

# The Creation of a Cultural Heritage Landscape: Elora, Ontario, Canada

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Elora, Ontario, has long been revered for its scenic, architectural and artistic amenities. These attributes have facilitated its transformation into a heritage shopping village, one whose economy is based, in part, on the production and consumption of handcrafted products reflecting local, regional and national heritage. This paper seeks to determine if this transformation parallels the stages of development identified by Mitchell (1998) in the model of creative destruction. The model demonstrated that the desire to accumulate capital drives entrepreneurs to invest in the production, sale and marketing of local heritage. These investments lure consumers whose presence inevitably leads to destruction of the rural idyll, an image of rural life that is happy, healthy and problem-free. To apply the model, data on entrepreneurial investment, visitor numbers and residents' attitudes are analysed for the period 1965 to 1999. It is concluded that the village of Elora is in the stage of advanced commodification, one characterized by relatively large investment levels, a growing visitor population, and partial destruction of the rural idyll. This state has been reached, and not exceeded, due to two factors. First, the existence of two other stakeholder groups whose actions are driven by the discourses of preservation and production. Second, the maintenance of a spatially separate central business district that caters to local residents. This situation has served to minimize resident-visitor interaction and promote relatively amicable relationships between the two groups. Results of this study confirm that while the premise of the model is sound, minor modifications are required to accommodate some of this study's findings.

*Keywords: heritage, tourism, entrepreneurialism, landscape change, post-modern discourse*

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The North American landscape is one that reflects the materialization of contemporary discourses (Schein 1997). According to Barnes and Duncan (1992), discourses are frameworks that embrace particular combinations of narratives, concepts, ideologies and signifying practices, each relevant to a particular realm of social action. Throughout the post-war period, and particularly since 1970, society has embraced a new discourse, one that esteems the past, the sense of place, consumption of experienced real world aesthetics and roots (Harvey 1990).

One materialization of this "post-modern" discourse is the heritage shopping village; a tangible, visible landscape of consumption where the commodification of heritage both satisfies middle-class desire to accumulate keepsakes of the past, and entrepreneurial drive to accumulate profit. Like all landscapes, these consumption centres are continually evolving. This evolutionary process was described recently by Mitchell (1998) in the model of creative destruction. To date, it has been applied to two communities of

southern Ontario (Mitchell 1998, Mitchell et. al., in press). This paper seeks to apply the model to a third locality, and, in doing so, test the soundness of its premise, and thus, its descriptive capability.

## **The Model of Creative Destruction**

The model of creative destruction was developed to describe the evolution of localities whose development has occurred around the commodification of heritage (Mitchell 1998). Its development was initiated because no suitable conceptual framework was found that explained the evolution of these post-modern communities. While several evolutionary models have appeared in the literature over the past two decades, they dealt to a large extent with resort towns (e.g. Butler 1980) and view places in isolation, divorced from exogenous economic and social forces that drive their development. As described in the original paper (Mitchell 1998), the model draws on an established body of literature in economic and rural geography. It

links the evolution of these landscapes to the entrepreneurial drive to accumulate profit and to consumer desire to accumulate nostalgia. These twin forces have resulted both in the creation of new landscapes and destruction of the old.

In his theory of accumulation, Harvey (1985; 1987; 1988; 1989a; 1989b; 1990) argues that the quest for profit is a dominant force behind capitalism. Continual investment and reinvestment in the production of goods or services, gives rise to a cycle of accumulation; one that generates continual profit for the investor. The cycle is not purely financial, but takes on a spatial dimension as investment leads to the creation of sites of accumulation, or what Harvey (1985) calls 'rational landscapes'. In recent years, at least since about 1970, these landscapes have taken the form of leisure spaces (Lefebvre 1976); a trend that undoubtedly capitalizes on the emergence of a discourse that focuses on the pursuit of cultural heritage.

The desire to purchase 'signposts' (Urry 1990) of the past, as both tangible product and aesthetic experience (Jameson 1984), is part of a broader societal trend to accumulate 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu 1984). This trend has been explored by many (Featherstone 1990; Zeppel and Hall 1991; Cloke and Goodwin 1992; Park and Coppack 1994) who suggested that it is society's desire to root itself in the present, that forces it to look to the past. Konrad (1982, p. 412), for example, argued that this tendency is driven by "a psychological need for continuity, the desire to transcend contemporary experience" and "the urge to know one's roots". Harvey (1990, p. 427) took the argument one step further by linking these new desires to economic forces, such as globalization and time-space compression, which drive the individual to seek out "visible and tangible marks of identity".

Contemporary entrepreneurs have capitalized on this quest for nostalgia. In an urban setting this has taken the form of investment in consumption-driven complexes centred on the cultural and heritage industries (Zurkin 1992; Kilian and Dodson 1996; Hall and Hubbard 1996). In a rural context, it is reflected in the emergence of landscapes that combine the best of two worlds; the carefully crafted products of a pre-industrial society (e.g. quilts, pottery or stained glass), with the modern conveniences (e.g. washrooms, parking, and air-conditioning) that contemporary

consumers have grown accustomed to. Thus, facilitated by the entrepreneurial drive to accumulate profit, we see a contemporary discourse materialized; one that reaps significant benefits for its investors, but at the same time one that comes with certain costs.

The creation of new landscapes inevitably results in the destruction, or partial destruction, of the old. This was recognized originally by Shumpeter (1942), and later by Harvey, in the context of his cycle of accumulation. One may extend the argument to suggest that the magnitude of this destruction will depend on the domination of a profit-motivated discourse. In the absence or unsuccessful intervention of individuals or regimes embodying other discourses, the destruction of the original landscape may be total. This is evident in urban settings where investment in 'spectacles' (Jameson 1984; Harvey 1987; Britton 1991; Hollinshead 1997), has resulted in the wholesale replacement of ageing industrial districts that developed under a modernist discourse. Similarly, in a rural setting, industrial buildings, or venues that provide goods for a local market, will be replaced by entrepreneurs who wish to reap the benefits associated with tourism consumption.

We argue here that the transformation of rural landscapes takes more than a physical form. The influx of visitors, which inevitably accompanies the creation of these leisure spaces, undoubtedly will be seen by some local residents as threatening their peaceful way of life (Doxey 1976; Lowenthal 1985; Ryan 1991; Brown and Giles 1994; Herbert 1995; Pearce 1995; Hall and McArthur 1996). Ultimately, what may be destroyed is the "rural idyll", an image of rural life that is happy, healthy, problem-free "*safely nestling with both a close social community and a contiguous natural environment*" (Cloke and Milbourne 1992, p. 349). This is a process that has been operationalized by Mitchell (1998) in the model of creative destruction.

The model is based on the relationship among three variables that have been dealt with at some length in the literature: entrepreneurial investment (e.g., Bryant 1989; Harvey 1989b; McGuirk et al., 1996; Hall and Hubbard 1996; Wood 1998); consumption of commodified heritage (Urry 1990; Bunce 1994; Kilian and Dodson 1996); and destruction of the rural idyll (e.g., Mingay 1989; Short 1991; Cloke and Milbourne 1992; Halfacree 1995; Gill and Reed 1997). The

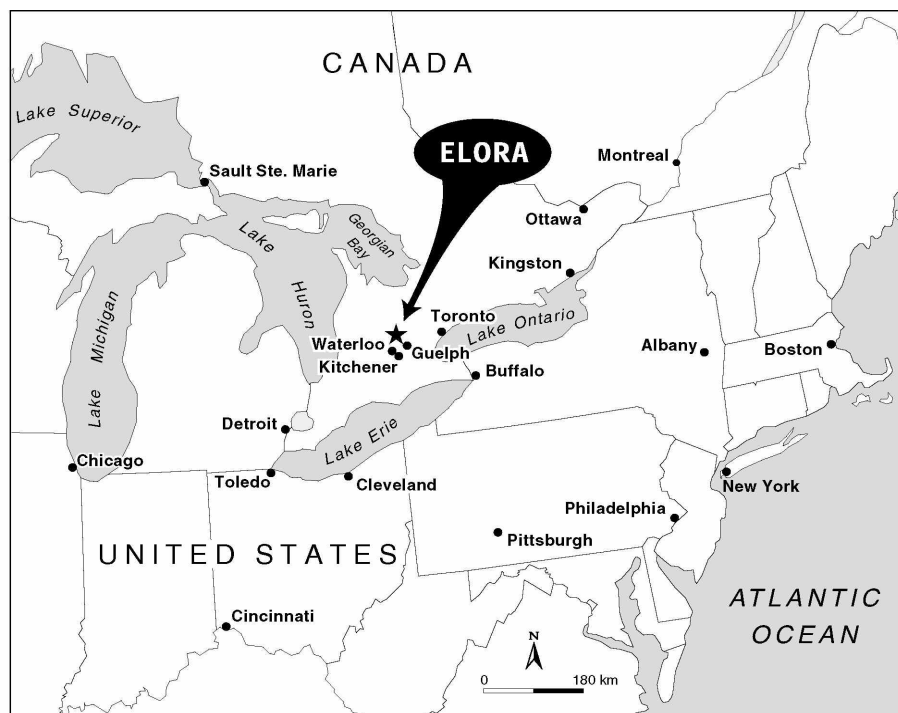


Figure 1: Location of Elora

premise underlying the model is that entrepreneurial investment in the production, sale and marketing of heritage, in both tangible and intangible forms, fosters the creation of a heritage landscape. The expenditures of consumers, who are drawn to this nostalgic environment, provide entrepreneurs with profit for reinvestment. As the commodified landscape continues to unfold and visitor numbers escalate, the image of an idyllic rural landscape will be destroyed, as reflected in the attitudes of local residents.

We recognize that other forces, extraneous to the model, may also be responsible for destruction of the rural idyll. These include changes in the political (e.g. transportation infrastructure); social (e.g. population); or economic (e.g. industrial base) arenas. In an ideal situation, these conditions should be absent when applying the model. If such conditions do occur (as they inevitably will), the model will still be relevant if one shows caution when attributing residents' negative attitudes solely to the processes that drive the model.

The model of creative destruction comprises five stages: early commodification; advanced commodification; early destruction; advanced destruction; and post-destruction. As a community evolves, investment levels, visitor numbers and

negative attitudes continue to increase. In the absence of intervention, an "idyllic" rural community is transformed into a mass-tourist destination. We have determined that this process is operating in the villages of St. Jacobs (Mitchell 1998) and Old Niagara-on-the-Lake (Mitchell et. al., in press). In this paper we assess if similar forces are at work in the southern Ontario community of Elora.

### The Village of Elora

Landscapes of commodified heritage emerge when three criteria are present (Mitchell 1998). First, a community must be readily accessible to a large and relatively affluent population.

Second, some aspect of amenity must be in existence before commodification begins. Third, entrepreneurial spirit must be present. Each of these criterion was found in Elora, thus ensuring the creation of this post-modern landscape.

The village is situated at the junction of the Grand and Irvine Rivers in the Township of Centre Wellington. It lies approximately 30 kilometres from Kitchener-Waterloo, home to 256,368 people, and 18 km from the City of Guelph, with a population of 95,821 (Statistics Canada 1999). It is located 35 km from a limited access highway, which provides direct access to Canada's largest population centre, the Greater Toronto Area, located 110 km to the east (Figure 1). Such an accessible location has provided the threshold population necessary to support the offering of a diverse array of heritage products.

A favourable location, however, does not guarantee success. It is widely agreed (Dahms 1991; 1995; Getz 1993; Mitchell et al. 1993; Mitchell 1998) that heritage shopping villages are replete with amenity, characteristics perceived as pleasant, particularly those "of an intangible nature which serve psychological rather than physical needs" (Park and Coppack 1994, p.164). A variety of factors create an amenity environment. An attractive physical setting, a pleasing streetscape, or unique customs and traditions lay the

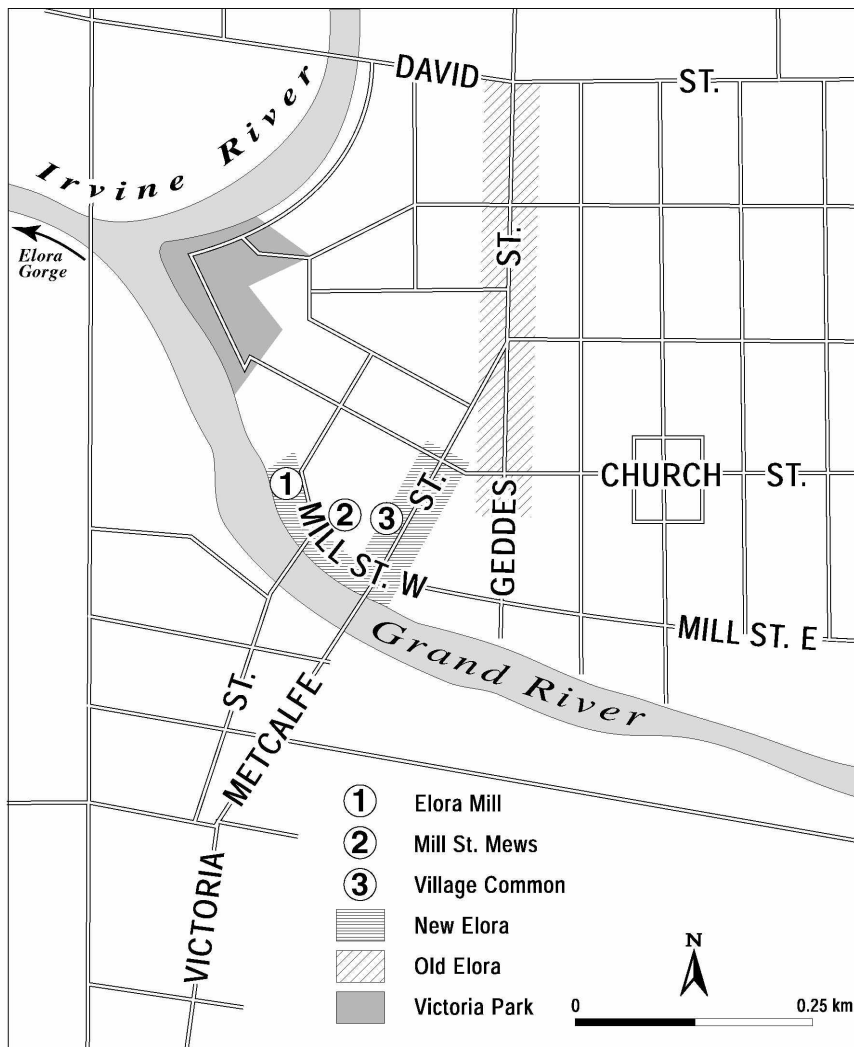


Figure 2: The village of Elora

foundation upon which a commodified landscape may unfold.

Each of these characteristics can be found in the village. It is the physical attributes, however, that have been at the root of Elora's success. The community is located on a spectacular site, one that influenced both the development of the original streetscape and the establishment of an artistic heritage (Figure 2).

As Westhues and Sinclair (1974, p.16) observed, "the juncture of the two rivers is surrounded by picturesque hills and, below the juncture, nature has carved a deep gorge which offers rare natural beauty amid the mainly flat terrain of southern Ontario". As early as the 1920s, this spectacular natural setting presented an attractive lure to visitors (Connon 1974). It would be 50 years, however, before Elora would fully capitalize on its magnetic potential.

The falls above the gorge not only created a spectacular landscape; it was the sole reason for the establishment and development of the village streetscape (Connon 1974). Captain William Gilkinson, the first of numerous settlers to arrive from the United Kingdom, founded the community in 1832. During its early years, Elora flourished because of the power provided by the Grand River. The construction of a gristmill in 1843 was quickly followed by the appearance of other industries including a woolen mill, foundry, distillery, knitting mills and furniture, brush, carpet and organ factories (Allan 1982). Each of these activities, and those of its residents, was housed in structures built from locally quarried stone. This contributed to the creation of a unique streetscape, one that entrepreneurs would later recognize as a goldmine of opportunity.

The natural setting also played a crucial role in the development of a rich artistic heritage. As noted in a local news article, "...as one of the most scenic and historic areas in

Ontario, Elora has long been famous as a community of arts and crafts people" (Anon. 1991, p. 3). As early as the 1920s, visual artists were lured to Elora for inspiration (Connon 1974). A.J. Casson, a member of Canada's famous "Group of Seven" artists, for example, spent much time in the village during the 1920s and 1930s. Like many, Casson was attracted to the village because of its unique ambience. In his own words, "I fell in love with Elora at first sight . . . Elora was unlike any other Ontario town I know . . . I became obsessed with sketching it" (quoted in Anon. 1998a). The work of Casson and others created a rich artistic legacy. When combined with its scenic attributes and pleasing streetscape, Elora proved an irresistible lure in the eyes of entrepreneurs.

Research conducted on heritage shopping villages, within the context of the model, has found that

development often is driven by a few key entrepreneurs who recognize a community's potential. In St. Jacobs, (and recently in Niagara-on-the-Lake) the transformation has been led almost single-handedly by one individual (Mitchell 1998; Mitchell et al. in press). The situation in Elora is somewhat different since investments have originated with many entrepreneurs, both local and non-local. To date, no one individual can claim responsibility for its present structure. It is the time and investment of many, which is responsible for placing Elora on the path of creative destruction.

## Methods

The purpose of this paper is to apply the model of creative destruction to the village of Elora. To meet this objective, change in the three variables that drive each stage of the model is described. First, indirect information on entrepreneurial investment is presented. This is drawn from three sources. First, Dun and Bradstreet Reference Books were used to describe the evolving functional structure of the community since 1965. These data were supplemented with information drawn from a variety of published works on Elora (e.g. Westhues and Sinclair 1974). Information also was gleaned from a content analysis of articles appearing in the local weekly newspaper, *The Fergus-Elora News Express*, for the period 1970 to 1999. While these sources do not provide consistent information on the dollar value of investments, they do illustrate the community's evolving business composition since mid-1960.

Second, historical data on consumption levels were provided by several organizations. The Grand River Conservation Authority supplied information on total number of annual visitors to the Elora Gorge, located just outside the village. Unfortunately, one can not assume that all visitors to this conservation area are drawn to the village of Elora. In fact, a survey conducted in 1995 (Reid et al.) revealed that only 42 per cent of visitors to the Gorge, also spent time in the business district. Nor can one assume that all visitors to the village also go to the Gorge. Thus, while these figures do not provide an accurate picture of the village's attraction, they do reveal regional trends in visitor numbers over time.

The Elora Festival also has collected statistics on visitor numbers since its founding in 1979. Again, this information is rather limited because the current festival season is only one month in duration. However, much like data provided by the Conservation Authority, they are useful in illustrating general trends. In addition, the local newspaper provided estimates of visitor numbers that have been compiled by Provincial and local tourist organizations (e.g. the Elora Chamber of Commerce). While these estimates were given for only a limited number of years, when combined with the Festival and Conservation Authority figures, we have enough information to generally document Elora's popularity over time.

**Table 1** Sources of Survey Data

	Date	Sample Size	Participant
Coppack	1984	56	Residents
Mitchell	1985	37	Merchants
Stewart	1986	76	Residents
Morris	1998	31	Residents
Mitchell and Coghill	1998	150	Residents
Mitchell and Coghill	1999	28	Merchants

Note: the date refers to the year the surveys were conducted.

Finally, data on resident attitudes towards tourism for the period 1970 to 1999 were also documented from the content analysis of newspaper articles and from information gathered from resident surveys undertaken by various authors at various times (Table 1). While these surveys are not always directly comparable, they provide sufficient information to document evolving attitudes towards tourism over the past three decades.

## The Process of Creative Destruction

### *Early Commodification*

In the first stage of creative destruction, the commodification of heritage is initiated. The restoration of local buildings and their conversion to venues for the production and sale of handcrafted products, are indications that the process of creative destruction is at work. These investments generate both financial benefits for those involved and cosmetic improvements

that are enjoyed by all. The attitudes of local residents are very favourable, and the rural idyll remains intact (Mitchell 1998).

The period of early commodification was relatively short-lived in Elora, originating in the early 1970s and continuing for approximately five years. It was during this stage that village 'newcomers' (Westhues and Sinclair 1974) initiated the restoration of several streets in Elora, including Mill Street West (Figure 2), an area that had deteriorated to "near-slum conditions". (Anon. 1975, p. 12). These efforts had two impacts. First, they provided a venue for the sale of specialized products. Second, they contributed to the creation of a new landscape; one ideally designed for visual consumption.

Information on Elora's evolving business structure can be gleaned from a review of Table 2. According to Dun and Bradstreet, between 1965 and 1975 the total number of businesses in Elora rose from 49 to 66. Much of this increase can be attributed to change in the number of retail establishments. In the former year only 26 retailers could be found in the community, offering a variety of everyday goods. By the latter year, the number had risen to 32 with a greater number of miscellaneous functions represented.

While Table 2 provides data on change in Elora's functional structure, it is impossible to tell if the businesses listed by Dun and Bradstreet were marketed to a tourist clientele. From a sociological study, however, we can conclude that eight or more stores in 1974 catered to tourists including the "affluent of Ontario" (Westhues and Sinclair 1974, p. 51). These were two venues where pottery was made and sold, a gift shop, two art galleries, a tea shop providing a "haven for weary travellers" (Anon. 1971, p. 2) and several stores selling refurbished antiques. Thus, it appears that investment in tradition was indeed taking place in the village.

The tourist shops identified by Westhues and Sinclair (1974) were markedly different from those catering to local residents. This was illustrated in their comparison of The Tea Shop, catering to "urban outsiders on a holiday in the country" with the Snack Bar, the meeting place for Elora residents (1974 p. 77).

There was no bar with a formica top; neither were there plastic-covered stools. Instead, there were carefully-restored antiques, exposed stone walls, aged wooden chairs and tables. It was even more quiet than the snack bar, the atmosphere suggested the quiet not of boredom, but of gentility.

**Table 2** Elora Businesses, 1945-1999

	1945	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995	1999
Total Number of Businesses	43	59	49	66	126	135	158
Number of Residences	2	0	1	2	10	7	12
Number of Retail Outlets	30	37	26	32	56	33	54
<b>Types of retail functions</b>							
Building Material	6	8	7	8	3	1	1
General Merchandise	1	2	1	2	5	1	3
Food	13	11	6	8	4	2	6
Automobiles/Gasoline	3	9	5	4	4	2	2
Furniture/Home Furnishings	3	5	4	2	10	5	6
Apparel	0	0	1	3	5	11	11
Miscellaneous	4	2	2	5	18	11	25

Sources: compiled from Dun and Bradstreet Reference Book 1945-1999; field work, 1995 and 1999.

These contrasting descriptions suggest that two images of Elora existed by mid-1970 (Westhues and Sinclair 1974). First, was Old Elora, which catered to the everyday needs of the 'modern' local resident. Here were found mass-produced goods, reflecting an industrial era. Second, was New Elora; a community that catered to the 'post-modern' consumer's quest for handcrafted products of a pre-industrial period (Harvey 1990). According to Westhues and Sinclair (1974 p. 56), New Elora:

...was not new at all with respect to the items it treasured or the style of living it espoused. It had a craving for antiques, for handicrafts like pottery, for crumbling brick buildings and creaking homes. In this respect it was far older than Old Fringetown {Elora}. What was new was its rejection of many aspects of consumer society and its disinterest in the mass-produced furniture, utensils, houses, food and almost everything else that today's urban Canada has.

The landscape of "New Elora" not only provided consumers with tangible products, but was itself, a commodity to be visually consumed. Much like Zurkin's (1992, p. 221) "dreamscapes of visual consumption", New Elora was a setting that portrayed an "idealized image of the countryside in the minds of consumers" (Mitchell 1998, p. 275). This image was reflected in the comments of the local Reeve who suggested that "Elora is one of the most beautiful and unique villages in Ontario . . . {where} the new has been blended with the old in the heart of the village" (Hoffer 1974, p. 12). The crafting of this image appears to have been successful for, by the end of this period, Elora emerged as a popular tourist destination.

It is difficult to gauge the overall success of the restorative activities since no record of total visitor numbers is available. Data provided by the Grand River Conservation Authority suggest that approximately 150,000 people travelled to the Elora Gorge in 1972 (Table 3).

It is impossible to estimate what percentage of this group visited the downtown. In all likelihood, it would be considerably less than the 42 per cent identified by Reid et al. (1995). However, information provided in the local paper and the study by Westhues and Sinclair (1974) suggested that Elora was being sought-out by visitors in search of a heritage experience. In 1972, for

example, an Architectural Conservancy Tour was initiated that attracted more than 500 visitors in its first year (Anon. 1972, p. 8).

**Table 3** Estimated attendance at the Elora Gorge and the Elora Festival (1972-1998).

Year	Gorge attendance	Festival attendance
1972	152,319	Not applicable
1977	161,988	Not applicable
1982	169,363	2,000
1987	169,389	Not available
1992	135,973	5,800
1998	192,899	10,058

Source: Grand River Conservation Authority and the Elora Festival (1999).

Many participants expressed their "enthusiasm for the renovations on Mill Street West, the original business section of town which is in the process of being reborn" (Anon. 1972, p. 8). Westhues and Sinclair (1974 p. 56) also noted the presence of visitors who were lured to Elora "to find in this village whatever it is that has been lost in the rapid industrialization of the postwar years". As a result of their presence, "the village can now support, largely from the tourist trade, craft production not unlike that of a century ago" (Westhues and Sinclair 1974, p. 51). It appears, therefore, that the desire to view historic structures was an integral part of visitor experience in Elora. This experience would be shared by an increasing number of people in later years.

The model of creative destruction envisions a harmonious relationship between resident and visitor during this period. A content analysis of articles appearing in the *Fergus-Elora News Express* revealed only one criticism. It was suggested by a local resident quoted in the newspaper in 1992, that in the 1970s many people opposed guided tours that made a brief stop in Elora on their way to other destinations.

Those opposing the tours were proprietors of downtown businesses who "complained about the flood of people using the washroom facilities and tramping through their business without buying anything" (Anon., 1992a, p. 9). Since no further comments appeared in the paper, it can generally be assumed that

local residents were in favour of the tourism development that was occurring. This situation would begin to change in the next period of creative destruction.

### ***Advanced Commodification***

In the original model it is suggested that the period of advanced commodification is marked by acceleration in investment levels, which contributes to the creation of the heritage landscape. During this time, new businesses are opened while others are converted to meet demands of the visiting population. The community is marketed extensively and the result is escalation in visitor numbers. For those involved in the tourism industry, the benefits are great. A partial destruction of the rural idyll ensues, however, as reflected in the attitudes of local residents (Mitchell 1998).

Advanced commodification began in Elora in the mid-1970s and has continued, with some interruption, to the present day. As illustrated below, this period of economic stagnation extended between the late 1980s and mid-1990s and was reflected both in reduced investment and lower visitor numbers. A period of renewed growth returned to Elora after approximately 1995 and demonstrated Elora's continued progression through the stage of advanced commodification. In the following section we describe changes in functional structure, visitor numbers and resident attitudes between 1975 and the present day (1999). We leave the explanation of these trends to the discussion section.

Data collected by Dun and Bradstreet, and verified through fieldwork, reveal that Elora's functional structure continued to evolve during this period (Table 2). Between 1975 and 1999, the total number of businesses in the community increased from 66 to 158. While the number of stores and restaurants fell between 1985 and 1995, the period since then has been one of growth. In fact, over the 24-year period (1975 - 1999), significant increases have occurred in the number of restaurants (from two to 12) and retail outlets (from 34 to 54). This is particularly true for stores selling miscellaneous goods and food (including three speciality food stores); whose numbers more than doubled over this period. In contrast, a decline occurred in venues providing goods (automotive and building material) consumed (we assume) by local residents.

Council blamed the decline in locally-oriented businesses on proprietors who were changing their product mix to take advantage of "premium returns on tourist items" (Corporation of the Village of Elora 1987a, p. 16). The result of this, they claimed, was that "the Elora commercial area suffers from considerable leakage for items such as groceries, furniture, home entertainment goods, sporting goods, hardware, automobiles and clothing" (Corporation of the Village of Elora 1987a, p. i). They concluded that the switch to tourist-oriented businesses had left Elora under-supplied (by 40-50%) in these retail sectors. This was verified in a 1999 survey (Morris 1999) that found the majority of Elora residents shopped outside the village for groceries, furniture, clothing, automobiles and convenience goods. It should be noted, however, that while some Elora residents now travel to neighbouring communities to meet their basic shopping needs, they now have the option of staying in the local community to purchase more specialized products.

As Elora's commercial structure changed, two types of initiatives emerged. First, were several major structural changes undertaken by the private sector to provide visitors with additional venues for consumption. Second, was a series of events that promoted Elora's performing, visual and literary artistic heritage. These initiatives provided consumers both tangible and intangible keepsakes of Elora's heritage, and contributed further to the creation of the commodified landscape.

The purchase and conversion of the gristmill was the most important structural change in Elora's recent history (Table 4). Until 1972, the building had functioned as a fully operating water-powered mill. In that year the owner decided that a modern building would be more viable for his rapidly growing enterprise (Anon. 1982a). The Mill was sold to a Toronto syndicate, which then turned the property over to two Elora residents. For the next two years, the Mill was subject of great speculation. In the fall of 1976, "the wraps came off and a new version of the Elora Mill was revealed" (Anon. 1982b, p. B15):

Where grain was once milled there were guestrooms, dining rooms, a banquet hall and lounge all tastefully decorated with original stone walls and hand-hewn beams incorporated in the décor. Carpets cover the floor, an elevator carries guests and smells of good food fill the air.



**Table 4** Examples of Major Entrepreneurial Investment

Date	Investment	Product
1974	Drimmie Grist Mill purchased and converted to the Elora Mill	Accommodation and dining in an historic setting.
1978	Site of Mundell Furniture and Blanchard Organ Factories purchased and converted to the Courtyard Shops	Traditional crafts and antiques
1982	Mill Stable converted to café and viewing area	Scenery, food and beverages
1988	Residence and adjacent property converted into the Village Common	Antiques, books, wicker items, etc. provided in 8 shops
1995	Opening of the Antique Warehouse on the site of a former lumber yard	Antiques and collectibles available from 65 vendors

Sources: Anon., 1974; 1975; 1978; 1982a; 1988; van Ray, 1999.

Not only was the Mill tastefully decorated, but also every attempt made to create an ambience reminiscent of a bygone era. As described by a local reporter (Anon. 1982b, p. B16):

the twenty-two guestrooms at The Mill are tastefully decorated in Early Canadian with pine furnishings, some antiques and quality replicas. There are pine or brass beds and pine accessories. Each room has handma de quilts . . . and no two rooms are alike. Stepping into a room at the Elora Mill Country Inn and Restaurant is like taking a step back into a different century without giving up any of the modern convenience.

The Elora Mill changed ownership several times during this period (Anon. 1982b; Anon. 1990), and with each new owner additional modification was undertaken. In 1982, for example, extensive renovations were made to the stone-walled stable, which was originally designed for the care of horses needed to work the gristmill (Anon. 1982b). Located precariously on the limestone cliffs immediately down river from the Inn, the Stable had been "constructed in the traditional style of the time, with thick stone walls

built to withstand the elements over the centuries" (Anon. 1982b, p. B17). Renovations undertaken that year resulted in the creation of a 1660 square foot café. Accompanying this was a seating area "made from belt wheels that used to drive the mill machinery" and a viewing platform that provided photographers the opportunity "to take pictures which have been unavailable for over 100 years" (Anon. 1982b, p. B17).

A second structural development of this period was the purchase of land that formerly housed two 19<sup>th</sup> Century manufacturing plants (Table 4). The vacant site, located on the north side of Mill Street, had been used as a lumber storage facility and parking lot since the mid-1950s, when fire swept through the street and destroyed the original structures (Anon. 1978). Its development by a Guelph company in 1978 was designed to "achieve an elegant place which will complement what is on the street now" (Anon. 1978, p. 3). Plans for a seven-shop complex were proposed, centred on a courtyard that would emphasize "early Canadian design using a lot of wood and stone" (Anon. 1978, p. 3). Ten years later, the "Mill Street Mews" was extended to house additional retailers specializing in handcrafted or traditional products. One such shop, "Steve's Sheepskin and Leather", for example, offered "everything from moccasins to leather jackets to Indian crafts to sheepskin coats", while another, "Cobwebs" provided gourmet cookware and Canadian antiques (Marucci 1988, p. 4).

The structural changes that we have just described enhanced the restorative activities that newcomers had initiated along Mill Street West during the period of Early Commodification. By the mid-1980s, all of the businesses located along this street catered to visitors (Mitchell and Wall 1985), giving rise to a well-defined tourist district (The Corporation of the Village of Elora 1987b). As Mill Street became saturated, entrepreneurs turned their attention to residential and retail properties located on adjacent side streets. The result was the extension of the tourist district to Metcalfe, a street located on the north side of the river, adjacent to Mill Street West (Figure 2). It was here where the third major structural change occurred.

Construction of the Village Common created a focal point for development on Metcalfe Street (Table 4). Offering eight shops on the site of a former residence and retail outlet, the renovation of this "board-and-batten" structure was in keeping with the original

architectural design and provided visitors with a variety of products. These included hand-made jewelry and clothing, antiques and handcrafted wooden pieces (Marucci 1988). With the opening of this structure, tourists now had reason to venture away from Mill Street in their search for symbolic objects.

The final major structural change to occur was construction of an antique warehouse on the site of a former lumberyard and farmers' market. Opened in 1994, this 15,000 square foot building is home to 65 vendors who specialize in antiques and collectibles (van Ray 1999). Its location on the outskirts of the village illustrates the continual expansion of the tourist district away from Mill and Metcalfe Streets; an expansion that was not unique to Elora but one that was also observed in the nearby village of St. Jacobs (Mitchell 1998).

The provision of these tangible commodified products was accompanied by the appearance of several events that provided visitors with intangible commodities; specifically, the chance to savour Elora's artistic heritage. These events are detailed in Table 5.

While each event warrants discussion, it is without a doubt that Elora's promotion of the performing arts has given it national recognition. In 1979, for example, the Elora Three Centuries Festival (now the Elora Festival) was founded. While the festival had modest beginnings, it has blossomed over a twenty year period and today is "recognized world-wide as one of Canada's finest music events" (Erdy 1999, p. 10). This reputation is attributed not only to the quality of programming, but also to the unique settings (e.g. a quarry) where events are staged.

A number of visual and literary arts events also emerged in Elora during this period (Table 5). An annual studio tour, for example, was initiated in 1987 to "familiarize the public with the wide range of crafts and works of art available in the area" (Anon. 1987, p. 2). In its first year, eighteen artists participated, and more than 300 visitors were drawn from a number of surrounding towns and cities (Anon. 1987). In later years, the number of participants increased representing a variety of art forms including "glassblowing, painting, pottery, jewellery making, sculpturing and quilt making" (Bonardo 1989, p.15). Approximately ten years later, the Spring Sculpture Show was initiated. Attracting more than 20 artists, this event provides visitors with an opportunity to experience the "creative dimensions of clay" (Anon. 1998b, p. 10), an

experience that is enhanced by the event's natural venues.

**Table 5** Performing and Visual Arts Events

Est.	Event	Duration	Product
1979	Elora Three Centuries Festival	Initial: 2 summer weeks Current: 4 summer weeks	Music of Canadian Artists
1987	Studio Tours	Autumn weekend	Demonstrations by local artists
1993	Words by the Water	1 summer day	Readings by local authors
1993	In Love with Elora	4 weeks in autumn	Various visual arts exhibits
1994	Elora Fringe Festival	4 weekends during the Elora Festival	Music by local performers
1995	Elorapalooza	1 summer day	Music, dancing and food on grounds of a private residence
1997	Celtic Festival	1 winter weekend	Celebration of Celtic tradition (song, lectures and dramatizations)
1998	Elora Spring Sculpture Show	1 spring weekend	Demonstrations and hands-on sculpting experience

Sources: Anon., 1994ab; 1995ab; 1997; 1998b.

In 1984 it was estimated that approximately 225,000 people had come to the village. By 1987 the estimated number had increased to 342,196, with non-local expenditures valued at more than C\$5,000,000 (Corporation of the Village of Elora 1987b, p. 3). These trends were short-lived, however, for in 1992 it was reported that only 100,000 people had visited the community in the previous year (Bryan 1992a, p. 9).

This dire situation was reflected in the comments of several retailers. One local proprietor indicated that "sales are steadily dropping and so are the tourist numbers" (Holdway 1994, p. 18), while another complained "the past couple of years have not been kind to retailers" (Anon. 1992b, p. 4). This trend has

been reversed in recent years. In 1998, the Chamber of Commerce estimated that 287,997 people had visited Elora's information booths (Elora Chamber of Commerce 1999). While visitor numbers have not yet surpassed those of the mid 1980s, their upward trend suggests that the village of Elora once again is on the path of creative destruction described by the model.

The period of advanced commodification is normally one of reduced harmony between visitor and resident (Mitchell 1998). While the majority of the resident population still favours the developments that are occurring, a minority will begin to perceive erosion of the rural idyll. This is reflected in the comments of local residents concerning issues such as parking and congestion. As revealed in several surveys (Coppack 1985; Stewart 1987; Mitchell and Coghill 1998), and in the content analysis of news articles, most residents appeared to approve of Elora's emergence as a tourist destination. However, while the overall attitude was positive, several "turf tensions" (Harvey 1989b) were emerging in Elora during this period.

A 1984 residentsurvey (Coppack 1985, p. 125) found that the vast majority of residents surveyed (86%) considered visitors to be generally positive for the village. By far the strongest reasons given were "good for business" and "stimulates growth". Other benefits mentioned were the encouragement of artists and the maintenance of the community's unique architectural heritage. These results prompted Coppack (1985 p. 125) to conclude, "there does not appear to be a significant conflict between visitor and resident".

These findings were corroborated three years later by Stewart (1987). In a survey of Elora residents, the author revealed that 80 per cent had favourable opinions towards tourism development, with only 14 per cent opposed and six per cent undecided (cited in the Corporation of the Village of Elora 1987b, p. 7). Based on Stewart's survey research, the Corporation of the Village of Elora (1987b, p. 7) also concluded that "there appears to be no current aggressive opposition to the tourist industry". The authors' 1998 survey further verified that local residents generally approve of tourism development in the village (Table 6).

When asked to comment on the benefits of tourism, many (38%) pointed to its role in generating income for local residents. A number of respondents also noted that entrepreneurial investment has created employment and led to beautification of the village. A small

percentage also pointed to the increased community pride and village recognition that has accompanied the expansion of the tourist base.

The generally positive attitude that prevailed in Elora in 1998 was further reflected in resident response to three questions. Residents were asked if tourism had affected their quality of life. The vast majority (about 96%) stated that the annual influx of visitors had either no impact, or contributed in a positive way to their quality of life. When asked if tourism enhanced their sense of community, only 8.2 per cent disagreed. Several ongoing issues have emerged in Elora as a consequence of its conversion into a heritage shopping village (Table 6). The most significant, and identified by more than one fifth of survey respondents in 1998, is the increase in traffic that inevitably accompanies any tourist development. Parking difficulties also were identified in the survey by twelve per cent of the sample. Other hindrances noted by only a few individuals included litter, damage to the natural environment and increased noise.

While noted by only a small number of survey respondents, the issue of parking has received considerable attention in the popular press. As early as 1978, the Clerk Treasurer in Elora commented that "heavy automobile traffic and parking problems are the biggest headaches" (Ketcham 1978, p. 2). A series of letters to the editor between 1984 and 1986 again pointed to the lack of available parking opportunities in the downtown (Anon. 1984; Anon. 1985; Anon. 1986). These concerns prompted an analysis to be conducted by the village, which concluded, "there is a shortage of parking spaces in the tourist area which is leading to traffic congestion" (Corporation of the Village of Elora 1987c, p. 25). Several strategies have been proposed by local merchants to alleviate this issue (Anon. 1986). These include extension of the two-hour parking limit, the identification of alternative parking spaces and erection of signage directing visitors to appropriate lots. Implementation of these strategies (Bryan 1992b) undoubtedly improved the situation and helps explain why relatively few respondents drew attention to this issue in the 1998 survey.

**Table 6** Advantages and Disadvantages of Tourism as Perceived by Local Residents(1998)

Effect	Percent noting effect (n=150)
Generates income	38
Creates employment	16
Beautification	14
Village recognition	8
Enhanced cultural environment	6
Increased community pride	4
Interesting shops	2
Increased traffic	22
Parking difficulties	12
Crowded	6
Litter	4
Loss of traditional businesses	4
Negative attitude of tourists	4
Destruction of natural environment	4
Expensive restaurants	4
Speeding cars	4
High rate of business turnover	4

Source: Mitchell and Coghill (1998)

In summary, the stage of advanced commodification in Elora has been one of growing investment in the production and sale of heritage, increased visitor numbers and emerging criticism of the tourist industry. However, this trend has not been continuous and in fact was reversed for nearly a decade when investments and visitor numbers declined. This is a situation not accounted for in the model and warrants further discussion.

## Discussion

We believe that two types of forces caused the economic downturn that befell Elora and have prolonged its state of advanced commodification. First, are exogenous forces, over which the community had little control. Second, are several endogenous factors caused by inactivity at the local level. The combined

effect of these forces undoubtedly influenced Elora's reduced popularity during this period. Once mitigated, the community rebounded and enjoyed more advanced movement through the stage of advanced commodification.

The early 1990s was a period of recession in the province of Ontario, brought about by myriad economic circumstances. The magnitude of the recession was reflected in the weakening of the tourist industry in the province as a whole. The Ontario Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism (1998 p. 53), for example, estimated that 20,916 jobs directly or indirectly linked to tourism were lost, with the overall value of construction in hotels, convention centres and restaurants decreasing by 14.8 per cent. One may assume, therefore, that Elora's downturn was a reflection, in part, of this broader economic situation. This was verified by the proprietor of the Elora Mill who commented in 1992 that "the recession has definitely had an impact on us" (Anderson 1992, p. 2). While important, this economic condition does not explain the magnitude of decline in Elora, and we must attribute this to other forces over which the community had some control.

At the outset of this paper, we suggested that the success of a heritage shopping village is a function of a community's ability to provide pre-industrial-style products in a post-industrial setting, one replete with amenities to which contemporary consumers have grown accustomed. By 1985 the former condition appears to have been met as evidenced in the structural and artistic changes that had taken place in the village. One can not say the same about the provision of modern-day conveniences, which lagged behind other communities that also were developing around the sale of heritage products. Elora appeared to lack three amenities: sufficient washroom facilities; convenient parking; and common store hours (Corporation of the Village of Elora 1976; Holdway 1994; Gow 1995). This situation prompted the local newspaper's editor to conclude that the economic downturn could be attributed to competition from other towns that "emulate Elora's atmosphere but surpass it by giving their cores nineteenth century style, with twentieth century amenities" (Holdway 1994, p. 18). When combined with the broader economic trends apparent during this period (including also the legalization of

Sunday shopping) it is not surprising that Elora's success was compromised.

The latter half of the previous decade was one of economic recovery for many Elora merchants. While this turn of events can likely be attributed to strengthening of the provincial economy, one must not ignore the efforts of various community groups who attempted to revive Elora's sagging economy. Five organizations warrant mention. First is the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (LACAC) which was founded in 1982, and has been responsible for many initiatives including the historical designation of numerous buildings within the community (Anon. 1982c). Second, is the Chamber of Commerce, which has been actively involved in both promoting the community (Bryan 1992c) and initiating a variety of cosmetic improvements in the business district (e.g. decorative planters). Members of the Business Improvement Area comprise a third group whose actions have enhanced the appearance and appeal of the downtown core since 1992 (Anon. 1992c). The Marketing Committee, consisting of five community volunteers, is a fourth group that has worked towards "the consolidation of effort and co-ordination of common goals to enhance the Village's tourist industry and other local businesses" (Anon. 1991, p. 19). Finally, the marketing activities of a regional organization, the Grand River Country Group, have served to facilitate greater awareness of Elora's natural and built amenities.

In summary, the post-1995 period has been one of gradual economic recovery in Elora, brought about both by improvements in the Provincial economy, and by the concerted efforts of community groups to enhance and market Elora's cultural heritage landscape. According to the model, the community is now in a position to advance to the stage of early destruction; a period of increased investment, visitor numbers, and greater recognition of problems associated with the additional influx of consumers. We suggest, however, that two factors, one of which is not accounted for in the model, may actually prolong its state of advanced commodification.

First, in the original paper, it was proposed that the evolution of heritage communities is driven by entrepreneurial investment; a process that reflects a desire to accumulate capital for future reinvestment. This study has revealed that investors have played a

major role in the transformation of Elora's landscape. However, it appears that two other groups, who may be driven by somewhat different discourses, also are responsible for creation of this landscape (Figure 3).

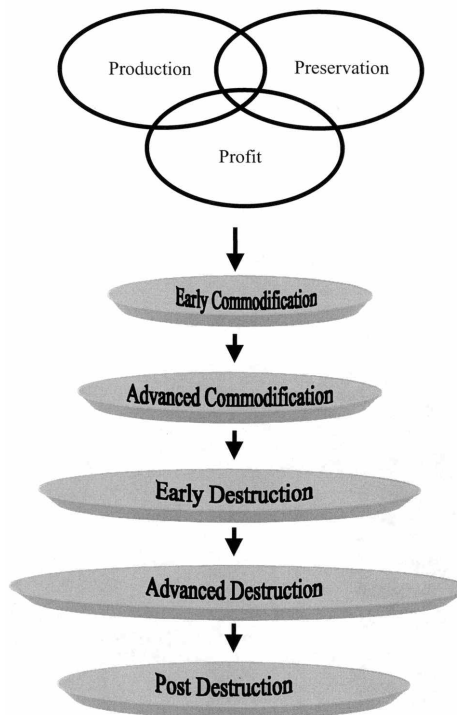


Figure 3: The creation of a heritage landscape

Preservationists are motivated by a desire to retain and enhance the historical environment. Their presence in Elora is not surprising, given their prevalence in other heritage shopping villages, such as Niagara-on-the-Lake (Mitchell et. al. in press). In Elora, the desire to preserve local heritage is reflected in two types of actions: those taken by various public and private sector organizations (e.g. LACAC), which we have already noted; and those taken by local residents in response to development proposals that might compromise the heritage image.

In 1998, for example, more than three hundred people signed a petition against a boat tour that would provide 30-minute rides along the river, accompanied by an amplified commentary (van Ray 1998, p. 13). On several other occasions, residents also have spoken out against mobile food service operators, such as chip wagons and hot dog stands (Bryan 1992d; Anon. 1999). In 1999, a petition was signed by 78 people who argued

that these structures are "an environmental hazard", "unsightly" and "a threat to Elora's reputation" as "Ontario's most beautiful village" (Anon. 1999, p. 2). In response, the Elora Village Council has devised a bylaw to ensure their restriction. If local residents continue to voice their concerns, and council remains receptive, developments that deviate from the heritage theme may be restricted thus preventing the community's entrance into the model's next stage.

The creators of handcrafted products are the second group whose presence has shaped Elora's landscape. We contend, although cannot verify without further research, that these individuals are engaged in several discourses. For those artists who do not sell their crafts, the desire to produce (i.e. create) or to preserve a time-honoured artistic tradition, may be the primary motivations driving their actions. For others, however, the need to profit may also be an important motivator and one that arises out of a need to fund the creative process. We suggest that the presence of multiple discourses may be responsible for the unwillingness of some Elora artists/proprietors to provide consistent store hours - a situation that the purely profit-driven entrepreneur must find somewhat frustrating (Gow 1995). This circumstance is unavoidable, however, unless the artist both works and sells in the same venue (a situation that exists in St. Jacobs) (Mitchell 1998). If such a setting is not feasible, then time spent in creation must necessarily detract from that spent in selling.

We suggest, therefore, that the discourse of the profit-driven entrepreneur does not dominate in Elora, but, rather, co-exists alongside that of other stakeholders, the preservationists and the producers. This situation differs dramatically from that in St. Jacobs where the entrepreneurial drive to accumulate profit appears to have been the dominant motivation behind the process of landscape transformation (Mitchell 1998). If this discourse comes to dominate in Elora, then it, too, may advance to the next stage of the model. In contrast, if actions driven by the need to profit are accompanied by those based on the discourses of preservation and production, then Elora's advancement to the next stage is highly unlikely.

The unique physical layout of Elora's central business district also may prevent the community from entering the stage of early destruction. This possibility was not accounted for in the model but warrants attention. As revealed in Figure 2, Elora actually contains two

spatially separate commercial districts. First is Mill Street West, the heritage district that caters to the tourist market and, as such, represents Westhues' and Sinclair's "New Elora". Second, is Upper Metcalfe Street, or Old Elora, an area that provides for the basic needs of local residents (Corporation of the Village of Elora 1987a, p. 16). It was observed by Coppack (1985, p. 123) that "Elora visitors usually confine themselves to the "tourist mainstreet" a small section of the downtown bordering the river. They do not in any significant numbers encroach on the residential community". Historically, this spatial separation has facilitated amicable relations between resident and visitor. Thus, as others have observed (Brougham and Butler 1981; Liu and Var 1986; Milman and Pizam 1988; Long et al. 1990; Pearce 1998), the location of a tourist district does appear to have an impact on the relationship between visitor and host. If this separation can be maintained, even in the face of increased visitor numbers, then resident attitudes may well remain positive and Elora will continue to exist in an indefinite state of advanced commodification.

## **Conclusions**

This study has revealed that Elora is a unique community whose evolution has occurred around the production, sale and marketing of local heritage. This transformation has been facilitated to a large extent by the actions of entrepreneurs whose investments have given rise to a vibrant tourist economy that is promoted both locally and nationally. These promotional efforts have been successful in luring individuals in pursuit of an experience that encompasses the purchase of specialized products in an historic setting. While the influx of visitors has created some problems, residents appear to be generally happy with the level of tourism development that has occurred, suggesting that the community is in a state of advanced commodification. We attribute the prolonged nature of this state to two things. First, is the presence of two other stakeholder groups, whose actions accompany those of the profit-driven entrepreneurs. Second, is the low level of visitor-resident interaction that results from the maintenance of two spatially separate business districts.

The findings of this study have several implications for development of the model of creative destruction.

First, as frequently acknowledged in the tourism literature, the location of the tourism district appears to have an impact on visitor-host relations. We conclude that the spatial separation of the tourist zone, from that designed for local residents, appears to have been responsible for the generally amicable relations that have resulted. This is a relatively atypical situation. The attractivity of most heritage shopping villages is the central business district itself; an area that evolves to meet the demands of the visiting population to the detriment of local consumers (situations that have arisen in both St. Jacobs and Niagara-on-the-Lake). This situation has not developed in Elora, primarily because the initial tourist enterprises were established in buildings that formerly housed industrial activity, rather than in stores catering to local residents. Thus, as in the resort community, we see the creation of a separate recreational shopping district; one that facilitates the spatial separation of visitor and resident and hence an amicable relationship between the two groups.

This study also has revealed that while profit-motivated entrepreneurs appear to be at work in Elora, they are accompanied by others, whose actions appear to be driven by the discourses of production and preservation. We conclude, although cannot substantiate without further research, that in the absence of a dominant pro-development discourse, a community's trek along the path of creative destruction may be avoided. If profit-motivated individuals wield the greatest power, then the cycle of destruction will be complete.

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