

Landscapes in Transition:

Planning for multi-scale challenges, uncertainty,
and long-term futures in
post-productivist forest-dependent regions

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Outline

Long-range environmental planning in post-productivist forest-dependent regions



Case study: Northeast Superior region



Challenges to long-range planning and managing uncertainty



A place-based system for scenario development and planning



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Post-productivist forest-dependent regions:
Multiple values and challenges

- From productivist to post-productivist: moving to diverse values and industries
- Vulnerabilities and challenges
 - Balancing multiples interests in environmental planning
 - High degree of uncertainty and lack of agency: markets/economies, demographic change, environmental change, government policy

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Forms of long-range planning

- Environmental planning: Adaptive management, FMPs and LCCs, environmental assessment (project and high level/strategic), other regional planning
- Socio-economic planning: Strategic plans, tenure reform, wood supply competition
- Scenario planning

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Scenario planning:
Managing long-range uncertainty

- Scenario development process
- Criteria:
 - Not predictive. Are plausible, not necessarily probable
 - Internally consistent
 - Compelling
- Requires imagination. Are explorative

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Benefits of scenario planning

- Stretches and challenges beliefs and perspectives.
- Room for more voices
- Room to incorporate discontinuous events
- Better able to visualize how trends might interact and extend into the future
- Enables preparedness and a quicker, less traumatized response when issues arise
- Can more effectively harness opportunities that develop

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How can uncertainty be effectively managed and planned for in long-range environmental planning for post-productivist forest-dependent regions?

How can the potential of scenarios be best tapped for long-range planning in these regions?

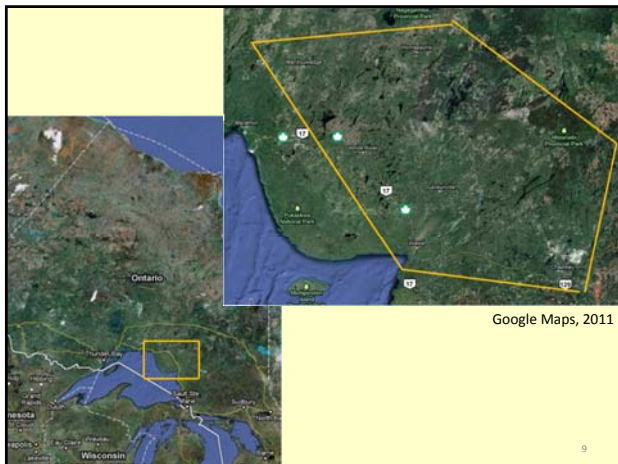
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Case study: Northeast Superior Region

- Municipalities:
 - Wawa, White River, Manitouwadge, Chapleau, Dubreuilville, and Hornepayne
- First Nations:
 - Chapleau Cree, Brunswick House, Michipicoten, Missanabie Cree, Pic Mobert, and Hornepayne First Nations
- All levels of government represented
- Collaborations between communities:
 - Northeast Superior Forest Community, Mayors Group, Northeast Superior Regional Chiefs Forum

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Post-productivist values and economies in the region

- Primary industries: forestry/mills and mines
- Other industries: hydro power, tourism, services, retirement communities
- Emerging industries: blueberry plantations, non-timber forest products, non-conventional wood products, carbon credits



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Methods

- Semi-structured individual interviews
 - Various stakeholders including all levels of government, industry (forestry, mining, hydro, tourism), environmental groups (conservation, access)
- Focus groups
 - Pre-established groups and groups with similar interests

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Challenges to long-range planning, managing uncertainty, and scenario use

- Difficulty envisioning the long-term. Future “goes dark” at about 10 years
- Difficulty planning for uncertainty versus a goal
- Persistent predictive tendencies. Preference of quantitative forecasts over “stories” or “science fiction”

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Other barriers to scenarios and long-range planning

- Unorthodox and inconsistent scenario development methods can reduce transparency and accessibility
- Essentialist perspectives
- Institutionalized resistance to long-range planning. Difficult to plan beyond election cycles

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Challenges specific to forest-dependent regions



- Boom-bust and dependency on a string of single industries → tendency to abandon plans when a new industry moves in
- Challenging beliefs about the future can be upsetting for communities with uncertain futures

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Other challenges for forest-dependent regions

- Reduced participation:
 - Volunteer burn-out
 - Small, sparse populations
- Hesitancy to engage in initiatives with no clear outcome or governmental commitment
- Wariness/distrust of government initiatives and motivations. Lack of voice in governance

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Scenarios offer unique benefits to forest-dependent regions

- Scenarios are promising but remain on the fringe of environmental planning
- Offers room for multiple voices in a landscape with diverse, conflicting interests and high connectivity
- Increases preparedness for regions which may have limited agency
- Forestry crisis is forcing communities and regions to face uncertainty. Will this willingness last?

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Facilitating acceptance, use and efficacy of scenarios

- First step - connect with existing planning processes/frameworks: introduction, relevance, government commitment
- Integrate into adaptive management → strengthen AM processes and perceptions
- Forest management planning already geared for the long-term
- Integrate into higher-level EA
- Established community collaborations

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A place-based system for scenario planning

- Difficult to transfer lessons from other scenario exercises.
- A place-based framework may offer some consistency
- Integrate common needs, limitations and strengths of post-productivist forest communities and regions
 - Neutrality of process, government commitment, process for fleshing out emotional scenarios

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Conclusions

- Long-range environmental planning for post-productivist forest-dependent regions is complex and requires that multiple values are balanced in the face of uncertainty.
- Such regions face unique challenges in long-range and scenario planning.
- Scenario planning is a promising approach for managing uncertainty: allows multiple perspectives, stretches boundaries and assumptions, increases preparedness.
- Scenario planning can be most effective when it is incorporated into existing governance processes and when it is place-specific.

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