Nancy Holman

Like mixing oil and water?: the take up of sustainability in hard-to-reach places - an East Texas case study

Article (Accepted version) (Refereed)

TITLE: "Like Mixing Oil and Water? The Take Up of Sustainability in Hard-to-Reach Places - An East Texas Case Study"

ABSTRACT
Following studies about the adoption of sustainability initiatives in both innovative and ordinary US cities, this article offers a unique view of sustainability in hard-to-reach places where regulation and planning are viewed with suspicion. Taking an interpretive approach to policy analysis, the paper asks if hard-to-reach places are destined to remain untouched by what many argue is a central tenet of modern planning. In so doing, it offers a key point of contrast to studies on cities at the vanguard of change, reminding us how critical it is to recognise all types of communities in our research and practice.

KEY WORDS: Sustainability, planning practice, hard-to-reach places, interpretive planning

Corresponding Author
Dr. Nancy Holman
London School of Economics
Department of Geography & Environment
Houghton Street
London
WC2A 2AE
United Kingdom
n.e.holman@lse.ac.uk

Bio: Nancy Holman is the Director of Planning Studies in the Department of Geography & Environment at the London School of Economics. Her research deals primarily with issues of governance and local planning, including sustainable development and hertiage conservation.

Acknowledgements The author would like to thank the editor and the three annoymous referees for their helpful and insightful comments in preparing this paper.

Introduction

Past literature on the adoption of sustainability initiatives in US cities has fallen into two broad camps. The earliest examined sustainability in places that were early adopters of initiatives or that were novel or innovative in their approach. These noteworthy places made up the mainstay of academic and professional literature until Conroy (2006), writing in this journal, enjoined us to look at less noteworthy cities. What both of these strands of research miss is what happens in those communities where sustainability is considered an alien concept. Are these places destined to remain wholly

untouched by what many argue has become a centrally relevant principle in modern planning (Jepson 2001, 2003) or are there ways to bring some of the concepts of sustainability forward so that they impact on these cities as well? Given current debates about climate change communication and the relevance of understanding the "…different psychological, cultural and political reasons" people choose to act, or not, act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions these questions are particularly relevant to planning scholarship and practice (Maibach, Roser-Renouf and Leiserowitz 2009, 1).

This paper analyses two such cities located in the East[1] Texas oilbelt, each of which has taken tentative steps, with varying degrees of success, along the path of sustainability, prompted mainly by issues of sprawl and promoting a better quality of life, which caused tensions or dilemmas between dominant modes of planning for economic development and solving these issues in a sustainable way (Bevir and Rhodes 2006). The paper highlights how the unique and place-specific development of the oil industry in the region impacted on the political economy of place and in turn how this has influenced attitudes towards regulation, environment and land-use planning. In so doing, the paper underscores that not all hard-to-reach places are the same: geography, identity and the stories we tell our selves matter greatly in the manner in which potentially unpopular policy options, like sustainability, can be put into play. Whilst storylines based on extractive industries like oil may act as a considerable block on the adoption of greener, more sustainable regulation, the paper elucidates how change can occur through the interaction of dilemmas and traditions mediated through situated agents allowing for different policies to be put forward and new behaviours to be pursued. This has implications for planning in practice as it helps to identify potential avenues for action that fit with the context of place and helps us to avoid actions that might be perceived as coming from outside the area.

The paper proceeds with a brief outline of the planning literature on the adoption of sustainability initiatives in US cities and sets out how sustainability and smart growth are defined here.

[1] I use East Texas here rather than 'east' Texas as the region has a well developed enough identity to warrant capitalisation and local vernacular use tends to capitalise East when referring to the region.

Next a contextualisation of Texas generally and the oil industry in East Texas specifically, is given in order that we can better understand the "…background and inherited beliefs" that help to shape and guide people's present day actions and performances (Bevir and Rhodes 2006, 89). It then introduces its two case study cities and following Mandelbaum (1990) and Hamin (2003), provides a fine-grained analysis of the planning policies adopted in each city along with the stories told by actors active in the planning process. Finally, it concludes by drawing together the empirical and theoretical literature before offering key learning points for planners in practice. The paper's main contribution is to illustrate the importance of reflecting on all kinds of communities, not just those at the forefront of change or those we may consider ordinary. We must also engage with places we might never associate with terms like sustainability as these cities and towns also reflect part of the landscape of planning in America. Here our hard-to-reach places offer us an opportunity to reflect on policy and innovation in new and interesting ways. And by employing the lens of interpretive analysis we are able to see the unique interplay between dilemmas that arise, traditions that exist and the situated agents who must ultimately mediate change.

Cities, sustainability and the conceptualisation of a hard-to-reach place

In 2000, Wheeler wrote that "...sustainability planning itself seems to be at the very early stages almost everywhere in North America" (135). As if to underline this point, cities like Seattle, Washington; Portland, Oregon; Austin, Texas; and Chattanooga, Tennessee have headlined professional and academic literature on sustainable development and local planning (Conroy 2006; Saha and Paterson 2008). There have also been larger-scale analyses of multiple cities noted for innovative sustainability planning initiatives (Berke and Conroy 2000 review 30 innovative cities; Portney 2003 reviews 24 cities). These studies have been useful in providing best practice guidance and highlighting gaps between planning for sustainable development and its implementation.

However, this enthusiasm for a North America burgeoning with cities ready to embrace sustainability has not necessarily been borne out by academic study. In 2006, Conroy enjoined

researchers to consider examining how sustainability policies were being adopted in cities outside the limelight, in those less well-known places that make up the mainstay of municipalities in the United States. Following this, several authors have filled the gap with studies on sustainability initiatives in Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio (Conroy and Iqbal 2009), California's Central Valley (Lubell, Feiock and Handy 2009) and medium-to-large cities in the United States (Saha and Paterson 2008). The majority found that various factors impacted the adoption of sustainability policies in these more 'average' American cities. Larger, better-educated populations, planning officers who were overtly aware of sustainability, institutional genealogy, legacies of built form, and economy all play a role in the take up of policies designed for sustainable development.

These studies all acknowledge that sustainability is itself a slippery term. Unless it is linked to action, it risks becoming no more than a buzzword, which though fashionable, is vacant of meaning (Conroy 2006; Saha and Paterson 2008). Here scholars tend toward pragmatic, criteria based definitions of sustainability that link policy and action across environmental protection, economic development and social equity (Portney 2003; Jepson 2004; Conroy 2006; Saha and Paterson 2008; Conroy and Iqbal 2009). Of great interest is the elision between local planning and sustainability, which has been noted by academics (Roseland 1992; Campbell 1996; Berke and Conroy 2000; Jepson 2001; Davoudi *et al* 2009; Owens and Cowell 2010) and policy communities (e.g. President's Council on Sustainable Development and Local Agenda 21) as it is here where "the rubber hits the road" in terms of policy action (Saha 2009, 20). Cities are faced regularly with dilemmas around how to best use scarce resources, ensure the longevity of their economies, and deliver social justice.

Yet, what this research into the more ordinary American city and previous research into notable cities fails to capture is what happens in areas that might be considered *hard-to-reach*: where the concept of land-use planning, much less sustainability, does not fall on fertile ground; where the discourse surrounding green issues is viewed as 'something that they may do over there but certainly not as something that we would do over here'. In these places sustainability is not in danger of

becoming a buzzword nor are policies adapted from international organisations like ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) likely to take root easily (Whittemore 2013). Here other conceptualisations of sustainability like Smart Growth, which provides a more palatable compromise between the economy and the environment and refocuses sustainability from a discourse of self-sacrifice to one of preservation based on self-interest, might prove more acceptable to our hard-to-reach places (Tregoning *et al* 2001; Krueger and Gibbs 2008; Tretter 2013). Therefore, in this study, sustainability was grouped around Environmental Protection (e.g. Open space/ nature protection, recycling, encouraging alternative transport); Smart Growth (e.g. limiting outward expansion, mixed-use development, adaptive reuse, heritage preservation, infill development and encouraging responsible economic development especially around the promotion of green industries); and Social Justice (e.g. Affordable housing policies, public participation, and creating community harmony) as this helps us ground our interpretation of sustainability for hard-to-reach places.

Framing the Lone Star State

This article is about sustainability in hard-to-reach places, and in many respects it is difficult to imagine places harder to reach than the cities of Texas. In large part, this is due to the image people have of Texas, and the picture it often paints of itself. Steinbeck, for example, tells us that "Texas is a state of mind" a "...mystique closely approximating a religion" (2001, 173). In part this stems from its history as an independent republic, which upon joining the Union in 1846, was allowed to keep its public lands without ceding these to the Federal government[2]. This proviso, along with a frontier history has built a highly individualistic and independent image of the state and its peoples. As Clemons tells us, "Texas' cultural identity is a complex set of performances that creates and maintains the *idea* of the state as a distinct identity and as a site of identity for its inhabitants" (2008, 1 emphasis in original).

[2] Critically this meant that Texas also retained the rights to its oil reserves a factor that according to Childs (1991) explains the number of independent producers in the State and their relative power and Weaver (2001) explains allowed Texas to avoid unitization on fields when the federal government imposed this measure on all federal lands.

This fierce independence has also impacted on planning with Texans often viewed as profit maximising, entrepreneurial individuals firmly against state intervention into issues of private property (See: Allen 1989; DeGrove 1992; Burby and May 1997). As a result, Texas has typically adopted a decentralised system of regulation via "…semi-autonomous state agencies, special purpose districts, and home rule municipalities" (Burby and May 1997, 67). This has not meant that Texas has completely eschewed comprehensive planning. In 1989 it enacted §211.004 of the Local Government Code, which required comprehensive plans to serve as the basis for subsequent zoning amendments and in 1997 the State created enabling legislation, which allowed both home rule and general municipalities to create and adopt comprehensive plans. However, as Johnson *et al* (2002) and Welch (2007) tell us, these advances should be viewed with caution, as during this time, prompted by the development industry, Texas also enacted regulations that limited home rule municipality's abilities to plan for growth by limiting their powers to declare moratoriums on residential development (for a detailed discussion see Welch 2007 on the implementation of Senate Bill 980).

Perhaps some of this profit seeking, short-term view of land and resources is embedded in the state's relationship to oil. In his 1985 'biography' of the state, Michener captures this by, first, explaining Texas' historic poverty, and then contrasting this with its future - post the discovery of oil at Spindletop in 1901, when "one could leap from land-poor to oil-rich in one generation...or one weekend" (993). This sense of 'resource triumphalism' (Bridge 2001) discursively reshapes and reconstructs the image of the place through the image of the commodity and is not simply limited to literature. Films such as George Stevens' *Giant* (1956) and television programmes like *Dallas* (1978) have all helped strengthen the links in the popular imagination of Texas and oil. The problem here is that neither dogged independence nor a reliance on crude oil bodes well for sustainable development. However, this is not to say that the whole of the state is hard-to-reach as local context is clearly important to sustainability planning (Farreny *et al* 2011).

Regional identity in East Texas

Texas is a big state and this expanse of land means that it is made up of a variety of uniquely identified places, which are perceived by both inhabitants and visitors. Jordan mapped these perceptual regions in 1978, finding 29 distinct identities in the state (294). One of these is the Piney Woods, which encompasses the counties of East Texas and has a mythology all its own. It is an isolated place, cut off by trees and steeped in the traditions of the South. In fact, as a 'compass region' it has the sharpest boundaries and the strongest connection with its population base (Jordon 1978, 306) and is viewed as peculiarly isolating by visitors (West 1978,106).

Economically it has been a region of poor dirt farmers, cotton and timber barons and the independent wildcatter. This has produced an inter-relationship between the land and the economy that has often had negative impacts on the former. Writing on her memories of growing up in the region, Prudence Mackintosh comments:

> "*But any foray into the lush countryside of East Texas is also likely to turn up equal parts devastation - the sandy-bottomed creeks despoiled by salt water from oil fields or trash dumping.... Quaint small-town squares are boarded up... Preservation and conservation are luxuries enjoyed by more prosperous, better educated parts of the country. East Texas, struggling to keep its population employed, has never thought it could afford them" (1989, 166).*

Such isolation and the relationship between the forested land on the one hand, and the material wealth that could be brought out of its extractive spaces on the other, has clearly been a factor in aligning East Texas with those hard-to-reach places described earlier.

In addition to the relationship between the economy and the land, the development of independent oil fields in East Texas has helped to produce a 'material-semiotic' space (Bridge 2001) whose history is constituted of a fascinating interweaving of political, economic and regulatory space (Huber 2011). Childs (2005) paints a picture of the uniqueness of the East Texas field where the geologic knowledge of the time showed little possibility of 'oil-pooling' thereby making the 'big-oil'

companies uninterested in the area. Thus, when the wildcatter C.M. 'Dad' Joiner struck oil in 1930, the field became populated "by thousands of small-scale independent operators who saw no reason for government regulations" - most especially the East Texans who "were not predisposed to think of the larger picture" (2005, 203). By March 1931, there were more than 200 drilling operations and by mid-May, "it was reported that the East Texas field had produced more than 17,000,000 barrels", plummeting the price of crude oil (Chambers 1933, 77). This prompted the imposition of martial law and a system of proration and allowables to try and put an end to what the then Governor of the state, called an insurrection perpetrated by an organised and entrenched group of crude oil producers in the East Texas field (Times 18 August 1931). Yet this did not stop some East Texans (who were so concerned that the 'right of capture' would mean that the oil under their lease would be pumped out by their neighbour) from producing what was colloquially known as 'hot oil' (Childs 2005, 316).

'Hot-oil', and the anti-regulation/pro-property-rights stance that went along with it, is a strong part of local culture and partly a product of the local political economy of oil in this story. Thousands of tales, some true and some surely apocryphal, exist around strategies for fooling the regulators, and producing as much oil as your well would allow. From the installation of dummy wells to gain extra 'allowables', to the locally famous slant-hole wells that drilled from your dry field into your neighbour's plentiful one, East Texans were well known for their abilities to skirt regulation and flout controls (Interview Data; Chambers 1933; Burka 1979; Olien and Olien, 2002; Childs 1991; Huber 2011).

Given these conditions and the local beliefs and traditions they helped to shape, I will explore two cities of average size in the East Texas region, which are located in or on the edge of the field. Their strong association with oil, especially independent oil production, and the smaller size of the cities themselves makes Tyler and Longview excellent candidates for the moniker of a hard-to-reach place. I will argue that the 1930s oil boom shaped each city *but in very different ways*. Tyler, lying on the edge of the field and, as local myth would have it, possessing the first paved streets in the area,

became the centre of the *professional end* of the oil services industry. It views itself as the more progressive and professional of the two cities. Longview, closer to the geographic centre of the field in Kilgore, became the home to *production* with its attached danger, filth and 'bawdy uses' (Chambers 1931). The city sees itself more as a manufacturing hub and home of oilfield roustabouts and roughnecks. These narratives, which were ever present in the stories told by interviewees, have shaped and continue to shape each community's view of themselves and of each other. They have also been instrumental in the way each has approached planning, regulation and ultimately sustainability.

Methodological Statement

This research asks what happens to sustainability planning in communities that may be considered hard-to-reach. Are they destined to remain wholly untouched by what is emerging as a centrally relevant principle in modern planning (Jepson 2001, 2003) or are there ways to bring some of the concepts of sustainability forward so that they impact on these cities as well? In order to answer these questions a multi-methods research approach was adopted combining interviews and documentary analysis. Three periods of intensive fieldwork were conducted from January 2010 to June 2011. First a rigorous textual analysis of current planning documents, local ordinances and key Planning and Zoning committee meeting minutes was conducted with the goal of understanding how far principles of sustainable development were integrated into planning documents and how these were then implemented by local officials. As noted earlier, numerous studies on US cities have provided pragmatic detailed definitions of local sustainability set around various criteria (Portney 2003; Jepson 2004; Conroy 2006; Saha and Paterson 2008). In this study, sustainability was grouped around Environmental Protection (e.g. Open space/nature protection, recycling, encouraging alternative transport); Smart Growth (e.g. limiting outward expansion, mixed-use development, adaptive reuse, heritage preservation, infill development and encouraging more responsible economic development especially through the promotion of green industries); and Social Justice (e.g. Affordable housing policies, public participation, and creating community harmony). A framework based on

Mandelbaum's (1990) work on reading plans, which was further developed by Hamin (2006), was used to unpick the documents in terms of the policy claims, design opportunities and the narratives embedded in the plans.

Alongside this analysis twenty-five in-depth interviews were carried out with key informants. Using published lists of participation at key city visioning exercises a purposeful sample (Patton 1990) was drawn so that the varying dimensions of sustainability (social, environmental and economic) were represented. Interviewees included planners, city managers, Chamber of Commerce staff, local environmental groups, and active citizens for both Tyler and Longview (including the Longview Smart Growth Task Force), and long-time residents who where prominent in the East Texas field between 1940-80. Interviewees were encouraged to discuss their views of the city, its priorities and planning, its past history and its future trajectory and to define and rate the importance of sustainability to their municipality. The interviews were then transcribed and analysed based on themes of community identity, attitudes toward sustainability (grouped around environmental protection, smart growth and social justice) and attitudes toward planning and regulation. The purpose behind this was to explore the stories told by each actor such that their beliefs and values could be incorporated into our analysis and to better understand the meanings city leaders gave to sustainability and the manner in which this related to city planning (Hamin, 2003). As Buckley (2005), drawing on Murdoch (2000), explains, local political priorities and struggles naturally become entangled with goals like sustainability, which ultimately help define the 'norms and rules' of the game creating real barriers to the discourse's capacity to shape urban futures (1029-30). Therefore, the aim was to tease out the dominant 'norms and rules' in each city through interview data using a close reading of local planning documents to triangulate comments.

Sustainability in hard-to-reach places – framing place

Table 1 gives the educational, income and occupational characteristics of each city and the state for comparative purposes.

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As can be seen Longview and Tyler have different demographic make-ups. Tyler has a more educated population and its occupational structure is geared more towards white-collar employment. Longview however, fares better in terms of median income. This reflects comments made by a number of interviewees who noted that whilst Tyler was traditionally more educated, the oil industry with its associated higher pay made Longview residents equally well-off but, at the same time, different. As one Longview interviewee noted, "*we are a coupon cutting, pick-up driving community, we may have an almost identical household income to Tyler, but they will be driving your Lexuses and your Buick La Sabers and putting on the dog*[3] *going to Dallas. We're more laid back, we may have the same income level but we see ourselves totally differently*.". Clearly, this educational and occupational difference could have impacts on how sustainability policies are viewed in each city (see O'Connell 2008 and Portney 2008). However, it is important to move beyond a simple statistical interpretation of why an area might or might not be amenable to a policy innovation like sustainability allowing for complexity, richness, values and beliefs to enter the frame (Hamin 2003; Bevir and Rhodes 2006).

Reading Plans in Longview and Tyler

Interpretive analysis of plans can be a rich and illuminating practice and is predicated on the ideal that plans are not simply documents that dictate a set of recommendations; "plans are also ideological artifacts" (Ryan 2011, 309). However, understanding where to begin, what to look for and how to make sense of what you find is a tricky business as interpretive approaches necessarily "...concentrate on meanings, beliefs, languages, discourses and signs" (Bevir and Rhodes 2006,1-2). Fortunately, Mandelbaum (1990) has provided us with a useful framework for plan analysis that allows us to do this in a systematic way by challenging us to read plans not simply as a set of 'plain sense' policy advice but also as of policy claims; design opportunities (e.g. responses to problems); and stories or narrative dramas (Hamin 2006; Abu-Dayyeh 2004; Khakee 2000). In what follows, we will examine

[3] "Putting on the dog" is a colloquial phrase meaning to dress smartly.

the comprehensive development plans of both Longview and Tyler. These were adopted over the last ten years as reactions against perceived sprawl and poor landuse. Whilst neither plan explicitly mentions sustainability, both are inspired by Smart Growth, which as Tregoning *et al* (2002) have noted has perhaps broadened the appeal of sustainability beyond the usual suspects and may therefore help to create shifts in values and beliefs as new policy ideas are adopted and assimilated in each city.

Longview adopted its Smart Growth inspired plan in 2002, as a reaction against sprawl and the piecemeal planning that had been the city's historic development pattern with the hopes of creating a more 'liveable' city. The plan was developed through public consultation and interaction with the City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission and grew out of a report put forward to the City Council by its specially appointed Smart Growth Task Force. This eight-person group included members of the Planning and Zoning Commission, local developers and business people, a landscape architect and a student from one of the local high schools. Inspired by the Task Force findings, the Comprehensive Plan understands Smart Growth as a process and investment that "…suggests, amongst other things, that the quality of the built environment and how well the natural environment is preserved directly affects our quality of life." (Longview 2002,1). As Tregoning *et al* (2002) suggest, Smart Growth shifts the focus of sustainability from one based on self-sacrifice to one based on self-interest" (342) and might therefore be well suited to the values of hard-to-reach places. And here we can see the beginnings of a potential shift away from a dominant rationale based solely on economic gain from extractive industries towards a new development pattern that might make room for competing more sustainably oriented rationalities to exist. However, whilst these aspirations are present at the start of the plan we must look into the document further to understand the specific policy claims it makes, the responses to problems it offers and the particular narrative or story that it tells about Longview.

Policy Claims, Design Opportunities and Narrative Dramas in Longview

In order to understand the Longview Comprehensive Development Plan's policy claims, we should begin by examining its construction, its production of evidence, the prediction and analysis it makes and finally, the arguments and explanations it gives for these policies (Khakee 2000,122). However, Longview's plan does not make this an easy task for, as development plans go, it is a curious document. It consists of a map and a mere six-pages of limited prose interspersed with lengthy sets of bullet points that fall under four emboldened headings: Housing; Transportation; Environment; and Land Use and Design. Under Land Use and Design there are a further seven subcategories - including Architecture; Central Business District; Neighbourhood Services and Support Facilities; Industrial Development; and Research Parks. It does not predict, it does not analyse and it does not provide any evidence for its assertions. The reader is therefore left to interpret the rationale for these claims freely.

What we can see from the plan is that, broadly speaking, the City would like to follow a new development pattern that is more open to creating a city less prone to the ills of sprawl and annexation through the provision of higher density landuse, retention and protection of green spaces, mixed use development and historic preservation, yet still maintains some of the city's current traditional planning. For example, considering one of our criteria under Social Justice, the plan discusses the importance of having housing options that are suitable for the whole community. However, the authors are keen to ensure that solutions pursued are market based and that the city merely provides a framework in which this can occur, rather than compels or incentivises this type of development. In terms of Environmental Protection, the plan notes that there should be more choice in transport and better retention of green spaces and the native environment but again does little to compel this and offers no incentive, ordinance or compulsion to achieve these aims. The Longview Comprehensive Development Plan therefore creates for itself an opportunity for action, by setting up traditional, piecemeal development as problematic and responds to this by offering up Smart Growth based solutions, which promise a higher quality of life for residents. However, these solutions are limited and

still tinged with Longview's more traditional car based industrial development reflecting the compromises and conflicts inside the internal logic of the document.

Looking then towards the narrative, or the story that the plan tells of Longview and its future direction we can, despite the paucity of information, build a picture of a city that has been largely defined by growth through annexation. This annexation has often brought conflicting land uses into the city and has created a piecemeal approach to urban development that the authors present as a problem. The future that they see for the city is the creation of a cohesive community and the plan's goal, or at least the one stated here, seeks to guide and shape this development in a limited but entirely new way. Part of the mechanism discussed for creating new cohesive land-use in Longview is an implementation of Smart Growth in the creation of a liveable city, which are clearly modern aspirations that move past the 'oil town' image the city has of itself.

Policy Claims, Design Opportunities and Narrative Dramas in Tyler

Tyler, also, has a long-range plan inspired by Smart Growth in the form of *Tyler 21* (2007), which was prompted by an immigration driven population boom, unbalanced growth to the south of the city, sprawl, and isolated land-use issues. However, unlike Longview's plan, *Tyler 21* is a far more professionally produced document. It is 490 pages long and covers thirteen chapters of well-written and well-reasoned prose. The authors have included graphs, illustrations and evidence, which are used to justify the plan's direction. Alongside this there is an entire chapter dedicated to community involvement and consultation, which helped solidify the plan's overall vision.

Tyler 21 builds its policy claims based on demographic and landuse trends that have impacted the city over the past decades and a set of projections of what these trends may mean for Tyler if they remain unchecked. It offers a vision of a city that "…will be nationally known for its commitment to community, a robust business environment, and the beauty of its public places" and sets this inside a framework of a city which intends to set "…the highest standards for an outstanding quality of life." (Tyler 2007, 3). The policy claims are supported by ten guiding principles that focus on community

development; balanced growth; open/ green space preservation; historic preservation and good design; strengthening the business environment; and fiscal responsibility and good governance. Each of these principles tie to the criteria embodied in Environmental Protection, Smart Growth, and Social Justice and each are linked to the evidence presented within the plan so that a case is made for their inclusion.

Shifting now into our second interpretive mode of analysis we look at how the plan constructs the problems facing Tyler and how it also intends to respond to these (Mandelbaum 1990, 353). Here we can immediately see areas where compromises and professional judgements have come into play in the setting of policy. For example, a great deal of effort went into community consultation, which helped to form the backbone of the plan's vision. However, it is clear that the problems identified by the community did not always align with solutions that would typically be viewed as planning best practice. Using one example, traffic congestion was a chief concern amongst residents but despite planners being able to link this back to the type of low-density sprawl that had typified Tyler's development over the last decades, few residents saw the connection (Tyler 2007, 27). The same was true for a belief that there was very little developable land inside the city. The plan's authors go to great lengths to illustrate that in fact, the city could encourage the development of parcels of land inside Tyler thus limiting the city's need to sprawl. In both of these instances we see the authors of the plan acting as educators of the population by explaining and promoting Smart Growth as a rationale and as a solution to Tyler's current problems. In interviews several individuals both from the city administration and beyond noted the emphasis Tyler placed on education and engagement of the population and the positive impact this has had on shifting planning priorities. Here we see an almost 'ideal' type of community participation and mobilisation as citizens recognise a collective fate, which is articulated through commonly held problems and solutions (Korten 1980; Krannich and Humphrey 1983 citied in Hibbard and Davis 1986).

Tyler's plan sets up a very similar narrative to the one laid out in Longview. In the not so distant past the city sprawled; there was leapfrogging development that caused discontinuity in the urban

fabric and numerous problems from conflicting landuse, to traffic congestion, to loss of community cohesion. However, though similar, the plans of Tyler and Longview most certainly do differ. Where Longview's plan tells of a city going tentatively outside its comfort zone and moving towards a more modern vision of its future, Tyler's plan is bolder and more confident. Its narrative tells us that the city has a proud historic past based around good stewardship and good governance, which provided or helped to produce brick-lined streets, rose gardens and the azalea trail. It sees itself capitalising on these assets and planning for a future that gives to its citizens an outstanding quality of life. Whilst *Tyler 21* does not directly reference sustainability it does bring forward a more professional planned version of Smart Growth, which will see the city favour policies of land conservation, transport diversity, historic preservation and the adaptive reuse of buildings.

Planning into practice – the stories we tell ourselves

So, here we have two hard-to-reach communities taking steps toward Smart Growth inspired solutions to planning and landuse problems that they have self-identified. Neither plan discusses sustainability per se nor does it tie itself to a more international programme of sustainability like Local Agenda 21. Rather, much like Kruger and Agyeman assert, we see Smart Growth being used to serve as a "…useful metaphor for elucidating variants of local sustainability that exist outside the scope of these [more international] constructs." (2005, 411). To move our analysis forward we will examine some of the more traditional or "off-the-shelf" planning activities that "…suggest how we might "get to" sustainability" (IBID, 411). Here we examine the actual planning practices that grew from the two above-mentioned plans in terms of planning code and implementation; historic preservation and design; and the tree policies in each city. Our goal is not merely to see these as policy instruments but, rather, to see what they represent as "reasonable solutions" to the problems defined by the communities themselves (Hamin 2003,182).

According to Hamin (2003) interpretive policy analysis should begin with building up the stories or narratives participants use to describe an issue. These stories suggest purpose and agency and have

storylines that follow from beginning to end (IBID, 180). These stories give us an idea of traditions and worldviews, which, when applied in new situations, open the tradition to adaptation and change (Bevir and Rhodes 2006, 8). We therefore examine the stories people told about sustainability in their respective communities and try to understand how these then impacted on everyday planning instruments in Longview and Tyler, especially focussing on issues of Environmental Protection, Smart Growth and Social Justice.

Interviewees were asked to discuss what they understood by the term sustainability and assess its importance to their city. Perhaps not unsurprisingly given the history of each place, many respondents found the task difficult. No one in either Tyler or Longview came up with the classic Brundtland (1987) definition of sustainable development and none talked specifically about the political struggle of balancing a strong economy, an equitable society and a healthy environment. Several individuals spoke either exclusively about the necessity to create better economic and business climates to encourage growth, and several simply answered that they were not familiar enough with the concept to provide any definition. Of those respondents who offered an alternative to a purely economic definition of the term, environmental preservation and sustainable use of resources were prominent features, with interviewees relying more on examples like 'sustainable forestry' and 'composting' to create a sense of what sustainability meant to them.

Interviewees who were directly involved in the planning of Longview and Tyler (e.g. planners, zoning commissioners, city managers) told very different stories to their residents. Where the inhabitants of Tyler and Longview were often adrift in talking about what sustainability might mean the planners responded with comments that elided the principles of planning with the principals of sustainability. They spoke of Smart Growth, density, mixed-use development and limiting car use, of creating neighbourhood identity and limiting sprawl. On issues of Social Justice, like affordable housing, neither city saw direct intervention by planners into the market as appropriate and both emphasised the limited reach of local government with Tyler especially keen to emphasise the role

faith based organisations played in issues of poverty and poor housing.

Importantly, the webs of beliefs or traditions of each city impacted on how the planners of Longview and Tyler talked about sustainability in relationship to their respective cities. Planners in Longview, the city (historically and in some part contemporarily) most tightly associated with industrial and oilfield employment, were adamant that sustainability was not seen as a priority. They commented that Longview was, from a political standpoint, very pro-development and that any regulation that could be interpreted as slowing down or impeding industry's ability to expand would be opposed. This anti-planning and anti-regulationist perspective was echoed by several respondents, and often linked back to the city's association with an oil economy, industrial uses and a real suspicion of anything that appeared 'green'. Indeed, on the whole, just getting people in Longview interested in green issues proved difficult. As one local activist asserted: "*They may agree with you in private but they never would in public... here it is about the oil business ... the view is that they're good - they're money*". This tacit understanding of a story-line based on oil helps to 'co-mingle' commodity and place in such a way that collective identities are formed and narratives about durably distinctive places become embedded (Bridge 2001).

In Tyler similar comments were made stating that sustainability was "*not part of the local culture*" but that natural beauty and quality of life were: "*It is about quality of life and living in a place that is attractive and beautiful, but people don't want to hear about saving the earth and the ozone layer*". Here, the more affluent image of Tyler as the city of the historic oil industry executive with its brick streets, rose festival and azalea trail, played a role in opening dialogue on how to maintain Tyler's image of a beautiful and visually green city. The potential of regulation was seen as a 'necessary evil' in maintaining quality of life and enhancing the economy through the attraction of executive employment rather than a direct attack on blue collar jobs, which were less valued by respondents. However, Tyler's elision of sustainability and quality of life did not go so far as to explicitly promote sustainability as an ideal.

The question then must be how much does this matter? Is it a critical failure that neither city explicitly embraced sustainability as an ethical concept? Will this mean that both are doomed to follow a path of sprawling landuse and wasteful development? As already discussed, the Smart Growth language used in each city's comprehensive development plan may represent an opening through which more sustainable planning may emerge. If we turn now to planning practice we will trace the moments where the dilemmas presented provided opportunities for situated agents (Bevir and Rhodes 2006) to re-interpret their dominant stories, adapting these to more sustainable policies.

Plan implementation in Tyler has been made easier by the adoption of a Unitary Development Code, which statutorily guides development in the city and was a direct outgrowth of *Tyler 21*. When discussing using the plan and the UDC, interviewees reported a strong sense that their residents understood the *value* of planning and were socially conscious of the impacts of development. There was a great effort by many of the interviewees, from planners to city management and from developers to amenity groups to ensure that Tyler was 'understood' as a progressive city with strong planning and a real sense of noblesse oblige. Interestingly this characteristic was repeatedly linked back to the story of the oil executive who settled in Tyler due to its brick paved streets and distance from the centre of the oilfield. Not only was this story of Tyler's development told by long-term residents and our historic oilfield workers, it was also repeated by newcomers to the city who had adopted this version of the city's heritage as a defining narrative of place. Indeed the strength of sentiment about Tyler's vision of itself as a proactive city that plans has been a strong contributory factor in developing such an all-inclusive comprehensive plan and UDC for the city.

Longview interviewees told a very different story about planning in their community. There was a strong sense of insularity and fear about losing economic development if regulation was seen to be too stringent. Numerous respondents talked about an historic lineage that passed from father to son: a feeling that *"this is the way grandpa did it - this is the way dad did it, and now this is the way we're gonna do it",* which dominated priority setting, attitudes toward planning, and restricted the community

in a number of ways. As one local government officer commented, *"People who are from Longview think it is a tiny little town...they don't know what is happening outside because they don't get out and go see what is being done in other places"*. Directly relating this to the comprehensive plan for Longview, the comments coalesced around issues of property rights and the community. Much like the 'hot oil' producers of the past, interviewees noted that *"...they want to be left alone; they don't like any kind of proactive, progressive planning because it in turn tells them what they can do with their property"*. Here we see perhaps a broader tendency toward values of independence and self-reliance that filter through the history of place and its strong association of nature as a commodity (Hibbard and Davis 1986), which acts as a break on achieving the more holistic vision for planning seen in Tyler.

However, crucially, this does not mean that the comprehensive plan has been set aside and that no change has occurred. The plan, which is intended to help 'shape' future development has given planners, commissioners and citizens a lever in the planning process, which has brought new ideas and voices into play. Whilst planners and commissioners commented that perhaps it was not used in the "…*big picture way we had hoped*" it was now immutably part of planning policy for the city. As one interviewee commented "*we utilize it daily but we are constantly having to fight council ... and show why it is important and why we should go by it instead of just spot zoning and piecemealing* (sic) *based on politics"*. From the perspective of the planners, Chamber of Commerce, residents and amenity groups Longview's attitude toward planning may still be far less progressive than Tyler's. However, as the comment above reflects, the masterplan has provided the opportunity for new interpretations of planning and by extension Smart Growth to enter into the decision making process subtly mixing with and altering long-held traditions.

As a result of their movements toward comprehensive planning and Smart Growth, both cities have also recently chosen to adopt policies to promote native landscape, historic preservation and, in the case of Tyler, the adaptive re-use of historic buildings. Landscaping requirements can be considered a type of 'green law' that Wolf (2004) describes as originating in an aesthetic movement, but can also

encompass a more comprehensive ecosystems approach to nature. Historic preservation and adaptive re-use also tie into local aesthetics but further can promote the sustainable use of resources, the promotion of cultural identity and the maintenance of a sense of place.

Tyler's landscaping ordinances are detailed. Therefore, only a brief outline of what they require will be re-produced here. Under Tyler's UDC, developers are required to produce a landscape plan upon application for a building permit. The plan has to establish how retained trees will be protected and what type and size of new trees will be added to the site. There is a credit for retained trees and provisos on how many trees may be removed from the site. Tree planting requirements can be worked out under a flexible formula:

INSERT TABLE TWO ABOUT HERE

For all plantings covered under this formula, at least 1/3 of the trees must be large shade trees; at least 1/3 are to be medium trees; and no more than 1/3 can be small trees. All trees planted must come from an approved list of native trees contained within the UDC.

In contrast Longview's tree ordinance requires one tree and two shrubs to be planted for every *7,000 square feet* for Industrially zoned sites, and one tree and two shrubs per *3,550 square feet* on Single Family and Two-Family zoned land. Longview has also introduced measures against clear-cutting of lots. Trees of six calliper inches or more in diameter are protected with no more than 50% of these trees being removable, and a minimum of 20 protected trees per acre being retained. Quite clearly the Tyler requirements are more stringent, and again the beliefs and traditions supporting the policies and how these subtly altered long-held traditions in each city proved interesting.

In Longview the landscaping and tree preservation ordinances proved highly controversial and were only recently subject to an unsuccessful move by the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem to bring the ordinances back to council for reconsideration or removal (LNJ, 26.04.2011) as it was felt that one tree and two shrubs for every 7,000 sq. ft. of industrial land could be damaging to business. Sidney Allen, Mayor Pro Tem stated "...Longview must maintain open arms to prospective manufacturers without

unnecessary regulations. This is an industrial city, that is what we are, and we need to continue that way" (LNJ 22.04.2011). In this we hear a direct call back to the single-industry, oilfield tradition of Longview where manufacturing is king and regulation is seen as a block to liberty, freedom and the production of wealth (Hibbard and Davis 1986). However, the comprehensive plan that Longview adopted, which called for better preservation of native landscapes and the attitudes of many of its local groups, planners and commissioners had shifted. Whilst the fight to incorporate a stronger tree policy into code (the original policy had called for the retention of only one tree per acre) was difficult, prompting one respondent to describe the old regulations *"…as insane but it goes back to who we are: in these parts, regulation's like mixing oil and water"*, it was successful.

Tyler's tree policy is a product of the comprehensive way in which their development plan was produced. The city took 18 months to consult with local residents through large planning workshops, expert meetings, consultation exercises and surveys. Trees came up as a major concern for residents. As a result, Tyler has embarked on its new landscape and preservation ordinances and has pledged to become a 'Tree City, USA', which will require the planting of 5,000 trees in five years. Interestingly, the public tended to link the idea of trees to quality of life and the aesthetic feel of Tyler, whilst city officials tied the policies to sustainability. One official referred to the tree policy as *"taking baby steps"* towards more sustainable policies, whilst another noted that policies could have gone further but the goal was to *"...get people used to some of these new ideas ... so that the plan did not die under its own weight"*. Of core importance to this success has been the ability to break into the dominant East Texas discourse of private property and anti-regulation through increasing participation and ownership in the planning process and linking the preservation and planting of trees not with 'tree hugging environmentalism' but with affluent, middle-class Tylerites who wish to see their city develop along its path-dependent route as an executive centre. In this way, the manner in which Tylerites 'perform' their identity, through the planning process they adopted, allows for slippages (Butler 1990) to be positively exploited thereby countering the broader property-rights and anti-regulation discourse that dominates

East Texas.

Historic preservation and adaptive reuse have also been policies more stringently adopted in Tyler than in Longview. Through its UDC Tyler has a strongly developed historic preservation policy, which sets up an Historic Preservation Board to determine applications for landmark status and give tax abatement to listed properties. In addition, the city has adopted policies and created overlay zones such that historic structures and buildings in or on the edge of historic districts can be adaptively reused. The rationale behind this is to maintain the historic character of areas and to sustainably reuse buildings. Historic preservation, like tree preservation, was a core issue to emerge from the community during the consultation into *Tyler 21*. As was noted in the plan, "Tyler residents already see their city as unique in East Texas and want to maintain this sense of uniqueness as Tyler grows in the future" (Tyler City Council 2007, 36).

Longview, whilst discussing adaptive reuse in its comprehensive plan, provided no specific policy or overlay district within its zoning ordinance to enable this to occur. In addition, Longview has only recently (13 January 2011) adopted Article 26 of its zoning ordinances, which allows for historic preservation in the city. During interviews planners commented on the endemic difficulty having no preservation policy caused the city, *"You know that we, a community of our size, has no historic preservation plan ... we just don't regulate ... we just tear buildings down"*. This sense of being 'behind the game' in historic preservation was, again, noted in the city council meeting minutes when the proposed Historic Preservation Ordinance came before council. Dr. Frank Jackson of the Preservation Task Force noted that Longview lacked any sort of measure regulating or enabling preservation to occur when its comparably sized neighbours had such policies (LCC 13.01.2011, 3). Also, speaking for the proposal was Victoria Wilson, local historic property owner and founder of the amenity group Preservation Longview who noted that the new ordinance would "… foster educational awareness, offer a higher quality of life and give us a sense of empowerment and confidence through local legislation" noting also that the regulation would "…be insignificant in relation to the beautification of

neighborhoods, increased property values and inner urban development." (LNJ 9.01.2011). The meeting that ushered in this new ordinance was described in the *Longview News Journal* as 'testy and terse' with Mayor Pro Tem Allen strongly dissenting the added layer of regulation (LNJ, 14.01.2011). However, much like the tree preservation policies adopted earlier in Longview we again see a slow but incremental mutation toward an increased acceptance of regulation.

Discussion and Conclusion

This article began by introducing the concept of the hard-to-reach place and asked if these communities might ever engage with sustainability, one of planning's emerging tenets. In order to address this problem the analysis followed an interpretive approach, which allowed for a more nuanced understanding of why change, to its varying degrees, occurred in each city. Here we were able to examine worldviews, beliefs and traditions as they interacted with dilemmas and were then mediated by situated agents who, using local reasoning, "…consciously and subconsciously modify[ed] their contingent heritage" (Bevir and Rhodes 2006, 9). Vital here is that these worldviews naturally affect the way in which problems are defined and therefore constrain what may or may not be considered acceptable or reasonable alternatives (Hamin 2003, 181). Understanding and acknowledging this can clearly contribute to more effective and locally sensitive planning policy, most especially where new and novel concepts are brought forward to address dilemmas.

So, what does this mean for Longview and Tyler? Do they remain untouched by sustainability? Clearly the answer here is no, as each has moved forward within the tolerance level predicated by the dominant beliefs and worldviews of their community. In itself, incremental change in planning is nothing new and has been discussed extensively (See: Lindblom 1959; Forester 1993; Sager, 2001). The difference is that the interpretive approach has given us a more nuanced understanding of how change developed. For example, in both cities the historical antecedents of the oil industry gave rise to a specific set of beliefs and traditions. In Longview these rested with the roughneck and the roustabout, in Tyler with the oil executive. In both cases these interacted with a locally identified

dilemma of piecemeal planning and sprawl, which was seen as negatively impacting on the cities. Each city, in its own way, chose to pursue comprehensive planning through the model of Smart Growth. Two key points emerge from this. The first is that even in cities where sustainability is an alien concept, the problems of 'unsustainable' landuse are still problematic. This means that some form of response will most likely occur. The second point is that once this renegotiation of traditions and beliefs takes place, both the actors and the city are changed and new opportunities will emerge. For Tyler and Longview these came in the form of "off-the-shelf" planning practices that might not have been so readily adopted had the initial steps toward comprehensive planning not taken place.

In Tyler, the city that has historically viewed itself as more culturally advanced than its neighbours, the adaptation of belief systems toward something that better approximated sustainable development was easier. The city already possessed a fairly progressive view of planning and citizen participation. The population of the city as shown by consultation exercises, valued its green spaces and civic beauty and shared many of the concerns about congestion and loss of amenity held by the local planners. Where there was disagreement between planners and citizens on causality, the plan, through its carefully worked evidence base, was able to overcome misunderstandings and illustrate the damage uncontrolled growth had on the city. Here the will to bring forward greener more sustainable policies were interwoven with a local desire to maintain and enhance a better quality of life. Of vital importance in this advance was the interaction of planners, city officials and citizens in identifying their collective fates and collective solutions. One can easily see how the beliefs and traditions of the community fostered an environment in which this type of practice could emerge.

In Longview where the economy has traditionally been more blue collar and the spirit of the 1930s wildcatter is still present, regulation will always be a hard-sell. However, the dilemmas faced by the city are similar to those of most mid-sized car dependent communities in America. Sprawl and piecemeal development have limited the city's liveability and were clearly identified as issues to be resolved by the city council as they embarked upon a comprehensive planning process in 2002. Whilst

the plan developed was sparse, it does suggest that Smart Growth when intertwined with ideas of quality of life might offer some degree of purchase even in a staunchly anti-planning community as the principles appeal to self-interest (Tregoning *et al* 2002). Also, important in Longview is that the mechanism of merely having a comprehensive plan opened windows of opportunities for other types of regulation including tree preservation and an historic conservation ordinance. Both of these policies were promoted as measures that would benefit local amenity and the local economy through the creation of more attractive environments. For Longview this was quite an innovation. That said, it is important to understand that under other guises, both are also green policies that can help promote carbon capture, biodiversity and the adaptive reuse of existing structures. Here we see how even small initial shifts in policy, prompted by dilemmas, can begin to reshape locally held traditions creating spaces for new behaviours to emerge.

Thus, understanding the context and conditions of change allows planners, communities and scholars far better purchase on how planning practice may be improved, especially when dealing with novel or innovative concepts. This examination of sustainability policy in hard-to-reach places provides us with a rich account of this context and offers a unique opportunity to reflect on policy and innovation in new and interesting ways. The techniques and ideas employed here could easily be followed in other contexts and policy fields like climate change adaptation where social and cultural interpretations of the problem at hand dictate the types of policies that can be pursued (Maibach *et al* 2009). The paper also serves as a key point of contrast to studies on cities at the vanguard of change, reminding us how critical it is to recognise all types of communities in our research and practice.

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Table 1 Education, Income and Occupational Sturcture 2007-2011 estimates

	Tyler	Longview	Texas
Population	96,900	80,455	25,145,561
Educational Attainment of population 25 and older			
• % high school graduate or higher	**84.3**	82.8	80.4
• % a Bachelor's degree or higher	**29.1**	20.8	26.1
Income			
• Median yearly earnings in USD	24,088	**24,977**	28,352
• Median yearly earnings of a full-time male	40,577	**43,664**	43,473

worker in USD			
• Media yearly earnings of a full-time female worker in USD	**31,832**	29,515	34,724
Occupation			
• % Management, business, science and arts occupations	**33.8**	28.2	34.2
• % Service occupations	**20.2**	18.4	17.1
• % Sales and office occupations	**26.0**	24.7	25.4
• % Natural resources, construction and maintenance occupations	7.7	**12.3**	11.4
• % Production, transportation and material moving occupations	12.3	**16.3**	12.0

SOURCE: US Census, American Fact Finder based on 2007-2011 estimates

Table 2 Tyler Tree Planting Requirements (Tyler UDC, 2010:131)

Option	Tree Requirements/ Square Footage	Tree Type
A	One tree/750 square feet	Large Shade Trees
B	One tree/625 square feet	Large Shade Trees, Medium Trees and Small Trees
C	One tree/500 square feet	Medium Trees and Small Trees