

Effective Strategies for SDG Localization in Canadian Communities: A Case Study of Peterborough, Ontario

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Land Acknowledgement

I respectfully acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Mississauga Anishinaabeg. I offer my gratitude to the First Nations for their care for, and teachings about, our earth and our relations. May we honor those teachings.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- Adopted in September 2015 as a framework for implementing the UN agenda 2030
- 17 goals (economic, social, environmental, and political)
- 169 targets
- 231 indicators

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Case Study of Peterborough, Ontario

- Greater Peterborough is a relatively small, semi-rural region, part of the Golden Horseshoe region of southern Ontario.
- Located on the Trent-Severn Waterways and the Otonabee River.
- Governed under the Williams Treaty 20.
- Home to Hiawatha First Nation, Curve Lake First Nation.
- Home to Trent University and Fleming College
- The region's population is around 125,478 approx., while the city's population is 83,651 approx. (2021 Census)
- Median age is 46.8 (2021 Census)

Peterborough and the SDGs

- GreenUp, KWIC, Trent and Fleming organized a Community Forum in 2019:
 - 5 focus SDGs and 5 working teams: SDG 1, SDG4, SDG6, SDG13, and SDG17
 - ILAT was created as a localization of SDG 17
 - In 2021, the organizers convened a virtual follow-up to the 2019 forum.
 - Peterborough's Indigenous engagement was recognized nationally as exemplary highlighted by IISD and the Tamarack Institute
- PKED's 2020 - 2024 Future Ready Strategic Plan:
 - Peterborough to become the most sustainable community in Ontario.
 - 5 priority SDGs: SDG4, SDG8, SDG9, SDG11, SDG17
- Sustainable Peterborough's 2021 - 2031 Strategic Plan:
 - SP to pick up the mantle from the community forum and push forward the SDG agenda.

Research Question

- How can Peterborough develop an effective SDG localization initiative to measure, assess and report on SDG indicators?
- How can the City of Peterborough align its development plans with SDG targets and Canada's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?
- What lessons and best practices can communities such as Peterborough learn from other comparable communities in Ontario, Canada, and globally in developing capacity for locally advancing the SDGs?

Methods and Methodology

Methods:

Qualitative research that relied on a literature review and semi-structured interviews with 23 individuals (city government staff, nonprofit staff, academics, city council members, and Indigenous leaders) in eight Canadian communities across four provinces.

Methodology:

Inductive thematic analysis, based on the framework outlined by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke in their paper entitled: Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology.

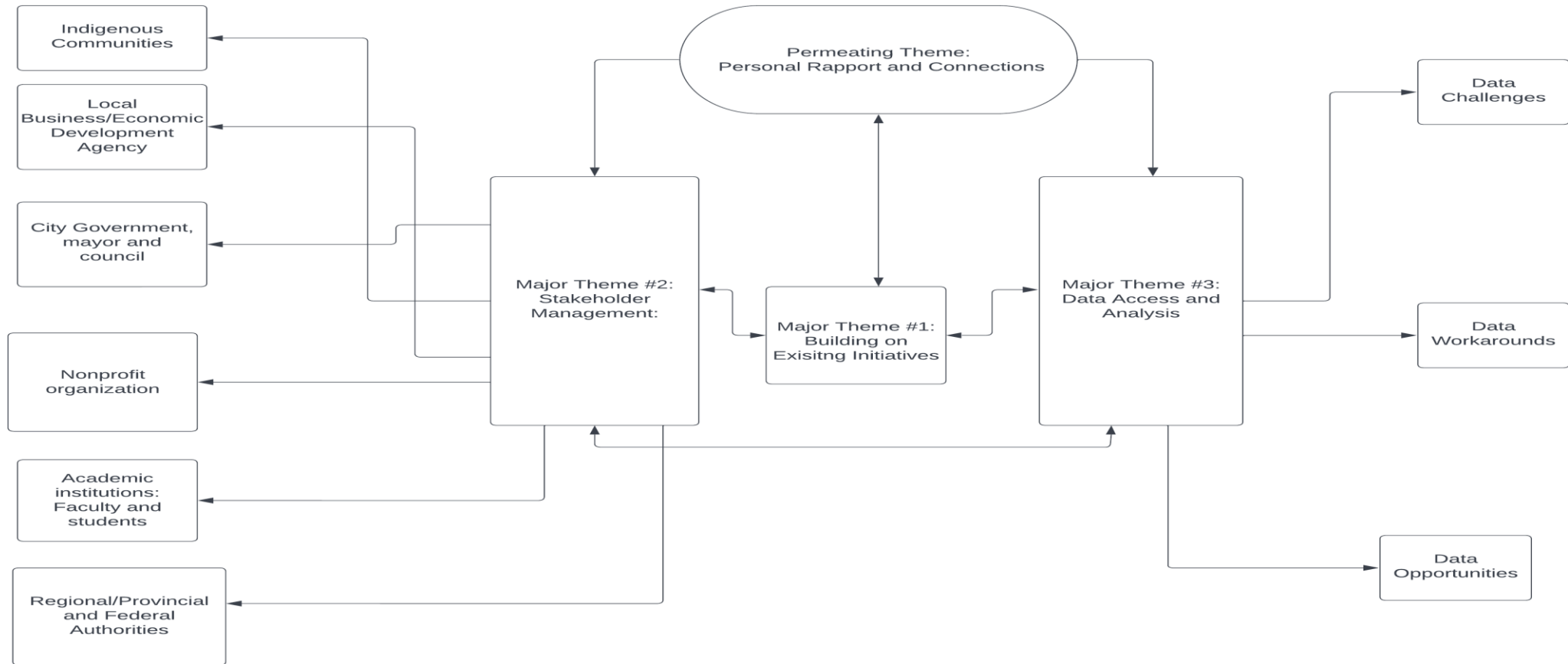
Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

Research Findings (1) - Community Studies

- Eight community SDG localization initiatives:
 - 5 SDG localization initiatives led by an NGO (nonprofit/University)
 - 3 led by city government departments.
 - Awareness of the SDGs in local governments and the community more broadly remains limited.
- SDG localization initiatives are best understood as projects:
 - Personal initiative, interests, rapport & connections were key in launching successful SDG projects.
- Awareness of the SDGs in local governments and the community more broadly remains limited.
 - City staff and members of the city council had very little knowledge, if at all, of the SDGs.

Research Findings (2): Themes



Research Findings (3): Lessons Learned from other communities

- Kitchener, ON had a unique model for engaging local businesses and entrepreneurs in the region:
 - SDG localization is spearheaded by the Waterloo Region Small Business Centre
 - SBC will manage an SDG lab, later called SDG Idea Factory in downtown Kitchener to provide space for entrepreneurs interested in the SDGs.
 - Council Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022 attempted SDG alignment at the level of the goals.
- Asker, Norway strategically integrated SDG targets into its municipal planning:
 - Norway mandates municipal planning alignment with SDGs
 - City of Asker used U4SSC KPI Methodology to measure performance and align its plans with specific targets.

SDG Idea Factory: A case in SDG Visibility

Kitchener, ON

<https://www.sdguideafactory.ca/en/index.aspx>



Research Findings (4): Lessons Learned from other communities

- Winnipeg built on a pre-existing community indicator system and aligned with SDG targets:
 - IISD and UWW co-manage the community indicator system (mypeg.ca)
 - Published a VLR in 2021
- Quebec City focused on inward SDG alignment and measuring its performance as a corporation:
 - Public Transportation Plan attempted alignment with SDGs at the level of the goals.
 - The Strategy for Sustainable Development: Plan for Transition and Climate action also attempted alignment with the SDGs at the level of the goals.

Analysis: Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges:

- Lack of capacity, both human capital and financial capital, to carry out effective SDG localization projects.
- Lack of clear strategic intent and direction
- Broad and comprehensive stakeholder engagement: *Leaving no stakeholder behind.*
- Access to and analysis of data that measures SDG indicators presented a real challenge.

Opportunities:

- The Canadian Indicator Framework (CIF) presents an opportunity to localize SDG targets and indicators in Peterborough through engaging with the SDG Unit at ESDC and being the **first Canadian** community to use this framework as a pilot study.
- Canada's Sustainable Development Funding Program \$60 million over 13 years.
- Engagement with mayor and council.

Conclusion and Recommendations (1)

- Context is key to ensuring relevance and community buy-in:
 - SDG leads used their local organizational ecosystem to develop and manage SDG localization projects.
- *"Don't let perfect be the enemy of good."* SDG localization projects are iterative:
 - Leads built upon existing initiatives and available data to produce their first iterations.
 - Leads aim to use results from the first iteration to improve the process moving forward.
- Stakeholder management is pivotal to the success of the process.
 - Leads had varying successes and challenges in community engagement, which underscores the importance of broad, comprehensive stakeholder mapping and engagement plans.

Conclusion and Recommendations (2)

- In Peterborough, more capacity will be needed:
 - Given the community's ambition, a proper assessment of the capacity needed to pull this initiative off is warranted. This should include a proper and detailed stakeholder mapping to effectively leverage the organizational ecosystem in the region.
- Working with the Mayor, Warden and Councils:
 - Identify allies at the city and county councils and engage them in the conversation.
 - Regularly engage with the mayor and warden.
- Trent University and Fleming College should increase their engagement in the process
 - Trent and Fleming could align some graduate and undergraduate projects with this initiative as CBR projects; example: Conduct a thorough review of the 76 indicators in the [Canadian Indicator Framework](#) to assess their relevance and applicability in Peterborough.
 - Develop a working relationship with MaDGIC and TCRC at Trent to collect, analyze, visualize SDG-related data on a regular basis.
 - Develop and pilot an SDG classroom integration toolkit (i.e., [York University's SDG-in-the-Classroom Toolkit](#))
- Taking part in SDG Community of Practice can help community leads stay up to date on developments as well as network with and learn from other peers in communities across North America.