Local and Regional Planning Capacity:
Using the Humber River Basin to Test a Framework for Addressing
Planning Capacity

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Résumé
L’amélioration de la capacité de planification locale et régionale peut aider les plus petites communautés à faire face aux demandes de plus en plus complexes qui leur sont imposées. Ce texte introduit une structure développée pour classifier et orchestrer une analyse des différentes capacités de planification locales et régionales. La structure identifie un éventail d’outils théoriques, pratiques et actuels qui existent et peuvent être employés par les municipalités dans leur planification générale. Les outils sont organisés en fonction de leur rôle dans le processus de planification, et la présence ou l’absence de rôle de planification dans les communautés est utilisé comme une approximation dans l’ensemble de la planification générale. Les municipalités du bassin de la rivière Humber sont utilisées comme étude de cas régionale pour tester la fiabilité de la structure et vérifier si elle pourrait être appliquée plus largement dans le travail de planification. Les étapes de la recherche sont les suivantes: une étude documentaire est effectuée pour générer un éventail théorique des outils de planification à la disposition des planificateurs qui sont alors organisés en fonction de leur rôle dans la planification. Puis, une liste des outils actuellement utilisés dans les sept plans locaux faisant partie de notre étude est établie par une analyse de contenu. Finalement, une analyse de la capacité de planification est faite utilisant des filtres financiers, légaux, politiques et autres pour révéler les opportunités et les limites de la fonctionnalité de la planification dans son ensemble.

Mots clés: capacité de planification, capacité des structures, rôles de planification, Rivière Humber, Corner Brook.

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ISSN: 1188-3774
Abstract
Improved local and regional planning capacity can help smaller communities to better address the increasingly complex demands made upon them. This paper introduces a framework that is designed to classify and orchestrate an analysis of local and regional planning capacity. The framework identifies the theoretical, practical and actual ranges of tools that are and can be employed in municipalities in their comprehensive planning. The tools are organized by planning role, and the presence or lack of different planning roles in a community is employed as a proxy for overall planning capacity. The municipalities in the Humber River Basin in western Newfoundland are used as a regional case study to test the viability of the framework and whether it could be more widely applied in planning practice. The research sequence is as follows: a literature review is used to generate the theoretical range of choice of planning tools available to planners, which is organized according to planning role. Then, the actual range of tools in place in local municipalities is established through content analysis of the seven local plans in combination with case study research. Finally, analysis of the practical planning capacity is undertaken using financial, legal, political and other filters that reveal opportunities and limitations to overall planning functionality.

Key words: planning capacity, capacity framework, planning roles, Humber River, Corner Brook.

Introduction
In this research, we are testing a framework that was developed for gaining insight into the planning capacity of municipalities in a river basin in western Newfoundland. Planned communities along the Atlantic seaboard have a long history, from the grid system of Philadelphia by Penn in 1682 (Gallery, 2008) to the fort planning of Louisbourg by de Verville in 1717 (Johnston, 1995). The Corner Brook area was originally settled by fishers and loggers in the mid-1800s. However, its first comprehensive planning initiative occurred in 1923 when Thomas Adams articulated a garden suburb plan for Corner Brook’s Townsite (Symonds, 2001).

The Humber River empties into the Bay of Islands at Corner Brook. Coastal areas and related estuaries always provide unique challenges to city building: dampness and rot, flooding, the presence of ecologically-productive terrestrial and marine resources, highest and best use of prime locations, and industrial ports and brownfields downtown that normally require careful redevelopment. Lacking the tax base of larger municipalities, smaller cities and towns like Corner Brook, along with their associated hinterlands, can find it difficult to meet these challenges, not to mention the more typical ones.
Testing a Planning Capacity Framework in the Humber River Basin

As professional planning practice continues to evolve, there has been a shift from the view of the planner as the master planner or technical expert to the planner as more of a negotiator who accommodates and guides rather than foretells, predicts and directs (Taylor, 1999). These over-arching categories of planning function can be further refined by articulating a role-based framework of what planners do or aspire to do. In this paper, there are three types of planning capacity (theoretical, practical and actual) relevant to the research, and each type has different research techniques associated with it. The research activities associated with each type of planning capacity constitute, in combination, the proposed framework for establishing planning capacity.

The theoretical planning capacity is addressed by a systematic literature review of planning functionality and tools. Then, using case study research and a content analysis of the existing plans employed in local municipalities, the actual planning capacity for each of the area municipalities can be addressed. Finally, by applying financial, legal, political and other filters to the research results, insight into the practical planning capacity can be established. The conclusions from this research can subsequently be used as preliminary inputs to upcoming plan revisions in the study municipalities.

The Study Area

The study area where the planning capacity framework is tested is located in Newfoundland and Labrador, and is known locally as the Corner Brook/Humber Valley Planning Area. Physically, the study area can be defined as the watershed draining into western Newfoundland’s Humber River. Politically, the region can be defined by the parameters of the Corner Brook/Humber Valley Regional Planning Advisory Authority or RPAA. The RPAA has the following municipalities within its scope (in a transportation circuit): Cormack, Reidville, Deer Lake, Pasadena, Steady Brook, Massey Drive, and Corner Brook (Figure 1). Most of the areas within the watershed (as defined) but outside of the boundaries of these seven municipalities are known as Local Service Districts (LSDs) and fall under the jurisdiction of the provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

At the same time, there are areas of interest within the study area that do not fall within the easy categories of the Local Municipalities/Local Service Districts dichotomy. Three exceptions include the following: the Deer Lake International Airport, the Marble Mountain recreation area (a ski resort), and Humber Valley Resort. The Deer Lake airport falls under the aegis of the federal government, as it is international and under the control of a federal airport authority. Humber Valley Resort, meanwhile, is a private entity outside any municipal jurisdiction. Areas within the resort not held privately are regarded as crown land and anybody wishing to develop within the jurisdiction would do so through an application to the provincial Department of Government
Services. Marble Mountain, meanwhile, is a crown corporation, and answers to the Ministry of Tourism. However, recent touristic developments like the zipline have required an intimate relationship to the Town of Steady Brook. Overall, this research focuses only on the seven municipalities that reside under the purview of the Regional Planning Advisory Authority.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, a comprehensive plan is referred to as a Municipal Plan (known as an Official Plan or Local Plan or by other names elsewhere in the country). The municipal plan is a formal document with legal status that captures both the preferred image of future physical development for the municipality and a policy commitment to solve problems and make public investments that will help in achieving the desired future. The municipal plan, therefore, normally contains sections on assumptions and forecasts, community objectives and intentions, and development policies that indicate the manner in which a municipality intends to achieve its objectives.

Municipal planning in Newfoundland and Labrador is subject to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and is regulated through the Urban and Rural Planning Act, 2000. Section 29 (Part I) of the Act specifies that a plan must be reviewed every five years and that the plan review process must face public
review before being presented to the Minister for approval (who then bases approval on the contents of the plan and the Commissioner’s report). Upon approval, the municipal plan is recognized as binding on Council, planners and the public. A municipal plan, once adopted, is made operational by the Development Regulations that individual municipalities formulate to implement the plan. In some municipalities, all of the planning tools in use may reside only in the development regulations, and not in the plan itself.

Introduction to the Planning Capacity Framework

Being more than just about making plans and providing expert advice, the planning profession in Canada has consistently evolved to accommodate demographic and societal changes (Hodge and Gordon, 2008). As planning contexts evolve, the breadth and depth of planning roles to meet new challenges has enlarged accordingly. Following a systematic digital literature review using the keywords and terms urban, roles in planning, and planning roles in a variety of article indices (including GeoRef, Illumina, Scopus, Web of Science, and Wilson Omnifile), a framework of ten selected roles that captured the variety of functionality in planning became the basis of the plan capacity framework (Table 1). We tried numerous iterations of the framework, and found that the following ten selected roles could accommodate all of the conceivable planning tools available in Canadian practice. As such, each planning role within our framework is associated with an inventory of tools (addressed later). It is noteworthy that there is some functional bleeding between the role categories. For example, the plan maker can simultaneously be an advocate and/or a creative catalyst. Or, the technician role, because of its focus on research, can simultaneously interpenetrate or support all of the other roles.

The strong and emergent roles for the planner with respect to the built environment include plan maker, developer, and regulator, where their dominance arises from their ability to directly shape and control the physical environment. But, while penultimately important, they do not necessarily represent where priorities lie. Current capacity building in planning is guided by transparency, social accountability, and community interactivity. By necessity, this period began with the realization that “under conditions of declining resources, communities must be mobilized for resistance and self-help” (Friedmann, 1994). In the meantime, other authors like Sehested (2009: 253) suggest that there are a number of reasons behind the evolving roles of planners, including, first, that expert authority is increasingly challenged by political authority, and second, that the planning process is increasingly democratizing and opening up to the full spectrum of development actors.
Table 1. The Different Roles of the Planner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>THE PLANNER’S ROLE</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Plan maker</td>
<td>The planner formulates policies, plans and designs, and introduces organizing concepts that contribute to local quality of life and environmental considerations (Leung 1989). This role includes the visionary, the conventional policy planner and the urban designer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>In support of the plan making function, the technician gathers data on and analyzes environmental inventories, population projections, environmental indicators and the like. Planners use their technical knowledge to provide state-of-the-art advice to decision makers, the development community and the electorate (Kaufman 1979).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Creative catalyst</td>
<td>Here, the planner uses creativity to complete or complement different functions of planning. It can mean being a visionary, an innovative urban designer, or finding new solutions to old problems. It is the creative catalyst that reaches out to other disciplines and to emerging social trends, and brings them into the planning dialogue (Mintzberg 1994; Sandercock 2005; Landry 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Sustainability coordinator</td>
<td>The sustainability coordinator tries to even the playing field among economic, social and environmental concerns in the planning arena. They focus on environmental quality maintenance and improvement, as well as environmental conservation or preservation. The sustainability coordinator includes the important function of land stewardship, where the planner identifies and facilitates land transfer and tenure options for the municipality or agency. The motives are typically for infrastructure development for the future, amenity provision (e.g., parks and parkway systems), or environmental conservation. Stewardship includes outright land banking for future developmental needs (Briassoulis 1999). As the sustainability coordinator consolidates their agenda, environmental concerns may begin to take precedence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Advocate</td>
<td>The planner as advocate supports the under-represented and can be expanded to include the planner as radical or activist. They identify and support any platform or group (e.g., the homeless) that lacks expertise, backing or political clout to advance their interests (Davidoff 1965; Clavel 1994; Feldman 1994; Campbell and Fainstein 2003). Meanwhile, in crisis-driven planning contexts, activist solutions may be the only ones that work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Testing a Planning Capacity Framework in the Humber River Basin

**Table 1 Continued**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Regulator</td>
<td>Here, the planner employs the municipality's police power in order to impose limitations or guide incentives regarding the use of land. As well, regulators undertake the administrative duties that make the planning process function (e.g., site plan approval, building permits, etc.). This is the development control planner or administrator (Levy 2005; Hodge and Gordon 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Developer</td>
<td>The planner identifies community needs and addresses those needs through the construction and coordination of infrastructural elements—roads, bridges, water mains, cell towers, utilities, solar panel arrays, wind turbine farms, parking, sewage treatment facilities, sewer mains, parks and parkway systems, swimming pools etc. (Levy 2005; Hodge and Gordon 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Entrepreneur</td>
<td>The entrepreneurial function uses the market to find planning solutions. The planner as entrepreneur can use public funds for the demolition, preparation and marketing of publicly-owned buildings and properties for development. Often, private interests can be encouraged to enter the land market and complete the development process when the entrepreneurial role is successful. The planner as entrepreneur can also act as a fiscal agent using financial instruments to improve the pecuniary situation of the municipality or the planning agency (Frank 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Consensus builder</td>
<td>To build consensus, the planner becomes a political agent and networker. These are the negotiators, the mediators, and the collaborators that take complex issues and find the common ground among disparate interests. Professionally, the planner tries to move political, community and developer understanding and behavior in a direction consistent with sound planning principles. Public participation techniques are central—especially co-education (Healey 1998; Briassoulis 1999; Taylor 1999; Innes and Booher 1999; Booher and Innes 2002; Healey 2003; Sehested 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Circuit rider</td>
<td>The circuit rider is the planner who builds or improves planning capacity. They increase the linkages between and among municipalities or neighborhoods and government agencies, and mobilize all of them (Healey 1998; Heimlich and Anderson 2001). They find funding sources to address neighborhood concerns and remove obstacles and improve communication within the planning triangle (decision makers, developers and the electorate). The empowerment of circuit riding improves the capacity of the municipality and its residents to achieve planning principles, goals and objectives. The importance of circuit riding ebbs and flows depending on the political milieu of the day. Under neoliberalism, planners as circuit riders become critical, but are less important under the left, where planning laws will empower the more traditional roles of planners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sehested (2009) also argues that the planner as consensus builder/collaborator role has dominated the planning literature for the past fifteen years. To the degree that escalating oil prices, resource scarcity, environmental concerns and international anarchism come crashing down on the next generation of global citizens, the planner will need to focus more on a variety of different roles, like that of the entrepreneur or the circuit rider. This is particularly salient with on-going globalization that continues alongside the increasing importance of knowledge industries to buttressing urban economic health (Novakowski, 2009).

As reflected in Table 1, the subject domains and concerns of the planner are myriad. The most basic distinction with respect to planning functionality is between plan generation and plan implementation, viz., the planner is either trying to articulate plans or to implement them (Leung, 2003). With these two fundamental trajectories of action, planning functionality can be further disaggregated into the ten selected roles as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Planners and the Planning Process.

Adapted from: Novakowski and Needham (1996).

As stated, the overall objective of this research is to test a framework that addresses the planning capacity of municipalities, concurrent to explaining and describing the theoretical, actual and practical planning capacities at work with respect to them. We are concerned with comprehensive planning, where “com-
prehensiveness is written into planning legislation and refers to multifunctional/multisectoral spatial plans as well as to the intersection of economic, social, environmental, and physical planning” (Friedmann, 1994). Each of the three capacities (theoretical, practical and actual) is addressed through a variety of different research techniques.

The totality of tools available to the planner is the theoretical planning capacity. The theoretical planning capacity expands on White’s (1961: 26-27) use of the term in resource management, where it would contain all of the tools that planners use, have invented, or can conceive of. The theoretical planning capacity is generated by a systematic literature review of the tools that planners use in each of their roles, in combination with planning experience and imagination.

In this paper, tools are regarded as a proxy for capacity, since planning tools like zoning or development impact fees are what planners employ to accomplish the goals and objectives of planning. Typical planning goals for the study area could include improving local water quality, improving local air quality, optimizing ecosystem integrity, maximizing green space system connectivity, protecting areas of natural and scientific interest from development, encouraging compact settlement patterns, and facilitating the staging of both advanced water treatment systems and integrated secondary/tertiary/quaternary sewage systems. Obviously, not all planning techniques and tools can be used in a particular municipality, as there are resource limitations regarding funding, time, and effort that preclude the full set from being implemented.

At the same time, the tools and techniques of the actual planning capacity can be employed as the foundation upon which to build (see Figure 3). To address the actual planning capacity of individual municipalities, content analysis of the municipal plans needs to be conducted in combination with case study research that establishes how many tools currently exist in relevant plans, how they are used, and how diligently the plan is followed. Now, plans are not always up-to-date, and are sometimes not used even if they do exist. Augmenting case study research to the content analysis of the plans provides a more robust measure of the actual planning capacity of a particular municipality.

In rural and urban-rural transitional areas, basic but important questions include whether there are planners on staff, whether there are plans in place, and what kinds of resources exist for building planning capacity? The research methods used for determining the actual planning capacity are the following: digital content analysis of electronic municipal plans and development regulations for each municipality in the study area, key informant interviews with town managers or other relevant actors, and case study research involving the following: reading local newspapers and transcripts of council meetings, attending planning and council meetings in person, watching local news shows, and participating in forums designed to elicit public opinion in the planning process.
Finally, addressing the practical planning capacity remains the goal of this research and concerns the range of planning instruments that are feasible in the given municipal context. It involves taking the theoretical capacity and putting it through a set of specific context and constraint filters (e.g., technical, financial, legal, institutional, and political) while simultaneously pushing the actual planning capacity in a preferred direction. In other words, the practical planning capacity is driven by institutions, culture, and economics, but is still to be shaped and guided by the planner. So, the practical planning capacity resides somewhere between the actual and theoretical capacities. Overall, the factors determining practical planning capacity can be explored through a combination of the following research techniques: literature review, strategic one-on-one interviews with key governmental and non-governmental informants, community outreach, and media research (primarily newspapers and local entries in the blogosphere). Again, as presented in Figure 3, the practical planning capacity resides somewhere between the extreme of the theoretical planning capacity and the reality of the actual planning capacity.

Research Results: The Theoretical Planning Capacity

Planning tools represent a proxy for planning capacity. Dalton and Burby (1994 :447) state that “communities with more [planning] techniques in place had more potential for managing development successfully, because different techniques lend themselves to different situations.” The more tools a municipality has, therefore, the greater its capacity to cope with development pressure and municipal concerns, whether they are about bringing a new ballpark to town or improving the connectivity of existing greenspaces with water. In a variety of article indices (again, including GeoRef, Illumina, Scopus, Web of Science,
and Wilson Omnifile) and using a systematic digital literature review and the keywords and terms, it was possible to snowball an inventory of tools available to planners. Keywords and terms used included: planning tools, planning techniques, and innovation in combination with standard planning tools, along with searches of the ten individual roles and their analogs.

Here, the tools of planning practice are elaborated upon as a way for a municipality to see how planning capacity can be enlarged or enhanced. As shown in Table 2 below, some roles are more replete with a breadth of tools than others. Importantly, the challenge is not only to enlarge the number of tools within each role, but also to enlarge the presence of as many roles as possible. Table 2 can be used as a basis for discussion within individual municipalities, and brainstorming and dot democracy techniques\(^1\) can be used to identify those tools with the greatest appeal to planners and other partners (Creighton, 2005). Only selected references are provided as the theoretical planning capacity exists without limits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE PLANNER’S ROLE</th>
<th>ILLUSTRATIVE TOOLS WITH SELECTED REFERENCES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan Generation Tools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Plan maker</td>
<td>Use of environmental paradigms; land use planning; goals achievement matrix; design principles; designation of priority funding areas; brownfields redevelopment (Heimlich and Anderson 2001; Wheeler 2008; Daniels 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Technician</td>
<td>Baseline studies; environmental inventories; population and land use projections; monitoring; analysis; risk assessment; roads needs studies (Levy 2005).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Creative catalyst</td>
<td>Visioning; urban design charrettes; design review panels; design contests (Sandercock 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sustainability coordinator</td>
<td>Vigorous stress on environmental paradigms like the ecosystem approach to planning; ecosystem indicators; cradle to grave management; environmental assessment; strategic environmental assessment (Briassoulis 1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Advocate</td>
<td>Legal injunctions; lawsuits; stop work orders; creation of environmental constraint areas; ecological footprinting; advocacy research; planning process overhaul; process harmonization (Friedmann 1994; Peterman 2004).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Implementation Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Regulator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Continued

| 7. Developer | Infrastructure (roads, sewers, waterways, utility lines, fiber optic cables, landfills, etc.) staging and construction; capital investment; stormwater management; waste management; affordable housing. For land banking, use eminent domain; property acquisition; conservation easements; restrictive covenants; heritage designations; land swaps; land trusts; site rehabilitation; land donation initiatives; mitigation banking; direct purchase of development rights (Heimlich and Anderson 2001; Maruani and Amit-Cohen 2007; Stoms et al. 2009; Miller et al. 2009; Amati and Taylor 2010; Daniels 2010). |
| 8. Entrepreneur | Demolition; marketing; development agreements; public/private partnerships (Frank 2007). As a fiscal agent, use exactions; development impact fees; development guarantees; taxes—deferred, tiered, strip; preferential assessments; rebates; penalties (Levy 2005). |
| 9. Consensus builder | Collaboration; negotiation; mediation; public participation; education; Delphi technique; committees; mediation; conciliation; website development (Lane 2005). |
| 10. Circuit rider | Community outreach; education; travel to individual neighborhoods; information dissemination; funding applications; research; website development; bottleneck removal; multisectoral planning (Heimlich and Anderson 2001). |

Research Results: Actual Planning Capacity

The actual planning capacity resides within the envelope of planning instruments currently available to a municipality’s council, planners, and managers as determined by enabling legislation plus existing plans, policies, and programs. As stated, the actual planning capacity can be revealed through a number of primary research methods: digital content analysis of existing plans and regulations in use, case study research and key informant interviews. In western Newfoundland, towns and cities have municipal plans as well as the development regulations that contain the character of how the municipal plans are implemented through zoning, subdivision regulations, etc.

A digital keyword analysis of existing municipal plans provides the baseline that establishes how much capacity there is for planning within the basin. During the study timeframe, there are currently no higher-tier plans with which local municipal plans must be consistent; however, this can be expected to change when the new Regional Planning Advisory Authority is able to present its own regional plan (a draft is currently being proposed for early 2011). Corner Brook is the only municipality in the study area with full-time planners on staff (two of them plus a sustainability coordinator, at the time of this research).

Obviously, resources among larger and smaller urban and rural areas are un-
equal. Urban centers typically have higher assessed land values, larger population bases, and the ability to harness the considerable skill and intent within the electorate. Nevertheless, even the City of St. John’s, the provincial capital, did not prepare its own municipal plan in-house; rather, the city hired Terrain Group to complete it (City of St. John’s, 2007).

All of the municipalities in the study area have municipal plans in place, and each of them had development regulations to support their implementation. It is worth noting that every municipality in the country has a different personality and capability to respond to the same challenges and opportunities. There was a wide discrepancy in the quality of the individual plans in terms of their sophistication and execution. A preliminary but not surprising conclusion is that the strongest role demonstrated in the document review is the planner as regulator role (as evidenced by the uniform demonstration of zoning by-laws, subdivision regulations, etc.). The review also revealed that the plans of the municipalities are not tool-intensive documents like plans elsewhere in the country, where policies bind the municipalities to courses of action. Instead, Newfoundland municipalities embody their tools in their development regulations. Based on the results of the content analysis of representative plans and development regulations for each municipality, the actual planning capacity of the study municipalities is summarily captured in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Graphical Representation of Actual Planning Capacity Demonstrated in the Study Municipalities (North to South).
Figure 4 does not provide a complete picture. Even within cells in the matrix that are shaded to reveal a stronger presence of tools, there is still ample room for enlargement of the planning capacity. Again, a basic premise of the actual planning capacity is that the more tools available to planners, the greater their ability to handle a range of complex planning scenarios. The planner as entrepreneur role, for example, was identified as evident but weak. This observation captures an opportunity for improvement.

Similarly, none of the municipalities but Corner Brook had a sustainability coordinator in place. And, the creative catalyst, advocate, consensus builder and circuit rider roles were completely non-existent. This suggests that there are enormous opportunities for improving planning capacity in the next plan review cycles of the respective municipalities.

**Research Results: Practical Planning Capacity**

When developing the practical planning capacity that recognizes the peculiarities of the individual municipalities, the challenge, again, is always to enlarge the planning capacity. This can be undertaken by understanding the dominant planning issues in each community, and fine-tuning an enlarged breadth of roles that can be mandated to answer them. As stated, the plan generation, technician, regulator and developer roles have dominated planning practice. More recently, the planner as consensus builder/collaborator role has been ascendant (Sehested, 2009). While the profession is well aware that all of these roles remain strong, it is also recognized that they cannot into to command the character of development.

Instead, a wider range of tools is required to move development in the direction of sustainability and inclusiveness, and the nuance of planning practice is now more likely to involve indirect control rather than direct control like zoning. Moreover, overt regulatory control works best in areas experiencing sustained development pressure, which is not the case in western Newfoundland. While regulation is seductive as a solution because it is perceived as inexpensive (e.g., no land has to be bought, nothing has to be built), it does not, frankly, work that well in areas not experiencing dramatic growth that would be better served by bottom-up planning measures like education or circuit riding.

In the Humber River Basin, the majority of existing plans in place were out of date at the time of research (see Table 3), and the two that were current were noteworthy mainly in terms of their averageness. There is currently a cookie-cutter quality to a number of the plans that comes from using the same input sources and consultants. Little to no vision, imagination or sustainability is evident in most of them. So, with steady but not compelling population growth evident in five of the seven municipalities, and further growth anticipated as the coffers of the province improve with the income stream from oil and gas
revenues, how is it that sustainability can be introduced into local plans, and into the regional plan if that ever comes to full fruition? There is no easy answer.

Table 3. Demographic Characteristics of the Basin Municipalities (North to South).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Municipality</th>
<th>Pop'n 2001</th>
<th>Pop'n 2006</th>
<th>Change 2001-06</th>
<th>Timeframe of Municipal Plan (MP)</th>
<th>MP is Current?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cormack Town</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>-2.7</td>
<td>2007-2017</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reidville Town</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1988-1998</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deer Lake Town</td>
<td>4769</td>
<td>4827</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>2004-2014</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasadena Town</td>
<td>3133</td>
<td>3180</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2000-2010</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady Brook Town</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>1988-1998</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massey Drive Town</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>1170</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>1994-2004</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corner Brook City</td>
<td>20103</td>
<td>20083</td>
<td>-0.1</td>
<td>1994-2004</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada 2010

In addition to the funding-, time- and effort-based constraints preventing the realization of the theoretical planning capacity, there is a host of specific filters that alter the extent to which particular planning strategies and tools are practical or even feasible for a particular municipality. In fact, the following filters can be considered the essential determinants of the practical planning capacity were addressed in the case study:

- **The nature and reach of relevant planning and planning-related legislation** (e.g., planning legislation, environmental legislation, etc.). In Newfoundland and Labrador, the salient legislation for planning includes the Urban and Rural Planning Act; the Municipal Affairs Act; the Housing Act and the acts for the individual municipalities. The lack of vision and imagination demonstrated in the basin's municipal plans is at least partly related to the province's vague planning legislation. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs administers these acts and needs to recognize that legislation simply addresses minimum requirements. It is simply not enough to expect planners to transcend the confines of legislation. Rather, the provincial government needs to find mechanisms to arouse and elicit creativity in planning. Stridently, planning capacity has to be aggressively promoted at the provincial level through inspiration. The term sustainable or any of its analogs, for example, does not appear once in the Urban and Rural Planning Act. This shortcoming must be addressed in future articulations of the act by guiding lawyers in the same way that politicians need to be.

- **The type and scale (regional, local, neighborhood) of the dominant planning issues characterizing the study area.** One of the dominant regional
issues is the uneven presence of development pressure, if not its overall lack. As background, the 2006 populations for the seven individual municipalities range from 511 in Reidville to 20,083 in Corner Brook (Table 3). The total 2006 population of the entire watershed within the municipalities is 30,863 (Statistics Canada, 2010). Unlike Newfoundland and Labrador as a whole, the basin is experiencing slight to dramatic population growth in each of the municipalities except Cormack and Corner Brook.

A concomitant consideration is that except for the town of Massey Drive (which experienced a dramatic 52% leap in population between 2001 and 2006), overall development pressure within the watershed cannot be considered strong when compared to other Canadian provinces. Recognizing the uneven growth pressure, it is not surprising that planning efforts will need to focus primarily on improving existing municipal resources and infrastructure (roads, water treatment facilities, and particularly sewerage) rather than growth accommodation. As well, there are a number of Local Service Districts such as Pynn’s Brook and Little Rapids that are outside the boundaries of local municipalities and receive planning control and assistance from the provincial Department of Municipal Affairs.

It is important that Local Service Districts be taken seriously as their behaviors can have serious impacts on local ecosystems. For example, not all of the local drinking water supplies are completely within municipal boundaries (e.g., in Deer Lake), which makes LSDs a serious planning consideration. The possibility that the new regional planning authority will, at some later date, generate a regional plan, will also significantly alter the planning landscape of the area. Other regional issues include the following: a current lack of a regional landfill; inconsistently-delivered drinking water; a lack of comprehensive sewage treatment in Corner Brook; and an anti-development malaise that seems to have taken hold in some of the local councils (for example, Steady Brook had employed the tactic of charging a higher property tax rate on investment condominiums versus condos that are lived in by their owners). Tiered property taxes are an anomaly in Canada. Meanwhile, Florida is the only state in the US that uses tiered taxes. “The Canadian Snowbirds Association, a lobby and information group for people spending significant time in the US each year, is warning that Florida is the only state in the US with a two-tiered property tax system that has different taxes for residents and non-residents” (PropertyWire, 2008).

- **The availability of resources—funding, time, expertise, effort, and desire—for both planning and public participation.** Municipalities in Newfoundland and Labrador are moving through a transitional phase. New funding sources and initiatives have appeared on the planning horizon over
the past few years from the Gas Tax. One initiative of particular merit is the Integrated Community Sustainability Plans program. Initiated in 2009, the program requires that all incorporated municipalities in the province generate sustainability plans by mid-2010 (Department of Municipal Affairs, 2009). In early 2011, some municipalities were still scrambling to provide them. The playing field is not even, and different municipalities will have different abilities to meet their deadlines. Corner Brook, for example, is advantaged by having experienced planners on staff, as well as its own Sustainability Coordinator. The actual value of having a Sustainability Coordinator in place can only be demonstrated when plan content is reviewed within the next plan review cycle.

- **The political culture—the agendas and power levers of the electorate, municipal council, industry, the public at large, and other relevant groups.** Dimensions of the political culture of the municipalities in the basin can be discerned from newspapers and the minutes of council meetings. Anecdotally, the overall pulse of the watershed reflects permission for conservative/traditional development, with few demonstrations of innovation. One obvious exception is a land use approval that was granted for a recreational zipline adjacent to Marble Mountain, a local ski resort. The zipline, however, is just outside the boundaries of Steady Brook and falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Tourism (since the ski resort and neighboring lands are governed by a provincial-level crown corporation known as the Marble Mountain Development Corporation). The anomaly, although encouraging, is certainly not the standard. At the same time, the local newspapers (e.g., the Western Star) are replete with locally-known instances of an anti-development sentiment among a number of the municipalities in the watershed, particularly Steady Brook and Pasadena.

- **The bureaucratic culture—the agendas and ability of the existing bureaucracies and other agencies to meet planning needs.** The Department of Municipal Affairs is the central bureaucracy at work in the Local Service Districts. As well, they review the quality of individual plans and development regulations for towns and cities in western Newfoundland. Newspaper and anecdotal evidence suggests that the provincial ministry takes an ambivalent point of view with respect to contentious municipalities like Steady Brook and is not keen to intervene in instances that may demonstrate conflict of interest.

Now, tools within the planning roles that are already represented in Figures 2 and 3 still need enhancement. As an illustration, the planner as sustainability coordinator role could employ aggressive planning for creating a connected network of greenspaces, rather than an amalgam of isolated parks and pockets of green. In
Corner Brook, for example, one idea would be to try to connect all parks to the central green spine of Corner Brook Stream, and its lower reaches below Margaret Bowater Park. Furthermore, the area of the stream just before Corner Brook Pulp and Paper needs to be completely daylighted. The most relevant ways that planning capacity can be built upon in the study area include both enlarging the scope of existing roles and introducing the following considerations:

- **Plan maker.** The new Humber Valley Regional Planning Advisory Authority has a regional focus that is warranted as there are issues that can only be handled at the regional level. For example, the Appalachian Trail and the TransCanada Trail are regional in nature. So is finding a site for the new regional landfill. The new Regional Planning Advisory Authority can legitimately coordinate these concerns. There are also concerns about climate change, demographic change and competition for natural resources that are best coordinated at the regional rather than local level. Another priority is that the town with the greatest amount of growth pressure—Massey Drive—is without a recent plan. This is a clarion call for attention, particularly since the spectacular views from Massey Drive suggest that growth pressure will continue.

- **Technician.** Statistics Canada was recently asked to curtail the mandatory nature of the long-form Census of Population in 2011. This condescension to neoliberalism has been fought by planners, statisticians and academics alike. This is akin to the rescinding of the Planning Act in Ontario under the Harris Administration in the 1990s. Tenable statistics rather than more ambiguity, particularly in high-growth Massey Drive, are critical to the technician role.

- **Creative catalyst.** First of all, the city of Corner Brook needs to formally recognize that Corner Brook Pulp and Paper is destined to collapse in the medium-term. There needs to be a visionary development plan in place that addresses this pivotal concern for the city. The provincial government may continue to throw money at this losing enterprise, but a simple shift in national policy that facilitates, for example, hemp growing for pulp and paper (or some other innovation) will be the death knell once and for all for this industry on the island. Secondly, tourism cannot fly without creative insight. Not only does a major tourism draw need to be put in place to replace the Mill as an employment nexus, but it has to have long-term appeal. “Build it and they will come” was the mantra of Robinson’s *Field of Dreams*, and a crisis-driven vision like that is required for Corner Brook. Certainly, the success of Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao suggests that a single, gorgeous, visionary and so-called *signature building* is an important catalyst for economic viability. Creative solutions with a view
to the great beauty and hospitality of the region need to be involved. A casino, for example, might attract cruise-ship traffic, as might a wind-turbine manufacturing plant that makes sense in Newfoundland’s windy climate—as solar panels are far less interesting (see Levitt and Dubner, 2009).

- **Sustainability coordinator.** Environmental quality in the Humber River Basin has a *get out of jail for free* card because of the region’s low population density. But, that is no excuse for the lack of state-of-the-art water or sewage treatment facilities in the pivotal city in the region. Fortunately, Corner Brook hired a Sustainability Coordinator in 2008. She is funded by gas tax money, and hopefully represents a true contribution to both sustainability efforts and circuit riding. Aside from water quality and sewage issues, the sustainability coordinator can ideally focus on water quality, multi-modal transportation planning, wind farming, trail development, and sewage treatment.

- **Advocate.** The planner as advocate/activist role comes into play when a particular group is disenfranchised and cannot look after or support its own interests (e.g., the homeless). Importantly, this role also becomes imperative under a second and third situation: when the community is facing crushing and sustained growth, or when it faces collapse. Exponential and sustained growth is a possibility for western Newfoundland, particularly if oil and gas prices reach levels that make the considerable petroleum endowments of the west coast viable. At the same time, the pulp and paper industry is collapsing in North America and mills continue to shut down. When Corner Brook Pulp and Paper (CBPP) eventually shuts down, dramatic changes will need to be underway for the region to accommodate the five to ten year transitional period of employment recalibration. A radical plan to ameliorate this eventuality needs to be in place sooner rather than later. And, in the meantime, permitting CBPP to burn tires to save on energy costs should be regarded as a fugitive pipe-dream that belongs only in the imagination of an industrial dinosaur.

- **Developer.** Environmental quality concerns need to be the primary development concerns in the basin. The City of Corner Brook is regularly debilitated by water quality advisories. Fortunately, a new water treatment plant is targeted for ground-breaking as soon as 2012. With that taken care of, sewage disposal becomes the next most pressing concern for the region’s focal city. “Improved water quality, a result of sewage treatment, would increase economic activity not only in the municipality in question but for the entire region. This is accomplished through an increase in coastal property values, expansion of fisheries and aquaculture industries, creation of new tourism and recreation opportunities, construction and operations
costs, etc…… ACAP Humber Arm believes sewage treatment should be the top infrastructure concern as it is an investment not just in our environment but also, crucially, in our social and economic well-being” (Peddle 2009, Pers. Comm.). Now, while ACAP (Atlantic Coastal Action Program) Humber Arm suggests that the best location for the new sewage treatment plant is adjacent to the CBPP site, other sites like the oil tank area just off of Church Cove in Curling should also be considered. The challenge will be to completely mitigate the social noise created by a new sewage treatment plant. In particular, it is important to recognize that the Corner Brook waterfront needs to be redeveloped as a mixed-use enterprise involving marine-related commercial uses as well as multi-storied high-end condominiums.

- **Entrepreneur.** The planner as entrepreneur role likely has significant potential over the next twenty years, which is the timeframe within which Corner Brook Pulp and Paper (CBPP) will either stop running or evolve into a new industrial function entirely. The jewel of the CBPP operation is complete ownership of its electricity source (the Deer Lake hydroelectric station). When CBPP ceases to operate or finds its new function, its prime waterfront site has to be re-envisioned and re-marketed as an entirely new water-dependent land use that optimizes its unique electricity source. Employment levels may be severely affected locally, but hopefully the issue can be absorbed by the local mixed employment base and through re-training, and create many new opportunities. Certainly, a mixed-use waterfront residential/commercial development is a starting point (as stated, perhaps with a large scale venue like a casino, entertainment hub or wind-turbine factory). Meanwhile, the waterfront site should be combined with regional tourism planning initiatives that are increasingly topical. A larger port could also be facilitated as ocean-borne shipping continues to be the least expensive way to transport goods. With the planner as entrepreneur operating as a fiscal agent, fiscal instruments like development impact fees and tax-based incentives such as rebates and preferential assessments work best in environments where there is sustained development pressure. The town of Massey Drive could certainly explore a variety of fiscal tools to accommodate the growth pressure it is experiencing. Meanwhile, where growth pressure is lacking, there is little incentive for developers to engage locally rather than elsewhere. Another opportunity is provided by public transportation in Corner Brook, and its annoying lack of convenience on weeknights and weekends (Olson, 2010). Transportation planners recognize that commuter choices between cars and public transit are based on cost and convenience rather than on abstract values like sustainability or ecological integrity. So, it is the cost and
convenience of options that needs to be addressed to make public transit more realistic. This means that user fees need to decrease, and the planner as entrepreneur needs to find the funding sources that are required to accomplish this objective.

- **Consensus builder.** The planner as consensus builder or collaborator interacts with the public, with decision-makers and with the development community. As Sehested (2009: 250) states, the planner as consensus builder or collaborator has dominated the planning literature regarding roles for the past fifteen years. This suggests that the scope of the planner as consensus builder is growing, perhaps because it facilitates different groups taking ownership of the planning outcomes that they have participated in. Despite the importance of public participation, this role was not mentioned in any of the plans under review in the study area. Yet, planning education is particularly important in the basin. Planning advisory committees (PACs), common in urban areas, are not mentioned in the province's *Urban and Rural Planning Act*. PACs are capable of providing insight and argumentation for dominant planning issues being experienced in each municipality. The planner is to use consensus building and communication techniques to bring the divergent participants in the process together to have a greater understanding of the planning principles at work.

- **Circuit rider.** Circuit riding refers to any professional who travels from municipality to municipality to provide professional or other services (e.g., planners, judges, lawyers, jurists, doctors). Circuit riding is particularly important in areas of low population density where resources need to be stretched over vast areas. Rural areas without planners on staff have little capacity to control growth other than through council and the town manager. Except in Corner Brook, the town manager is the *de facto* planner in the basin and oversees the entire development process through the permitting process. This situation could be ameliorated by using a circuit riding planner, who is hired and paid for by a consortium of municipalities who use the circuit rider’s joint services (Lapping, Daniels and Keller, 1989: 56). Although shared service arrangements can lead to one municipality taking the lion’s share of the circuit rider’s time and effort, arrangements can be made to control this. A suitable place to house the circuit riding planner would be the regional planning office in Corner Brook. Circuit riding is particularly important because its dominant purpose is to build planning capacity. Of all the roles in this framework, the circuit rider, arguably, is the role that has the most potential for western Newfoundland.
Advisedly, it is recognized that whether or not planning tools exist on the books is irrelevant to whether they are actually implemented or actually constitute a palpable role. In that light, the following assumption is made explicit: planning tools that exist in plans and policy documents represent capacity (perhaps unfulfilled capacity, but capacity nonetheless). It is left to the political will of the municipal council in power to adjudicate the degree to which tools are made operational.

Conclusions

The municipalities of the Humber River Basin were found to be uniformly constrained in terms of planning capacity, with plans ranging in quality from largely ineffective and out-of-date to one that can be considered slightly above average. Without exception, all of the area municipalities can use more capacity at their disposal to deal with the planning complexities that are imminent (e.g., the eventual closure of Corner Brook Pulp and Paper, uneven development across the municipalities, the lack of water treatment and sewerage services in key municipalities, and overt development pressure that will eventually accompany higher prices for oil and gas resources that benefit the province). The testing of the actual planning capacity of area municipalities revealed that the local plans lacked many of the planning innovations of the past thirty years of Canadian practice. Instead, the plans tended to be conventional, and deficient in terms of not only capacity but also vision. Particularly in the smaller municipalities, resource limitations dictate much of this lack of capacity. However, the lack of imagination of local councils must also been seen as a part of the explanation.

In this paper, a new framework for addressing the theoretical, actual and practical planning capacities was posited so that municipalities would have a tested strategy for detailing where they are (the actual planning capacity) and where they could be going (the practical planning capacity). The framework appeared to work well in terms of comprehensiveness, efficiency, and effectiveness. The theoretical planning capacity informs the entire discussion by establishing the full range of planning tools that are conceivable. A further advantage of the framework is that it directs the dialogue of planning towards needed improvements in planning capacity in a given context. Building planning capacity is, by necessity, how the profession will improve its fit with its host municipalities, and attends to the increasingly complex milieu in which it is required to operate. Traditional, anti-development, or ornery municipalities and councils that are not keeping up with the massive amount of information that modern culture generates should probably not engage with an analytical framework like this—as it will only reveal their shortcomings.

By using the proposed analytical framework, it became apparent that the study area’s economic lynchpin, Corner Brook, needs its plan and planning pro-
cess to be underpinned by vision and imagination. And, due to its exponential growth, Corner Brook’s nearest neighbor—Massey Drive—needs more planning capacity than the other municipalities in order to shape its future sustainably. Corner Brook is categorically different from its neighbors because of both its available resources and its capacity borne of resident and experienced planners. At the time of this research, the city was undergoing a massive overhaul of its plan. Once the new plan is in place, it will need to be reviewed by this framework.

Other municipalities in the study area that were less well positioned for overhaul than Corner Brook need to find mechanisms to improve the profile of the circuit riding role. In particular, those municipalities that were identified as more anti-development through newspaper review need serious attention. There are many challenges afield in the Humber River Basin, and addressing the area’s lack of planning capacity is an important step to improving the trajectory of the region’s attempt at sustainability. It is the challenge of the new regional municipality to embrace the vision that this research demands.

Acknowledgements
The authors would like to thank the Humber River Basin Project for funding this research.

Notes
1 With dot democracy, each member of the planning focus group is given a number of sticky dots ranging from five to twenty-five. Then, with a list of tools before them, members can be instructed to allocate their given number of dots according to those tools that they feel are the most relevant to their particular planning context. This way, the group can focus their attention on those roles that are deemed the most salient, rather than focusing on the entire theoretical range of choice (Creighton, 2005: 156-7).
2 As of 2006, all Canadian provinces and territories signed Gas Tax Agreements with the federal government. Gas tax funds are federal monies distributed to the provinces to be used for sustainable municipal infrastructure. Eligible projects will include municipal capacity building, water and wastewater management, public transit, bridges, etc. (Department of Municipal Affairs, 2009).
3 In theory, the town manager is the assistant to the mayor. In practice, the town manager is the mayor’s proxy to supervise the affairs of the town, and is responsible for its efficient administration. However, in at least one municipality in the study area, the town manager operated on their own.
References


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