

**The Amalgamation of Brant County: Understanding Sense of Place and  
Public Participation**

by

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## **Author's Declaration**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to explore the role of public consultation in the amalgamation process of Brant County, as well as to explore how amalgamation affected sense of place in this community. The research was conducted through a comprehensive literature review looking at amalgamation, public participation, and sense of place. Interviews with key informants were also conducted, with key informants being selected for having integral roles in the process of amalgamation. The study demonstrated that there was an attempt for considerable public participation through the amalgamation process, but that outside pressures from the province ultimately resulted in public opinion becoming inconsequential. The study also demonstrated that for most age cohorts sense of place was largely unaffected, with the older cohorts being most vocal about the negative effects of amalgamation on their communities. The findings of the study demonstrate that the province did not make a priority of public opinion when influencing the process of amalgamation.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the 1990s, communities in Ontario were affected by a new provincial policy that dictated amalgamations of adjacent municipalities. This strategy was intended to enhance efficiencies in the delivery of public services. The argument was that economies of scale would be achieved through this process of amalgamation. There remain conflicting opinions about whether this strategy was successful.

This was not a voluntary process; rather, communities were obligated to consolidate. The process moved very quickly. The province downloaded cost and responsibility to the communities of rural Ontario. A number of decisions were made before fully understanding the needs of the respective communities. Those communities then needed to make decisions on things like new service locations, new council structures, and new service delivery structures, while developing new planning documents and policy (Miljan & Spicer, 2015).

This top-down approach to decision-making left little room for the expression of opinions from community residents about the process and implications of amalgamation. Indeed, many questions remain regarding whether these efficiencies have been realized. Further, there is a sense that equally important issues, such as the quality of life and sense of belonging in these communities, was undervalued and overlooked in the rush to amalgamate.

Questions still remain as to whether the current structure of amalgamated municipalities and jurisdictions has met the respective communities' needs. The supporters of amalgamation have rallied behind its ability to address economic concerns, such as efficiency and effectiveness of services, and various cost saving factors through

the consolidation of resources and people. Some current research in the province of Ontario, however, indicates that these goals have not been achieved. The effects on the social aspects of current and previous communities that make up newly amalgamated jurisdictions is even less clear, particularly as it relates to the rural communities of Southern Ontario.

In addition, questions have been raised about whether and how community residents were consulted as this amalgamation strategy was designed and then implemented. Accordingly, this research explores whether these amalgamated communities were able to address and express their personal opinions, concerns, and attitudes as it relates to amalgamation. If there was a consensus that amalgamation is negatively impacting the lives of a community, how was this addressed by planners and government officials?

## **1.1 Purpose of Study**

There currently exists extensive research on the efficiencies and effectiveness of amalgamations within Southern Ontario (Hollick, Siegel, & Endeavours, 2001; Sancton, 2001; Slack & Bird, 2013; Miljan & Spicer, 2015; Found, 2012). Although each of these studies has discussed and quantified many aspects of amalgamation as they relate to economic benefits, most of these studies only begin to scratch the surface in relation to measuring social dynamics that have been influenced by the processes of amalgamation.

This research seeks to answer the following questions: How has sense of place and community in Brant County been affected by amalgamation? What were the methods of public engagement within this process, and, from that, what were the implications for planning processes and policies? In answering these questions, this research will seek to

understand how public engagement could have been designed to achieve a better understanding of a community's sense of place and social capital within the newly constructed municipalities in which they live.

## **1.2 Significance of the Study**

The social implications of government restructuring are not well understood within the recent amalgamations of Ontario. The literature concerning themes such as sense of place, attachment, and belonging discusses the individual ability to connect with and understand the places they inhabit. This literature can be connected to the ways in which communities are planned in terms of short and long-range planning, not only evaluating the economic and political sides of growth (Manzo and Perkins, 2006). The age composition of a community can serve as a vital indicator of what resources are required, as growth continues to occur across its geographical boundaries. Public engagement, therefore, becomes an increasingly valuable asset to determine the needs of a community.

This research adds to the current work on amalgamations within Ontario, focusing on the recent amalgamations of the late 1990's, and endorses an improved method of public consultation and community assessment. This is considered a significant weakness in the 1990s approach to amalgamation. Therefore, the findings could inform future amalgamation policies and implementation strategies.

## **1.3 Thesis Structure**

This thesis begins in Section Two with an examination of the existing literature, laying the foundation and background understanding of the nature of amalgamation and its context within Canadian governance structures before giving a synopsis of historical

amalgamation processes across Canada. This section is followed by a review of the specific literature focused on the more recent provincial amalgamations of Ontario. Subsequently, sense of belonging, community, cohesion, and attachment literature are explored in greater depth.

This exploration helps to illuminate the various elements of the individual's social and physical connection to the community he or she inhabits and his or her response to the changes that occur within those communities. Public engagement and planning theory are then reviewed in greater depth to understand both theory and application within North American in the last half century. The section then concludes with a brief exploration of possible alternatives to the amalgamation restructuring process and identifies the foundations on which these research interests and area of study were derived. An open-ended interview and a concluding discussion were arranged with Professor Andrew Sancton. In conjunction with this meeting, the literature was used to formulate key research questions.

Section Three explores the methodology that supports the research conducted and provides greater clarification on the research design and methodological approaches used. This section includes a discussion of issues such as the validation and limitations of the study. Once a thorough understanding of the methodological approaches selected for this research has been achieved, Section Four provides in-depth background on amalgamation within North America before focusing on the case study community and a synopsis of the events that led to its amalgamation in the late 1990's.

Section Five provides the research findings, starting with a summary of the interviews conducted, followed by exploration of the key themes that were taken from the

interview transcripts related to the research questions and the literature. Section Six compares these findings with the literature through the lens of the research questions. Section Seven comprises the recommendations formulated based on the findings of this research. These recommendations examine citizen participation and engagement methods that would have been more effective during the restructuring of Brant County. It also offers future considerations for addressing growth and municipal restructuring within the case study area. Finally, Section Eight provides specific recommendations for future areas of study related to the case study community, as well as broader conclusions for the research.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW AND APPLICATION OF LITERATURE**

### **2.1 What is Amalgamation?**

This study focuses on the impacts that amalgamation has generated over the course of the last century, specifically analyzing various aspects of amalgamations within the province of Ontario. The chapter begins with a brief introduction and description of amalgamation, then explores Canadian governance structures and responsibilities, and finally the pattern of historical amalgamations in Canadian provinces.

#### **2.1.1 Structure and definition.**

An amalgamation occurs when two or more municipalities unite (or merge) to create a single municipal government within a defined territorial boundary (Sancton, 2011). Acting as one centralized political structure, the objective is to provide spending, taxation, and service delivery decisions in a balanced format (Slack and Bird, 2013).

The terms “amalgamation” and “annexation” are often used as synonyms. Annexation typically occurs when a municipality absorbs some of the land from an adjacent municipality (Reynolds, 1992). It does not mean, however, that land acquisition by one municipality from another results in a new single-tier municipal government, as is the case in amalgamation (Sancton, 2011). With an amalgamation process, land areas and possibly a portion of the population are now under the jurisdiction of new municipal boundaries (Palmer & Lindsey, 2001).

Pressures for annexation and amalgamation are driven by the demand for new land to accommodate suburban or exurban development, and economic development generally (e.g. industrial parks).

## **2.2 Canadian Government Structure and Organization**

To further understand amalgamations and the outward expansion of cities, it can be of significant value to comprehend federal, provincial, and local municipal governments. Each level of government has various responsibilities and powers. This section provides a brief summary of these structures, going into greater detail when exploring local municipal governments and explaining the province of Ontario and its various upper-tier and lower-tier municipalities, regions and counties.

The first forms of democratic government date back to the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century when the Iroquois and First Nations people originally had confederacy throughout Canada and North America (Parliament of Canada, 2016). Later, as Europeans began to settle in the former portions of Upper Canada, Canada became a nation in 1867. Confederation was established by Canadian leaders who met to formulate the constitution known as the British North American Act (BNA) (Parliament of Canada, 2016). This act served as a catalyst in bringing together various Canadian provinces from 1867 to 1999, and set a foundation and structure for new laws and the subdivision of power (Parliament of Canada, 2016). This system was modeled after Britain, having both federal and provincial legislatures in order to evenly subdivide responsibilities between the two levels of government and also establish a system of shared responsibilities (Parliament of Canada, 2016). At the highest level, the federal government's powers and responsibilities range from immigration to criminal justice and indirect taxation (Parliament of Canada, 2016). Provincially, government responsibilities account for things such as education, administering justice, and health and social services (Parliament of Canada, 2016).



In addition to federal and provincial governing bodies, Canada has one more level of government. The lower and more localized level of government is referred to as municipal government. The geographical make-up of municipal governments consists of regional boundaries, counties, and municipalities. This level of government is responsible for a range of services and programs, including transit, policing, land use planning, and public health (Parliament of Canada, 2016).

Under The Municipal Act of 2001, the basic structure and framework for municipal government was established to provide municipalities with direction on the services and programs that must be provided under their direct governance and those that are optional (Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Ministry of Housing, 2011). In addition to The Municipal Act, other acts such as; *The Social Housing Reform Act 2000*, *The Building Code Act, 1992*, *The Ontario Works Act, 1997*, and *The Planning Act, 1990* provide municipalities with additional tools and guidance on programs and services that must be provided, monitored, and evaluated under their watch.

The organization and structure of municipalities in Ontario should also be discussed, with particular attention to how municipalities operate within their determined boundaries and how some services and programs are allocated across different tiers of government (Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Ministry of Housing, 2011). Formal names of municipalities may include terms such as townships, villages, cities, towns, or hamlets. The term region or county may depict a larger level of municipal government but does not always determine its legal powers (Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Ministry of Housing, 2011). The term district represents a territorial boundary that does not serve a specific municipal government function or purpose. Examples of districts in Ontario

include: Algoma, Parry Sound, Cochrane, Rainy River, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, and many other Northern locations of Ontario (Association of Municipalities of Ontario, 2017).

There are over 444 municipalities in the province of Ontario. The Municipal Act, 2001, identifies three sub-categories of municipal power and responsibility: upper-tier municipalities (within a two-tier municipal structure), single-tier municipalities, and lower-tier municipalities (within a two-tier municipal structure). Upper-tier municipalities are composed of two or more lower-tier municipal bodies. This would include counties and regional municipalities such as Bruce, Durham, Halton, Niagara, Oxford, Peel, Perth, Simcoe, Waterloo, and York, to list a few.

Single-tier municipalities such as Brant, Brantford, Chatham-Kent, Greater Sudbury, Haldimand, Hamilton, Kawartha Lakes, Norfolk, Ottawa, Prince Edward, are examples of municipalities with no regional or county governments above them (Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Ministry of Housing, 2011; Neptis Foundation, 2014; Association of Municipalities of Ontario, 2017). Single-tier municipalities also include all northern municipalities where governance is provided at a district level (as discussed above) (Association of Municipalities of Ontario, 2017). These municipalities were amalgamated in the late 1990s into a single administrative body, providing their own individual services and resources for their respective communities (Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Ministry of Housing, 2011).

Lower-tier municipalities (those forming part of upper-tier municipalities) represent close to 250 cities, towns, townships, and villages across Ontario. This includes, but is not limited to, locations such as the City of Belleville, the Municipality of Blue Water, the Town of Cobourg, the Town of Ear Falls, and the Village of Oil Springs

(Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Ministry of Housing, 2017). When considering upper-tier municipalities and lower-tier municipalities, the upper-tier municipalities deliver certain services for the lower-tier municipalities within its boundary (Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Ministry of Housing, 2011).

It is also important to note the discrepancies between municipal regions and counties. Regions often provide greater servicing for their lower-tier municipalities. These services include road construction, transit, regional land use planning, health and social services, along with many others. More rural counties typically provide fewer services and have less responsibility when compared with the more urbanized regions (Parliament of Canada, 2016).

Towns, cities, and, at times, villages and hamlets that are part of a county will often provide the vast majority of services and programming to their own residents. Counties will often be left with the power and responsibility of governing land use planning and health services. Noting the discrepancies between upper-tier municipalities and lower-tier municipalities within the context of Ontario, a larger exploration of amalgamation throughout Canada can add to an in-depth understanding of how various provincial governments have implemented restructuring processes, or avoided them all together.

### **2.3 Early Amalgamations**

When understanding the ambitions of amalgamation, it is important to note that this is far from a new concept. To understand the basis for amalgamations in Ontario, across Canada, and throughout the world, often a key jumping-off point for this topic would be to explore dramatic examples of amalgamation throughout the United States.

Consolidationists have argued in favor of amalgamation since the mid 1800's in relation to English speaking populations of the world, with the most noted examples looking at the early push for the amalgamation of settlements and communities within Philadelphia and New York (Sancton, 2011; Sancton, 2000).

In 1854 the consolidation of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania was a result of what seemed to be issues with policing, law enforcement, and the inability to respond to numerous racial riots and several social concerns spanning across many territories. In addition to benefits from law enforcement, supporters of consolidation and political elites in Philadelphia attempted to address effective delivery of services within its newly acquired communities. In the end, the City of Philadelphia was able to meet the needs of the communities in establishing a professional police force. At this time, however, many scholars critically commented on the long-term complications that lay ahead, since this consolidation did not result in any type of savings or benefits from economies of scale. Large scale government was going to destroy the idea of local community relationships (Sancton, 2000).

One of the most influential amalgamations within North America was the consolidation of New York in 1898. This restructuring was based on the premise that the amalgamation of 15 cities and towns and 11 villages in 5 separate counties would make a new single tier government for New York comparable to other large cities of the world. This amalgamation would include control of the water front, railroads, shipping, and the ability to facilitate growth through increasing boundaries. The financial benefits of New York's amalgamation were never recognized as areas of concern since cost saving was never the end goal. There was a continuous increase in expenditures from \$98.6 million

dollars in 1899, to \$130.4 million dollars by the year 1907 (Sancton, 2000). Consolidation did, however, have an impact on infrastructure and, more importantly, planning. Through this process, one of the largest common goals of the amalgamation of New York City was addressed. Under the governance structure of Greater New York, regional based planning could occur to address new transportation infrastructure projects such as the city's early subway system development and planning of new transit corridors (Beckert, 2003, p.317). Key leaders and visionaries, such as Robert Moses created transit systems and connective greenspace that would change the landscape of New York City and its regional communities (Caro, 1974).

The greatest disapproval of this amalgamation came from the City of Brooklyn. The citizens of this area were directly concerned with identity changes to the ethnic composition of their communities because of widening municipal boundaries. The concerns of identity become an important piece when reviewing the implications of amalgamation (Sancton, 2000, p.32). Over the course of a century, New York City has served as one of the key economic hubs of the world. The fate of the 15 cities and towns and 11 villages that consolidated has not played out to each community's liking. Outlying areas like Queens and the Bronx have been affected by crime and poverty since the amalgamation in 1898. Identified as the last comprehensive legislated amalgamation within the United States, New York City's 1898 consolidation marked amalgamation as a thing of the past.

Debates and conversations across Canadian provinces about municipal amalgamations are often reference consolidations that have occurred throughout the United States. While these neighboring countries share many things in common, their

government structures are far from identical. As noted by Sancton, (2000), the American influence on politics and structure has been said to have had a larger impact on local governing bodies and decisions when compared to Canada's own federal and provincial levels of government. As described by Sancton (2000), two factors that separate American states from Canadian provinces are: (1) Each American municipality is protected by its own state constitution. The local population directly determines the direction the organization of the municipality. Any process for consolidation would have to occur through a referendum only. (2) Canadian cities grow through the amalgamation of other municipalities (hamlets, villages, towns, cities), while American cities grow by acquiring unincorporated areas within their counties. Counties in the United States can span large areas and generally cover entire states. The unincorporated areas are areas that do not include towns or cities. Therefore, when American municipalities consider growth, they are considering annexing unincorporated lands to established municipalities. In Canada, these annexations do not commonly occur, as most amalgamations in Canada over the last few decades have included urban environments such as established towns and cities (Sancton, 2000 p. 25-26).

Occurring throughout Canada in the 1900's, the majority of amalgamation has occurred in the latter parts of the century between the 1990's and the early 2000's. Some provinces, however, have moved in the opposite direction with many municipalities de-amalgamating during this same time, specifically within the province of Quebec. Regardless of the time, the justification and underlying arguments supporting amalgamation have revolved around four distinct drivers: efficiency and effectiveness; equity; planning infrastructure and environment; and economic development (Sancton,

2011). Regardless of the time, the justification and underlying arguments supporting amalgamation have revolved around four distinct drivers: efficiency and effectiveness; equity; planning infrastructure and environment; and economic development (Sancton, 2011).

## **2.4 The Canadian Experience with Amalgamation**

It is important to note that these municipal restructurings occurred mostly in two large waves. With the exception of Windsor, Ontario's involuntary amalgamation in the early 1930's, the first wave of amalgamations occurred between 1950 and the mid-1970s, with the second wave of governmental restructurings occurring from the early 1990's to the early 2000s (Sancton, 2011; Found, 2012.). Table 1 provides a basic outline of amalgamations across Canada.

### **2.4.1 Windsor was first.**

Windsor, Ontario's amalgamation in the early part of the 1930s is an example of the early development of provincial policy and the relationships between provincial and municipal levels of government (Sancton, 2015). Similar to many municipalities within Ontario during the 1920s, communities surrounding the City of Windsor pushed to establish a Utilities Commission. Under the title of "The Essex Border Utilities Commission," various municipalities surrounding Windsor established integrated water supply networks, wide scale planning systems, district health boards and care centers, and took centralized control over parks and naturalization areas (Sancton, 2015).

**Table 1. Depiction of Amalgamations Throughout Canada**

Province	Years of Amalgamation		Restructuring format	
	Winnipeg	1972	1992	1972 (Unicity)
Newfoundland	1992		18 municipalities to 13	
Prince Edward Island	1994		18 municipalities and 2 unincorporated areas down to 3	
New Brunswick	1995	1998	Miramichi & Edmundston	
Nova Scotia	1993	1996	Cape Breton & Halifax	
Quebec	1961-2000 (*2006)		Amalgamation (De amalgamation in 2006)	
Ontario	1996-2001		850 municipalities down to 445	
➤ Windsor, Ontario	1935		Involuntarily	
Alberta, Saskatchewan, British Columbia	---		The pressure of amalgamation has been somewhat weak with the exception of Abbotsford & Matsqui BC in (1995)	

Source: (Sancton, 2015)



It was assumed that amalgamation could benefit the municipalities surrounding the Essex area of Southern Ontario (Sancton, 2015). To community leaders, amalgamation seen as a way to strengthen and unify government through professionalism, better regional planning, and more efficient and effective services delivery (Kulisek & Price, 1988, as cited in Sancton, 2015). While Windsor and four municipalities supported amalgamation in the 1920s, it was rejected in a referendum vote, in large part due to the communities of Sandwich and Walkersville (Kulisek & Price, 1988, as cited in Sancton, 2015).

With the province playing a much larger role in monitoring the actions of various municipalities in Ontario, citizens of Sandwich and, more importantly, Walkersville (who had not been as drastically affected by The Great Depression due to a prosperous whiskey industry) saw that voting against amalgamation was no longer of any value (Sancton, 2015). As a result of the Windsor Amalgamation Act of 1935, municipalities involuntarily amalgamated in order to provide a wider array of financial resources to the surrounding communities that were drastically affected by The Great Depression (Kulisek & Price, 1988, as cited in Sancton, 2015).

#### **2.4.2 Nova Scotia.**

We turn now to the experience in Nova Scotia. The provincial government embarked on a program of amalgamation in 1996. The argument was that amalgamation would create enhance efficiencies and cost savings. However, as McDavid (2002) notes, there is little evidence that demonstrates amalgamation actually generated any of the cost savings, effective service deliveries, and overall economic benefits that it set out to achieve.

While the communities of Bedford and cities of Dartmouth and Halifax amalgamated and economic prosperity occurred to varying degrees, over the past 20 years it is actually very hard to determine if these financial gains have been a result of amalgamation or if this economic growth is in fact a result of off shore natural gas developments within the province (Sancton, 2015; McDavid, 2002). Advocates of amalgamation argue that economic growth trends are a direct result of the Maritime city's ability to attract large-scale corporations because of its centralized coastal location (Sancton, 2015).

The Halifax case highlights the value of citizen acceptance during transitions towards amalgamation (McDavid, 2002; Dale Pole, 2000). While this amalgamation saw the merger of both rural and urban municipalities, there was the discomfort and unwillingness of citizens in different communities. These issues may seem to be buried in previous debates of the last 20 years. However, the discomfort of various communities can still be identified in recent surveys completed by residents of rural communities related to service delivery (specifically policing), increasing crime rates, and the need for equal access to public officials and planning staff (Pole, 2000; McDavid, 2002; Sancton, 2015).

#### **2.4.3 British Columbia and regional districts.**

British Columbia has been one of a few provinces not to promote amalgamation (Sancton, 2011). According to Vojnovic (1998), the province's strategy has had considerable success with the creation of regional districts that are efficient, effective, and equitable in meeting local needs and requirements, without demanding municipal restructuring.

As a province that has roughly 12 percent of its population within rural communities, regional districts have influenced British Columbia's regional government since the mid-1960s in order to provide a wide array of services to a dispersed population (Regional District of North Okanagan, 2015; Vojnovic, 1998). Within regional districts, multiple municipal cities, towns, small villages, and hamlets have elected representatives that collectively make up the larger regional districts. Each municipality can choose to participate or remain uninvolved in matters at the regional level.

At the local level, municipalities are responsible for handling things such as community planning, while it is the responsibility of the district to provide services that will benefit the wider regional boundaries (Regional District of North Okanagan, 2015). These services could include water treatment or solid waste management planning (Regional District of North Okanagan, 2015). This flexible regional model has led to enhanced collaboration and coordination of services while still remaining independent once projects and service needs are met (Vojnovic, 1998).

In contrast to the Ontario experience, regional districts in British Columbia do not have the power to impose things like planning objectives onto municipalities. These objectives must be achieved through stages of mediation and arbitration with community stakeholders (Sancton, 2011). British Columbia seems to have found an effective way to deal with inter-municipal disputes, and to find solutions to mutual benefit (Sancton, 2011; Vojnovic, 1998).

## **2.5 Rationale for Recent Amalgamations in Ontario**

During the mid-1990s, the Ontario government instituted a program of local government restructuring which resulted in the amalgamation of local governments and

consolidation of services (Kushner & Siegel, 2003a). Two-tier government structures throughout the province were alleged to have been one of the main reasons for overlapping of services provided to municipalities, and also the duplication of services. Ontario's government, under the "Common Sense Revolution", felt that amalgamation would enhance service delivery efficiencies, with regard for the distribution of system costs and benefits (Kushner & Siegel, 2003b).

The government developed a set of guidelines to provide direction and support to municipalities when making the transition from a two-tier to a one-tier government structure (Kushner & Siegel, 2003b). The focus was on issues such as taxes, local representation in municipal decisions, grants, regional planning, and service delivery (McKay, 2004). The positive and negative impacts of amalgamation both pre- and post-implementation have subsequently caused considerable debate among academics, local government officials and politicians, and community residents in areas affected by the Harris regime's restructuring policies.

## **2.6 Kawartha Lakes Attempt to De-amalgamate**

The City of Kawartha Lakes can be regarded as a key player in determining the future of all amalgamated municipalities in Ontario. This city was nearly successful in its attempts to de-amalgamate, a process that could have opened the flood gates for other municipal de-amalgamations in Ontario.

The new City of Kawartha Lakes was created in 2001. With a previous population of 69,179 and geographically composed of 16 lower-tier municipalities and Victoria County, Kawartha Lakes was frustrated with the idea of amalgamation after the short time span of one year (Statistics Canada, 2013; Miljan & Spicer, 2015). What

separated this restructured municipality from the newly reduced 444 municipalities in Ontario was that it had clearly demonstrated its desire to de-amalgamate through the support of a referendum.

Other municipalities, such as Flamborough (now amalgamated into Hamilton), were given false hope from the Liberal leader that the demergers were possible. Sancton (2005) noted that the McGuinty government contacted the demerger activists of Flamborough with a message stating, “Unlike Mike Harris and Ernie Eves - I will not sit in my Queens Park office and dictate the future of our communities” (Sancton, 2005, p.7). Premier McGuinty also stated, “Resolving the future shape of our municipalities recognizes that each community is different and requires a unique system of democratically determining the future” (Sancton, 2005, p.7).

While McGuinty would win the election in the fall of 2003, and although communication with Flamborough activists was made in regard to the potential for demergers, the only attempt to go forward with a demerger was with the referendum of City of Kawartha Lakes (Sancton, 2005).

Many attempts were made to pressure the Province’s restructuring commissioner to make a submission questioning amalgamation of Kawartha Lakes. After the provincial resignation of Mike Harris and the Progressive Conservative government were voted out of office, the new Liberal Government under Dalton McGuinty was not in favour of Kawartha Lakes overturning the processes of amalgamation. The new government felt it would only encourage other municipalities across the province to also rally for de-amalgamation (Miljan & Spicer, 2015).

Although the referendum would be passed and originally promoted by the McGuinty government, conditions were put in place by the Liberal Government that made the local council of Kawartha Lakes feel unsure about following through with the process of de-amalgamation. They were concerned that the downloading of costs that would be carried by each of the small 16 municipalities, as they would not receive any support from the province for this restructuring and had to prove they could in fact cover all associated costs and required resources (Miljan & Spicer, 2015; Sancton, 2005). In the end, the referendum would be pushed aside and ignored politically by local and provincial government.

In response, Kawartha Lakes responded by making things “work” for the local communities by addressing many of the common concerns such as increased wage issues, staffing relocations, tax increases, and long-term debt increases which were a result of this amalgamation (Miljan & Spicer, 2015). Had Kawartha Lakes been successful in its attempt to de-amalgamate, their precedent might have opened the flood-gates for de-amalgamation across Ontario. This issue makes the restructuring of The City of the Kawartha Lakes a very interesting case study for amalgamations. At this juncture, it is helpful to understand how provincial legislation made these actions increasingly possible.

## **2.7 The Conservative Government, Mike Harris, and Neoliberalism**

Coming into power in the mid 1990’s, the Progressive Conservative government, under Mike Harris, pushed their political agenda under the slogan of “Common Sense Revolution” (Miljan & Spicer, 2015). Similar to the political environments that were created under United Kingdom Prime Minister Margret Thatcher and United States President Ronald Regan in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, the political and economic

environment created by the Harris government can be viewed through the ideologies of Neoliberalism (Keil, 2002). These ideologies (slashing government jobs, welfare cuts, and reidentifying municipal boundaries) have largely affected the daily lives of Ontarians since their implementation.

According to Kiel (2002), the agenda implemented by the Harris government was a standard example of Neoliberalism policy. While this agenda attempted to push the ideals of equity and self-liberty, instead the Tory government inserted itself with authority at the expense of Ontario citizens' wellbeing. From teachers and school boards, to government workers, the homeless and many other groups, the Harris government impacted many people's lives (Keil, 2002). The goal of the Harris government was to solve problems related to high tax rates and spending which did not necessarily exist (White, 1997; Keil, 2002).

When understanding the goals of Neoliberalism, neoliberals will often discuss aspects of "individual freedom". Braedley and Luxton (2010) discuss individual freedom as "the ability to pursue whatever work one wishes, and to sell one's own labour power for a wage that reflects the social value of one's work to the highest bidder in a free labour market" (Braedley, S., & Luxton, 2010, p.10). The authors recognize that there are some incorrect assumptions associated with the values of Neoliberalism. Other needs relating to freedom must also be taken into consideration such as the freedom to be in good health, to take care of one's family, or to take part in one's broader community (Braedley, S., & Luxton, 2010). With that understanding, the impact of the Harris government during the mid-1990's can be explored further to understand how this neoliberal approach impacted the lives of many Ontarians from welfare cuts, extending

labour regulations to allow for sixty-hour work weeks, the downloading of responsibilities to municipal government, eliminating public housing programs, the amalgamation of municipal governments, and other considerations (Keil, 2002). Each of the previously mentioned agenda items of the Harris government can be explored through the policy and regulations through which they were implemented. Looking at the amalgamation of Ontario municipal governments, additional policy and regulation developed by the Tories during the 1990's can be explored in order understand the additional impacts they had on the municipalities of Ontario and their respective residents.

## **2.8 Bill 26 and The Savings and Restructuring Act**

In late November 1995, Bill 26 and *The Savings and Restructuring Act* were made public by the Harris government to specifically address municipal reforms through annexation and amalgamation within the province of Ontario (Sharma, 2004; Sancton, 2015). This legislation developed a structure for municipalities to carry out a thoughtful re-structuring process (Kushner & Siegel, 2003a). If the municipalities could not achieve a level of agreement, a commissioner would then be appointed by the province to independently decide how the municipal boundaries would be developed (Sancton, 2011). The goal of Bill 26 and *The Savings and Restructuring Act* was to generate a fast-tracked approach to regional needs and, more importantly, to offer a cost-effective solution. However, the Harris government and Mike Harris himself were caught in a contradictory situation (Sharma, 2004).

In 1994, prior to the election, Harris addressed various community members of Fergus, Ontario discussing the value of a community's identity and name, and stated that



“bigger is not better” (Redway, 2014). Harris informed the community of Fergus that being tied to individual community pride and having well-established roots within a particular place should be of great value. Another objective was to provide a comparable level and quality of public services while trying to avoid duplication (Redway, 2014). However, the promulgation of *The Savings and Restructuring Act*, actually contradicted the position that Harris had taken in 1994 when he spoke to the local residents of Fergus, Ontario (Sharma, 2004).

This inconsistency in messages affected how municipalities would choose to amalgamate well into the latter parts of the 1990s and early 2000s. For example, in the Kent County (Chatham–Kent) case, the early influences of Bill 26 saw local politicians struggle to finalize how they would design and follow a thoughtful re-structuring process (Sancton, 2011; Sharma, 2004). As a result, a single individual was appointed by the commission to resolve these debates and provided the final decision that the county was to amalgamate.

This decision had previously been explored by local politicians; only 1 of the 23 municipalities actually supported this plan (Sancton, 2015). Local representatives and community members were outraged. However, the issue quickly dissolved as public officials and representatives looked to the future because they now had to compete for limited positions under a newly structured government.

As a result of Chatham–Kent’s unwanted and somewhat involuntary amalgamation, other municipalities within Ontario realized that, even if they disagreed with the notions of consolidation, they needed to race to restructure under some new annexation or amalgamation reform rather than leaving their fate in the hands of a single

commissioner, similar to Kent County (Sancton, 2015). Several municipalities within Ontario chose to amalgamate with communities of equal size and avoided amalgamation with larger urban centres that had the potential to dominate the political scene and leave small municipal concerns off political agendas. Some municipal governments went as far as to only amalgamate with municipalities that were of equal financial status (Sancton, 2015; Sharma, 2004). This tactic was used to ensure that they did not have to provide for municipalities in need of financial support. The fear of having their future determined for them scared many municipalities to act swiftly and consolidate.

However, as identified by Siegel (1997), Bill 26 had been developed under the intention of the “Common Sense Revolution” to help municipalities construct new ways to reduce government overlap, eliminate duplication, and reconsider how to address unfair downloading of responsibilities by the provincial government. What was instead seen was that municipalities received increased pressure to provide social services for a much larger area with less local representation and understanding of localized needs. Municipalities faced a series of challenges trying to define what roles their governments should take in order to generate the best outcomes for their community (Siegel, 1997). (See Figure 1).

The provincial government became more interested in the service delivery role that local government would play and less about allowing them to establish a system that

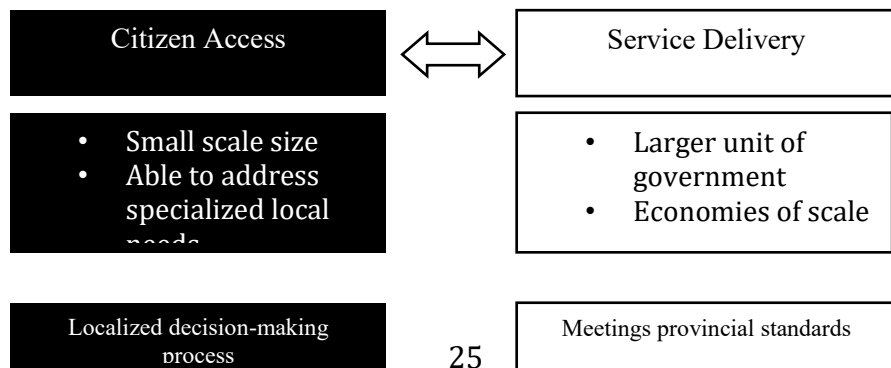


Figure 1. Contradictory Approaches for Local Governance Source: (Siegel, 1997)

was accessible to citizens. As a result of amalgamation, the small size boundaries of municipalities would not be large enough to allow for what the Harris government understood as a universalized approach to capture the larger benefits of economies of scale (Sancton, 2011). Provincial guidelines and standards laid out a precise framework for how this reform should be conducted, meaning that localized choice was actually of limited value. The contradictory roles that had to be considered by local governments are depicted in Figure 1 below.

While amalgamation in Ontario during mid to late 1990s was experienced as a voluntary act by most municipalities, it is important to note that choosing to amalgamate in order to avoid a prescribed restructuring seems far from voluntary (Sancton, 2011). This lack of choice is especially significant when it is not clearly understood whether amalgamation has lived up to its stated objectives in terms of taxes, equitable local representation in municipal decisions, grants, and regional planning, and effective and efficient service deliveries (McKay, 2004).

## **2.9 Efficiency and Effectiveness**

Efficiency was one of the fundamental reasons why the provincial government established systems of local government (Sancton, 2015). Efficiency and effectiveness, as seen through amalgamation, can be directly related to the quantity and quality of public service and how they are delivered in single municipalities. These services are affected specifically by how the government institution functions (Slack and Bird, 2013). An increase in municipal size and population ensures that municipalities are financially capable of providing a wide range of services (Slack and Bird, 2013). When discussing efficiencies related to amalgamation, they can be directly tied to the concept of

“benefiting from economies of scale”. This concept takes into consideration the number of individuals that can have a service provided to them in order to lower the cost per single unit of service, which ultimately lowers the overall cost of that service (Sancton, 2015).

## **2.10 Economies of Scale and Financial Benefits**

Extensive research has been carried out regarding the effectiveness of amalgamations in Southern Ontario (see Hollick, Siegel, & Endeavours, 2001; Kushner & Siegel, 2003a, 2003b; Sancton, 2001). With significant contributions from Joseph Kushner and David Siegel in this field of study, amalgamation and its success is quantified largely from an economic standpoint. Based on the previous studies of Hollick, Siegel, and Endeavors (2001), Kushner and Siegel have individually and collectively generated findings related to varying levels of efficiencies and effectiveness of three amalgamated communities within Southern Ontario. They have also explored similar studies within the context of the Greater Toronto Area (Kushner & Siegel, 2005; Kushner & Siegel, 2003a; Kushner & Siegel, 2003b). Their findings were presented on matters relating to quality of services offered pre-and-post amalgamation, communication and availability of councilors and community representatives under a new governing structure, and understanding if amalgamation has met the stated objective as presented under the Conservative government’s framework (Kushner & Siegel, 2003b).

Financial evaluations were also conducted alongside these same studies to understand if newly amalgamated jurisdictions benefited from economies of scale (Kushner & Siegel, 2003b). The findings suggest that, overall, citizens have not noticed any drastic changes in the delivery or quality of services post amalgamation (Kushner &

Siegel, 2003a). There were instances where amalgamation caused some displeasure among citizens, however, it was perceived to have an overall positive impact as it related to delivery and quality of services (Kushner & Siegel, 2003a). Accessibility to representatives and councilors was also seen by community members and elected officials to have not changed in any significant way.

Research has been conducted into the monetary gains that have been achieved through the most recent amalgamations in terms of economies of scale. This research includes discussions around efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery in Ontario during the mid - 1990's. According to Kushner and Siegel, in terms of financially benefiting from the consolidation of 29 communities to 3 municipalities, there were not significant changes in terms of cost saving in the municipalities' budgets (Kushner & Siegel, 2003b). It is important, however, to identify some of the most recent research on amalgamations related to cost savings. Cobban (2017) explored cost savings programs implemented through the Harris government's amalgamation policy in the late 1990's. Focusing on economies of scale and cost savings, he explored administrative costs related to economies of scale and indicated that, since the implementation of amalgamation, some cost savings have been achieved related to specific departments of municipal service. This work has demonstrated that economies of scale have been achieved in terms of administrative costs, when looking at positions that include municipal councilors, deputy clerks, Chief Administrative Officers, and members of senior staff. Cobban does, however, raise caution when exploring cost saving across other municipal departments such as fire, parks and recreation, and public works, as indications of cost savings were less clear in these areas (Cobban, 2017 p.33).

The rationale for these types of amalgamations has been reviewed in work by Sancton (2001), as he has analyzed amalgamation on both sides of the North American border to find that the reasons for consolidation have many external influences. Sancton concludes that amalgamation is less about cost-saving benefits and more about actual structures of democracy and various communities' ability to express self-governance within the larger political structures in which they are governed (Sancton, 2001).

In a similar study, Nelson (1992) examines Swedish local governments that consolidated from the late 1940's to the late 1980's. The jurisdictions were evaluated in terms of the services and resources they provided to their respective community's members. This study found that amalgamation was not the answer to solving the problems related to accountability of local representatives and poor quality of services. Instead, Nelson (1992) proposed that new government structures should be evaluated and implemented to replace the single amalgamated structure that has been ineffective for many years. Siegel (2000) specifically mentions that there is very little faith in the belief that amalgamation in Ontario provided the hoped for financial savings. While the ability to deliver services has improved in terms of land-use planning, public transportation, road infrastructure, for the most part, citizens' views and opinions towards these services remains unchanged.

When examining and evaluating the influences of amalgamation, it is important to (a) review the efficiency of services delivered once amalgamation has occurred, and (b) determine whether the financial benefits have been delivered as promised.

## **2.11 Economic Development**

There are often high levels of competition among communities to attract global investment. Investors do not care so much about boundaries of communities and are instead interested in what the community has to offer them in terms of possible revenue and resource opportunities (Sancton, 2011). The argument in favor of amalgamated municipalities is that the amalgamated municipality can act on behalf of multiple communities and has more power with what they collectively have to offer, allowing prosperity to occur across a much wider area (Sancton, 2011).

While amalgamation has presented some clear-cut benefits to larger municipalities, does it out-weigh the benefits that can be offered to small, separate municipalities? Many countries throughout the world are still choosing to avoid consolidation and avoid enlarging municipal boundaries. At the community level, however, it is vital to identify how these same processes have impacted equity and social capital for those who live within communities impacted by restructuring.

## **2.12 Equity**

While the economies of scale issue is important, equity is also important: individuals who live within a single-tiered municipality should all receive the same levels of service. Through amalgamation, communities are provided with a level of equal financial resource regardless of the economic success of their municipality. This can happen through redistribution of resources from richer to the poorer areas. This redistribution allows for an equalization of the inner areas of a municipality (Harper & Stein, 1992).

Consider the following example as it relates to equitable service delivery; an urban community, prior to amalgamation, had an effective service such as snow removal that was promptly able to address the needs of community street clearing, and a much smaller rural community in close proximity had untimely snow removal that caused many delays in local residents' lives. Here, the underlying goal of amalgamation works to equitably address these concerns through attempting to even out services for both the urban and rural communities through one uniform municipal service.

These balances are assumed to be in check for the most part within amalgamated communities of Canada. This balance differs greatly from the United States, where municipal competition and pressures from financially affluent communities create a clear imbalance. Social segregation, class, and racial issues impact the sufficient balancing of services and tax revenues (Vojnovic, 2000). However, ineffective and inequitable distribution within Canada is still prevalent within various aboriginal communities (Vojnovic, 2000). In addition to understanding levels of equity in both urban and rural communities, how do individuals within newly restructured communities relate to the boundaries that have been established through amalgamation? Have service locations changed how individuals understand the space they inhabit or altered their opinion on the community and government structures that were previously in place?

## **2.13 Sense of Belonging, Community, and Cohesion**

### **2.13.1 Sense of place, a sense of community.**

When discussing and trying to quantify how an individual within a community understands the space they inhabit during consolidation, it is important to first understand how these individuals relate to those same places and spaces (Tuan, 1977). To explore



this understanding further, the concept of “place” and “space” was given increased attention in the early 1970’s when geographers and academics began to emphasize the significances of place and space across micro and macro levels (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001). A large metropolitan area, town, village, community church, or even an individual room of a house are places and spaces that have specific meanings and understanding attached to them by individuals that identify with them for a multitude of reasons (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001). These identifying characteristics can be vague, detailed, or increasingly complex, acknowledging a city’s streetscape, a farm field that a family worked for many decades, or even a seat at an old kitchen table. Places and spaces become an individual’s understanding of seeing, experiencing, and feeling both the surrounding social and physical constructed environment (Cresswell, 2004).

Understanding the emotional responses attached to place and space comes from the early work of Yi-Fu Tuan and his depiction of place identification and the terminology “Topophilia” (Tuan, 1974). This term describes the personal and emotional connection to space and place, a synergy of two Greek words “Topos” (place) and “Philia” (love) that when put together mean “love of place” (Tuan, 1974; Holloway & Hubbard, 2001). In using this collaborated term in some of his other works, Tuan identified the need to understand the individual experience of place and space, conveyed through a range of senses such as smell, touch, and feel (Tuan, 1974). From understanding these senses comes the recognition of one’s “sense of place”.

Many decades prior to Brant County’s amalgamation, towns, villages, and hamlets that now make up the county were written about by local newspapers and political figures, such as William Kingston, for their ability to convey a romanticized

sense of place for visitors. In 1834, a writer from The Western Mercury newspaper of Hamilton, Ontario visited the village of Paris and later published a section stating;

In this vicinity are truly enchanting scenes, and sufficiently enticing to please the admirer of the charms of nature. The scenery along the Ouse - ‘Golden shores and forest of dark pines’ - is so picturesque that European strangers might find here the fairy land of their youthful dreams.

(Smith, 1956, p.39).

Romanticizing the sense of place made the landscape and natural environment of Paris something to be desired by many new European settlers. This example serves a strong early indication of how individuals connected with small villages and towns of the now consolidated county.

While it has been discussed that sense of place can generate very positive experiences, emotions, and sensory responses, it can also indicate negative emotions or experiences that are bound to a particular place or space (Massey, 1991). Continuing through the 1970 and 1980’s, Tuan and other influential academics such as Anne Buttimer, David Seamon, and Edward Relph explored concepts of place and space, mainly exploring the humanistic side of place and space and the exclusiveness or shared experience associated with each (Cresswell, 2004).

In more recent explorations related to analyzing sense of place, the work of Mendoza and Morén-Alegret (2012), discussed recent geographical investigations of sense of place that consider “the character intrinsic to place as a localized, bounded and material geographical entity, as well as the feeling of attachment and detachment that human beings experience, express and contest in relation to specific places” (Mendoza &

Morén-Alegret, 2012, p.763). Both authors also acknowledge previous literature that discusses sense of place and its incorporation into municipal policy and regulation, as planners often work to create or preserve structures or environments that make space notable or different, the planner attempts through this process, to create and promote a connection to that place (Mendoza & Morén-Alegret, 2012). As it will be discussed in the sections that follow, this sense of place can serve to connect people to their environment.

### **2.13.2 Sense of place and counter-urbanism.**

Within the sense of place literature, the romanticized concept of rural landscapes, community, and personal relationships with neighbours have been documented in conjunction with migration from urban cores and the decentralization of major industry in Western civilization (Woods, 2010). Terms such as community, sense of place, and belonging have long been attached to the ideas of rural life. The rationale for these linkages is based on the fact that rural communities are believed to offer stability, security, safety, and family protection when compared to the busy and dense populations of more urbanized environments.

This general shift and idealized escape to rural surroundings has been titled “counter-urbanization” (Berry, 1980). With pressures from competitive markets, urban preferences, urban crowding, and technological advancements, rural towns and communities have been seen as an escape from a highly developed and materialist society (Woods, 2010). As global markets have changed and major industry has relocated, rural settings along major transit corridors connecting with large metropolitan areas allow for rural relocation and sprawling settlement in agrarian communities to become increasingly

available. However, with the economic and demographic changes to small rural communities, migration also causes a series of changes for the pre-existing social and economic capital in place within rural communities (Woods, 2010). As new members of these rural communities are drawn to migrate, they often look internally for resources that will provide the most personal benefit for them and their families. This benefit could be small class size in the local school system or easy access to recreational activities. This focused attention to the community changes how these individuals identify within the community they now inhabit. Changing the individual's sense of place and identity also creates a larger shift away from the place identity that may have been established by older generation of individuals residing in the same community (Salamon, 2003; Woods, 2010). Instead, a newcomer's residence becomes a dwelling unit within a suburb and not a home that has a distinct identity and place (Salamon, 2003).

### **2.13.3 Cohesion and belonging.**

Manzo and Perkins (2006) have demonstrated the value of a sense of belonging within a community. Identifying a sense of belonging indicates that planners and government officials have to acknowledge how individual preference, perception, and emotions are all attached to a community's social connections, participation, and overall development. Often, the focus of many governing bodies has been to address political and economic needs within their community (Manzo and Perkins, 2006). The actions and goals of the Harris government during the mid-1990's demonstrated this narrow focus (Sharma, 2004). Manzo and Perkins (ibid) identify the values of individual residents and their behaviour towards a particular community as shaping how they collectively nurture its social, political, and environmental development.

Dempsey (2009) identifies a series of dimensions related to social cohesion and belonging, such as social interactions, social networks, sense of community, participation in organized events, sense of safety and acceptance, and trust and reciprocity. These dimensions are vital for how a community is shaped and how individuals understand the physical and social environments in which they live. Dempsey concludes that further work in understanding changing levels of quality in services, such as community transportation, infrastructure, schools, and public spaces within neighborhoods and communities, could provide a better understanding for why residents reside within a specific community or choose to relocate (Dempsey, 2009). As service delivery may not have seemed to change in many instances in Ontario, the recommendations presented by Dempsey seem to provide a better understanding for how individuals understand communities and neighborhoods once changes to a particular service have occurred when paired with a series of dimensions impacting individuals' physical and social environments.

#### **2.13.4 Community attitudes.**

When examining previous studies related to a sense of belonging in post amalgamation communities, it is clear that the terms “a community’s attitude” or “sense of community” are associated with a working definition of what community in fact means (Vojnovic & Poel, 2000; Kushner & Siegel, 2005; Kushner & Siegel, 2003b). In the areas of social groups, churches, clubs, and organizations, previous studies have indicated that the sense of attachment within a community was not largely influenced by amalgamation (Kushner & Siegel, 2003b).

Amalgamation can also be perceived by some individuals to have negative impacts on similar resources, such as civic buildings and programs that may have had established participation. The closing or relocation of these facilities to a more distant location, diminishes individuals' sense of connection within the community (Kushner & Siegel, 2003b). The dynamics that influence one's connection to a space and place can be subjective to the individual and may be linked to the ability to be personally invested in the community, regardless of its purpose or actions (Tuan, 1977). According to work by David Kushner in 2003, within the municipal amalgamations, there are direct links between resources, services, and how individuals understand their sense of attachment to a community. Participants in the Kushner study indicated that, if certain services were to leave their community through amalgamation, they may feel less attachment, as these services were distinct to the community.

Pole (2000) conducted a study to understand how the amalgamation within the Halifax-Dartmouth region of Nova Scotia in 1996 influenced citizens' attitudes towards their community and also towards the processes of amalgamation. The community was strongly opposed to many aspects of amalgamation, from relationships with planning staff and public officials, to feeling disconnected and a lack of leadership in their communities, and a need to change the delivery of services. A change in certain services and relationships among community representatives indicated that citizens had accepted these changes with reservations.

According to Sancton (2015), many of the discomforts and lack of faith in amalgamation were still apparent in many rural communities within the Halifax region. Crime rates, police services, access to local representatives, and a feeling of uneven

distribution of resources are indicated to have impacted residents' daily lives within many of the studies conducted throughout Halifax related to amalgamation (Dale Pole, 2000; McDavid, 2002; Sancton, 2011).

Understanding the impacts that amalgamation has on one's ability to feel a sense of place and belonging at the level of the individual citizen can serve as a vital tool in indicating the value and success of amalgamation just as much as measuring and quantifying levels of efficiency and effectiveness. How this information is collected by government officials is the next question. In order to understand place and belonging, various forms of communication, collaboration, partnership, and participation need to occur. At what level this engagement occurs is the next question. Public engagement is far from a new concept, as will be seen in the following sections exploring the profession of planning and public engagement.

#### **2.14 Planning's Place in Amalgamation**

Planning theories and practices can be evaluated to understand and improve citizen engagement methods that may have been used in amalgamation processes across Ontario. Participatory methods can allow for valued community understanding and meaningful engagement. This information serves as a vital resource in understanding a community's perspective on amalgamation and the weight planning and larger governing bodies can have on policies and procedures related to municipal government. Planning and the value of public participation are not new concepts, dating back well over a half a century. Citizen participation and various levels of engagement have been a part of the planning and decision-making process throughout North America for several decades.

## **2.15 Evolutions in Public Participation and Planning Theory**

### **2.15.1 1950's to 1960's Public participants and planning professionals.**

During much of the 1950's and into the early 1960's, planning was considered a disconnected profession, very much influenced by the theories of rational planning or the "Blue Print" method (Skeffington Committee, 2013; Faludi, 1987, as cited in Lane, 2005). This method saw the general formation of planning without public participation. In a very autocratic hierarchy, the political structure appeared to solicit public participation when, in reality, the public input was predetermined (Faludi, 1987, as cited in Lane, 2005).

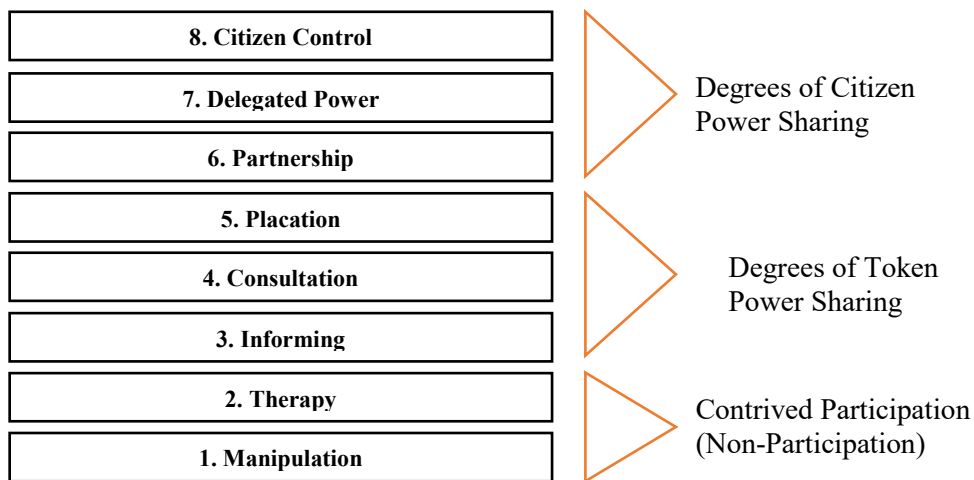
As time progressed into the early 1960's, citizens were provided with the right to participate in decision-making processes in a more meaningful way in many North American cities. The public pushed for greater participation at the local community level and at the provincial level with the development of new planning policy (Hodge & Gordon, 2008). Inclusion in the planning process was seen by planning professionals and academics as a means to resolving conflicts that many individuals and groups began to show (Hodge & Gordon, 2008). Individuals became increasingly upset with planning and city officials due to the displacement of poor and low-income individuals in response to the urban renewal policies that were prevalent in the United States and, to a lesser, extent, As the top-down relationship positioned planners above the general public, this hierarchy began to be tested by citizens trying to find ways to enable the "have not" citizens of society (Arnstein, 1969). These minorities included African Americans, Mexican Americans, Indians, and Whites who aided in the economic and demographic growth of



North American cities and established a change in planning, which had not yet accounted for these individuals' voices, opinion and rights (Arnstein, 1969).

**2.15.1.1 Ladder of participation.**

Sherry Arnstein (1969) developed a categorization of public participation within planning in her work titled “*A Ladder of Citizen Participation*” (Figure 2). She examines public participation at varying levels and developed these levels into a refined series of 8 categories or “rungs”.



*Figure 2. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation*  
*Source: (Arnstein, 1969; Hodge & Gordon, 2008)*

When proceeding through the 8 rungs, one climbs from the lowest level of contrived participation, “Manipulation”, ascending the ladder past the varying degrees of citizen participation with “Citizen Control” being at the top rung. Each rung represents a higher degree of citizen inclusion and power sharing in the planning process (Arnstein, 1969; Hodge & Gordon, 2008). Most importantly, Arnstein recognized not only a lack of public inclusion in planning processes but the need to represent all members of society in the planning of communities, specifically those “have not” citizens from migrant populations and minorities (Arnstein, 1969). Arnstein believed that reaching complete

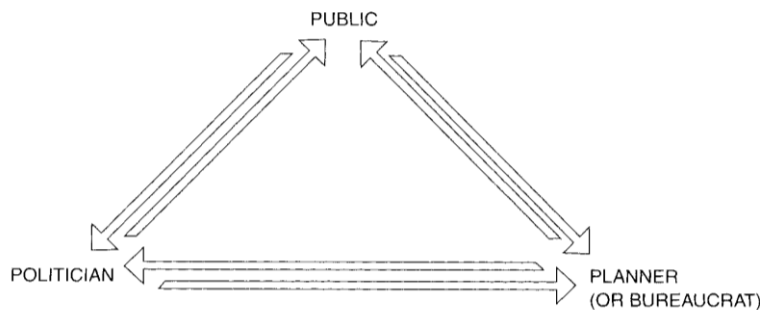
“Citizen Control” might be unrealistic as both ends of the participation ladder are less about power sharing and instead return to autocratic styles of power (Arnstein, 1969). While during this time period approaches related to power sharing in planning may have been risky for planning officials because taking this risk could lead to a different planning approach, one which Arnstein saw as a move away from a “Mickey Mouse Approach” to one that included all members of a community with true representation and not empty rituals (Arnstein, 1969).

#### **2.15.2 The 1970’s to 1980’s Public participants and planning professionals.**

Work by Roberts (1974) demonstrates the planning profession moving into the 1970’s continued to improve upon communication and public involvement strategies. Progressing, the profession began to seek new ways to stimulate public interest and recognized the previous inflexible approaches to citizen involvement in planning processes. Planners and academics in Canadian cities began to identify value in recognizing social classes within communities throughout Canadian provinces and explored the demographic compositions of communities and their needs related to housing, amenities, and transportation (Wolforth, 1971). With new approaches to public participation, new methods of communication were developed to create opportunities for ongoing and continued communication between citizens, planners, and politicians (Hodge, 1986). Into the mid 1980’s the challenges between these three parties started to be viewed as valued social collaboration and an educational opportunity (Hodge, 1986). The interactions between these parties became another valued stage in community planning (Hodge, 1986). At the same time as changes were occurring to public engagement and participation in North America, similar improvements were occurring in

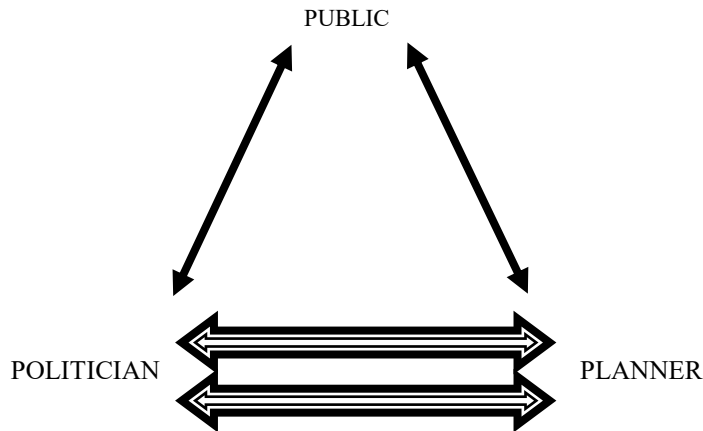
other parts of the Western world. The Skeffington Committee was established in Britain in order to develop a report that would aid in identifying new ways to involve the public and explore new avenues to engage the public in the planning process (Roberts, 1974). Other improvements to British planning practices during this time period saw planning professionals continue to increase communication and engagement methods, with citizen activist groups growing and additional information sources being provided (Roberts, 1974). Exploring the work of the Skeffington Committee (2013), although not specific to North America, is valuable as it mirrors practices followed in North America. Following planning practices and municipal structure from the 1970's through to the 1990's some central governments in the Western world began to see amalgamation as a means to reduce the size of government and to promote economic development (Sancton, 2000). Understanding the goals of governing bodies in both European and North American countries can indicate how public participation may have changes as a result of restructuring.

**2.15.2.1 Six-sided triangle.**



*Figure 3. Lash's Triangle of Participation*  
*Source: (Lash, 1976; Hodge & Gordon, 2008)*

When reviewing the significance of Harry Lash’s work on the “Six-Sided Triangle” (seen in Figure 3), Lash believed the success rate of the planning process to be determined largely by the degree in which three parties (the public, the planner, and the



*Figure 4. Adjusted Triangle of Participation*

politician) are able to achieve common goals together (Lash, 1976). The arrows between the three parties indicate a balanced relationship (Lash, 1976, Hodge & Gordon, 2008). However, the triangle developed by Lash may have more realistically been represented by a linear flow of information between the politicians and the planners, as that is where the majority of communication took place (see Figure 4).

Lash, similar to the work of Arnstein, understood the value of balanced relationships, input, and feedback across multiple parties. Between the three parties addressed by Lash, a wide array of new skills could be developed over time within planning practices. Trust, citizen education, and meeting personal and professional goals could all be established to effectively display community planning for the future (Lash, 1976; Arnstein, 1969).

### **2.15.3 1990 – Present: public participants and planning professionals.**

Moving from the 1980's to the 1990's, professional planners developed a better understanding for how large-scale development could benefit from increased public participation (Teitz, 1997). In the case of American cities during the 1990's, several planners were investing much of their efforts in community development within the inner regions of cities (Teitz, 1997). In locations such as Los Angeles, where major issues were stemming from the effects of poverty, planners tried to implement advocacy and equity planning (Teitz, 1997). Planners worked with city officials to compile information in an effort to develop policies to help those who were disadvantaged (Teitz, 1997). They became advocates for what they believed would provide more resources for the poor and working-class population (Teitz, 1997).

More recently, moving into the new millennium, planners began working in close partnership with the public as they analyzed civic engagement. They experimented with new ways to get citizens more involved in planning decisions based on the needs of the entire community (Hoene et al, 2013).

This process allowed citizens equal opportunity to participate in establishing and addressing planning needs for both the short and long term. "Bright Spots in Community Engagement", produced by the L. Knight Foundation, examined 14 communities across the United States (Hoene et al, 2013). It explored how experimentation with new tools and resources could be used to engage citizens in the planning process (Hoene et al, 2013). Citizens were then empowered to tackle large-scale issues and concerns within their communities. Various communities and cities were able to develop new plans and

policies, in collaboration with the community members that reflected the goals of the population as a whole within the planning framework (Hoene et al, 2013).

***2.15.3.1 1990's Theorists Judith Innes, Sarah Connick and David Booher.***

In their work titled “Informality as a Planning Strategy”, Innes, Connick and Booher (2007) explore more recent large-scale community collaboration programs that have been developing in the United States. These authors acknowledge the informal structures that provide the public with opportunities to influence planning decisions, signaling a shift in planning theory away from formal government structure, where the focus is on centralization of power (Innes et al., 2007, p.200). A case study in California related to collaborative programming (CALFED) (state (CAL) and federal (FED) agencies participating in Bay-Delta Accord), explored the use of informal structures to develop task groups and committees in order to combat the conflicting interests related to water allocation that has divided citizens (Innes et al., 2007).

The 1990's saw large changes in terms of citizen participation and the creation of a forum that placed the collective gains ahead of individual needs in order to develop policies and action plans (Innes et al., 2007). Although the overall success of this approach continues to be assessed, it is hard to ignore the value of collaborative planning in bringing various stakeholders together in an informal setting, to develop effective plans related to all community members and their environment (Innes et al., 2007; Hoene et al, 2013).

After evaluating the evolution of citizen engagement and the contributions of various academics, planning theory can be further analyzed to understand additional

models of citizen participation. These models can add to the current understanding of how to effectively engage citizens in municipal processes and how these same processes can evolve to become even more valuable when engaging citizens at various stages of planning practice. Studying these models also enhances understanding of how they can be applied when looking at the processes of amalgamation and ensuring citizens and local residents are view as valued stakeholders in all aspects of a restructuring process.

## **2.16 Progression of Planning Theory**

The ability to engage citizens within the planning process has taken large steps. No longer do citizens sit on the lower rungs of Arnstein’s participation ladder (Arnstein, 1969; Hodge & Gordon, 2008). Instead, they have become increasingly well educated. They are also more vocal and require their vested interest in the plan making process to be constant, rather than on a part time basis (Guyadeen & Seasons 2016).

Planners must meet these demands and find new ways to make “partnerships” with citizens and stakeholders (Hodge & Gordon, 2008). Choosing how to communicate with the post-modernist individual requires that the collaborative process be fair but also engaging (Filion, 2014c).

Consider the use of media tools and techniques which were used by the Greater Kansas Area city government (Johnson & Graves, 2011). Through the use of a television talk show, various topics were discussed that directly related to different communities in the Greater Kansas Area and the discussion was conducted in a live on-air format (Johnson & Graves, 2011). This gave citizens of all ages a chance to learn about and participate in planning processes through a new engaging platform. Some citizens were filmed live at round table meetings and voiced their concerns to the viewers, while others

had the opportunity to call in and respond with issues, concerns, and new ideas (Johnson & Graves, 2011). Rather than trying to get a turnout to the mundane public meetings that had previously been rarely attended, all members of the community thought this new method gained interest from various age groups and stakeholders (Johnson & Graves, 2011).

Current planning practice must provide incentive to the citizens, as their participation is vital. As Hodge and Gordon (2008) suggest, planners need to give the public the tools they need to be assets in the planning process (Hodge & Gordon, 2008). The planning process will continually need to adapt in order to continue to meet the needs of all stakeholders and ensure that all voices are heard.

One can look at the normative processes of the Rational Comprehensive Model (RCM) and see that this top-down model has had an impact on how planning has developed as a discipline (Hodge & Gordon, 2008; Filion, 2014). It has limited public input and provided limited opportunities for reviewing the process. Its effects can still be seen on current planning practices (Hodge & Gordon, 2008). This scientific approach to planning consistently fails to be well reasoned, can present many gaps in accurate data, and has general assumptions that often leaves out stakeholders and, more importantly, citizens (Hodge & Gordon, 2008).

Secondly, under examination of the Transactive Model one can see that this model has planners recognizing that their own knowledge and skill sets may have been of significant value in the RCM model but, in this model, they need to combine their knowledge with the goals and objectives of society at large to be of more value (Filion, 2014b). No longer will the RCM process, followed by Robert Moses, focus solely on the



goals of government and elite members of society. The Transactive Model, however, needs a framework to combine both expert and public knowledge. Without both of those pieces coming together, it difficult for the Transactive Model to stand alone as an effective planning model for current society (Filion, 2014b).

The last of the normative models to be examined will be the Advocacy Model. This model looks to redefine public participation and reach all stakeholders, not just those well represented in public spheres but also those marginalized within society (Filion, 2014b). This model pushes planners to mobilize the public and help them voice their concerns, ones that may have previously been overlooked in the planning process (Filion, 2014b). This task, however, is not always comfortable for a planner, specifically in municipal settings, as the planner can be trying to accommodate individuals' goals and objectives that may conflict with the goals and objectives being developed within their governmental organization (by politicians) (Filion, 2014b). This model is effective but is not universal as it looks to bring equality but cannot always be fairly implemented (Filion, 2014b).

These models serve as a way to understand our past and improve our current planning structures. Interpretative perspectives and models can also be examined to understand the form that planning should currently take (Filion, 2014). The interpretive perspective of Post-Modernism serves as a vital tool for understanding the need for better communicative planning. Since the early 1970's we have seen changes in life values, diversity, points of view, demographic compositions, education, and overall equity (Filion, 2014c). All these changes identify a shift in power as planners must provide unbiased information, listen to a wide variety of concerns, implement changes based on

feedback provided, and allow everyone a platform for expression (Filion, 2014c). All these areas can cause great difficulty for planners, and this perspective, while well understood, needs a more balanced understanding of current society in order to be implemented into an effective, tangible model (Filion, 2014c).

A second interpretative model to look at is the Incremental Model. This model identifies some of the challenging issues currently existing within planning organizations (Filion, 2014b). Most organizations do not respond well to large-scale decision-making changes. The known conditions in which they currently exist often bring with them levels of comfort, understanding, and comprehension (Filion, 2014b). Large-scale change is difficult and uncomfortable. For these reasons, the Incremental Model supports smaller scale or segmented changes to occur over longer periods of time (Filion, 2014b). This method has seen some success in addressing planning issues linked to areas like upgrading Peterborough's infrastructure after multiple years of flooding (Oulahen & Doberstein, 2012).

The question that remains is how to effectively engage participants in the decision-making process. Amalgamation was a process that had very rushed timelines in various rural communities of Southern Ontario. The province wanted to complete this process in short succession to avoid political consequence (Miljan & Spicer, Z. 2015). In this instance, when the process of amalgamation was rushed, it by no means followed an incremental approach.

Beyond the examining planning theory and how to best engage participants, it is also of value to explore alternatives to the actual restructuring process that is amalgamation. Additional literature can support alternative options that may have been a

valuable solution for rural and urban communities of Ontario during the late 1990's and early 2000's.

## **2.17 The Value of the Alternatives**

### **2.17.1 Two tier governments.**

As demonstrated by Slack & Bird (2013), the two-tier governing model consists of an upper tier governing body, beginning with a district, region, or metropolitan area, and a lower tier governing body composed of two or more villages, towns, or cities. It is the expected responsibility of the upper tier to deliver services that will generate benefits on a region wide scale, taking advantage of the economies of scale. The lower tiered municipalities are tasked with providing services that are specific to their local area's needs.

The two-tiered structure differs greatly from amalgamated one-tier systems in its ability to address accountability, efficiency, and local responsiveness. The duplication of services has been presented as a counter argument against two-tiered systems. There is still, however, validity in this structure's ability to address specialized at the regional level while allowing the smaller issues to be effectively managed at the local level.

Charles Tiebout supports the goals of two-tiered governments. Tiebout saw the value in structuring municipalities so that they are able to provide for the specialized needs of their individual communities (Sancton, 2011; Tiebout, 1956). However, a weakness in Tiebout's arguments is that he does not address the complexity of the taxation process at the local level. As each individual community has specialized needs, they need to have input into how their services are structures and accounted for. (Sharma, 2004).

Being specific to each individual community, the upper tier governing structure may in fact be unable to provide for specialized, local needs that have been established by a community (Sharma, 2004).

### **2.17.2 Voluntary cooperation.**

This governing model is specifically structured around the fact that there is no single, independent institutional status (Slack & Bird, 2013). Very common in the United States, Voluntary Cooperation establishes an interrelationship between local authorities within a region or an agreed upon structure between multiple municipalities. This system is seen as being generated from the bottom up when compared to the one- or two-tiered governing systems, being that it starts at the localized level in comparison to originating from the region-wide perspective (Slack & Bird, 2013).

As municipalities choose to co-operate, the varying levels of collaboration between varied political agendas can take place. This form of cooperation can allow municipalities to collectively propose new taxes for infrastructure development projects or address concerns on how to tax for regional public service (Slack & Bird, 2013). If there is some misunderstanding between municipalities and their localized goals, this disparity can create some debate and force bargaining to occur, which can create an uneven playing field (Slack & Bird, 2013).

However, a significant benefit to this governing structure is that, with these various debates and disagreements, it is very easy to dismantle any of the relationships between local authorities under the framework with which they were originally developed. This restructuring allows for greater flexibility and cost effectiveness. By comparison, amalgamation incurs transaction costs and restructuring that can be quite

time consuming for everyone involved (McKay, 2004; Sancton, 2011; Slack & Bird, 2013).

### **2.17.3 Joint boards.**

As identified by Thornton (1995), it is difficult, without the clear restructuring of amalgamation, to achieve levels of integration that consider the best of both worlds. It is challenging to provide the benefits of capturing economies of scale in order to provide efficient and effective service delivery while remaining small enough to keep political agendas specific to localized needs. Thornton's concerns were addressed through the government model of Joint Boards, proposed by Dollery & Johnson (2005). Joint Boards work on the concept that individual municipalities retain their own governance based on distinct boundaries.

Municipalities have a larger shared administrative and operational body called a "Joint Board" that allows for municipalities to collectively reap the benefits of economies of scale. Each municipality elects councilors to equally represent their individual needs on this board. Allowing for greater regional participation and, more importantly, respecting the history of the community and preserving a sense of place, the goals and ambitions of Joint Boards address some of the less quantifiable qualities that amalgamation has often avoided. As we have seen in the case of many Canadian provinces during the 1990's, their amalgamation concerns were only related to addressing the collective benefits from an economic standpoint (Hollick, Siegel, & Endeavours, 2001; Kushner & Siegel, 2003a; Sancton, 2001).

This governing model does have potential areas of conflict, as competing interests between various municipalities within a single Joint Board still exist. However, the

largest difference between amalgamation and Joint Boards is that the emphasis on restructuring does not relate to resource efficiencies and effectiveness. Instead, Joint Boards look to address representation and fix its efficiencies and effectiveness through the implementation of multiple small councils that can be brought together for collaborative management of a wider regional area (Dollery & Johnson, 2005). Joint Boards serve as a suitable alternative to amalgamation by addressing its inability to respond to concerns such as individual sense of belonging, attachment, cohesion, and acceptance within individual municipalities.

After evaluating each alternative governing model, questions still remain at the level of the individual citizen, the community, and their understanding of the municipal boundaries they resided in. Although each alternative previously discussed may have served as a suitable alternative for many of the more recent municipal amalgamations across Ontario, the processes of amalgamation needs to further explore the various social dynamics beyond the quantifiable economic values.

## **2.18 Research Topic**

In conducting the literature review, it became clear that there currently exists extensive research on the efficiencies and effectiveness of amalgamations within Southern Ontario (Hollick, Siegel, & Endeavours, 2001; Kushner & Siegel, 2003a; Kushner & Siegel, 2003b; Sancton, 2001). While each of these studies has discussed and quantified many aspects of amalgamation as they relate to economic profitability, several of these studies only begin to scratch the surface in relation to measuring various social dynamics that have been influenced by the processes of amalgamation.

## **2.19 Expert Discussion**

An open ended and semi-structured interview and discussion, conducted with Professor Andrew Sancton, was instrumental in informing this investigation. A now retired professor from Western University, Professor Sancton has over thirty years of experience teaching courses related to Canadian local government, and can be identified as one of the key experts on the topic of government restructuring and the processes of amalgamation. Having published numerous articles and books on the topic of amalgamation, Professor Sancton's time was an intricate part of this study. It allowed for comparison and triangulation when exploring the personal results and findings of the study against the larger processes of amalgamation within Ontario, and throughout the world. Sancton's book *Merger Mania: The Assault on Local Government* discusses his "interest in building institutions that enable citizens collectively to control some aspects of their lives outside the structure of huge government". While taking a different approach as it relates to community connection, sense of place, attachment, and belonging, Sancton's work has influenced aspects of this research questions and the specific interest of amalgamations within the rural communities of Southern Ontario.

## **2.20 Research Question**

Concluding this literature review, the basis of this research focused on the following overarching research questions, as they relate to the experience with amalgamation in the case study, Brant County:

How have residents' sense of place and community in Brant County been affected by amalgamation?

What were the methods of public engagement within this process, and were there implications for planning processes and policies?

## **2.21 Conclusions from the Literature Research**

The literature has identified multiple key themes. These key themes include: the history of amalgamation within Canada; rationale for recent amalgamations within the province of Ontario; understanding sense of belonging, community, cohesion and attachment as they relate to annexations and amalgamation; and lastly plausible reform alternatives that are available in relation to amalgamation. The concepts and theories serve as a basis for identifying clear gaps in previous works and aid in gathering a better understanding of how individuals within communities understand the processes of amalgamation, and their outlook on the identity and sense of place within their respective communities before and after consolidation occurred.



## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research questions

This chapter outlines the methods implemented through a thoroughly developed research design in order to answer the main concerns of the research question and, in doing so, answer the cornerstone questions of *who, what, why, how, where, and when* (Berg, Lune, & Lune, 2004). Each of these questions give direct focus and purpose to the study methodology and provide a greater understanding of the data in the context and setting of Brant County.

The purpose of this research was to develop an improved understanding of the consultation processes that were used during the amalgamation with Brant County and, from these findings, understand how individuals within the communities of Brant County perceived their input to be valued during the consultation process of amalgamation. In this research, a case study design of Brant County with a qualitative research approach was chosen. This research links both the negative and positive impacts citizens expressed and conveyed to members of government and municipal employees during the processes of amalgamation in Brant County.

#### 3.1.1 Research questions and objectives.

This research sought to answer the following questions:

- ⇒ In what ways was public consultation facilitated during the implementation of amalgamation in Brant County?
- ⇒ How did government officials perceive public consultation to take place?
- ⇒ How has sense of place and community in Brant County been affected by amalgamation?

⇒ Has amalgamation had larger impacts on how the communities of Brant County have been planned for in terms of policy development and service delivery?

The formulation of each research question was rooted within the identified gaps of the literature review and those questions were then refined based on the case study area with potential outcomes identified in Table 2 below.

Through answering these questions, it was the overarching goal of this research to explore how individuals within communities understand how they were informed, consulted, and participated in the processes of amalgamation. From those findings, it sought to understand their outlook on the identity of their respective communities before and after consolidation occurred. This study answered these questions by synthesizing a combination of information from semi-structured interviews and content analysis.

### **3.2 Case Study**

Through a case study design, this research explored the events, processes, and outcomes of Brant County's amalgamation during the late 1990's. According to Yin (2012), case studies are of great value when trying to understand outcomes for how or why something such as amalgamation happened and what has occurred as a direct or indirect result. While this method has been criticized for only being an introductory piece of research that requires additional exploration, this design serves as a valuable resource to the qualitative interview and content analysis methods chosen for this research.

**Table 2. Potential Results and Outcomes**

<b><u>Research questions</u></b>	<b><u>Qualitative research methods</u></b>	<b><u>Potential Results and Outcomes</u></b>
1. In what ways was public consultation facilitated during the implementation of amalgamation in Brant County?	Semi-Structured Interviews with past: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Political Leaders</li> <li>○ Government Officials</li> <li>○ Community Organizations</li> <li>○ Various Administrative Representatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Key Informants expressed that public consultation was/was not sufficiently conducted.</li> <li>○ Contact with and participation from the public was/was not experienced during the public information and consultation stages of amalgamation.</li> <li>○ Municipal and Provincial representatives did/did not incorporate feedback and information gathered during public and community meetings into final decision-making processes.</li> </ul>
2. How did government officials perceive public consultation to take place?	Semi-Structured Interviews with past: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Political Leaders,</li> <li>○ Government Officials</li> <li>○ Community Organizations</li> <li>○ Various Administrative Representatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The community was/was not very active in providing feedback in the process.</li> <li>○ Community members from select cities, towns, and villages were for or against amalgamation.</li> <li>○ Past political leaders were/were not in constant communication with the public during the processes of amalgamation.</li> <li>○ Key informants identified the following locations of where public consultation took place.</li> </ul>
3. How has sense of place and community in Brant County been affected by amalgamation?	Content Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Media Observations</li> <li>○ Transcripts</li> <li>○ Interviews</li> <li>○ Minutes</li> <li>○ Documents, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It has not, individuals still identify as being members of the communities they lived in prior to amalgamation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It has changed and individuals from Brant County identify as members of the County rather than select cities, towns, and villages they live in.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ There is a divide between the communities of Brant County as a result of amalgamation.</li> <li>○ The relocation of resources has still left some members of Brant County upset, changing their opinions of the County.</li> <li>○ Media print and content analysis indicated that the issues of amalgamation are/ are not still present for many individuals living in County of Brant today.</li> </ul>
4. Has amalgamation had larger impacts on how the communities of Brant County have been planned for in terms of policy development and service delivery?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-Structured Interviews</li> <li>• Content Analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The allocation of resources and services has/has not made some locations in the County more desirable in terms of living and spending recreational time.</li> <li>○ Policy development and long-term planning have/ have not been affected, as each community has continued to see the same rates of economic and social growth.</li> </ul>

Formed in 1851, Brant County was originally a part of Wentworth & Oxford County and consisted of Brantford Township, Burford Township, Oakland Township, Onondaga Township, South Dumfries Township, and Tuscarora Township (Six Nations Indian Reserve, New Credit Indian Reserve) (Middleton, 1927). On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999 Brant County saw the restructuring of the Townships of Brantford, Burford, South Dumfries, Onondaga, Oakland, and the Town of Paris into a single municipality, with the exception of Brantford, which was not a part of this amalgamation process (as seen in Table 3) (County of Brant, 2014; Brant Public Library, 2014; Smith, 1956). This study focuses on the impacts that amalgamation has generated over the course of the last century, specifically analyzing various aspects of amalgamations within the province of Ontario.

**Table 3. Restructuring of Municipalities**

Source: (County of Brant, 2014)

<b>City/District</b>	<b><u>Party Municipalities</u></b>				
Brant (Former)	Paris, Town/ Brantford, Township/ Burford, Township/Oakland, Township/Onondaga, Township/ South Dumfries, Township- Amalgamation				
	Brantford, City/ Brant County- Annexation				
<b><u>New Municipal Name</u></b>	<b><u>New Municipal Status</u></b>	<b><u>Approval Type</u></b>	<b><u>Royal Assent Order Date</u></b>	<b><u>Gazetted Date</u></b>	<b><u>Effective Date</u></b>
County of Brant (Name/ Change February 6, 1999)	Single Tier	Minister's order	January 26, 1998	February 14, 1998	January, 1999
No Change		Minister's order	September 22, 2004	October 9, 2004	October 1, 2004

### **3.3 Research Approach**

#### **3.3.1 Qualitative approach.**

When providing a clear research design, investigators must identify the type of study they will undertake in order to determine what methods and methodologies they will implement during the course of their studies. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, research strategies have remained predominantly based on quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell, 2014). These methods have given validity to measured statistical approaches and also the ability to construct personal interpretation and meaning from data sources (Creswell, 2014).

Serving as the main focus of this research, a qualitative methodological approach was chosen to understand the social and political aspects of amalgamation in Brant County. Observing and analyzing behaviours, written communication, and personal responses of lived experiences through semi-structured interviews allowed for this research design to emphasize meaningful participant involvement (Creswell, 2014).

The underlying strength in qualitative research and the semi-structured interview process can be found within the validity of its processes. During interview practices, researchers can establish a level of detail that can allow for the results of their work to be understood as true, believable, and complete interpretations of the views and experiences of the individuals being interviewed. Limitations of qualitative research can be linked to sample sizes, when evaluating the methodology of some studies.

Academics supportive of quantitative research methods prefer large sample sizes and official statistical data sets that can be extracted, often overlooking opportunities and methods used to analyze behavioural aspects of a study (Hakim, 2000). Hakim (2000)

stated,

Whether one is seeking explanation at the social structural level, or at the level of the individual choices and lifestyle, qualitative research is valuable for identifying patterns of association between factors on the ground, as compared with abstract correlation between variables in the analysis of large scale surveys and aggregate data (p.36).

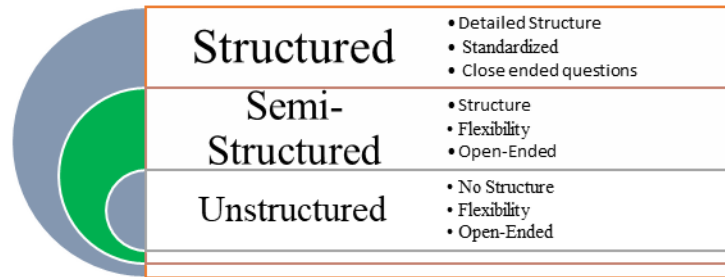
### **3.4 Research Methods**

In identifying the current gaps in literature as they relate to the amalgamation, the structure of this research focused on qualitative methods. As demonstrated in earlier sections of the literature review, several researchers (Pole, 2000; McDavid, 2002; Sancton, 2011) developed similar studies in order to understand the changing needs of communities and residents after consolidation and restructuring had occurred, to understand the perceptions of individual community members, and to assess overall government changes. Each of these studies conducted interview processes and survey methods to extract both qualitative and quantitative data.

#### **3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews.**

The first step of this research was to conduct semi-structured interviews through purposefully selecting key informant participants. As understood by Turner (2010), the purpose of qualitative interview research is to understand the themes of the participants' perceptions of life relating to particular topics. Walking the thin line between everyday conversations while remaining professional, the effectiveness of purposeful interviewing relies on a specific approach and technique of questioning. Interviewing through face-to-face structure with key informants required semi-structured interviews to be conducted

with past political leaders, government officials, community organizations, and various administrative members who represented the county during the period of amalgamation. Semi-structured interviews, when compared with two other main interview methods (structured and unstructured) can be located directly in the middle of the interviewing spectrum as outlined in Figure 5 below.



*Figure 5. Interview Method Spectrum*

Structured interviews can be viewed as tightly guided procedures that set out to answer a list of detailed and standardized close ended questions, often producing quantitative data (Seidman, 2013).

Unstructured interviews, more closely linked to semi-structured interviews, cannot actually be considered “unstructured” as they do follow some loosely defined guidelines. In most cases there may be one or two organic questions in this interviewing method that the interviewer will ask of the interviewee, and based on conversation, that interviewer may respond to comments or feedback they find interesting. Unstructured interview methods should be seen as a recording of friendly conversation (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews, as chosen for this study, can be seen as a method which has a list of questions and broader topics that are outlined in an interview guide, giving the interviewer a structured path to take interviewee’s along over the course of the

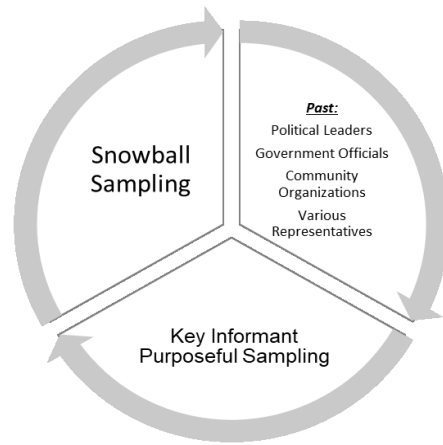
interview. The interview guide may not be followed exactly as it is outlined. Focus must be used by the interviewer to give importance and structure to conversation and questions from the guide that they feel are of value and will extract additional details and information (Bryman, 2015). In choosing the semi-structured interview method for this study, it was a process that offered structure and, most importantly, flexibility which places it directly in between the approaches of structured and unstructured interview methods.

The purpose of this method was to identify individuals that can provide understanding of the processes that were performed in order to implement amalgamation, communicating what structures and procedures were put in place for public consultation during amalgamation. It also looked to review the successes, shortcomings, and feedback that have been experienced within the community of Brant since amalgamation was implemented. This information served as the primary source of the research findings and was used in conjunction with content analysis once it had been recorded, labeled (coded), and stored.

#### **3.4.2 Sampling method.**

One main sub-group was questioned in this interview process, identifying those in past public service roles within the communities of Brant County. These positions are identified in Figure 6 below. As part of the methodological approach, two main techniques were chosen: purposeful sampling of key informants and snowball sampling methods.





*Figure 6. Sampling Methods*

As part of selection process for this research, the first qualitative method chosen was to purposefully select individuals through the key informant technique. According to Tremblay (1957), key informants are used as the primary sources on topics including organization, economics, and political structure.

This technique is used for gathering qualitative and descriptive information that may otherwise be time consuming through quantitative survey methods. This sampling method is used in order to avoid overlooking informants who could potentially add to an in-depth understanding of key aspects of amalgamation and reach out to participants who previously held specialized roles within the community on various topics related to amalgamation (Tremblay, 1957, p.689).

Taking advantage of larger social networks, the snowball sampling method was used to identify additional key informants. As primary interviews with key informants are conducted, concluding questions probe informants on the names of other subjects that can potentially offer further specialized interviews (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Some concerns with snowball sampling are that primary interview contacts often provide bias when providing researchers with secondary interview sources. For the purpose of this research,

the snowball sampling method avoided bias as informants identified through this sampling method were evaluated based on the criteria outlined in the sampling methods for targeting informants of past public servants of Brant County (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). The number of participants interviewed in this research is explained as follows:

- I. Accessibility to key informants that previously held positions as political leaders, government officials, or individuals employed in various municipal administrative roles was a factor. Locating previous key informants became a challenging task as several of these individuals have relocated outside of Brant County since their years of employment in the county, and others have since move into assisted living facilities or passed away.
- II. It can be difficult to obtain interviews with all key informants that meet the requirements identified above due to issues of availability, experience, and understanding of amalgamation (key informants may be a new employee or public official not aware of what transpired during amalgamation in Brant County).

The number of secondary sources identified through snowball sampling resulted in the overlapping of potential interview sources. This overlap was directly related to the time period in which key informants were being selected. Amalgamation took place in the late 1990's and in selecting available key informants employed by the county during this time period, results of the snowball sampling methods lead to some saturation in this sampling method as similar key informants were repeated as potential interview candidates.

A finalized number of interview participants could not be identified at the outset of this research and sampling method. Accessibility and availability played a large factor in determining the total number of participants. The concept of qualitative saturation also serves as a useful tool to help identify an approach to finalizing a number of participants (Creswell, 2014). This research identified saturation based on assessing interview data that no longer lent itself to new ideas or information that no longer sparked additional data inquiries.

### **3.5 Interview Format and Analysis**

Using a semi structured design, interviewers are able to dive deeper into both social and personal matters with key informants (DiCicco-Bloom, & Crabtree, 2006). With a goal of allowing open-ended questions to stimulate conversation and opinions from participants, this interview structure allowed for a conversational environment to be established and avoided power relations existing between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2014). Each of the questions that were provided to participants were formulated from a combination of literature review findings and correlated with findings from primary review of content analysis in the form of archived media articles and public meeting minutes.

Digital recordings and hand notes were taken during interviews. Once interviews were conducted and data repeatedly reviewed, the later stages of data analysis occurred, transcribing both audio and hand-written notes and coding information into many categories from both key informants and snowball sampling participants. Using open coding as the primary level of coding, distinct concepts and categories were chosen to serve as the basic units for analysis.

This analysis was done through manual observation of transcripts and notes, providing color coding for each concept and category. In addition, secondary axial coding was used to confirm that the selected categories and concepts were valid representations of the responses provided by interview participants. This confirmation provided additional support in asking supplementary questions, confirming that in coding all interviews important aspects were identified and given proper consideration (Creswell, 2014; Biddix, 2009).

### **3.5.1 Content analysis.**

Preliminary research and review of media sources from the time of amalgamation indicated the value in reviewing multiple forms of content for data analysis, to understand the events that transpired leading up to amalgamation and those that occurred after its implementation. As indicated by Stemler (2001), content analysis can provide strong empirical evidence on the changes in public opinion. The qualitative objectives of this method categorize all types of recorded communication (media observations, transcripts, interviews, minutes, documents, etc.) and, through this code, identify themes and patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

This controlled approach followed content and analytical rules to review multiple forms of material without the requirement for quantifying data (Mayring, 2000). A challenge in this type of analysis can be the reliability and validity of information being reviewed. Some sources may have biases and require the researcher to perform additional observations or triangulation with other sources for confirmation. In addition, the researcher must ensure that the data set is not too large. As indicated by Krippendorff (2004), in some cases researchers cannot handle the sheer volume of data available to

identify and extract valuable information. For this reason, this study will engage in content analysis that explores patterns and trends which are only qualitative in nature and based on smaller data sets.

Descriptive coding was selected to help synthesize information collected from media observations, transcripts, interviews, minutes, documents and other sources. As indicated by Saldaña (2015), descriptive coding can serve as the primary way to categorize main topics within documents, correspondence, diaries, videos, artifacts, and a wide variety of data forms. Steps were taken, using this method, to categorize and create an index of all documented content. From this a second cycle of coding allowed all passages and content coded with similar codes to be extracted from their original fields, reviewed in primary coding stages, and relocated together under a separate structured document for further analytical observation.

### **3.5.2 Ethics and validation.**

The basis of this research involved human participants, including past government officials, or individuals employed in municipal administrative roles before and during the amalgamation of Brant County. Each of the data collection procedures and methodologies for this study were submitted in the fall of 2016 to the Office of Research Ethics for approval prior to beginning data collection. To ensure proper ethical practices, it was important for this study to incorporate principles related to dignity and privacy of individuals, not bringing any participants harm as a result of this study (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

In order to recruit participants, it was ethically important that the researcher was clearly identified, the purpose of the research was clearly indicated, and the potential

participants were provided with the proper information letter and consent forms. In providing these forms, participants understood that their participation was voluntary, and outlined the rights and responsibilities of the interviewer and interviewees engaged in this study. Within these rights, it was also communicated to participants through documentation that their right to privacy and confidentiality would be protected, as data would be collected and anonymized, then kept in a secure and confidential location for further analytical review by the researcher (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Participants were also provided with the contact information of the advisors Professor Mark Seasons and Professor Pierre Filion, and the contact information for the University of Waterloo Research Ethics Office.

#### ***3.5.2.1 Validation of interviews.***

Interviews conducted with previous political leaders, government officials, or individuals employed in various municipal administrative roles were instrumental in identifying the four key participants of the study. Each participant played an intricate role in the various aspects of the restructuring process that occurred in Brant County.

To protect their identity as part of this study, while elaborating on the roles each participant played and the quality of data obtained through the semi structured interview process, the following positions are described in greater detail to demonstrate the value each participant to this research:

##### *High Ranking Elected Official.*

This key informant participated in all aspects of amalgamation within Brant County. Having sat on transition boards, County Committee, and arranged public information sessions, this participant heard many local

citizens' concerns and communicated numerous times with the province on aspects of amalgamation. Serving as an elected official pre- and post-amalgamation, this participant provided detailed responses that were very important to the focus of this study.

*Senior Administrative Staff.*

Working closely with councilors and municipal staff from many of the former municipalities that now compose Brant County, the Senior Administrator's outlook on public meetings that were arranged and the information that was provided to the public served as measure of the local response to amalgamation. This senior staff member also heard many of the complaints and concerns that were brought forth during the meetings that lead to the Brant County Amalgamation. This outlook on amalgamation provided a perspective much different from the political perspective of the Mayor and councilors.

*Elected Official.*

This participant had a vast knowledge of the various communities of Brant County and served as an elected official on the amalgamation committee and transition board. With knowledge and experience regarding the community of Brant County pre- and post-amalgamation related to social and economic implications of amalgamation, this participant also served as a vital resource to this study and clearly communicated an opinion on the current issues around social capital, identity, and desire for autonomy in locations in Brant County.

*Senior Municipal Staff Member.*

This interview participant served various positions and filled numerous roles for municipalities within Brant County prior to amalgamation. Having held various positions and having established a thorough understanding of the various communities of Brant County and the social, economic, and environmental climates of each, this participant provided an enriched understanding of the development process that was implemented post-amalgamation and its values to the planning process. This participant also shared an outlook on the planning methods used leading up to restructuring.

While several researchers (Pole, 2000; McDavid, 2002; Sancton, 2011) have used mainly survey and questionnaire methods to determine quantifiable results related to political, economic, and social impacts of amalgamation, this research design avoided the highly structured nature of surveys and questionnaires that can produce more quantitative results, in hopes of drawing on the individual experience and personal understanding of a particular phenomenon for inductive data analysis (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Creswell, 2014).

The works of Kushner & Siegel (2005), and McKay (2004) provided guiding methodological approaches for this research, as these researchers have looked at evaluating the processes of amalgamation at different stages of its implementation in Ontario through interviewing government officials, administrative support staff, and community leaders. While the details of those studies do not match the methodological



approaches of this research precisely, interviews with those in governing positions and supporting administrative roles provide a supporting framework for identifying how amalgamation has been implemented within communities of Southern Ontario and its impacts on many aspects of social capital throughout various stages of its enactment.

### **3.5.3 Limitations.**

Given that the sample size can be seen as relatively small, consisting of only four people, it was difficult to represent the full range of previously held positions of political leaders, government officials, or individuals employed in municipal administrative roles. As previously mentioned, a variety of factors affected accessibility to participants, as several participants who were contacted communicated an unwillingness to participate due to personal reasons and the current political environment in Brant County. In order to remain ethical in the research approach, these individuals were not pursued. In addition, due to the timeline of this research and its separation from the time period amalgamation occurred (late 1990's) several potential participants had since passed on, as indicated through the snowball sampling stages of the interviews. However, by triangulation of content analysis and interview data, specific themes and categories have emerged, providing assistance in answering primary and secondary research questions.

Lastly, information provided in this study considers methods to address and improve community members' concerns related to sense of place and support methods for meaningful engagement. It is important to identify that this study cannot be linked to understanding if public engagement was "meaningful". Meaningful engagement should be considered through other methods, possibly interviewing those that participated in public consultation leading up to, during, and after amalgamation process occurred. As

indicated in previous sections, individuals employed in various public service roles and were interviewed as part of this study. Through triangulation of interview data, specific themes and categories emerged which, through content analysis, provided assistance in answering primary and secondary research questions. Given the limited sample size, this study cannot extrapolate that the opinions or the information collected in this study is shared by all stakeholders in the amalgamation process. Instead it focuses on the perspectives of individuals active in local government during the time of amalgamation.

### **3.6 Summary**

In using the data gathering methods outlined above, this research demonstrates a design that was valid and ethical in its approach and implementation. In conducting this research, the collected data was applicable to the research questions and goals. Interview content, when combined with extensive and thorough approaches to analyzing documents such as media observations, transcripts, interviews, minutes, and documents, serves as an additional source when reviewing the current literature related to the processes of recent amalgamations within Southern Ontario.

## CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDY – BRANT COUNTY

### 4.1 Introduction

Previously recognized for a large and prosperous industrial sector, the county has not matched its economic prosperity since the mid 1900's (Farrugia, 2012). Aside from industry, the county is well known for its vast number of natural amenities, rich agricultural heritage, and outdoor resources, as it is surrounded by vast amounts of prairie land and located within proximity to both the Grand and Nith River systems (County of Brant, 2014). Located within Southern Ontario, Brant County is geographically centralized in relation to several larger Census Metropolitan Areas within Ontario. Bisected by Highway 403, the county is serviced by multiple transit linkages for commuters. As indicated in Figure 7 below, the county is located west of Hamilton and Toronto, east of London, south of the Region of Waterloo, and north Haldimand-Norfolk Region.



Figure 7. Brant County Location Map

## 4.2 Population Composition and Analysis

Indicate in Table 4, Statistics Canada reports from 2016 indicate that the current population for the County of Brant is close to 37,000 people, with a geographical area covering 843.25 square kilometers and a density of 43.5 people per square kilometer.

**Table 4. Brant County Census Data (1991-2016)**

<i>Municipality</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2016</i>
Paris	8,600	8,987	9,881	11,177	11,722	12,310
Brantford Township	6,509	6,487	6,535	A	A	A
Burford Township	5,733	5,858	5,975	A	A	A
South Dumfries Township	4,624	5,441	6,183	A	A	A
Onondaga	1,519	1,675	1,758	A	A	A
Oakland Township	1,398	1,385	1,337	A	A	A
Amalgamated County of Brant	28,383	29,833	31,669	34,415	35,638	36,707

\* - Count for this area has been revised  
 A- Census data dissolved after restructuring

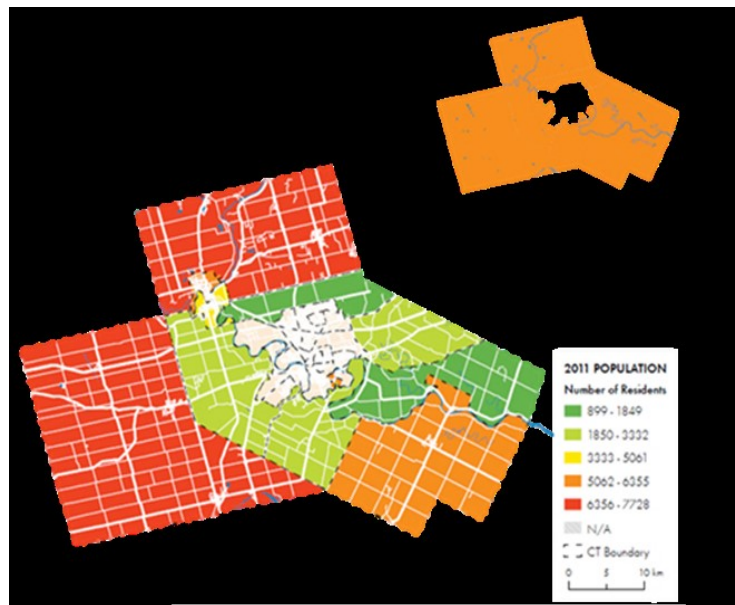
(Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population; Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population; Brant Community Social Planning Council, 2003)

When analyzing historical census data, the townships which comprise the county have experienced moderate but consistent levels of growth over the past three decades. According to recent and historical Statistics Canada census data, two municipalities that experienced minor fluctuations and decreases in population growth from 1991-1996 include Brantford Township (-0.3%) and Oakland Township (-2%). With the exception of these minor fluctuations the County of Brant continues grow at an average rate of approximately 1,650 residents between census evaluations.

A further review of census and ArcGIS data indicate that the Town of Paris accounts for the largest number of inhabitants and highest population density in the County of Brant. Prior to the dissolve of census counts for the former townships, Paris

accounted for approximately 30% of the amalgamated county’s population in 1991, 1996, and 2001.

When looking at Figure 8 below, which depicts 2011 population distribution across the county, census tracts can be used to identify the density of locations which represent small urban environments and those which represent more ruralized locations. In a Development Charge Background Study and Proposed By-Law Report prepared for the County of Brant by Watson and Associates in 2014, a ten-year growth forecast estimated a population increase in the county of approximately 5,135 people by the year 2024 (Watson and Associates, 2014).



*Figure 8. Brant County Density Map*  
*Source: County of Brant & The City of Brantford 2013*

In line with the ten-year forecast prepared by Watson and Associates, the consultant also forecasted that the majority (68%) of all residential development would be accounted for in urbanized areas including Paris and St. George, with the remaining

32% of residential development occurring in the towns, villages, and remaining rural communities of the county (Watson and Associates, 2014).

A long-term growth forecast calculated an increase of approximately 4,033 people by the year 2031 by tracking growth targets set out by the province in The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Watson and Associates, 2014). Census data of the past three census conglomeration also indicates that the population of Brant County has seen increased growth in senior age cohorts. As indicated in Table 5 below, the percent of the population above the age of 50 has steadily increased over the past decade.

**Table 5. Brant County Age Cohorts Composition 2006, 2011, 2016**

2006-Age characteristics			2011-Age characteristics			2016-Age characteristics		
0 to 9 years	3,925	11%	0 to 9 years	3,985	11%	0 to 9 years	4,040	11%
10 to 19 years	5,100	15%	10 to 19 years	4,790	13%	10 to 19 years	4,565	12%
20 to 29 years	3,580	10%	20 to 29 years	3,760	11%	20 to 29 years	3,825	10%
30 to 39 years	4,075	12%	30 to 39 years	3,870	11%	30 to 39 years	3,915	11%
40 to 49 years	5,715	17%	40 to 49 years	5,510	15%	40 to 49 years	4,805	13%
<b>50 to 59 years</b>	<b>5,185</b>	15%	<b>50 to 59 years</b>	<b>5,695</b>	16%	<b>50 to 59 years</b>	<b>5,980</b>	16%
<b>60 to 69 years</b>	<b>3,295</b>	10%	<b>60 to 69 years</b>	<b>4,240</b>	12%	<b>60 to 69 years</b>	<b>5,060</b>	14%
<b>70 to 79 years</b>	<b>2,210</b>	6%	<b>70 to 79 years</b>	<b>2,370</b>	7%	<b>70 to 79 years</b>	<b>2,775</b>	8%
<b>80 +</b>	<b>1,345</b>	4%	<b>80 +</b>	<b>1,410</b>	4%	<b>80 +</b>	<b>1,740</b>	5%
% of population 50 +	35%		% of population 50 +	38%		% of population 50 +	42%	

*(Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population; Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population.)*

### 4.3 History of Amalgamation in Brant County

A deeper look into the chronology of events that occurred throughout Brant County and Brantford over the last half century is provided in the Table 6 below:

<b>Table 6. Restructuring Within Brant County: Chronological History</b>	
<b>1852</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Originally incorporated as the County of Brant</li> </ul>
<b>1970's,1980's,1990's</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoided restructuring attempts by various governmental bodies at Queen's Park through the 1970's to the early 1990's</li> </ul>
<b>1995</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mike Harris's provincial Conservative government is elected, starts the process of reviewing restructuring within communities of Ontario</li> </ul>
<b>April 1996</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brant County Council receive Terms of Reference (TOR) and report on the delivery of services, asking them to consider if restructuring should occur</li> </ul>
<b>August 1996</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESI consulting firm hired by the County to investigate cost effectiveness of amalgamation. Public information session held, where-in an ESI consultant stated amalgamation was unlikely to occur given it would be "costly and ineffective"</li> </ul>
<b>January 1997</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Brantford's deadline for restructuring solution looming, City of Brantford cuts road subsidies to County of Brant without warning</li> <li>ESI consulting suggests that a single tier municipality in the County of Brant would be the best way to handle increasing costs</li> <li>Harris government restructures funding of services and downloads many costs to municipalities, altering the accuracy of ESI's estimates of cost effectiveness of amalgamation</li> </ul>
<b>April 1997</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Chatham and County of Kent are forced to form a single tier municipality "Chatham-Kent" by the provincial government</li> </ul>
<b>May 1997</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paris and Burford express their disinterest in being part of a single tier system</li> <li>City of Brantford proposes single tier city/county model</li> <li>Motion to form single tier municipality with Brant municipalities only (excluding the City of Brantford) results in a 7-5 vote for amalgamation. Stipulations in the TOR mandated a 2/3 majority to pass a motion, thus this motion does not pass. A subsequent motion was passed to change the required 2/3 majority to a 51% majority to pass</li> </ul>
<b>June 1997</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paris proposes they continue as a standalone municipality and the remaining municipalities in Brant merge to form a second single tier system. They hire their own consultant, who later determines Paris has the ability to stand alone as a single entity</li> </ul>
<b>September 1997</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All municipal councils and senior staff meet collectively. At the end of the meeting they have executed a Memorandum of Agreement in Principle, meaning that ultimately they decide to amalgamate. Many saw it as the best defensive move to avoid being incorporated into the City of Brantford, a possibility most felt was the worst-case scenario and feared would occur, similar to Chatham-Kent</li> </ul>
<b>November 1997</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restructuring proposal completed and sent to Minister of Municipal Affairs, supporting amalgamation of the County municipalities only</li> </ul>
<b>January 1, 1999</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amalgamation takes official effect, 6 former municipalities (Township of South Dumfries, Town of Paris, Township of Burford, Township of Oakland, and Onondaga) are now known as the County of Brant and are governed by a single tier system</li> </ul>

Source: (Dean, 2001)

#### **4.4 Summary of Case Study Area**

What becomes increasingly clear is that the process was rushed, as it was with many other rural amalgamations within Southern Ontario during the 1990's (Miljan & Spicer, 2015). Although there were many attempts for the process to be slowed down, as many municipalities wanted additional time for independent studies and consultation with the public, there was a sense of pressure and fear that the province would intervene. The intervention was observed in surrounding communities like the forced amalgamation of Chatham-Kent. The unknown fear of restructuring into a single tier municipality with the City of Brantford in the driver seat caused great concern for county municipalities, as they were also anxious about future land annexations and growth (Dean, 2001).

As this restructuring process concluded, work by Dean (2001) concluded that, in correspondence with the hired consulting firm ESI's Bill Rice, some municipalities voiced concerns leading up to amalgamation about identity and autonomy. These concerns, while over-powered by the concern of a provincially forced amalgamation and the undesired merging with the City of Brantford, went unannounced and left some additional questions related to identity, sense of place, and the way the residents of these respective communities understood the space they inhabited.



## CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the findings of the interviews conducted with past political leaders, government officials, community organizations, and administrative members representing the county and its previous communities during the period of amalgamation. These interviews were conducted between February and June of 2017. This section is structured according to the questions identified in the interview:

1. In what ways was public consultation facilitated during the implementation of amalgamation in Brant County?
2. How did government officials perceive public consultation to take place?
3. How has sense of place and community in Brant County been affected by amalgamation?
4. Has amalgamation had larger impacts on how the communities of Brant County have been planned for in terms of policy development and service delivery?

In response to questions related to public consultation and how government officials perceived public consultation to occur, sub-categories that emerged were: Large Venues and Attendance Values; Passionate Community; Engaged and Involved Public Information Sessions; Consultants; Petitions; and Provincial Pressures. Other categories that developed related to amalgamation's impact on sense of place and the larger impact amalgamation had on planning and policy development were: Identity, Participation, and Infrastructure and Services.

It is important first to understand background information on the key informants selected to participate in this research. Table 7 below provides clarification on the

participants involved this study, the position of employment held during amalgamation, years of employment in the former municipalities that now make up Brant County, and their current employment status. In addition, each subcategory previously discussed, along with its linkage to the interview inquiries previously mentioned, are outlined in Table 7.

**Table 7. Key Informant Interview Outline**

<u>Participants</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>P1-P4</li> </ul>	<u>Position During Amalgamation</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senior Administrator</li> <li>Senior Municipal Staff Member</li> <li>High Ranking Official</li> <li>Elected Official</li> </ul>	<u>Year of Service within Brant County</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All more than 10 years</li> </ul>
<i>Interview Questions</i>		<i>Sub-Categories</i>
1) In what ways was public consultation facilitated during the implementation of amalgamation in Brant County?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Large venues and attendance values</li> <li>Passionate Community</li> <li>Engaged &amp; Involved</li> </ul>
2) How did government officials perceive public consultation to take place?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Information Sessions</li> <li>Consultants</li> <li>Petitions</li> <li>Provincial Pressures</li> </ul>
3) How has sense of place and community in Brant County been affected by amalgamation?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identity</li> </ul>
4) Has amalgamation had larger impacts on how the communities of Brant County have been planned for in terms of policy development and service delivery?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation</li> <li>Infrastructure and Services</li> </ul>

## **5.2 In What Ways Was Public Consultation Facilitated During the Implementation of Amalgamation in Brant County?**

### **5.2.1 Large venues and attendance values.**

Key informants interviewed discussed the amount of support from participants and the venues used to accommodate members of the public for meetings related to amalgamation. For example, Participant #1 described the meeting as being for the residents:

Well basically, most of the meetings we had were involving the residents of Paris. And they were not in favour of becoming part of the county. So, we had some big meeting on that, but then eventually of course, we had to join the county. Every meeting that we had was very much supported by the residents of Paris.

With similar comments about residents' high attendance values, Participant #3 stated:

One meeting in the arena I remember vividly. And there were, I think there was close to 1,500 to 2,000 people in the stands. We were going to have it at the fair grounds. And then as we got closer and closer and closer, and the feedback and the word and you know, just what we heard, we thought we got to move it to the arena. And with seats on the floor of the arena and that was full. And benches in front of us, all across the hall were full. And we had our full council there, we actually brought in police because we were kind of concerned.

Media Sources were used to confirm location and participant totals, and the Brantford Expositor indicated that, "About 2,000 people attended a public meeting at the Syl Apps Community Centre in Paris on Thursday to discuss their town's future in Brant County". (Marion, 1997 p. A3). A second media source also indicated that residents would attend council meetings at the Town Hall in Paris. One council meeting saw 40 community members adamantly help council in requesting additional time for supplementary studies to support the goal of a non-amalgamated community (Toms, 1997, p. A1).

### **5.2.2 Passionate community.**

Each participant discussed the community's ability to communicate their opinions and participate whenever possible. Participant #4 discussed the Town of Paris yearning to be heard and involved in amalgamation stating, "I think to get their honest to goodness opinion. Because people come out if they have got a burning desire and Paris did." Similarly, Participant #1 stated "Oh, they showed up at the big meetings. Many people called me. Some people wrote letters to the paper." In describing the role that they had filled during some public meetings, Participant # 2 described how active the meetings were when so many members of the public voiced their opinion,

Getting forms ready and things like that, now that would be a difficult thing to do at public meeting. You get people up and down, you know ranting and yeah, a lot of ranting. Yes, a lot of individuals were ranting, and there are actually a lot of individuals that believe that Paris should still be Paris.

Similarly, Participant #3 described the displeasure community members expressed at some of the meetings: "Oh yeah, angry. As I recall there was a lot of anger. A lot of animosity towards, well the City of Brantford eventually and the other townships."

### **5.2.3 Engaged and involved.**

Key informants interviewed also discussed the community's engagement on topics outside of amalgamation. Demonstrating moments of community engagement, Participant #1 spoke about community turnout during early attempts to close the hospital in Paris, "When they first came to close the Willet, we had a huge turn out at the high school. We filled the main gym. We had to put television into the other gymnasium. And

it was just.... bloated.” Media coverage supported these comments and indicated that over 2,000 people attended this meeting at the Paris District High School in February of 1976 to fight the closing of the Willet Hospital (Paris Star Staff, 1976). Similarly, Participant #2 spoke about the current issues still being faced in Paris and community engagement and the desire to keep it open,

I volunteer up there at the Willet, and there has been recent talks about closing the Willet. The people have signed petitions that they don't want it closed. I think the idea that the hospital has, is that they would relocate the urgent care part of this into another facility.

Participant #3 spoke about the community's desire to keep the local arena open and the action of local champions:

There was talk of selling it, and this was recently. This is not going back that far. But there was some stuff that came out that certain councillors were looking at selling it as a condominium site. You know it's like 60, 70, 80 years old. But guys like Earl (*pseudonym*), who is an engineer, would come down every 2 or 3 years and doing an engineering inspection of his own, to help Paris out, to get it recertified and he is a Paris boy.

Participant #2 also spoke about the larger community's engagement in recent issues around aggregate quarries and source water protection as they stated:

Aggregates is another one. That has been an ongoing thing. That's been going on for years. You got people of those committees who are fighting to get their certificate looked at again. And so people of Paris are very adamant. And, interesting enough, there are people on those committees that are not originally

Paris town residents. So, you got people who are engaged in the environmental side of it, so that is interesting as well.

Participant #1 also spoke about the community's awareness around source water protection as they stated:

They have voiced their concerns and I have. I think people realized generally that it is necessary to extract gravel because in this area, this is some very good quality gravel. Their concern is that they don't go too deep and upset the aquifer. And that item has been addressed reasonably well.

Supported by secondary source media, CBC indicated, as of January 2017, various members of Brant County expressed their concern with the by-products of aggregate quarry operations in the County of Brant. CBC stated:

Citizens in Paris will be speaking in a hearing on Wednesday to oppose the development of a gravel washing pit they say will endanger their drinking water. They have raised \$80,000 to pay for a tribunal appealing the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's decision to give the company a permit. (Beatty, 2017).

Participation and engagement is still very important to Brant County residents and community members as CBC also indicated that "citizens will have the chance to give their depositions, and 100 people are expected to turn up to the council chamber that only seats around 65" (Beatty, 2017).

### **5.3 How Did Government Officials Perceive Public Consultation to Take Place?**

#### **5.3.1 Public information sessions.**

In reviewing interview material regarding the format in which meetings were held and public participation was arranged, public information sessions and towns meetings served as the main meeting format between the local municipal government and its residents. Participant #2 indicated that their role was to provide information to residents and meeting participants in order to receive feedback:

**J. Schram:** When you say Jeff (*pseudonym*) spear headed a lot of the meetings, what were some of the forms you had to prepare on the clerks' side of things, what would that look like, in terms of preparation?

**P2:** I think that he wanted people's comments about what they thought, that type of thing. The type of thing you would get ready were handouts. And I think he talked about or told them about what the process has been and how the ministry has been involved and council's involvement.

Participant #3 also indicated major meeting formats that looked to inform and update the public, "It was probably more of an information meeting from us to them, to say ok, here is where we are at." Meetings were also arranged in a very structured format, with a mediator controlling the assembly and how information would be communicated by members of council, after this, questions would then be allowed from the public. Participant #1 indicated,

Yes, it was a big lot of people. I was there to update the public. Let people know where we were. We had one big meeting. Before he was in provincial politics, I

had Dave Levac...well he kind of kept the meeting together. I had a lot to say but he also heard from other people as well. And he was kind of chairman of the meeting if you like.

Participant #1 also indicated methods for informing the public about meetings were very standardized:

**P1:** Oh, we would advertise it in the paper.

**J. Schram:** Advertise it in the paper? So, is that how most things would be handled in the community? You would advertise in the paper that there was going to be a public meeting?

**P1:** Yes, and probably over the radio too.

**J. Schram:** And was there any mandate that basically said the Town of Paris will follow this procedure every single time so that people knew? Or wasn't there anything set out in the Official Plan that mandated public participation at that time?

**P1:** No, we were kind of flying by the seat of our pants.

There was also clear communication between the Paris council members on how things would be brought forward and shared with local residents in Paris. Participant # 3 stated,

Well there was a lot of suggestions and Mark (*pseudonym*) and I talked about it. We also involved the council when we were preparing for any meetings or preparing to bring something to the floor. We did not just do it on our own. We



talked to council. And during the public meetings, prior to us hiring our own consultants to the whole process.

Similar comments from Participant #4 discussed his/her outlook on public engagement during the early years as a municipal staff member,

I started my career in an era when council was elected, paid professional staff. Things happened at the council table. And at times it's still hard. You know that we need the level of community engagement that we do because I still think of a system that you elect the people.

### **5.3.2 Consultants.**

To perform additional studies and work related to the feasibility of amalgamation for the Town of Paris, council members hired consultants that focused on factors outside of public engagement to produce findings to support or oppose amalgamation. Participant #1 indicated that it was not the consultants' job to engage with the public:

**J. Schram:** Was there a consultant brought in to help with this process as well? To help facilitate whether amalgamation would be feasible for Brant County?

**P1:** Oh yes, we had a consultant.

**J. Schram:** And did that consultant in any way bring forward ideas on how to engage the community or was that not part of their mandate?

**P1:** No, their main reason was to ensure us that we were able to go ahead financially on our own.

Participant #4 stated that, “I don't remember too many meetings, if any, that were like now a day's. Public engagement is so prevalent”. Participant # 4 recalled “...a process that was very political, consultant driven. I think one of the underlying things, Josh, that was really the focus, and people felt they had to move on it”. Participant # 3 also mentioned their opinion of the role that the consultants played when hired by the Town of Paris,

**P3:** Their mandate was to look at the parameters: options, benefits, economic, political. In terms of how does this really benefit Paris?

**J. Schram:** And were they of the opinion that the rest of the community was?

**P3:** Well we excluded that portion. We excluded joining as a starting point. We said, “If we go this way, what is our justification for doing so? To make the presentation to the executive committee and the province?” So, we needed some hard facts and we needed an outside source. As the process moved forward, that changed. Even our own consultant was of the opinion that amalgamation was going to be in the best interest of Paris. So, kind of a hands-off kind of thing. And economics of scale kept coming into it and they didn't buy into that at all. And it hasn't proven at all.

### **5.3.3 Petitions.**

In addition to conducting information sessions, participants indicated that votes were held and petitions signed by meeting attendees. Community members were also polled during other events to understand the local community's desires when it came to amalgamation. Participant #3 described a voting process during one of the large information meetings held at a local Paris facility,

We actually conducted a vote that we circulated ballots and I think that all but half a dozen or a dozen out a 1,100 or 1,200 that were turned in said no (*not in favour of amalgamation*), 7 or 8 said yes.

In addition, secondary media sources also indicated that approximately 1,300 residents signed a petition opposing amalgamation and a single tier system (Paris Star Staff, 1997). In the years following amalgamation, de-amalgamation was still on the minds of many local residents, as Participant #2 stated,

Well this article here (*references an article from personal collection*) was from 2004 and that is when they got a petition to try to get the town to return to the Town of Paris. So, I mean that is like five years after amalgamation. And you know you can probably talk to people on the streets today that, if they were from the town, they would be telling you that we should have stayed the way we were.

#### **5.3.4 Provincial pressures.**

During the time that public meetings were being held, interview participants also indicated that there were pressures and direction from different outside sources on how things should proceed. Participant #3 indicated that there was some pressure from higher levels of government on how amalgamation would proceed in Paris and surrounding communities, as they commented:

When you go back to us sitting and talking back and forth about Paris doesn't want to be part of this, we want to be on our own. If you look at some of the documentation, the Province says, "Well we are not going to force you to do this". But I can remember being told at various meeting in camera that we had

received phone calls, from staff, from the provincial government, saying, “You guys don’t do it, we will do it”.

Similarly, Participant #4 discussed some of the larger political factors for how timelines of amalgamation were set to occur and the additional period given for the communities like Brant to come to an amalgamated solution:

It was very interesting and challenging the whole restructuring, because I would say the single tier option was not the preference for any of the municipalities. It was not, you know from my recollection, it was not the preference. They knew they had to do something, but the preference was a modified two-tier system. So, there would be some mergers or amalgamations but by and large there would still be a two-tier system. But then, I don't know if it was ESI consulting, I'm not sure if that's the right name. When, they came in, again they were supposed to be coming up with the most appropriate two tier modified. But they had a confidential meeting with the politicians from across Brant County and said if you do anything other than single tier you risk the City of Brantford going to the province and saying, just like what happened in Chatham- Kent, should happen here. And in fact, it's my best recollection that several years, it probably was several years after amalgamation, the City of Brantford hired Hempson to do a report, a consultant’s report, on the amalgamation and I forget all of the particulars, but one of the interesting things that came out of that report was Hempson said Brantford missed the boat in not taking opportunity when we were having those discussions to try and force something at that time.

Participant #4 also discussed the previous political relationships that had been established across Brant County and the information that was passed along during their early career in Brant County, learning from the previous reeve of Oakland prior to amalgamation:

Stella (*pseudonym*) used to tell me that the reason that restructuring wasn't forced on the area was there was too many Tory stronghold supporters in and around the rural area of Brant County that had enough influence with even previous governments like Bill Davis when he was premier, and so it was just never going to happen there.

#### **5.4 How Has Sense of Place and Community in Brant County Been Affected by Amalgamation?**

##### **5.4.1 Identity.**

Several participants discussed their outlooks on the current communities of Brant County and their interactions with residents in locations such as Paris. Participant # 3 stated:

I know today, if you talk to what I'll say is the old time Paris people, my age or older that went through it, still are, we'll still say we should have stayed on our own, or it should have never happened. Identity was a big thing, because losing our identity, as much as Paris is Paris, you cannot take Paris off the map physically. Or, Burford or St. George. When it became the County of Brant, a lot of people thought well what is going to happen to Paris? Again, from a standpoint of identity and personal feeling and so on and so forth. That was a hurtful thing.

Similarly, Participant #2 believed that older residents of the community would want the municipalities to be structured the way they formerly were, prior to amalgamation, commenting:

Well they would probably have their own thoughts about how the town is now compared to what it was because you still have people saying we were the Town of Paris, this is how it was. Things have certainly changed, and some of them aren't for the better.

In addition, Participant #2 discussed the changes in services within the county and also the delivery of those same services, having been a resident of the county throughout amalgamation and noting the various changes:

Now, what the public would see would be the services like when they went to the arena or seeing the roads being plowed. Maybe not so much in the summer time but in the winter time. And that is one thing the Town of Paris was always proud of because they always had good plowed roads. But now the service is geared to... like my road for instance, it gets plowed not by a big truck, but by a pick-up truck with a weight on the front. Or a tractor comes down and clears the nearby farm.

Participant # 4 indicated that the changes that the former municipalities of Brant had undergone were similar to other municipalities of Southern Ontario and mentioned that the age cohorts within the County of Brant would learn to accept the status of amalgamations, stating that:

Yeah, there were isolated pockets that never would have accepted what happened.

However, let me share this. I was tasked with setting up and providing

recommendations to committee and council on our first ever economic development and tourism division program. And as part of my research I went to visit many different communities and one of them was the City of Cambridge and I met a gentleman there, and so asked him, you know the Region of Waterloo restructured many years ago and it's a new regional municipality and not single tier but I knew all the stuff that happened in Cambridge with Galt, Preston, and Hespeler. And I said, "How many years does it take before people are accepting of it?" and he said, "The only way things are ever going to change is you have to fill up a few cemeteries first". And you know what, there is a lot of truth to that. In the sense that you have to have that generation die off, and as you say, new people move in.

## **5.5 Has Amalgamation Had Larger Impacts on How the Communities of Brant County Have Been Planned For In Terms of Policy Development and Service Delivery?**

### **5.5.1 Participation, infrastructure, and services.**

After amalgamation had been implemented, the community's engagement in meeting for the development and consolidation of guiding documents such as a new Official Plan, Secondary Plan, Zoning By-laws, Fire Master Plan, and several other guiding documents were each well attended by the residents of the new county. Participant #4 indicated that when compared to participation and input on restructuring, public consultation was seen as a key component of developing these new documents, stating:

As part of getting our house in order, everything that needed to be done as part of restructuring, Bill (*pseudonym*) and I would both tell you that we had to

consolidate all the Official Plans into one. We had to consolidate all the zoning by-laws into one. One of the things we were both very heavy on was having public consultation sessions in appropriate designated areas throughout Brant County when we were doing the Official Plan, when we were doing the zoning by-law updates and even to the point when we held one of the last, if not the last, public meetings on the Official Plan. I will always remember this because it was a day before my wife and I were going away for our tenth anniversary and I was dead tired getting up and leaving in the morning because it went to 'til 2:30 in the morning. We just kept going because there was lots of people that wanted to be heard. So, quite the contradictions, while I can not remember waves and waves of public meetings and public consultation about restructuring. I do know, that when it came to setting up the new municipality, developing a Recreation Master Plan, developing a Fire Master Plan, these were all things that were important when we were considering our properties and whether some were surplus or not. Some of the community centers, lots of community consultation. I also think one of the fundamental signs of respect even though we were restructuring into a single-tier municipality and the need for people to feel that local connection and input.

In addition to changes in planning documents and other policy driven regulations, there was also a large amount of discussion about changes in services within the County of Brant with specific reference to the community's connection to police and fire services. Participant #3 indicated the local connection to the police force in the Town of Paris was lost once converted to the OPP:



And the Paris Police force, that was a hot issue. I mean that was whoa. And I fought, and fought. I took over that one for Isabelle (*pseudonym*). I fought that, being that the county should have its own police force versus the Ontario Provincial Police. And of course, the Paris Police, again were known locally by just about everybody and they knew just about everybody. And there is all kinds of stories about interactions between the police and how they communicated or took care of problems within the community. And there was that whole thing that Ontario Provincial Police are not going to have the empathy and the same towards.

Participant #1 described the improvements they observed related to fire services in the county as they now, "...were all working well, but probably the amalgamation all together, overall is probably better than having the individuals." Participant #1 felt the new amalgamated service allowed the communities to respond to a wider range of fires and emergencies that may be required:

Because they can look at, the difference, for example Paris is as a small urban and requires ladders to be able to reach apartment buildings and so on. Whereas in Burford, there are no mains there, so they rely on tankers. So, they have to get the water from the pond and then carry it in the tanker.

Participant #3 also commented on the underlying positives that came out of service delivery when restructuring and how some services would remain habitually localized to each municipality:

We did not look at how many fire trucks do you have and how many fire trucks do you have. We just said, “Ok, everything is coming into the pot. Does not matter if we got 5 fire trucks and you got 2, does not matter. It is all coming in, there is no accounting for this”. And to me that was fair.

In addition to service provisions interviewed participants also described their concerns with development and infrastructure requirements that would come out of restructuring and the demand for proper land use planning and communication between all towns, villages, and hamlets in Brant County. As Participant # 4 indicated:

And that’s why even once we got through the Official Plan and the Zoning By-Law, I pushed for a Secondary Plan for South West Paris. You think about the development that happens down there. Because the problem was what we knew on the development side and the engineers knew. If we didn’t get our act together with the proper Secondary Plan, a settlement plan, the developers were going to dictate development and they had some success doing it because our politicians being from their previous municipalities liked to see development happen. You think of the smaller municipalities, “oh sure if development is going to happen, let’s have it”. And there was that sort of old perspective. And so one of the things I think we had to make sure the politician understood is that we are now a single tier municipally and development should not dictate, we need to be working ourselves with the community.

Within similar concerns Participant #1 questioned the county’s current ability to offer servicing and proper planning in areas with proximity to the major highways when asked about current servicing in locations of new development in Paris:

**P1:** Another big thing that is happening is that, Paris is growing quickly. A lot faster than if we had stayed on our own.

**J. Schram:** Why do you say that?

**P1:** Well because a number of developers have bought that land around and now it's a larger community, its all ok. But I think we're gonna, have to end up with another sewage treatment plant before we are much older. And sometimes people have a tendency to forget the infrastructure and how old some of it is, and how important it is, and what it does.

## **5.6 Summary**

Throughout the four interviews that were conducted for this research, key informants expressed similar opinions on the amalgamation and restructuring of Brant County in the late 1990's. Participants' outlooks on public consultation during the implementation of amalgamation were comparable, with key themes categorized into venue and attendance, the passion the community displayed, and public engagement. Participants communicated the ways in which they perceived public consultation to occur, revolving around themes related to public information sessions, hired consultants, petitions, and outside provincial pressures. Exploring the ways in which sense of place and community were affected because of amalgamation, participants communicated concerns around place and identity. And when exploring the demands for planning and policy development because of amalgamation, participants communicated the value of public participation and the current need for infrastructure and servicing to different locations within the county.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

### 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to develop an improved understanding of the consultation processes that were used during the amalgamation within Brant County, and, from these findings, understand how individuals within the communities of Brant County perceived their input to be valued during the consultation process of amalgamation. It begins by evaluating the public consultation during the implementation of amalgamation in Brant County. Secondly, it evaluates the ways in which sense of place has been influenced by the restructuring and the perceived changes. Lastly, the final section of this chapter looks to explore changes in planning procedure and policies as a result of amalgamation in Brant County.

### 6.2 Participation in Brant

“I don't remember too many meetings, if any, that were like now a day's. Public engagement is so prevalent”. *Participant #4*

In order to understand the public consultation process that occurred leading up to the amalgamation of Brant County in the late 1990's, you need to understand how the public participation of Brant County would be categorized when looking at the earlier work of Arnstein (1969), and the “Ladder of Citizen Participation”. Several of the participants in this study have indicated that they provided the public with updates and information from the province on discussions related to amalgamation in a format that would resemble information sessions. This would place citizen participation along rungs 4 (Informing), 5 (Consultation), and 6 (Placation) of Arnstein's ladder, each sub-categorized into degrees of “token power sharing” between citizens and public officials (Arnstein, 1969). As Participant # 3 and Participant #1 indicated within the findings

section of this study, major meeting formats looked to inform and update the public, but there was not necessarily an open forum or method used to engage citizens. The format for participation recognized a lack of public inclusion in the planning process as the channels of communication seemed to be very one-sided.

This approach, however, was the result of a larger process that was being applied by the provincial government. And although 21 municipalities had preliminary considerations of amalgamating after the restructuring proposal was brought forward, it was not until the forced amalgamation of Chatman-Kent that the idea of voluntary amalgamation was quickly considered by other municipalities of Southern Ontario to ensure they still had a say in the process (Miljan & Spicer, 2015). Municipal staff recognized these pressures that may have pushed restructuring processes along quicker in Brant County. As Participant # 4 commented, “I recall a process that was very political, consultant driven and I think one of the underlying things, Josh, that was really the focus, and you know people felt they had to move on it”. The Progressive Conservative government did not demonstrate a clear mandate for how public participation should transpire in this process. The Harris government was able to avoid discussions around public participation, which is far from a new concept and mandate in democratic practices of local government in Ontario, as identified in the earlier works of Sherry Arnstein (1969), Harry Lash (1976), or Judith Innes (2007). As commented by key expert on the topic, Professor Andrew Sancton (2017),

The participation movement, especially in planning and municipal things generally predated the 1990's, 1980's. It really goes back to the 1960's and all the community organizing and maximum participation. What was it, that phrase,

maximum feasible participation in the American war on poverty and I mean when I first started studying urban politics, participation was a big thing so whenever I hear people say, “Oh it's, you know, it's recent”, I just think that's wrong because people have been talking about increased participation for 50 years. So, I would say that the Harris interlude there was the exception to the rule. It was outside the normal framework. Harris managed to convince Ontarians that there was this huge crisis of debt and bigger, a government that was too big and the only way it could be solved was by quick action. To bring about obvious solutions and it was obvious to Harris without any study or any serious investigation that amalgamations would save money, would make the government smaller, having fewer politicians was a good thing, there wasn't anything really to participate in.

Sancton discusses the ability of the Harris government to avoid any type of public participation in their desire to amalgamate municipalities of Southern Ontario. Professor Sancton also commented that he would not support the idea that public participation is something recent. In the case of Brant County and the format for public participation, it is important to note that while there were many public information sessions during the lead up to amalgamation, the local government generated different avenues for the public to voice their concerns and provide feedback on the material they had been provided. As indicated in the findings chapter, Participant #1 indicated there was one big meeting for public input which was guided by a local government official.

In addition, in the findings section Participant #2 discussed the formats for the Paris Town Mayor for receiving public comments, sharing information, and the open public forum that was established at several meetings related to pre-amalgamation

discussion. Handouts were made to provide additional information for residents about how council and the provincial government were involved in the restructuring process. In addition to receiving verbal feedback, petitions were also signed, demonstrating public agreement on the desire to not amalgamate. As Participant #3 described, a voting process occurred during a large information meeting held at a local Paris facility, where ballots were passed out and the majority of residents in attendance voted against amalgamation. Local residents of Paris discussed aspect of autonomy and identity as reason to not amalgamate (Dean, 2001).

So, it would appear at the outset that many government officials did not engage in public participation that may resemble the meaningful participation in Lash's "Triangle of Public Participation" (Lash, 1976). There was a clear consensus among study participants that public input was a valued part of the process, but that there was an undetermined method for how the provincial government would hear the concerns of local citizens and incorporate meaningful public participation as part of the restructuring process. As Participant #1 indicated there was very limited direction on how to engage the public in that they were approaching each meeting and community information session differently with no set format. Other locations were also being rushed in the processes of restructuring during the late 1990's. Haldimand and Norfolk, located within close proximity to Brant County, also saw the province and special provincial advisors pursuing and rushing restructuring with limited or non-existent opportunities for public consultation (Miljan & Spicer, 2015, p.19). As each rural community experienced limited variations of public consultation, it became increasingly clear the rural amalgamations

within Southern Ontario were rushed and had large provincial pressure influencing the pace of restructuring.

### **6.3 Larger Pressure**

As deadlines grew closer and the example that had been made of Kent County (Chatham–Kent) became increasingly real to other municipalities during the late 1990’s, local politicians of Brant County indicated that, after several public meetings and discussions held among the local councils, there was increasing pressure from the province related to restructuring. Participant #3 described the provincial pressures that were more like backroom conversations in council chambers. If local council could not sort things out promptly, there would be additional action taken by the province.

The pressure from the provincial government caused municipalities to take action without fully understanding its ramifications. With more time and less pressure, they could have more fully considered standing behind their original decision not to amalgamate. Professor Andrew Sancton (2017) stated:

The government was saying this was the case. We have a mandate to do this. Where for most of these amalgamations, as I said, they didn't even force them in an official sense. So, you said there might have been a sort of a backroom pressure, people from the ministry saying, “If you don't do this, we might have to do something”. The government was justifiably able to say that. I don't know, 90% of the amalgamations in Ontario were voluntary. And were voluntary in the sense that, people will do things that they didn't otherwise want to do.

Therefore, the pressure being felt behind the closed doors of council chambers was enough to remove the public from these discussions even if they had originally



wanted more public involvement. There was no mandate to explain to the public how things were transpiring leading up to amalgamation. Key questions were not explored. Were the local citizens of the former municipalities of Brant County hanging on to a romanticized sense of place which they thought would be drastically changed because of restructuring? Were they actually losing their respective communities? Was it in fact a larger concern to Brant County council that provincially imposed, single tier option where Brantford would become a part of Brant County that forced the former county to quick action?

#### **6.4 Sense of place**

“Identity was a big thing” - Participant #3

The work of Manzo and Perkins (2006), recognized the ongoing efforts made by various government officials to acknowledge individual preference, perception, and emotions that are linked to a community’s social connections, participation, and development. While the Harris government’s focus was only on the political and economic needs within communities, they ignored how locations such as Brant County would be effected by the impacts on social capital. Participant #3 indicated a major concern for citizens of the municipalities regarding the loss of individual community identity. In the statement found in the findings section, Participant 3 discussed what Dempsey, (2009) indicates are dimensions related to social cohesion and belonging. These dimensions include social interactions, sense of community, and sense of safety and acceptance. These dimensions are vital for how a community is shaped and how individuals understand the physical and social environments in which they live. The Harris government was concerned with issues related to taxes, local representation in

municipal decisions, grants, regional planning, and service deliveries (McKay, 2004). They ignored how all the dimensions indicated by Dempsey, (2009) are interwoven with the goals of Bill 26 and *The Savings and Restructuring Act*. They overlooked the influence it had on community transportation, infrastructure, schools, public spaces, and rationale for why residents reside within a specific community (Dempsey, 2009, p.340).

As Participant #2 discussed in the findings section, the older community members of Brant County believe that the communities of Brant County, such as the old Town of Paris, were better off prior to amalgamation. This belief also indicates that an older demographic within the county may have been attached to a sense of place and romanticized concept of rural municipalities. The aging population may have supported a desire for “counter-urbanization” based on the fact that rural communities are believed to offer stability, security, safety, and family protection when compared to the busy and dense populations of more urbanized environments (Berry, 1980). Participant #3 also stated, in the findings section, that in his working relationship with the public, an older cohort still believe to this day that communities such as Paris should have stood alone during the whole restructuring process. There was a strong consensus from an older demographic in Paris that they opposed this change. As Professor Andrew Sancton (2017), stated:

I'm interested to hear from you that there were these big meetings in Brant County that had a few hundred people out, but that would be seen as people who didn't understand the gravity of the problem, who were just clinging to old fashion idea about municipal government.

What became evident through this research was that a large portion of the citizens participating and engaging in the restructuring process did not fully understand the changes that were going to take place or how they would influence aspects of their geographical, political, and social interactions within their respective communities. When asking about community acceptance in the years that would follow restructuring in Brant County, Participant #4 indicated that it was largely influenced by demographics within the newly amalgamated county and was consistent with information they had gathered from other government officials in Southern Ontario. When discussing their conversations with another member of municipal government from the City of Cambridge and how Cambridge citizens transitioned through amalgamation since the early 1970's, they were told that older cohorts must pass on and a few generations must be removed from the amalgamation process before change and acceptance could actually transpire. While these comments are dramatic, they reflect on how the changing demographics of a local population allows the impact of restructuring to be forgotten.

As new members of rural communities are drawn to locations such as Brant County, they often look internally for resources that will provide the most personal benefit for them and their families. As indicated in the earlier section of the literature review, how the community meets their needs changes how these individuals identify with the community they now inhabit. Changing the individual's sense of place and identity also influences a larger shift away from the place identity that may have been established by older generations of individuals residing in the same community (Salamon, 2003; Woods, 2010).

## 6.5 Procedures and Policies

Within the province of Ontario, when evaluating public participation in the context of planning, citizen participation is mandated and documented through the *Planning Act*. Looking at the *Planning Act*, Section 17.15 (b, c, d) identifies that with the development of any Official Plan municipal staff will ensure:

- (b) The prescribed public bodies are consulted on the preparation of the plan and given an opportunity to review all supporting information and material and any other prescribed information and material;
- (c) Adequate information and material, including a copy of the current proposed plan, is made available to the public, in the prescribed manner, if any; and
- (d) At least one public meeting is held for the purpose of giving the public an opportunity to make representations in respect of the current proposed plan. 2006, c. 23, s. 9 (2).

And with regards to zoning under section 35.12 (a, b);

- (a) The council shall ensure that,
  - (i) Sufficient information and material is made available to enable the public to understand generally the zoning proposal that is being considered by the council, and
  - (ii) At least one public meeting is held for the purpose of giving the public an opportunity to make representations in respect of the proposed by-law; and

- (b) In the case of a by-law that is required by subsection 26 (9) or is related to a development permit system, the council shall ensure that at least one open house is held for the purpose of giving the public an opportunity to review and ask questions about the information and material made available under sub clause (a)
- (i). 2006, c. 23, s. 15 (6); 2009, c. 33, Sched. 21, s. 10 (2).

As restructuring occurred within the County of Brant, it also meant that the various Official Plans, Secondary Plans, Zoning By-Laws, Fire Master Plans, Parks and Recreation Master Plans and many other policy-guiding documents needed to be consolidated. As each of these guiding documents would help direct growth for the newly consolidated council and staff, planning staff and local council felt that with direction from the *Municipal Act, 2001* and *The Planning Act* the new Official Plan and Zoning By-Law must welcome the input of the residents. In the findings chapter, Participant #4 indicated their dedication to the planning and restructuring process, discussing consultations with the public on policy for the new Official Plan for Brant County and comparing this to the lack of engagement related to discussion on restructuring. Public meetings on the Official Plan and Zoning By-Law would take municipal staff into the early morning hours as local residents had so much to say and about which to be engaged.

The consultation that took place post-amalgamation in Brant County has been viewed by those in municipal staffing roles during that same time as very robust and inclusive. There was a plan in place for how policy and regulation would be developed and there were clear methods and support for how the public should be included in the outcome to produce consolidated policy. Participants of this study have also indicated

that with amalgamation and shared resources throughout smaller rural communities, growth and service demand are now becoming more apparent. Participant #1 discussed how certain municipalities have been able to attract developers which places increasing demands on servicing. The need for proper land use planning and policy to guide future growth has been very important in the county, as indicated in the findings by Participant # 4. He/she described relationships with the development community shortly after amalgamation and the significance of guiding documents such as Secondary Plans for communities of the newly amalgamated Brant County. They became the key documents that governed how growth should occur across the communities of Brant. It was important to not allow the developers to be the sole drivers and dictators of growth.

Post amalgamation, participants of this study have indicated that planning procedure and policies did change. New Secondary Plans and a new Official Plan, Zoning By-Law, Fire Master Plan, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and many others were developed for the new county. These documents were guided by larger policy and regulations set out by the province, discussing how to involve the public and how to ensure stakeholders were not only informed about, but also collaborated with in order to produce newly consolidated policies and plans for the County of Brant.

## **CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS**

### **7.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this research was to explore the understanding of individuals within the communities of Brant County regarding how they were informed, consulted, and participated in the processes of amalgamation. From those findings, the research seeks to understand their outlook on the identity of their respective communities, before and after consolidation occurred. In conducting this research, key informants were identified who provided in-depth understanding of the processes that were previously performed to implement amalgamation, communicating what structures and procedures were put in place for public consultation during amalgamation. The research then reviewed the successes, shortcomings, and feedback experienced within the community of Brant since amalgamation was implemented.

### **7.2 Conclusions**

This research has concluded that the experiences of public participation and the outlooks on communities before and after consolidation occurred resemble the experiences of many other municipalities in Southern Ontario during the amalgamations the late 1990's. Based on the research conducted within this study, concluding recommendations can be made related to citizen participation and future land restructurings.

What becomes increasingly clear is that the process was rushed, as it was with many other rural amalgamations within Southern Ontario during the 1990's (Miljan & Spicer, 2015). Although there were many attempts for the process to be slowed down, as many municipalities wanted additional time for independent studies and consultation with

the public, there was a sense of pressure and fear that the province would intervene. The intervention was observed in surrounding communities like the forced amalgamation of Chatham-Kent. The unknown fear of restructuring into a single tier municipality with the City of Brantford in the driver seat caused great concern for county municipalities, as they were also anxious about future land annexations and growth (Dean, 2001).

Dean (2001) concluded that, in correspondence with the hired consulting firm ESI's Bill Rice, some municipalities voiced concerns leading up to amalgamation about identity and autonomy. These concerns, while over-powered by the concern of a provincially forced amalgamation and the undesired merging with the City of Brantford, went unannounced and left some additional questions related to identity, sense of place, and the way the residents of these respective communities understood the space they inhabited.

During the public meetings that led to the amalgamation of Brant County, when identifying the level of citizen participation and tying this to Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation" (1969), results from this study indicated these meetings were only what Arnstein would consider "Token Power Sharing" between citizens and public officials. Citizen input was very limited in the overall process. At the same time, study participants also indicated there was no direction from the province on how to effectively engage citizens in meaningful participation in discussions on restructuring.

With backroom communication and pressure from the province, it would appear that unfair downloading was also occurring, as council had to figure out their own methods to engage the community on restructuring. Participant #1 indicated that they were "flying by the seat of our pants".



This study has identified varying opinions from study participants regarding the ways in which sense of place has been influenced by restructuring. It has also identified a connection to place and identity within the geographical context of Brant County linked to age cohorts, romanticized ideas of previous municipal structure, and attachment to place through the resources and services that local residents use. As the county continues to grow, the value of new planning procedures and policy has been of significant value in the eyes of the study participants and will continue to shape the ways in which growth is taken into account. While the processes of restructuring did not ensure citizen participation, the processes of planning for new policy and procedures supported what Arnstein (1969) would consider true citizen representation.

### **7.3 Recommendations**

#### **7.3.1 Retro-fitting citizen participation.**

With reference to secondary sources and interview findings, the citizens of Brant County felt a strong desire to participate in the discussion that led up to its amalgamation. Local councils conducted what they felt were meaningful meetings to update and inform the public on new information being passed down from the province on restructuring. While council provided participation methods that included information sharing, ballot submissions, and voting, the interviews with the key informants of this study and secondary sources of data collection would indicate that these public events did not facilitate meaningful engagement or collaboration (Innes et al., 2007; Hoene et al, 2013). This research indicated that, missing from the citizen engagement during the amalgamation of Brant County, were effective methods for delivering information to citizens and engaging them in in-depth understanding of the Harris government's desired

restructuring outcomes and its impacts on services, resources, social capital, and the larger financial implications.

Regardless of the desired outcomes, greater support needed to be given to the council of Brant County communities and citizens to ensure that they were not only informed but seen as valued stakeholders in the restructuring process. In line with the restructuring of Haldimand and Norfolk, information and meetings with provincial representatives and advisors were very limited. In the case of Haldimand and Norfolk, these did not occur outside of a few meetings held by provincial special advisors (Miljan & Spicer, 2015). In reviewing literature and through research analysis, retrofitting methods of citizen engagement can be implemented to engage citizens in restructuring and demonstrate an approach that may incorporate the concerns of citizen stakeholders, while ensuring they are properly informed.

### **7.3.2 The role of council.**

This research clearly demonstrates the passion that residents of Brant County have shown toward their communities. On the topic of amalgamation and citizen participation, the research supports the findings that additional steps needed to be taken to ensure that residents of the County of Brant fully understood the changes that were being forced upon their municipal government. The research is not saying that local council and those in past public service roles within the communities of Brant County did not engage and represent the public to the best of their knowledge and ability. However, the research has indicated that citizens in years since amalgamation are still unhappy with the results of amalgamation. This displeasure is linked to their sense of identity and connection to place, and what Cresswell (2004) would indicate is related to places and spaces as they

become the individual's understanding of seeing, experiencing, and feeling both the surrounding social and physical constructed environment. These aspects of amalgamation within Brant County remain unclear. In the context of geography and physical boundaries, the municipalities of Brant County are still clearly demarcated with city, town, village and hamlet signage and the physical changes seem minor in their implementation. However, influences on social interactions for residents and the relocation of service offices have still impacted the community by downloading many aspects of service reliance to the residents such as relocation of structural service offices.

### **7.3.3 Age demographic and service.**

The population demographics within Brant County have been analyzed and indicate that older population cohorts continue to see increased growth within the County of Brant. Within the findings of this research, participants indicated that the generations residing in the municipalities during the restructuring process were attached to the identity of their municipalities. The participants spoke of “older people”, “old time Paris people”, “older generations”, and even younger cohorts that were raised in the County of Brant. With a consensus that identity was associated to these older generations, it is important to consider how those same individuals and all age groups across the county identify with the spaces and places they inhabit. The literature indicates that specific space can have meaning, from a large metropolitan area to a town, village, community church, or even an individual room of a house. It is of value to understand how access to space and one's understanding of space is experienced (Holloway & Hubbard, 2001).

#### **7.3.4 Another layer of consultation.**

As noted in this research, there was a common consensus that members of the provincial government were applying pressure to local council, and that the timelines were only getting shorter. In addition to a thoroughly thought out citizen engagement model, the province needed to avoid identifying all rural municipalities of Southern Ontario as being uniform and give greater assistance to each local council and the public to ensure amalgamation really was the right course of action.

The following recommendations could have assisted local councils and improved the experiences of the communities of Brant County. These recommendations (Table 8) should be viewed as an additional layer of consultation in relation to the public information meetings that occurred leading up to the restructuring of Brant County and are supported by the literature on planning theory.

**Table 8. Amalgamation and the Public Engagement Process**

**1. Considerations for Restructuring**

- a. Thorough understanding of all aspects of the county (economy, society, environment, infrastructure)
  - i. Feasibility study
  - ii. Demographic and population study
  - iii. Accessibility study
  - iv. Development charges etc.
- b. Public input
  - i. Meetings
  - ii. Open houses
  - iii. Community programs
- c. Pause, reflect, and communicate findings of the process if required

**2. Identify All Pro and Cons**

- a. Public input
  - i. Meetings
  - ii. Open houses
  - iii. Community programs
- b. Pause, reflect, and communicate findings of the process if required

**3. Discuss Alternatives to Amalgamation**

**4. Compare and Evaluate Alternatives**

- a. Public input
  - i. Meetings
  - ii. Open houses
  - iii. Community programs
- b. Pause, reflect, and communicate findings of the process if required

**5. Adopt a Plan Moving Forward**

**6. Monitor and Review the Outcomes of Amalgamation**

**7. Compare and Evaluate Alternatives**

- a. Public input
  - i. Meetings
  - ii. Open houses
  - iii. Community programs
- b. Pause, reflect, and communicate findings of the process if required

Established through planning theory, this consultation model recognizes the importance of understanding all aspects of the community in terms of economy, society, environment, and infrastructure. Study participants indicate that background data collection that was a measure of economics and was consultant driven would have brought valuable information to the process.

Additionally, studies and surveys would have been of value, evaluating how residents viewed things such as service changes and location, or citizen opinion on closing or relocating resources linked to specific buildings and open spaces that may have been of personal significance or attachment. This process gives importance to education and understanding, as participants of this study indicated public meetings were mainly to update and inform the public, giving them some opportunity to speak and vote. Few meetings were established where citizens and government officials sat down beside one another to map out desired outcomes and discuss the pros and cons of various aspects of amalgamation and alternatives.

In turn, this deepened level of consultation moves local residents up Sherry Arnstein's (1969) "Ladder of Citizen Participation" to the rungs of "Power Sharing", with a greater level of invested participation in the restructuring process. It does not ignore the fact that the council and residents felt direct and constant pressure from the province, fearing the outcome of the Chatham-Kent restructuring. However, it does consider that additional time was needed to reflect and even redirect the process, if required.

In adopting any plan there is always a need to evaluate, monitor, and review the outcomes. Many participants indicated that it would not make sense to go back after

restructuring occurred. However, additional work could have been done to measure the individual residents' sense of place within the various communities of Brant County, and accessibility resources.

An updated study is needed to determine if Brant County met the stated goals originally outlined by the province in order to serve a greater purpose for the local municipalities and the province. It is not fair to download all aspects of consultation responsibility to the local municipal council and their supporting staff. The goals of the Harris government did not focus on social capital and instead pushed economic feasibility, when a broader understanding of the municipal communities was needed and should have been given importance.

### 7.3.5 Future growth.

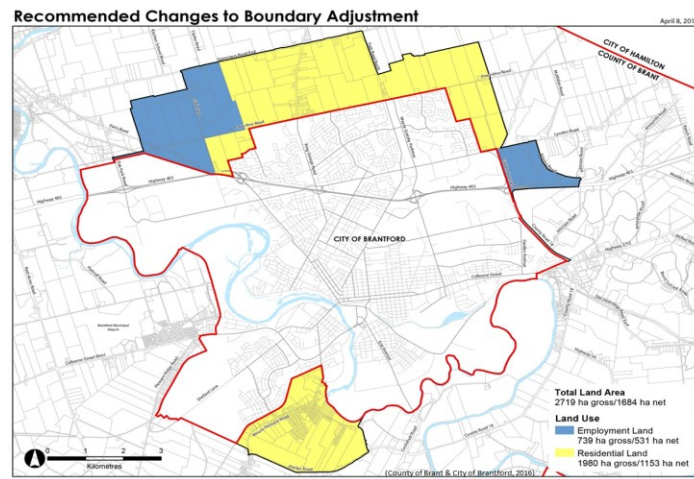


Figure 9. Brantford & Brant County Land Adjustment Map  
Source: City of Brantford 2016

As the literature has indicated, the Southern Ontario amalgamations have discussed and shown limited monetary benefits in relation to their stated objectives (Sancton, 2015; Slack & Bird, 2013; Miljan & Spicer, 2015; Found, 2012). Similar to the annexing of unincorporated lands that transpired in American cities, this process can and is happening in the County of Brant and surrounding municipalities, and may be a better

solution when compared to amalgamations occurring in Canada over the last few decades (Sancton, 2000). Smaller boundary adjustments occurred between the County of Brant and the City of Brantford in January of 2016. As demands for economic and population growth, services, and resources increase in Southern Ontario, the county and city proceeded with a land sale and annexations of 2719 hectares of gross land, as seen in Figure 9 (County of Brant & City of Brantford, 2016). Related to smaller and rural land annexations, urban environments were not impacted drastically when compared to the previous restructuring process. When discussing future growth and the practicality of smaller land annexations, Professor Andrew Sancton (2017) has indicated that:

When you were talking about the annexations before, I have no quarrel with urban areas like cities and towns annexing land from their rural neighbours. That makes perfect sense to me. In my view, if the system is working properly, there is a whole string of incremental annexations and you wouldn't need any big restructuring.

According to the literature, American cities have not seen large scale amalgamation for several decades and have found success in incremental annexations. The long-term effects of the recent land annexations between the County of Brant and the City of Brantford are not fully understood. Individuals in small, rural communities have new municipal boundaries and service locations, but access to resources and physical environment have not been significantly changed, making land annexations and minor boundary adjustment between municipalities a practical application for growth. The unique circular shape of the County of Brant, with the City Brantford at its center, will continue to present challenges as both municipalities continue to grow and expand their



boundaries. This discussion will also need to take into consideration the valuable relationships the County and City must continue to foster with the Six Nations (First Nations reserve), being in close proximity.

#### **7.4 Concluding Thoughts**

As Brant County and its surrounding municipalities continue to grow and change in their demographic compositions, a change in the overall understanding of amalgamation may be experienced. Younger generations and new arrivals who were not part of the amalgamation process only experience these communities as they are today. There will still remain, however, an older generation within the county who did experience the changes of amalgamation (close to 45% of the population is 55 and older as of 2016 Census data). These individuals have a very different understanding of municipal government, local services, and attachment to sense of place identity. They should continue to be seen as valued assets as Brant County continues to see various types of growth across its municipal boundaries.

The goal of this research was to explore how individuals within communities understand the ways in which they were informed, consulted, and allowed to participate in the processes of amalgamation. Key informants of this study have indicated that the amalgamation of Brant County saw a consultation process that varied in its approach. Government officials and administrative staff arranged various public meetings and opportunities for public involvement that served as information updates and ballot voting processes. What is less understood is why further resources and assistance were not provided by the province that incorporated local concerns and ensured the citizens understood and were viewed as valued assets in the restructuring process. Additional

research could be done within Brant County to understand how individuals of all ages access resources within their respective communities and those provided by the county.

When posing the question of further restructuring of municipal boundaries to Professor Sancton (2017), he stated:

There aren't these whole sale reviews that we've had before. I don't think so. This is something coming dangerously close to making a prediction now that I said I wasn't going to do. But, I just don't see any likelihood that there will be some massive effort to re-arrange all the boundaries or reduce the number of governments, or for that matter to expand that number of governments. I mean the de-amalgamation movement was probably at its peak around the time you were talking about: 2004, somewhere in the 10 years ago.

In line with these comments, as per the current land annexations and boundary agreements within the county and surrounding municipalities, amalgamation is not viewed as a best method to address future growth and to take advantage of economies of scale.

In conclusion, the changes of amalgamation should not be forgotten. Participant # 4 indicated that they were told by municipal staff from other municipalities that in order to change the outlook of a community related to amalgamation, older cohorts must pass on. These challenges need to be remembered and recognized for their effects on the communities of Brant County. When determining and understanding the public engagement processes that occurred throughout the amalgamation of Brant County, as stated in previous sections, it is important to recognize that this study did not look at citizens that participated in the various engagement processes, instead it focused on

individuals employed in various municipal servant roles during amalgamation. As a result, it cannot be assumed that these opinions would be shared by all stakeholders in the amalgamation process. Through triangulation of interview data, specific themes and categories emerged, with content analysis providing assistance in drawing specific conclusions related to the primary and secondary research questions, aiding in providing an in-depth understanding of public participation within Brant County pre- and post-amalgamation. Local residents should continue to be informed of any changes within their municipal boundaries. The task of government officials and representatives is to respond to all aspects of individual communities, including social, economic, and environmental capital.

#### **7.5 Areas for Future Exploration: Age Friendly Assessment of Brant County**

As of September 2008, a Master Aging Plan for the City of Brantford and the County of Brant was developed to provide a multifaceted approach in evaluating reports, demographics, housing, transportation, safety and security, health care, professional and retail options, and affordability for older adults within Brantford and the surrounding areas (Alzheimer Society of Brant, 2008). While this plan serves as a strong resource for future studies, it is of value for Brant County and the surrounding areas to review this Master Aging Plan and provide an update. Recent Statistics Canada data has indicated increasing growth in senior cohorts throughout Brant County since 2011. A re-evaluation of these indicators and others would help to address, coordinate, and understand the wide range of needs and services that older adults in the county require.

The City of Brantford recently brought forth a report to the Social Services Committee, notifying them that city staff were establishing projects to support reductions

in senior social isolation, applying for provincial grants in 2016 with planned approval in 2017 (Graham & Connor, 2017). The County of Brant and surrounding municipalities should consider continuing to apply for provincial grants, seeking to study and understand older age cohorts within their municipal boundaries. Gaining further knowledge on the ways this aging demographic understands, identifies, relates to, and accesses space would add to the understanding of the larger functions and goals of a municipality and add to a better understanding of how all individuals and age cohorts relate to the spaces they inhabit.

## **7.6 Reflections and Lessons Learned**

When reflecting on the case study of the amalgamation of Brant County, I have learned that in order to approach a research topic it is important to be mindful of the time era in which the studied event occurred. In the instance of the case study used in this report, the research interviews became difficult to navigate as many individuals who would have been useful key informants have evolved to circumstances in their lives where they were unable to be accessed as resources. I was surprised to find, however, that the informants I did interview were not only useful sources of information through their interview process, but that they often were good resources for additional documentation and information. Many of them had personal collections of archived newspaper articles, brochures, or correspondence letters from the time of amalgamation which were resources I would possibly not have accessed otherwise.

I have also learned the importance of considering all age cohorts individually, and the motivations that drive their opinions on a topic. The individual age cohorts discussed in this case study all had very different opinions on amalgamation and experiences

driving these opinions. Diverse life experiences and outlooks on community debates should not be overlooked but examined and understood in order to understand how the individuals access their community and may be affected by change. I would propose that this deeper understanding allows for better planning decisions to be made alongside stakeholders, politicians, and planners on behalf of the community.

My research demonstrated that attempts were made for public participation in the amalgamation process of Brant County, but that ultimately the outside pressures from the provincial government out-weighed public opinion. Public engagement is an important part of the planning process, but unfortunately in the case of Brant County's amalgamation the process failed. I would argue that in planning processes it is important to have accountability for public opinion and a method for how public opinion and feedback is integrated into planning decisions. I would encourage planning schools and training to continue to emphasize the importance of making public participation meaningful. In the case of Brant County successful public participation was highlighted in the months following the decision to amalgamate as the communities came together to incorporate public opinions into new planning documents for the newly formed county. In the future, I also think that planning education should highlight the degree of connectivity between the many divisions of municipal government. In the example of this case study, the decision to amalgamate affected all sectors of government resulting in a need for a new Fire Master Plan, Recreation Master Plan, servicing assessments, infrastructure upgrades, among others.

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