



Crafting strategies for sustainable local development

A COMMUNITY GUIDE

Monica Gruezmacher
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for sustainable
local development**

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Part 1

UNDERSTANDING --- THE BASICS

INTRODUCTION

This guide can be used in many ways. It can be perused in the evening with a beer or in the morning with a coffee and it can be used by all people who take an active interest in steering their community on a more sustainable course. Those people, the readers and users, can be active citizens, people working for local government, for community organizations and people directly or peripherally involved in local politics or in the projects that could reshape a community.

It is intended as a guide, yet a guide that does not intend to make false promises. Change is possible, a more sustainable future is possible, yet simple recipes are not available. What this guide does contend is that a local strategy for community development is almost always a necessity. Even if the community is shrinking and even if no money for consultants or for hirings is available. A strategy can take many forms, yet it always includes the combination of a story of a good and realistic future and a set of policy tools to move in that direction. Sometimes those tools will have to be built, sometimes they will come into existence yet remain unwritten.

The book also makes a point of highlighting that many tools (which we call institutions) already exist, but that they might be fragmented, partly contradicting each other, and not realizing their full potential through collective coordination. For that reason we pay attention and ask the community to pay attention to the fragmentation of their policies, plans and laws. Often, those tools go unused for a long time and then become useless. The land and its organization, the tools to work towards a better organization of space, have to be part of any discussion on sustainable communities. In other words: working towards sustainability requires strategy and strategy needs to tie in the tools to organize the land.

This book is based on projects in the Canadian province of Alberta sponsored by the Alberta Land Institute and it is also based on experiences in other parts of the world. We believe it can be used in many parts of the world since the issues discussed and lessons drawn are not tied to specific kind of plan or law or landscape or particular set of

problems. Indeed, each community is unique and a community strategy will have to be unique to be effective. It will have to start from a deep self-reflection, on the issues and assets of the place, and a deep understanding of the way decisions have been taken in the past. We speak here of a path of governance.

What is not unique, and where this guide comes in, is the need in many smaller communities across the world to rethink themselves, and to create the tools to transform themselves. Their reasons for existence have shifted, young people move to cities, old activities moved or are not profitable anymore, and the existing rules and traditions of governance do not provide the answers. Smaller places often lack resources but they offer more opportunities for reinvention, through collective effort, through strategy.

THE LAND AND ITS USES

The land, the way we use it and organize it reveals a lot about our desires, about our past and our future as a community. Problems are also reflected in the land and the way the land is organized also creates problems.

This is even more true for communities that have a close relationship with the land, like rural communities. Rural issues are therefore presented as distinct from urban issues and rural is often defined as the opposite of urban. This blunt distinction is reinforced by politicians, the media, pop-culture, drawing a coarse line that divides rural and urban: “rural is everything not urban”.

However, when uncovering the stories of rural areas, what becomes obvious is that there is no clear boundary or distinct divide. Rural areas have often been transformed into networks of semi-urban places, or into a family of small communities connected to cities and interacting with cities all the time. City dwellers are constantly searching for rurality in the form of farmers markets, urban farms, local produce. Urban and rural systems are intricately and inevitably connected. The reason for this is simple: they are complex systems. Rural and urban, smaller and bigger places cannot be seen as entirely separated because they are part of one complex system.

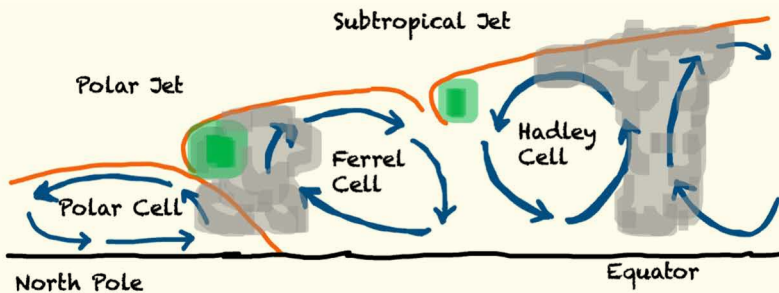
What does this mean for rural and smaller communities? It means that such places share problems and qualities, yet strategies for the future will still have to be distinct, based on what exists locally, and how it relates to more urban centres.

No blueprints or silver bullets are available to effortlessly move smaller communities in a different direction. This stems directly from the nature of complex systems, where the history of interactions between the parts makes certain futures less likely, but at the same time, those complex interactions makes the future unpredictable. We are compelled to observe, think, analyze, reflect and adapt -constantly. Blueprints can be of value but they have an expiry date. Why? Because systems change and complex systems change in often unpredictable ways.

Complex is not the same as complicated.
A car is complex but you don't need to be an engineer
to use it; you do need to learn some rules ...

Think about your community. What worked to solve a problem a few times in the past might not work today. The community of today is different, it has changed. We can say it has evolved. Your community is part of a complex system with both social and environmental components, constantly interacting with each other, constantly changing and evolving.

FIGURE 1 The weather system in our planet is a good example of a complex system. Its different elements are tightly coupled. When one part of the system is disrupted, there are changes to the whole system and those changes are not entirely predictable. By understanding one part or element of the system we cannot understand the system as a whole. Nonetheless it is useful to identify these elements (the different weather circulation cells), observe their interactions (the different jet streams) and the outcomes of these interactions (rain, heatwaves, polar vortex).



We know about complexity because we deal with it every day. Just like we drive our cars routinely and can “sense” when there is something wrong. We can decide when to take it to a mechanic, when to ignore the nuisance and when we can deal with it ourselves. We know that one problem can have different solutions but also different causes. If we decide to fix or change one part of the car it will affect the whole. We can also recognize when we make a mistake and hopefully learn to avoid it.

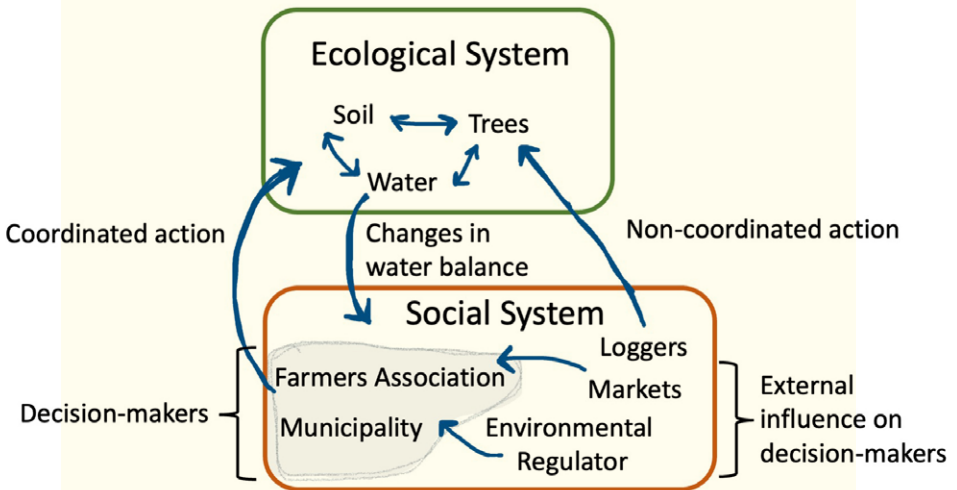
Complex systems are not very different. An action in one part of the system does not have the same result every time. An action can also be the result of different decisions and follow different paths every time. Every action influences multiple parts of the system, sometimes at different scales or levels. All parts of the system are interconnected and change together, they co-evolve. Parts of the system that work closely together develop tight connections, are strongly coupled and can develop dependencies. It is impossible to understand the functioning of the system by studying just one part.

How to deal with complexity? As you would approach a problem with your car. Don't ignore it, don't try to underplay it or pretend the solution is simple. Recognize you might need help or advice, learn from your mistakes and from the mistakes of others and stimulate constant observation and reflection.

Communities are complex social systems. They are part of larger complex systems and are interacting with other complex systems. With some of them, they co-evolve. The land around them is one complex system with which they interact, a complex natural (or ecological) system. The people in a community relate with the land in different ways, establishing different interactions and those relationships are mediated by certain rules agreed upon by the community. Sometimes those interactions are not agreed upon: illicit or unregulated interactions. We cannot control complex systems but we can design (or redesign) interactions and their rules. Rather than predicting a future and organizing ourselves from there, it is possible and much more desirable to envision a future and from there a set of goals. Grasping these principles is very useful when crafting community strategies.

One of the leading experts in the study of communities and their organization as complex systems is Professor Gert de Roo (see Further Reading). He and his colleagues in the Department of Spatial Planning and Environment (University of Groningen) point out that organization can come from many sides, that problems with old forms of community organization can be solved by people in politics and administration, but also by new forms of self-organization. Citizens can participate in new ways in the old system, maybe transforming it, but they can also

FIGURE 2 An example of a social-ecological system showing interactions within and between the ecological and social systems. Note the hints at systems within systems. The farmers association and the municipality have agreed on a way to coordinate the use of the land and water resources. Interactions in one part of the system have effects on others. The use of water for farming will affect the water balance in the region and therefore the use of water by others. There is an information flow. The environmental regulator is in charge of systematically collecting information on the quality of soil and water and provides that information to the municipality. There might be also non-coordinated actions that affect the resources, for example illegal logging. This contributes to erosion which in turn affects water quality, creating difficulties for farmers and everyone else.



rebuild community from the ground up. The difficulty in predicting how a community will change and respond to new ideas and policy, in other words, is not only a difficulty. It also means that unpredicted openings for change might show up. In this book, we embrace such ideas and we will show that community strategy can take many forms and can emerge in different places.

The path our community has carved is the result of past decisions and influences the possibilities for future paths. Who takes those decisions and how they are taken is part of the community's story; it is part of an essential system within our community – our governance system. What is governance and who is part of that system will be discussed in the next chapter.

STORIES

Stories or narratives about the community, its past and present, are important in understanding the path that has been traced. Stories about the past and present inform ideas of the future.

Communities are narratives, stories people tell about what they share and who they are. Just as individuals develop particular identities so do communities. These identities are shaped by previous experiences and they structure future ideals. There is a continuous connection between past and future experiences, a continuous narrative. This narrative or story imbues each community with an always limited frame of understanding of the world, itself, its past and possible futures. Stories also encompass ideals, fantasies of the ideal community and they play a crucial role in guiding aspirations.

Communities are not just a group of individuals: there is a story creating and constantly shaping its path.

People are desiring beings and without desire no image of a desirable future can be maintained. These desires are part of our individual identity and can connect past, present and future in a more or less stable manner. This applies to communities as well. Desires, ideals and images of the future will be evident in the way a community organizes itself. They will be reflected in the policies, plans and more generally in the decisions taken as a community but also in the way these policies are articulated. In other words, governance (understood as politics in a broad sense) is the site where a community's desires and images of the future are forged and confronted, the place where past traumas are exposed, where healing should take place.

A community's story shapes the way it perceives its environment, both built and natural. It reveals itself in the way it uses and manages the land and its resources. It is worth making a distinction between story and history. Uncovering a community's story will most likely mean taking a

look at its history. We need to keep in mind that history is always told from a certain perspective. Certain voices are more dominant than others, some ideas are more emphasized.



In recording a certain historic event, such as a battle, a loser's perspective might recall it as "we were taking care of this land and our enemies came, fought and took it over". While a winner's perspective might record that same battle as "they were mistreating the resources and enslaving their neighbours and therefore we were obliged to fight and take over." It is therefore important to adopt a critical perspective in order to identify losers / winners and what might have actually led to that confrontation. Perhaps more important for a community's story is the question of what role did the losers and the winners play in the future of the place. Who do we identify with now and what happened to the others? In other words, whose perspective is dominant nowadays?

Some questions that help us uncovering the story or stories of our community

- **How did the community begin?**
- **Who were the founders?**
- **What was their goal for the community?**
- **Do we know how they imagined the future?**
- **What were some major turning points for the community?**
- **Is the past identity still important or/and relevant today?**
- **Are the stories and goals of the past still important and / or relevant?**
- **Are there plans to change the story, goals for the community?**

History is not always about winners and losers. In most cases it is about finding a middle ground, about trade-offs and compromise. Uncovering the motivation behind the resulting arrangements can prove challenging, especially when having to go far back in time.

Consider the situation of asking five people familiar with the tale of Little Red Riding-Hood to retell the story. It is very likely you will hear five different stories, perhaps with the same characters, the main events but each with slightly different twists. Now, if you ask these five people to agree on one version, you can imagine some discussion will take place. If you ask those people to come up with a follow-up story then you can imagine more discussion and deliberation will take place, perhaps some confrontation of ideas... who knows. Perhaps conflicts arise.

This trivial example is not too far from reality. You can imagine a situation where, instead of a fairytale and five people, we have decades of history and hundreds of people. Identifying with certain key moments, certain characters and events, agreeing on one version of the story can become quite messy. There will be different versions, some overlapping, others conflicting.

Uncovering a community's story becomes crucial in understanding why it stands where it does, where it wants to go and how it plans to get there. Outlining the story of a community is therefore a first step in the crafting of strategy. There are many ways in which we can attempt to do this outline and we will talk about that in more detail in the second section of the guide. In this first section we will define the elements of that story in order to be able to identify them in a way that is useful for local decision-making, for local strategy and policy.

As we have already mentioned, a community's story is inseparably linked to its identity. It will reflect its identity. It is important to keep in mind that just as individuals change and reconsider their aspirations and identities, so do communities. A community's story can change – and should do so when necessary, when the community feels the need to change its course.

Change always occurs in a community, and, in terms of land use, some form of development and some form of degradation always takes place. Even if we believe nothing changed, things did change, in the community, the environment, the way we govern ourselves. Being aware of this makes a difference, and so does preparation.

A new narrative on the future cannot be disconnected from the existing narrative(s). In order to be persuasive, a strategy will have to be a narrative about community and future rather than just a sum of actions or a list of institutions or simply a set of goals. Goals by themselves might work if they are intuitively understood as part of a narrative shared in the community.

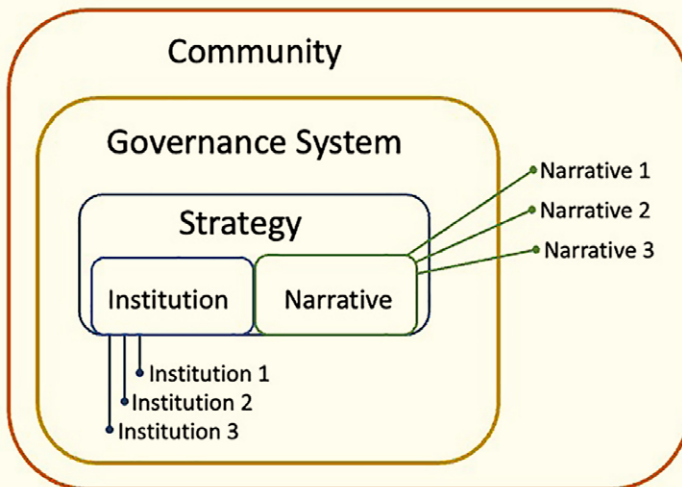
Change and development are inevitable; guiding them in a sustainable way takes effort

However, a strategy should also be understood as institution because its intention is to coordinate action in order to move in a particular direction. This means that it will have to be an institution containing and coordinating other institutions. If a strategy exists in contexts where informal institutions have a prominent role in governance, failing to recognize these institutions in the new strategy will most likely render the effort ineffectual. It is therefore essential for communities to have some understanding of their governance system, its elements and interactions.

FIGURE 3 A strategy is both a narrative and an institution, embedded within a community's governance system. It is a narrative because it brings together images of the future, hopes, desires and fears that reflect the community's identity. It is also an institution because it needs to coordinate action in the community in order to move in a particular direction.



FIGURE 4 A strategy should be embedded within a community's governance system. Each community has a unique path, evolution, a unique set of narratives and governance arrangements. Without some understanding of the different elements that play an important role in governance and without understanding the interactions among these elements will likely render a strategy ineffective.



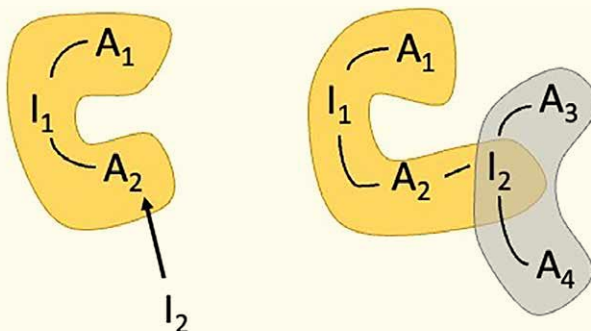
GOVERNANCE

We often hear about governance: good governance, corporate governance, public agency governance, non-profit governance, etc. There seem to be many different kinds of governance and many different definitions so which one to choose? How to define it for our community? Why even define it?

Governance can be understood simply as taking collectively binding decisions. A governance system is then the system in which those collectively binding decisions are taken and the governance path implies therefore the trajectory of those decisions over certain time. The governance path allows us to observe the evolution of the system.

Governance is not restricted to government, it is not inherently good or bad and it does not have an ideal form. In our complex societies it simply exists. After societal collapse governance will need to re-emerge. Shocks or disturbances weaken governance; they can create fissures and fragments. When governance is fragmented or weakened it will need a period to reorganize.

FIGURE 5 Actor institution configurations are essential elements of governance. Actions between actors are coordinated through institutions. They change each other over time. New institutions create the possibility of establishing a new configurations with new actors, reshuffling existing relations. Similarly with new actors appearing new rules of interaction have to be created.



Understanding governance, governance systems and their paths can help in understanding not only policy options but also help the crafting of strategies that are context sensitive. By this we mean that they are more likely to have an effect in that particular context but also that they are more sensitive to the relationships, desires, qualities, fears and hopes of a given community.

Understanding governance begins by understanding its main elements and interactions. We begin with two elements that are often discussed independently but that form a fundamental configuration; actors and institutions. Actors and institutions are recognized separately but can only be understood in reference to each other. When referring to actors and institutions attention is usually focused on the effects of one on the other and much less on their continuous co-constitution. We believe that actors and institutions are continuously shaping each other, co-evolving in an intimate arrangement.

Individuals, groups and organizations can all become actors by participating in governance or by being observed as such. A wide variety of actors can play a role in governance, each with their own perspective and interests, each accepting a particular set of narratives. Therefore coordination of actors is coordination of interests, of perspectives and narratives.

This coordination between actors within a governance system is done through institutions. Institutions are the rules by which actors relate, interact and coordinate their actions. Institutions bring actors together just like coffee breaks bring together co-workers to talk about work and non-work related issues. Shared narratives among actors bring them closer together.

Actors interact in sites and some sites become sites of decision-making. Think of coffee breaks bringing together co-workers that share hobbies or sports to discuss their activities and progress. These spaces are also an opportunity for co-workers to learn about new sports and even switch hobbies or interests. In the same way institutions bringing actors together can instigate a change in their narratives. Actors can influence others or be influenced by others through institutions.

FIGURE 6 Governance takes place in configurations of actors and institutions which might include governmental and non-governmental actors, as well as actors not visible on any official flow chart of decision-making; or actors outside governance arrangements. Lines connecting actors [A] represent institutions, some connections are strong while others might be weak.

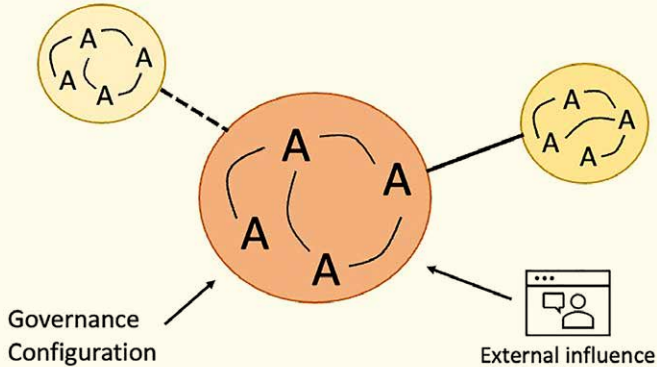


FIGURE 7 Each actor [A] in governance believes in different narratives, stories about its context. Some of these narratives are shared by some actors and other narratives are shared by different actors. Each narrative is informed by a certain type of knowledge. A change in narrative will likely imply different kinds of knowledge, different experts and/or expertise.



Coffee breaks and the rules governing them can be formal or informal. Plans, policies and laws are examples of formal institutions. A plan can (and most often is) easily adapted to a changing situation while a law is more difficult to change. Informal institutions can sometimes be formalized. Think about a casual coffee break that begins to turn into a brainstorming session and thus higher levels of management see it now as

a productive space for the organization, perhaps offering treats, a more comfortable physical space, stimulating people to come together at the coffee break, etc.

There is one more essential and often not very evident coupling in governance; that of power and knowledge. Think back on the example of the coffee break, of co-workers discussing their favourite hobby or sport. It will soon be evident that some of the participants have more experience than others, that some have a greater influence or are portrayed as an ‘authority’ on the topic. It might be that less experienced co-workers look forward to some advice on their hobby or sport during the coffee break. It might also be possible that because some co-workers refer to others as ‘authorities’ in their hobby or sport they might perceive them as authorities for work related issues. This might not always be the case but it certainly is not uncommon.

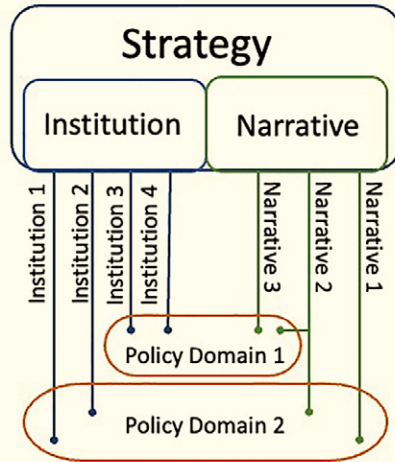
What is knowledge or knowledgable for a particular hobby or sport is often not difficult to identify; a handicap, a high score or achievement level. In governance knowledge can be a myriad of things. The kind of knowledge that is expected to be useful cannot be discovered beforehand – what is knowledge then? Anything that helps to understand the world and ourselves in it – anything that gives insight as well as the insight itself. As we mentioned earlier we cannot predict the future of complex systems and therefore we cannot really predict what will be useful or not.

What is useful in a community or society at a certain moment might become obsolete in the future, think of typewriters. However the opposite is just as true; what we regard now as obsolete might actually be quite handy in the future. An old barn can become a ‘vintage’ guest house, an abandoned field can become a bird sanctuary, an old rail car can become a cafe, etc.

We simply cannot predict what will become useful or obsolete in the future. We do know however that a lack of diversity impoverishes the system. The lack of diversity restricts the options for future choices in the same way that the lack of biological diversity renders an ecosystem vulnerable to pests and diseases. The lack of diversity in knowledge means restricted views of the context, of the community, its problems, its future. Going back to the coffee break example imagine co-workers discussing



FIGURE 8 Strategy serves the function of coordinating institutions and narratives within the community. The different institutions and narratives coordinated by strategy have influence and are influenced by different policy domains. Therefore we can say that different policy domains because they bring together both institutions and narratives can also be coordinated through community strategy.



different hobbies and sports agree to pursue one activity only, say downhill skiing. Then all conversations during coffee break will be focused around that one activity, summers are seen as periods to prepare and winters as moments to escape to a ski resort. This might become an attractive place for ski lovers but unwelcoming for non-skiers. Problems are seen from a skiers perspective, so will solutions. Without snow or the possibility to access the snow, frustrations rise, perhaps some might consider learning or relearning a new activity. Some might regret selling their bicycle or canoe. It will take time to shift from one coffee break dynamic to a new one. Having people in the room that already know about new activities, that have different expertise will make that transition smoother.

Understanding the interactions between actors is important for understanding the evolutionary pathways of governance. The interactions between actors create power relations, institutions or diverse narratives which in turn can influence the behaviour of the actors, and so on.

Unavoidably understanding the interactions between actors and pathways of governance will also reveal tensions, problems and conflicts within the community. As we will see in the next chapter this tough step might be essential in healing wounds and moving forward.

CONFLICT, PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In attempting to uncover a community's story, its governance path, its development trajectory we will certainly reveal its problems and sources of conflict. In this chapter we will argue that as hard and difficult as this might be, it is essential to moving forward. What becomes important then is not to try to solve all problems or resolve all conflicts but rather learn to find ways of managing them, recognizing as well that just acknowledging some conflicts might actually be productive.

Some problems and conflicts have roots in traumatic experiences for the community. Community trauma is a topic that deserves careful examination and a special kind of attention, beyond the scope of this guide. We will address some aspects and difficulties of trauma as it can become visible in governance and because we believe that the methodological tools we discuss in the second part of the guide could also assist in identifying trauma.

CONFLICTS

Conflicts are as much part of a community as aspirations and desires. As we all recognize from daily life and daily political life in particular, the differences between our individual aspirations and desires are often a source of conflict and a cause of tension. While some parts of the community might desire to develop resources, other parts might desire to conserve them. These desires are part of different futures imagined for the community, different stories. Stories or narratives can have different roles in relation to conflict.

- Conflicts can emerge *because* of narratives, often different narratives competing with each other. For example: this is true and that is false
- Conflicts can *generate* narratives (Since 'x' is true then we have a, b, and c happening)
- Conflict *is* also a narrative in itself: understandable and reproducible, it can be retold again and again ...

Social and cultural identities are narratives; they are stories people tell to give meaning to themselves, to the group and their world. Identities play a significant role in conflict. We can observe this very clearly in current political debates. Politics should be a space for deliberation of alternatives. In some places and at some times however we see how it becomes closely linked to identity. Political debate becomes rigid, with factions competing against each other, prone to conflict and therefore blind to alternatives. It's either left or right – no other option available. If conflicts become associated with identity narratives, they become more intractable. eg. “I am _____ and therefore I don't believe in _____ or I will always believe in _____ ”. If conflict becomes associated with identity narratives then it is difficult to manage or change because it would mean a change in identity.

We are constantly reminded of the harmful and sometimes painful consequences of some conflicts. The world has seen more than enough wars waged over identity. Not all conflicts need to be resolved at all cost, however. Some conflicts simply cannot be resolved – at least not with the current actors, institutions or narratives. Sometimes conflicts are difficult to solve because they transform and spring up somewhere else. Sometimes conflicts are difficult to solve because they are replaced by new conflicts coming out of old tensions or old identities or narratives or competitions.

Not all conflict has to lead to a war or to aggression. Positive things can come out of conflict. They can also be productive or simply harmless.

Conflict can be productive in different ways.

- Useful things can come out of a conflict: a new identity, a new story or institution, perhaps even a new landscape...
- Conflicts can enable learning through tough discussions, by confronting different ideas and points of view new insights can emerge
- In general and broad sense they can lead to increased reflexivity, a reassessment of values.

Because there are often positive aspects to conflict and because often they don't disappear, we believe it is better to talk about *conflict management* rather than conflict resolution. When we think of conflict management we

are focusing on reducing harm, enabling productive discussions and often stabilizing institutions. In the case of environmental conflicts we can think of stabilizing ecosystems or their functions. Thinking of managing or stabilizing conflicts might be less frustrating than thinking of resolving them. By managing conflicts we give them the opportunity to become productive conflicts.

PROBLEMS

In many rural communities, identity is closely linked to one resource or industry. We partly touched on this issue in the previous chapter with our example of the coffee break dominated by conversation on one activity, one set of experts and expertise. Similarly, in resource communities after some time it is common to see knowledge and expertise, social, political and cultural spaces dominated by actors and narratives closely associated with the particular industry.

This homogeneity in a community becomes a significant problem when places undergo a shock. These shocks in resource communities are commonly referred to as boom and bust cycles. The idea of boom and bust is often defined narrowly in economic terms, however these dramatic ups and downs transcends the economy. Their effects are observed in terms of population, housing, infrastructure, environmental quality and social-psychological factors within the community. These dramatic changes affect the capacity of the community to coordinate collective action and stabilize expectations and that is the more significant problem.

The real cause of many problems we observe in resource communities has to do with the undermining of institutional capacity. It has to do with factors that go beyond the cyclical statistics of a dominant industry. We believe it is useful for communities to be able to identify some of the commonly observed pressures on institutional capacity.

We summarize the importance of four pressures on institutional capacity in smaller communities dominated by one resource or industry. They reinforce each other. We identify: pressures on time horizons, pressure on regulation, selectivity in governance and pressure on the material/physical environment or material dependency.

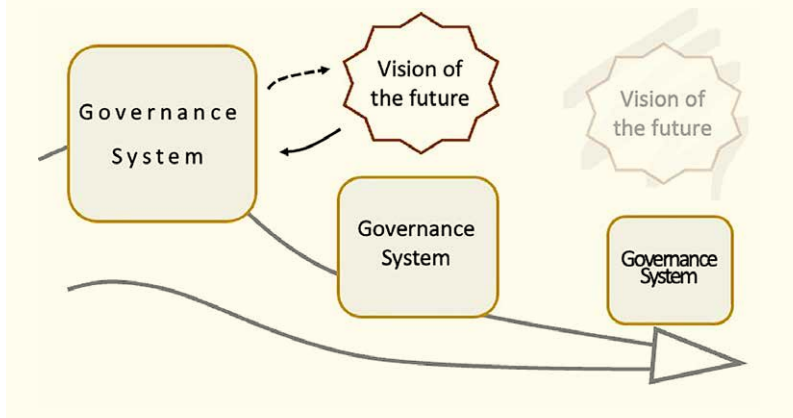
- 1) *Pressures on time horizons.* The fast speed at which decisions have to be taken in boom times contradicts the pace required for collective deliberation or discussions about the future. When time horizons are shortened because actions need to be taken quickly, there is no real possibility to plan. Communities are reacting and there is not enough time to fully consider all the implications of a decision.
- 2) *Pressures on regulation.* Closely linked to pressures on time horizons and reinforcing them. The pressure to act in both the boom and the bust periods often overrides the common good and erodes the checks and balances in place. Regulations become difficult to enforce because “we need to act fast and secure the investment” or “we need to act fast to keep afloat and not dive deeper”. Regulation becomes seen as a luxury.

Boom and bust can undermine the formation and implementation of all sorts of rules and thus certainly of strategies addressing boom and bust which will likely invoke complex sets of rules over a long term – such as land use policies attempting to buffer or mitigate boom and bust effects.

- 3) *Selectivity in governance.* The third type of pressure has to do with privileging a selection of elements in governance (actors, institutions, narratives, etc) leading to tight interrelations. Think of the coffee break example where alternative perspectives and the forms of expertise associated with alternative activities tend to diminish. We call such simplification of both actor/institution configurations and power/knowledge configurations the *concentration problem*. Fewer actors with a more similar interests and shared perspectives remain within governance. The concentration problem increases rigidity in the governance path, making alternative paths harder to imagine and harder to coordinate and implement. A history of ups and downs tends to simplify governance, making it less flexible and thus reducing its possibilities of adaptation.
- 4) Pressures from the material or physical environment. These pressures we refer to as material dependencies because they create a dependency of the community on a specific type of material or physical environment that is difficult to overcome. For example, infrastructures

tend to become one-sided and mono-functional, especially focused on attending the needs of one particular economic activity. The patterns of land use also reflect the priorities of the privileged economic sector(s) during the boom. Even the aesthetics of the community cater to the styles and typologies typical for boom periods.

FIGURE 9 Concentration problem is apparent when the path of development narrows with time. When all efforts are placed on one narrowly defined vision the governance system concentrates all its efforts in fulfilling that vision. In a way it becomes hyper-specialized and dismisses diversity of visions and in turn the capacity and tools to create alternative paths. With time the governance system becomes restricted, constrained, with a diminished capacity to react and recover from shock. The system is vulnerable because it has undermined its ability to envision different futures.



TRAUMA

Just as individuals, communities can be severely shaken up in the course of their life history. As with individuals, the effects of trauma can be quite diverse and can be more or less problematic. In our view, community trauma becomes problematic when it appears in governance, when it is reflected in the way a community takes collective binding decisions. This can be observable in a tendency to repeat past behaviour without much reflexivity, thus making it difficult to choose different directions for the future. Trauma can render the past opaque and make it hard to take a distance from the repetitive behaviours and symptoms. This situation makes it difficult for the community to reinterpret itself and therefore to

decide whether it has a problem, whether it is freely choosing its destiny or whether it is captured by the trauma and its symptoms. Of course what is a problem is not always easy to identify for the community (or persons) experiencing trauma and therefore confronting trauma with the help of an outsider has to precede any analysis.

Healing from trauma requires digging in the past or at least a collective effort to understand the past. In this sense, tracing development trajectories and governance paths can become an initial step towards healing. It can reveal latent memories that structure the present. A word of caution: the effects of the past on a community and its governance, on its ways of looking forward and creating policy for future development are complex and they can be structural. The stories people tell about the community, and the history we find in the local archive are not enough to fully understand how the mentality, the organization, the ideals of the community might be tinged by trauma.

Part 2

SELF-ANALYSIS

MAPPING AND UNDERSTANDING THE GOVERNANCE CONTEXT

In the previous section we identified the building blocks of a community's system of governance, the main relationships between the different elements and how they change and shape each other. We highlighted the importance of narratives or stories in steering our community's path, the role they play in conflicts and problems within the community and the way they define identities. In this section we will discuss ways in which a community can uncover or untangle those stories and stimulate self reflection.

Mapping exercises can be considered a way of self-analysis because they are an opportunity to ask basic questions. They are a way of discussing and confronting the stories or narratives that have defined the community's development path. We talk of mapping as a method of delineating main elements of governance: actors and institutions as well as the power relations, tensions, problems or conflicts that arise.

When talking about mapping exercises that can be useful for strategizing it is of special importance to pay attention to the links between long-term perspectives (stories about the long term), land use tools (institutions) and strategies. We refer to this as a special kind of mapping exercise, as mapping links. In this book, we make a case for the mapping of links between long term perspectives and land use tools, between land use tools and broader strategies. In later chapters, we will show how such mapping can inspire a better linking and thus a better strategy.

We distinguish two steps in mapping exercises. The *first mapping* is that of the current governance situation. This is useful for the *second mapping* step, consisting of two parts, *path mapping and context mapping*. Precise mapping of the links between land use tools, strategies and long term perspectives will be more meaningful after the first two steps

are attempted. That is: mapping of the current governance situation, of the governance path and its context will make it easier to uncover and understand links between land use tools, strategies and long-term perspectives and therefore hopefully ways in which they can be improved.

The **first mapping** should reveal an initial story of the current context and aim at answering questions like: who is involved? are there other actors in the background? Are there tensions in governance? what are these tensions about (resources, exclusion, inequality, etc)?

It is important to keep in mind that a first mapping can lead to the conclusion that the underlying tensions and problems of the community are not observed in governance. It might be that what is identified as a problem, tension or issue by the community does not permeate the collective decision making process: there is no story about these problems within the governance configurations.

Some questions to stimulate a first mapping

- **Who is part of governance? Who is responsible and what are they responsible for?**
- **Are there actors in the background – actors taking decisions or participating informally?**
- **Are there actors excluded? Is there inequality?**
- **Are there tensions or conflicts over resources? Conflict might not really be about the resource itself.**
- **What are the different stories involved?**

This invisibility of local problems and issues in governance can be because

- 1 There is a problem of exclusion.
 - Certain stories or actors are excluded *intentionally* because there is abuse of power or actors are afraid that bringing up stories of conflict in governance might be too disruptive to collective decision making.

- Certain stories or actors are excluded *un-intentionally* because there is a group or an area of the community which is marginal or lacks means of connecting with local decision making process.
- 2 There is a problem of participation. Certain stories or actors have all the means to participate in the local decision making processes but are unwilling to do so.
- 3 There is a problem of representation. Certain stories or actors have all the means to participate in the local decision making processes but are not represented which creates then a problem of observation. It is difficult to care for (react, asses, evaluate) things that we cannot see.

When local problems or issues are not evident in governance then they are not dealt with, they are not properly assessed or evaluated. The first mapping is therefore essential in recognizing whether local problems are made evident in governance and how this happens.

A first mapping then is a mapping of the current governance arrangement. It will provide a preliminary narrative that will be useful for more detailed mapping exercises. Later analysis can reveal missing aspects that can then be incorporated in the first mapping. Mapping can be a continuous exercise.

For a more detailed mapping, we need to jump outside the present governance system and out of the present, I.e. we need to take into account what happened in the past and what happened outside the community. We speak here of path mapping and context mapping.

Path mapping consists of reconstructing the governance path or trajectory of the community. It will be necessary to look back in time and rely on the more senior members of the community, those who were in local government or members of the community who were active in local decision making processes.

Some questions to stimulate path mapping

- **How did a particular configuration of actors – institutions come about?**
This might lead to understanding how it can be changed
- **How are actors configured? Think about relations between actors, are some more influential than others?**
- **Think about the institutions that mediate the interactions between actors. Remember to include informal institutions as well.**
- **Which actors and institutions mediated actions with the natural environment? – with the man – made environment?**
- **Which stories associated with actors?**
- **Which new stories emerged?**

Context mapping is intended to map elements of the broader context affecting governance at an observable scale. Sometimes during the first mapping or path mapping exercises it becomes evident to the community that there are elements in the broader context affecting local decision making processes. These connections to a broader context always start from local observation and might actually be more directed to understanding the broader context. Perhaps there is a need to know more about actors and institutions beyond the local level. It is always selective, focusing on a particular issue or problem and always goes from small to large scale.

Some questions to stimulate context mapping

- **What do we need to know about higher level actors and institutions to understand the local situation ? (companies, market, a higher level conflict, a political alliance)**
- **Are there higher level stories that play a local role? (An ideology?)**
- **Is there something we need to know about a specific feature of the ecosystem? Of a resource?**

SMALL METHODS IN THE BIG MAPPING METHOD

There are many ways to carry out mapping exercises. Different methods can be used and combined depending on what is possible or desired for a community. Some might be better suited than others for a certain moment or space or group of participants. We present a list of methods that are well known and easy to carry out.

More *participatory methods* which tend to work well with large groups of people and which can be mediated by brokers or outside experts include:

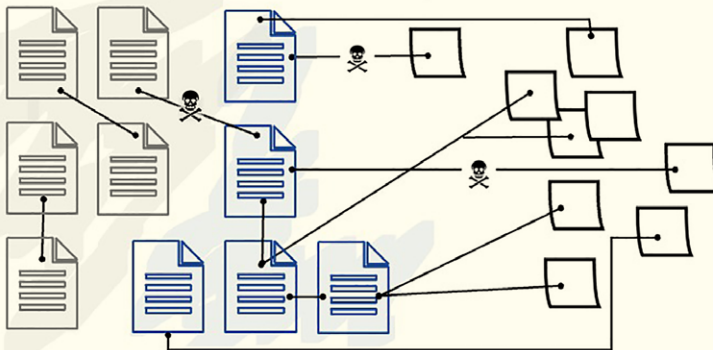
- *Open houses*: if a local administration already started a first mapping, or a preliminary path mapping, this can be shared with the public, in an informal setting which invites conversation, discussion, and a combination of unstructured and structured events
- *Citizen juries*: a small group of community representatives meets several times and discusses the key points and features of the mapping. This can lead into visioning (see below), where several options are discussed and deliberated by the ‘jury’.
- *Public meetings and debates*: path mapping is never a neutral exercise and that is no problem. It is about building a self-image and an understanding of the key events and mechanisms that brought us to the present system of decision-making. Thus, public meetings and debates, where different voices can be heard, different understandings of the identity and history of the community, are very useful. In such debate, it’s not about winning but about coming to a new understanding of the past and how it shaped the present. Such meetings can also lead naturally into visioning. They can easily be combined with some of the next methods.
- *Discussion of statements or pre-studies*. Path and context mapping can be highly participatory, but research in advance and/or afterwards can make the participatory elements much more productive. Such research can serve as input and follow-up but can also be used as resources a discussion, debate, or, later, visioning session. Statements prepared by staff or consultants can also serve to structure a public mapping session.

- *Charrettes*: short and intensive design sessions can be useful in mapping, visioning and strategizing. The presence of someone thinking in design terms is always useful. In participatory mapping, a charrette can illustrate how the community developed in terms of structure and infrastructure, relation to landscape and resources, how some problems are spatial (and could require spatial solutions).
- *Small or large workshops*: groups of citizens can work with staff, politicians, advisors, to work on a partial mapping task, eg: which plans actually worked? What was the impact of the mining coming and closing on the community and its governance?
- *Essay, photo, art exhibits and competitions, awards*. These can elicit stories, sentiments, trigger discussions, on what is important and typical in the community, and how we got there. Discussion and conversation afterwards is as important as the art project itself.

FIGURE 10 We can find many documents of different sorts that fall under the label “strategy” however some are ineffective because they are not linked or are in contradiction with each other and informal rules and traditions within the community.

Documents supposed to have strategic function

... but are ineffective ... and are effective *informal rules and traditions ...*



- *Community theatre*: performing plays about the past of the community, as a community, can create a new understanding.
- *A media and public awareness campaign*, maybe presenting research, and strong opinions, leading into debate.

We mentioned *research* several times. Mapping as presented here is an exercise in reflexivity for the community itself, a way of self-examining that can help to move forwards in a more deliberate manner afterwards. It's not a good idea to outsource the work. Yet, research in the traditional sense can still be very useful. We mentioned already that it can serve as initial input, as detailing afterwards, and as accompaniment of the more participatory mapping. Research is supporting in the true sense; it should not dominate or dictate.

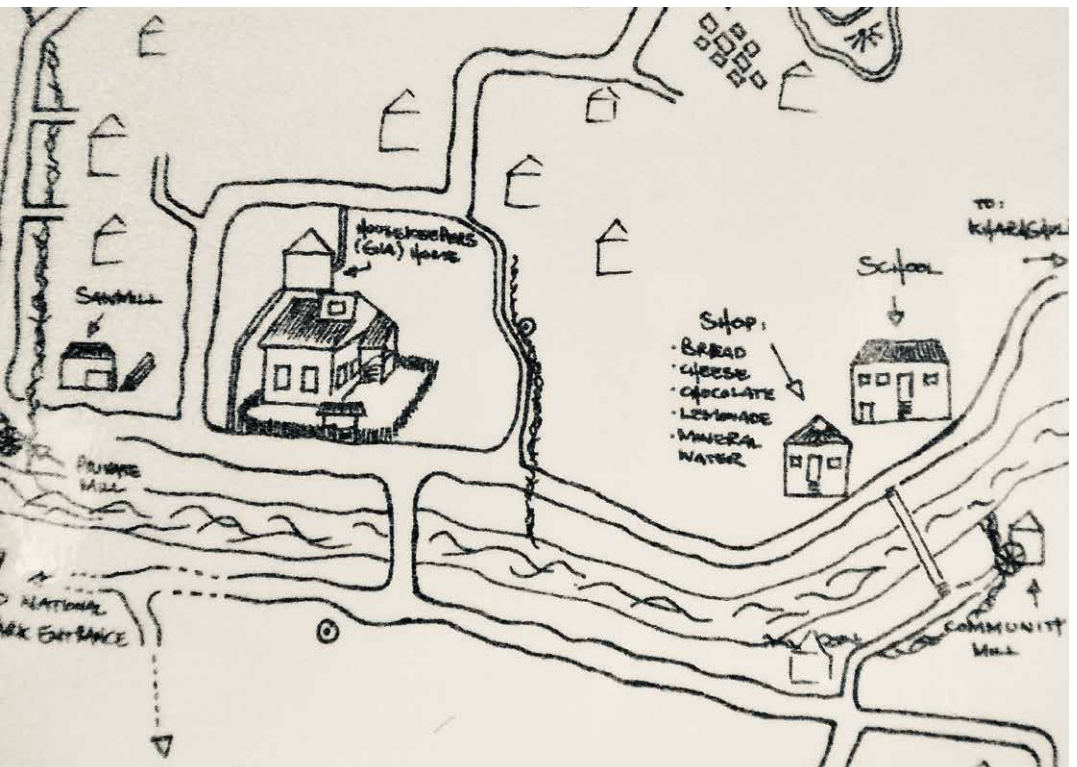
Methods of research which can be helpful include some of the following:

- *Surveys*: What are key issues according to locals? What is identified as typical, as important, as threat? What do they see as key moments, phases, players, decisions in the past?
- *Historical work*: digging up old council documents, local newspaper clippings, maps, diaries, plans. This can clarify what were old points of contention, ambitions, players, traditions, values and sensitivities, as well as shifting relations with external players.
- *Collecting basic statistics*, using data available to local government, and possibly from more targeted historical work and surveys. Numbers can be useful at any point in the discussion, in mapping and later visioning exercises.
- *Interviews, life histories and focus groups*: these can be used to get a fresh overview of how people interpret the history of the community and its governance, or to get unique perspectives of people with long memories or special roles or to trigger a discussion (in focus group) which can produce new insights.

- *Observation.* This might sound strange, but learning to look at the place with new eyes, asking questions, why things were built, laid out, in a certain way, why people use space in a certain way, can open up new avenues of understanding the community, and contribute to path mapping.

A good strategy is based on the knowledge of what the previous strategy looked like

- *Asset mapping:* understanding what the main assets were in different phases of the development of a community can help to understand the evolution of governance, and likely many current features of the community, its governance, its landscape. Also asset mapping can blend into visioning.



For the specific purposes of this community guide, a few things deserve special attention. As we want to understand how can the organization of the land contribute to a more general strategy of community development, we will want to figure out, for present (first mapping) and past (path mapping) *what really had an influence!* Or, in other words, which documents or informal institutions had a strategic function in the development of the community. Secondly, we want to figure out which tools to organize the land were actually used. Figuring this out for the past and for the present can be of great help, when considering how to move forwards, and which tools could be helpful for that. Mapping is necessary, and politically sensitive, as revealing how things actually work, as opposed to paper realities, always benefits some, less others.

During our own research, insiders in different municipalities revealed that informal institutions were key to understanding how governance worked, what kind of strategy was present and which land use tools were used. In many cases strategy was nonexistent. When strategy was existent it was sometimes as informal agreements within the local elite or, more formally, as the economic development strategy presented by administration and articulated by the chamber of commerce. A municipal development plan (a comprehensive plan) was considered a guide at times but most often it was not, while the sustainability plans were almost never coordinating development. The absence of strategy in some communities was linked to the idea that things ought to stay the same (which we know is impossible since change is constant) or that strategy was impossible anyway (where there is a will there is a way) or not desirable by the community (in this particular case community was understood as a collection of individuals – a political choice).

For this kind of mapping towards an understanding of land use and strategy, a good starting point is always to look up which documents *could* play easily a strategic role in the community and which land use tools *could* be used, either separately or as part of an embedding strategy.

For a Canadian province such as Alberta, many of those land use tools and some of those potentially strategic documents can be found in the municipal government act (MGA), which defines planning tools available to municipalities, but also in other acts, guiding nature conservation,

water management, natural resource management and other activities. In other parts of the world, national and regional legislation and policy will similarly define which tools are available for local communities to strategize.

While listing what *could* be used is useful, it is important to keep in mind that many of the instruments available are not used, even when they exist locally. It is also important to keep in mind that communities developed in very different ways, that they had considerable freedom and autonomy to develop their own system of governance and land use (despite the formality suggested by higher level laws and other institutions). In other words: tracking the official procedures and tools is only a beginning. Even for locals, for most locals, it is not clear at all if there is a strategy, and where it would be found, in what kind of document or in which kind of unwritten agreement.

FIGURE 11 Land use tools can be embedded or not in a strategy. In either case they can have direct or indirect influence in the community and its development.

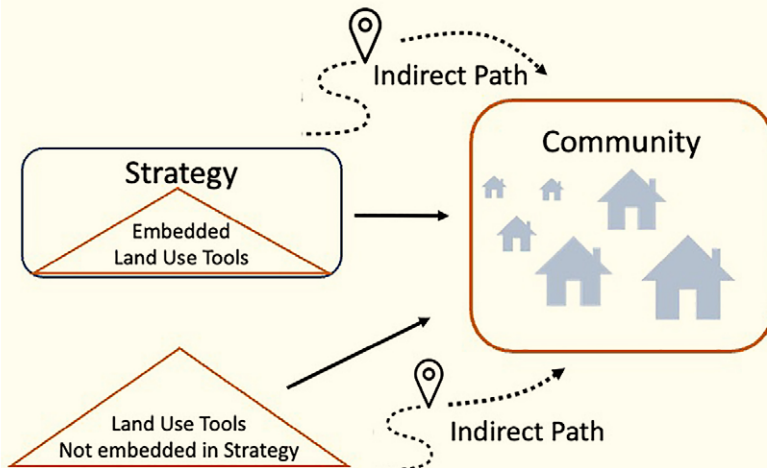


FIGURE 12 A simple way of mapping the effects of the material environment. The material dependencies can be natural [the ecological systems or its elements like rivers, mountains, deserts, the weather etc], it can also be human-made [railroads, dams, shipping yards, pollution, etc] or a hybrid environment [parks and recreation areas where wild animals forage, an old mine that has polluted the aquifer]. These material dependencies can be enabling or disabling depending on the community's perspective and context. For a particular community a mountain can be disabling because it makes it difficult to build houses; that can be seen as a negative aspect for solving housing issues but can be positive for recreation purposes. A human-made infrastructure can bring revenue; this can be positive for financing programs within the community but can also be negative in the future when it is in disrepair or disuse and the community is left in charge of the 'clean-up' operation.

	Enabling		Disabling	
	+	-	+	-
Natural				
Human-made				
Hybrid				

UNDERSTANDING FRAGMENTATION IN GOVERNANCE

When mapping of governance gives us a good idea how things work, where to look for strategy and which tools are used and available for organizing the land, then it will be clear in all cases that not everything that is supposed to work, works. That might not be a tragedy in some cases.

Some of the problems that might become apparent:

- Many land use tools are not consistent with each other, or simply ignore each other
- Strategic documents contradict or ignore each other
- Land use tools and broader strategies are not coordinated

These problems can lead to land use tools that will not be optimally effective, strategic documents that will lose their impact and in the end strategy becomes difficult.

In North America it is common to hear that the municipal development plan or comprehensive plan is not followed. That it is losing its power to guide the community in its development because it is incompatible with the zoning plan or land use bylaw. In the United States comprehensive plans do not create binding restrictions and there is no legal requirement for local governments to enact them, therefore they are used simply as a reference or guide but most often not used at all.

In Europe comprehensive plans are required in most countries but the situation is not entirely different. It is therefore not strange to hear from many cynics that planning itself is a waste of time – or even worse. We would say that some form of community strategy, whether it is a comprehensive plan or not, is utterly useful and entirely possible. Many communities across the world have proven that it is possible to coordinate action to move in a particular direction. On the other hand, we can also

think of places that have no idea about their future and are unprepared when challenges arise.

Fragmentation undermines the ability to strategize and is a real problem. If zoning bylaws are not in sync with the development plan, or if there is no development plan at all then it is much easier for a developer, a company or a political actor to come in and impose their will, their own plan. Fixing fragmentation, for example making zoning and a general plan more cohesive does not contradict development. Cohesive community strategy which is coupled to the land use tools available should make it *easier* for developers to work but *more difficult* for them to do what a community does not want. If things are not in sync, it is much harder for the community to stop unwanted development and to attract or incentivize desirable development or change.

A strategy can be many things but it is NOT just a set of tools

In Alberta, for example, the Municipal Government Act states that if a development proposal requires land to be subdivided, a subdivision application must be submitted to the municipal subdivision authority. The proposed subdivision must conform to regional plans, any statutory plan, land use bylaw, the municipal government act, and Subdivision and Development Regulation.

This statement is a sign of great foresight by legislators. It shows how complex governance of land is in Alberta, as it is anywhere in the modern world. It also highlights there are many chances or opportunities for *not conforming*, for not cohering and coordinating.

As we noted earlier, in many municipalities land use tools are often used at will, without reference to an overarching strategy for community development. At the same time strategies, if existing, are not fully used. Comprehensive plans are routinely ignored and bylaws are the institutions most often used to organize the land. More precisely, they are revised after something happens, or exceptions are allowed and acknowledged. There is at least a reference to those bylaws, even if the intention behind them and the cohesion in the zoning plan are also ignored.

Reasons for fragmentation and disconnect

- **Not updating land use tools and strategy documents**
- **Ignoring land use tools and strategy documents**
- **Routinely using exceptions in land use decisions**
- **Routinely using exceptions in other decisions with long-term effects**
- **Staff not communicating to each other, to politicians, to other stakeholders**
- **Staff moving, politicians coming and going, institutional memory weakening**
- **Staff and politicians lacking time and resources to get familiar with issues and tools**
- **A belief that local governance is just about services which require little coordination**

These are very common reasons for fragmentation, making it more difficult to coordinate policies, to embed policy tools in broader strategies.

In Alberta many smaller municipalities do not have a development plan, as they are not obliged to. Although the Province recommends making a plan, often small municipalities miss the expertise, the resources to make one. In some cases there might even be a concern that and there might be political and economic implications if a plan is actually used.

A classic example is the updating of zoning plans and development plans. If zoning plans are updated but not development plans, these more strategic documents lose their value. Or, if the zoning plans themselves are not updated, and are either completely ignored or accumulating exceptions (variances), they will lose cohesion and thus strategic value.

In Canada the federal government promoted sustainability plans though which many rural municipalities have the opportunity to access federal infrastructure funds. In Western Canada, most of those plans were shelved as soon as they were printed. This is not so strange considering the complexity of governance and strategy that already exists in the region which often identifies with an ideology averse to federal interference and not entirely convinced of long-range planning. In many other countries, similar problems can be observed, and even where plans or other strategic documents are mandatory, their impact can be minimal. They can contribute to fragmentation in governance.

To overcome fragmentation, to build a cohesive community strategy, it is first of all important to know how things actually work. Which tools are available, which ones are used, and which ones are supposed to be used. The forms of mapping discussed earlier can help a community understand and map fragmentation in governance. However, even when more elaborate or time consuming forms of mapping are not on the table, simplified forms can make a difference. Simply knowing, as a community and its administration, which links exist and what isn't linked or is disconnected, what there is and isn't, what could be there, are all potential starting points for new and more strategic thinking about community development. This reflection, the knowledge that is brought forth cannot stay within the local administration. It cannot be considered a technical matter alone in order for it to have an impact.

Once a strategy is in place, it is easier to maintain and adapt it. Once it is in place, it is easier to roll in new tools for strategy when opportunities arise. Even small communities can make strategic use of environmental impact assessment procedures and related forms of environmental review for a given project. When a project or change is proposed either internally or externally, or, in case of some larger proposals when cumulative impact assessments are carried out, their results can potentially be tied in more comprehensively with the identity and ambitions of the community.

As the fate of the rural sustainability plans indicates, strategies not only exist in a context of other strategies and strategic orientations but also in a context where informal institutions can be important. Local, unwritten, traditional rules or ways of doing things, inspired by a shared idea of the future cannot be ignored. On the contrary, these informal institutions, and these long-term perspectives in the community have to be acknowledged and be part of strategy in some shape or form.

Strategy is Persuasive Story-telling

Fragmentation has another face therefore: a disconnect between the long-term perspectives in the community and strategies in place. If this is the case, the strategy, (in the form of a sustainability plan, an economic development plan, a downtown revitalization plan, a conservation or cluster design strategy, a nature conservation or community forestry strategy, a heritage-based development strategy, a responsible resource extraction strategy) will not be persuasive for the community and it will not coordinate action. It will bump into informal institutions and will be ignored at its own peril.

Part 3

TRANSITIONING

VISIONING

Visioning can mean many things for many people. For some, it is too vague to bother with, for others, it is something that can be precisely defined, even rendered into a formula. For us, it is something that can quite easily be grasped, something that is very useful in the building of community strategy, but it is not the strategy itself. Nor can it be reduced to a recipe.

Visioning is not predicting either. Working with scenario's is certainly possible in visioning, as long as these are not entirely prepared by experts and as long as these scenario's are not three or four predictions of possible evolutions that might happen to the community. Such idea of scenario's and of visioning emphasizes the helplessness of communities and makes it harder to grasp what is really possible.

Community visioning is the *transition from self-analysis to strategy, the discovery or forging of a shared vision for the future*. Out of many stories and images of the place and its future, one shared image, in fact one shared narrative, has to be forged. This means immediately that it has to come out of some form of participatory process. Otherwise, support will be questionable and its function of leading into a realistic strategy will not materialize. It also means that it is likely to be an imperfect synthesis, and likely not something that can hold forever. On the other hand, a vision can be a powerful tool to bring together different voices, especially if it can link to existing ideas and aspiration, to existing stories.

**A vision is not a prediction
Nor is a fantasy a vision**

Therefore there is no recipe for visioning and the community has to decide for itself what it needs. A visioning process has to be crafted. We go back to the idea of crafting, of creating something with both the heart and the head. We can think of some tools and techniques that might be helpful to consider when crafting in different contexts.

Crafting requires careful attention to past attempts. The quality of the vision hinges on the *quality of the preceding analysis*. We refer to our discussion of mapping as self-analysis and the techniques for mapping listed there. Some of these mapping techniques lead rather organically into visioning (see chapter 5). If visioning takes place without preparation by organizers and participants, without a structure, background information, results from self-analysis, and clarification of expectations, it is very likely that the crafting process will lead nowhere or to something that cannot serve as input for a community strategy.



The quality of craft cannot depend on one perspective or opinion. The quality of visioning depends on the quality of participation. This is a form of 'quality-control' where different perspectives help shaping the vision, pointing at flaws or potential weaknesses. The resulting vision, we can

remind ourselves, needs to be a story that is persuasive for the people in the visioning sessions and for the rest of the community. A good starting point is to practice persuasion and storytelling in visioning.

The following are popular techniques used for visioning that take into account past attempts at visioning and that can easily become participatory processes.

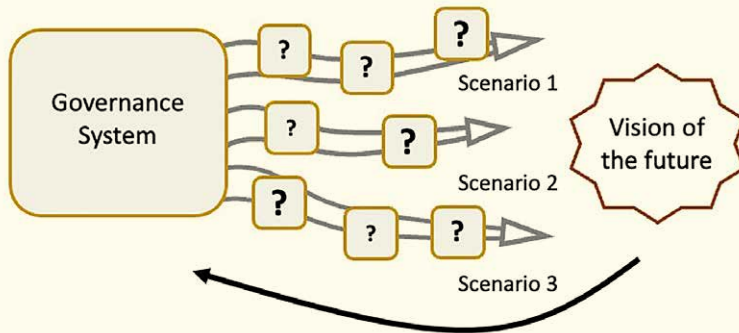
Open houses. (see chapter 5) Productive as long as they are very open and if the context of the open house helps to trigger more informal visioning exercises in small groups or even discussions which can serve as input for bigger visioning sessions.

Visioning sessions. Can be organized when a smaller or bigger group comes together. It will require an agenda that includes community issues to ponder, maybe scenario's to discuss or results from self-analysis. A visioning session needs structure and guidance and that can be either by municipal staff, external consultants or visiting academics. Result can be an overarching vision for the community, an envisioned answer to one problem, or a shared goal.

Charrettes. Are short and intensive, participatory design sessions that can prove to be powerful tools for visioning. If they are participatory and if the experts are neither too active nor passive in the exercise. When experts are too involved in steering the process they often have a predefined answer ready, they dominate the discussion and impose a design (or sneak it in). On the other hand they need to be self-assured and competent enough to translate different ideas into spatial form and explore together with participants the possibilities of redesigning places in ways that could allow pursuing different goals at the same time.

Participatory asset mapping and assessment. These can be categorized as techniques of analysis or mapping but they can also be used in visioning. Especially if some preparation took place (in self-analysis or by outsiders), a preliminary mapping of what is valuable in the community (assets), or of what might be vulnerabilities, threats, rigidities, or what happened to an ambitious previous policy or plan, can structure a visioning exercise. The facilitator can then elicit responses to elements from this input, and

FIGURE 13 Crafting visions can be done through scenario building. Here different possible governance evolutions are explored – not just different targets or economic contexts. Scenario building should explore which assets are really assets for the future and which obstacles are harder to overcome. The exercise can begin from current conditions and then develop goals and steering mechanisms or it can start with bold goals and reason back to the present; “what is needed now to get there?”.



go from there in bringing up different narratives about the community and its future, posing for example the following situations: “if ____ is an asset, then ____” or “if this plan didn’t work, then ____”.

Scenarios. Building scenarios can be useful in exploring alternative futures but cannot be passive and they are never enough. As we mentioned earlier in the chapter, visioning does not attempt to predict the future but rather attempts at constructing a future which is persuasive for the community and that might actually work given the conditions. If the community is aware that nothing stays the same and is convinced that it’s better to manage their own future instead of letting the future run over them, then scenarios can be ways to structure thinking about different possible futures. A healthy scenario building exercise considers questions like; “If we want A and B, what will happen to C and D.. and do we need E and do we need to take care of F?”

Scenarios can then be a way to investigate the effects of certain choices on other things. They can also be a way to trigger discussion by making

these effects visible. A better informed choice and a better vision become possible. It is rarely profitable to vote on one scenario. There will be discontent that will lead to disconnect and thoughts like “that was not *my* choice” or “I did not vote for *that*”. Think of changing and using the scenarios in a discussion aimed at building one new and shared scenario. This kind of exercise leads more easily into strategy and uses the potential of visioning more proactively.

A NOTE ON CONSULTANTS AND ACADEMICS

Bringing in outsiders to facilitate visioning processes can be very productive. Outside experts can bring a more objective and critical eye to the discussion, they can provide technical expertise or share experiences of other places. They can open up discussions that were stuck, maybe broach prickly subjects more easily, see and question assumptions held in the community and discern assets and possible solutions not commonly considered by locals. Citizens and staff alike might be too close and too familiar with the place, its people, problems, its ways of thinking and organizing. It happens to all of us whenever we visit someone else’s home and think “Oh ... this is a clever way of using _____ , I had never thought of that.”

On the other hand, consultants are under pressure to produce fast and might come up with pre-made solutions and templates and procedures. Academics are sometimes too closely tied to a disciplinary background, a method, an ideology or theoretical perspective. All this simply points out the obvious: it is important to know those who are hired (even if they come for free). Go for a coffee and get to know them as best as possible before any visioning session takes place. Learn about the advisors and help the advisors by telling them about you, ideally over more than one conversation. In a perfect world the community is able to carry out a self-study, ideally the mapping exercises proposed earlier, before visioning and before inviting external advisors. Conscientious and professional advisors will also ask for some form of self-analysis and will refuse work if the community is not ready for visioning and strategy.

LEARNING

Learning takes place all the time. People, organizations, communities, governance systems learn. In the terms of this guide, learning takes place in self-analysis, in visioning, in strategizing, in implementation (or from non-implementation). Nevertheless, we bring it up here as learning plays a special role in visioning and strategy and in the transition from visioning to strategy.

So far we have recognized different aspects of preparation that involve learning and that help pave the way for a successful strategy. We know by now that some important things to try to understand are:

- How the governance system works. Attempting to understand the workings of the system implies learning about decision-making and informal influence in the community and learning how to participate.
- How the system learns. The system learns from the past, from its successful and failed attempts to change, to strategize, to solve problems. Learning how governance adapts and what happened to previous strategies and big plans is important to move forward. Trying to understand how we are learning from the present situation is also important. As is it is important to learn from the experience of other places, their failures and successes.
- How we learn. Members of the community are learning right here and now, in the present situation.

Municipal staff, external experts, and – not to forget – local politicians have their work cut out there. They need to inform and explain. If the intention to strategize is serious, participants need to be familiar with the procedures of self-analysis, visioning and participation. They need to familiarize themselves with the results of previous steps (if they were not involved) and with the key tools available to them (in strategizing, in tying-in land use within the strategy).

Advice on UN-productive participation

- ✓ **Don't prepare. Always good just to say something first and research later.**
- ✓ **Keep your thoughts to yourself and complain later. *This will most certainly undermine the legitimacy of the process.***
- ✓ **Just focus on one thing and forget about the big picture. Stick to that thing and do not budge. *This will for sure hamper the possibility to compromise, to see what is important, to come up with a new big perspective.***
- ✓ **Be fanatic, shout as loud as possible and never compromise. Ask the impossible and assume the staff or council (or planning commission) has superpowers and can decide on anything right away.**
- ✓ **Work alone, focus on cultivating enemies, do not lobby before, during or afterwards.**
- ✓ **Ignore what is good in some proposals, ideas, scenario's and don't allow yourself to be persuaded by anything. Make liberal use of personal attacks, and base your arguments on opinions of persons, groups, parties. Approach these persons, groups and parties with extreme paranoia: they're out to get you!**
- ✓ **And do not try to persuade anyone.**

Although the kind of learning we refer to here might sound overwhelming, it is feasible. Staff, politicians, community organizers and consultants are capable of clearly summarizing and communicating many things. They can explain the problems coming with fragmentation in governance, highlight the bottlenecks and missed opportunities and they can give their opinion on why certain plans or strategies didn't work or what worked and did not work. Ideally, these insights come out of a participatory process of self-analysis, but even when this is not possible, a compressed version can enable speedy learning before visioning.

Regarding the *content* of strategy: this is, most certainly, for the communities to decide themselves. What is desirable and possible depends on what the community wants, how it understands itself and on what is possible in the given environment. Path and context mapping are therefore quite useful.

We can still mention a few rules of thumb that can be useful. If we believe in land use tools as enabling strategy for community development and if we can accept that coordinating land use is helpful in giving direction to the community, then it makes sense to give a strategic role to some planning documents and to pursue some planning ideas. Planning is useful.

Yes you CAN!

'If you can answer the following questions then you have probably learned more than you think and can use your knowledge for crafting strategy ...

- **what is the role of the _____ (planning commission, appeals board, a specific by-law, or other institutions that are relevant for planning in your community)**
- **What are the opportunities and risks of a new project (infrastructure, resource development)?**
- **Is it possible and worthwhile carrying out a review process that goes beyond just stopping or approving a project?**
- **Can you highlight bottlenecks of a failed plan or strategy? Strengths of a new one?**
- **Can you name disconnects between different policy tools? Between staff and politicians?**

We can find useful planning perspectives with different labels and many names. Many of these approaches have been transformed and repackaged as recipes or products that can be more easily sold. This doesn't mean there's no value in them. We select a few principles distilled from various planning literatures which can help a community to decide on the content of their strategy:

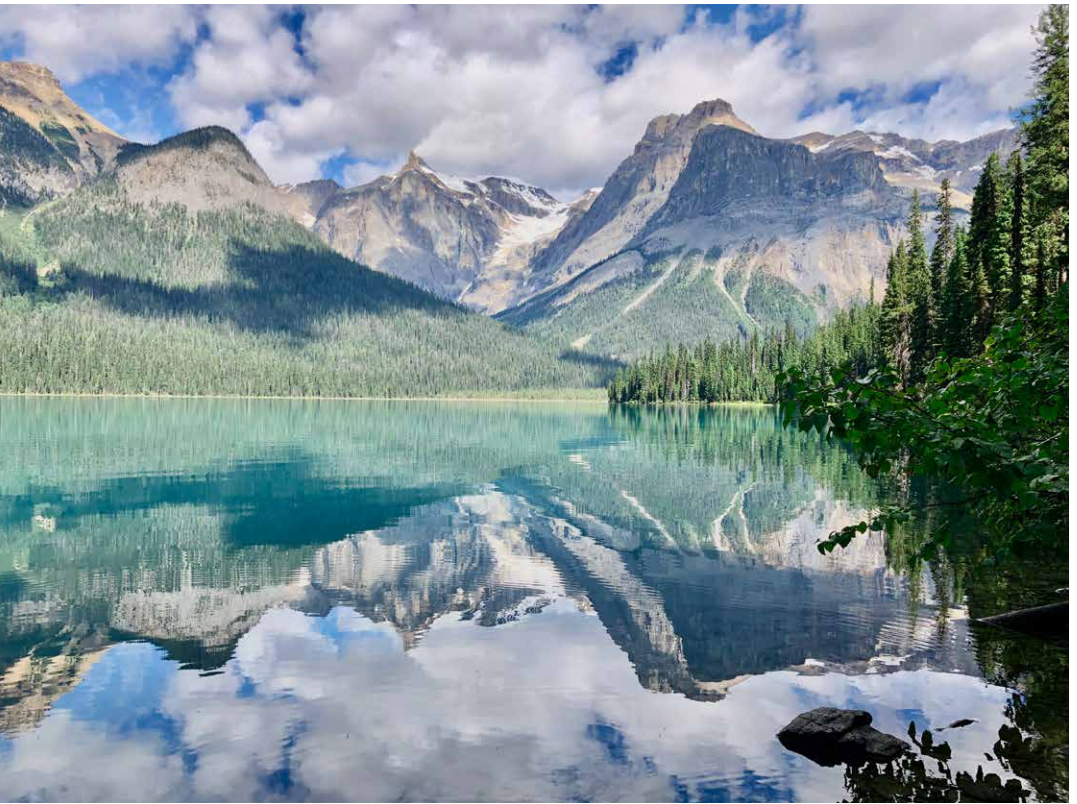
Not every community needs to grow forever. The size can remain the same, the economy and quality of life can improve. Shrink can be smart, design can be redesign, planning can focus on infill, on multi-functional spaces, on connectivity, for fast and slow traffic.

If the community wants to grow, it shouldn't overemphasize quantity. Initiatives that aim at sustainable growth, in economic, social, environmental terms are in principle aiming at quality rather than quantity. The emphasis is therefore on growing into the kind of community people want to live in later.

Downtown deserves attention. Investing some thought and attention to the downtowns can make a lot of sense. This part of the community can serve surrounding areas missing a centre. Downtowns can be the starting point for a reinvention towards new activities, even new residents. Having people coming together for different reasons in one area can also inspire new perspectives, ideas, ventures.

Diversify assets. What is defined as an asset and the value created by that asset will change over time. We cannot really predict what our community will define as an asset 100 years from now but we can say that depending on one activity, overemphasizing one asset is a risk.

A failure to plan is a plan for failure ...



There are assets hiding in the wild. Neglect of environmental quality in general creates high risk. Environmental features are often not immediately recognized as assets. What are now seen as “wasted spaces” can become fundamental in making a place attractive for the next generation. They can greatly enhance environmental quality later, or reduce environmental problems. There are also examples from urban spaces: what is now a small and useless alley can be an element of a network for slow transport (walking, bikes, ski) attractive for both residents and tourists.

Treasure uniqueness. Cultivating awareness of what is unique in a community, valuing and reinforcing a sense of place and enabling diverse uses of space can become catalysts of change. Spaces used in several ways tend to become unique and build on that character. What is unique can include traditions, products, landscapes, experiences as well as



infrastructures, forms of knowledge and organization. All these can be used as a starting point for reinvention.

Avoid hard boundaries. Be careful with false oppositions and hard distinctions. Drawing a hard distinction between urban and rural emphasizes differences instead of highlighting cooperation. Hard distinctions and boundaries help digging trenches instead of building bridges. ‘Development’ and ‘conservation’, especially in more rural and resource dependent areas, cannot be seen as opposites or as mutually exclusive because rural areas that are not caring for their environment will lose out in the end.

Planning as design rather than procedure. Rural design is an important tool to pursue these goals. Planning has to be more than following procedures, protecting property rights and enabling piecemeal development. It can be the main form of strategy and it has to be planning-as-design. Design can save time and money, as it can be translated back into plans and bylaws. By designing space, a community can work on several problems and pursue several goals at the same time.

Even when the community opts out of spatial planning and decides rather to pursue an economic development strategy and define planning in terms of economic imperatives, design can serve an important role. Working on spatial form could help the community figure out what to preserve, what to change, where to be flexible, how to move around, what to focus on. This is not just a matter of benches and sidewalks but also of creating new green and pedestrian networks, of preserving landscape assets, of maintaining small regional roads, creeks, and encouraging more sustainably forms of resource extraction and agriculture. The work of Randall Arendt (see Further Reading) has much to offer on rural design, both details and principles.

Part 4

FUTURE STRATEGY

COMMUNITY STRATEGY

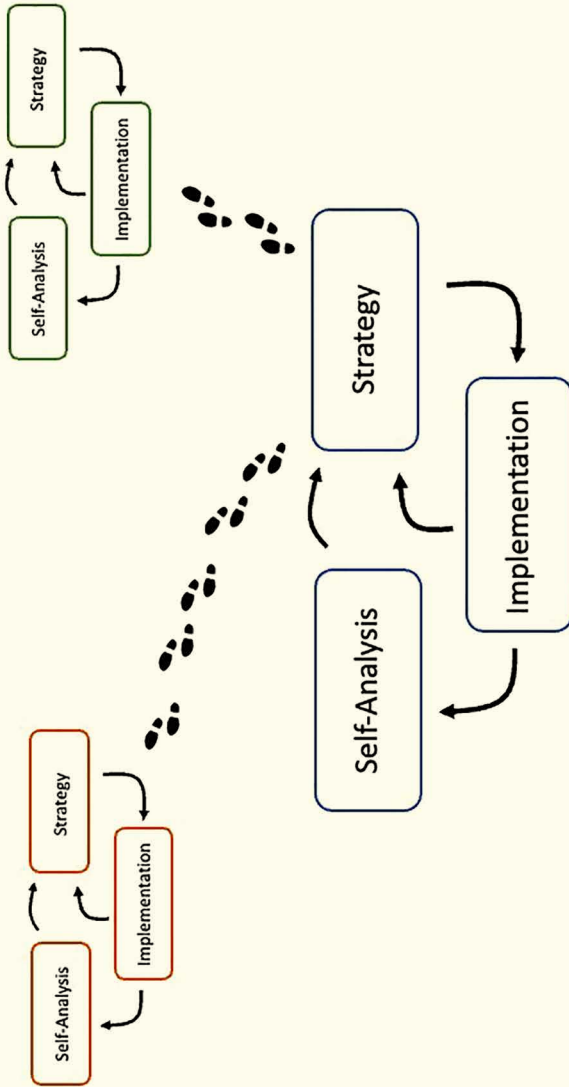
We find ourselves deep into this guide and perhaps at a good moment to revisit our original question: How to craft long-term strategy for sustainable community development?

The answer to the question takes us back to the first chapter: there is no simple solution to the problems of complex systems. What we suggest here is to reflect on our past and present (chapters 5 and 6) in order to create a vision, an improved or a new story for the future (chapter 7). In all this, it is important to recognize and understand the role of learning (chapter 8) because learning in its different forms will strengthen strategy. The strategy that takes us to the future we desire will often require us to have some space and time to regroup, rethink or recover (chapter 10) and/or make improvements in the community's capacity or its assets (chapter 11). In this process it will be essential to recognize the importance of narratives (chapter 2) and governance (chapter 3) in our particular context because by understanding these two elements and its constituent elements we will be able to better understand the sources of problems and conflict (chapter 4) and ways to manage them.

The process of strategy will require much collective effort and it will take many forms. What is most important is that whatever we define as a strategy can integrate different policies and people and can move them in a certain direction. It is because of this that we have said that a strategy is both a narrative and an institution, because it motivates and steers. Here we would like to add to this definition that strategy is not a thing but rather should be seen as function that is able to integrate stories and rules and tools, that mobilizes resources and that motivates the community.

When a strategy is close to the community's desires and aspirations, people are also motivated to follow its development and progress, to learn about what has been done and what is still missing, what needs to improve. A strategy is continuously adapting to the complex context in which it exists, it's changing and evolving with the community in an ongoing cycle of self-reflection.

FIGURE 14 Strategy development is an ongoing adaptive process that begins with a self analysis. Self-analysis is not supposed to stop; adaption requires ongoing analysis and self-analysis.



Community Strategy

- **A function: coordination**
- **A narrative: a good future**
- **integrating stories, rules, tools**
- **mobilizing resources and**
- **motivating the community**

We argued in the previous chapters that a self-analysis, for example in the form of a serious mapping exercise in participatory form, makes a difference for the quality of community strategy. Visioning can be a transition from mapping to strategy. Even when not all of this is possible, some basic questions should be asked. We identify three paths.

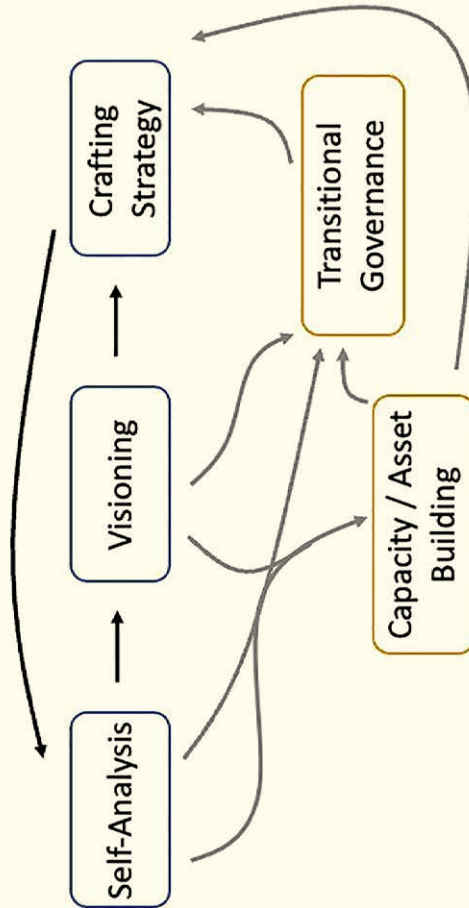
After a self-analysis a community has to assess its position and ask itself:

- 1 Do we need an entirely new strategy?**
- 2 Would it be better to link or re-link existing tools, strategies and long-term perspectives?**
- 3 Are we still not sure what we need to do or how to proceed?**

Situation 1 *We need a new strategy.*

If the community agrees after a self-analysis that the tools, existing strategies and long-term perspectives are not useful anymore in steering the community to where it wants to go then the answer is indeed crafting a new strategy. This will lead then to visioning a new direction – a new goal for the community. A community vision as we mentioned already is

FIGURE 15 The crafting of strategy should always begin with a self analysis, this is the most important step in the process. The community will come back to self analysis phase throughout the process of crafting strategy. The simple path to strategy development is one that is seldom is traveled and where a visioning process takes place after the self analysis and there after strategy development. More often after self analysis communities will recognize a need to build capacity or assets before moving forward. They might also feel they are not yet ready to take any decision and might need time and space to regroup. This time and space we refer to as transitional governance and will give the community an opportunity to revisit a self analysis.



tied to a story or a set of stories that will shape the new strategy. When the need for a new strategy is acknowledged it is still useful for leadership to reflect on improving the couplings we presented as important – between strategy, land use tools, and long term perspectives (situation 2 cannot be entirely avoided). This is, as we mentioned, also a political matter.

The value of self-analysis and of visioning becomes clear once again at this point. If there is an agreed-upon long-term perspective as a result of visioning, then strategizing can serve its purpose of linking the vision to the tools of policy and planning. In order to do so it is important to know to what extent these tools exist and how cohesive and coordinated they already are. Again, both political and technical expertise are important, as technical staff can be aware of what exists and how it comes together and politicians might shed their own light on why this is the case.

Situation 2 *We better relink the existing strategies, tools and long-term perspectives.*

In a way it might be easier to clean up and re-organize what is already there. Some communities have already invested large efforts in creating strategies for specific issues, for example sustainable development, economic development or social welfare, and people agree that these still reflect the community's desires and goals. In such case the effort needs to focus on relinking the different strategies, perhaps redrafting some of the details, creating new tools or institutions, maybe a new actor.

Even if an overarching strategy is not desired, or simply not clear at the moment, it is worth for the community to reflect at least on a) the cohesion or coordination of existing land use tools, and b) on the possibility to enhance this cohesion in the pursuit of those collective goals or goods that *are* more clear or defined. The same can apply to other policy domains, which might have underused and non-coordinated tools.

If the decision is to opt for re-linking without changes in strategy, the community needs to be aware that this might still have consequences on strategic choices later on. Here again we mention the importance of the quality of mapping and the importance of understanding fragmentation in governance (see chapter 6) when working on de-fragmentation or

re-linking. Also important is the quality of staff, institutional memory and willingness for departments or individuals with technical expertise to work together and discuss fragmentation and re-linking. External experts might be useful here to analyze both fragmentation and options for re-linking.

Simply 'bringing things in line' is often not simple at all and requires great social sensitivity and political acumen. Some seemingly technical issues turn out to be not just technical because often in reality, there are silent priorities in the community, with some ideas, some policy domains, some groups and individuals (also within administration) taking priority or enjoying privileges.

Even when no new strategy is desired, chances are that long-term perspectives in the community are not entirely coalesced into a vision which is then translated into strategy. This means that re-linking extends to the re-linking of long-term perspectives to strategy and its tools. And this in turn often means that the need for strategy will be discovered later on.

Situation 3 *We still don't know which way to go.*

If after self-analysis the community still is not sure what to do, it is probably because there are still many questions needing an answer. If this is the case there are two options that are not mutually exclusive and can be carried out in tandem. One option is agreeing to establish a 'regrouping' space for the medium term. This means organizing a transitional form of governance that allows the community to address weaknesses, create a more permanent space for self-analysis and learning. Transitional governance is thus a temporary form of community organization which can develop the tools and the insights necessary to decide on strategy later.

It is also possible that a transitional governance period is one bridge too far and that the community decided simply to invest in capacity and asset building directly. What is important to recognize is that transitional governance takes time to develop, after which decisions can be taken, while capacity and asset building are activities that can start right away.

They can be single projects. In other words transitional governance allows for more time to reflect and learn about many issues and to develop tools of governance, while capacity and asset building are focused on very specific topics or issues decided upon quickly (see more on transitional governance in chapter 12).

In the next chapters we will go into greater detail on transitional governance and the other detours useful for situation 3. Those detours are not always necessary, so we will also be discussing techniques for crafting strategy and describe conditions that favour strategizing.

CRAFTING STRATEGY

Strategy is always crafted. It is more art than science. Community strategies are more complex than strategies for organizations, and they are per definition the product of politics. They are, or they should, be the product of governance, of politics in the broad sense, including all people and organizations that really affect decisions. Strategizing is not something to be left to staff or politicians alone. It is an exercise where their expertise is essential, but where broader participation is just as important. Hence the emphasis in this guide on participatory mapping, visioning and strategizing.

Politicians might have a long-term vision, and maybe it secured their election, but leaving the strategizing entirely to them is not a good idea. They need input from experts, in staff or elsewhere, and they need broader input, both for the refining and calibration of their vision, and for turning the vision into strategy. Politicians often do not know whether their vision can even be translated into strategy, and politicians are always elected by only part of the community, and often for reasons unrelated to their long-term vision. Thus, in those cases when a reset, a change of course is needed, maybe even towards community reinvention, it makes sense to see strategizing as a process requiring more than usual participation, and more than usual reflection.

Enabling conditions for community strategizing

Higher-level actors can enable strategy locally, eg in a national park, or an area of strategic interest for resource extraction. They can stabilize the long-term perspective, help to plan, organize the community, but this also creates a reduced local autonomy, which later on makes it harder to adapt and chart a local course. Similarly, single sector economies, even without much higher level intervention, can enable strategy in the beginning (as in a company town, where everything is easily coordinated around one activity), but this comes with tradeoffs. Adaptation later is harder, reinvention is very difficult.

Local identity, whether resource-related or not, is a major asset for any community, and naturally giving direction to its development. A strong shared identity can reduce conflict, can be associated with strong mutual support, with shared values and informal institutions which can then be harnessed when crafting a strategy. A strong local identity without reflexivity in local governance however, can easily turn into a rigid identity, making diversification, adaptation, and often strategizing as such difficult (no need to really think about the future).



Administration is an important factor: its quality, its expert knowledge and knowledge of the community, its stability, its networks, its institutional memory, can all contribute to visioning and especially the transition to strategy.

Finally, *external collaborations* can make things possible. This is especially true for smaller communities in rural or remote areas, where institutional capacity is weak and pooling resources, expertise, and lobby power can save the day.

Key decisions in crafting strategy

- **Choose a form: is it going to be a plan, a policy, an informal strategy? Or we already know design is they key, and a design will be the form?**
- **Choose a focus and a home: Will the strategy be first of all an economic strategy, with other policy domains coordinated around it? An ecological one, one focused on a particular resource, or one focused on downtown development or agriculture? Which organization, department or person will work to be the driver and coordinator?**
- **Select key existing policies, plans and other institutions which have to be coordinated through the strategy. See what needs to be aligned better in case of fragmentation or contradiction.**
- **Decide which new policies etc might have to be created, for the overall strategy to work. Or: some pieces of the puzzle might be missing – while others just have to find a place.**
- **If we assume the narrative is already created through visioning, assess the most important linkages between narrative and goals, and between goals and policies etc which might have to be created or coordinated. Be careful though not to reduce vision to goal setting and strategy to reaching that goal. A strategy can only remain convincing and mobilizing if it is broad enough to be adaptive and to keep the narrative front and centre.**
- **Decide on steps and timing. Not all needs to be detailed, but initial steps and broad phases can be outlined. If things have to go fast, then initially, tactics might be important to keep the strategy alive.**
- **Recognize which knowledge is missing to move in the desired direction, and decide how to optimize the learning process, in governance and likely in the community. Think of learning here in the different forms discussed before.**

Some important strategic documents for rural municipalities in Alberta:

- **Land use bylaws**
- **inter municipal planning documents**
- **economic development strategy**
- **municipal development plan**
- **10 year and 20 year capital plan**
- **land use planning documents**
- **municipals sustainability plan**
- **strategic plan**
- **economic development plan**
- **area structure plans**
- **strategic action plans**
- **economic investment plan**
- **asset management plan**
- **master servicing plan**
- **watershed plan**
- **community business plan**
- **council's strategic plan infrastructure masterplan**
- **growth plan**
- **water and wastewater studies**

The *techniques* for strategizing are as varied as the Canadian landscape. We have to remind ourselves that a strategy is essentially *a function, not a thing*. So, it can take many forms and can come about it many ways. It can be a set of coordinated elaborate strategic planning documents (as in Edmonton), and it can be an informal agreement or sketch on the proverbial napkin. The shared feature is that of intended coordination of other institutions, by means of narrative and the creation of a new, overarching institution, the strategy itself.

In fact, many of the techniques we mentioned under self-analysis and visioning transition easily into strategizing, and can do most of the work. We come back to this. It is also useful to keep in mind that strategizing at community level does not always happen around a table at city hall, and that it can emerge rather slowly, or piecemeal. Nor does it always revolve around rational arguments and deliberate choices. Even when it is informal, emerging in a small circle, and out of a gut feeling among local elites, it can work. What this guide argues for is not one form or role of strategy, coming about through a set of fixed techniques. It argues for community strategy, coming about in a process as open as possible, as participatory as possible, and as effective as possible through linkage with existing narratives, existing policy tools, and especially land use tools.

In practice, especially in larger communities, parts of the strategy process have to be delegated, because of the degree of complexity dealt with. Some visioning will happen in politics and administration, in economic elites, and on golf courts where people meet. Some translation from vision to strategy will happen in small circles of experts in administration, by consultants, or in networks of well informed and well seasoned politicians, and experts in public and private sector. This is not necessarily a problem, as long as the circle does not stay closed entirely.

What is realistic and what happens often, is a back and forth between more open and closed arena's. Expert groups, administrative departments, advisory panels, advisory committees, consultants and academics, council, chamber of commerce, take care of aspects of visioning and strategizing, and in a representative democracy, this is ok. Complex societies and their governance systems cannot run on participation alone. The techniques of strategizing involved will multiply, as will the techniques of mapping, and the risks of fragmentation. Even so, even in big places with big systems of administration, there are moments when rejuvenation and rethinking are necessary, and when an episode of intense strategizing really requires new and more radical forms of participation, a real attempt to do self-analysis, visioning and strategizing in the style proposed in this guide.

For smaller communities, more radical participation is more realistic, and, in many places, a radical rethink, and a community strategy much more urgent. Some key decisions in the crafting of community strategy we can

discern more easily there. The following list has to be seen as applicable if and when the community decided that a new strategy is needed.

Resources are, of course, key, but resources have to be considered each step of the way, starting in self-analysis, and in each phase of strategizing. Starting with a budget risks (just as rigid goal setting) reducing a community strategy to a project, which it is not. Some of the steps outlined here will be made already, or will be made in a smaller circle, outside the participatory process envisioned. Even so, the overall structure can be maintained.

Listing techniques for strategizing is thus not a simple matter, and most lists, the ones we saw at least, were pretty misleading. We would say that it depends on the process, on how these 7 steps work out, which techniques will be used. Even the word ‘techniques’ can be misleading, as a meeting at a bar can be a ‘technique’, just as a sketch on a napkin can be a rudimentary vision. If we assume that the community agreed on a vision, that it agrees on a story on where to go, then the additional techniques for strategizing are mostly techniques linking the overarching narrative to more detailed stories, places, sectors, to goals, to institutions (so step 5 as the most technical one). This is often not as difficult as it sounds, as building the vision often had to pass through these same places. It already had to take into account ideas on places, topics, sectors.

There are a few usual ways for people to figure out what they will do: meetings, discussions and debates, lectures, workshops, open houses and charrettes, inviting external advisors.

We add to the list a few others useful ways to figure out what needs to be done:

- Inviting *internal* advisors and
- Organizing meetings with different combinations of people: staff + politicians, staff from different departments, staff+ politicians + citizens.
- Inviting staff and municipalities from communities with similar issues and similar visions, and more experience in translating vision into strategy

- Organizing extra visioning sessions, in smaller groups, and sometimes more expert driven, on identifying key locations and key activities, present and future, which can fit and further the strategy. A classic: how important is the downtown if we take this strategy serious? The highway? Agriculture?
- Bringing in the results of the analyses on fragmentation in governance, and organizing focused expert meetings deciding which existing institutions, including existing land use tools and strategy documents have to be modified, which ones cancelled.
- Reflecting on possible municipal reorganization, or staff reassignments, to move policy integration in the direction of the strategy.
- Establishing a task-force monitoring not only progress of the strategy in terms of results, but also the *functioning* of the strategy, whether the narrative is still persuasive, and whether it still succeeds in keeping together its parts, the different policy tools it is supposed to coordinate and the different projects and goals it spawned.

THE LAND AND THE STRATEGY

Land use tools need to cohere, in order to avoid legal problems but also in order to preserve the power of any overarching strategy. A strategy for local development, even if land is not the focus, will affect the land in some way, and if the rules for organizing the land are not consistent, this can easily throw sand in the machine. Just as important is that a strategy without reference to the land, and without using policy tools to organize land, does not achieve its full potential. We knew this!

Yet, where a community development strategy exists, the idea of coordination with land use tools is often not widely shared in administration. One reason for this can be a disconnect within administration. Another reason is that land use is often regarded as something regulated only to avoid harm (environmental laws, wetland protection, water management rules) or to circumscribe the pursuit of private profit. In both cases, governance is expected to be passive and expected to wait for private initiative – which it then assesses. Articulation of collective goals and goods in governance, and translation into land use policies is therefore rarely considered. This naturally, leads over time to a weak cohesion between strategic documents and the land use tools.

We mentioned other reasons for a disconnect between strategy and land use tools, including lack of knowledge, not updating some plans and bylaws, not using them, reliance on informality, accumulation of exceptions. And there is sometimes competition between strategies, where one is spatial (a plan) and one is not. We also mentioned the need to understand fragmentation, and, in strategizing, to fix this whenever possible.

What is not possible, is to present rules for an optimal use of the land in a development strategy. As said, a community can choose for a strategy which is not primarily spatial. The first goals can be social or economic, and the main tools can be social or economic, e.g. The land plays a different role in each strategy. Even if the strategy is a plan, the

approach can vary a lot: design can play a key role, or not. The focus can be on transformation of space, or conservation., on separating uses or combining, on protection private property rights or pursuing collective goals.

We can illustrate the way of thinking proposed in this guide in a different way though. The following are a series of vignettes, not uncommon situations where a community is confronted with strategic questions and has to take a decision regarding its use of the land:

WHEATLEY WILL DISAPPEAR

The agricultural town of Wheatley has seen better times. Farming is important but consolidation led to bigger farms, with relatively few employees, lots of machines and seasonal workers, and no need to use Wheatley. In fact, none of the farmers live in town, and the surrounding county shows no interest in the town, seen as an urban centre of vice (there used to be a strip club). A few young people from Wheatley decide to meet with the remaining farmers and with people at the county and put their cards on the table: Wheatley will disappear if we don't work together. First, an informal collaboration starts, and then, the youngsters are able to convince the older people that a merger with the county is a good idea, especially as the remaining staff members of Wheatley municipality can move to the county, where they join a staff with an economic development officer. Overall strategy remains informal, but it spawns a formal strategy with a spatial and economic focus: downtown redevelopment, with housing for seasonal workers, and some agricultural services, as well as reopening some amenities people in the smaller towns in the county were missing.

CLEANING UP DUSTY

The former mining town of Dusty had a pollution problem. The landscape was littered with slag heaps, local lakes were polluted by old mining activities, ruins scattered everywhere and an unstable underground was causing cracks in streets and buildings. Lobby with the province freed up money for cleaning up, demolition of those ruins with no picturesque or heritage value, levelling of terrain, and stabilization of buildings. A visioning process did not lead immediately to a shared narrative about a future Dusty. The subsidized cleanup however was broadly supported and when locals experienced their “new” improved space they started to contribute new ideas to the environmental improvement plan. Years after it was finished, a new round of visioning found people more open to new ideas for the future and it was decided to combine environmental protection and economic development in a new ‘heritage growth’ strategy focusing on small-scale industrial activity in the still polluted areas, and services and residential in the more attractive ones. Their new motto ‘Make your own mountain hip’.

REINVENTING NETTLE

The small town of Nettle used to be an agricultural enclave in a rather wild landscape and a service centre for resource exploitation further north. Agriculture waned and the resource extraction didn’t need the Nettle services anymore. Discussion followed and the people decided to reinvent as a place for ‘nature tourism’. A branding campaign highlighted the surrounding landscape and the quaint downtown, which was renovated and spruced up. Resource extraction was downplayed and connections with more untouched areas were highlighted, while collaboration with neighbouring towns created a package more attractive for tourists.



WHAT'S THE STORY SPACEY?

In the village of Spacey, the arrival of the train in 1860 started a fascination with space exploration. When the railroad was abandoned, and the grain elevators were left empty, a community organizer with charisma convinced locals that Star Wars was the way to go and council adopted a comprehensive plan which promoted the space theme everywhere, and tried to derive economic development opportunities from this story. A next generation of citizens, and village administration, found it impossible to work with the plan and it was gradually neglected. The next mayor dropped the plan formally, creating space for a new strategy, which was informal at first, that focused on economic development, while retaining the funniest Space relics as heritage.

BARNEY'S SECRET STRATEGY

The mountain town of Barney used to be a centre of curling, and silver mining. Well, mostly of mining, but people were enthusiastic about curling. Local business people decided that hiking, cross-country skiing and curling could be a tourist draw, but also a lifestyle which could bring in small innovative firms. This had happened elsewhere in the province, and in fact the town was not too far from a larger city known as tech hub but entirely overpriced. Only thing missing was a downtown: the place was a mess, and missing character. Consultants recommended an ambitious architectural modernist paradise, but locals decided to go more traditional, allowing for mixed styles and slow development, with conditions for mixing uses, density and aesthetics. None of this was written down, but it worked. The strategy remained informal, but produced more formal and visible episodes (such as the appearance of a new neighbourhood right next to the downtown, and the negotiations with the forest owner to allow for more ski trails).

These vignettes are just stories, illustrations of a broad orientation to strategy and land use, not perfect illustrations of our approach. They can however give an idea how difficult strategizing is, how adaptive communities have to be, how important it is to consider the organization or reorganization of space as a driver. Abstract goals of 'economic development' or 'conservation' only land when a landscape with many functions is constructed with a focus on development or conservation, and a strategy is needed for this.

A few more **general principles** can be gleaned from the vignettes and from the previous chapters.

- 1 Old rural economies don't allow the survival of most rural communities. They have to reinvent themselves or disappear, and reinvention requires strategy.

- 2 In most rural or natural settings, this reinvention allows for a reorganization of space as the old land use is less dominating.
- 3 If the reinvention goes far beyond agriculture, then chances are that spatial and environmental quality will be more important, even critical, in terms of attracting tourism, but also lifestyles for new residents doing other things.
- 4 If resource extraction is the new thing, it can be great, but it will not last. In these cases, a long term economic strategy is essential, a strategy for diversification, and/or shrink. The strategy has to be spatial at least in the sense of protecting environmental quality, ensuring cleanup, and possibly smart shrink later on.
- 5 Even shrinking rural towns can have a space problem. They might not have the land to attract people and investment to achieve a viable size, they might not have the real estate, and the townsite itself can be overcrowded, even if underused. The old mixing of uses in town, and of land, often gave way to a simplification, and now a new form of mixed use of land, and a new mixed use downtown has to be invented. A strategy is required.
- 6 In many scenario's, the downtown is essential. Downtown redevelopment requires a more detailed strategy, and it can support a large area. If large cities are too close, this might not work. In other cases, a renewed downtown can revive a large area. Economic development strategy plus, for the downtown, a more spatial strategy, makes sense.
- 7 Institutional capacity and expertise, as well as instability by staff leaving, are problems, and strong collaborations with neighbours is advised. The capacity to strategize is not there or will be lost if there is no staff, no institutional memory, no money for consultants, no way to lobby provincial players. In better cooperating or enlarged municipalities (as in the vignette of the town dissolved into the county), specialization in staff might take place, so there can be a real choice in terms of strategy. A spatial strategy without a planner is difficult.

- 8 Where old economies are gone and people are ok with that, and where natural and cultural landscape elements conspire to make an attractive setting, this can be a reason to focus on lifestyle or tourism or, if growing is not an aspiration, on conservation itself. We refer to the box below on Conservation Design as a useful approach in these cases, but note that conservation design (again inspired by Randall Arendt) is also helpful in more urban settings where density and conservation need to be combined.



DETOURS ON THE PATH TO STRATEGY

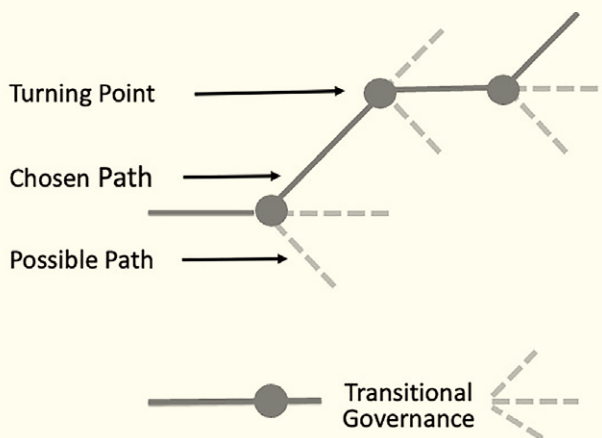
By now it should be pretty clear that the path to sustainable local development is not a straight or gentle one. Even after attempts at self-analysis and visioning exercises for some communities it will still be too difficult to come up with a strategy right away. Other places might find themselves in the wrong situation to attempt crafting strategy – a case of bad-timing. In this chapter we will discuss detours that might be useful.

Jumping on to a new path of development, reinventing the community does not have to be an immediate process. As a matter of fact it almost never is. We mentioned in chapter 9 the concept of **transitional governance**, constructing a temporary governance arrangement that allows for the community to think and organize.

It is difficult not to refer to the Covid-19 pandemic as a clear example. The world as we knew it came to a halt and despite the many things we were not able to do, most governments were able to organize new rules (institutions) new actors (organizations, support programs, etc) with the goal of stabilizing society temporarily. In many places these transitional governance arrangements were able to bring stability. Societies were able to maintain essential functions and had the chance to reflect, to think about how to move forward, how to avoid the same situation in the future and how to transition back to some new state of normality. A brutal disruption like the Covid-19 pandemic or the shock of an economic bust also shows us that things will never go exactly back to how they were before. There are losses – immeasurable sometimes – but there are also opportunities created.

There is another detour on the path to strategy that tackles uncertainty within the current governance arrangement. This detour will concentrate efforts in building assets and capacity, it aims at diversifying the current context in the hope of creating opportunities.

FIGURE 16 Transitional governance is about allowing the community to address weaknesses, provide more space for self-analysis and learning and develop new policy tools. It is a temporary stage.



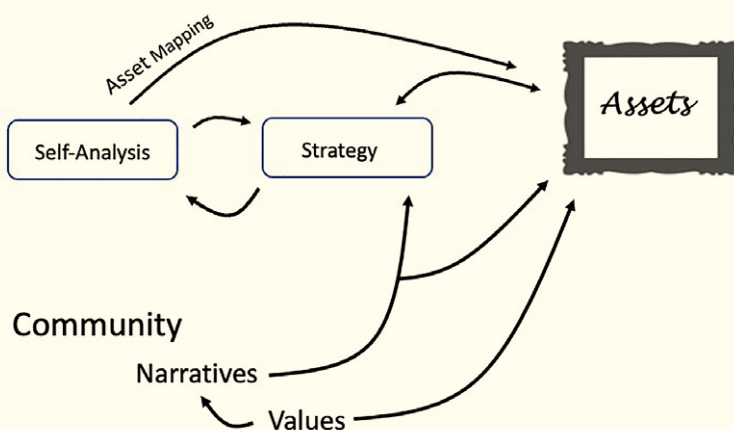
Strategy and assets are intimately connected to each other as well as to a community's story. A community narrative, a vision, that reflects shared values will be the starting point for crafting strategy as well as for defining assets. Assets can also be defined as a result of strategy but for some it could work the other way around; recognized and valued assets can become the core of strategy.

Defining assets can be a deliberate exercise in a self-analysis. The careful consideration of a community's path, its history and its values in a process of self-analysis also provides an opportunity to think of assets, present and future. If the community values its natural setting by the river for example, it will need to manage and protect its river valley. This does not only mean letting nature take its course but also managing it so that high-water doesn't erode exposed banks and even do some landscaping so that there are spots where visitors are able to sit and have a picnic.

Assets take time to build and require long-term perspective and care. This is also true in the case of capacity building. A place that has not invested in a healthcare system cannot invent one in a few months. The same goes

for education systems and governance systems in general. We refer back to the first chapters and our references to complex systems, with many different elements working together, more than a sum of the parts. In some cases capacity will require years to build to adapt to the local setting; in other cases part of that capacity will need to be “imported” from elsewhere. It doesn’t make sense for each rural community to have a college, however it does make sense to work on cooperation agreements with medical schools in order to guarantee support.

FIGURE 17 Recognizing and defining assets is essential for a community’s future. Assets can be defined as a direct result of asset mapping and self analysis. They can shape and be shaped in the process of strategizing but they can also be defined directly out of a community’s narrative or indirectly by a strategy resulting from a narrative. Assets are associated with a community’s values and can directly stem from them. Values are of course also reflected in a community’s narrative and thus through it also linked to assets.

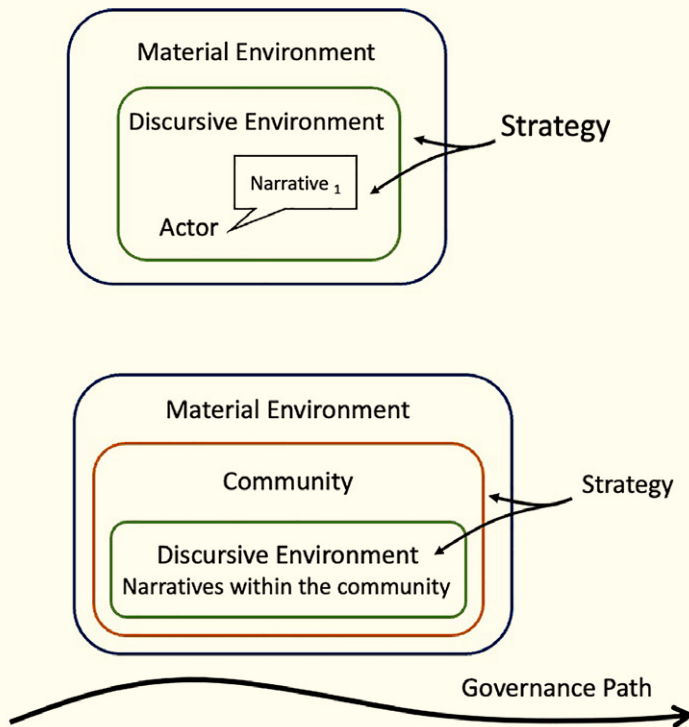


Assets and capacities both require a long-term perspective. They are mentioned here as short-term fixes, as ad hoc responses, in absence of a strategy. This is the cases because some communities are not sure about a general direction but they do agree they need something and they can jump on it right now. It can be a thing, a project, an expert, a building, an

anchor in a sea of uncertainty. The possibility of quick action, the promise of something tangible, of a clear link between a clearly defined problem and a solution makes ad hoc and partial responses to a community's condition attractive for politicians and citizens alike. In some occasions when uncertainty keeps creeping in from all corners sometimes the only option is to attack with short term goals and tactics. This might be helpful even when the short term sneaks in the long-term and even when a focus on one topic might make a broader strategy less balanced. On the positive side, we can mention that a project can rouse the spirits, enhance collaboration, and pave the way for more ambitious collective action later on.

We would also add discussions to the list of detours. By discussion here we mean well-informed, analytical and critical exchange of ideas not simply an amiable dialogue. It is even worth considering organized debates – not necessary public – where teams focus on a certain perspective on an issue and bring forth arguments in favour of their position. We bring up discussion again at such a late stage, because we see strategy as ongoing conversation on the future, and when we're stuck, it can help to restart more basic forms of conversation.

FIGURE 18 Strategy influences and is influenced by by a community's material as well as its discursive environment. The discursive environment simply put is the collection of discourses or narratives that are important or influential in a community. Actors in governance will likely identify with a set of discourses; different actors will identify with different sets. These different sets or collections of narratives – the discursive environment are part of the community just as the community is part of a physical or material environment that is at the same time influencing and being influenced by the discursive environment. A material environment where water is the main means of transportation will likely not have cars as prominent elements in its discursive environment, at the same time a specific form of water transportation (say speed boats) may be favoured over others (canoes).



Part 5

POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF STRATEGY

STRATEGY AS A FUNCTION

Strategy finds its roots in military and diplomatic writings. It later developed thinking of organizations (private-sector organizations in particular) and within management studies. Not long ago, strategizing has been discussed with regards to policy, planning and administration and even more recently, strategy at community level came into the picture. Community development strategies are probably the more diverse, flexible and at the same time potentially enduring. They can encompass and utilize strategy in more limited domains. They have more to coordinate, are thus vulnerable in that sense, but they can also endure longer because the things they coordinate, the communities, can exist for a long time, and they can create their own tools of coordination, in a broad pallet, and sanctioned by the state.

Community Strategy is both an institution and a narrative

Development strategy at community level is a venture in self-reflection and continuous adaptation involving both insiders and outsiders. Community strategy can be many different things but in order for it to be effective, to steer the path of a community in the direction it desires, it needs to be both a narrative *and* an institution.

We say that strategy has to be an institution because its intention is to coordinate action in the community in order to move in a particular direction. This will mean that it will have to be an institution containing and coordinating other institutions, including informal institutions. In places where informal institutions have a prominent role in governance, failing to recognize them in the new strategy will most likely render the effort ineffectual.

A strategy that intends to steer a community onto a more sustainable path of development might need to coordinate action between waste and water management and tourism management. It will have to coordinate

land use policies with wildlife protection/conservation policies. All this will have to be done at different levels of governance, meaning it will need to coordinate actors and institutions at local, provincial and federal level. If strategy is not conceived and functioning as an institution it will most likely fail to achieve this; it will become yet another document on the pile.

The strategy will at the same time need to be a narrative in order for it to be persuasive. A strategy will have to be a narrative about community and its future rather than just a sum of actions, a list of institutions or simply a set of goals. Although in some cases goals by themselves might work if they are intuitively understood as part of a narrative shared in the community, that is if the community already agrees on a shared story about itself. If a community is not able to create its own narrative, combine the different stories about itself, then a strategy will most likely speak only to part of the community (or to none of it) making it almost impossible for strategy to become an institution.

In a community where only a fraction of its members believe they can live together with nature, a strategy that intends to steer the community into a more sustainable path of development might become an obstacle or impediment for the rest of the members who believe that nature should be “tamed” and used for their benefit. The challenge then is to find space for both in the community’s story, acknowledging differences and trying to find ways of conciliating divergent views.

A community might also agree on an entirely new narrative of its future and the path to get there. However, this narrative about the future will not be disconnected from the starting point, the existing narrative or multiple narratives existing in the community. It is difficult for a former mining community, for example, to develop a strategy to become a touristic destination when ignoring its history, the changed landscape, the lack of skills required to bring in tourists. A shared narrative about their future will begin by acknowledging that history might be used as an asset for the future (for example recognized as heritage) but that mining is in the past. If mining is still believed to be part of the future for many in the community, then the narrative of becoming a tourist town will likely not take root.

Strategy in governance emerges within always evolving configurations. We refer to the configuration of elements in governance: actors, institutions, power and knowledge. Actors and institutions shape each other over time. Actors and institutions are intrinsically coupled and recognizing these couplings is part of the understanding of how governance works in a given context.

Understanding how forms of knowledge and expertise are continuously selected and developed through power relations, also leads us to a better understanding of governance. Entrenched knowledges, perspectives and narratives maintain power relations. What might be identified as an asset to be developed in the future is shaped (and often controlled) by current power-knowledge configurations. If the forest is considered an asset in a community where those in power are mostly environmental scientists the development strategy is not likely to give logging activities a prominent place. Similarly what can be coordinated towards future development is also defined by these configurations. Therefore a community where logging has been the main economic activity will not likely craft a development strategy aiming to create the next Silicon Valley. And spatial planning is not likely to be a site of coordination.

A word of caution: Just because you understand what is wrong or what needs to change does not mean you understand **how** to make that change ...

Paths to reinvention

Places that have undergone severe disruptions might decide they require reinvention. In such cases, more sustainable futures require strategies that are able to radically redirect their development path. A first step is recognizing the need for change, a kind of change that is likely to rewrite the community identity, and might require a reorganization of governance. Strategy is needed to start a process of reinvention, yet the demands on coordination are so high and the unpredictability of the process so marked that it is not likely that the strategy itself will hold, that it will remain the same. A limit to strategy shows itself here, without rendering strategy useless.

The vision for an alternative future can come from different corners; it does not necessarily have to be locally engendered as long as it is persuasive locally. It also doesn't have to be an entirely local endeavour, but rather should attempt to balance insider/outsider perspectives. In attempting this balance we need to recognize the role of local identity. Community strategy, governance and identity are never far removed from each other. However their relation cannot be captured in stable terms. We do know that reinvention tests everything, as a new identity is aspired for, and this sets the bar high for strategy. The difficulties of reinvention shed a light on the difficulties of community strategy more generally.

Identity is never entirely stable or entirely unshakable. Those narratives claiming a stable identity, "we have always been ..." are usually benefiting one version of the story, one particular group of actors. To get a better picture of actors in governance and of the formation and distribution of narratives in the community it might be enough to honestly ask ourselves two basic questions:

"Who is strategizing?"

"What needs to change and for whom?"

A path to reinvention forces the community to ask itself difficult questions. This can require confronting fears, uncovering conflicts and in some cases working through trauma. At the same time these difficult questions open up reinterpretations and opportunities. Community strategy begins with self-reflection and continues with a continuous assessment and re-assessment of the chosen path.

Reflect

Most communities do not want to reinvent themselves entirely, and do not encounter the limits to strategy coming with such ambition. Which ever pathway the community decides to embark on, **it is important to remember that self-analysis and reflection are always essential.** This means we are learning from the past, we are forming new ideas and perspectives and confronting them with existing ones. This should happen independent of stated policy aims in a non-threatening environment.

Our recommendation: start self-reflection at a small scale, in areas of governance which are not contested or steeped in conflict. With time try to push the boundaries of reflexivity to other more problematic areas or contexts where the long term becomes visible. Recognize situations where disappointment looms, or where hopes are dashed. Try to prevent the wavering between overly optimistic and overly pessimistic thinking in such situations.

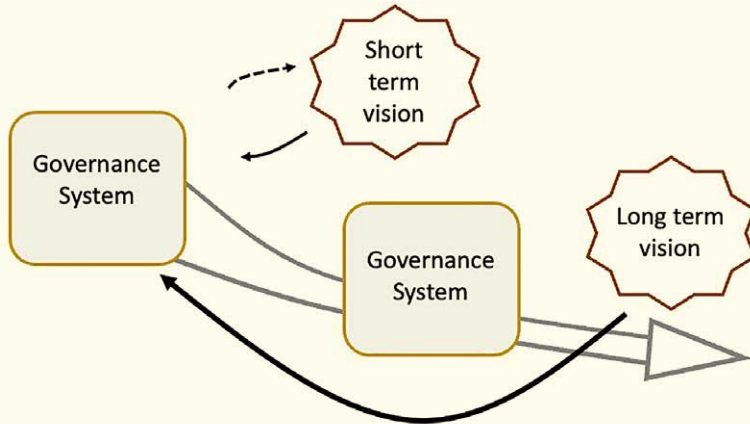
Leaders are not superheroes. A good leader is not one that aspires to cultivate followers but rather one that cultivates reflexivity – even if by doing so her leadership is later challenged.

Reflexivity should be encouraged at individual level. Outsiders can help insiders to reflect, and insiders can reveal things in the community the outsider-advisors did not realize, while they can challenge their assumptions. This is part of embracing the messiness of complexity. Reflexivity can lead to discussion and debate, to confrontation of ideas and visions, to exploration of alternatives not considered before. We discussed at length how structured self-reflection, eg in the form of mappings, can lead into visioning and strategy.

Blur boundaries

There is a lot of truth in the saying that no one knows how it feels to be someone until they walk in their shoes. Applied to communities we can say, no one knows better what the problems and issues of the community are than those who live in it. This does not mean that the solution to the problems of a community can only come from within. There is much to learn from outsiders, people actually outside the community, or locals with little influence, and a different perspective. Outsider experts are often received with skepticism when they promise to solve problems. Communities are right in being cautious. As we said many times in this guide, there is no silver bullet or miracle method for community sustainability and prosperity. Outsiders making such promises are not

FIGURE 19 Community development requires both tactics and strategy, short term goals and long term vision. Some tactics can be directly inspired by strategy but often a detailed local knowledge and quick adaptations by leaders are required to seize windows of opportunity, to create stepping stones.

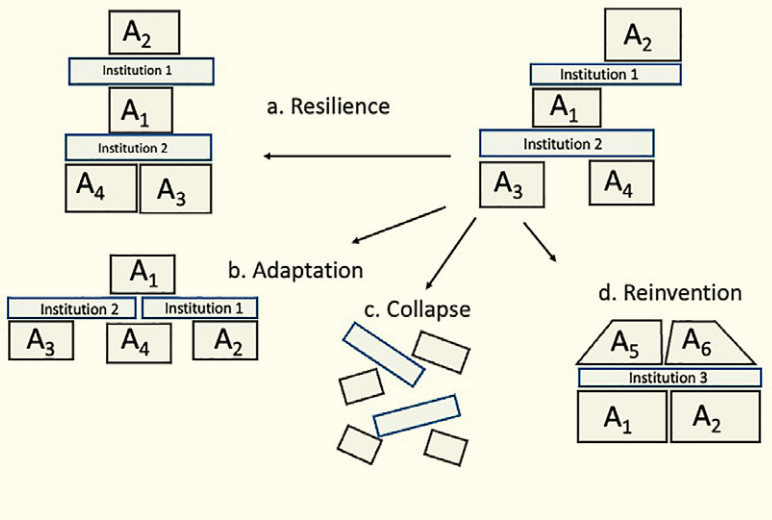


really useful. However, outsiders can start discussions, observe changes, bring in expertise or experiences from other places. Highlighting differences between outsiders and insiders and favouring either local knowledge or outsider expert knowledge will hamper the learning and self-analysis process, prevent it from being useful for governance.

Limits of strategy

Anyone involved in administration, either public or private, knows by experience that there is no such thing as a 'perfect' strategy. No matter how much investment is poured into a strategy, there will always be hiccups, unexpected events or disasters. Uncertainty within complex systems, including governance systems, is the norm rather than the exception and we therefore need to accept that it cannot be entirely reduced by strategy.

FIGURE 20 Possible outcomes of shock or disturbance to governance systems. Actor-institution configurations within the governance system could be shaped following the pre-shock design (a. bouncing back) or they could have a different shape but incorporating the same elements perhaps thinking of a design that is better equipped to deal with a similar shock (b. adapt). We also need to consider the possibility of complete collapse of the system with no useful or viable elements remaining (c). It is also possible to create something new, a reinvention of the community will necessarily imply a new design of governance and its configurations (d). Any of these options (except in the case of complete collapse) will require elements and/or narratives to reshape the configurations within the system. Just like the blocks in the picture will not be put together on their own; the creator will put them together either by following the original design (bouncing back), improving the original design (adapting) or by creating a new design using different pieces (reinventing).



Every element of the system, every actor, institution, narrative brings some level of uncertainty to the table. The bigger the ambition, the longer the time horizon, the broader the topic, the more actors and institutions that need to be coordinated, the more uncertainty. This is the case because each element and tool comes with inherited ‘blind spots’ and their interactions are never entirely visible and predictable. No matter how hard we try to control uncertainty, it will always find a way in and impose limits to what strategy can achieve.

Other types of limits are more manageable. The quality of strategy is affected by the quality of observation. By this we mean the degree to which we are able to observe the workings of the governance system, its elements and interactions as well as the degree to which we are able to observe our physical environment, our community, its surroundings and ourselves.

A brilliant dialogue between Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous characters, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, illustrates well what we mean by observation. Sherlock asks his friend how many times he has gone up and down the stairs in his house, to which Watson replies "hundreds of times" and yet when Sherlock asks him how many steps there are, Watson answers he doesn't know. Sherlock proves his point: "You see, but you do not observe".

Observation, for Sherlock Holmes and for ourselves, is tightly linked to reflexivity or self-observation. The degree to which we are able to observe and reflect on the external and internal environments, the quality of these observations will have an influence on the quality of strategy. In a way we should become somewhat like Sherlock Holmes, sharpen our detective skills.

Nonetheless we also realize not everyone is a fan of the famous detective and despite his great skill he often profoundly annoyed those around him. It is therefore also possible to ask others, outsiders for example, to do some of the work.

You see but you do not observe (Sherlock Holmes)
High quality strategy relies on high quality observation and reflection.

Sherlock and his assistant would also agree with us that a strategy for solving a murder case is never a generic one. It has to be crafted based on the clues and the context at hand. While Sherlock was not overly interested in matters of land use, he would have surmised quickly



that what people desire is expressed in the way they organize their surroundings, and that what they say or write is usually less revealing than what they do. This applies to land use and murder cases. Just as Sherlock would never claim that solving murders would lead to the discovery of eternal life, we do not claim that community strategies can create eternally sustainable communities. This, however, is not a problem, as sustainability is a matter of maintaining an always evolving long-term perspective of the community in its environment. Sustainability then consists in desirable relations between community and environment and for that, coordination and strategy are needed.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kristof and Monica arrived in Alberta early in 2014 from across the ocean where their paths had originally met. Kristof had been working on rural development and governance evolutions in post soviet countries and Monica was finishing her studies on social ecological relationships and governance transitions in indigenous communities of the Amazon both at the German Institute for Development Research. They began their work at the University of Alberta as a team, with research on drastic governance disturbances and institutional transformations in rural areas of Alberta and British Columbia. They have also had the opportunity to learn about regional government and reinvention paths in western Newfoundland. They continue their work in Alberta focused now on land use governance, learning and long-term strategies.







FIGURES

- 1 The weather system is an example of a complex system
- 2 Social ecological systems are complex systems containing other complex systems
- 3 Strategy is both a narrative and an institution
- 4 A strategy embedded within a community governance system coordinates narratives and institutions within the community
- 5 Actors and institutions form an essential configuration in governance
- 6 Governance configurations are made up of actor institution configurations and are influenced by outside actor institutions
- 7 Actors in governance are ascribed different discourses or narratives
- 8 An Effective strategy coordinates different policy domains through the coordination of institutions and narratives within the community
- 9 The concentration problem restricts the governance system by narrowing a communities path of development
- 10 Document supposed to have a strategic function can be ineffective or effective and are linked to informal rules and traditions
- 11 Land used tools can be embedded or not embedded in strategy
- 12 A simple way of mapping the effects of the material environment
- 13 Crafting visions for the future can be done through scenario building
- 14 Crafting strategy is an ongoing adaptive process
- 15 Crafting strategy should always begin with self analysis
- 16 Transitional governance opens a space for self analysis and learning
- 17 Defining assets is essential for a community's future
- 18 The material and discursive environments have an influence on and are influenced by strategy
- 19 Community development requires both tactics and strategy
- 20 Outcomes of shock or disturbance to governance systems

GLOSSARY

Actors: participants in governance, formally or informally. Actors can enter governance, be created by governance, and actors transform when they become actors in governance. Actor can refer to individuals, groups or organizations. They are ascriptions, the result of observation, and sometimes of formal recognition as actors.

Adaptive capacity: the capacity of a community to adapt to changing circumstances, internally and externally. Optimizing adaptation to one thing can undermine adaptation to something else, so enhancing adaptive capacity as such is working on everything at the same time. Each community, then, has its own form of adaptive capacity (not merely its own place on a scale), and will have to make its own choices, on which to target. A community strategy can target something, a set of goals, and keep other things open, as contribution to adaptive capacity, but this still requires choices, narrowing down, to be meaningful. A place can aim at sustainable forestry, preserve other assets to leave other options open, yet still has to make a choice in what to preserve, implying some idea of other options. In addition, there is the version of adaptive capacity associated with the goal itself, i.e., the idea to make forestry itself more adaptive, hence sustainable.

Assets: an element or quality in a community that is of value. Assets are recognized in and by the community as an asset and value is attributed. Something becomes an asset in a certain perspective in a certain practical situation and discursive configuration or environment. A large labor pool can be an asset when it can conjure up activities; it can be a highly destabilizing factor when there are no jobs. An asset can be defined by outsiders who recognize it as an asset elsewhere. A rare metal no one knew existed by the river bank for example, can have consequences for the community itself; influx of new people, new expertise, new lifestyles influencing locals who might start to attribute a value to the new asset. If locals and newcomers have very different interpretations of the asset, this can be good and bad, since conflict could be avoided, but, negatively, locals can be quickly marginalized. Large discrepancies in valuation of the

asset between insiders and outsiders likely lead to conflict, unless local self-governance is strong.

Community: A group and a territory. An open concept which can veil very different realities per governance path. Governance can create the impression of community as some sort of social identity and unity, and it can result and represent such unity. Not every town is a community, no community is entirely stable and unchanging, and internal diversity and division always exists, even if the dominant narrative in governance does not mention this. Good governance entails observing and dealing with this diversity, guiding self-transformation in the community, and, when possible, building of community out of incongruous elements.

Concentration problem: a common issue in boom/bust communities referring to a concentration of power and knowledge in few sectors, actors or groups of individuals. It makes governance rigid, strategy narrow, adaptive capacity low. Concentration problems are often associated with rigid identity narratives and corporate control – although the issue can remain even after industry leaves. Concentration problems are self – reinforcing: diversity of people, of discourses and possibilities of diverging futures tend to decrease while similar people, stories, resources, infrastructures remain and are attracted. Good governance amidst concentration problems is first of all breaking open power/knowledge, exposing actual risk of limited futures and cultivating difference. At the same time it should strengthen the capacity to maintain diverse power/knowledge configurations in the future. The risk this involves can make leadership transitional as resistance can be fierce.

Dependencies: rigidity in the evolution of the governance path. We can distinguish path dependence, interdependence and goal dependence. Dependence does not imply determinism, there are always options open, there is always a measure of contingency and freedom.

Development: the evolution of governance in the community, and, in a narrower sense, the evolution towards shared goals. Development can take place with or without development policy, plans or visions. Different disciplines, different political ideologies embrace or produce different recipes for development, including different roles for government and

forms of governance in the development process. Modernist development ideologies assume there is one correct goal, one path, one recipe. In our view, each community has its own options for and versions of development. Development is not necessarily growth, not necessarily maximizing average income or tax base, and neither is it restricted to territorial expansion or maximizing the existing form of resource extraction. What it is and can be becomes clear in a process of path and context mapping, later community strategizing.

Discursive environment: Each community identifies with narrative or story about itself. The collection of stories and narratives with which the community identifies itself is what we refer to as discursive environment. These narratives make reference to the community itself (its past, its future, its values and identity) as well as to the physical environment (the natural elements, the infrastructure and human-built environment). A community's discursive environment influences the way assets are identified as well as the idea(s) about the future.

Formal/informal institutions: exist in each community. Policies, plans and laws alone do not guide the governance of a community. Formal institutions are the ones that are supposed to guide a certain interaction, while informal institutions are all the alternatives existing in the community. Formal and informal cannot exist without each other and continuous change in informality changes the effects of formality, the interpretation, the formation of new formality. Informal and formal institutions have to be assessed together, as one thing which has positive and negative effects; only looking at one side and then evaluating does not give much insight. A new strategy for a community cannot be restricted to formal institutions, and in its analysis it has to look at formal and informal.

Governance: the taking of collectively binding decisions in a community by a diversity of actors, inside and outside government, with formal roles and without formal roles. Governance relies on formal and informal institutions, on formal and informal roles. Governance has always been there, it is not something new or something that can be plugged-in. Each community has its own set of actors, institutions and

interactions, its own path. The degree of transparency in governance will be different in each case, the emphasis on formality or informality will also be different as well as the belief in the possibility to improve, to develop, in and by governance. Some forms of governance do not embrace the idea that planning makes sense, that strategizing for collective action is meaningful, while others operate on shared stories about utopian futures. Everything in between can be observed as well.

Governance paths: the specific evolution of governance in a community. Governance paths have to be carefully reconstructed to be understood in their identity and their implications for possible futures. Strategies cannot be copied from other places; other places can serve as inspiration, after self-analysis, after deepening understanding of our own governance path. A governance path implies a unique effect of new policies, plans, laws adopted; in each community, the same policy will work out differently.

Identity: that what makes something into what it is. For people, identities are narratives, stories they tell about themselves and which others tell about them. Identities can be tied to roles. Identity can also be attributed to places, times, groups and then we speak of spatial identity, social identity and image of history. These three shape each other in the history of the community and in governance paths. Governance can thoroughly reshape social and spatial identities, while shifting identities in wider circles will have governance effects at some point. Broader narratives and discourses affects the formation and transformation of identities. Power/knowledge arrangements in governance evolve shaped by identities.

Ideology: stories embedding other stories. Ideologies offer explanations of bigger issues, create images of what is the good life, the good community, the desirable identity, preferable role of government. Ideologies can (or not) be directly present in government and they can (or not) be tied to political parties. Expert knowledge, academic knowledge and other types of knowledge are not free of ideology. Sound self-analysis includes thinking about the links between community narratives and ideologies as well as about the forms of expert knowledge with a role in governance. Ideologies diametrically opposed to long term perspectives and collective action render buffering of boom and bust difficult.

Institutions: rules of coordination between actors. Institutions can take the form of traditional or implicit or local rules, and the form of laws, policies and plans. Institutions in each case refer and link to others and often contain others. Plans are tools for policy integration and usually include a variety of other institutions, while they require and rely on yet others for their implementation, that is, their path of increasing influence on the community. Community strategies will have to envision the broad range of institutions which can be relied upon to move the community in a desired direction, while the self-analysis can increase awareness of that institutional diversity.

Leadership: the capacity of individuals and groups to move the community in a desirable direction, to help it in self-analysis, strategy making and implementation. Leadership will have to engage with the paradoxes of community, sometimes exposing internal conflicts and contradictions, sometimes silently working on them, sometimes leaving issues for later. Leadership cannot be reduced to representing the will of the community, as that community is not unified and the will of each faction is not without internal contradictions. Leadership can entail provoking and dealing with conflict, it can include suggesting tactics and strategy, helping to find new unifying narratives, suggesting new forms of knowledge and expertise, new institutions as coordinative instruments, and discerning ways to interpret and combine existing sets of institutions and actors to move the community as a whole in a certain direction. Leadership cannot be entirely transparent, and it cannot take risk away from governance; it can contribute to the quality of risk assessment and management.

Mapping: reconstructing governance paths and governance contexts. Mapping is always selectivity and interpretative: paths are infinitely detailed and context extends without limits in time and space. Path mapping reveals sequences and sites of collective decision-making, actors and institutions. Context mapping focuses on the external contexts most relevant for governance. Context mapping can reveal informal networks of businesses, organizations, state actors at higher levels, etc. Path and context mapping together can help strategy making, can assist leadership and community to make decisions.

Multi-level governance: implies that several governance paths exist in a larger community. These paths can run parallel, they can entangle, can inspire each other, and they can block each other. In most forms of government, particularly democratic government, communities are subjected to multi-level governance, with different power dynamics, different narratives, different actors and different specializations existing at each level. The specialization does not allow for neat compartmentalization: it is not enough to say that each level is responsible for certain things, as for each policy domain, de facto all levels play some role, positive or negative.

Narrative: a form of discourse that has a particular conceptual structure. This structure can render discursive materials more real and more compelling by introducing temporal, spatial and emotional order. A narrative is a particular assemblage of concepts, subjects, objects and events. It articulates for example particular events and episodes as game changing, identifies heroes and villains, gives central place to certain values, decides on foreground and background, on reality and noise.

Participation: direct contribution by actors to governance; direct as opposed to indirect and delegated. Individuals can participate, or they can be represented in a certain role or interests by others, who could be called actors. Making governance more participatory probably increases the number of actors, but not necessarily. The democratic effects of participation should always be considered in relation to representative forms of decision-making. More local participation is not always the best solution to development problems; if there are concentration problems (see above) in the community, then participation will only re-enforce the similarity of all remaining potential actors. (Imagine a community beautification committee with only color-blinded members). Bringing in outsiders can provide rejuvenation, provoking internal discussion, re-engaging with higher level governments or other actors at higher levels as well as with industry actors.

Path Dependency: a rigidity in governance paths whereby the next step in governance evolution is restricted by the existing governance configuration and the history leading to that configuration. Path dependencies in other words are legacies, some of them visible

in governance, others not. Path and context mapping makes path dependencies more visible in and for governance, and can expand strategic options, while avoiding unrealistic expectations. Concentration problems represent strong combinations of path and interdependence, so the clarity of this analysis is all the more important. For resource dependent towns, material path dependencies entangle and reinforce each other: the nature of the resource itself, the landscape, climate, infrastructures, place a material configuration in place which cannot easily be altered or repurposed. Cautious land use for extraction, cautious asset preservation beyond extraction, and careful cultivation of internal diversity can limit the scope of material and other path dependencies.

Power/knowledge configuration: the unity of power and knowledge in a given governance path. Power shapes knowledge and knowledge shapes power and none can be understood without reference to the other. Governance is possible because of power/knowledge configurations, which make reality understandable and malleable at the same time. Power is neither good nor bad it is not necessarily tied to individual or group action, desire and intentionality.

Reflexivity: the habit and attitude to reflect on one's actions, thoughts and position and to look for grounding assumptions, underlying discourses, and their effects. In governance, reflexivity can increase flexibility and decrease rigidities in the governance paths. A deeper understanding of past and present shows more and more realistic transformation options. Reflexivity in governance can foster common goods, but it can also making individual or actor strategies more complex and intricate. Just as with transparency, there are limits to reflexivity; reflecting on every step can delay development and make it cumbersome. One can say that phases and places of higher reflexivity can alternative with the practicality of operating on a base of shared narratives and ongoing negotiation on daily business. For communities in search of new and better futures, we believe such phase of higher reflexivity has to come soon and self-analysis and crafting strategy represent one form of recommended reflexive governance.

Transitional governance: a governance configuration which results from community strategizing, but is not the final state desired in and by the strategy. Transitional governance can be clearly defined and leading to a clearly defined next step, or it can be a platform from which new avenues can be explored, reflexivity, assets, adaptive capacity, discursive diversity, long term perspectives can be built. For communities with serious concentration problems, aiming first at transitional governance can be recommended, rebuilding capacity first.

Vision: a unifying narrative for the future of the community, capable of integrating interests and policies. A vision can be a plan or a comprehensive policy; it can be detailed or sketched.

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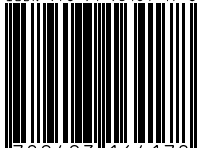
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ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability.
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We wrote this book with small communities in mind. Many small places share similar challenges in re-imagining their future and we believe community strategy can help. Crafting a strategy, envisioning a long-term future can take many forms. The message in this guide is simple: strategy is not a form but rather a function. Community strategy needs to coordinate action towards an envisioned future. That future needs to connect to the stories, the values, the ways of working together in a community, without simply perpetuating them. The guide can be useful for people living in or working for small communities, for all people interested in the future of small places, in rural, remote and resource-based communities. It is especially useful for places where the future cannot be a repetition of the past, where a form of transition is needed or already taking place. In these pages, the reader will find tools for the community to analyze itself in a new way, to assemble a vision out of many stories and to craft a strategy to move in that direction. And, oh, yes... it's useful for bigger places too.

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