Municipal Governance Reform and Land-use Planning in Alberta

Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities

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Municipal Governance Reform and Land-use Planning in Alberta
Final Report

Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
Alberta Land Institute

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The objectives of this project were to:
   1) assess and describe the current governance framework for land-use planning in Alberta;
   2) identify potential issues and gaps within Alberta's current land-use governance structure that could impact achieving the priorities outlined in the Land-Use Framework (LUF) and implementing the seven regional plans;
   3) identify models that have been used in other jurisdictions to define the relationship between provincial and municipal interests and authority in land-use planning;
   4) identify what made these models effective or ineffective and how this is relevant to Alberta;
   5) identify what type of legislation or regulatory changes are needed to clearly define roles and responsibilities of all stakeholder involved in the ongoing implementation of the LUF and identify if revisions to the Municipal Government Act (MGA) are required; and
   6) identify what tools and processes are needed to support an effective governance framework for the LUF.

This project found that the full effects of LUF on municipalities' capacity, planning and governance is largely unknown. This project identified that there are many potential issues and gaps within Alberta's current land-use governance structure that could impact achieving the priorities outlined in the LUF and implementing the seven regional plans.

This project found there are two different perspectives on the LUF and municipalities: the provincial and municipal perspective. These perspectives show that there is a lack of clarity and consensus around the role of municipalities within the LUF process. Finally, this project identified that municipalities are looking for alternative forms of municipal governance.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW:

Statement of the Problem:

Alberta's provincial land-use vision is "Albertans work together to respect and care for the land as the foundation of our economic, environmental and social well-being" (Government of Alberta 2008, 15) and the Alberta Land-Use Framework regional plans were originally (2012) intended to be complete between 2010 and 2012. The strategies presented by the LUF include:

- Develop seven regional land-use plans based on seven new land-use regions,
- Create a Land-use Secretariat and establish a Regional Advisory Council for each Region,
- Cumulative effects management at the regional level to manage the impacts of development of land, water and air,
- Develop a strategy for conservation and stewardship on private and public lands,
- Promote efficient use of land to reduce the footprint of human activities on Alberta's landscape,
- Establish an information, monitoring and knowledge system to contribute to continuous improvement of land-use planning and decision making,
- Include aboriginal peoples in land-use planning.

As of 2014, four of the seven regional plans had not even begun. The delay has compounded pre-existing issues including the practices of regional land-use planning, municipal planning and municipal governance for rural communities. As a result of this implementation delay, rural municipalities are left with little direction or support from the province with regards to land-use planning and the 'new' Land-use Framework (pictured below).

LOWER PEACE

LOWER
ATHABASCA

UPPER PEACE

UPPER
ATHABASCA

EDMONTON

NORTH
SASKATCHEWAN

RED DEER

CALGARY

SOUTH
SASKATCHEWAN
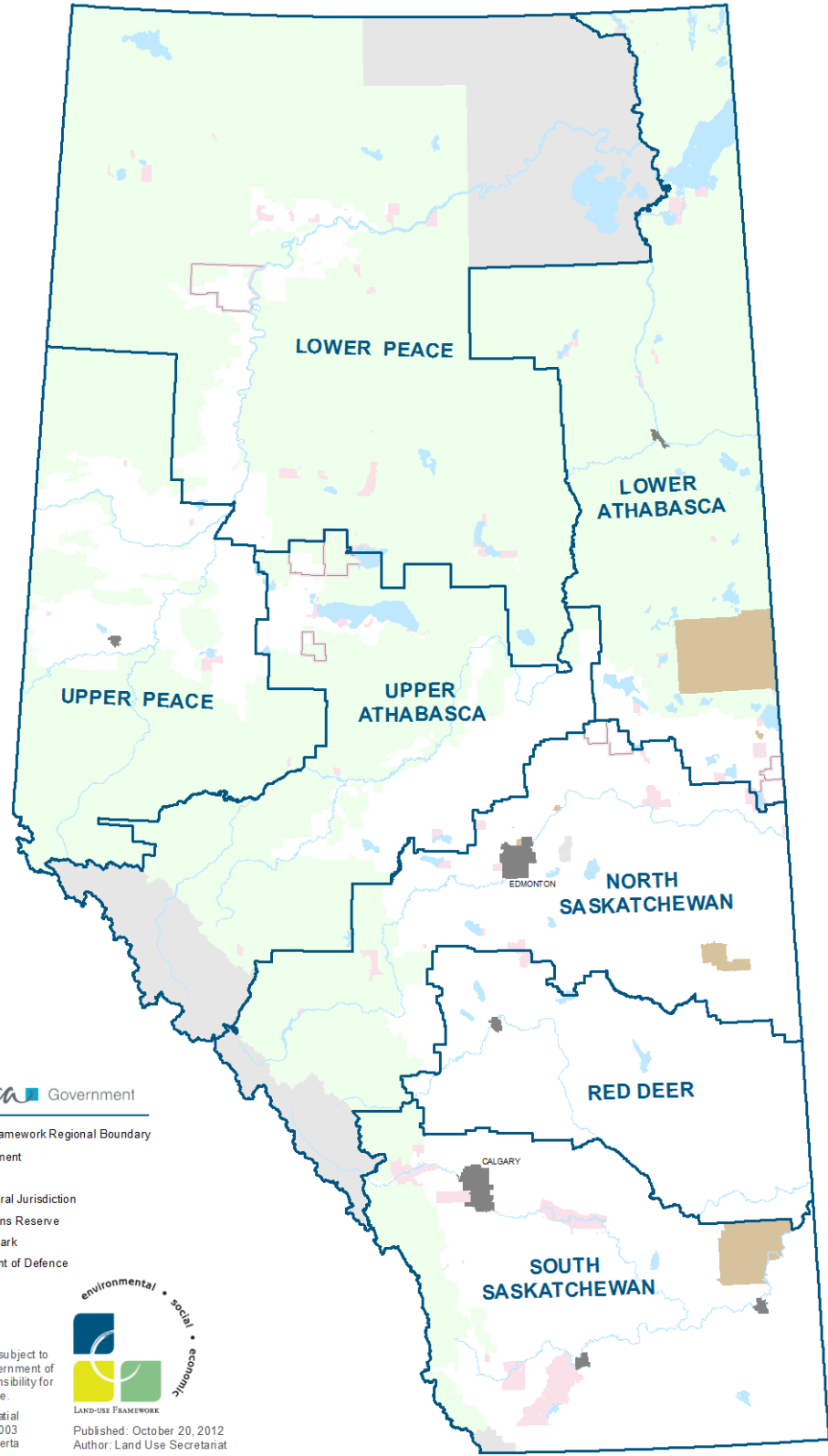
Alberta Government

Land-use Framework Regional Boundary
Métis Settlement
Green Area
Lands Under Federal Jurisdiction
First Nations Reserve
National Park
Department of Defence

environmental • social • economic
LAND-USE FRAMEWORK

Information as depicted is subject to
change, therefore the Government of
Alberta assumes no responsibility for
discrepancies at time of use.

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Author: Land Use Secretariat

(Government of Alberta 2016a)

Objectives/ Purpose:
The objectives of this project were to:
- assess and describe the current governance framework for land-use planning in Alberta;
- identify potential issues and gaps within Alberta's current land-use governance structure that could impact achieving the priorities outlined in the LUF and implementing the seven regional plans;
- identify models that have been used in other jurisdictions to define the relationship between provincial and municipal interests and authority in land-use planning;
- identify what made these models effective or ineffective and how this is relevant to Alberta;
- identify what type of legislation or regulatory changes are needed to clearly define roles and responsibilities of all stakeholder involved in the ongoing implementation of the LUF and identify if revisions to the MGA are required; and
- identify what tools and processes are needed to support an effective governance framework for the LUF.

Theoretical Framework:
This project was based on socio-historical neo-institutionalism and network governance. These lenses allow us to analyse the tensions between municipal governance and the Alberta Land-Use Framework. This framework not only recognizes the importance of institutions but also the role of society as a part of rural governance.

Socio-Historical Neo-Institutionalism
The socio-historical neo-institutional approach examines "how institutions shape political behaviours and outcomes" (Kato 1996, 556). Neo-institutionalism recognizes the importance of institutions and focuses on organizations and institutions as its primary unit of analysis. Socio-historic neo-institutionalism acknowledges that institutions have autonomy and that this autonomy is affected by outside forces that may increase or limit an institutions' capacity (Kato 1996; March and Olsen 1984). This meso-level theory allows us to understand how institutional actions are influenced by historical and social factors. Socio-historical neo-institutionalism is particularly useful for analyzing rural governance and policy because it recognizes that allocation of resources and responsibility from higher levels of government affects how local institutions and stakeholders can respond to policy and planning (March and Olsen 1984). Furthermore, socio-institutionalism also recognizes the complexity of political structures, and the importance of norms, behaviours, buildings, and individuals (March and Olsen 1984).

Network Governance
There has been a shift in terminology in political science from government to governance (Hajer and Wagen**aar 2003). Governance involves more than just formal institutions; it includes social organizations** and individuals. Network governance recognizes that some problems are too complicated and complex for centralized solutions (Hajer and

Wagenaar 2003). Instead, network governance argues that governance is about the relationship between the state and society, and that deliberation and collaboration are needed between formal governments, industry, not for profits and other organizations to think creatively about "new modes of conflict resolution" (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003, 11) and problem solving.

METHODS:

This project used a neo-institutional and network governance lens to examine authority, fiscal capacity and participation within rural municipal governance and the land-use framework. This included: (1) bibliographic research; (2) intensive interviews; (3) scenario planning workshops; and (4) inter-system and inter-municipal comparisons.

This project focused on rural communities. In Alberta, the Alberta Rural Development Network considers rural to be any community other than Edmonton or Calgary. There are 348 municipalities in Alberta that fall into that category (Alberta Municipal Affairs 2010) and all were invited to participate in the study. Despite the many similarities, rural communities are unique and a one-size-fits-all approach does not work for rural planning and policy (Douglas 2005).

(1) This project began with a literature review of existing research on land-use planning in Alberta. Land-use frameworks were also analyzed in other jurisdictions similar to Alberta and Canada, such as Australia, USA and Britain, to establish benchmarks of land-use planning. These systems were compared to determine what made them effective or ineffective and what relevancy these models have for Alberta.

(2) Semi-structured intensive phone interviews were conducted with representatives from the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, Alberta Association for Municipal Districts and Counties, appropriate staff from the Government of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development and Municipal Affairs, and two municipal councilors or mayors from each of the seven land-use regions. These conversations were recorded and transcribed. The interviews were used to identify the issues and gaps within Alberta's current land-use governance as well as help identify what tools and process are needed to support effective municipal governance. The semi-structured nature of these interviews allowed for conversation to develop and evolve without a rigid structure (Hallstrom 2001). This method also granted the interviewer flexibility to modify and mould the interview process to each interviewee.

(3) Scenario planning, a "hypothetical sequence of events constructed with the purpose of focusing attention on causal processes and decision points" (Swart, Raskin and Robinson 2004, 140) was used in order to allow researchers to see what affect restructuring the MGA could have on municipal governance and land-use planning. Scenario planning works by enabling interviewers to ask a question, and discern possible outcomes (Swart, Raskin and Robinson 2004).

THE ALBERTA LAND-USE FRAMEWORK:

1. Municipal Planning:

Land-use issues are very important in rural Canada because there is a strong connection between land use, the environment and the economy. Typically rural communities' economic well-being is dependent on land and natural resource extraction (Caldwell 2010). Land-use planning helps municipalities deal with conflict between industry, agriculture and residential land uses. Furthermore, most land-use planning highlights the importance of balancing economic, environmental and social concerns. "Rural planning, like other forms of planning, seeks to ensure a compatible mix of land uses, the wise distribution of resources, the mitigation of conflicts between land uses, and the review, evaluation, and identification of long term goals for the municipality" (Caldwell 2010, 120).

In Canada, generally speaking, the provincial government outlines and enforces different ways that municipalities must engage in municipal planning (Caldwell 2010). These requirements generally include community/official plans, inter-municipal plans, sustainability plans, land-use planning bylaws, and development permits. Provincial legislation also outlines the process that municipalities must use in the creation of municipal planning documents. The province may require municipalities to have public consultation through public hearings, or other consultation methods (Local Government Department of BC). Public consultation in land-use planning is important because land-use plans help communities decide where homes, schools, business, roads and other essential services will be located (Government of Ontario 2014).

Since 2008, Alberta has undertaken a major shift in how land-use planning is conducted. This change will require a transformation in how both rural and urban communities approach, and implement land-use planning, and how they interact with industry, private landowners and the provincial government. This transformation will occur as the province moves towards coordinated regional land-use planning. In 2008 the Government of Alberta proposed the Alberta Land Stewardship Act (Government of Alberta 2009, see appendix II). This legislation was designed to unite Alberta's land-use planning under one piece of legislation. ALSA also resulted in the creation of the province's Land-Use Framework (LUF). This Framework is meant to combine all land-use planning in the province under the overarching objectives of "balancing the competing economic, environmental and social demands" on the land (Government of Alberta 2008, 6). The LUF (see appendix III) divides the province into seven regions, loosely based on the 7 major watersheds in the province, and requires each region to create a regional land-use plan. However, to date (2014), only two regions (Lower Athabasca, South Saskatchewan) have completed a regional plan and another (North Saskatchewan) just begun. Based on these recent changes to land-use planning in Alberta, the literature review below seeks to understand how land-use planning has changed in Alberta and what these changes mean for municipalities.

Land-use Planning Post 2008
Alberta is on the leading edge of integrated land-use planning (Brownsey and Rayner 2009). As Alberta grows, the competition for and pressure on the land continues to rise. This competition is primarily fueled by oil and gas development but includes demands from farmers, ranchers, recreationalists, forestry and municipalities who all want access

to land to suit their needs (Brownsey and Rayner 2009). Alberta has, therefore, opted for developing a new approach to land-use planning. The Alberta Land Stewardship Act (ALSA) and Land-use Framework are two documents that outline a new province-wide, integrated approach to land-use planning (Brownsey and Rayner 2009; Lavelle 2012).

Although other provinces in Canada have moved towards integrated land management (Rayner and Howlett 2009), Alberta is the only province to create an overarching land-use framework that ties all other land management policies together (Government of Alberta 2007). Roth and Howie (2011, 477) describe the ALSA legislation as "super-legislation" because it unifies all other acts, policies and regulations regarding land, land-use planning and resources, which now must align with LUF and regional plans. This is a major policy shift in Alberta because prior to the LUF and ALSA, land development was done on a project-by-project basis with little coordination (Brownsey and Rayner 2009).

The LUF is different from other planning models, not only because it unifies all existing government documents and plans by requiring compliance, but also applies to both public and private lands as (opposed to the Integrated Land Management (ILM) plans that primarily focused on public forest lands) (Lavelle 2012). Historically, land-use planning has been conducted at the municipal level with little to no direction from the province; however, this new framework is meant to provide greater involvement from the province to set overarching policy directions and strategies (Lavelle 2012). The LUF is a comprehensive document that seeks to coordinate economic, social and environmental goals and articulate the provincial policy direction to all government departments, local governments and other stakeholders in the province.

This increase in government involvement not only occurs at the direction setting stage but also throughout most of the development and implementation of the regional plans. The planning process, which decides what is included and excluded from each regional plan, is left almost entirely up to Cabinet's discretion (Lavelle 2012). Cabinet is responsible for setting the terms of reference for the Regional Advisory Council (RAC) (Government of Alberta 2009a), a council made up of regional stakeholders who advise Cabinet (Government of Alberta 2008). However, Cabinet is not required to use any of the recommendations made by the RAC and Cabinet must approve each regional plan before they become official. Although this process of developing these plans is intended to be very collaborative (Government of Alberta 2008), municipalities (the primary agent for land-use planning on private lands) have been removed from any direct involvement in creating the plans. Municipalities' only voice in the official LUF planning process is through the few seats held by municipal representatives on the RAC. Moreover, Cabinet can amend or repeal regional plans without consultation of RAC or the Land-use Secretariat if they deem changes necessary to any regional plan (Lavelle 2012).

The Alberta Land Stewardship Act has greater authority than previous land-use planning regulation (ILM, Regional Planning Commissions) because it has the authority of the law (Roth and Howie 2011). This authority gives the LUF both more regulatory power and

greater legitimacy and also allows for legal repercussions for non-compliance (Government of Alberta 2008); however, the repercussions for non-compliance are unknown at this point. This increase in legal strength led to push-back from the public because of fear that the LUF would infringe on their private rights (Lavelle 2012; Roth and Howie 2011). The government then decided to amend the ALSA to appease this public outcry.

Most analyses of the LUF and ALSA focus either on the legal elements of this legislation, such as how it will be enforced and its effects on individual rights (Lavelle 2012; Roth and Howie 2011), or on the implications for specific provincial departments and industry (Brownsey and Rayner 2009; Mitchell and Parkins 2011; Harris, McGee and McFarlane 2011). Few authors even mention the role of municipalities, let alone focus upon them. One exception (Harris, McGee and McFarlane 2011) recognizes the role that municipalities play with regards to land-use planning, but focuses specifically on emergency response and wild fire mitigation.

Although there is a limited amount of academic research conducted on the LUF and ALSA, there is significantly more grey literature. However, this literature was primarily produced during the draft stage of both documents (AUMA 2008; Kennett 2009; Kennett and Schneider 2008a; Kennett and Schneider 2008b; Kennett and Schneider 2008c) and focuses on providing feedback and critique to the draft LUF.

2. Current State of LUF:
As of 2014, the provincial government continues to develop regional plans under the LUF. The province has completed the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan, the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan (see appendix III) and has begun the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan. However, it is unclear how long it will take for the other 4 regional plans to be created or if they will even be created.

3. Relationship between MGA and LUF:
As stated above it is evident that strong provincial direction is needed in order to aid municipalities and other stakeholders in having a coordinated and integrated response to land-use planning; however, it is evident that municipalities have lacked a meaningful presence throughout the regional planning process. There is also a lack of direct reference to the LUF within the MGA. This is a major issue for municipalities because the plans and policies developed at the municipal level will be required to align with the regional plans that come out of the LUF (Roth and Howie 2011).

Lavelle (2012) argues that there is substantial ambiguity surrounding the development and implementation of LUF and ALSA. In 2008, Kennett and Schneider wrote that the LUF needs "clearer direction and more detail regarding the design and implementation of the proposed strategies and specific policy initiatives that are critically important for the success of this initiative" (2008a, 3). However, six years later, clarity has still not been brought to municipalities and those implementing the LUF and regional plans. This lack of clarity   is further compounded by the scattered and disorganized process used to develop a completely new land-use planning approach (Brownsney and Rayner 2009).

This lack of clarity leads Brownsey and Rayner (2009) to be very critical of whether the framework will be implemented and achieve its mission. This concern is supported by the fact that the Alberta government has a long and disappointing history of introducing land-use initiatives and abandoning them prior to implementation (Kennett and Schneider 2008a).

Although municipalities are the primary agents responsible for land-use planning, they have the least authority in relation to the other players involved in land-use planning. LUF like the ERCB (Energy Resource Conservation Board), NRCB (Natural Resource Conservation Board) and AUC (Alberta Utilities Commission) all have the authority to overrule local planning laws (Roth and Howie 2011).

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT:

Current Status - MGA Review:
In 2013, the department of Municipal Affairs began a Municipal Government Act review process. This process was designed to update and modernize the MGA, a document that has had little revision since its introduction in 1994. There were three main focus areas for the MGA review including: 1) planning and development; 2) governance and administration; 3) assessment and taxation (KPMG 2014). Municipal Affairs conducted extensive consultation with key stakeholders from municipalities, business and the general public to further discuss these three focus areas. Throughout 2013/14 Municipal Affairs engaged these stakeholders in 11 three-day face-to-face consultations across the province, an online workshop and survey on each chapter of the MGA. This widespread consultation was important because the MGA is a one-size-fits-all document that grants municipalities the same power regardless of size or capacity. Therefore, it is not surprising that the recommendations from these consultations varied based on the size and capacity of the municipalities.

On July 31, 2014 Alberta Municipal Affairs released "Municipal Government Act Review: Summary of Input and Identified Issues." This document is not designed to include all the recommendations received by MA, instead, it "address[es] the major areas where there is an opportunity to improve the current MGA" (KPMG 2014, 3). The document then goes on to summarize 54 policy issues and reform options identified during the MA consultation process. Of the 54 policy issues only 2 directly relate to regional planning and ALSA: 1) policy issue #48 "Hierarchy and Relationship of Plans: Should the hierarchy and relationship of statutory plans, non-statutory plans and *Alberta Land Stewardship Act* be legislated?; 2) policy issue #49 "Provincial Land-use Policies: Should the province continue to have land-use policies that apply province wide?" (KPMG 2014, 15-16). Policy issue #48 is relevant to ALSA and regional plans because ALSA states "In the event of a conflict or inconsistency between (a) a statutory plan or a land- use bylaw, and (b) an ALSA regional plan, the ALSA regional plan prevails to the extent of the conflict or inconsistency" (Government of Alberta 2016b, 346). Policy issue #49 is relevant to ALSA and regional planning because once the regional plans are

created, the provincial land-use policies will be repealed. This could result in a gap if the regional plans do not sufficiently cover existing provincial land-use policies (KPMG 2014).

Many of the policy issues that came out of the MGA review consultation focus on governance. These include issues of provincial municipal roles, responsibilities, the one-act-fits-all framework, accountability and conduct of elected officials, public participation, and municipal viability. Most of the recommendations presented in this summary document are very practical and hands on issues, there is little out-of-the-box thought as to what municipalities in Alberta could or should look like in the future.

None of the policy issues presented in the MGA review are connected to change in the structure of municipal government/governance. There seems to be no connection between regional land-use planning and municipal governance. The only policy issues that relate to this are policy issues #18 and 24:

- Policy issue #18 highlights regional collaboration and asks "should municipalities be required to cooperate with each other?"
- Policy issue #24 highlights regional funding approaches and asks "should the province legislate mandatory sharing of municipal tax revenues from linear property?"

INTERVIEW AND WORKSHOP RESULTS:

Overview:
This project has found that the full effects of LUF on municipalities' capacity, planning and governance is largely unknown. There are many factors that have constrained this research from uncovering the effects of the LUF on municipalities. The first challenge is the timing of this research. On one hand this research is very timely because regional plans are currently being developed; however, most regional plans have yet to be implemented. Although the LUF was developed in 2008, there have been significant delays in the development and implementation of regional plans. These delays have resulted in a simple absence of meaningful data because only two of the seven regional plans are completed, and inter-regional communications about the LUF are limited (excepting the Lower and Upper Peace regions, who co-authored and released a position paper on the LUF (Mackenzie Municipal Services Agency 2012)). The second challenge has been the length of this project, since the new MGA review has not yet been released and the LUF regional plans are not completed. One year is not enough time to review the effects of the LUF on municipal governance in Alberta.

This project has identified that there are many potential issues and gaps within Alberta's current land-use governance structure that could impact achieving the priorities outlined in the LUF and implementing the seven regional plans. The first issue is that there are two different perspectives on the LUF and municipalities: the provincial, and the municipal. These perspectives show that there is a lack of clarity and consensus around

the role of municipalities within the LUF process. Furthermore, these two perspectives only exaggerate the existing gap identified by this research (see below).

Finally, this project identified that municipalities are looking for alternative forms of municipal governance. Currently there is not a mechanism within the MGA that allows for municipalities to organize in any formalized collaborative way. This fact restricts the legislative options available to municipalities. Municipalities recognize that amalgamation is not the only way to reach this collaborative goal; however, they are uncertain of what other structural options would look like.

Interviews:
Between January and September 2014, the ACSRC conducted 20 semi-structured intensive phone interviews with representatives from the rural and urban municipal associations, planning associations, appropriate staff from the Government of Alberta, and municipal mayors, CAOs and development officers. The interviews generally took 45 minutes to an hour, and were transcribe for data collection and analytics. These interviews highlighted that there are two different perspectives on the LUF and regional planning in Alberta: (1) the provincial perspective, and (2) a municipal perspective.

The ACSRC used email as the primary method to make initial contact with potential interviewees for this project. Emails requesting participation in this research were sent to members of the AUMA, AAMDC, Alberta Professional Planner Institute, Community Planning Association of Alberta, Municipal Affairs, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, Land-use Secretariat, and municipal mayors, CAOs and development officers. The municipal emails primarily targeted Mayors and CAOs because all municipalities have a mayor and CAO, whereas, not all municipalities have an office or position devoted to planning or development. However, we also requested that the information be passed along to planning officers, development officers or anyone else who may be interested in discussing land-use planning and municipal governance.

We began by contacting municipal interviewees from Lower Athabasca and the South Saskatchewan region because at the time these were the only two regional plans that had been started. Our researchers contacted every municipality within these two regions; however, due to a very low response rate we choose to expand our pool of potential interviewees to municipalities connected with MGA review consultations and those who were interested in attending the scenario planning workshop but we unable to. In an attempt to increase our interview response rate, we also asked that interviewees provide us with a recommendation of those people who would be interested in this research.

We asked participants to spend 45-60 minutes discussing municipal governance reform and land-use planning in Alberta. The interview would be semi-structured in nature to allow for conversation to develop and evolve without a rigid structure. Participants' responses were recorded and transcribed for data collection and analytic purposes only (and the recording will never be released, made public, or attributed to any participant as an individual).

The interviews were broken into 3 key topic areas: 1) experience and impression of LUF and land-use reform; 2) land-use and municipal government; 3) reform and future scenarios. The first section identified the interviewees' understanding and knowledge about the LUF and regionalized planning, the second section looked at the relationship between LUF and municipalities, and municipal land-use planning collaboration. The last section highlighted what reforms, if any, are needed to ALSA, LUF, MGA and what challenges or future successes could come from regional land-use planning.

The provincial perspective recognizes the LUF as a high level, over-arching document meant to give provincial direction to land-use planning and to align all planning documents under this direction. When asked about the affects of the LUF on municipal capacity, it was also stated the LUF and regional plans are such high-level documents that they will not have a direct impact on municipalities. The municipal perspective highlighted that (1) municipalities have very little knowledge about the LUF and regional planning; and (2) municipalities have not been effectively engaged in the development of regional plans.

Thematic Analysis:

Provincial vs. municipal

The main themes that emerged during the interview process were that there are two different perspectives of the LUF and regional planning in the province. The first is the provincial perspective and the second is the municipal perspective. Based on these interviews, we see that Alberta intended for the LUF and the regional plans to be broad, high-level planning documents. They were not designed to dig deep into any specific issue; instead, they would outline the region as a whole and create general policy direction for that region. Once the regional plans are completed the Land-use Secretariat would then develop sub-regional and issue-specific plans. These plans will be closer to the ground and have the potential to have a greater impact on municipal planning. However, when looking at the broader regional plans, those falling under the provincial perspective believe that these plans will have little direct impact on municipalities. This perspective also highlights that regional plans are more about bringing coordination and cohesion to all planning documents in the province, and is generally more focused on public lands and existing provincial planning documents. This perspective leaves us to ask, if the regional plans are so high-level that they do not affect municipalities, then how do they intend on implementing them when municipalities are responsible for planning for a significant part of the province?

The second perspective revealed in our interviews was the municipal perspective. This perspective is multi-faceted. First, it highlights that many municipalities have not been engaged in the regional planning process. For example one interviewee stated "I'd say it's not clear in terms of exactly how this framework affects us. We're just carrying on business as usual…" and another interviewee stated "we've… taken the attitude… [we] are going to keep our heads down." Many of the interviews noted that municipalities will continue on the way they always have until they are told to do something different. One interview notes that this lack of engagement from the province may stem from the fact

that "the government hasn't necessarily recognized the role that municipalities have to play and that they're not just another stakeholder, that they are… an elected level of government with a clear role to play in land-use planning."

The second major facet of the municipal perspective is that municipalities are afraid that the LUF and regional plans will take away local municipal authority. One interviewee felt as though the provincial government is "snatching too much authority away from the municipalities." Another interviewee stated "I think individual autonomy is what makes municipalit[ies] strong and what makes Alberta strong is that micro-level decision-making or close-to-the-citizen decision making versus high-level decision [making]." Municipalities believe that they do a good job of taking care of their own land-use planning, so why does the provincial government need to step in and take a top-down approach to land-use planning? One interviewee believes that the LUF and regional plan does not go far enough; therefore, it is up to the municipalities to step up and ensure that good stewardship is occurring.

Interestingly, results from this project's interviews and the scenario planning workshop were not the same. Although both the interviewees and scenario planning workshop attendees generally believe that the MGA is good and that major reform is not needed, the perspectives on autonomy, collaboration and competition have varied. Interviewees were highly focused on municipal autonomy and opposed to forced collaboration or regionalization, whereas the workshop attendees were more focused on regional collaboration and finding a system that works for municipalities before something like the Manitoba model is forced on them.

Scenario Planning Workshops:
On October 8 and November 14, 2014[1] the Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities hosted two Scenario Planning Workshops in Camrose, Alberta as a part of a broader "Municipal Governance Reform and Land-use Planning in Alberta" project. This project brought together 49 participants representing 35 municipalities (including cities, towns, villages, summer village, municipal districts and counties) from 5 of the 7 LUF regions.

Scenario planning is a tool that can help us to identify and understand the driving forces and uncertainties in our environments (Gordon 2008). Scenario planning acknowledges that we can influence our future to make it more or less desirable (Gordon 2008). However, in order to move towards our desired future, we must first define what the ideal future is. Vision scenarios can be used to help a group to identify what their ideal future could look like (Gordon 2008). From this vision, you can then create a path forward and identify what steps need to be taken in order to reach this vision.

The scenarios that were built provided 'clues' about what could be key drivers of change in the future and how these changes could affect municipalities. The scenarios described

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[1] Originally the ACSRC only planned to host one scenario planning workshop, but due to tremendous response from municipalities, we requested funds to host a second scenario planning workshop.

a possible future situation (Peterson, Cumming, and Carpenter 2003) based on the current situation or possible shifts in the municipal governance. For the purposes of this project, the research team chose to adapt a process of scenario planning from HHL (Center for Strategy and Scenario Planning). HHL's has a six step process to scenario planning: 1) definition of scope, 2) perception analysis, 3) trends and uncertainty analysis, 4) scenario building, 5) strategy definition, and 6) monitoring (HHL).

There were some common themes that were present in both scenario planning workshops. First, municipalities, in general, have not been actively engaged with the LUF process. Although some had connected with the LUF in 2008, little time has been put into staying on top of ALSA, LUF and regional planning. Furthermore, municipalities highlighted that there is a disconnection between the LUF and MGA. In Alberta the MGA is the "bible" for municipalities, therefore, any legislation that is doing to have a direct impact on municipalities should have a clear connection to the MGA.

Attendees from both workshops also highlighted municipalities' desire to maintain their own unique and autonomous communities. However, this point was much more significant at the second workshop than at the first. Both workshops also noted similar challenges facing municipalities in Alberta, these challenges include: downloading, urbanization, inconsistent funding, rural/urban divide, growth challenges (from too much to not enough growth), and lack of capacity (financial and human). Finally, attendees from both workshops also recognized that in order to deal with these challenges and ensure the future sustainability of municipalities in Alberta, that cooperation is needed. The first workshop highlighted regional collaboration more broadly though regional governance, regional government, regional service districts or specialized municipalities as the means to reach this cooperation, whereas, the second workshop narrowly focused on amalgamation as a means to attain regional cooperation.

Due to time constraints, this project chose to focus on an adaptation of the first 4 scenario planning steps. Our four-step process included engaging participants in: 1) better governance – where do municipalities want to go? 2) proximal and distal causes - what affects municipalities?; 3) what are we missing?; and 4) Trends and patterns.

Session 1:
- What is the relationship between the LUF, MGA and municipal government/ governance?
- What values, principles, actions and structures are ideal for rural municipalities?
- What do these values, principles, actions and structures look like and why does it matter?

Session 2:
- Identify things that have immediate or arm-length effects on how municipal governments act.
- Distinguish between things that municipalities have influence over and things that happen to them.

Session 3:

- What are the key elements along the way that we need to recognize that we often don't recognize?
- What do we know, what do we know we don't know, and what are we missing?
- What are the things people aren't thinking of in municipal governance moving forward?
- What are the implications of this knowledge?

Session 4:
- What are the trends in terms of municipal governance?
- What are the trends in terms of LUF to date?
- What are the trends in arms-length variables identified in previous sessions?

Plenary Session:
- What is the best way to get where municipalities want to go?
- What are your table's top 2 ways to get there?

To better help municipalities understand the scenario planning process, the research team used the analogy of a road trip:

- Session 1 was deciding where we want to go – choosing your destination.
- Session 2 was what is going to affect our road trip; weather, gas prices, family circumstances, preferred driving style.
- Session 3 what are we missing, are there unexpected circumstances that could arise on our trip, what possible events should we be prepared for?
- Session 4 what trends can we assume will be relevant to our road trip, such as weather during the summer, or tendency for gas prices to go up.
- Finally, the plenary session was deciding how we were going to get to our road trip destination, will we take the direct route or the scenic route?

The results of the two scenario-planning workshops varied significantly; however, we believe this variability had to do with the fact there were more elected officials at the first workshop and more administrative staff at the second. This resulted in a more visionary approach at the first workshop and a more practical approach at the second. The participants at the first workshop highlighted four types of regional municipal collaboration: regional governance, regional government, regional service district and regional municipalities. Municipalities noted that they do not want the type of regionalization that is offered by the LUF or MGA, instead they want a more fluid form of municipal collaboration. However, this type of collaboration is currently hard to achieve in Alberta given the LUF, MGA and the history of competition between municipalities in this province. This issue was highlighted in the second scenario planning workshop where participants focused on the practical struggles of regionalization and what that would mean for their local identity and autonomy. Nevertheless, both workshops agreed that changes need to be made to Alberta's current municipal governance model and that municipalities want these changes to be bottom-up not top-down.

October 8 Workshop – Data Summary:

Participants noted that we must begin by recognizing that every municipality is unique, that each has their own sense of identity and wishes to maintain their autonomy. However, municipalities are also realizing that in many cases their funding, revenue and growth trajectories are not sustainable and they cannot maintain themselves if they continue on their current path.

In order for municipalities to move past the competitive nature of the past they must first build trust. They must recognize that they are working together to increase their collective quality of life. It is not about one municipality exploiting another, instead, it is about municipalities coming together to work towards the collective good. In order to achieve this goal, municipalities need to understand how their neighbor feels, what they value and what impact your decisions will have on them before you can collaborate.

Although municipalities are often resistant to change, and want to maintain their own autonomy, it is important to remember that all municipalities share common beliefs such as good government, high quality of life for their constituents and sustainability. Municipalities have common beliefs that can bring them together to collaborate. It is possible for municipalities to start with agreements that are already in place, make them stronger, and continue to have these types of discussions in order to share ideas about common values and collaboration. Ultimately municipalities need to understand where each other are coming from so they can build partnerships and not force decisions upon each other.

Municipalities do not want forced collaboration; they want regional collaboration by subject matter that can be flexible for whatever is best for each municipality. However, municipalities cannot come to the table empty handed. In order for regional collaboration to work, all municipalities must have something to put into it. Furthermore, municipalities cannot let the past dictate the future, rather, municipalities need to move towards a collaborative future. In order for this process to work it must be fair and equitable for all municipalities involved. Nevertheless, municipalities need to be willing to try to work together because municipalities "don't always realize how strong we could be if we think regionally" (ACSRC 2014a).

Municipalities identified that they don't understand the LUF but they do understand the MGA. In addition, they think there should be better connection between the LUF and MGA. They also noted that it is difficult to think regionally when the regions are so big. Local government should be considered an order of government not a stakeholder with regards to the LUF. Municipalities need to be looking 20 years ahead instead of 4 years ahead. The problem remains that not everyone wants to collaborate.

The LUF may bring a shift toward regional government or governance either way, but municipalities recognize that they can't wait for provincial government to

change governance structure, municipalities need to start it themselves.

"Collaboration needs to be an attitude not a process. There needs to be a fundamental shift in how municipalities interact with each other. Historically in Alberta municipalities have been told to compete against each other, compete for funding, compete for citizens and compete to survive. However, if municipalities truly want to survive they must change their mindset from competition to cooperation and collaboration. This means that not every municipality can have everything, or offer every service. Instead maybe one municipality has an arena while another has the hospital. It is better for all communities if resources are shared instead of simply centralized in larger urban centres" (ACSRC 2014a).

November 14 Workshop – Data Summary:
The second scenario-planning workshop focused more on day-to-day roles and responsibilities. However, like the first workshop, participants were also quick to highlight that each municipality is unique and that no municipality wants to voluntarily give up their autonomy. They also recognized that a form of regionalization might be the only solution to their current capacity issues. This group of participants tended to focus on amalgamation as the only road to regionalization.

At the beginning of the day some participants highlighted that the province has been moving towards regionalized municipalities for a long time. This has occurred through government funding cuts, viability assessments, funding provided for collaborative work, and now the LUF. If this is an objective of the provincial government, can municipalities choose their own future before something is forced on them?

One participant noted that municipalities are living in the past, instead of applying what they know. Municipalities know:
- they have power;
- they can act proactively instead of reactively;
- they need to change to survive;
- they are missing an opportunity for rural and urban organizations to cooperate more.

However, how can municipalities move towards collaborative or regional governance when the town and county or rural and urban parties can't get along?

Given municipalities' current situation of provincial downloading, viability assessments, aging infrastructure, and regional collaboration grants. Some participants believe that amalgamation is the best solution for creating long-term sustainable communities. This is because amalgamation could save money, provide more expertise, clear up development issues between urban and rural citizens, lead to shared services, reduce taxes, and give municipalities a stronger voice. One participant highlighted that "right now we have municipalities living together without marriage licenses" (ACSRC 2014b), amalgamation would formalize this already existing reality. Amalgamation should be considered because it is not a question of whether you are viable now; instead it is a question of whether you will be viable in 30 years. With that said, some participants also note that

amalgamation does not guarantee strong communities, is not straightforward, and may take a very long time to implement.

At the end of the workshop there was little consensus about where municipalities want to go, although there had been much discussion about regionalization as cooperation, collaboration, government or amalgamation. To clarify, we asked participants whether regionalization is viable from a planning standpoint; they nodded yes. We asked if regionalization is viable from an administration standpoint; they again nodded yes. We asked if regionalization is viable from a political standpoint; they said maybe. Politically, it depends if people still have a hometown or community they relate too. The participants at this workshop had a lot of tangible questions about how regionalized or collaborative governance would work. Can municipalities collaborate and still maintain their identity? Can municipalities have regional or shared services and still maintain their independences?

"Rural Alberta is very independent, nobody wants to look at it from a whole county principal. The county needs to look at everything in the big, not just look at one division. We need to get to the mentality that we are in this all together, there is no team playing right now in rural Alberta. As the population drives, everyone keeps spending money in their own little areas they are not fixing any problems. People right now are just throwing money at issues and not taking a stand to make a difference and "do the right thing" and unfortunately what rural Alberta wants is not always that right thing. We try to change, but it is difficult. We are here to make the "right decisions" not be popular" (ACSRC 2014b).

GAP ANALYSIS:

This research project has identified that there are many potential issues and gaps within Alberta's current land-use governance structure that could impact achieving the priorities outlined in the LUF and implementing the seven regional plans. These gaps include:
    1) implementation gap;
    2) knowledge gap;
    3) scalar gap; and
    4) structural gap.

Implementation Gap:

The first and most prominent gap we discovered was the implementation gap. The implementation gap acknowledges that there is no method outlining how ALSA, the LUF and regional plans will be implemented by regions or municipalities. Instead, there is a broad hierarchy that recognizes that all other planning in the province must align with regional plans and that all sectors, government departments, businesses and municipalities must come into compliance with these plans. There is, however, no clearly articulated process for how compliance, monitoring and implementation will occur, beyond a broad timeline of when businesses and municipalities must come into compliance. One interviewee said "I think the framework was a good foundation. I think you do need something high level, you need to start with that but then you need go beyond it." This quote highlights the very problem of the implementation gap. The

province has created this high level legislation, but they have not moved beyond it in either operational or functional terms.

Knowledge Gap:
The second gap this project discovered is the knowledge gap. The knowledge gap reveals that while expected to be significant actors in implementation, municipalities simply do not know about regional plans. At the first scenario planning workshop, of the 29 participants, only one had ever been to a LUF or regional planning consultation. Some participants had never even seen the LUF document (or ALSA). On one hand this gap is partially a function of time, since regional planning has taken so long, most municipalities simply have not kept up with the process. The provincial government and municipal government both have different ideas about the role of the LUF and regional planning, and how regional planning will impact municipalities. Most municipalities interviewed said that they were aware of the LUF and were engaged in the process in 2008, however, since they have seen limited developments with regards to regional planning. This gap has led to a lack of municipal engagement with the LUF because 1) municipalities do not understand the process, 2) they have not been involved in the process, 3) it is unclear exactly how regional planning will affect them.

Scalar Gap:
The third gap identified by this project is a scalar gap. The scale gap recognizes the disconnect between ALSA and MGA. ALSA is a high-level document that sets the land-use direction for the province and the MGA is an operational document that provides municipalities with functional direction. However, there is little clarity or explanation as to how the high-level priorities of ALSA will be operationalized by municipalities through the MGA. Although both ALSA and the MGA recognize that municipalities must be in compliance with regional plans, neither of these documents articulates the process that municipalities must take to do so. This is a problem because as one interviewee noted "it is provincially spearheaded - we are going to have to have communication from the province down to each municipality." However, that communication has not occurred and has not been legislated. Therefore, there is a gap because the reality is that the LUF and regional plans are high-level documents with micro-level implications that no one is discussing (NOTE: An MGA Review session was attended as part of this project, in which no LUF-specific content or material was presented or discussion).

Structural Gap:
Finally, the last gap discovered by this project is a structural gap. This structural gap is related to how municipalities can facilitate and engage in collaboration. There are two dimensions to this challenge: (1) there is no mechanism in place (beyond the AUMA or AAMDC) to facilitate or structure collective decision-making by Albertan municipalities; and (2) the geographic and municipal differences between regions creates a highly differentiated framework of ecological, economic, political and collaborative opportunities and challenges within each region. This regional differentiation is most clearly shown in the comparison between the number of municipalities in the Lower Athabasca (that has 7 municipalities) and the North Saskatchewan (that has 114

municipalities). As one interviewee stated, the biggest challenge is "the fact that they're so large." Not only is there a significant challenge associated with 114 actors attempting to collaborate or harmonize planning, but this is compounded by the absence of a venue within the LUF or elsewhere in Alberta that can facilitate this collaboration. Based on the two scenario-planning workshops, we have seen that municipalities are aware that they can no longer make it on their own and that something needs to change, but up to this point, they continue to carry on with business as usual and hope that their community continues to survive.

Models of Regional Governance:
A municipality is defined by the MGA as "a city, town, village, summer village, municipal district or specialized municipality" (Government of Alberta 2016b, 32) with the purpose of providing "good government, to provide services, facilities or other things that, in the opinion of council, are necessary or desirable for all or a part of the municipality, and to develop and maintain safe and viable communities" (Government of Alberta 2016b, 35).

This study identified that rural municipalities are very interested in regional models of governance. Currently there is not a mechanism within the MGA that allows for municipalities to organize in any way other than what is listed above. This restricts the legislative options available to municipalities. Municipalities recognize that amalgamation is not the only way to reach this collaborative goal; however, they are uncertain of what other structural options are available.

This study identified two regional options: the first is an accelerated approach, that would see large-scale amalgamation to increase municipal collaboration; and the second is an incremental approach, that would require municipalities to work together to identify common values and goals and use those commonalities to work towards regional sustainability.

This study identified two regional options:
1) Accelerated
2) Incremental

The accelerated approach to regional governance is relatively easy, but of minimal benefit to individual municipalities. It is a top-down approach that would see large scale amalgamation of municipalities. This approach would follow the model used by Manitoba where the provincial government forced amalgamation throughout the province in an attempt to reduce redundancies, and increase municipal capacity.

The incremental approach to regional governance poses greater difficulty but holds the potential for high benefit. This approach is about municipal collaboration. The workshop participants in this study did not identify exactly how this would look, but they did recognize that there are many different ways it could be achieved, such as: regional government, regional governance, regional service districts or specialized municipalities. The key to this approach is that it would be bottom-up (driven and designed by

municipalities) with a focus on municipal collaboration. Instead of one municipality taking over another, this approach would see municipalities come together to work towards a common goal.

Legislation:

Based on this project, we have found that both the MGA and ALSA would benefit from revisions to bring greater clarity to their proposed intention, implementation, evaluation, effects and linkages with both each other and relevant legislation.

With the MGA currently under review, it is hard to know what kind of changes will be seen in that document but based on our interviews and scenario planning workshops, most participants indicated that (overall) the MGA was good. At the end of both scenario-planning workshops the participants noted that an alternative collaborative approach to municipal governance was needed, but at the same time they did not necessarily promote the idea of legislative reform to bring about that collaboration.

Although little MGA reform was recommended by workshops or interviews, based on this research we can see that there is room for reform surrounding the relationship of municipalities to ALSA. This includes:

- Increased clarity in relevant legislation,
- Increased engagement of municipalities in the regional and broader LUF design and implementation process,
- Greater clarity and consideration of the linkages between the LUF and municipal governments,
- Greater consideration to the fiscal, democratic and environmental implications of the LUF when operationalized at the regional and municipal level,
- Greater transparency and accountability of the LUF to (and for) municipalities,
- Revised and increased opportunity structures (at multiple levels) for municipal engagement, collaboration and representation in regional land-use initiatives and processes,
- Increased opportunity structures for collection of municipal decision-making at regional and provincial levels that contributes to alignment, harmonization and the implementation of LUF.

Both the LUF and ASLA specifically will also benefit from revision. As noted above, the framing and language of these documents (to date) present a number of gaps that affect rural municipalities, and can be updated to better clarify the issues and practices of implementation and compliance, as well as the role of municipal governments. Currently there is no reference of municipalities' role in the LUF process in ALSA, beyond the requirement of compliance with regional plans.

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Appendix I

Experience and impressions of LUF and LU Reform

1. What is your overall impression and experience with land use, the LUF, and the changes to land use planning in your area/region/municipality?
2. How would you assess the decision to create land use regions? How do decisions made at the regional level affect land use planning and implementation?
3. How has the regionalization of land---use planning in Alberta affected how you do land---use planning?
4. What do you see as the biggest barrier or problem to the implementation of the LUF? Are there other factors that might compound this?
5. Are there models or experiences with land use that you think could or should inform the LUF and its implementation in Alberta?

Land Use, Municipal Government and Network Governance

6. Has the introduction of the Land---Use Framework affected the capacity, processes or decisions of your local/municipal government? If so, how and why?
7. Do you think municipalities are equipped/capable of working within the LUF?
8. How involved are your community members and outside stakeholders in your municipal land---use planning process?
9. Have you been able to encourage community engagement within the land--- use planning process?
10. How does/should/will your region address collaboration to develop implementation of plans? Is this seen as a benefit, or additional work?

Reform and future scenarios

11. What kind of support and structures are needed for municipalities to do effective land---use planning? For regions? For the province?
12. What is the biggest challenge land use planning faces today? What are the implications of that challenge?
13. In a perfect world what would land use planning and the provincial framework look like for your community & region in 5 years? In 15?
14. If you could change only one thing related to land use planning in Alberta, what would it be?
15. Are there institutional, procedural, legislative or policy changes that you would like to see made? If yes, why? What effect would such changes have?

**Scenario Planning Municipal Governance and Land-Use Framework Alberta
Land Institute
Mayer Community Hall, Performing Arts Centre, University of Alberta,
Augustana Campus | Camrose, AB October 8 & November 14, 2014**

Item	Time	Activity	Facilitators
1	**9:00 – 10:00**	Welcome, Introduction and Background	Lars Hallström & Naomi
2	**10:00 – 10:50**	Better Governance – Deciding where we want to go?	Lars Hallström
3	**10:50 – 11:00**	**Break**	
4	**11:00 – 11:50**	What Affects Municipalities?	Lars Hallström
5	**11:50 – 12:30**	**Lunch**	
6	**12:45 – 13:35**	What are we Missing?	Lars Hallström
8	**13:40 – 14:30**	Scenario Selection	Lars Hallström
9	**14:30 – 14:45**	**Break**	
10	**14:45 – 16:00**	Plenary Discussions	Lars Hallström
11	**16:00 – 16:30**	Next Steps For You	Lars Hallström

Scenario Planning Collective Wisdom Initiative

http://www.collectivewisdominitiative.org/papers/pioneers_dialogue/11_scenario.pdf

Scenario Planning

Overview

Scenarios are possible and plausible pictures of the future. They are created through a series of conversations, through which a group of people invent and consider several varied stories about how the world may turn out. Ideally, these stories should be carefully researched and full of detail, able to expose new understandings and some surprises. Scenarios are powerful tools for challenging assumptions about the world, and in so doing, they lift the barriers of our own creativity and understanding about the future.

The term "scenario planning" was originally coined by the RAND Corporation during and after World War II, as part of their corporate strategy. When Herman Kahn left the RAND Corporation, he set up the Hudson Institute and further developed the process, and went on to write a book called "The Year 2000" which was published in 1967. Since the late 60's, the process has taken off as a tool and has evolved considerably from its origins.

Scenario planning as a process started with a paradigm of "predict and control", where probabilistic scenarios were sketched out about the future. This paradigm as a basis for the process has changed significantly over the years, mainly due to the work of Pierre Wack at Shell in the 1970's. Wack separated issues which were predictable from those which were uncertain, and worked with uncertainties and how they influenced various scenarios.

Nowadays, scenario planning then supports the notion that the world is inherently uncertain. Scenarios are used not so much as a tool for predicting the future, but rather as a process which challenges assumptions, values and mental models of various stakeholders about how uncertainties might affect their collective futures. By encouraging scenario planning processes at different levels of an organisation or community, old paradigms are challenged, and innovation encouraged through surprising possible stories of the future. Scenarios therefore help develop new and valuable knowledge.

By bringing multiple perspectives into a conversation about the future, a rich and multidimensional variety of scenarios are created. Scenarios encourage storytelling and dialogue between people who would not necessarily share their perspectives with each other. As Peter Schwartz points out: "Scenario-making is intensely participatory, or else it fails."

Preparing for a Scenario Planning Process

Before embarking on a scenario process, it is important to establish whether it is the right process to use, and in what context it would be most useful. Scenarios are generally used when the following conditions exist:

- There is a high level of complexity in a given situation which is difficult to understand
- There is a longer term (at least a few years ahead) focus required in looking into the future, and how to respond to it
- There is uncertainty about how the external environment will impact a particular situation
- There are resources available to invest in a series of conversations amongst different stakeholders over a period of time, and to distribute these scenarios extensively.

Scenarios can also be very broad and are not necessarily useful if the focus and purpose is unclear. Once a particular organisation or community has decided to use scenarios, the following questions will help make the outcome relevant to all concerned. The scenario-planning process can then be adapted to these specific needs:

- What is the purpose of this process?
- How many "players" need to be part of this process in order to view the necessary perspectives of the future?
- What parts of the external environment are important to focus on when considering these scenarios?
- Is there any level of control by any of the stakeholders of these external variables?
- What is the time horizon?
- Who is endorsing this process at a leadership level?
- Who needs to "buy-in" to the potential outcomes?

Applications

Scenarios have been used since the 1960s. Back then, the process was mostly used within companies to help them make more informed decisions about the future. Since then, the process has been more widely applied to social contexts with multiple stakeholder involvement. Scenarios have been used extensively all over the world in varied contexts from mapping out country strategies (Jamaica, South Africa, Botswana, Kenya and others), corporate strategies (Shell, Anglo American, OldMutual), as well as at multiple community levels.

Case Example: Mont Fleur Scenario-Process, 1991, South Africa

In his book, *Solving Tough Problems*, Adam Kahane tells the story of facilitating the Mont Fleur Scenarios. In 1991, 22 key influential South African figures came together for a scenario-building process about the future of the country. It was shortly after Mandela's release, when the future was very uncertain and divided.

The group attending included leaders from the left (ANC, PAC, National Union of Mineworkers, South African Communist Party), as well as their adversaries from

white business and academia. They all saw the reality of South Africa from different perspectives. Participants included Trevor Manuel, Tito Mboweni and Vincent Maphai.

The group sat for a couple of days talking to each other. They met multiple times over a period of months, and talked through a number of scenarios. They eventually decided on four scenarios they found most plausible for South Africa. These scenarios were all based on the question of: *"How will the transition go, and will the country succeed in "taking off"?*

The four, richly explained stories were based on bird analogies. Firstly, there was the *Ostrich*, where the white government sticks its head in the sand to avoid a negotiated settlement. Then there was the *Lame Duck* where the transition goes on for too long, trying to satisfy all parties and not succeeding. Thirdly, there was *Icarus*, where a black government comes to power and institutes a massive public spending policy which bankrupts the economy. Finally, the most positive scenario was *The Flight of the Flamingos*, where a successful transition takes place, and where everyone is South Africa rises slowly together.

From the group, the Flamingo scenario was unanimously agreed on as the best alternative. These scenarios were written up in a 25-page report and distributed widely through the media, and workshops all over the country. From these multiple engagements, the outcomes of Mont Fleur had a significant effect on the economic policy of South Africa. Many leaders and politicians have referred to these scenarios in various debates and discussions.

This process was so remarkably successful for four overarching reasons:

1. The timing was right – it was the window of opportunity to create a new future at the beginning of South Africa's transition. There was much uncertainty and absence of control.
2. There was top political buy-in and participation at all levels.
3. The process itself built meaningful relationships and all involved bought into the scenarios, which also demonstrates excellent facilitation.
4. The follow-up was extensive – the stories were well written in detail, and communicated through mass media, television, and workshops. Many political speeches and strategy sessions referred to this documentation.

These scenarios proved to be powerful tools for both planning and debate, and are still spoken of over 10 years later. The Mont Fleur process highlights the impact of facilitated dialogue about the future, and the power of stories.

Commentary

Many organisations work in an increasingly complex situation both internally and externally. When we are faced with complex systems, one of the key capacities that is

needed is to be able to not only work from one point of view or frame of reference. Scenarios help us to work simultaneously with more than one perspective and story, and to take actions that make sense across multiple frames. The real power of the scenario planning process is the ability to bring many different stakeholders into a conversation about the future, thereby creating collective ownership of these sets of pictures, and building important relationships across differences.

The outcome of a scenario-building process can be useful in two ways:

1. The set of possible stories of the future help a group/ organisation/ community respond to that situation should the event arise. This is a more responsive interpretation of the process. The 4 scenarios chosen at the end may not have an order of preference (good or bad), but rather map out the positive and negative outcomes of all scenarios. This is typically an outcome of an organisation-specific process, where the primary purpose would be to respond in a more informed manner to situations as they arise.

2. A more proactive response would be to strive towards the scenario of choice, and map out strategies to help a group move towards that picture. Scenarios would therefore have an order of preference amongst stakeholders involved, and the most preferred scenario is the one to strive for. Peter Drucker once said: "The best way to predict the future is to create it". Scenarios are a powerful way of moving towards a more desired future, as has been highlighted by the incredible outcome of the Mont Fleur scenarios. The process and examples we have used in this explanation demonstrates this view of futurist thinking.

Resources

Hansen, M. et al. *What's Your Strategy for Managing Knowledge?* In Harvard Business Review: 106-117
Illbury, C & Sunter, C. *The Mind of a Fox: Scenario Planning in Action.*
Schwartz, P. *The Art of the Long View: Planning for an Uncertain World.*
Van der Heijden, K. *The Art of Strategic Conversation.*
Kahane, A. *Solving Tough Problems.*

Scenario Planning Information Package

Municipal Governance Reform and Land Use Planning in Alberta
## Scenario Planning Workshop

October 8, 2014

Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities

What is Scenario Planning?

Scenario planning is a tool that can help us to identify and understand the driving forces and uncertainties in our environments. (Gordon 2008). Scenario planning acknowledges that we can influence our future to make it more or less desirable (Gordon 2008).

However, in order to move towards our desired future, we must first define what the ideal future is. Vision scenarios can be used to help a group to identify what their ideal future could look like (Gordon 2008). From this vision, you can then create a path forward and identify what steps need to be taken in order to reach this vision.

Scenario planning is not about predicting the future; instead it is about exploring the future. Looking at what could happen, to help prepare you for what will happen (BREFI, n.d.). Scenario planning does not guarantee you will be prepared for the future but it does increase the likelihood that you will be aware of the possible futures and therefore be more prepared for your ever-changing environment.

The scenarios built will provide the 'clues' about what could be key drivers of change in the future and how these changes could affect municipalities. Scenarios describe a possible situation (Peterson et al 2003), based on the current situation or possible shifts in the situation. Scenario planning can be broken into six steps. For our scenario planning workshop we will be adapting the process below from HHL. The tools they identify are from their website and if you would like more information please visit their website http://www.scenarioplanning.eu/our-scenario-approach/
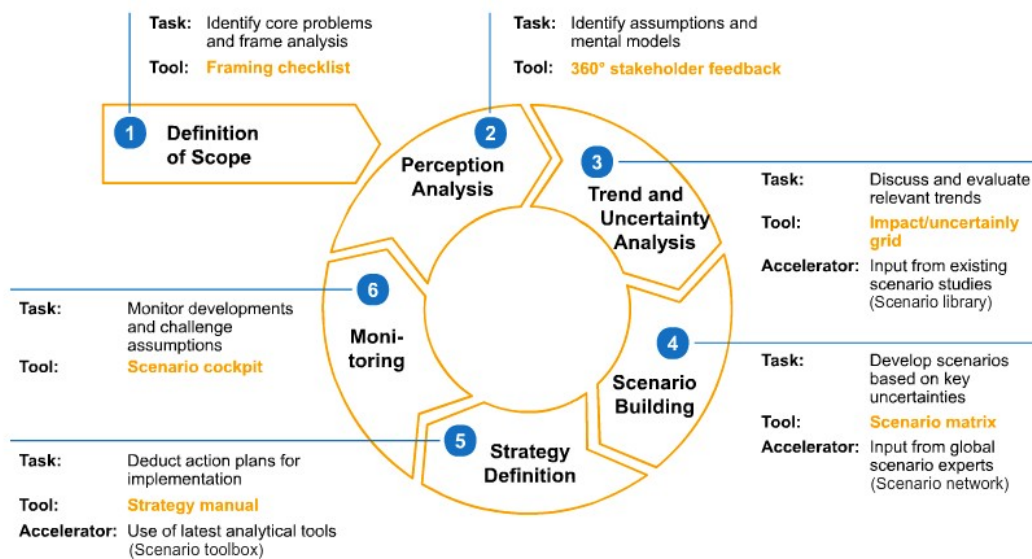
1. **Define the Scope**: In step 1 of our scenario development process, we define the project scope. Scenario Center experts and project partners meet to agree upon the project, identify core problems and frame the analysis. Our Framing checklist tool makes sure that every important aspect is covered and that all project partners share a common understanding of the steps ahead.

   Task: Identify core Problems and frame analysis. **Tool:** Framing Checklist.

2. **Perception Analysis:** In step 2 of our scenario development process, we analyze how the project partner perceives his situation, how he thinks about the future and how he conducts strategic planning. Using our 360° stakeholder feedback tool, we examine the assumptions and underlying mental models of the project partner (internal) and compare them with the perceptions of key stakeholders (external). This reveals possible blind spots in the project partner's perception while also paving the way for scenario thinking.

   Task: Identify assumptions and mental models. **Tool:** 360 degree stakeholder feedback.

3. **Trends and Uncertainty Analysis:** In step 3 of our scenario development process, we determine and analyze trends that are likely to impact the project partner in the future. With the help of our Impact/uncertainty grid tool, we cluster the trends according to their degree of impact and their level of uncertainty. Trends which score high on both dimensions are then transformed into 'key uncertainties', the basis of the next step in our scenario development process. To speed up this process step and incorporate existing knowledge on future trends, we use our Scenario library, which has comprehensive global scenario knowledge readily available.

   Task: Discuss and evaluate relevant trends. **Tool:** Impact/uncertainly grid. **Accelerator:** Input from existing scenario studies.

4. **Scenario Building:** In step 4 of our scenario development process, the scenarios are built. Using the 'key uncertainties' determined in the previous step, we deduce possible futures for the project partner and describe them in detail. Typically, three or four plausible and distinct scenarios are developed. Our Scenario matrix tool steers this process of transforming trend knowledge into scenario knowledge. To speed up the process and to make the scenarios as accurate as possible, we also use the know-how of global scenario experts assembled in our Scenario network.

   Task: Develop scenarios based on key uncertainties. **Tool:** Scenario Matrix. **Accelerator:** Input from global scenario experts.

References:

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http://www.brefigroup.co.uk/facilitation/scenario_planning.html

HHL Center for Strategy and Scenario Planning.
http://www.scenarioplanning.eu/our- scenario-approach/

Gordon, Adam. 2008. "How to Build and Use Scenarios." Media from scenario planning
leadership development workshop, Washington DC.
http://www.slideshare.net/adgo/scenario-building-workshop-how-to-build-and-use-
scenarios