willing and able to adopt such a perspectival shift at work an in community remains to be seen. It may simply be that cohousing and similar approaches to collaboration are better suited to some people and not others, and their emergence is simply a manifestation of this kind of difference. However, what this study shows is that it does take a certain degree of commitment, work, and practice from even those members who do choose to stay in such a context. It might be more the case that some people are willing and able to do this work and others, for a variety of reasons, are not.

In terms of application, organizations may consider embedding some of these practices in a way that goes beyond annual team-building retreats. In the same way that some enterprises give their staff space for personal side-projects or volunteer time, knowing that this time provides some long-term dividends to the firm, they may create opportunities and space for members to build the reflexive and deliberative skills needed to engage in meaningful dialogue, so when the time comes they have prepared the container for the effective use of such deliberations. Until such a time that our educational institutions commonly build these skills as part of the process of learning, this will remain something organizations may consider including in their on-boarding and continuous training programs.

6.5.1. Streamlining the development of cohousing and other forms of collaborative living.

The importance of these deliberative practices is self-evident to anyone who has spent any time in these communities, talking with members, but are not outwardly visible to those looking to replicate the physical attributes of these communities alone. As part of the initial census of cohousing in the Canadian context, I was able to determine that only about 25% of all projects that are initiated and publicized are ever completed, which suggests there is a latent demand for this form of housing. Moreover, cohousing is increasingly part of recommendations around housing policy in Canada (e.g. Ellery, 2019; Polar Knowledge Canada, 2019). In an attempt to meet the demands of different markets for more collaborative and/or more sustainable forms of living, be it cohousing, ecovillages, or co-living, it's important not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. The physical architecture plays a role in referencing and reminding a community of their shared values – formed via long meetings and contentious dialogues where members dug deep into the roots of their ways of understanding the world, what it means to be at

home, etc. These values and the iterative deliberation around what these mean in practice shaped the physical design of the community and, in some cases, they both literally and figuratively coloured these communities. In this way, the physical design of the community references these shared experiences and supports the evolution of the community members in relation to these values, as a kind of monument to collaboration. The buildings are not so much a guide for behaviour, but a constant reminder of the productive capacity of a practice of listening, respecting, and suspending judgment.

To effectively streamline the process of the development of these kinds of communities, one would have to be fairly certain of what the major barriers are to their completion and address those rather than simply adopting a standard market development approach with a slight change in the physical design. It's worth understanding that real estate development takes an unusual set of skills around project management, finance, marketing, and diplomacy with officials. In the case of cohousing communities, you have to pair this set of skills with the need to also build a real sense of community within a group of strangers in a relatively short period while co-developing a dynamic system of governance for the design, development, and management of the community. This is a rare set of skills indeed.

It's therefore not a surprise that while in conversation with the informants, the single most common piece of advice interviewees offered to communities in formation was to work with cohousing professionals in the process of developing a cohousing community. Nearly every person involved in the development stage of the community mentioned in some form or another the central role played by various professionals, but especially the cohousing consultant, in the development of their communities. This was the case with communities that had a professional cohousing consultant and those that did not. For example, a member of one community expressed the following about the process of their community's development,

> It was a long, tortuous process because we didn't hire a (co)housing consultant…. and I think we all agree that was a mistake. Because we were very naïve, we had no idea that you need someone to be a pit-bull for you with all the contractors and the project managers and, you know, the city zoning and raising the finances and all that kind of stuff. Who knows how to do that? We didn't, and we just sort of learned by making mistakes — and we made lots of them.

In contrast with the above, a member of another community said that hiring an experienced cohousing consultant was the "number one intelligent decision" they made. They

hired her to help with the first meeting, feasibility study, and then after the land purchase as a project manager.

> One thing we had going for us — we had a lot of intelligent people that knew what we didn't know. So, a lot of us were professionals but we're not design professionals, we're not builders. So, we really knew what we didn't know, and we hired the expertise to help us. So that made the process go, you know, quickly and smoothly. Like, we were two and a half years from that first meeting to move-in.

That is a quick timeline by any standard, let alone an unconventional one such as this one, which was the first of its kind in that region. As outlined in Section 3, a key success factor in multi-family real estate development is the completion of previous projects (Irigoyen, 2019). That is, you are more likely to be successful if you have previously managed a project to completion. This suggests that theoretical knowledge of development is less important and than practical experience, and highlights an important shortcoming for one-time developers, such as the organizations that form around the development of cohousing communities: they are very likely to be missing a key factor for success. This means that forming communities must fill an important resource gap in their plan and the most common way to do this right now is with a cohousing consultant. It wasn't that long ago that is was difficult to find professional cohousing help locally, but this is starting to change. Many of the consultants today are people who have a mix of professional and personal experience and with each passing project develop new tools to better facilitate such projects. At least one leader in the cohousing movement, architect and author Kathryn McCamant, has proactively started to train a network of consultants to leverage her years of experience into the development of cohousing communities beyond her capacity as one individual.[13]

Another path is for developers to lead such projects on their own or in collaboration with a cohousing consultant, as with the example of streamlined processes that I cited in Section 3 between Wonderland Hill Development Company and Cohousing Solutions, which included a practice of deliberate community building facilitated by someone with deep expertise in that domain. In many ways, fast-tracking some of the decision making around the development project may give members of the community more time to work on their community cohesion, but only if that is given the priority attention it deserves. However, I'm concerned that the emergence of developer-led co-living lifestyle buildings[14] will dismiss the very human side of collaboration in favour of web applications and service exchange contracts around the care and maintenance of shared spaces.

A model that seems to be working for the development of cooperative housing in the province of Quebec is the creation of not-for-profit technical resource groups to support more community-led development. At the time of writing, the first affordable cohousing community in North America was under development in Quebec. The proponents of this project, La Mason des RebElles (French for the House of Rebels), were able to realize this project by leveraging the existing infrastructure in place for other models of affordable housing. That is, when they decided they wanted to build their community, they contacted a local non-profit technical resources group, Bâtir son Quartier (BSQ) and a found development agent who was able to guide the design and development process for the group, who were matched with a local developer looking to include affordable housing on an urban redevelopment application. BSQ is one of 25 technical resources groups in Quebec and is a social economy enterprise that, in addition to overseeing the development of space, also provides training on cooperative management and communications. Since 1976, BSQ has made almost 12,000 units of not-for-profit and/or cooperative community housing in Montreal. Their funding largely comes from a development fee appended to the budget of completed projects, though part of their expertise includes understanding how to leverage grants or subsidies for accessible housing made available through foundations and all levels of government.

The emergence of truly affordable cohousing in North America via the project of La Maison des RebElles presents an opportunity to observe how this model can work in conditions of greater social mixing related to income. Most members of the community will pay below-market rates and low-income members will never pay more than 25 percent of their income on rents, though some members of the community may leverage their financial capacity to build something superior for the collective.

The proponents of cohousing and other forms of collaborative living may look to adopt a similar locally-grounded approach to more systematically guiding community-led processes of real estate development for those able to afford market-based housing, with an eye on balancing the drive to meet demands for housing, with the building of procedures and skills that support the rich deliberative process that can bring such housing to life.

6.6. Recommendations

There are several ways of addressing some of the above limitations and alternate views presented above. Firstly, we might consider if and how conflicts are resolved in other deliberative

contexts. Do they make use of dialogical processes, if so, what processes and mechanisms help them arrive at those moments? As the antecedent conditions for dialogue are not well documented, it would be interesting to see what happens to the nature of conflict and tensions when you introduce this kind of deliberative practice and training to people who aren't part of an intentional community. That is, is it the contingencies of deliberative decision-making in intentional communities that strengthen certain enablers of dialogue, such as perspective-taking (Burton, M, & Kagan, 1994)? Or is it the additional training they do in advance and during the development and use of these processes? It may be both or some other variable. Further exploring the relationship between organizational design and relational engagement would help us answer the question what are the processes and mechanisms that contribute to productive dialogue in self-organizing collectives? One might adopt a more experimental approach to this question and introduce deliberative processes (such as consensus-seeking decision making) to groups or organizations with and without laying this kind of groundwork and see what comes of it over time.

As outlined in the findings chapter, the tolerance to agonistic outcomes is impossible to know when talking with current members of communities about the successful resolution of conflicts in community. The occasional recollection of member self-selection in both the events studied here and during other parts of our conversations suggest that consensus-seeking may have something of a homogenizing effect in these communities. I would not be able to comment on whether that has to do with (prospective) members' orientation towards the establishment of common ground with others, or some other kind of mismatch (e.g. location of the community, nature of the homes, the included shared services, etc.). One would have to study the rationale of departed members to understand their motivations.

7. Endnotes

1. There is an emergent model of co-living housing development, this description relates to the more common and long-standing "roommate" model.
2. Global ecovillage network: https://gen-europe.org/home/index.htm
3. For more information see: http://nstreetcohousing.org/
4. For more information see: https://www.whdc.com/
5. Reflective remarks are the transcription of field notes taken on-site and any additional thoughts that emerged while on-site or just after the site visit measured in pages of prose.
6. Marginal remarks are reflections that came because of revisiting the audio interviews to code this material measured in pages of prose.
7. See appendix 10.4.2 (indigenous concepts, consensus cards) page 136
8. See appendix 10.4.5 (indigenous concepts, honeymoon period) page 138
9. Given the appreciative approach of the research, question limiters are not addressed in this work
10. Co-care is a grassroots model of voluntary mutual support, which intends to reduce social isolation and promote positive, active ageing in community (Critchlow & Moore, 2015)
11. See appendix 10.4.4 (indigenous concepts, "Is this the mountain/hill I want to die on?") on page 137
12. Given the appreciative approach of the research, question limiters are not addressed in this work
13. The 500 Communities Program, "a 12-month course designed to train collaborators to meet the expanding need for professional support in creating new communities. The program is applicable to many different job fields and was designed with all means of collaborative development in mind. Its intention is not to teach one model of cohousing, but to build on the lessons learned as we explore models of collaborative development not taught in university or trade school." https://www.cohousing-solutions.com/about-the-program
14. For an example of market-based approaches for co-living see: http://vancouvercoliving.com/

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9. Postscript

In many ways, I chose this line of study because I was impressed with the way members of these communities talked about managing challenging situations. I entered this project with the idea to study one thing but was guided by the way informants talked about these events to consider these questions pertaining to dialogue. Ultimately, I was struck by the maturity and level of reflexivity demonstrated by the informants when considering the curious place that they call home, and the experiences they had living there. While it might be strange to think about people, many of them seniors, as mature… the reader might be able to relate to the notion that while many people grow old, only some grow up.

It's worth stating quite clearly, that despite the topic of this thesis, the people I interviewed were largely *very happy* with their choice to live in their communities, they embodied the notion that "community is a process," and that this process was a bit of a wild ride at times. In some ways, these communities were pleasing – many of them had beautiful grounds and very attractive designs - but it wasn't always a pleasure to live in them. Even if this wasn't exactly what some of them had signed up for (surely a rose garden was exactly what some had envisioned), what they acquired was complex and complicated, messy, and meaningful. Many were especially satisfied with the personal growth they found in living in these communities, and the way this could be carried with them into the rest of their lives.

As I was conducting research in these communities I couldn't help but feel optimistic about the future – this kind of collective behavioural approach to sustainable living was something that I had been looking for (hoping for) as a means of addressing some of the social pathologies that seem to accompany our current approach to living in Canada and North America. Here we had an approach to living that allowed their members to have rich lives with less stuff. The social and environmental benefits of these communities would not accrue if members of the community were not able to effectively manage the tensions that can arise when every member of the organization has equal say in decision making. So, while there was an aspect of living simpler lives, on the one hand, this was accomplished by complexifying and deepening their relations with their neighbours. To seek a life of quality over quality, and happiness and meaning rather than following the ever-escalating pursuit of pleasure so visible in popular and social media.

And then, while I was conducting field research in one community, Donald Trump was elected as President of the United States. My hopes dissipated as quickly as they had arrived. From what I could tell at the time, this surely represented the end note in the minor key glissando that had become popular discourse, and this effectively pulled the rug out from underneath those warm feelings that built up in me after having talked with members of Canadian cohousing communities. However, as I listened back on the many conversations that I had with these people, the confluence of these conditions stressed to me more than ever a need to improve discourse in our communities, to build a better foundation from the ground up via meaningful face-to-face engagement starting at the ground level. As I was wrapping up the writing on my thesis protests had erupted across the United States and much of the democratic world over the issue of police brutality, racism, and deeply entrenched and worsening social inequality. Our need to engage with one another in a compassionate and deeply reflexive manner has never been more apparent to me.

Knowing what I had learned in meeting with these people meant that laying the foundation for success in these and other communities would take proactive work, and we shouldn't take an initial inability for engagement to work effectively as a failure of democracy, but rather as a failure of adequately prepare for the rigours of dealing with difference in a way that allows for the development a better understanding of one another. As an educator and engaged member of my community, I would find renewed purpose in the tools of education and deep collaboration through this work.

To be continued.

10. Appendices

10.1. Examples of common house facilities.

Image 1 Interior of common house: dining hall, kitchen and fireside seats, Creekside Commons, Courtney BC

Image 2 Interior of common House, guest room and library. Harbourside, Sooke BC

Image 3 Common house Interiors: Small kids play area, Heddlestone Village, Nelson BC

10.2. Examples of building typologies.

Image 4 Common house in the foreground, private duplexes in the background, Creekside Commons Courtney BC

Image 5 Townhouses connected by addition, including common house, Terra Firma, Ottawa, ON

Image 6 View of Private residents at Harbourside, Sooke BC

Image 7 View of Courtyard and common house (beneath solar panels), Vancouver Cohousing, Vancouver BC

10.3. Interview Protocol

Date: Time: Location:

[Present consent form]

I would first like to thank you or your participation in this research project. This meeting will serve to help me better understand the processes that facilitated the successful completion of cohousing communities in Canada. If you have no objections, I would like to record our conversation as a means of preserving the information; rest assured it will all be erased when I have finished my research. Everything we discuss will remain strictly confidential, and your name will not be included in any of the research unless you have specified otherwise on the consent form.

With your permission, I would now like to begin to ask you questions regarding your experience living in cohousing.

1. Profile of Participant

I would like to start by getting to know you a bit as a person. Could you tell me a bit about yourself, and how you came to be drawn to this community?

(not to be asked directly… but useful to capture if possible, without disrupting the speaker)
1.1 age
1.2 single or living with someone else in the community?
1.3 originally from this area?
1.4 what do they do for a living, if anything?)

2. **Theme: Sustainable Design**

I've noticed there are a number of sustainable design features incorporated in [community name].

2.1 How important was this to you when you first considered joining the community?

2.2 Did you learn anything during the process of co-design (or when you moved in, if they joined the community), that helped you better understand how you might be able to live more sustainably?

2.3 How, if at all, has the physical design of the community helped you live more sustainably compared to your previous living situation?

2.4 Are there perhaps other, non-physical, ways that the community has helped you live in a more sustainable way (e.g. learning new skills, sharing, other social norms)?

3. Theme: The process of building trust

I'm going to move on to ask you some questions about your experience here at [community name]. As previously mentioned, I'm particularly interested in the process of community formation, and the establishment of trusting relationships in the community - so that will be the focus on my questions in this section.

3.1 How did you first hear about cohousing?

3.2 How did you first hear about this particular community?

3.3 When did you move into this community? (this is on the survey – check in advance if they've completed this)

3.4. How would you describe the stage of development for the project at the time you first encountered it?

Was it in its early stages of development? (A)
Was the project underway? (B)
Was the community already built? (C)

A. If they are a founding member (very early stages of development)
    a. I've provided you with a very basic timeline, would you be able to jot down, to the best of your ability, the most important steps taken to realize the project?
        i. Walk participants through the timeline, ask for explanation/clarification, as needed.
    b. Can you recall a moment, an incident, or event or a series of events that you consider to be key in terms of your decision to commit to the process of developing this cohousing community? That is, was there a point where you felt something along the lines of "yes! this is going to work - this is the right project and these are the right people to be working with…" (provide as much detail as possible)

    Interviewer - try to capture the following:
        i. Cause: What was the cause of the incident?
        ii. Actions: What were the behaviours that took place during the incident?
        iii. Sentiment: How did you feel during the incident? Afterwards?
        iv. Outcome: Was joining the community the only outcome of this incident?

B. If the project was already initiated…
    a. How did you first hear about the community?
    b. What were your initial thoughts or feelings upon meeting the existing members of the community?
    c. I've provided you with a very basic timeline, would you be able to jot down, to the best of your ability, the important steps taken to realize the project?
        i. Walk participants through the timeline, ask for explanation/clarification, as needed.
    d. Can you recall a moment, an incident, or event or even a series of events that you consider to be key in terms of your decision to join the community? That is, was there a point where you felt something along the lines of "yes! this is the right project and these are the right people to be working with…"

    Interviewer - try to capture the following:
        i. Cause: What was the cause of the incident?
        ii. Actions: What were the behaviours that took place during the incident?

iii. Sentiment: How did you feel during the incident? Afterwards?
iv. Outcome: Was joining the community the only outcome of this incident?

C. If the community was already built…
   a. Could you describe your experience of discovering the community?
   b. What were your initial thoughts or feelings upon first visiting the site?
   c. What were your initial thoughts or feelings upon meeting the existing members of the community?
   d. I've provided you with a very basic timeline, would you be able to jot down, to the best of your ability, the steps you took to become part of this community?
      i. Walk participants through the timeline, ask for explanation/clarification, as needed.
   e. Can you recall a moment, an incident, or event or even a series of events that you consider to be key in terms of your decision to move into the community?

Interviewer - try to capture the following:
   i. Cause: What was the cause of the incident?
   ii. Actions: What were the behaviours that took place during the incident?
   iii. Sentiment: How did you feel during the incident? Afterwards?
   iv. Outcome: Was joining the community the only outcome of this incident?

3.8 Can you describe a moment, an incident, or event or even a series of events that you consider having been challenging for the community, like a conflict or a disagreement, where you felt the resolution of this issue was somehow satisfying to you? Can you tell me about what happened to lead to this resolution?

Interviewer - try to capture the following:
   i. Cause: What was the cause of the incident?
   ii. Actions: What were the behaviours that took place during the incident?
   iii. Sentiment: How did you feel during the incident? Afterwards?
   iv. Outcome: What did the community do as a result of this process?

4. Final reflections

4. 1 In your opinion, is this community a successful community?
   a. If so, what are the key ingredients to its success, in your opinion?
   b. If not, what would make it more successful, in your opinion?

4.2. If you were to give some advice to a forming community in terms of what they might do to facilitate the process of co-designing and developing a community together, what might that advice be?

10.4. Indigenous concepts

10.4.1. Consensus

The word consensus implies complete agreement. However, in practice, two elements move the idea of consensus in Canadian Cohousing away from this strict definition towards a concept perhaps better understood by the notion of *consent* and it's for this reason that I often present these terms together in this document. Firstly, when making organizational decisions, all but one community makes use of pure consensus. Secondly, it is often enough for members to not block a proposal for it to be accepted.

Most communities have something of a failsafe in their bylaws and/or agreements that allow them to pass amendments to these agreements and bylaws with a supermajority vote. In practice, this means that for a proposal to be blocked, it must be blocked by at least more than one household. This is to prevent the communities from being "held hostage" by one household that disagrees with the will of most members - a lesson most people with experience in less hierarchical consensus-seeking organizations have experienced as the "tyranny of the minority" or "the tyranny of structurelessness" (Freeman, 2013). That said, consensus is the stated goal within these communities, and this means that communities will try to address the concerns of a household that blocks a proposal. As one member of Lodgepole Pine Coho said,

> So if I'm facilitating a meeting and we're going to call a show of cards and there are a fair number of yellow cards, as a facilitator I will probably say, you know I'm not sure if we've quite got this. Is there something we need to change here in terms of the wording or is there a need to come back again with some refinements? You know it's not showing a strong consensus. We want it to show a strong consensus. (GR_13A)

While strong consensus is the goal, many members of communities express a sense of "letting go" of some issues to move a discussion along. Members may choose to abstain from meetings, use a yellow card to express dissatisfaction with a proposal that they don't want to block. In this way they reluctantly consent to an idea rather than agree to it in the traditional sense of the word consensus, suggesting that they are not willing to "go to the wall" on the issue – or that their disagreement on an issue was "not a hill I'm going to die on."

10.4.2. Consensus cards

As consensus-seeking organizations, several common facilitation techniques are shared for assessing the level of agreement on a particular proposal across the many households in these communities. Many of the communities make use of consensus cards (or hand gestures) in deliberation and to see how people are feeling about a particular issue or proposal. See table below for a summary of the common uses of these tools. It's helpful to understand this, as respondents often cite a "block" as a turning point in events, as they indicate an unsettledness or disagreement in the community.

Table 10 Consensus seeking cards/gestures

Gesture	Associated colour	Meaning
	green	*In discussion:* Wish to contribute (like putting up one's hand) *Decision making*: Agreed
	yellow	*In discussion:* Address a question, direct response. *Decision making*: Reservations and/or stand aside
	red	*Decision making*: Block, principled objection [note: sometimes a red card may be used for point of order in communities that do not make use of the blue card, below]
	blue	*In discussion:* Point of order (off-topic or have not followed procedure)

Once a proposal is given to the group, one member of each household indicates their position on the proposal by holding up his/her card. Red indicates that the person holding up that card does not agree with the plan. Yellow indicates that the person holding up the card would like more information or has a question about the proposal. Green indicates that the person holding that card supports the proposal. In principle, a proposal is advanced if all the households hold up a green card. If anyone presents the yellow card, the group will want to check with this person to see if they may respond to their concerns. If a red card is presented, this person is invited to share

their resistance to the idea and encouraged to participate in finding resolution or compromise to the issue.

10.4.3. "Checking the temperature" (including "check-ins" and "check-outs")

The process of "checking the temperature" or "taking the pulse" is a common facilitation technique used in the communities in this study. Meetings are often book-ended with "check-ins" and "check-outs" whereby each meeting participants are invited to speak for a brief moment (e.g. 30 seconds to a minute), during this time other members are meant to listen. This technique allows members of the meeting to practice both voicing and listening while also contextualizing the disposition or temperament of their colleagues. For example, if Alex has been up all night with a newborn, revealing this during check-in might help the other meeting members understand why he is having a hard time keeping his eyes open. The check-in has provided a space for his neighbours' to better understand his situation and are less likely to take his sleepy or grumpy behaviour personally. Checking-out of a meeting allows people to share how they are feeling about the outcome and experience of the meeting – such checkouts provide meaningful feedback to facilitators on how they might improve future meetings and provide a space for households to express any lingering thoughts or feelings before they depart.

Likewise, a facilitator may "take the temperature" of a meeting to see if there is a sense of the discussion that has stayed on track. For example, if a proposal elicits a strong response in a few members of the community, the facilitator might "check the temperature" to see if the conversation should be moved outside of the meeting, where the aggrieved parties can work out their differences in a more focused manner. Community members may also call an informal meeting to "take the temperature" regarding a possible proposal. That is, they may call a meeting to open a dialogue on a given issue and invite interested parties to share their ideas and concerns. This process of proactive advice seeking is common practice in some communities.

10.4.4. "Is this the mountain/hill I want to die on?"

This is one of a few similar reflective questions used informants (e.g. "'am I going to go to the wall on this one?") as they thought about tense or conflictual issues and their engagement with them. This particular wording has been attributed to a cohousing consultant that has worked on many of the communities that participated in this study. Some informants expressed a certain

appreciation of this turn of phrase because it helped them shift their thinking on a given issue. By considering this simple phrase, they were able to see tense issues as less vital to themselves with some consideration. It helped them step back or slow down in their approach to an issue and adopt a "live and let live" approach to some problems as they emerged. Often this phrase facilitated suspending their personal views in order to take in the issue from the perspective of a community member – that is, 'is this worth raising a real fuss with my neighbours?' Or 'do I think this issue is ultimately *that* important to me?'

10.4.5. The honeymoon period

Some people who move into existing communities experience something called a honeymoon period. This is not unlike its namesake, a brief wonderful period of that is nonetheless a bit of a vacation from reality. This time can last weeks or months upon moving into a community and typically "crashes" or ends at the outset of the first serious conflict experienced by the new member of the community. Informants recount their shock at the frankness of people in the community in dealing with challenging issues and the level of emotion that can be part of meetings. They also talk about the amount of learning that happens after the crash, including an understanding of the reasons that people speak so directly to one another and the particularities of the language they might use in pursuit of clarity.